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BOUNDARY SPANNING, NETWORKING, AND SENSEMAKING/SENSEGIVING:  
HOW CAREER SERVICES DIRECTORS ENACT MID-LEVEL LEADERSHIP

A Dissertation Presented

By

LINDA KENT DAVIS

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies,  
University of Massachusetts Boston,  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

December 2016

Higher Education Administration Program

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HOW CAREER SERVICES DIRECTORS ENACT MID-LEVEL LEADERSHIP

A Dissertation Presented

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LINDA KENT DAVIS

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## ABSTRACT

### BOUNDARY SPANNING, NETWORKING, AND SENSEMAKING/SENSEGIVING: HOW CAREER SERVICES DIRECTORS ENACT MID-LEVEL LEADERSHIP

December 2016

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This study seeks to understand higher education leadership overall by exploring how mid-level leadership is enacted by career services directors. Given that higher education institutions are facing a wide range of challenges that require an equally wide range of skills to address them, colleges and universities may need to become more inclusive regarding who contributes to institutional leadership. Mid-level leadership is defined in this study as a process of social interaction that originates with a middle manager and that cuts across functional areas and/or hierarchical levels to impact institutional goals. Three research questions frame the study: 1) How do career services directors develop the capacity for social influence within their institutions, 2) How do career services directors use their social influence to cut across functional areas and hierarchical levels, and 3) What institutional goals are advanced when career services

directors enact mid-level leadership? A collective case study methodology was employed. Twelve career services directors whose profiles matched the study's selection criteria for individual characteristics (e.g. years working in a director-level position in career services, years working at the director level at their current institution, minimum of master's degree, evidence of engagement in leadership activities on- and off-campus), unit characteristics (e.g. unit size, staff configuration, and scope of services offered), and institutional characteristics (e.g. geographic location, institutional size, four-year public or non-profit status) took part in interviews for the study. Study findings indicated that career services directors developed the capacity for social influence by creating internal networks, involving staff in increasing the visibility of the unit, and establishing themselves and/or their unit as a critical institutional resource. They utilized their social influence by deliberately leveraging their networks, providing access to information and resources, and framing issues for institutional stakeholders. The study found that when career services directors enacted mid-level leadership, the institutional goals they impacted included the development and/or implementation of the institution's strategic plan, curriculum development and student learning, and the advancement of diversity initiatives.

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## CHAPTER 1

### PROBLEM STATEMENT AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Higher education institutions encounter an enormous range of leadership challenges. These challenges include cost containment, financial management, accountability, globalization, technology integration, student retention, changing demographics, assessment of student learning, and measurement of institutional outcomes (Basham, 2012; Kezar, 2000; Kezar & Lester, 2009). Given the high level of complexity in which colleges and universities operate, it is unlikely that a small group of leaders, positioned at the top level of an institution, will have either the time or the range of expertise and skills necessary to address the expanded range of challenges currently facing higher education. Furthermore, these challenges have been compounded by a long-term expectation that increasingly more will be done with fewer and fewer resources (Lipsky, 1980). The expectation of doing more with less is evidenced by the fact that state appropriations to public higher education institutions have not kept pace with the cost of attendance (McLendon et al., 2009; Toutkoushian, 2001), and that both public and private institutions are seeking to reduce expenses and generate greater efficiencies. To address these challenges effectively, colleges and universities may need to increase their capacity for leadership by encouraging organizational members from a variety of

positions and hierarchical levels to contribute their knowledge and expertise to advance organizational goals.

One strategy for increasing leadership capacity is for institutions to actively and genuinely integrate a wider range of stakeholders into the leadership processes (Benjamin & Carroll, 1998; Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Kezar, 2001). Colleges and universities can distribute leadership across a wider range of constituents. More inclusive leadership not only expands the pool of institutional actors available to contribute leadership, but it also provides access to a wider range of expertise, skills, and diversity existing throughout the organization. Greater diversity in terms of experience, skills, and perspectives can generate greater creativity as it minimizes the potential for a single interpretation of organizational reality to become dominant (Bensimon & Newman, 1993). Additionally, the development of a wider circle of leadership can expand cognitive complexity, catalyze innovation, mitigate “group think” (Kezar, 2000, p. 9), and ultimately foster organizational renewal in higher education institutions (Kezar, 2001; Tierney, 1992).

Mid-level administrators are an internal stakeholder group that can be utilized to enhance leadership capacity in colleges and universities. According to Rosser (2004), mid-level administrators “...may be classified as administrators, professionals, technicians, or specialists, and their positions tend to be differentiated by functional specialization, skills, training, and experiences” (p. 324). They most often work at the director or coordinator level (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2000), and many report to either a dean or senior-level administrator (Rosser, 2004). Some mid-level administrators are members of collective bargaining units with negotiated contracts that frame the scope of their



work; some are not (V. Rosser, personal communication, January 30, 2006). Mid-level administrators include both academic and non-academic support personnel (Rosser, 2004). Academic mid-level administrators include department chairs, as well as unit directors whose reporting line connects to an academic dean or vice president for academic affairs. In contrast, non-academic mid-level administrators work in the areas of admissions, institutional research, registrars, business officers, computing and technology, human resources, communications, alumni affairs, student affairs, placement and counseling, financial aid, student housing, and development and planned giving (Rosser, 2004). Many mid-level administrators work at what Lipsky (1980) refers to as the “street level,” (p. xii) where they interact regularly with external stakeholders as they carry out their assigned responsibilities.

