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Examination of 21st Century Organization Development: An Ethnography of a Distance Learning Support Department at a Hispanic Serving Institution of Higher Education

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EXAMINATION OF 21ST CENTURY ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT: AN

ETHNOGRAPHY OF A DISTANCE LEARNING SUPPORT DEPARTMENT

AT A HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

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 This study used an ethnographic lens to examine the historic organizational development of a distance education support department within a Hispanic-serving institution of higher education. The Borderlands University (BU; pseudonym) Online Teaching, Learning, and Technology Center (OTLT) is representative of the structure and culture of a successful distance education support department for the 21st century. Through qualitative ethnography, this research study examined the development of cultural and structural components necessary for the success of this organization. This includes the internal community of support departments housed within institutions of higher education. Technologically raised generations emerging from traditional schools, "digital natives," are entering the realms of higher education at a rapid rate (Moloney & Oakley, 2010; Maguire, 2005; Gunawardena & McIssac, 2003; Phipps et al., 1999; Allen & Seaman, 2003; Wolcott, 1994). This research functions as a prescriptive formula, identifying the culture of the team and structural components necessary to create a distance education organization aligned with the mission, values, and needs of the internal and external community it serves.

DEDICATION

Completing my dissertation would not have been possible without the love and unwavering support of my family and friends. For my children, Deuce and Erik, thank you for always grounding me with your unconditional love and always finding a way to make me smile. To my "big three" that we lost along this journey; the father of my children, Mark, was a constant source of pep talks; my brother Sammy, for reminding me of my worth at the most critical of times and my husband, Andy, who always made sure I didn't forget to breath. My mother, Ellen, my father, Roberto, my step mother, Ofelia, her mother, Enma; and all of my brothers and sisters; Ricky, Smiley, Jr, Angie, Sammy, Jenny and Marcie learned to live with my constant "working". Thank you to my extended family, the Martinez', Shaw's, Franklin's, Barlow's, Davis', Newberry's, Leadbetter's, Von Rosenberg's and all the Chauvin's whom never let me give up. My friends; Ivan, Luis, Fawn, Lia, Amy, Carla, Daniel, Adrianna, Eugenia, Sylvia, Baby Sammy, Carmen, Tracy, Christina, Holly and so many more that let me bend their ears in frustration and use their shoulders to shed tears of emotional anguish at any given moment on any day of the week, I can never repay you for those crucial levels of support. To my Aunt Janet Scarborough, if not for her passion for education; I do not honestly know if I would have chosen this path had I not heard her story. A special thank you goes to my inspiration for pursuing my education goes to my father, Roberto, who taught me that learning is lifelong and to take advantage of the opportunities presented through my academic successes.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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distance education support department within a Hispanic-serving institution of higher education. The

Borderlands University (BU; pseudonym) Online Teaching, Learning, and Technology Center

(OTLT) is representative of the structure and culture of a successful distance education support

department for the 21st century. Through qualitative ethnography, this research study examines the

development of cultural and structural components necessary for the success of this organization.

The emergence of distance education's role in the expansion of programs at research institutions of

higher education is a formidable one. The increased normalization of digital technology warrants a

response from education researchers and sociologists regarding this socio-technical change (Selwyn

& Facer, 2014). As computers and the internet are more a part of our lives, it is essential to note the

connections of community to online education. This includes the internal community of support

departments housed within institutions of higher education. Technologically raised generations

emerging from traditional schools, "digital natives," are entering the realms of higher education at a

rapid rate (Moloney & Oakley, 2010; Maguire, 2005; Gunawardena & McIssac, 2003; Phipps et al.,

1999; Allen & Seaman, 2003; Wolcott, 1994).

Distance education support departments are a unique fusion of educational pedagogies and

information technology. These support departments operate with an awareness of the rapidly

evolving online environment and adjust accordingly with little to no disruption to the delivery of

courses and programs. Collaboration is an integral component of distance education. The organization manages the technology and pedagogical methodologies simultaneously. This historical examination of the organizational structure of a successful academic technology support department at Borderlands University (pseudonym) will serve as a guide for institutions at varying stages of distance education integration.

The applied theoretical framework of Organizational Identity Theory guides the research to a central, enduring, distinguished organizational identity. This perspective provides a broader scope from organizational behavior, but relative to an organization's more specific culture and image (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2006). The organizational identity will emerge and become refined and reinforced as the research is revealed. This research will function as a prescriptive formula that identifies the culture of the team and structural components necessary to create a distance education organization aligned with the mission, values, and needs of the internal and external community it serves.

Conclusions drawn from this research are reflective of an institution in transition and transformation. In 2014, Grande State University (GSU; pseudonym) and its sister school, Border State University (BSU; pseudonym), transformed into one institution, Borderlands University. This union was made known to the institutions at the latter portion of Fall 2012. All academic and support departments at GSU and BSU were combined into one to serve both campuses, as BU. It is a testament to the element of change in environments that have cultivated an ability to adapt as the population it serves grows and embraces its diversity. Tolstoy's novel, *Anna Karenina*, begins, "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." This statement and its story led to the development of and expansion upon the Anna Karenina Principle (AKP) by

Diamond (1994; 1999). Application of AKP to an organization illuminates its effectiveness, efficiency, and ability to adapt to a changing environment; all parts of a whole yield success.

Background of the Study

In the early 1990's, a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) had a handful of computer science, education, sociology, and business professors actively integrating the technology of the internet into their courses. Emailing, delivering assignments electronically, and creating digital study guides for their students was only the beginning of this institution's steps into distance education. This small group saw the technology as the vehicle to serve a broader audience improve student outcomes. This collaboration of disciplines served as the foundation to the creation of a support department for the emergent technological age of education (K. Chauvin, personal communication, January 23, 2017). The leveraging of skills to synchronize technology and its supporting departments is a challenge that requires balance between the educator and delivery method (Singh et al., 2002; Selwyn & Facer,2014). The Web-based Education Commission established in 1999 by the United States Congress reports a 32% increase of web-based courses offered in higher education from 1995-1998 (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics., 1999). In 1995, GSU, crossed national and international education borders through this technological surge by way of Web Computer Technology (WebCT).

As a founding member of the consortium of Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), GU shared in a million-dollar grant for the installation of facilities at all nine campuses within the statewide system to provide and receive programming via interactive satellite. At the end of the 1993-1994 academic year, classrooms and telecommunications infrastructure was in place, and the electricity generated from it resonated beyond the brick and mortar, sparking the interest of Provost. The Provost assigned a faculty member from the computer science department to complete a study about

the impact of technology across the campus. A member of the computer science faculty at GSU applied for and received a grant from a Canadian institution for the purchase of the license of the initial learning management system (LMS), WebCT. The grant parameters included experimenting with using technology developed by computer scientist to teach computer science and extend the use of the LMS to all disciplines on campus. The grant afforded hiring two undergraduate computer science students to install, maintain, support development and testing of its content. The WebCT was installed on a separate server, and the space held a dual role; Dr. C's office and The Distance Learning and Teaching Center (K. Chauvin, personal communication, January 23, 2017). This unconventional matriculation of the support department's inception is not uncommon. However, we must not forget that the waters of educational technology were relatively uncharted in the United States in 1994.

Distance Learning in Higher Education

In 2003, the United States Department of Education reported that distance education course enrollments were more than three million. Over the next academic year, it was reported that 56% of all two and 4-year Title IV-eligible, degree-granting institutions offered distance education courses (Allen & Seaman, 2003). At the end of the academic year 2012, the National Center for Educational Statistics (Ginder, 2014) reported 8.7 million students enrolled at the United States post-secondary institutions had taken a minimum of one course online, and 34 percent of that population were enrolled in fully online programs. There is no expectation for a slow trajectory for the direction of distance education.

Increased demand for higher education faculty to enhance their courses with online materials or deliver their courses using hybrid or wholly online constructs is more evident in institutions of higher education as the integration of technology continues to impact all systems;

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academic and non-academic. Furthermore, faculty are expanding their roles to designers, interpreters, change agents, mentors, and motivators (Allen & Seaman, 2003, 2008, 2011; Connick, 1997; Twigg, 2002; Porter et al., 2003). As the faculty roles expand, their access and resources must increase in quality and quantity. This multifaceted instructor requires a support team to simplify, identify, and explore the best educational technology practices. Failure to develop adequate support systems for students (Aggarwal, 2001; Aggarwal & Legon, 2002) and faculty (Palloff & Pratt, 2002; Fuller, 2000) when an institution has made the investment in the technology "is a recipe for mediocrity at best, for disaster at worst" (Watkins et al., 2013).

Paulson (1995) created a research framework that compartmentalized the online instructor roles into three categories: organizational, social, and intellectual. Through the organizational category, we find the foundation necessary to evolve the delivery method into an entire self-sustainable department housed within an institution of higher education that carries a dual role of student and faculty support for the systems. According to Willging and Johnson (2019), students drop out of college for a variety of reasons. They found this to be consistent between online and face to face learning. The highest number of dropouts in the online environment occurred upon the completion of the first course (Willging & Johnson, 2019). Each institution of higher education can manipulate attrition rates; there is no one standard to calculate the rates. Willging and Johnson's (2019) results indicated that fewer students left the program upon completion of the first few courses. Their study found that the dropout rate is attributable to student self-satisfaction. They more accurately identified it as, students that struggle with technology will leave in the first few courses. However, after completing more than three courses, a student is less likely to give up on completion in an online program (Willging &

Johnson, 2019). The impact of design, technology, and flexibility upon student satisfaction, learning outcomes, and retention rates define the area's most meaningful to the learner.

The social foundations in education take more a formal tone; the environment impacts learners, even when the walls of a classroom are virtual. The organizational structure of the department serves as full support to faculty and students within the online environment. Social foundations in education defined by Waks (2013) involve a virtual reimagining of the information networking to reveal the educational implications of change required. An examination of four critical information webs specifically, a) human, b) knowledge, c) learning, and d) work assist in developing a connective unearthing based on social foundations. Social foundation contexts are identified in the best practices for student success in online courses as planning, community, technology, and personal challenges (Wagner, 1990; Backroad Connections, 2004). Education technology presents new social needs associated with the practices and norms, reflective of the changes in culture manifested through these four webs (Waks, 2013; Backroad Connections, 2004).

Social foundations in education persist that the research of the online environment is conducted to define inequities and the impacts upon community. There are necessary modifications of traditional teaching to the educational pedagogies and strategies for online delivery. New technologies are only a portion of the framework for education delivered online. The human, knowledge, learning, and work webs that we are immersed in regularly impact our views and perceptions of our roles in society. Digital normalization must preserve the historical context from which it was born. Technology is not slowing down, nor is the demand for alternative delivery methods in higher education.

Technology and Distance Education Departments in Higher Education Institutions

The organizational structures that disseminate online courses and programs must be examined to reduce institutions time and effort to develop the most effective and efficient support departments. These support departments, in effect, will increase optional course delivery methods as the student population expands. Higher education institutions consist of several colleges of discipline and support service departments for faculty, staff, and students. Distance education technology, before the early 1980's and 1990's, found itself primarily, housed under a non-academic umbrella, rather than academics (Wagner, 1990; Waks, 2013). Education is, by most accounts, a business; therefore, its internal organization is often compared to a corporation. To reach a level of excellence, various systems, the bureaucratic of Weber (1937), scientific management of Taylor (1911), and administrative management of Gulick and Urwick (1937) are in place in the organizational structures of an institution. Change in education is slow and conservative, specifically with innovation and technology (Birnbaum, 2000; Kezar, 2011; Tierney, 1999). Birnbaum (2000) found that the slow pace of education is due to the inherent skepticism. Innovation is seen as a "fad," not long-withstanding. Historically speaking, information technology has never been a necessary element of higher education but seen as a convenient addition (Wagner, 1990; Kezar, 2001; Tierney, 1999).

The inefficiencies responsible for slow adaptation result in loosely coupled organizations (Weick, 1976). Weick (1976) describes loose coupling organization within institutions of higher education as groups independent of one another with commonly shared missions. These organizations are not dependent upon structured coordination in more diverse areas and operations, such as information technology (Weick, 1977; Wagner, 1990; Snow, 2016). The opposite of loose coupling is tight coupling; time-dependent, reliant upon interdependence

departmental structure and, commonly found in manufacturing industries (Van et al., 1976). The loose coupling in higher education is void of processes or procedural protocols. The institutional theory focuses on rules, policies, and routines that form an organization from the social structures and behaviors (Meyer & Rowan, 2012; Scott, 2000). This does not satisfy the overlapping parameters of distance education departments. Distance education support departments contain academic and non-academic components; therefore, the rules, policy, and routines form independently. A new institutional theory provides legitimacy to the organization through a stronger emphasis on frameworks that focus on cultural beliefs that support institutional isomorphism. Organizational isomorphism confirms the legitimacy to develop educational research (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Hirsch, 1995; March & Olsen, 1983; Meyer et al., 2005; Scott, 1987). Terosky and Heasley's (2014) research on faculty support in online environments reveals that instructors struggle to maintain their teaching philosophy and professional identity. The participants in the study rarely mentioned the relativity of technical skills and pedagogical tools. The focus of the participants was the value of their role in the environment. There was a clear need for instructors to align their teaching philosophies and professional role within the environment. It is another reinforcement that community of practice frameworks, occurring through social interactions as a cognitive act, are not individually attained. (Brown, et al., 1989; Lave, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1999).

Ethnography

In its literal translation, the Greek definition of ethnography in its literal translation is broken down as such; a written account (*graphein*) of a people (*ethnos*). However, ethnography is not confined to the boundaries of anthropology or sociology. It is defined as a set of strategies or research strategies often described as fieldwork. Fieldwork is composed of observation,

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participation, and artifacts to gain a meaningful understanding of the situational actors (Wolcott, 1994). Informed by a realist – objectivist or constructivist – interpretivist approach, ethnographic design research seeks to discover the "how" and "what" of organizational situations, recognizing the behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture sharing group (Harris, 1968; Agar, 1996). This study is a complex research analysis of an informed space using a combination of investigative methods such as interviews, observation, and participation of the researcher as well as the study of artifacts to gain insight into the inner constructs of a culture or organization. Ethnographers use descriptive sociocultural data gathered from a single group, society, or a component of a system of socio-culture while moving towards the identification of concepts and theories (Zaharlick, 1992; Agar, 1996; Pole & Morrison, 2003; Cousin, 2009).

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this research study is to provide a critical examination of the organizational foundations, identified by the cultural and structural elements revealed, necessary for a 21st-century distance education support department at an institution of higher education. Retaining scholarly integrity and promoting applied learning achievement while advancing the history of distance education in the U.S. will inevitably impact the higher education population at large. Formulating a how-to guide for institutions of higher education regarding the construction of sustainable distance education support departments with the least impact upon administration and its hierarchy will increase the efficiency, effectiveness, and opportunity to yield best results, in respect to the academic achievement of its learners. Transparency is vital for the advancement of distance education; just as it was done face to face, it must be modeled and applied at fast pace with as little disruption to the flow of knowledge as we know it.

Statement of the Problem

Online programs have been on a steady rise for the past decade (Moloney & Oakley, 2019; Flowers & Baltzer, 2006). This increase of students deemed part-time or non-traditional, created an opportunity for online universities. Therefore, traditional universities are formulating fully online programs supported and delivered through their respective campuses. The evolution of traditional education supports online delivery, using a methodology congruent with educational foundations that contributes to the success of the 21st-century student. Inevitably, a broad-spectrum topic of investigation for educational researchers has emerged (Singh et al., 2002; Selwyn & Facer, 2014). Examination of higher education organizational constructs that support these delivery methods and the students, staff, and faculty will serve as a best practice guide for all institutions entering and immersed in the educational digital age. Future online educators using traditional university support will use this contribution to the discipline and area of study.

Significance of the Study

This study provides the higher education community a template for developing and implementing a distance education department. Given the impact of the global pandemic of 2019, COVID-19, the need and ability to shift from one modality to another was put through a live test in real time. This is where the most relevant significance is clearly defined. A robust plan of implementation and organizational elements (technology and human) of a distance education department is necessary. This was demonstrated by the impact of COVID-19 upon education, globally. The significance of a distance education department at any educational institution is vital, as it will undoubtedly be the "go-to" in times of national and\or global security crisis.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study will focus upon the critical, historic organizational development of the distance education department at a Hispanic Serving Institution of higher education. The specific intentions are to a) examine the organizational processes which led to the development of the distance education department; b) identify the frameworks for implementation; and report the participants' perceptions of effectiveness of the department during and for the future. The following questions are addressed in this study:

1. What are the goals of internal distance education departments for the future as perceived by former and present actors and stakeholders within an internal distance education department?

2. What are the structural, organizational characteristics of a distance education department internally housed within an institution of higher education?

3. What are the benefits of an internal distance education department that functions under an academic umbrella as perceived by former and present actors and stakeholders within an internal distance education department?

4. How does an internal, academically based distance education department impact other support departments and divisions at Borderlands University?

5. How did the growth of distance education contribute to the creation of an internal academically based distance education department at Borderlands University?

Definition of Terms

The following is a list of the conceptualized definition of terms utilized throughout this study:

Digital Native – a person who is very familiar with digital technology, computers, etc. because they have grown up with them (Presnky, 2001).

Distance\Online Education - The formal educational process that occurs when students and instructors are not in the same physical setting for the majority (more than 50 percent) of instruction (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2018)

Professional Development - Activities that aim to develop an individual's professional skills and knowledge (Floyd & Casey-Powell, 2004).

Distance Education Support Department – A distance education support department that is physically housed within the institution it serves (Floyd & Casey-Powell, 2004).

Information Technology- is the use of computers to create, process, store, and exchange all kinds of electronic data and information. (FOLDOC - Computing Dictionary, 2000).