Mid-level administrators in general merit being tapped to increase institutional leadership capacity based on the scope of their presence within higher education and their longevity at their employing institutions. Non-academic mid-level administrators make up 64% of those working in administrative roles within higher education (Rosser, 2000). More recently, a February 2014 article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported a 28% growth in the hiring of administrators between 2000 and 2012, most notably in the area of student affairs (Carlson, 2014). Duderstadt (2000) writes that mid-level administrators often comprise that portion of an institution’s workforce that is stable and that provides continuity. Unlike presidents and top-level administrators who have a high rate of turnover, mid-level administrators often spend their entire careers at one college or university (Duderstadt, 2000; Guskin, 1996; Scott, 1980).

The contributions of mid-level administrators to institution-wide leadership can have multiple positive outcomes. The institutional value that mid-level administrators offer can be counted in terms of their organizational knowledge and historical perspective, as well as the range of expertise they use to supplement or support the expertise found at the top-level of the organization. Because of their longer-term commitment to their employing organizations (Duderstadt, 2000), mid-level administrators offer both organizational knowledge and historical perspective, eliminating the need to repeatedly “reinvent the wheel.” The value of mid-level administrators can also be counted in terms of the relationships that they have with external stakeholders who can provide access to information or other available resources. Given their frequent interactions with external stakeholders, mid-level administrators often play an important role in shaping how the institution is perceived by important actors in the external environment (Middaugh, 1984). Finally, their value may be counted in relationship to their access to and ability to leverage informal networks inside the organization. According to Huy (2001), middle managers “... usually have the best social networks” (p. 76). Middle managers have often “... accumulated a lot of social capital inside the organization, are at the center of a large informal network, and know how to pull the right strings” (p. 75).

### **Career Services Directors as Mid-level Administrators**

Career services directors comprise one subset of mid-level administrators within higher education. They can be considered mid-level administrators because their jobs are situated in the organizational hierarchy below top-level administrators, and they have responsibility for functionally specialized units – specifically, career services offices.

Like Lipsky's (1980) "street-level bureaucrats," (p. xii), Clark and Harriman (1984) suggest that career services directors often serve as the public face of the institution to external stakeholder groups, particularly employers.

Additional support for the notion that career services directors qualify as mid-level administrators comes from the Council of Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), an organization that has advocated for the use of standards in the practices of student affairs, student services, and student development programs since 1979. Career services is one of 30 functional areas for which CAS has established standards and guidelines. Certain CAS components support the argument that career services directors work as mid-level administrators. Specifically, these CAS components illustrate elements of functional specialization, training, and experience attributed to mid-level administrators (Rosser 2000). Within the CAS standards, functional specialization refers to discipline-specific expertise that is linked to "... formal education and training, relevant work experience, personal attributes, and other professional credentials" (CAS, 2001, p. 15). According to CAS, career services – and by implication, the career services director as unit head – is held responsible for being an institution's internal expert on career development, which derives from theories and knowledge related to learning and to both career and human development. CAS also holds career services directors responsible for providing institutional leadership for issues related to career development.

Like mid-level administrators in general, career services directors specifically merit being tapped to increase institutional leadership capacity. Their potential to contribute to institutional leadership is suggested by the extent of their presence in colleges and universities. Career services is a standard and critical higher education

function. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (n.d.) (NACE), a professional association whose mission is to connect career services and human resources and staffing professionals working in the areas of college relations and recruiting, reports a membership of more than 5200 career services practitioners working at approximately 2000 colleges and universities in the U.S. Clark and Harriman (1984) underscore the leadership functions carried out by career services professionals who:

... link the university to the employment community, an important source of resources and support. Among leaders and representatives of business, industry, and government, attitudes toward the university may be based solely on contact with the placement service and with graduates recruited there. At the same time, the career development function scans and monitors the environment for the information on the present and future job opportunities for university graduates, interprets and analyzes that information, and transmits it to the administration and the academic units (pp. 60-61).

Empirical research remains scarce, however, regarding the contributions of career services directors to institution-wide leadership. Thus, the field of higher education lacks a clear understanding of how career services directors can contribute to expanding the leadership capacity of colleges and universities. Furthermore, senior-level administrators lack research-based practices for involving mid-level administrators more extensively in the leadership of their institutions.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to expand our understanding of institutional leadership by examining leadership that originates with stakeholders other than the

president and/or top-level administrators – specifically leadership that originates at the mid-level and that is enacted by career services directors. Institutional leadership in higher education has been examined with a focus on the president (Basham, 2012; Birnbaum, 1992; Davison, 2012; Eddy, 2003; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Kezar, 2008; Levin, 1998), presidential leadership teams (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Woodfield & Kennie, 2008), and senior-level academic administrators (Bensimon, 1991; Cleverley-Thompson, 2015; Neumann, 1991). Furthermore, faculty contributions to institutional leadership, through governance committees and other decision-making mechanisms, have been examined in previous research (Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Ramsden, 1998; Sullivan, 2002). At present, however, the literature provides few insights regarding how mid-level administrators enact or contribute to institutional leadership. While there is an extensive literature on academic department chairs as mid-level leaders (Gmelch, 2004; Hecht, Higgerson, Gmelch, & Tucker, 1999; Johnsrud, Heck, & Rosser 1998; Lucas, 2000), studies of mid-level non-academic administrators are few, and fewer still are studies of career services directors. The literature review for this study, in fact, revealed no studies that have examined their contributions as organizational leaders. To narrow the information gap found in the literature and to increase our understanding of an additional source of institutional leadership, this study will focus on mid-level leadership enacted by career services directors within the context of their employing institutions.