Academic\Education Technology - is the combined use of computer hardware, software, and educational theory and practice to facilitate learning (Floyd & Casey-Powell, 2004).

Academic-based distance education support departments - Educational support departments which are concentrated in the teaching and learning aspects of distance education (Floyd & Casey-Powell, 2004).

Technology-based distance education support departments - Educational support departments which are concentrated in the technological aspects of distance education (Floyd & Casey-Powell, 2004).

COVID-19 - is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus in 2019 (WHO | World Health Organization, 2020).

Remote teaching and learning - Occurs due to a sudden emergency with no time to plan or

     prepare to transition to an online/technology-enhanced teaching and learning

     environment. Neither faculty, nor students have planned, nor elected to teach or learn

     remotely online. (The State University of New York, 2020).

Online\Distance teaching and learning - fully-planned, resourced, and supported online faculty

     development and course design initiatives, often taking six to nine months before the

     online instructor is prepared and the online course is delivered. Both faculty and students

     have deliberately chosen to teach and learn online (The State University of New York,

     2020).

Asynchronous - online, but not live, or at the same time/place. 100% of the Direct instruction

     occurs under time delay; that is, direct instruction is recorded/stored and accessed later.

     (The State University of New York, 2020).

Synchronous - online live video. 100% of the Direct instruction occurs in real-time without

     (time) delay (The State University of New York, 2020).

Summary

The importance of distance education was made profoundly clear through the impact of COVID-19; however, it is not the only reason for any institution to implement a distance education support department. It is the talent of the staff, goals and visions of the leadership and intentional growth of the department's technology, pedagogy and ability to reach across all elements of an institution of higher education must be consistently evaluated and considered for an internal distance education support department. The review of literature provides an overview of how these organizational elements impact and intertwine between the learner, faculty and administration. Ethnography provides sociocultural elements necessary to gain a true sense of

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the importance and intention of how this distance education department was created. Using qualitative data analysis methods, the researcher provides findings based upon the interviews. Conclusions, discussion of findings and a summation of the recommendations complete this research study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The amount of literature regarding distance education is saturated with varying degrees of interests from the student, instructor, methodologies, technologies, administration, development, and design. The following review of literature encapsulates relevant historic aspects of historic ethnography of an organization. As defined by Albert and Whetten (1985) and Whetten (2006), organizational identity theory is the applied theoretical framework for the study. The theory requires the existence of specifically defined elements of central, enduring, and distinguished attributes in an organizational adaptation to change. This is a comprehensive overview of critical factors that impact the development of a collaborative teaching, learning, and technical support department at a Hispanic serving institution in South Texas.

Organizational Identity Theory

Organizational identity theory as defined by Albert and Whetten (1985) and Whetten (2006) is comprised of three attributes that answer the question of, "who are we as an organization?". Clear elements of central, enduring and distinguishing attributes are required in order to have a defined organizational identity. This broader perspective interprets the organization's instability as a benefit that is grounded in its ability to adapt to change. Given the rapid changes of distance education throughout its history, the attributes effectively maintain their respective adherence over time (Allen & Seaman, 2003; Hulsmann, 2004; Moore & Kearsley,2011; Ginder, 2014; Waks, 2013).

Central attributes are historic in characterization and function as the method of change necessary for the development or evolution of the organization. The historical factors drive the organization's development. Enduring attributes are consistent over extended periods of time and explicit to the organization (Whetten, 2006). They are closely related to the core values or beliefs of the organization and stem from the historical contexts of the central attributes. These distinguishing attributes are those that contribute to the uniqueness of the organization. Each of these attributes are independently defined and rely upon the strategic concepts of plurality and synergy of the multiple identities found within the organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Pratt & Forman, 2000). The uniqueness of the support department examined in this study is defined by the diversity of individual identities.

Holographic leadership style is found in an organization identity comprised of multiple or diverse individual identities. A holographic-led organization warrants universal acceptance amongst the multiple individual identities. All workers have the responsibility and ability to work as a part of the whole. There is a balance of work teams of specialized and generalized personnel. An organizational identity with holographic leadership can take on challenges, develop efficient processes; work interchangeably in various roles, and effectively adapt as environmental changes occur (Pratt & Forman, 2000; Morgan, 2006).

<div align="center">**Hispanic Serving Institutions**</div>

The Higher Education Act of 1965 established Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) through Title V, effectively identifying the category. This opened the doors for economic support through federal funding to the HSI's. Granted a non-profit status, HSI's are recognized

to provide economic support for the educational needs of Hispanic communities (Dayton et al., 2004). For an institution to qualify as a Hispanic Serving Institution, the following criteria must be met. Currently, most HSI's exceed these criteria due to the continual rise population growth.

By the year 2030, one of every five Americans will be Hispanic, potentially serving as a primary driving force for the economy. This is dependent upon the quality of education, improving to meet the needs of the population. The success of the United States economy moving forward will have a substantial reliance upon HSI which are comprised of a 60% student population defined as Hispanic (De Los Santos & De Los Santos, 2003). HSI ensure the academic opportunities for the populations it represents. Texas has the largest Hispanic population in the country and directly impacts the success of higher education institutions and overall opportunities for that growing demographic.

The Grande State University

Grande State University was founded in 1927, first as a two-year community college. The county school district functioned as its administration. The first graduating class of the community college totaled five. By 1930, thirty-five students a year were graduating, yearly, and enrollment expanded to 250. The community college gained admission to the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of Southern States. In 1933, the Association of Colleges deemed the institution Rio Grande Community College (pseudonym). The County School District encouraged its K-12 population to transition into the community college to expand higher education opportunities for the growing population. This would establish the institution as a rising contributor to the educational progression in the region (Welch, 1987).

The County School District functioned as the board of trustees. The community college grew to 100 graduates yearly following World War II. Enrollments at the community college

increased to 625 by 1947, mainly attributable to the establishment of the G.I. Bill. After

securing regional, independent status and receiving state funding in 1948, 8 ½ acres were

purchased by the community college in 1951; the state legislature passed a bill for the county to

hold a referendum for a four-year institution. The outcome of that referendum established Rio

Grande College (pseudonym). One month later, in January of 1952, the name changed to Grande

College (pseudonym). The student population was more than 1,500 and increased each

academic year. The County Commissioners Court selected a board of regents, and in 1965,

Grande College became the 22nd institution by the State System of Colleges and Universities. At

the close of the decade, Grande College was eligible for state and federal funding. This enabled

the institution to build a $1.5 million-dollar fine arts complex, and additional funding was used

for other building extensions (Welch, 1987).

In 1970, Grande College was approved to offer master-level graduate programs in the

arts, science, and education. At the onset of the 1971 academic year, they gained full university

status and changed their name to Grande University. The following year, enrollments exceeded

6,800, resulting in increased revenue of state appropriations funding, and an extension campus

was added in the neighboring city. In 1975, the fifth president of Grande University appointed

Dr. Gonzalez (pseudonym) as the Vice President for Student Affairs. The demographics of

Grande University consisted of a student body population, predominately Mexican-American.

Dr. G implemented various fundraising endeavors that connected the university to corporations,

foundations, and the community. His role was changed in 1976 to Vice President for Student and

University Affairs and the development of an Alumni Association, becoming a significant

contributor to the forward progress of the institution (Welch, 1987).

In 1981, the President of Grande University announced his retirement. Dr. Gonzalez applied for the presidency, along with more than 140 other applicants. He earned the position, becoming the sixth President of Grande University and the first Hispanic president of a major university in the State. Dr. Gonzalez retained this position for the next twenty-three years. His persistence in attending Texas Legislative sessions in Austin, petitioning for more federal and state funding, allowed Grande University to become an institution that was firm in its value of offering higher education opportunities for everyone in its community population (Welch, 1987). In 1989, Grande University became Grande State University and was recognized as a part of the prestigious higher education system. Enrollment, at the time, continued increased progression since 1927 and held a substantial 9,000 student population that continued to grow each academic year. By 2013, the Grande State University had a student population of more than 19,000 students and no signs of slowing down in its future (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2018).

South Texas Border Initiative

Historically, many impactful educational initiatives are born from lawsuits, in some form or fashion. The lawsuits are a function of the laws brought to the public at large through the development of legislation at varying levels that impact those public groups or organizations that have brought the issues to a broader audience. The *League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) v. Clements* and the subsequent landmark decision from *Richards v LULAC* created change through the Legislative court system, specifically the 71st State Legislature, into the development of the South Texas Border Initiative. This would become a significant piece of legislation to impact Higher Education (Flack, 2003; Ortegon, 2013; Duarte, 2016).

The initial case, *LULAC v. Clements*, originated in December of 1987, charged that the State Governor, William P. Clements, the Texas Commissioner of Higher Education, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the boards of regents of fifteen institutes and systems of higher education in Texas had discriminated against the region from their fair share of state funding for higher education development. The claim, on behalf of LULAC, filed by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) charged that the Mexican American residents of the state's border area were denied "equal access" to higher education resources and participation in "quality higher education programs" which were available to the other residents of the same area. This case has long since served as the catalyst which ignited the South Texas Border Initiative to impact border institutions (Duarte, 2016; Ortegon, 2013).

The 107th District Court would hear MALDEF present evidence showing that only three of the 590 doctoral programs available through Texas public institutions were available to the border region. This region contained 20 percent of Texans, with only 10 percent of funding for higher education distributed to it. Furthermore, the plaintiffs showed that in comparison with the rest of the state, students from the border region were travelling much further to attend public institutions that had master's or doctoral programs available, while 61 percent of students outside of the border region were able to quickly attend institutions that had graduate programs (Flack, 2003; Ortegon, 2013; Duarte, 2016)

In the case of *LULAC v. Clements*, the 107th District Court ruled in 1991, with the jury finding the state not guilty of discrimination for the region, but that there was a failure to establish institutions of higher education along the South Texas border. However, the presiding judge overruled this decision and issued his ruling in the case. The Judge ruled prohibition of the

state to fund higher education in the border areas until the state could enact a good constitutional plan; a stay of injunction remained on this case until 1993 (Duarte, 2016; Ortegon, 2013).

Appealing to the Texas Supreme Court in *Richards v. LULAC*, the jury's original decision in the *LULAC v. Clements* was overturned. The court ruled against LULAC based upon precedents from the 14th amendment of the United States Constitution. The 71st Legislative Court expanded upon the pre-existing South Texas Border Initiative (STBI) from 1989 to provide millions of dollars in state funding for nine of the 15 institutions cited in the original case (Flack, 2003; Ortegon, 2013).

The funding for the STBI was found in two distinct forms; authorization to issue tuition revenue bonds and special item funding placed on tuition bonds. Tuition revenue bonds are issued by an institution based upon tuition and fees. However, in 1971, the Texas Legislature began using the bonds as part of the funding for capital expansion in public higher education. In essence, while TRB's are obligations of the institutions, they are paid for by the Texas taxpayers (Ortegon, 2013) This explains the importance of keeping the community where a bond will impact being directly involved in the process of voting for and deciding upon the best way to allocate the funds. By issuing tuition revenue bonds, the Legislature was placing the final decisions into the hand of the communities it impacted, allowing appropriations to be available for the special items. These items do not include auxiliary items such as dormitories; they are more aligned with the community's educational needs (Flack, 2003; Ortegon, 2013).

The special funding allocated to the Grande State University saw the most significant increase at the onset of the academic year 1994 with a 2.25-million-dollar injection of funding to academic program development and more than 1.5 million in funding to the Engineering program at an increasing rate each academic year beginning in 1990 (Ortegon, 2013).

Impact of the South Texas Border Initiative at Grande State University

The graph below depicts the impact of allocated funds to the Grande State University through the South Texas Border Initiative taken from a 2003 presentation to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board by the Deputy Commissioner. The entire presentation was an update; the STBI monies were allocated to the nine schools affected. The considerable increase in the student population at GSU is represented by the number educational student grants awarded increased substantially from 1992 to 2001 (Duarte, 2016, Flack, 2003)

**Enrollment
1991-2001**
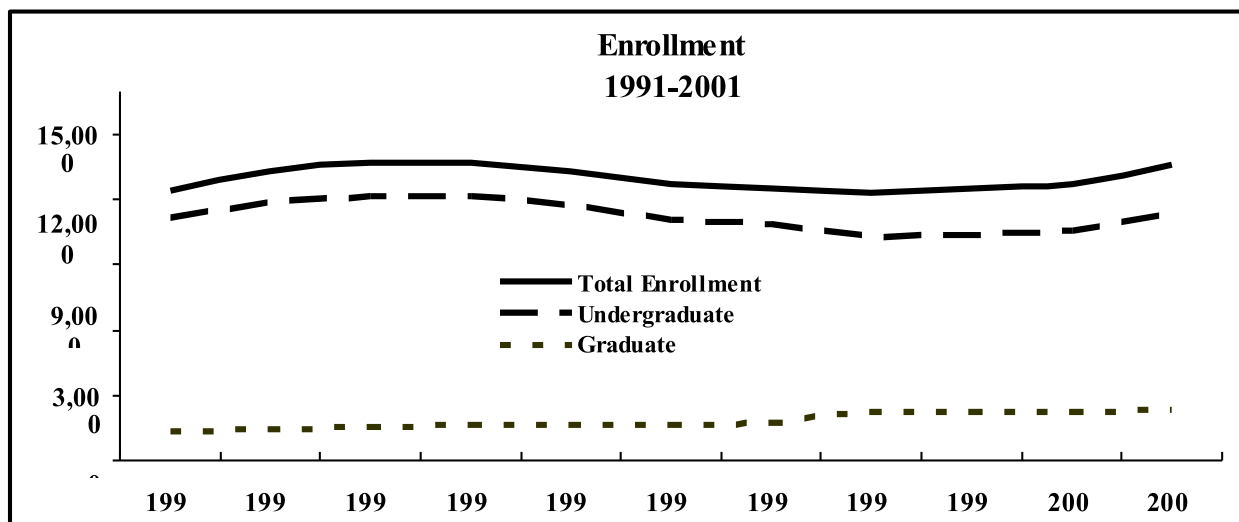
Figure 1: Enrollment 1991-2001

This increase may be due to the influx of funding for technology provided in the Border Initiative that ultimately changed the delivery of higher education for the region. An initiative built out of a legal battle would be the catalyst for the institution to be a pioneer in creating a sustainable technological academic support department (Flack, 2003).

History of Distance Education

Distance education is not a new concept in higher education by any standard; it is traced back to the late nineteenth century. There have been several evolutions of distance education

over the years. Beginning with correspondence study to the online delivery method of today, there are straightforward technological advances that contribute to the evolution of distance education.

Correspondence Study

The postal service played a crucial role in correspondence courses delivered from both for-profit and non-for-profit institutions of higher education. The reliability and economic benefits of delivering via mail is directly relative to the railroads that began crossing the national landscape. Many of these first courses or programs were delivering the courses to advance their employees skillsets and training. However, some that were reactions to land grant universities. The 1862 Morrill Act directed universities to offer educational opportunities to all backgrounds. An extension of these land grant universities was the "Wisconsin Idea," which would hold the boundaries of the institution to the state it resided in (Pittman, 1991; Key, 1996; Altbach, 2001). This opened doors for the institutions to expand instruction to include agriculture, engineering, and business.

There were more than 200 proprietary correspondence schools by the 1930's operational in the United States. Correspondence schools were famous throughout Europe, as well. In the 1850's, two European professors, Charles Toussaint and Gustav Langenscheidt, established a correspondence language school.   The University of Cambridge in England wished to open higher education access for more people by creating an academic degree which was ultimately rejected by the administration. Professor Richard Moulton, a member of the University of Cambridge advocacy for the development of academic correspondence degrees, immigrated to the United States. William Rainey Harper, a colleague of Moulton, initiated the first formal

higher education program in 1892, during his first year as President of the University of Chicago (Moore & Kearsley, 2011).

Correspondence instruction would further impact higher education opportunities for women as well. Anna Eliot Ticknor established a home-study school, Society to Encourage Studies at Home, in 1873, which provided formal access to education for women who were denied that opportunity at the time (Nasseh, 2012). In 1900, Martha Van Rensselaer was given the charge by Cornell University to develop correspondence courses for women in rural areas. By 1905, more than 20, 000 women enrolled in the three distance education courses she developed (Cornell University, 2001).

Radio and Television Study

The introduction of radio in the twentieth century, "schools of the air," were established upon federal licensing by higher education institutions found a way to deliver distance education. Universities began pioneering in the new technology of radio, and in February of 1925, the State University of Iowa offered a for-credit radio courses via its station WOI. More than 80 percent of those enrolled in the courses went on to complete their degrees at the institution (Bates, 1984; Pittman, 1986) In 1929, the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) sponsored the RCA Educational Hour via the Ohio School of the Air. Many K-12 schools found the medium ideal for public school educational programs; however, radio did not afford the rewards envisioned. For the most part, commercial radio broadcasters dominated the airwaves (Bates, 1984; Moore & Kearsley, 2011). However, there was even newer technology on the horizon.

The introduction of television broadcasts was a big boost for the expansion of distance education. From 1939 to the end of World War II, more than 400 educational programs were broadcast from the State University of Iowa, and 242 of the 2053 television frequencies were

allocated for noncommercial use (Unwin & McAlesse, 1988; Moore & Kearsley, 2011). Television included foundational grants in education by such as donors as Johns Hopkin's University and the Ford Foundation to expand the public broadcasting that led to the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967. This new technology impacted k-12 and higher education. At the end of the 1970's there were more than 150 educational TV stations comprised of instructional TV programs across the United States (Unwin & McAleese, 1988; Moore & Kearsley, 2011).

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) required all cable operators to provide an educational channel to their subscribers in 1972. This would be the beginning of "telecourses" as many universities, community colleges, and private producers such as the University of Kentucky, Pennsylvania State University, and the International Consortium developed and delivered more than 200 college-level courses. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) distributed the courses via their Adult Learning Service and enrolled more than 600,000 adult learners. A minimum of 1,000 institutions signed up for access to those courses (Wright, 1991; Moore & Kearsley, 2011).

Open Institution Instruction

By the latter part of the 1960's, it was clear that distance education had carved out its place in educational instructional technology. New instructional theories and pedagogies for the technology began to immerse. Two experiments in distance education solidified the use of communication technologies for educational purposes. The Articulated Instructional Media Project (AIM) and Great Britain's Open University (OU) would ultimately provide the research to support the new distance education opportunities brought forth by the changing landscape of the technology across the globe (Harry, et al., 1993; Moore & Kearsley, 2011).

The AIM experiment, led by Charles Wedemeyer and funded through the Carnegie Corporation, spanned four years from 1964 to 1968 at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. This experiment resulted in distance education as a complete system in education. This systems approach included correspondence tutoring, printed study guides, broadcast of programs, audio tapes, telephone conferencing, at-home kids for experimentation, use of local university laboratories, discussions in local groups and student support and counseling, as well as, a whole design team, consisting of technology specialists and content experts as well as instructional designers (Bates, 1983; Wedemeyer & Najem, 1969). The self-directed nature of the courses was mediated with materials, and facilitation from the faculty and support departments would be up to the learner. At the beginning of this experiment, Wedemeyer spoke at a conference and was approached by England's University of Oxford. Wedemeyer concentrated his speech to discuss the three flaws in his research; control was imperative for faculty, funds, and academic rewards for the AIM project (Wedemeyer, 2010; Bates, 1983; Pittman 1991). Given the brevity of these flaws, the idea and execution of a single-mode distance teaching institution, specifically open universities, is the best model to explore for the experiment (Moore, 2004). Within the next few years, the open university concept would become a reality to revolutionize higher education. Wedemeyer would be an integral component of the new institution's creation. He used AIM as his guide its open educational systems creation. The fully autonomous institution was empowered to grant degrees, control of its funding, and its faculty. The United Kingdom OU (UKOU) would serve as a world-class university. A total systems approach model was applied to distance education (Keegan, 1986; Harry, et al., 1993; Moore & Kearsley, 2011).

The large scale and retention of quality and cost-effectiveness of UKOU deemed them as mega-universities. The mega-universities included more than one institution contributing to

radio, television, and postal service distance education modalities in one collective university

(Keegan, 1986; Daniel, 1996). They are dedicated to providing teaching and learning in one

single-mode through employing of teams of specialists to design and deliver courses of large

enrollment. The figure below provides a snapshot of these mega-universities, and it is noted that

the United States is not one of them as it was found to be a need at the time as the educational

system was open. Distance education had been infused into the curriculum for some time (Moore

& Kearsley, 2011).

Country	Institution	Established	Enrollment
Pakistan	Allama Iqbal Open University	1974	3.2 million
China	Open University of China	1979	2.7 million
Bangladesh	Open University	1992	600,000
India	Indira Gandhi National Open University	1985	3 million
Indonesia	Universitas Terbuka	1984	646,467
Iran	Payame Noor University	1987	183,000
Korea	Korean National Open University	1982	210,978
Spain	Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia	1972	180,000
Thailand	Sukhothai Thammathirat OU	1978	181,372
Turkey	Anadolu University	1982	884,081
UK	The Open University	1969	203,744

Source: Wikipedia (2010)

Figure 2: Mega-Universities 2010

However, the powers of each state in the U.S. were responsible for the direction of distance

education. Therefore, the development of policy to create a mega university was not possible at a

national level. This led to the development of consortiums throughout the United States systems

of higher education.

The consortiums of the United States poised for this evolution in that they had the

frameworks of development established through the efforts of institutions development of the

various distance education of correspondence. As early as 1943, the U.S. consortiums within the

United States Armed Forces Institute (USAFI) relied upon the established civilian institutions to deliver the courses to American troops around the globe (Wells & Phelps, 1990). Wedemeyer was primarily involved in this organization and the development of the yet undefined open university concept (Bates, 1983; Pittman, 1991; Moore & Kearsley, 2011). These new organizations were equipped with Wedemeyer's systems approach of AIM. One example of this new organization of distance education is the University of Mid- America, comprised of nine institutions across the U.S., providing courses to the students of the midwestern states that it served. The lack of costs offset by enrollment reflected the individual state support from those involved in the consortium (McNeil, 1980).

Teleconference Delivery

A direct outcome of the AIM project at the University of Wisconsin was the development of the Educational Telephone Network (ETN) in 1965 that provided continuing education for physicians. The ETN began with 18 locations and one weekly program; however, it expanded to 200 locations including, county courthouses, hospitals, and schools with more than 100 programs and more than 35,000 users. The emphasis of the programs as professionals in medicine, law, engineering, library, and more. Several states followed with similar models of the ETN. Much of what emerged in distance education in the 1980's was through use of teleconferencing. Teleconferencing mimicked the face-to-face environment of being in the same space simultaneously. The open university and correspondence distance education models supported the learner being alone and studying independently. Teleconferencing technology gave live connection between instructor and learners (Wedemeyer, 2010; Bates, 1983; Bates et al., 1987; Bates, 1990; Bolliger & Halupa, 2012; Pittman 1991).

To expand educational and health opportunities to rural areas of the United States, the Office of Education allocated funds for experimentation using satellite technology. Through the Educational Satellite Communication Demonstration (ESCD) project, the consortia, National University Teleconferencing Network (NUTN), was founded in 1982. The consortia began with 66 institutions with a base of Oklahoma State University. Within ten years, NUTN was a network of more than 250 organizations and provided more than 100 programs servicing more than 6,000 learners at a time (Cowlan & Foote, 1975; Moore & Kearsley, 2011). Another of the large consortia was the National Technological University (NTU), which primarily focused upon science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs of study. NTU delivered accredited university graduate-level offerings from 50 institutions and continuing education supported by corporations such as IBM, Hewlett-Packard, and Lockheed Martin as a method of keeping their respective engineer teams on the cutting edge of technology. A third consortium, American Distance Education Consortium (ADEC) consisted of 65 land universities, historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic serving institutions and tribal colleges with a concentration upon delivering agriculture programs. In 2005, Walden University merged with NTU to become the NTU School of Engineering and Applied Science (Moore & Kearsley, 2011).

Online Education

As technology continued its advancement from large mainframe computers to personal computers for office and home, networks of internet access began to take shape. Three institutions of higher education, Duke University, Yale University, and City University of New York, developed, the Because It is Time Network (BITNET). This supercomputer network was dedicated solely to education, and the link between institutions grew to 3,000 in 1991 (Moore &

Kearsley, 2011). Development of the worldwide web from these supercomputer networks gave distance education its most significant opportunity. The World Wide Web system allowed for a document to be accessed across any distance with different software, operational systems, and resolutions. In the 1990's, Universities began delivering web-based programs, and many of those evolved from the telecourses and teleconferencing programs already functioning. The Jones International University (JIU) became the first fully-accredited online university in 1995 (Pittman, 2013; Feasley & Bunker, 2013; Black, 2013).

Distance Education in Higher Education

In Fall 2013, the National Center for Education Statistics reported 20.4 million students enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the United States; of that total, approximately 2.8 million were taking at least one distance education course. Online education continues to grow at a rate that far exceeds the demand. (Hullsmann, 2004; Education Statistics, 2014). Researchers, Sahin, and Shelley (2008) and Wickersham and McGee (2008) determined that "student satisfaction ultimately leads to higher levels of motivation, engagement, learning, performance, and success" (Bolliger & Halupa, 2012). These are the guidelines that we use in terms of student success, satisfaction, and retention. According to Grzerda and Miller (2009), older students (more than 32 years of age) and women showed to have a secondary emerging factor of shortened times of completion. This information provides the basis for why students choose the online programs. Identifying the factors that contribute to student satisfaction, positive learning outcomes, and retention rates in online programs will provide information that will support the migration of programs at traditional universities towards the new platform of online delivery. Bolliger and Halupa's (2012) study results indicate that student satisfaction is considered when evaluating online courses and their effectiveness. An emerging theme of student satisfaction was

based on the instructor. Timely feedback and responses, helpfulness, supportiveness, and openness were some of the factors cited by the respondents (Bolliger & Halupa, 2012). These are mostly the same social foundations found in the face to face classrooms more broadly defined as efficacy.

Hurt's 2008 study, concludes that efficacy is not pointed at the instruction, but dependent upon the individual's work habits. The highest negative comments were drawn regarding feedback from assignments. The course delivered where the professor was the primary and direct contact received a grade of an "A"; courses that used assistants received a "B" for the professor and a "B- "for course design. (Nichols, 2011). This study concludes that the need for professor involvement is a critical component in creating online courses and improving student efficacy. Moreover, Warren and Holloman (2005) conducted a study with results indicating that online and traditional courses held the same efficacy values, and student satisfaction was a non-factor.

Nichols (2011) comparative analysis of the leadership course and professor evaluations between online and traditional instructional formats provides that a critical component in creating online courses is the need for professor involvement to improve student efficacy. Teacher immediacy, according to Rodriguez, Plax, and Kearney (1996), influences students affective learning, thereby effecting cognitive learning. A Deakin University study conducted by Palmer and Holt (2009) provides identification of some factors of student satisfaction. Of these factors, the lowest area items, in order of importance, a) ability to learn without face-to-face contact b) interacting online with other students and c) is completing online quizzes/tests. Furthermore, assignment feedback received the lowest scores from the 761 participants in the

31

study. However, further conclusions indicate that it is still a crucial influencer in the success of an online course overall.

"Jonassen, Reeves, and Mouer (1995) define the collaborative learning process "engage the learner and promote the learning necessary for present and future work preparation." Cox's 2008 study on the use of interactive peer to peer discussion boards in an online environment increases the development of a collaborative learning community. This skill resonates throughout future academic work.   Students have a developed ability of establishing rapport with peers and instructors. Webster and Hacklery (1997) find that instructors' attitudes correlate positively with student outcomes in technology-mediated distance learning.

Kirtman's 2009 comparative analysis of three online and traditional courses using a post-test only design of students enrolled in a public institution in the Southwest indicated no difference in the learning outcomes of students. Kirtman's (2009) research posed questions not yet considered such as study groups in online groups were not possible due to proximity, students in the traditional courses could rely on peer interaction to voice inquiries they had not yet formulated themselves, and overall the online courses were geared more towards the visual learner. Thus, indicative of a real correlation between the frameworks of the programs which influence the successful student learning outcomes.

In 2009, Meyer, Bruwelheide and Poulin, conducted a study to determine the contributing factors of the high rate of retention in an online certification program at Montana State University-Bozeman. They applied Tinto's Social and Academic Framework (1991), Bean and Metzner (1985) Non-traditional Student Attrition Theory and the Community of Inquiry Model developed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000).   They found that retention relied more upon the academic integration, rather than the social. The enrollment reasons of flexibility,

convenience, and job-related training were consistent. However, the determinants for retention in the program were reliant upon the quality of faculty, coursework, and personal reasons outside of the enrollment reasoning (Meyer et al., 2009).

According to Diaz and Cartnal (2006), the drop rates for the online versus the traditional sections do not conform to higher attrition in online courses. The delivery of the course does not seem to play a vital role in the attrition rates. Shorter-term lengths seemed to evoke a sense of urgency to complete the tasks, thus having lower dropout rates. This is seen in the traditional classes as well and maybe more impacting in an online course due to the lack of face-to-face contact. Time requirement is the most mentioned obstacle of students taking an online course (Flowers, 2001). This study suggests that shortening the term of the online course would in have a higher success rate and lower dropout rates. The data suggests that shorter-term length is related to a reduction of drop rates for students enrolled in online classes.

Distance Education Support Departments in Higher Education

As technology impacts the instructional development of faculty, many find their roles expanding. Instructors are re-structuring assessments, assignments, and activities, researching the technologies available to them and developing materials consistent with the face to face environment with little to no guidance. Traditional institutions develop internal systems with the capacity to supply the students and faculty with quality distance learning support (Baker, Aggarwal & Legon, 2003; Tait, 2003). However, there are apparent disconnects of what disciplined specializations are necessary for best functionality of the department. Berger and Mrozowskis (2001) comprehensive review of research from 1990-1999 found there was not a support department combination of technology and strategic teaching practices in online environment. The two areas remained separate but highly dependent upon one another's

effectiveness. Tait and Mills (2003) found a significant exclusion of faculty support for distance education outside of how to use the software and computers (Merkley, Bozik & Oakland, 1997).

According to Hoare (2001), virtual learning will not replace face-to-face entirely (Singh, 2002), and as its popularity contributes to the expansion of for-profit online programs in the United States and continues to rise, it challenges traditional universities to compete for the non-traditional student. Growth rates of nontraditional students at commuter colleges and universities have increased considerably over the last twenty years. Grzeda and Miller (2009) conducted a study based on an online MBA program, which indicated that flexibility is the most core criterion factor students have for selecting online programs. Additionally, older students (more than 32 years of age) and women showed to have a secondary emerging factor of shortened times of completion (Grzeda, & Miller, 2009). The successful learning outcomes of students enrolled in online programs are essential to the program's success, thus impacting the equity of the community in which the learner is located.

The organizational elements of these support departments are a mechanism comprised of more than one discipline and pragmatic, collaborative attributions that inform the instructors abilities in a virtual environment. Higher education of the 21st century is traveling at a warp speed. The implications of faculty preparedness to accommodate the new additions to their roles in academia rely upon the support departments. This department must be equipped to provide the support, in a language and at a level of interpretation, that is easily applied and learned. (Gillespie et al., 2010; Sorcinelli et al., 2006; Steinert et al., 2006) The knowledge base of the staff at these support departments must be familiar with the pedagogies and the technology best suited for achievement of the objectives of the course curriculum.

Evaluation of the instructor's experience with an online designated supportive department found both full-time and adjunct instructors expressed an alarming lack of or complete non-existence knowledge of instructional methods and collegial standards of the staff. The focus was more mechanical and based upon the technical aspects of the delivery systems. (Lei, 2010; Terosky & Heasley, 2015). This furthers the discourse of institutional support between the importance of maintaining the integrity of the profession and preparation for instructor development of skills required for the more technically challenging environment.

Leadership must avoid using new technology as the resolution to educational issues or as the supporting factors to create a distance education program, but as an implementation to achieve the desired results, otherwise there is no evidence of the need to support the change (Watkins et al., 2013; Eckel et al, 1999). Research-based Strategic planning is the only acceptable evidence to create successful change within the institutions (Watkins et al., 2013). Successful change requires a clear vision, need, and a commitment to a collaborative development process, which includes the stakeholders; however, it may still have a fragmented execution.

Organizational Structures

Interests, conflict, and power in organizational leadership is the key identifier of the philosophy representative of the group. Identifying the core navigational abilities in these areas guide the organization towards their goals. The organizational structures of higher education operate in a combination of Taylor's (1911) classical and scientific; Weber's (1947) bureaucratic; Fayol (1949) Gulick & Urwick (1937) and Mayo's (1933) human relation theoretically based management methodologies (Shockley-Zalabak, 2009; Morgan, 2006).

Intrinsically, defining organizations as political systems is a visualization of its comprehensive operating system of "rule." Henry Fayol's (1949) broad fourteen principles of management (Shockley-Zalabak, 2009; Kezar, 2001) establish a baseline to define these political systems. The most common organizational, political rule types are autocracy, bureaucracy, technocracy codetermination, representative democracy, and direct democracy. Each of these types defines a core set of values and belief systems, similar to how a political party creates its platform. The interests of the organization and type of system it most predominately operates under dictate the abilities of its members, leaders, and overall mission. It is these interests that serve as the baseline of how the organization approaches distribution of power and conflict management (Shockley-Zalabak, 2009; Morgan, 2006; Kezar, 2001).

Conflict is existent in all organizations. Leaders or groups of leaders determine how organizations deal with conflict and whether it is a collaborative or competitive environment. Pondy (1967) defined five types of conflict stages; the process is based on balance between individual and others needs and goals. Pondy's five stages are avoidance, competition, compromise, accommodation, and collaboration. Thomas (1992) states that orientation and predisposition of the conflict impact the strategy, thereby holding a level of gravity of probable outcomes. The degree of power contained determines the strategic plan that is implemented. However, the Hersey-Blanchard (1999) approach recognizes that the latitude of the workforce's abilities is determined by the technology and centralization or decentralization of the leadership (Shockley-Zalabak, 2009; Kezar, 2001).

Power is not only concentrated to management; according to Fayol (1949), Von Bertalanfly (1938), and Macgregor – Burns (1978), each member of an organization ultimately has some level of power, including individual power. Fayol's fourteen principles of management

provide a framework to assist in resolution of conflict. Kurt Lewin's Change Theory (1951) consists of a three-step model of unfreeze, freeze, and re-freeze applied to organizations in times of conflict or change. Leadership is most transparent during times of conflict or change, and a dominant style emerges (Shockley-Zalabak, 2009; Morgan, 2006). The sources represent the core of the organization operational functions. Gender roles are another consideration in leadership; strategic styles are specific to males and females. The stereotypes held by men and women are in flux and transition dependent upon the project, departmental relationships and any other external elements that may commonly carry generalized attitudes and behaviors. (Morgan, 2006). French and Raven (Shockley-Zalabak, 2009; Kezar, 2001) define five power types: legitimate, reward, coercive, referent, expert and connection. Through these five power types, we understand how abuse of power occurs. A leader's effectiveness in an organization relies upon the balance between power and conflict exerted.