### **Significance**

Expanded leadership capacity refers to involving a wide range of actors, rather than relying on a single leader or a small group of leaders situated at the hierarchical apex

of the organization. For more inclusive leadership to be effective, it is critical to understand the many sources that can contribute to an institution's leadership. By providing insight into mid-level leadership as enacted by career services directors, this study will add to what is currently known about organizational leadership in higher education and provide a new lens through which to examine and perhaps reframe our understanding of leadership and its multiple sources. For the purpose of this study, leadership is defined as "... a process of social influence through which one person is able to enlist the aid of others in reaching a goal" (Chemers, 1997, p. 5). Drawing from Chemers's definition of leadership, mid-level leadership, in the context of this study, is defined as a process of social interaction, originating with a middle manager, that cuts across organizational functions and/or hierarchical levels and that advances an institution-wide goal.

An increased understanding of mid-level leadership as enacted by career services directors has multiple dimensions of significance: significance for those who study leadership, for the institutions that employ career services directors, for the career services directors themselves and the units they manage, and for the field of career services in general. While a few studies exist about mid-level administrators in general (Amey, VanDerLinden, & Brown, 2002; Johnsrud et al, 1998, 2000; Rosser, 2002, 2004; Scott, 1980), not much is known about their leadership. The knowledge generated from this study will be relevant to those who study organizational leadership in higher education, because its findings will contribute to laying a foundation of information about mid-level leadership.

This study will have practical implications for those responsible for the stewardship of leadership within their institutions. This study suggests that mid-level leadership is not necessarily linked to formal organizational roles and structures. Rather it may occur both inside and outside of formal structures. Leadership taking place outside of formal structures (e.g. via networks) or at the “street level” can effectively advance the institution’s formally established goals even though the source of this leadership is not from the top of the formal organizational hierarchy. When the president and senior level administrative team have a better understanding of the leadership phenomenon – formal and informal -- occurring within their institutions, they will then be better able to leverage mid-level leadership for institutional benefit, and thus expand overall institutional leadership capacity.

This study will also have significance for career services directors who will have a new lens through which to examine their contributions as mid-level leaders and their potential for institutional impact. A deepened understanding of the components of mid-level leadership will enable career services directors to increase their capacity for leadership at their employing institutions, as well as within their careers overall. As career services directors deepen their understanding of themselves as mid-level leaders, their units will likely benefit as well. Such benefits may include prestige, positive reputation, and access to resources. Lipsky (1980) argues that perceptions of institutions are formed by the nature of interactions. If top-level leaders in the institution perceive the career services director in positive terms, then this positive perception will likely extend to the career services unit itself. When institutions are making critical decisions about how to allocate scarce resources, the career services unit may be perceived as an

important institutional function. Under these conditions, career services directors may be better able to advocate for their unit, because the unit would be more likely to be perceived as a critical institutional function.

Finally, this study will have relevance for professional development within the field of career services for practitioners at the director level and for those who aspire to become directors. At present, the primary source of professional development designed specifically for career services practitioners, and which focuses on career center management, is the Management Leadership Institute offered through the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). The institute is a multi-day training session focused on skills (e.g. marketing/branding, financial management, supervising and leading employees, and strategic planning and management) identified as necessary to manage a career services office. Within the context of NACE training, the career services office is primarily treated as a bounded unit and the director as enacting leadership within the unit. There is little focus on the skills needed to lead the unit within the overall context of the institution, or on the skills needed to contribute to institution-wide leadership. This study will deepen our understanding of leadership enacted in relationship to the entire institution rather than just the career services unit. That deepened understanding can then be used to generate agendas for future career services leadership trainings that are focused not only on leadership and management within the unit, but also include an emphasis on leadership that flows multi-directionally throughout the institution, thus positioning career services directors as skilled institutional leaders.



## **Research Questions: Institutional Leadership**

Chemers's (1997) definition of leadership as "a process of social influence through which one person is able to enlist the aid of others in reaching a goal" (p. 5) has been adopted for this study for several reasons. First, Chemers's definition is both flexible and inclusive. His definition does not delineate who within an organization can enact leadership and who cannot. Its focus is on leadership as a process rather than on leadership as a function of an identified organizational actor or actors. Chemers suggests that leadership is not the purview of only certain stakeholders, and this definition is consistent with the call in the higher education literature to include a wider range of stakeholders in institutional leadership (Benjamin & Carroll, 1998; Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Kezar, 2001).

Second, Chemers's (1997) definition does not prescribe the direction in which leadership flows. Thus, it allows for a non-hierarchical conceptualization that extends the traditional notion of leadership flowing downward in the organizational chart. Instead, Chemers's definition allows for the study of institutional leadership that originates with stakeholders other than presidents or their top-level administrative teams, as well as leadership that flows upwards, laterally, and diagonally, in addition to downwards.

Finally, Chemers's (1997) emphasis on leadership as a process in which multiple constituencies interact is consistent with how other scholars frame leadership. According to Ogawa and Bossert (2000), non-hierarchical leadership is not linked to the person(s) holding the highest position(s) within a specific unit or organization. Rather, they suggest that non-hierarchical leadership can emanate from any point in the organization, is multi-directional, and is socially constructed in the interactions between organizational

members, rather than in the relationship between their positions in the organizational structure. Similarly, Rost (1993) argues that leadership is a “dynamic relationship” (p.4) and that its essential nature is “...the process whereby leaders and followers relate to one another” (p. 4). Faris and Outcalt (2001) described leadership as inclusive, collaborative, and comprised of relationships, while Ogawa and Bossert (2000) argued that leadership occurs at the point in time when organizational members interact and that “social interaction is the building block of leadership” (p. 50). For higher education institutions, this suggests that leadership can originate with actors other than those holding formally defined leadership positions (e.g. president, senior administrators) and may cut across organizational functions (e.g. academic affairs, student affairs, finance and operations) as well as hierarchical levels as the result of specific interactions – formal or informal -- among organizational stakeholders.

This conceptualization of institutional leadership frames this study and leads to the following questions about mid-level leadership:

**Grand tour question.**

How do career services directors enact mid-level leadership within their employing institutions?

**Subsidiary questions.**

1. How do career services directors develop the capacity for social influence within their institutions?
2. How do career services directors use their social influence to cut across functional areas and hierarchical levels?

3. What institutional goals are advanced when career services directors enact mid-level leadership?

The three subsidiary questions address the various dimensions of mid-level leadership, which has been defined here as a social influence process that cuts across functional and hierarchical levels to advance institution-wide goals.

### **Forms of Leadership**

Several different models of leadership could be used to frame this study. Why, then, should the leadership enacted by career services directors be examined through the mid-level leadership lens rather than through the traditional hierarchical frame or through other frames that support the notion of more inclusive leadership? To answer this question, it is necessary to better understand those other forms of leadership and how they are different from and/or similar to mid-level leadership as it is defined for this study.

#### **Hierarchical leadership.**

Like mid-level leadership, hierarchical leadership is studied at the individual level. That is, the unit of analysis in both forms of leadership is the individual organizational member enacting leadership. In the case of hierarchical leadership, the person who occupies the highest position within the organization (in the case of colleges and universities, the president) is formally vested with the responsibility for its leadership. Institutional stakeholders working at positions below that of the president serve as conduits for channeling hierarchical leadership throughout the institution.

Within the framework of hierarchical leadership, career services directors serve as recipients of or as conduits for downwardly flowing leadership. Alternatively, the

depiction of hierarchical leadership described above can be used to understand the leadership enacted by career services directors in their role as unit heads. As the person occupying the highest position within their assigned area of responsibility, career services directors can enact hierarchical leadership within the career services office. Their leadership flows downward within the unit, and their staff members are the conduits through which it is channeled.

While hierarchical influence is one directional component of mid-level leadership, the hierarchical leadership lens limits our ability to understand the full scope of mid-level leadership. To examine career services directors' leadership solely through a hierarchical lens would suggest that their leadership is unidirectional and is enacted only within their department or unit. Mid-level leadership, however, is multi-directional and cuts across both organizational functions and hierarchical levels. This suggests that mid-level leadership can flow laterally, upwards, and diagonally, cutting across organizational functions and hierarchical levels. While career services directors are likely to exercise hierarchical influence within their respective units, to employ only a hierarchical lens would preclude examination of other forms and venues of leadership enacted by career services directors.

### **Shared leadership.**

The concept of shared leadership extends the number stakeholders participating in institutional leadership. Bensimon and Neumann's (1993) study of executive leadership teams at 15 colleges and universities provides a framework from which to understand shared leadership. According to Bensimon and Neumann, shared leadership is a deliberately constructed process initiated by the president whereby authority for

organizational leadership is expanded to include a select group of administrators working at the most senior levels of the organization. The president can invite other stakeholders to formally share leadership through serving on a leadership team, thereby extending their responsibility and authority for leading the institution. While more inclusive than hierarchical leadership, shared leadership retains several qualities of hierarchical leadership. Both forms of leadership concentrate power and authority at the top of the organization. Whereas hierarchical leadership invests authority in a single leader at the highest point in the organizational pyramid, shared leadership allocates authority to a group of leaders in the form of a team that encompasses a more diverse range of skills, perspectives, expertise, and experiences than can be embodied in a single leader. The leadership team, rather than a single individual, is positioned at the highest point in the organizational structure, and the leadership that emanates from it flows in a downward trajectory stratum after stratum. Institutional stakeholders working at positions below that of the shared leadership team serve as conduits for channeling leadership throughout the institution. In this way, shared leadership mirrors hierarchical leadership.

Shared leadership, however, differs from hierarchical leadership in its cross-functionality. The members of shared leadership teams in Bensimon and Neumann's study (1993), for example, were senior level administrators, most often at the vice presidential level, each of whom had responsibility for and expertise in a different area within the institution (e.g. finance and administration, academic affairs, student affairs, development, and institutional effectiveness). For shared leadership to be effective, leadership team members must develop the ability to understand issues through the professional lenses of their colleagues. Subsequently, both the team itself and the

individual members increase their cognitive complexity as a result of the diverse perspectives brought about by cross-functionality (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Kezar & Lester, 2009).

Shared leadership, like mid-level leadership, cuts across organizational functions. Unlike mid-level leadership, shared leadership does not originate with an individual source; rather it originates from a collective source that functions much as an individual might. Additionally shared leadership differs from mid-level leadership as it has a single downwardly flowing direction and is studied at the group level, rather than at the individual level.

#### **Collaborative leadership.**

Collaborative leadership engages multiple stakeholders in institutional leadership. Stakeholders from a variety of organizational functions and hierarchical levels are formally brought together to form an interdisciplinary or interdepartmental team charged with a specific area of responsibility (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Like shared leadership, collaborative leadership increases the number of stakeholders who formally engage in institutional leadership. It too is characterized as more inclusive of diverse perspectives and more likely to generate cognitive complexity than hierarchical leadership. In addition to being cross-functional, as is shared leadership, collaborative leadership is also cross-hierarchical. Collaborative leadership does not originate at any one particular stratum on the institutional hierarchy.

Kezar and Lester's (2009) study of collaborative leadership at four colleges and universities provides a framework from which to understand this phenomenon. Within their study, collaborative leadership is conceptualized not as an organic process cutting

across all segments of the organization, but rather as deliberately constructed by senior administrators to address specific needs or functions. Collaborative leadership can be initiated by senior administrators when an issue or problem could best be addressed by aggregating a range of skills, knowledge bases, and perspectives. Collaborative leadership is bounded much like unit leadership. While unit leadership is bounded by functional area, collaborative leadership is bounded by the scope of the defined project or issue that it is intended to address.