Individuals within an organization will bring a full set of perspectives and expectations. The perspectives development, expansion, or deterioration are visible during the organization's evolution. An organization is reflective of its conflict management style and, ultimately, its leadership style, represented as a single cohesive unit. As a unit, its members or population make up the body which contains a brain. Metaphorically speaking, the brain configures a resolution process based upon historical experience and an ability to progress.

Dennis Gabor's (1948) development of holography enabled scientists to record information that stores an entire image in many parts. Karl Pribram, a neurologist from Stanford University, likened the function of the brain to a hologram based upon the Gabor (1948) holography development (Pribram, 2013). Scientists store full images and record information using holography. This metaphor of the holographic brain suggests that intelligence is distributed

throughout the brain with no central point of control. It is analogized as the blur in a photograph, while it seems to be out of focus it is a matter of readjusting the needs of the brain for accessing a specific area. Applying holography to an organization, Pribram (2013) finds memory is distributed throughout the brain; therefore, if damaged, can be recreated from the existing parts (Morgan, 2006). A holographic organization is when each worker has the responsibility and ability to work as a part of the whole. There is a balance that meets the demands of specialization and generalization. Work teams, units, and departments are compiled of specialized and generalized personnel. They take on challenges, develop efficient processes; work interchangeably in various roles; and effectively adapt as environmental changes occur (Morgan, 2006; (Pribram, 2013).

Simon and March (1955) examined parallels between human and organizational decision-making based upon the cognitive limits of rationality. Simon (1955) states that people tend to act on incomplete information about the possibilities and consequences. They conform to limited alternatives for any decision and are incapable of applying rationales aligned with outcomes. Simon concluded that "individuals and organizations settle for a bounded rationality of good enough decisions based on simple rules of thumb and limited research and information." His work concluded that organizations are "institutionalized brains" that compartmentalize in fragments, rely on routine, and stagnate the decision-making process to make more manageable (Morgan, 2006). This type of static conformation is not applicable to organizations reliant upon collaboration in a constant state of evolution.

Argyris, Schon (1991), and Senge (2004) provide another perspective of the structural framing of organizations, defining them as "learning organizations." The learning organization is one of inquiry before action, able to organize without supervision and assimilates to its

environment as it changes. Senge (2004) found that learning organizations "create new capacities through which organizations can extend their ability to create the future" (Morgan, 2006). The creative aspect allows for the adaptation to an evolving industry and aligns more with a new transformational leadership style of MacGregor-Burns (1978). Argyris and Schon's (1991) theory of single and double-loop learning that maintains a state of constant evaluation of its environment and roles to operate at its most effective capacity. This model effectively utilizes a modified cyclical method. Furthermore, organizational reflection guides are advised to assist in moving the group forward in their process.

Active learning is a part of the participation process of a learning organization (Nonaka &Takuchi, 1995). Learning organizations not only collect and process information but they "must embrace the creation of insight and knowledge" (Morgan,2006). The reinvention of learning organizations to stay competitive is necessary just as taking risks and removing boundaries (Prahalad et al., 2001). Applying the brain metaphor as an organization, using the decision- making approach modeled by Herbert, Simon, and March (1958), it becomes a component of the functionality of its distribution (Morgan,2006).

The philosophical promotion of continuous improvement in organizations dates back to the 13th century and was brought to the forefront of business through the work of Deming and Duran in the 1950's (Rokke et al., 2015; Morgan, 2006). The long-term success of the Total Quality Management (TQM) philosophy states that organizations must engage all members to participate in the improvement of processes, products, services, and the culture of their work environment. Blackburn and Rosen (1993) liken this paradigm to a collective communal effort that informs the entire organization through workshops, coaching, teams, innovation, and more.

The TQM philosophical paradigms provide a free-flowing dialogue that encourages the differences of opinions and inquiry to improve the effectiveness of the organization (Rokke et al., 2012).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study will utilize a qualitative research approach using an ethnographic design to examine the culture and structure of the organization with an applied theoretical framework of Organizational Identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2006). Through interviews, observation, artifacts, and documents, the researcher will collect the data and keep field notes throughout the process. The field notes will function as a part of the audit trail described by Guba and Lincoln (2005) in Creswell (2007). The audit trail is all of the documentation taken that supports the findings from the research. A structured outline, described by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011), recognizes the themes and develops a story based upon the analysis in a relaxed manner building the narrative inductively. As the themes evolve, the researcher will elaborate and reflect upon them through commentary to depict the situation. Using "thick description" (Geertz, 1973; Denzin, 1989), the rhetorical narrative will inject detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships as they are observed.

Wolcott (1994) defines three types of ethnographic writing techniques; description, analysis, and interpretation. The description of the organization's development will be revealed through a historic chronological order from the department's inception. The interviews provide various perspectives through the collection process, and the researcher will interpret the data using context from the experience (Wolcott, 1994).

Wolcott's techniques will be utilized by the researcher to support the discourse gathered from the data collected through interviews, observation, and documents.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide critical look at the historic foundations of a distance education support department and identify the unique organizational elements of the environment. The researcher will evaluate throughout the data collection process and identify the significant issues. Participants are chosen on their ability to illustrate the historical account of how the support department formed. There is a need to provide educators with a study that can build a knowledge base of the individual support department's culture (Herman, 1994). This type of approach will be used in the research dissertation to interpret an accurate account of the organization's formation. The data collection or fieldwork is the recognition of patterns, and ethnographic writing is the expression of those patterns (Goodall, 2000; Spindler & Spindler, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

Online programs have been on a steady rise for the past decade (Moloney & Oakley, 2010; Flowers & Baltzer, 2006). This increase of students deemed part-time or non-traditional created an opportunity for online universities. Therefore, traditional universities are formulating fully online programs supported and delivered through their respective campuses. The evolution of traditional education supports online delivery, using a methodology congruent with educational foundations, contributes to the success of the 21st-century student. Inevitably, a broad-spectrum topic of investigation for educational researchers has emerged (Singh, 2002; Selwyn & Facer, 2014). Examination of higher education organizational constructs that support these delivery methods and the students, staff, and faculty will serve as a best practice guide for

all institutions entering and immersed in the educational digital age. The contribution to the discipline and area of study will be used by future online educators using traditional university support.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study will focused upon the critical historic organizational development of the distance education department at a Hispanic serving institution of higher education in South Texas. The specific intentions are to a) examine the processes which led to the development of the distance education department; b) identify the frameworks for implementation and c) analyze the participants' perceptions of the department during and in the future. The following questions were addressed in this study:

1. What are the goals of internal distance education departments for the future as perceived by former and present actors and stakeholders within an internal distance education department?

2. What are the structural, organizational characteristics of a distance education department internally housed within an institution of higher education?

3. What are the benefits of an internal distance education department that functions under an academic umbrella as perceived by former and present actors and stakeholders within an internal distance education department?

4. How does an internal, academically based distance education department impact other support departments and divisions at Borderlands University?

5. How did the growth of distance education contribute to the creation of an internal academically based distance education department at Borderlands University?

These research questions will guide the researcher in development of interview protocols of the staff, faculty, and administrators about the development of an online academic technologically support department accommodating the needs of the 21st-century learner and their instructors. A best practices formula for development of an online academic support department at a Hispanic Serving Institution of Higher Education has not been formalized. This ethnography offers a resolve for institutions challenged with the development of a distance education support department that combines the critical elements of technology and academics while meeting the needs of faculty and students.

Methodology

An ethnographical approach will be used in this study. This approach provides significant human elements necessary for an in-depth analysis of an organization's frameworks. An interpretivist social constructivist lens will be applied using the qualitative research method data analysis and collection processes. Interviews from historic key stakeholders of the organization's formulation will serve educators with a deep understanding of issues the participants identify as significant. The most salient issues related to the development of the support department will emerge from the data through its collection and analysis (Lincoln, 1992; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Creswell, 2007; Wolcott,1994).

Ethnography

Ethnographic research reveals a distinct perspective of relationships from the participant point of view through data-driven discovery. Development of theories can be applied quantitatively to the broader representation of populations. Quantitative studies often stem from ethnographic research and offer more avenues of analysis to the survey researcher or case study theorist (Wilson & Chadaha, 2009; Pole & Morrison, 2003). The use of triangulation through a

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variety of data collection methods insures the accuracy, enhances the scope and depth, clarifies the constructs developed throughout the investigation, effectively contributing to the reduction of biases (Creswell, 2007; Zaharlick, 1992). Ethnography is multi-faceted, reflexive, and relational by its definition.

Organizational Ethnography

In the 1970's, organizational ethnography took a backseat to quantitative research methods used in behavioral sciences. Ethnographic research is used to examine organizations crossing a range of disciplines, including education, business, healthcare, and others. Organizational life based on the observable field research that communicates the participants' perspective is an example of ethnography. It is found in the Hawthorne effect theory established by Mayo's Hawthorne studies of the 1920's through the 1930's. Through use of verbatim interviews (Roethlisberer & Dickson, 1939; Gillespie et al., 2010), a shift towards human relations aspects within productivity and organizational structures was established. Usage of an informed realist-objectivist or constructivist-interpretivist approach, ethnographers, seek to reveal how things occur or what happened in any given organizational situation studied (Creswell, 1998). The ethnographer utilizing an ontological -realist approach can become an objective researcher and sense-maker of his findings. (Harris, 1968; Agar, 1996). This is a direct contrast to the bureaucratic theories of Max Weber (1937). Weber defined formal organizations, as well-structured machines with a series of hierarchal and procedural processes, much like the systems of education and government.

The saturation of quantitative inquiry for measuring organizational structures consists of tracking occurrences and behaviors through scientific survey statistics. Quantitative research methods neglect the human aspect, experience, and meaningful context. A resurgence in

qualitative methodology regarding an examination of organizations in their entirety began in the late 1970's and early 1980's. An increase of theories within the social sciences sparked the renewal in the qualitative system of inquiry across disciplines (Geertz, 1973; Rabinow & Sullivan, 1985, 2007). The empirical phenomenon research of Jon Van Maanen (2006) solidified organizational ethnography as a new design of the qualitative research method of inquiry. Theories developed through organizational ethnographic research within the fieldwork are fluid. They are tested and retested within the environment, making them resistant to the foundations of one theory. The information accumulated by the ethnographer is representative of all possible contextual meanings, as it is compiled and utilized in the collection process of fieldwork. Normatively speaking, in a longitudinal study, these theories can be tentative, filled with qualified details that have yet to be formulated into a more concrete conclusion (Van Maanen, 2006). Applying his type of ethnographic design to educational infrastructures is the most appropriate approach for this research.   Organizational ethnographic design provides insightful meaningful context necessary for a holistic view of the organic evolution of intra-departmental relationships.

An intricate method of research and more time consuming, ethnographic study is a massive undertaking for any researcher. However, the advantages and contributions to the field are robust in sociocultural information that cannot be determined through strictly quantitative data. The practice of learning through experience allows the ethnographer to develop practices and an informed understanding of organization. The researcher is cognizant of their strengths and recognizes personal biases that may come across in the written work through the experience. The ethical tenets embedded in ethnographic the process, hold the researcher to a standard not considered for a quantitative study. The research findings presented through organizational

ethnography are found in scholarly work of many facets, including but not limited to conference presentations, methods-focused books, and journals. The increased use of organizational ethnography as a research approach leads educational leaders to believe a surge in monographic specialist work citations will be the standard (Barley & Kunda, 1992; Orr, 1995). Various practices in organizational ethnography are focused to discover the "how" and ethical and social issues emerge through the data gathering process. The methodological challenges and analytical nature are represented through a thick, descriptive narrative (Neyland, 2007; Kostera, 2007; & Ybema et al.,2009). The complexity of organizational ethnography upholds a level of integrity. The researcher is to observe without introducing his presuppositions or applying his theoretical interpretations. He relies on the data and the process to develop organically without interference.

Organizational Ethnography in Higher Education

An increase of popularity of organizational ethnographic higher education research is attributed to the accessibility and the convenience of the approach (Sambrook et al., 2008; Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012). Foundations of organizational ethnography are a branch of critical ethnography from qualitative inquiry built through a combination of epistemology and social theory (Creswell, 2007; Anderson, 1989). Educational researchers embraced the qualitative methodological shift from quantitative inquiry. The interpretive movements from anthropology and sociology are more centered upon the actors within a specific cultural sharing group, resulting in more meaningful context relevant to the educational discourse (Anderson, 1989; Creswell, 2007; & Harris, 1968). Management efficiency and innovation ideas brandish a wealth of skepticism from higher education. There is a growing number of educational trends that are subjected to little scrutiny and are swiftly adopted into curriculum and pedagogies (Birnbaum, 2000; Kezar, 2001; Tierney, 1999).

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Through ethnographical observation of the organizations found in higher education, cultural interpretations of the relationships can be distinguished, and their trajectory understood (Emerson et al., 2011). The organization is the focus. Power dynamics relative to the impact of the organizations role within the institution are elaborated upon from an inside perspective. Observation of the everyday life (Cousin, 2009) of these social units (Erickson, 1984) gains insight into how the organizational cultures evolve (Kezar, 2014) and identifies the complexities of the formulation of relationships between and among the actors. Careers, education, employment, and interpersonal relationships within the home or workplace are new areas of critical ethnographical research as the approach provides an intimate perspective in a variety of capacities (Reed-Danahay, 2001). Organizational ethnography fosters the revelation of cultural spaces and relationships within higher education to be explored and examined, especially in those areas of conflict (Ellis, 2001). Sociocultural issues are an aspect of human relations which inform the communities and subcultures within an organization.

Cultural Implications of Organizational Ethnography

The fundamental concept of the workplace as a social environment is revealed through the study, known as the Hawthorne effect. Mayo concluded that there is social value in all industrial environments; a change in behavior occurs in response to observation and assessment (Mayo, 1933). Through organizational ethnography, the researcher examines the structural sociological frameworks within the organization using a scholarly lens. He can observe and document the phenomenon in a capacity of duality. Organizational ethnography in higher education exposes a multidimensional, intricate, descriptive narrative (Humphreys, 2005; Pelias, 2003; Jago, 2002; Haynes et al., 2006; Riad, 2007; Sparkes, 2007; Sambrook, 2010; Poulos, 2010; Sambrook et al., 2008; Medford, 2006; Ellis, 2007; Etherington, 2007; Rambo, 2007;

Duarte & Hodge, 2007; Scott, 2009; Sambrook, 2010; Krizek, 1998; Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012). The social realities are subjectively developed from the researcher's perspective, in different roles, as the observer, participant, and interpreter. Their reflections, social connections with the participants, their roles between and among the organizational phenomenon are discovered (Eisenhart & Howe, 1992; Kirk & Miller, 1986; Stake, 1988).

The three forms of ethical concern with organizational ethnography are the autonomy of the participants, the relationships of the participant to the ethnographer, and revealing of their identities. The combination of these three tenets are taken into consideration through the writing, reviewing, publishing, and examination of the study. As defined by Slattery and Rapp (2003), relational ethics is the intent of doing what is necessary to be "true to one's character and responsible for one's actions and their consequences on others." This satisfies the first of the three tenets of ethnographic research and its ethical parameters. The second tenet is best described by Flemmons and Green (2002) and their relationship with the researcher. It is known as "outing," defined in ethnography as a consorted decision. The decision to reveal himself implies his awareness of the impact upon the relationships and trust built among the participants. This type of vulnerable act opens the door for the researcher to be examined, not only by his written work but by the role he played in the research (Ellis, 2007). The third tenet is that of the revealing of their identity as Vickers (2007), a potential situation of harm to the researchers. Her autoethnography about bullying in the workplace had complexities that included psychological, physical, material and emotional which exemplifies the degrees of importance to be in alignment with the three tenets prescribed.

There are many approaches applied to the ethnographic identity reveal, based upon personal experience within the intricate designs of the methodology (Doloriert & Sambrook,

2012). The use of classified or confidential information that is not permitted to be published without a saturation of disguise is often seen in what is referred to as fictionalized, semi-fictionalization ethnography or simply "ethnography fiction-science" (Watson, 2000; Humphreys & Watson, 2009). These approaches found in the work of Doloriert and Sambrook (2012) Sparkes (2007) and Watson (1994) unveiled it was a necessity to protect the researcher and his participants by masking their identities in some form or fashion. Another approach that cannot allow for fictionalization in ethnographic research is defined as mindful slippage, which in essence garners the ability for the researcher to abridge or modify the human (personal reality) experience when the truthfulness of the circumstance remands it is necessary (Medford, 2006).

Participants

Participants for this research will consist of administration, staff, and faculty of the institution that were involved in the development of distance education. The chronological period will be from the onset of the department's infancy to its final form. The researcher predicts this to be approximately five to six people that are still working at the institution as it is known now, Borderlands University and those that are no longer at the institution. Two sampling strategies will be used. Purposive sampling (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Which is selected by the researcher of persons directly related to the topic will be the first one implemented. The sampling strategy defined by Creswell (2007) as the snowball strategy, incorporates one participant providing names of others who will contribute to the study and meet the criteria defined by the researcher will be used (Gay et al., 2009; Creswell, 2007) as the researcher continues through the collection process. They will be male and female ranging in age from 24 years of age and older. Using a variety of participants that were active at various intervals throughout the growth of the support department will provide a wealth of perspectives

to contribute to a robust analysis.

Researcher's Role

The researcher will take on the role of interviewer, observer, and analyst. An interpretivist social constructivist lens will be applied to the interviews gathered from the actors. The data collection framework will be organized into themes of analysis and a systematic sorting and re-sorting done to identify patterns and relationships (Creswell, 2007; Goodall, 2000). The researcher applies a hermeneutic view or an intention of finding the meanings behind the words, using sociocultural context to inform the evaluation of the data collected. Using a constructivist – interpretivist approach, ethnographic design research seeks to discover the "how" and "what" of organizational situations, recognizing the behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture sharing group (Harris, 1968; Agar, 1996).