Framed in this way, collaborative leadership is similar to this study's framework for mid-level leadership. Collaborative leadership is more inclusive than hierarchical leadership, is cross-functional and by extension, more cognitively complex, and its participants can work in positions located at various hierarchical levels. Collaborative leadership differs, however, from mid-level leadership in two distinct ways. First, collaborative leadership relies upon formal hierarchical leaders for its inception and continued support. Collaborative leadership arrangements are endorsed and designed by senior level administration. Second, collaborative leadership is studied at the group level, while mid-level leadership is studied at the individual level.

### **Grassroots leadership.**

Grassroots leadership originates with organizational members who are positioned at a lower level in the organization than the person(s) who have formal authority over the issue that the grassroots leaders seek to impact. Thus, grassroots leadership flows upwardly. Organizational members initiate grassroots leadership when they recognize a need or problem that the institution is not adequately addressing. While grassroots leadership may begin with an individual, the initiative can become a collective effort as

more organizational members become engaged and align themselves with the change effort.

Grassroots leadership, like shared leadership and collaborative leadership, increases the number of stakeholders who participate in organizational leadership. Unlike shared leadership and collaborative leadership, grassroots leadership can be characterized as informal leadership. Unlike shared or collaborative leadership, there is no organizational directive at the senior level that sanctions or provides structure to this form of leadership. Instead, grassroots leadership happens more organically (Kezar & Lester, 2009).

Kezar and Lester's (2009) study of faculty grassroots leadership at five colleges and universities provides a framework from which to understand grassroots leadership within the context of higher education. Kezar and Lester suggest that the structure of higher education and the challenges currently facing faculty (e.g. increased numbers of part-time and non-tenure track faculty, increased demands for publication, increased teaching loads, integration of new technologies and pedagogies into teaching) make faculty grassroots leadership difficult to enact and sustain. While their study focuses specifically on faculty, the organizational constraints to grassroots leadership that they identify are likely to apply to non-faculty seeking to lead change at the grassroots level. For instance, expanding workloads within the context of resource constraints are not faculty-only challenges, nor is the integration of new technologies into the workplace.

Using Kezar and Lester's (2009) framing, grassroots leadership within higher education is similar in many ways to this study's framework for mid-level leadership. Grassroots leadership involves more people than hierarchical leadership, is cross-



functional and by extension, more cognitively complex, and its participants can work in positions located at various hierarchical levels. Grassroots leadership differs from mid-level leadership in that grassroots leadership is typically conceived of as a collective endeavor, and is studied at the group level.

This discussion of hierarchical, shared, collaborative, and grassroots leadership (see Table 1) suggests that to utilize any of those lenses would leave us with an incomplete understanding of the leadership of career services directors. The framework of mid-level leadership, however, is more likely to provide a comprehensive understanding of their contributions as institutional leaders, because it allows for a multi-directional flow of leadership that is not constrained by hierarchical level or divisional function.

Table 1

*Forms of leadership*

<i>Form of leadership</i>	<i>Point of origin</i>	<i>Directionality (flow)</i>	<i>Level of study</i>
Hierarchical	President (institutional) Unit head (departmental)	Downwards	individual
Shared	Top-level Administrators	Downwards	group
Collaborative	Cross-functional/cross- hierarchical team	Upwards, downwards, lateral, and/or diagonal	group
Grassroots	Lower level	Upwards	group
Mid-level	Middle manager	Upwards, downwards, lateral, and/or diagonal	individual

## **Conceptual Framework**

The examination of mid-level leadership in this study requires a conceptual framework that assumes that leadership is flexible and inclusive rather than rigid and limiting – inclusive in terms of who within an organization can contribute to its leadership and flexible in what directions leadership may flow. This necessitates the adoption of a framework that allows for leadership to originate with multiple sources including but not limited to leadership that originates from sources positioned at the most senior organizational levels. It also necessitates a framework that suggests that the flow of leadership may include but is not limited to the downward trajectory associated with hierarchical leadership.

Not all actions taken by mid-level administrators qualify as mid-level leadership. How do we distinguish those activities that qualify as mid-level leadership from the other activities in which mid-level administrators engage? Many of the activities in which mid-level administrators engage are associated with their formal organizational responsibilities and are likely to be tied to managing their unit's various functions (e.g. budget development, staff supervision). While these activities are critical to day-to-day functioning, they do not necessarily have organization-wide impact and as such would be considered management rather than leadership. That does not mean that every action mid-level administrators take relative to their unit is only managerial. Nor does it suggest that any activity in which a mid-level administrator engages relative to something external to their unit is leadership. The key is that the activity's outcome has organizational impact.

The conceptual framework for this study seeks to understand how mid-level administrators can develop and use social influence to advance organizational goals. Scholars in the field of organizational behavior have suggested that leadership is associated with the capacity for social influence. For example, Katz (1973) defines leadership as “the process by which one individual consistently exerts more influence than others in the carrying out of group functions” (p. 204). Organizational members can achieve higher levels of social influence when they possess and share information and resources that help the organization deal with critical uncertainties (Hickson et al., 1971; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1974). Critical uncertainties for a college or university might include the institution’s capacity to attract students, the institution’s reputation in the external environment, and the institution’s ability to interpret and respond to external events, such as changes in the skills needed by employers and changes in public policies that affect higher education. When individuals provide information that helps the organization address these types of uncertainties, they gain social influence, and therefore, they acquire the capacity for institutional leadership. The organizational behavior literature (Granovetter, 1973; Weick, 1993) suggests that organizational members can use three mechanisms to develop and use of social influence. These mechanisms include boundary spanning, networking, and sensemaking/sensegiving.

Boundary spanning was included in the conceptual framework because much of the work that career services directors perform is situated at the boundary of their employing institutions. For instance, career services directors cross boundaries when they interact with employers seeking to hire their graduates. These interactions with employers, as well as interactions with other external stakeholders such as parents of

prospective students, provide career services directors with access to external knowledge and information that is of importance to the institution. These external relationships and the associated access to important information can provide career services directors with social influence in their employing institutions. Their external relationships and their knowledge of the external environment can be viewed as an important organizational resource that helps the institution address critical uncertainties, particularly in terms of employment outcomes for graduates. When organizational members can help the institution address critical uncertainties in the external environment, those organizational members gain a higher level of social influence within the institution (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1974).

Networking was included in the conceptual framework because networks are the mechanisms through which career services directors can enact their social influence throughout the institution (Kezar & Lester 2009; Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999). Huy (2001) identified mid-level administrators as having the most robust internal networks of all organizational stakeholders. Given these robust internal networks, career services directors are well positioned to use their social influence to advance particular goals. When these internal networks span hierarchical levels and functional areas, the networks can be powerful mechanisms for having influence at the organization-wide level.

Finally, sensemaking and sensegiving were included in the framework for two reasons. First, social influence is an interactive process that involves changes in how people perceive and think about issues and circumstances in their organization (Weick, 1995). To exert social influence, an organizational member must first interpret and frame the issue for him or herself (that is, engage in sensemaking). Then, the organizational

member can attempt to influence others so that they interpret the issue in a way similar to how the organizational member has framed it. For example, an administrator can frame a student retention problem as a teaching and learning issue, and then attempt to influence others so that they think about retention in relation to the college's teaching and learning environment, rather than attribute the retention problem to lack of student motivation or to some other potential explanation. In summary, social influence occurs when an individual interprets and frames an organization issue, and then is able to convince others to also embrace that framing of the issue.

Second, sensemaking and sensegiving may be particularly relevant to how mid-level administrators can enact social influence. Career services directors, because of their mid-level positioning, may not have formal power to define which issues are important to the institution. Based on their boundary spanning activities, however, career services directors become aware of issues within the external environment that are of critical importance to the institution. In the absence of formal hierarchical authority, career services directors can still enact social influence through sensemaking and sensegiving by calling attention to the issue and by framing the institution's understanding of its importance. For instance, career services directors often interact with employers who hire their institution's graduates. As a result of conversations with those employers, career services directors may learn that the current curriculum is no longer adequately preparing students for technology-based positions and is impacting their employability. This becomes information that they can share with academic leadership.

Boundary spanning, networking, and sensemaking/sensegiving are each important dimensions of this study's conceptual framework. They are also inter-related. For

instance, there is much knowledge and information to be gained from engaging in boundary spanning activities. When external knowledge and information are valued by the organization, boundary-spanning individuals are likely to gain more capacity to exercise social influence in the organization (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1974). However, for that information to have institutional value, mechanisms must exist that allow the information to be communicated throughout an institution (Kezar & Lester, 2009). While networks are the conduits for the dissemination of knowledge and information, when used strategically, they can also be vehicles through which mid-level leaders can engage in sensegiving, which in turn, can lead to institutional impact.

### **Boundary spanning.**

Boundary spanning is a critical dimension of mid-level leadership. Many mid-level administrative functions (e.g. admissions, human resources, alumni affairs, placement and counseling) require organizational members to cross the institution's boundary and interact with entities in the external environment. Clark and Harriman (1984) define the organizational boundary as "...a region in which elements of the organization and its environments come together and perform activities to more effectively relate the organization to the outside world" (p.60). According to Pruitt and Schwartz (1999), boundary spanners contribute to an institution's ability to anticipate and subsequently manage change. They suggest that, "Boundary spanners perform a critical function by linking intra-, inter-, and extra-organizational groups to each other and to the university by collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and exchanging information, ideas, resources and people across these boundaries" (p. 62). A career services director's ability to facilitate critical connections between the institution and its environment contributes to

his/her overall capacity for influence. For instance, in addition to channeling information (e.g. employment trends) accessed through boundary spanning activities into their institutions, career services directors can facilitate connections between the institution and external stakeholders. For professional programs such as accounting or engineering, they can assist with the identification of employers willing to serve on advisory boards and make the necessary introductions.

Boundary spanning can be understood in terms of the types of boundaries that are crossed or spanned. Some boundaries separate an organization from its external environment (Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999; Lipsky, 1980). Other boundaries are internal, separating units, departments, or divisions from other units, departments, or divisions within the organization (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999). For the purpose of this study, only those interactions that cross boundaries that separate an organization from its environment will be considered boundary spanning, while those interactions that cross boundaries internal to an organization will be considered networking.

This characterization of boundary spanning as linking extra-organizational groups is consistent with Lipsky's (1980) characterization of the boundary spanning activities of "street level" bureaucrats. Lipsky depicts mid-level administrators as being organizationally positioned at the "street-level" where they operate with considerable autonomy on the front-lines, that place where the organization abuts its external environment. Street-level work casts many mid-level administrators into the role of boundary spanner. Boundary spanners regularly cross the boundaries of their institutions while interacting with external stakeholders to carry out their "street level"

responsibilities. As boundary spanners, mid-level administrators develop relationships with external stakeholders that provide them with access to information about what is happening within the surrounding environment; they can then channel that information back into their institutions (Lipsky, 1980; Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999).