Instruments

The data collection will primarily be conducted through interviews, conducted in order to obtain "particular information from one's subjects" (Wolcott, 1994; Creswell, 2007). These will be videotaped at the Borderlands University for those participants located in that area. For the non-local participants, an alternate method will be used to document an audiovisual interview. The use of the web conferencing tool Zoom will be the preferred tool for the off-site interviews. All other documents of significance will be acquired from the appropriate entities.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection procedure will include pre-protocols defined by the institution and the qualitative research methodology. The pre-checklist is as follows:

- Apply and obtain Internal Review Board approval from the Borderlands University

- Obtain permission from "gatekeepers" of research site from the Borderlands University

- Develop protocol for data collection based upon ethical standards of qualitative inquiry

- Develop an interview guide for interviews of individuals and groups

    o Specific questions for the interviewees derived from the research questions

    o Create email and formal letter permission requests for participants

    o Consent forms

    o Conduct a pre-test of the interview questions and create some follow questions

    o Ensure questions are probing

- Gather equipment necessary

    o tape or digital audio-recorder, video recorder, notebook for field-notes, another for keeping track of decision making along the way to maintain an audit trail

- Obtain NVivo software for analysis

- Locate volunteers for assistance with lighting, transcription, and refreshments

- Budget for services outside of the research such as

    o Transcription

    o Refreshments

- Schedule interviews

Upon completion of the protocol pre-checklist, interviews will be conducted in a systematic method. Use of a field notebook with two columns in order to separate observations during the interviews and any notes that may lead to follow up questions during the process. After each interview, the researcher will prepare a summation and select critical elements of relevance to revise the next set of interview questions based upon the former for more robust findings. Each interview will contain a transcription and recording. These will be housed at the Borderlands University when not in direct possession of the researcher throughout the collection process and

immediately upon completion of the dissertation will become intellectual property housed at the

Borderlands University accessible by the researcher and institution gatekeepers.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data will be analyzed using the defined process of ethnographic approaches in a

qualitative methodology. Through interviews, observation, artifacts, and documents, the

researcher will collect the data and keep field notes throughout the process. This will create the

audit trail described by Guba and Lincoln (1988) in Creswell (1998). All of the supporting

documentation taken from the research will be thoroughly examined. The dynamic themes will

provide the framework for the narrative based upon the analysis (Emerson et al., 2011). Using

"thick description" (Geertz, 1973; Denzin, 1989; Fraenkel et al., 2014), the rhetorical narrative

will inject detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships as they are observed. As

the themes evolve, the researcher will elaborate and reflect upon them through commentary to

depict the situation. Applications of dependability and confirmability; triangulation and member

check; credibility and transferability will be applied throughout the data collection and analysis

to ensure the integrity of the researcher and the findings presented.

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability, as defined by Guba (1981) within the constructs of a

postpositivist approach, are preferred to confirmability and dependability, respectively.

Reliability is generally established by replication using the same instrument to different subjects

more than twice and obtaining similar results (Lincoln & Guba, 1988; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Confirmability is applying an objectivity that accounts for the researchers own bias or theoretical

influences. A critical approach will be taken to ensure that there is a balance of dependability and

confirmability reflected in the narrative. Through use of verbatim quotes, a detailed account of

all aspects of the process and observations of the researcher will be used to contribute to the dependability and confirmability of the findings. A detailed procedural account and reflective notation of the experience, along with any biases that may influence the work will be noted as an assurance of validity and reliability (Creswell, 2007; Kirk & Miller, 1986; Eisenhart & Howe, 1992).

Triangulation

The use of triangulation through a variety of data collection methods insures the accuracy, enhances the scope and depth, clarifies the constructs developed throughout the investigation, effectively contributing to the reduction of biases (Creswell, 2007; Zaharlick, 1992; Wolcott, 1988). Triangulation is the technique of using more than one method of data collection within a study to give more credibility to the results. The results are more credible if through interviews and observations produce similar discoveries. There is no definitive methodological technique for establishing the absolute truth of any research findings. However, some techniques and procedures protect the integrity of the research. This interpretivist social constructivist researcher will use triangulation, member check, consent forms, Internal Review Board approval, and safeguarding of the data techniques (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Gay, et al., 2009) to collection and analysis as a method of ensuring its integrity.

Triangulation is applied through the use of multiple methods and theoretical constructs (Guba, 1990, p. 23), which add rigor and depth to a qualitative study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 4). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that the term 'triangulation' derived from radio triangulation, in which multiple reception points determine the origin of the radio signal. Denzin (1978) defined four types of triangulation; sources, techniques, theories and multiple investigators. This is another way of ensuring dependability and confirmability of the research by

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allowing the participants an opportunity to view notes or interview transcriptions in order to respond to anything not represented and revise it (Creswell, 1998). It is another facet of replication inherent to the process.

This study applies three of the four types: sources (administrators, instructors and staff), techniques (observation and interviews; video interviews) and theories (a review of literature in related areas). The fourth mode (variety of perspectives) was not included. Lincoln and Guba (1985) took issue with the concept of triangulation, including the use of theories.

Reliability

The researcher ensures reliability through familiarity with the culture provided in a biographical sketch, field notes, use of the qualitative research methods to conduct an ethnography, debriefings at conclusion of interview data collection, feedback from committee and peers, a reflective journal and reviewing literature examining similar cultures (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Guba and Lincoln (2005) assert that the reliability of the researcher is of highest importance and subjected to scrutiny if not in compliance.

Transferability

This ethnographic study is aware of the transferability of the organization examined replication, due to environment or population size. However, the use of thick description (Geertz, 1973; Guba & Lincoln, 2005) and detailed information, commonly found common in social, behavioral science research, will provide a level of transferability to the discipline it is directed toward. Distance education is continuously moving, therefore, defining any static issues that can be supported through research is progressive.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the population of one institution in South Texas. Therefore, implications of the research findings at this university may not be specifically applicable to all institutions of higher education. The use of qualitative ethnography as a methodology for research is subjective to the limitations of this approach. A key limitation of this qualitative study lies within the logistics of obtaining the interviews. Due to the impact of COVID-19 and restrictions mandated by local, state, and federal governing bodies in the United States at the time they were conducted, the researcher was not able to conduct these interviews in a face to face environment. This limits the study to the non-verbal communication observed via video and audio transmission only which impacts the natural setting preference defined by Creswell (2007).

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter will present the results of qualitative data obtained through interviews from administration, staff and faculty. The purpose of this study was to provide a critical look at the organizational foundations of a distance education support department and identify the necessary elements for success in the virtual educational environment. The researcher evaluated the data and identified the significant themes and relationships between the actors. Participants were chosen on their ability to illustrate a historical account of how the support department formed over time and provide insights regarding the sociocultural development. There were three categories which guided the research questions asked by the interviewer: developmental constructs, cultural influences and participant perceptions of the future of distance education support departments housed under an academic umbrella. The research questions used to guide this study were:

1. What are the goals of internal distance education departments for the future as perceived by former and present actors and stakeholders within an internal distance education department?

2. What are the structural, organizational characteristics of a distance education department internally housed within an institution of higher education?

3.What are the benefits of an internal distance education department that functions under an academic umbrella as perceived by former and present actors and stakeholders within an internal distance education department?

4. How does an internal, academically based distance education department impact other support departments and divisions at Borderlands University?

5. How did the growth of distance education contribute to the creation of an internal academically based distance education department at Borderlands University?

This chapter reports the findings of the data analysis for this study, which examined the organizational development of a distance education support department through a reflective, historical, ethnographic lens. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides a general description of the participants. The second is an examination of the data analysis process, including the emergent codes and categories. An overall summary of the findings is then discussed to conclude this chapter.

Study Participants

This section describes the nine participants. It is based on analysis of the transcripts, audio and video of the interviews and field notes taken on their responses to the research questions. The following participant descriptions capture the general backgrounds of their professional journeys. Participant profiles were developed through analysis of audio transcripts, video and field notes gathered from their narrative stories. There were various participants' backgrounds that were found to have similarities and parallels.

Participant A

Her work in higher education has been vast and played a pivotal role in the expansion to fully online programs for the graduate college. A former Executive Vice Provost that oversaw the Distance Education and Continuing Education for Borderlands University.

Participant B

A former university president, he was instrumental in supporting the development of online education. His constant support provided the platform for the success of the distance education support department.

Participant C

She played a key role in the development and first full iteration of the distance education support department and maintained a strong voice of its direction throughout her tenure. Her voice during pivotal moments of transition allowed for the distance education support department to continue to be housed under an academic umbrella.

Participant D

A tenured professor at the university in the College of Education. He was a champion of distance education and the technology that brings the institution into the 21st century while fostering a community of learning between and among modalities.

Participants E

He was an originating staff member with a business background within the distance education support department.

Participant F

She was an originating staff member of the distance education support department and holds a dual role as an adjunct professor of graphic design and full-time staff for the distance education support department.

Participant G

An originating staff member and a former director of the distance education support department.

Participant H

An originating staff member and systems manager of the distance education support department.

Participant I

An originating staff member and instructional designer at the distance education support department.

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Data Analysis

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The data analysis process was a combination of the audit trail described by Guba and Lincoln (1988) in Creswell (1998) and Saldana (2012) qualitative data analysis. The initial broad categories determined from the interview questions provided the framework for the narrative based analysis (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). The next step of this process was reducing data into themes and categories, more specifically using Saldana's (2012) method of analyzing and making thematic connections. Using "thick description" (Geertz, 1973; Denzin, 1989; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009), detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships were inserted as observed.

Data Collection

It must be noted that these interviews were conducted during a time in history that was different than any other seen before in the world. The COVID-19 Global Pandemic impacted schools across the world and face to face teaching was halted for more than 18 months. Distance education had come to the forefront in all levels of education in the United States by March of 2020 and institutions across the globe shifted all their classes to a virtual or remote environment. At the time of these interviews, there was no clear path of how educators were to proceed given the need for mask wearing and social distancing. A quick fix form of distance learning emerged and was deemed "remote learning". When the country went into this new education model for teaching and learning there was not a path of how education would look moving forward. The impact upon the population was drastic; businesses were closed, limitations on number of persons allowed in a grocery store imposed and all non-essential workers were effectively without a job. The recovery is still in progress at this time and most schools are not fully open, but working on a reduced seating or limited class space model.   Many schools went to a reduced seating model and at this time, the hope is that schools can return to 50% capacity on campus by Fall 2021.

The data collection process was aligned with the qualitative, narrative methodology. Semi-structured interviews were used to uncover the participants' stories related to the research. questions. During the process, both audio\video files of the interviews were kept in either a password-secured site or in a locked space. All interviews were conducted using password protected Zoom software and upon rendering each file was downloaded to the researcher personal computer and housed on an encrypted USB drive. The next step is to reduce the data into themes.

Reduction of Data

Data reduction began with basic review of the transcriptions for accuracy and then uploaded to the NVIVO qualitative computerized assisted data analysis software. This software license was purchased by the researcher and is also password protected to avoid any possibilities of compromise. First coding was done using the auto code option, this yielded more than 109 themes based upon synonymous words and phrases. The researcher began hand coding the interviews for clarity and narrowing of the codes and categories. This process involved a meticulous method of color coding for the following themes: organization, culture and growth of distance education support departments.

Utilizing the broad themes proved effective for the researcher to identify categories and subcategories reviewed in context of the interview questions and flow of conversation. The researcher reduced the data into categories. Using field notes, transcription, theme color coding, labeling and context from the interview questions, the data revealed eight emergent categories from the themes. From those categories the data was then entered into the NVIVO software to run queries of frequency and comparison among the participants responses. Extraction of direct quotes to provide depth to the narrative descriptions of the themes and categories completed the process to assemble the narrative and summations. Three themes that emerged were the historic development of the organization, cultural perceptions and perceptions for future growth in distance education including two emergent categories from each.

Theme One: Historic Development of the Organization

The researcher's list of interview questions included the following: *Interview question five What were some of the initial reactions for bringing fully online courses and programs to thisHispanic Serving Institution? Describe the approach administration chose to take regarding*

growth? Was this the best route? Why or why not?

The responses from the participants provided a historical perspective of the structural and internal development of the organization. These two subcategories delivered the mapping of how the organization began from the actors involved throughout the process. These two categories may seem similar however, they are very different. The administration and stakeholders were the constructors of the field. The staff functioned as the players for the internal team. The distinction between these two categories was very clear throughout all of the interviews. Nearly all the participants provided the similar key terms to distinguish between the two categories of development of the organization.

Category One: Historic Structural Development

Interview question three was How did you envision the Distance Learning Departments growth at this Hispanic Serving Institution? What were some initial concerns? The infrastructure or structural development of the distance education support department as noted by participants at all levels of involvement looked to have a determined ideal of where and how this department would exist within the institution. The physical location, designation within the organizational hierarchy and its primary role at the institution were all key factors noted by the participants. The late 1980's aligned with the South Texas Border Initiative of 1989, which afforded GSU more opportunities to receive a variety of grants (Flack, 2003; Ortegon, 2013; Duarte, 2016). Parameters of one of these grants included experimenting with using technology developed by computer scientist to teach computer science and extend the use of the LMS to all disciplines on campus. Reflecting back to the beginnings of this support department, Participant B recalled, "I know that with Distance Education, I want to say it was like 1988 or '89 before that first grant was received. That's I mean, when we were really going into like a Web CT." The WebCT was

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installed on a separate server, and the space held a dual role; Dr. C's office and The Distance

Learning and Teaching Center "(Chauvin, 2017). The organizational model was based on the

structure and successful functioning of the Computing Research Lab as well as the Service

Planning group at IBM. Capturing the best practices in each group as evidenced by successful

deliverables, and mating this with a service model the PI had seen growing up, the CDLT model

evolved into a service unit within academic affairs. Through mutual respect and open and honest

dialogue and collaboration, CDLT was able to adapt to the quickly evolving technology, service

the academic community and response to the academic communities needs that would not have

worked had it fallen into one of the two IT organizations that existed on the campus at the time -

one for academic affairs business processes and the other for business-oriented business process

(HR, financial aid, etc.) (Chauvin, 2017).

> BSU was a founding member of Hispanic Educational Technology Services, a
>
> consortium of Hispanic Serving Institutions (originally 9, now 40+). The goal was to
>
> expand the capacity of the institutions to provide and receive programming via interactive
>
> satellite. HETS received a million-dollar award to install facilities on each of nine
>
> campuses to support this effort. The classrooms and telecommunications infrastructure
>
> were installed in the 93-94 timeframe (Chauvin, 2017).

This growth across the institution was not specific to only distance education, but really

gave flight to many structures as noted by Participant B, "a lot of stuff at the vice president level,

that all had to do with student affairs and building those, for lack of a better word, all those

student affairs and student services structures, because I guess they weren't in the institution yet

or they were just coming in like different counseling services and things like this. "

Between 1996 and 2001, over 2 million dollars in additional funding was acquired to support the growth of the lab. The growth was spurred in part, by the emergence of the Tele-Campus and BSU's role in developing courses for the first three system wide initiatives: an online MBA, an online Master's in Kinesiology, and the first two-year core courses. BSU developed two and four courses in the programs respectively. Numerous conferences and meetings brought individuals engaged in online learning together from across the University System and the state. Simultaneously, there was a growing interest in online distance learning (Chauvin, 2017). The administration actively, "worked on developing several initiatives and programs and projects and we've applied for grants federal grants that helped us to do a lot of things, the distance learning effort was primarily housed in the College of Education, and it was, it was almost like an individual effort" (Participant C). The College of Education's physical space already had a dedicated technical staff and there were faculty that were seeking out help in that space. "The FIPSE initiative that provided significant funding (up to $2M for 5years) to collaborative initiatives to expand the breadth and depth in online learning environments. The HETS Director and the Director of BSU's CDLT served as PIs of a grant submitted on behalf of the HETS Consortium. HETS was awarded one of a few five-year awards" (Chauvin, 2017).

Participant C continued, "faculty who were interested and enjoyed that kind of work we're doing it on their own. We had excellent technicians who were helping with the technology involved in distance learning. The primary housing, if you will, for the distance learning would be in the College of Education, because they were there, there was a staff there. There were technicians and there were faculty who were already ahead of the game."

Funds were used to hire students who could work independently, were curious and who provided outstanding customer service: each knew what they had to do, when it was due, and

had to have a project of their own to work on that pushed them outside of their existing knowledge (and often comfort) bounds. from 1994 to 2001, no one was let go. However, students who wanted or needed close supervision usually quickly self-identified and left because they were uncomfortable in the relatively self-directed work environment (Chauvin, 2017). With the location designated in a former mathematics lab, Participant F recalled, "they had those little proctoring rooms like where the lab attendants would look through the windows." The management of the LMS had always been within the same physical space of the department. The next and final move for the distance education support department would enlist the staff moving the server over a weekend.

Participant F remarked about the move**, "**I remember some of the help desk guys and the kids, which I shouldn't call the kids. But the guys like the bigger guys and all these other guys they helped move everything like, I don't know if they did it over a weekend to like bring down the server. They moved everything over to the new building into where we had the server room in our office. That's where the servers were And I remember because It had to be kept so cold. Cold air would come underneath through the doors because they weren't insulated, probably or like sealed properly. And, so if you sat in that area near the door, you would freeze to death. Yeah, you always have to have like a jacket or a sweater or something. That was in 2006."