Information accessed through boundary spanning is critical for institutional change and adaptation (Chemers, 1997; Middaugh, 1984). According to Chemers (1997), “Organizations must know what is going on around them and adapt to change in the environment. The ability to change is the critical element of innovation in organizations and is necessary for adaptability” (p.3). Directors of career services, for example, interact with organizations seeking to hire the institution’s graduates. The information that they gather about the specific skills that employers require of job candidates can be used to inform curriculum development. The same information may also be utilized by the mid-level administrator to more effectively manage his/her own unit. Knowing what an employer needs and expects from a new graduate enables the career services unit to deliver programming designed to help graduates become more competitive candidates for positions.

Additionally, mid-level administrators are often the only institutional representatives with whom some external stakeholders interact. As such, interactions between mid-level administrators and external stakeholders can frame how external stakeholders perceive the institution (Clark & Harriman, 1984; Lipsky, 1980). When an external stakeholder has a positive interaction with a mid-level administrator, they are likely to perceive the institution in a positive way. Parents who have positive interactions



with admissions representatives, for example, might be more likely to support their children's desire to attend a specific institution, thus increasing enrollment and revenues.

Pruitt and Schwartz (1999) identify eight categories that delineate the range of activities reflected in the boundary spanning behaviors of student affairs practitioners. These eight categories include representing, transacting, administering, scanning, monitoring, protecting, linking, and processing/gate keeping. Table 2 provides brief explanations for each of these categories.

Table 2

*Boundary spanning categories*

<i>Category</i>	<i>Boundary Spanning Activity</i>
Representing	Presenting information about the institution and student affairs to external audiences to shape the opinions and responses of other organizations, groups, and individuals.
Transacting	Acquiring resources and marketing the benefits, services, or graduates of the institution
Administering	Designing, managing, or performing operations; setting policy in the division or university; planning in the division or university; and changing to meet new demands.
Scanning	Identifying emerging trends or events which provide opportunity or threat.
Monitoring	Tracking changes, trends, and/or events identified as strategic.
Protecting	Warding off external pressures which could be disruptive.
Linking	Establishing and maintaining key relationships with important organizations, groups, and individuals.
Processing and gate-keeping	Communicating information to key decision makers at all levels of the institution.

*Note:* Adapted from “Student affairs work as boundary spanning: an exploratory study,” by D. A. Pruitt and R. A. Schwartz, 1999, *College Student Affairs Journal*, 19, 1, pp. 67-68.

The categories that Pruitt and Schwartz (1999) have outlined correspond to other identified boundary spanning activities associated with mid-level administrators. For instance, representing and linking align with roles enacted by Lipsky's (1980) "street level bureaucrats" (p. xii), which include functions that frame the ways in which mid-level administrators interact with external stakeholders. As mid-level administrators interact with external stakeholders, they are able to gather information by scanning and monitoring the environment. They can then utilize this information to more effectively administer and/or protect their units. This information may also be used in the processing and gatekeeping functions as mid-level administrators pass ideas and data on to other internal stakeholders. Additionally, transacting is directly linked to the organizationally defined work of some mid-level administrators. For instance, career services directors work to support positive employment outcomes for their graduates.

The CAS standards (2001) identify employers as external stakeholders with whom the career services office is required to interact. Employers, as external stakeholders, have roles as both partners who inform the educational process and as customers of career services units. Career services directors engage in boundary spanning by inviting external stakeholders into the institution. For example, employers may be invited to partner with career services by serving on advisory boards where they share their expertise (e.g. field-specific skills or hiring needs and trends within their field) or be asked to assist with programming (e.g. serve as panelists to discuss opportunities within their industry) where they share their expertise directly with students. Career services directors may also engage in boundary spanning by stepping out to interact with

employers with the purpose of connecting students to opportunities for experiential learning and to jobs that are aligned with employer needs.

### **Networking.**

Networking is a critical dimension of mid-level leadership. It supports the notion that mid-level leadership is enacted not only through formal organizational structures, but also through informal structures that are not bounded by or limited to positional or functional relationships. Rosser (2004) writes that networks are highly valued by mid-level administrators. “The relationships that midlevel leaders develop within and between their work units are very important worklife issues to this group of professionals. They enjoy building positive relationships with colleagues within and between work units” (p. 333). Networks, however, do more than just provide the social connections that increase work satisfaction. Networks also enable mid-level administrators to navigate organizational politics (Ferris et al., 2005). In the context of corporations, Huy (2001) suggests that mid-level administrators “...usually have the best social networks in the company” (p.76) and that these networks provide them with a place to spend their accumulated social capital. He writes that mid-level administrators have networks that typically “include unwritten obligations and favors traded, giving effective middle managers a significant amount of informal leverage” (p. 76). Subsequently, networking becomes the mechanism that mid-level administrators can utilize to cut across hierarchical levels and organizational functions, thus expanding the spheres of their influence in the context of the whole institution.

Given the informal networks that they typically develop, mid-level administrators may be particularly skilled in creating linkages between and among inter-organizational

groups (Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999). They can become especially skilled at utilizing these linkages or informal networks as a result of the relationships they have developed across the institution. Huy (2001) argues that because of the networks they have formed and leveraged, mid-level administrators are positioned to have institutional impact:

Look for people with informal power. These individuals' influence exceeds their formal authority; they're middle managers whose advice and help are highly sought after by people all around them. They have accumulated a lot of social capital inside the organization, are at the center of a large informal network, and know how to pull the right strings. They can become excellent ambassadors for change if senior executives can get them (p. 75).

Mid-level administrators' ability to develop and leverage networks is also critical to effective institutional functioning, given the organizational structure of higher education, which is characterized by "fragmented hierarchies" (Cherrey & Allen, 2001, p. 41). The structures of higher education institutions typically reinforce hierarchical interactions and limit cross-functional communication, resulting in constrained resource reallocation and a subsequent inability to adjust to a changing environment.