This move would prove significant to the impact upon the institutional initiatives to expand its reach through distance education. "As evidence was the grant from Fund for Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) initiative that provided significant funding (up to \$2M for 5years) to collaborative initiatives to expand the breadth and depth in online learning environments. The HETS Director and the Director of BSU's CDLT served as PIs of a grant submitted on behalf of the HETS Consortium. HETS was awarded one of a few five-year

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awards" (Chauvin, 2017). A deeper dive into the approach by administration was further confirmed by Participant A. "I view it as responding to the needs of the students and the faculty. I think as technology changed. We wanted to have the top technology, we could as support for it (the distance education support department), so that was, you know, that was all critical, but that was from the very beginning, the commitment to provide that support to everyone that was interacting with it."

The role of the department and the population it served strongly determined its placement within the organizational chart of the institution. The strategic plan for CDLT was developed with input from stakeholders across campus, but most particularly those in academic affairs. It was to remain an academic affairs center for all of campus, arising from the faculty. The funding was not allocated and then the center build, rather that other way around. The faculty received funding to address their needs and interests and the center evolved, driven by the faculty actions (Chauvin, 2017).

Participants recalled that the decision to place the department under the organizational hierarchy of Academic Affairs was done with purposeful intention. Participant A continued, "to me, it was only thing that made sense. You know, only thing that made sense was to have CDLT be the integral piece to that. You know, there was talk about moving into it at various times. It didn't make any sense. They had to maintain the connection with the faculty and the students and the, the technology in a way that if it were isolated from the faculty, in particular from the faculty, it would be much more difficult to get faculty buy in; to get faculty to interact with it. So, the decision to maintain it as independent unit within academic affairs. That was what was so critical to not lose sight of the critical piece of providing education within the curriculum to the students.

"Prior to 1994, a few faculty members were involved in integrating technology into their teaching to improve outcomes as well as serve a broader audience through distance learning" (Chauvin, 2017). Collaboration of faculty across disciplines, quality of the curriculum and the commitment of the Provost to enhance the efforts of developing courses for online delivery further supported housing the department under Academic Affairs.

Participant C said, "we did not have professional faculty with those kinds of that kind of background, especially in in the development of curriculum for distance learning. Mm hmm, so as part of the focus on, on, curriculum development, we began to be concerned about the quality of the distance learning efforts and there were faculty in other departments, for example, in the College of Business. There were some even in science. I remember some of them chemical engineering department and others were also wanting to develop that kind of thing. So, the provost and I after discussions and after examining and doing our research in terms of discerning it. The Provost decided that we would enhance the efforts and make it a total University effort. The faculty in the College of Education had also established relationships with faculty in other colleges and in other departments. And so that's how the word spreads and they begin to build good relationships. So, there was a level of respect for each other. And that allowed the expansion of to say probably a level of trust. We have some good relationships. But we, but when we started, we were not only after quantity we were after quality as well."

Participant I added, "we're (distance education department) part of Academic Affairs because we do it where it's not just about technology. It's educational technology and what we do goes into pedagogy, right? In our blue printing processes, we help them(faculty) develop their curriculum maps. We help them set up their program goals, set up the matrix for their courses."

The structural placement, both physical and within the organizational chart of the

institution were critical to becoming a sustainable and an essential department at Borderlands University.

Category Two: Historic Internal Organization Development.

The internal historic development of this organization was a notable category for this research. The department is composed of two primary components; technology and academic which meld together as educational technology.   Delivering distance educational resources for the purpose of providing faculty with the tools to ensure student success was the primary focus of this department. Therefore, it required a staff that held those same values and overall mission. "The goal of the lab was to provide an environment where students employees provided high quality deliverables in a timely fashion in conjunction with faculty that were interested in investigating how technology might provide a richer learning experience" (Chauvin, 2017). This united front of dedication to the greater goals of the department for the success of the students attending the institution would serve as a foundation for the internal development of the organizational mindset.

Participant A said, "I think that it (distance education support department) really has a mandate to provide the best support for the faculty, the best support for curriculum design as well as the best support for the students taking the courses. And so, the idea of providing the absolute highest quality of online experience for the students and the faculty has to be both ways. You know, was absolutely critical. So, we worked with them (distance education support department) to put in place, you know, different, different support for them (the department). Whether it be Quality Matters to look at the to look at the coursework and how they're delivered, whether it be looking at setting up a very robust blueprint. Program, which was critical for the online but also critical for any program moving online to look at that. So, I think that having a

very strong organization was critical for success. And, you know, not only for the design of the curriculum, but also for the interaction of the students."

Participant G added to that sentiment, stating, "yes, it also requires a lot of communication and a lot of awareness or educating all the stakeholders about not just the, the, the value that our unit would bring up but the details around that. So, you have the ability to look at things from different angles and different perspectives and not just from the personal point of view, but also from the disciplinary point of view disciplinary points from the discipline point of view, I guess that's one way to put it. The one thing that I think, even though there were different backgrounds that came together in that in that unit or in that team, it was that everybody was not just committed, but they had a genuine interest to not just make a difference for students. I know it sounds cliché and all that everybody had it, but also an interest to be committed to make a difference. In the context of education in the context of teaching and in the context of learning. We had the technical team members Rob and Carl come to mind very technical savvy. But they at least were interested enough to understand a little bit better, the instructional design side of things so that they could then make the connection on how their contributions their work. I think of our unit and how we were able to accomplish so many things because we were structure right and we were organized properly."

"From 1994 through 1997, additional funding was acquired to support the infrastructure: hardware, software, and people. The space allocated to the Education faculty was reallocated to this new initiative and the center gained a presence. Initial staffing was drawn from the BSU undergraduate and graduate student population" (Chauvin, 2017). There was a unified effort from the internal staff that served as a motivation to provide quality services to the students and faculty. They persisted in making the distance education department a core element of the

institution. The external standards for developing quality courses, Quality Matters, was brought in as a metric the staff could apply to their burgeoning design and development practices.

Participant E said, from 2013 to 2015 we were trying to get our foothold in design quality and that, that means changing a culture, a change internally. We have to have a kind of understanding of what Quality Matters is and how that actually looks like and feels like because there are four or five ID's (instructional designers) and everybody has their own idea what a quality online course entail. Including what type of learning activities would best fit certain situations and all that takes a collection of minds to iron that out. Including having to do other workloads. So that's one shift internally, where we're at now. I feel like everybody has a better idea of what Quality Matters is so on a snap of a finger or a turn of a dime, we're able to make quick decisions to have a course meet QM (standards).

 The distance education support staff was able to see how their contribution was of value to the faculty and students. They recognized that each college and academic department had different needs and accommodated to those specific needs. When assigned to work with various colleges and disciplines, they make shifts and pivots to accommodate the faculty they are serving.

Participant E says, "what's great about that is we can provide support. The downside is some colleges or some departments require more support than others. That is just because faculty are subject matter experts. Some of them are very in tune with their discipline, but then others have no background in teaching. So, if you were to give be given college of education. They have a mindset of Curriculum writing design, maybe not technical support so you'll be providing more technical support. But if you're given College of Science and math and you get mathematicians. They're gonna be fighting you the entire way, because they're more focused on the technology."

The ability to recognize their role was important in the department establishing its place within the grand scheme of the goals of the institution. The next theme would provide the more insight into how the culture of the community and workplace would refine the department's ability to support the institution.

Theme Two: Cultural Perceptions

The cultural perception of the Distance Education Support Department at Borderlands University was the second theme which emerged. The researcher specifically inquired about the community and internal cultural facets relative to distance education at Borderlands University. The researcher asked specifically about the community of the regional culture as well as the institutional, internal culture of Borderlands University. The thematic results of these inquires brought about the emergence of the following two categories of the culture or the regional population and the internal culture of the organization, providing a macro and micro level of observable perspectives.

Category One: Culture of the Regional Population

Question six asked**,** What role, in your opinion, did the Hispanic culture of the community play into the development of this departmental organization? The perceptions of the culture of the regional community of the population included the demographic which the institution serves and its geographic location. As a Hispanic Serving Institution of Higher Education (HIS), the Borderlands University recognized the value of its unique location as an opportunity to contribute to the success of the student population it served.

Participant G stated, in the context of a Hispanic Serving Institution, "I saw this as an opportunity to empower the student population and specifically the student population You know, all of those things had a tremendous impact on the student population, more so than the

Hispanic Serving Institutions population because, and I know I may be preaching to the choir here, but a lot of our students were commuter students. Or, what we used to call non-traditional, although, I my, my point of view is now it's the new traditional student. They have another set of responsibilities, aside from their academic responsibilities, whether it is they have a full-time job or they have responsibilities with the family. So, all of those characteristics through distance education and, and the role that our unit would serve at that institution, I think it empowers those students to still have access to education, to still being able to leverage educational resources. And yes, closes that digital divide."

Participant D said, "the region itself was a little behind, but it had nothing to do with the students. You know I frankly think that we had a lot of underserved students right within the 70-mile radius here and there were underserved because the institutions faculty would not do a typical scheduling for face to face courses, like Saturdays. So not only do we serve. the further regions, but I think what we noticed was that and they would, they would flock to our programs.

There were some reservations or concerns about the ability of the students to be able to participate in the programs due to economic or locale situations, such as lack of internet connections. Another added concern was if the students would take advantage of the new opportunities or continue with the traditional modality of higher education.

Participant C commented, "well, some of the reservations was whether our student population would avail themselves of those opportunities. Because of their own, lack of resources, lack of background, preparation, if you will, to actually be successful at online. Distance Learning classes were opposed because one of the things we found was that, given our student population, face to face, one to one instruction was the most powerful way of learning for them. There was a great deal of reassurance of having a faculty member in front of them and

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being able to visit with them and to communicate more effectively that way. And so, we were we were concerned that through distance learning that possibility wouldn't be there and so that they might not be as successful with that type of work."

The priority of administrators, faculty and staff regarding distance education in the region was always a focus. Participants were eager to share their thoughts about the approach that was taken when introducing distance education to the community and the existent culture of inclusivity. Participant A noted, "you know, it was very important to me to improve higher education in this region. I think it's just a remarkable, you know, the level and quality of higher education in the valley. Now, especially compared to, you know, 30 years ago 25 years ago. The culture of the valley being very inclusive. I think as long as you approach any redesign of curriculum or organizational structure or whatever it is you have, from an inclusive stand standpoint, you have to have buy in. From the faculty, from the administration, certainly from the students; you have to understand this is something that students want and see the benefit from. You know, we had to make sure that we had, you know, had the strong enough organization to support that. We didn't want to lose touch of the personal relationship with the faculty. That was also very important to us. I think that, you know, if you look at Hispanic culture personal relationships are critical. And I think students are more engaged when they feel like they have a relationship with their faculty.

Participant B remarked, "I hate to use the term the Hispanic culture because I like to call it the valley culture, just because I feel like it's a very unique pocket as, as opposed to these places further north that are not as impacted as, as we are in the valley, by that border". The international border was represented by the participants as another side of the culture and students the institution serves. Participants C and F recalled, professors conducted exchanges

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with a higher education institution located in Mexico using the WEBCT technology to collaborate with other professors.

Category: Internal Culture of the Organization.

The internal culture within the organization is one that represents the culture of the region. Participants noted that the staff employed at the distance education support department at Borderlands University is diverse in many facets. They noted that within this combined department of technology and academia there were some sound characteristics of the distance education support department at Borderlands University. One being the technology.

Participant I said, "nothing against instructional tech. I mean it. I mean, so, but I but um so I don't know. It just, I feel it's, if you take a look at who's in our roles and I think you would agree too right? If you're going to be in this position, you have to be not be afraid of technology like, if you're going to break it or something like that."

The close proximity within the department between the instructional designers, help desk and learning management system staff allow for easy access and informal communication to occur somewhat organically. Participant H says," it goes back to like the one stop shop and you know, say somebody comes in for technical help, the faculty member, it could be faculty, it's not always the students, the faculty can come into our office and say I need you to recognize this technology is not working. Then, oh, but I also want to speak with my ID here about how to utilize it in my course, we're all there together. So, it's all, it's all in our department. And I think that's like one of the big, I guess, positives of our in our department setup. It is just actually structured, so that we have a little bit more direct communication, you know, with our IDs. Instead of having to go through other hoops to do things and this and that. So just having everything like unified in one area is one of the big pluses of our department."

There is an authentic exchange and appreciation found within the culture of this department that is grounded in the mission for the workplace. Participants expressed a real sense of compassion from within their team and externally towards the administration. Participant I said, "the willingness for the department to, like, hey, you're interested gamification. Okay, you can take these trainings. Hey, you're interested in Photoshop or like different things like they they're (administration) willing to invest in you to develop your skills and that's nice. "

Participant F said, "so genuinely the open mindedness and the fact that we all have the same goal, which is to serve our students. so that allowed us to say, yes I may not agree with you, but I will figure it out type of scenario. And I mean that's not to say that we're perfect and we haven't had problems. But like any dysfunction, you know, any family has a squabble here and there. One time I remember we were all at the Help Desk side or the programmer side were arguing with the designer side literally over the template, so it was back and forth, back and forth to the point where people were sick and tired of each other. Later on, we had trainings and someone, and by someone, I mean, a faculty member said something about one person in our group. Yeah, insulting and everyone turned, like, how dare you? you know, it was like we can bicker amongst each other but, don't you dare. We bicker amongst each other when it's needed, because we're trying to get the best product possible to the students, not because we're stubborn and we just want our way. "

Providing just in time services or one stop shop modelling was a built-in constitution to this internal culture of the organization. Participant G expressed, "I think there is a phrase that just in time service that is a phrase that it gets used quite often. But it has a lot of meaning and a lot of weight and a lot of it makes a tremendous difference. So, by us having those three teams together under one umbrella, we were able to provide that Justin time Support your team time

help all of those things that make a difference, not just from the faculty point of view, but also from the student's point of view so that if there was a technical issue or if there was an issue we had the opportunity that within the team to figure out whether it was an instructional issue or a technical issue or maybe was a process issue. And because we had the ability to manipulate or to manage each one of those things under the one umbrella, we were able to adjust accordingly and make those adjustments that just in time, make a difference."

The department itself was composed of several student workers at varying times throughout its development and maintains a retention rate for student employees. Seven of the participants interviewed began their career in higher education as student employees at this distance education support department.

Participant F stated, "when I came in, into It was one of the few departments that had so we had at least five different countries represented in our office. Which is unheard of. India. Myself Puerto Rican, even though it's part of the United States. But let's face it, they categorize me as something else. We had Mexico represented, Jamaica, China, of course, American. Let's say the backgrounds of their disciplines, when I came in; we had engineers, Computer Science, Biology and I was from Chemistry. Now it's, I think, a little bit more diverse and we have communications, arts, music; I used to call us the United Colors of Benetton." The internal culture within the department functioned as a family and supported one another in regard to the tools and trainings provided to the faculty.

Participant A says "what it is, you know, responding to provide the best support that the students and faculty need. And I think that looking at, looking at the way they have held online Training sessions for faculty from the day one, whether you want to teach one class online, whether you want to be part of the blue printing. They've tried to respond to the needs of the

faculty at every level. And that is critical because the course itself has to be top quality. it was about the time I was leading that we added all the online component to the student help desk, maybe the last year I was there, but the commitment, the university made from the very beginning was to make sure they supported the student and the faculty and the curriculum design. And so (the distance education support department) participated in the curriculum design, not from deciding what the curriculum should present, but helping put it to put the pieces together correctly. Through their expertise and an understanding through quality matters and education technology and what was available and helping the faculty learn how to use the technology."

Participant D says, "it's, you know, was out of my hands after, after I left the provost, but I   think the critical, critical aspect of leadership and organizations such as that these, you have to realize that the services you're delivering or support services, they're not leadership services. Now, there can be leadership within the organization in terms of making faculty comfortable Catering to within resources catering to the needs of the faculty and training the faculty and I thought they did a really excellent job of that."

Theme Three: The Future of Distance Education

The third theme provided perceptions for the future of distance education yielded a spectrum of implications from all nine participants. Participants were found to lean more towards an emphasis upon needs for technology resources and support for both students and faculty. The need for more program development, changes to curricula, and overall expansion of student opportunities in distance education were at the forefront.

Participant A said, "looking at moving programs online, which would better respond to the needs of our students, especially our students in the valley potentially, you know, we have to

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make sure that we have, you know, have the strong enough organization to support that. The reason is going back to the quality experience for the student. We want to make sure that we can provide the level of support the student needs; the level of support the faculty needs, as far as within, the core structure of the online courses" and "critical for the online but also critical for any program moving online to look at that. So, I think that having a very strong (distance learning support department) organization is critical for the success."

Participant B stated "we're not going to go back. totally to what we were, you know, six, eight months ago, I think there is online, maybe not to the extent that is this now, initially, but there's gonna be a lot of online learning. And so that is, to me, that's a big research question, to do the comparisons."

Participant C commented, "what I see happening is we have to very quickly and dramatically have faculty move to distance learning and online teaching and learning without much preparation without, you know, having much time and to prepare it, to get it together and students themselves have had to very quickly become experts at the technology, etc., etc."

Participant D observed, "the technology needs are matched with the curriculum needs, and I still don't think we have that down. Yeah, it gets everybody. And I think it is an aversion (to faculty), to experimenting with new things. Yes, it is also students these days are wanting much more visual and audio variety, you know, students are wanting to see prepackaged materials that are created by the professor."

There was a significant concentration upon increases in support, technology training and accessibility challenges. "So now the trends are, you know, doing accessibility or analytics or

Figure 3: Word Cloud

how to improve the student learning versus how to improve the technology so the key going

forward is, okay, so right now, we have all this work that we're doing the blueprints for all these

things, said Participant G. "To provide the best support that the students and faculty need…hold

training sessions for faculty from day one; whether you want to teach class online or not", stated

Participant A. Participant H said, "do we have to we need to make sure that we provide enough

professional development and being able to provide so that way we can better serve our faculty

(be) better informed; what support is needed? Participant I said, we do not have to sacrifice any of

those aspects that are critical for student success, instead we figure out how we can align things in

a way that we're still going to be able to provide, not just the quality, but also the opportunity for

the students to participate.

Overall, all participants agreed that "remote learning" and "quality" of content were of high

importance to insure student achievement. "Remote learning is like a repository and doing X, Y, Z

distance learning is you being present answering (to the students)" (Participant F). Below, is a word

cloud rendered from the NVIVO software based upon the overall participants responses regarding

growth of distance education. The words in the center of the graphic represent the most used by all

identified as staff of the department. The words used were then looked at in context to pull the full quotes and analyze them into categories.

Based upon the word cloud pictured above greater use of the terms department, technology and university were at the forefront of the participants regarding future of the distance education support department. The next level of frequency of terms applied to the three broad themes were the following: instructional, enrollment, institution, accessibility, leadership and understand. A query search for the direct quotes for context was completed and two categories emerged. These two categories were identified as: increased distance education programs and curriculum and the role of the distance education support department.

Category One: Increase of Distance Education in Programs and Curriculum Design

Question seven asked, how do you describe the organization of the distance learning department today? Do you feel it has kept up with the changing institutional needs? Why or why not*?* Participants perspectives regarding the future distance education leaned towards expansion and inclusion of technology in program and curriculum development was the first emergent category. All participants held to an overarching agreement that curriculums and programs needed to be addressed for the future of distance education support departments. Anticipation for further development of programs that held educational technology elements was found to be a priority.

Participant B stated," there's going to be more and more demand for distance learning, and they'll have to be a plan of how much and for what, but at the same time, I think it also is a tremendous opportunity for young men and women or people of all ages to continue their education to continue to learn. It's not just about getting degrees. It is about learning."

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There were expressed evaluations of the current programs and curriculum moving forward to include distance education elements. Participant E noted, "if you don't go online to bring in enrollments. We (institutions) are going to suffer; it is a huge priority for us to stay online and build it and continue to grow the culture of online education because it is going to be sustaining for the university."

Some remarked upon of the needs of technology and how, "the technology needs are matched with the curriculum (Participant C) as opposed to the curriculum aligning to the technology. Distance education does not develop the curriculum of the programs, but "helping to the put it into the pieces together, correctly" (Participant D) (distance education support departments) must provide the best support for curriculum design (Participant A) to preserve a quality and academic rigor. (Participant I).

According to the participants, the teaching population in higher education would be impacted in several ways, relevant to the increase and inclusion of distance education technologies brought into more programs and curriculum development.

Participant C remarked, "more education is going to be online and distance learning, but there's going to have to be some kind of a middle ground that we have to come to, personally. I still believe that face to face is very significant, very important in terms of learning. That communication and one to one interaction with a person, who is an expert in that field, can talk to you as a human being, is extremely important, but the reality of the future."

Participant F stated, "in the beginning (of the pandemic), the huge struggle was getting all these faculty together, because we were training them face to face. It was just getting them to do remote learning and then we saw a lot of them not come back, like we had a lot of faculty retire. There's going to be more of a microscope, like, you know, in an experiment. You are testing

things out and to see what happens. Then you're going to analyze it. This is like the experiment phase and now they're starting to go back and analyze what they did what they did. Going, you know, from in six months from face to face to online. I've seen our art professors publishing their experiences on how the technology doesn't help them because, how can you teach ceramics online? How can you teach jewelry making, metal shop? People are now starting to go back and look at the research and try to see what works and not and analyze things."

Participant D added that," if they (learners) don't know that's their instructor's hand, they can hear it's their instructors voice. It's funny because I see a lot going kind of like, a back to basics, through zoom, So, that is what he's (the instructor) most comfortable with, but you know, he's losing, he's losing so much of his power, not being able to use his body and do the things that he used to do face to face. Actually, when we did the first switch over and this guy had like four sections of 80 people each. I just couldn't throw the students to the wolves because he didn't know how to create a PDF."

Participant A said," they could work in a little bit of a different way and I think that was very important, you know, to our students. I don't think they were afraid of the technology. We're very much more accustomed to using distance online resources for research for variety of things. And, I think that the students, here, are seeing it as an opportunity to better handle all of their many, many responsibilities, a family of work of school. It was a way they could do so with a little bit of flexibility that they needed that they didn't have from going and sitting in class from seven to ten every Tuesday night."

Participant B said, "oh man, I spent a lot of years teaching and if not all of it, mostly, 99.9%, you know, face to face. I think the face to face is a whole lot better in my bias. I often felt the students learn more from them (face to face classes), from each other. They (institutions)

can get it adapted fairly quick, to a new mode of instruction. Yes. I think it's (face to face) better. The way we did it. And the whole bit, but I'm not wanting to say that's going to fail. I think the kids can adapt, but I think most of the faculty are probably a doubt (to adapt). I know a couple of old some of the old faculty members at the university here are still teaching and I don't think they can adapt. I could, if I was there, you know, maybe a little bit, but not totally on this thing. The young people, young minds, I think they could. If you go back to when I was in public schools and all that, they taught us in the way, you know, how we teach and teaching now, it's different. And yet, there've been some whom have adapted to the thing. I think the hardest part is going to be on behalf of the teachers to make the change. In fact, I think some faculty will never do it. They'll do it but reluctantly and not in a good way and some will do it, but they'll have some struggles."

Participant H said, "well, I think what you're seeing now is the perfect example. I think the majority of people will realize how important distance education is because who knows if there's ever another pandemic. Distance learning is going to be beneficial for anything. I mean, that's my opinion. Even when things kind of normalize again the faculty that are face to face, might say, I remember this technology when I had to teach online. Can I still use it Face to face? and the answer would be yes."

Participant J stated, "they're going to see these as a threat to their job security, and it's always easier to throw the vendor under the bus, meaning blaming the technology. There's always going to be new technology, all those bells and whistles that are going to be exciting. I think the core of all of these is making sure that we do not lose focus on the essentials here, which is that of the students. For us to facilitate access to learning through the work that we do. We have a responsibility to make a positive impact, for the students. Then we also have the

responsibility to empower those individuals with the expertise to make that impact on the students, which is the faculty. So just being aware of that, you know, it requires sometimes sacrifice. Once you have infrastructure, you're, you're basically telling our students, they have the capability to compete with all the other students in just a state. "

Participant F said, "Because everyone assumed, oh, students know what they're doing and that was the one thing that I kept telling them (faculty), just because they are millennials, as you all call them, doesn't mean that they are digital natives to education. They are digital natives to social media ask them to do Instagram, they can do it in an instant. Ask them to log into Blackboard, they don't know what that is. They're, like, well, how do they not. One of those (faculty) whom were like, I don't bother telling them how to do it because they should know they should know. And I was like, sir, you're assuming that they know how to do it. And I flat out told him (that), just like you don't know how to use zoom and you don't know how to use Blackboard, they're (students) in the same boat."

Participant C stated, "what I see happening is we have had to very quickly and dramatically have faculty move to distance learning and online teaching and learning, without much preparation without, you know, having much time to prepare it (content) to get it together and students themselves, have had to very quickly become experts at the technology, etc., etc."

This led to the emergence of the second category regarding the perceptions of the increased role of Distance Education Support Departments across education. The data collected was based strongly upon what was gleaned from the remote pivot that occurred during the onset of the COVID pandemic.

Category Two: Increased Role of the Distance Education Support Department

Question eight asked, how do you see the role of Distance Learning Departments located at

four-year research institutions impacting the landscape of Higher Education? The second

category that emerged under this theme was a perception of the increased role of the distance

education support departments in the future. In retrospect of the onset of the COVID pandemic,

it was recognized that distance education support departments were called upon to act quickly.

Participant D remarked, "in organizations such as these, you have to realize, is that the

services you're delivering or support services, they're not leadership services. Now, there can be

leadership within the organization in terms of making faculty comfortable, catering to within

resources, catering to the needs of the faculty and training the faculty. And I thought they

(distance education support department) did a really excellent job of that."

Participants that work in distance education support departments noted some early informal

insights coming to light through internal departmental audits of student and instructor feedback.

Participant I stated, "there are some complaints coming from some students about

course(s) that did not go through the blue printing process (distance education support

department services) and they (instructor) wanted to teach it their own way. Now, the

administrators and the deans are saying no (to instructor only developed online courses for

delivery). This (distance education support department services) is, this is needed. This is just

being proven, you know, that support that means a lot. Even administration are seeing more of

our (distance education support department) value. So, those that didn't see us before now see us,

and now know us, and so it's pretty cool."

Another aspect noted, was technology support and how the increase in support for

technology would continue. Participant H said, "the technology side, I guess supporting the

added, you know, technologies, because there's now faculty that they find other technologies on

their own. and they want to know, if we can we implement into Blackboard. So, with so many

people, I guess, finding other technologies, you know, because before like you know early on. It was just, we were just Web CT or Blackboard. Now, we have all these third party add ins. These publishers now with their own stuff. We need to limit the kinds of technologies that they (faculty) can use, but at the same time, is that good? Questions about that was a big thing coming up. I feel like the technology is kind of slowing down and the shift is going more back towards how to make distance education better. Now, the trends are, you know, doing accessibility, or analytics or how to improve the student learning versus how to improve the technology. The key going forward is we have all this work that we're doing; the blueprinting and all these things are an integral part of the institution or the distance learning unit. It has to be present, you can't you can't be without it. I kind of feel like it's going to have its own infrastructure, in a sense, eventually, so where they have their own like building to be a separate Division."

Participant G says, "you know they (faculty) are saying, this isn't working, because it wasn't designed. Right? It may be that it may be a setting that it hasn't had it (distance education support) that way because they're thinking from the information security point of view. Faculty should be embracing the recommendations from the instructional design team, rather than relying on a publisher content; where they have their own initiatives and goals and they have to make money. That's fine, but also, to me, it makes a difference, in a bad way. They're (publishers) not aware of the characteristics of the student population of that institution; of the dynamics of that institution. All of those intangibles that when you have that relationship within (the institution) you have that just in time ability to provide support, even if it's just answering your phone to answer a question. Yet, another participant noted the increased amount of faculty being served by the distance education department, now and in the future."

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Participant E commented," I believe they're (educators) still in a state of shock and having to be reactive and there's no discussion of being how to be proactive. You have to start planning now. There is no discussion about what's going to happen, other than remote learning. Not a solution for us. For a distance learning department, we need at least four to six months in advance for pre planning because that's the planning that's involved for a quality course. The department is no longer serving 500 faculty, it's not 600 faculty, it's 1000 plus faculty. Who is the one that will train everybody in our department? And then provide support (to faculty and students). So, that's why I'm saying, like, I don't know, if this current leadership really understands that remote learning is not enough or have the understanding (of) what we actually do in house. Participant F asked, are we looking at new research, new technologies that can better improve the situation? not really. And even then, frankly, I don't know if there is any, because people are so focused on just surviving what we have; it's a new world.

All three themes and categories represent the data gathered by the researcher. The next chapter will provide a discussion of findings, recommendations and a conclusion.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research study was to provide a critical examination of the historical organizational development of a distance education support department at a Hispanic serving institution of higher education in South Texas through an ethnographic lens. The three areas of focus were organizational development, culture, and the future of distance education support departments. The evolution of traditional education supports online delivery, using a methodology congruent with educational foundations that contributes to the success of the 21st-century student. Inevitably, a broad-spectrum topic of investigation for educational researchers has emerged (Singh, 2002; Selwyn & Facer, 2014). This is why the researcher chose to use a qualitative ethnography to provide a broader spectrum of investigation for future research.

The unique lens applied through the methodological approach of ethnography aligned with the basis of Organizational Identity theory as defined by Albert and Whetten (1985) and Whetten (2006). Clear elements of central, enduring and distinguishing attributes of the historic development of this department, and its inner workings solidified the application of the theory to the research. Consistent with the rapid evolution within the online environment, adjusting is an element that does not interfere at any level of significance with the central functionality and endurance of processes of organizations such as these. This organization manages the technology and pedagogical methodologies, simultaneously. As noted in the review of literature, the speed of changes of distance education over the course of its history contribute to the effectiveness of

maintaining respective adherence over time (Allen & Seaman, 2003; Hullsmann, 2004; Education Statistics, 2014; Moore & Kearsley, 2011; Ginder, 2014; Waks, 2013).

In the early 1990's at GU, a Hispanic Serving Institution in South Texas, began dabbling in the "information superhighway" or as we now commonly refer to as "the internet". These early pioneers of educational technology saw it as a method of reaching the learners in between the spaces of the region and the metropolitan areas to the North. This small group saw the technology as the vehicle to serve a broader audience as well as improving student outcomes. As noted by Dr. Chauvin in 2017 interview, "collaboration of disciplines served as the foundation to the creation of a support department for the emergent technological age of education."

As a founding member of the consortium of Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), GU shared in a million-dollar grant for the installation of facilities at nine campuses in the HSI statewide system to provide and receive programming via interactive satellite. At the end of the 1993-1994 academic year, a computer science faculty member was approached by the Provost to conduct a campus wide study regarding the impact of technology at the university. This resulted in obtaining the initial learning management system (LMS), WebCT. Historically, servers and technology were housed within the informational technology department or IT (Wagner, 1990; Waks, 2013). However, this educational technology server was determined to be managed within academics, not IT. This synchronization of technology and its supporting departments provided the balance between the educator and delivery method (Singh, 2002; Selwyn & Facer,2014) which supported keeping the distance education support department under the umbrella of Academic Affairs.

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Theoretical Framework

Through the methodological approach of ethnography supported by the basis of Organizational Identity theory, as defined by Albert and Whetten (1985) and Whetten (2006), provides a deeper insight into the historic, cultural, and projected future of distance education. In alignment with this theoretical framework, there were clear elements of central, enduring, and distinguishing attributes. Rapid changes of distance education over the course of its history contribute to the effectiveness of maintaining an enduring evolution over time (Allen & Seaman, 2003; Hullsmann, 2004; Education Statistics, 2014; Moore & Kearsley,2012; Ginder, 2014; Waks, 2013).

Discussions of Findings

This discussion of findings is from participant interviews through the Chapter Four data analysis. The three primary themes which emerged from this research of historic, cultural, and future perceptions serve as jumping off points and considerations for the development of distance education support departments. These findings establish a framework for other institutions at either the onset, in development or making improvements of current distance education support departments.

The historic events that enabled this department's creation may not apply to all institutions; however, generalized conclusions can be drawn from the context moving forward. The guiding questions applied throughout the study were as follows:

RQ 1. What are the goals of internal distance education departments for the future as perceived by former and present actors and stakeholders within an internal distance education department?

RQ 2. What are the structural, organizational characteristics of a distance education department internally housed within an institution of higher education?

RQ 3. What are the benefits of an internal distance education department that functions under an academic umbrella perceived by former and present actors and stakeholders within an internal distance education department?

RQ 4. How does an internal, academically based distance education department impact other support departments and divisions at Borderlands University?

RQ 5. How did the growth of distance education contribute to the creation of an internal academically based distance education department at Borderlands University?

Each of the research guiding questions were enveloped into the initial interview questions allowing for the organic flow of follow-up questions. Chapter four provided a review of these responses in the context of the interview questions they were asked. The researcher applied the three attributes (central, enduring, and distinguishable) of Organizational Identity Theory (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2006) to the discussion of emergent themes. This discussion illustrates the connections between the review of literature and the research findings in response to the research questions. This chapter concludes with implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

Discussion Research Question One

What are the goals of internal distance education support departments for the future as perceived by former and present actors and stakeholders within an internal distance education department?

My findings identified the future of internal online distance education support departments would see an increase of online courses and programs that would increase the need

for more support to meet the demand. Reviewing the early works of McIsaac and Gunawardena (1996), it was predicted there would be a continued expansion of online distance education worldwide. As increased use and innovation of the systems used in the online modality persists, online distance education would become more cost effective to the institutions and learners. This continued increase of learners is further supported by reports from the National Center for Education Statistics (2013). Hullsmann's (2014) study of the cost effectiveness of distance education projected the demand for distance education would increase at a pace consistent with the innovation of technology. Despite all the analysis indicating increasing online programs and inserting online elements into curriculum design, many participants offered up alternatives to consider. Some noted the idea of using hybrid or blended teaching and learning as a good middle ground. While still other participants expressed, albeit with caution, they would rather have all learners in face to face classrooms, but recognized this line of thinking should not be applied without including online elements.

Findings from this study included the need for educators to evaluate the current curriculum standards and apply the technology innovation to keep the learning relevant to the needs of the global workforce. The Jonassen, Reeves, and Mouer (1998) study found it a necessity to promote the learning for future work preparation. Participants in their study advised to align the curriculum in such a way that the technology would not disrupt the learning from taking place. Both Flowers (2001) and Grzeda and Miller (2009) attribute increased completion rates for online learners when shorter term lengths are applied. Participants from this study recalled the launching of two fully online accelerated graduate programs at BSU that consisted of seven-week carousal term length. The carousal allowed the learners to step in and out of the program, every seven weeks without falling behind program goals. Both programs were cost

effective and provided the flexibility to the learner population. A key factor revealed in this study was collaboration between the faculty and the ODSD.

It was noted by participants, that the global pandemic increased the awareness of what distance education support departments provide and while we would like to think technology advances at light speed, it does not. Findings from this study recognized that there are many moving parts that require a full vetting of technological applications to an LMS and not all can integrate. Nichols (2011) concluded that instructor involvement in the development of online courses is critical to improving learner efficacy. Baker, Aggarwal & Schihl (2003) found that many instructors saw their roles expanding to include researching the technologies, with little to no guidance. Tait (2003) found that to provide the best quality of online support to faculty teaching in the virtual modality, institutions that developed internal online distance support departments (ODSD) for students and faculty yielded increases in student retention and achievement of learning outcomes. This critical collaboration between instructors and the ODSD are reflected in these findings. Participants from this study recognized the importance of matching technology to the curriculum, not aligning curriculum to technology. It is further noted by the participants, that ODSD contribute to course design with the appropriate technologies that best enhance the quality and academic rigor of the curriculum.

It was indicated through these findings that to meet the needs of faculty and students, as course and program offerings increase, will result in expanding the service offered by the ODSD. Overall, the increase of online programs and online elements infused in curriculum delivered in all modalities of the future was reflected within these findings. Key elements to consider were to align the technology to the curriculum and increase importance of applying the best practices from the research that the ODSD provides for faculty. The researcher found that distance

education is a fully accepted modality for educators. Baker, Aggarwal & Schihl (2003) and Tait (2003), determined the need for collaboration between faculty and an internal ODSD a priority. These studies found that online delivery is a valuable and native component of education across the United States. Therefore, the role of the ODSD will expand within the institutional frameworks to meet the future demands of a growing population of learners.

Discussion Research Question Two

What are the structural, organizational characteristics of a distance education department internally housed within an institution of higher education?

Characteristics from the findings recognized that a diverse internal culture and leadership that allows for its members to take an active role in the development of the organization are key to its effectiveness and ability. The centralization or decentralization of the leadership and technologies determine the latitude of an organization's members (Hersey-Blanchard, 1991; Schokley-Zalabak, 2009; Kezar, 2001). Findings from the analysis recognized that many members began as student workers and were promoted to permanent positions at higher levels, such as instructional designers, LMS managers, assistant directors, directors and helpdesk managers, a clear attribute of transformational leadership (MacGregor-Burns, 1978). The staffing expansion of the department was aligned with technology innovation. As technology became more advanced, accessible, and adaptive to education, the need for members with specializations increased. Learning organizations such as the ODSD are able to adapt to change and create their future within an evolving industry (Argyris & Schon, 1991; Senge 2004; Morgan, 2006; MacGregor-Burns, 1978). The data collected revealed that the internal culture within the department was made up of a diverse group from a variety of academic disciplines.

The culture of this internal organization was heavily influenced by the helpdesk. While the two overarching areas of distance education support departments are primarily technology and academics, the help desk was a unique feature found at this institution that served a broader purpose. The helpdesk intersected the two and ultimately served as the front line of support to both faculty and students. Active learning through the removal of boundaries is an application of reinvention used by learning organizations (Nonaka & Takuchi, 1995; Hamel & Prahalad, 2001). This critical enhancement kept each side of the house informed, while contributing directly to the organizational structure. As noted in the data analysis, the helpdesk was a component that was installed at the onset and was always determined to be a sustaining characteristic of the organization. The distribution of responsibility and ability to work as part of a whole when making decisions is a hallmark of a holographic organizations (Gabor, 1948; Pribram, 2013). The balance within a holographic organization between specialized and generalized staff enable an ease of adaption within a changing environment. Holographic organizations are able to resolve conflict and make decisions by aligning the change to the perspective (Morgan, 2006; Pribram, 2013). The growth in learner population serves as a driving force behind the pace of the online course and program development in the future.

When the ODSD first emerged at this institution, there was little specialized diversity represented by its staff, outside technology. Given that its first home was in the office of a computer science professor who employed two computer science student workers, there was not a need beyond technology at that point in time. As the role of the department expanded into development of courses and programs, inclusion of areas of specialization emerged to meet the demand of specific support for faculty and students. The inclusion of a variety of disciplines, ethnicities and experience became more visibly apparent. This is identified as the Organizational

Identity (OI) distinct attribute of the organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2006). As Participant F stated, "I used to call us the United Colors of Benetton." The range of academic disciplines contributed to the "one-stop" shop experience, as these areas of specialization gained their role in the organization identity. Given that the ODSD are comprised of more than one discipline and inform their supported population in a variety of approaches, members must be able to communicate within a level of understanding using language that can be interpreted with ease (Gillespie, et al., 2010; Sorcinelli, et al., 2006).

It was observed that the participants, while working within the department, spoke of their colleagues with eager tones and authentic appreciation for one another. There was a definite sense of comradery amongst all the participants, regardless of the role they played in the development of the ODSD. It was in the manner of how they spoke of the value of service they were providing to the betterment of the learners and community at large. The enduring attribute of OI maintains there is a consistent dedication to the mission and overarching goal of the organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2006). Participants in this study, who held administrative roles during the time of the development of this ODSD, made clear that it was a consorted effort not to interfere with the organization's development of working mechanics (processes, procedures, and culture). This gave the members a level of ownership and an active role in the formulation of the department and its functionality. Total Quality Management (TQM) philosophy defines a free-flowing dialogue that engages the members in a collective communal effort to evaluate and improve upon processes, products, services and culture in the work environment (Blackburn & Rosen, 1993; Rokke & Om, 2012; Morgan, 2006). In summation, the characteristics of internal specialization and diversity along with enduring active participation from its members, contribute to the effectiveness of the department.

Discussion Research Question Three

What are the benefits of an internal distance education department that functions under an academic umbrella as perceived by former and present actors and stakeholders within an internal distance education department?

The most significant benefit of having an internal distance education support department held under the umbrella of academics rather than technology was that it created a "one stop shop" and served as a method of on the job training to fulfill developing needs to sustain the department. From 1990 through 1999, Berger and Mrozowskis (2001) observed that there was not a combination support department dedicated to online educational technology and teaching pedagogies. Participants' responses determined that the ultimate goal of the development of the distance education support department was, "responding to the needs of the students and the faculty" as noted by Participant A. This commitment as perceived by Participant C was, "we were not only after quantity, we were after quality as well." Being a under the umbrella of Academic Affairs was the most sensible for all parties, as reiterated by Participant A. Analysis of the data informed when applying Organizational Identity Theory (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2006) directly to the placement under Academic Affairs as the distinguished, central, enduring attributes it embodied. OI is often used by social constructivist to describe malleable organizations, such as distance education support departments which experience intrinsic periods of transition (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2006).

Across the board, all participants agreed that there was need to have these support departments working under the academic umbrella to ensure learner success. According to Organizational Identity Theory, Albert and Whetten (1985) and Whetten (2006), found these elements of central and enduring attributes. The central attribute of Organizational Identity

theory (OI) is driven by the historic development of an organization, in this case, its foundation under the academic umbrella. The enduring attribute is relative to the shared goal of the organization and for this organization, it was academic student success. According to the findings, GSU was filling a support need for faculty and striving toward developing a combination department. Implementing a distance education department must be done as a resolution to educational issues to achieve a desired result, which serves as the evidence to support the change (Watkins, et al., 2013; Eckel, et al., 1999).

Findings from this study determined that decision was made by the administration at the earliest stages of its development, and as Participant A stated, "it made sense". Previous studies that evaluated the instructor experience with technology support departments lacked pedagogical or collegiate support for instructional delivery (Lei, 2010; Terosky & Heasely, 2015). As described by Participant I, "it's educational technology and what we do goes into pedagogy." Meyer, Bruwelheide & Poulin (2009) found that student retention in online programs was reliant upon the academic integration. Several participants noted the benefits for faculty from all disciplines and appreciation from student population that the department be housed under academics, rather than technology umbrella. The BU distance education support department is located in the College of Education, a centralized area where various faculty professional development trainings occur. A centralized, enduring space is an attribute of OI that supports the placement under academics. It maintains the fluctuation of educational technologies, while being pedagogically grounded.

Discussion Research Question Four

How does an internal, academically based distance education department impact other support departments and divisions at Borderlands University?

The findings for this question are closely related to RQ 3 as the "one stop shop" impacts all the departments that are alleviated from servicing the population in a truncated or disconnected manner. The ease of access is something that found in the review of literature as a primary reason learner stay in online programs (Flowers, 2001; Grzeda & Miller; 2009). Ease of access and centralization of the physical space impacted concentrated departments of pedagogy and technology that intersected and formulated the Online Distance Education Support Department. Ultimately, instead of going to the discipline specific department for development of an online course; faculty go directly to the ODSD to obtain support, and students can go directly to the ODSD for support with online discipline specific technology issues. This alleviated the instructor from a bombardment of emails, calls or visits that would be redirected.

Discussion Research Question Five

How did the growth of distance education contribute to the creation of an internal academically based distance education department at Borderlands University?

These research findings support that the historic development of this distance education support department aligned with what was happening in distance education at the time. Formulations of consortiums and networks such as National University Teleconferencing Network (NUTN) and the American Distance Education Consortium (ADEC) in 1982, were taking specific aim at HSI's through their large corporate partnerships. IBM, a key stakeholder, was investing in distance education through these networks and consortiums by way of grants (Moore & Kearsley, 2011; Waks, 2013). According to the data, the initial grant for GSU was awarded in the late 1980's. It was designated for experimenting with use of technology developed by computer scientists, to teach computer science and expand the use of learning management systems. The organizational model used for this experimentation was based upon a

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combination of the IBM Service Planning group and the existing Computing Research Lab. Another contributing factor from the results that speak to this historical development was the installation of the sixth President. President Gonzalez held a strong commitment to expanding higher education opportunities in this border region. The president's regular attendance at Texas Legislative sessions in Austin and major role in the South Texas Border Initiative placed the institution in a recognized position with an expanding school of engineering (Flack, 2003; Ortegon, 2013; Welch, 1987). Results from the data found that BSU was one of the nine founding institutions of the Hispanic Educational Technology Services attributing to the million-dollar award to install facilities for a telecommunications infrastructure. The founding of the National University Teleconferencing Network (NUTN) in 1982 and the formation of the American Distance Education Consortium (ADEC) with an interest in HSI's showed that large computer corporations, such as IBM, were actively investing in distance education This interest in HSI's, coupled with the expansion of opportunities through the South Texas Border Initiative, set the stage for a fusion of education and technology. Results from this study confirm that several disciplines at GSU were actively utilizing technological resources available such as email and teleconference. There was a specific interest in Hispanic Serving Institutions by large technology companies via the NUTN and ADEC to invest in Distance Education IBM provided a large grant, specifically designated for the development of computing research labs and to test the WEBCT technologies (Moore & Kearsley, 2011).

Berger and Mrozowskis (2001) found that there was not a support department combination of technology and teaching within an online modality from the 1990's through 1999. This unique administrative foresight gave weight to the history of consistent and innovative collaboration between education and technology. Tait and Mills (2003) revealed that

faculty support for distance education was not significant beyond using software and computers (Merkley, Bozik & Oakland, 1997). Findings revealed that the institutional strategic plans anticipated the technological advancements which coincided with the departmental expansion. Watkins, et al., (2013) found that successful change occurred within institutions when strategic planning was informed by research. The findings revealed that GSU was filling a support need for faculty and striving toward developing a combination department. This is a direct alignment to support the distinctive attribute of the organization, according to OI theory. OI is often used by social constructivists to describe malleable organizations, such as distance education support departments which experience intrinsic periods of transition (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2006). In other words, the blending of these two mechanisms was inevitable according to the historic data.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are guided by a review of the historical research of distance education, cultural implications, and future of these support departments, as provided by the participants. It is strongly recommended that stakeholders be cognizant that distance education support departments need an academic pedagogical balance with the technology in order to be fully able to provide the full service to its population.

Much like reflective teaching practices, educational research is reflective as well. Applying a historic lens, it is recommended for all administration to take knowledge of how this support department became a part of the strategic plan of the institution upon the earliest time of perceived change. In other words, develop an initiative across the institution to conduct research contributing and aligned with the vision and mission of the institution relative to the developments in technology. Administration needs to stay informed of what other institutions are

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doing in distance education for many reasons, but the more obvious is to be inclusive and expand options to potential learners. Conducting further research regarding the functionality of their own distance support department may incite change to their own internal constructs, processes, policies and procedures. It is crucial to consider the culture of the community they serve, but also the institutional culture, specifically those partnerships between and among learners, faculty and staff. As found in the discussion from the data, the internal and external growth and expansion of this support department had the support of the administration to essentially stay aligned to growth of technology that would be best adapted to the needs of their faculty and learners.

Recommendations relative to the culture of the community the institution serves inspires more research to define the community at large. It is encouraged to go beyond the region and look at the areas of similar institutions. It is recommended to review the technology available in the area to determine how far it reaches. Review the socioeconomic population averages in the area and define the needs of the community. Look at the ability of the community to sustain itself and identify the gaps between the learners within the K-12 system. Review high school graduation rates and those that go on to college and explore the monetary drivers in the community and define the commodities of the community.

Other recommendations are to speak to local community advocates and get an oral history of the people and the area so the research will reflect a true representation that includes personal historic accounts. Research that includes a thorough review of the community will reveal the culture of the community. Institutions aligned to serving the needs of the community expand the opportunities to its population. Then, these institutions are better able to develop and

provide curriculum programs specific to those areas based upon the cultural values that exist within community.

It is recommended that more research regarding the internal cultures within distance support departments be examined through a quantitative audit of the services provided by the individual departments. The researcher observed the importance of anticipating and responding to what the learners need in distance education and how the faculty can fill that need through the distance education support department. Audits of distance education support departments, regardless of the size of institution are recommended.

It is just not possible to give context to the motivator for future research without mentioning the impact of the global pandemic on teaching and learning. The recommendation to continue researching these support departments' staffing configurations is one area this researcher found necessary to explore. Research that can expose and reveal the balance or lack balance of course loads to number of designers able to assist. This could lead to some kind of standardization for course design. As noted in the analysis and discussion, using third party quality measurements of best practice design is already in place. However, the researcher recommends reviewing institutions that used no quality inspections of their course design and what impact, if any, was found in learner outcomes and/or the content delivery satisfaction levels from the instructors. Perhaps, a federal initiative could provide researchers an opportunity to take a deep dive into the most generalized aspects of design for online delivery that could be easily integrated into an LMS, so the focus for the faculty could be more on the content and less on design.

As noted in the discussion and analysis, the expansion and inclusion of technology in all aspects of education and the workplace is occurring at an accelerated speed. Unfortunately, in

education, the ODSD are usually tasked with vetting these new innovations. It is a timely

process that can take several days or weeks to fully review possible pieces of technology. Many

factors must be considered, including but not limited to, integration, ease of access, accessibility

and relevance. It is recommended that current distance education support the departments allot

time to actively research new technologies and innovations for education. It is recommended to

designate an internal team that can vet a variety of educational technology tools and create a

matrix or data base of what works with which LMS for their institution. As technology is

moving quite rapidly, keeping this database could allow an option for suggestions to new

applications. There are current national databases for adaptive release products, but the

researcher is not aware of one at the time of this writing of any specific to all emergent

educational technology tools.

Conclusion

The researcher's findings throughout this process of a historic ethnographic study of a

distance education support department provided a framework for other institutions within the

discipline looking to develop, improve, or inspire opportunity. The historic, cultural, and future

perceptions discovered serve as a spring board at various moments throughout the development

of a distance education support department. The research provides opportunities for

improvement for current and future distance education support departments. This study provided

the higher education community a template for development and implementation of a distance

education department. An examination of higher education organizational constructs that support

these delivery methods and the students, staff, and faculty serve as a best practice guide for all

institutions entering and immersed in the educational digital age. The contribution to the

discipline and area of study will be used by future online educators using traditional university support and recognizing the need to include a specific distance education department.

      In summary, the perspectives of the participants are most valuable, as it spanned more than two decades from inception of one distance education support department in one Hispanic Serving Institution in South Texas. Their recollection of the events which led to the department's persistent motivation to serve all learners was powerful. Their need to express that this area of support was always a priority, regardless of how many name changes and administrative changes occurred, and this institution would stay true to its plan. Educational research applying an ethnographic lens provided a real voice from real actors that embarked upon a journey without prior exploration, but the surety of its need to be developed and sustained.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

INITIAL QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWEES

1. How long have you been working in Higher Education? Briefly, describe your journey in

   HigherEducation? Roles you held and any significant initiatives that you championed?

2. When was the first time you recognized the benefits of Distance Learning in Higher
   Education? R1, R2

3. How did you envision the Distance Learning Departments growth at this Hispanic

   ServingInstitution? What were some initial concerns? RQ 1

4. What role, in your opinion, did the Hispanic culture of the community play into the

   development of this departmental organization? R2

5. What were some of the initial reactions for bringing fully online courses and programs

   to thisHispanic Serving Institution? Describe the approach administration chose to take

   regarding growth? Was this the best route? Why or why not? R3

6. How did the Distance Learning Department impact the mission and values of the institution?
   R4

7. How do you describe the organization of the distance learning department today? Do you

   feel ithas kept up with the changing institutional needs? Why or why not? R5

8. How do you see the role of Distance Learning Departments located at four-year

   researchinstitutions impacting the landscape of Higher Education? R5

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Bobbie Myatt serves as a Faculty Development Program Lead for the Alamo Colleges District. In this capacity she serves as a District Quality Matters Lead Coordinator, QM Certified Online APPQMR Facilitator and lead overseeing the educational technology support for the five independently accredited colleges. She serves on several conference and event planning committees across the five colleges in San Antonio, Texas; serving as a presenter, technology liaison and a TXDLA ADA Certified Specialist. Ms. Myatt has a strong background in Instructional Design, ADA Compliance, Quality Matters, Educational Research and Online Teaching and Learning. She earned a Bachelors in Journalism coupled and Masters in Communication Studies from University of Texas – Pan American prior to entering her doctoral program. Bobbie Myatt earned her doctorate in Educational Leadership, Ed.D. from University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in May of 2022. She delivers a variety of interactive professional development courses to our faculty that combine pedagogy and technology. Her lifelong passion for education is most evident through her commitment to increasing diverse learner equity and providing a transformational leadership to her team. She can be contacted via email at bmyatt@alamo.edu and resides in San Antonio, Texas.