Mid-level administrators can use their networks to impact change in the organization as a whole, as well as within their units. Their networks – much like their boundary spanning activities -- provide access to information that might not ordinarily be available to them due to hierarchical or functional positioning within the institution. This information may enable them to be more strategic in leading their units. Information garnered from their internal networks allows them to make decisions about their units

based on a broader institutional context rather than solely from a unit or functional area context.

It comes as no surprise that career services directors would be skilled at networking within their employing institutions, as networking is a common skill taught by career services professionals to their job-seeking clients. The formal scope of their responsibilities, as outlined by CAS (2001) and NACE (2009), suggests that their work cuts across functional areas. As career services directors support students studying various academic disciplines who seek jobs and internships or are pursuing graduate school, they may find themselves naturally in orbit with the academic side of the institution. As they provide services to and involve alumni in program delivery, they might find themselves connected to institutional advancement and alumni affairs. Also their role as internal expert on issues related to employment and job markets for the institution's graduates will bring them in contact with other stakeholders on campus. Interactions with these different internal populations can provide the career services director with the opportunity to access information and shape perceptions much in the same way they do when boundary spanning externally.

### **Sensemaking and sensegiving.**

Sensemaking, the process of interpreting and assigning meaning to situations and experiences for oneself (Weick 1995), and sensegiving, the process of deliberately influencing how others come to understand a situation (Eddy, 2003), are additional dimensions of mid-level leadership, because they represent the mid-level administrator's ability to impact cognition and ultimately to have influence in the organization. When mid-level administrators make sense of organizational issues for themselves, they can

then, in turn, act as sensegivers to their staff members, as well as for other internal and external stakeholders. In this way, sensemaking and sensegiving can impact the institution as a whole (Smith, Plowman, & Duchon, 2010).

Sensemaking is an ongoing process that may occur at either the conscious or the subconscious level as an individual attempts to interpret and assign meaning to that which is occurring in the environment around them (Weick, 1995). Weick argues that sensemaking is an automatic process; people are constantly engaged in interpreting and assigning meaning to what they experience. Sensemaking is shaped by an individual's existing mental model, and the sensemaking process can be enhanced through reflective practice and through interactions with others who are also attempting to assign meaning to what they experience.

Cunliffe and Coupland (2011) have contributed to the body of sensemaking literature by addressing what they described as “an undertheorized aspect of sensemaking: its embodied narrative nature” (p 63). They argue that sensemaking is not simply a retrospective process but one that generates plausible accounts that incorporate what is going on in a particular moment and what is anticipated to happen in the future. Their review of relevant literature led them to believe that “a gap therefore exists in terms of theorizing sensemaking as a lived embodied everyday experience” (p. 64). Their conceptualization of “embodiment” includes three components: 1) it incorporates bodily sensations, felt experiences, and sensory knowing in addition to emotion; 2) rather than abstracting embodiment and generalizing it across experiences, they situate it within lived experience; and 3) they conceptualize embodiment as “an *integral* part of sensemaking” (p.64). They argue that sensemaking or “making life sensible”:

- occurs in *embedded narrative performances* – in the lived experience of everyday, ordinary interactions and conversations with others and ourselves;
- is *temporal*, taking place moment-to-moment within and across time and space;
- encompasses *polyphony* as we attempt to interweave multiple, alternative and contested narratives and stories;
- is an ongoing *embodied* process of interpretation of self and experiences in which we cannot separate ourselves, our senses, our body and emotions (p. 64).

Before individuals can engage in sensegiving – framing meaning for others – they must first make sense of a situation or an event for themselves. The need for a mid-level administrator to make sense of an issue for him or herself before engaging in sensegiving suggests that there is a sequential relationship between sensemaking and sensegiving. Once an individual has made sense of a situation or issue for him or herself, he or she may engage in sensegiving to influence others to adopt a specific understanding or interpretation. Sensegiving, therefore, is an intentional, strategic act, the goal of which is to influence the perceptions of others. Thus, sensegiving is similar to impression management which is “... the process by which individuals control (influence) the impressions others have of them” (Nelson & Quick, 2003, p. 102). While much of the impression management literature focuses on managing the impressions that others have of oneself (Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984), Crane and Crane (2002) argue that it is the actor’s motivation that impacts how impression management is enacted. This in turn suggests the focus of impression management may not be limited solely to promoting positive impressions of oneself. Rather it may extend to include an actor’s intent to influence how stakeholders internalize a wider range of deliberately crafted impressions.

Impression management, conceived in this way, is aligned with what Eddy (2003) refers to as framing issues for others.

One way in which a mid-level administrator can engage in sensegiving, or framing an issue for others, is to promote or advance a specific understanding or interpretation of an issue with other stakeholders. Within the units that they oversee, mid-level administrators can engage in vertical sensegiving by working to influence their staff to adopt a specific interpretation of a situation or issue. When they engage in sensegiving with their staff, mid-level administrators can offer explanations or translations of organizational policy, thereby helping staff members understand the rationale behind organizational decisions. When advancing their own specific frames, mid-level administrators can also engage in vertical sensegiving directed at hierarchical levels above them as they work to influence their own supervisors or others working at more senior levels. Sensegiving may also flow horizontally in the organization as mid-level administrators work to influence the understanding of those working in different functional areas.

In addition to working to influence others to adopt a specific interpretation or understanding, mid-level administrators can also leverage sensegiving to elevate an issue so that others also come to recognize it as important. Kingdon's (1995) concept of policy entrepreneurs and Kotter's (1996) concept of "establishing a sense of urgency" (p. 27) about specific issues are examples of the ways in which mid-level administrators can enact leadership through sensegiving. According to Kingdon (1995), the policy entrepreneur is someone who impacts policy through their ability to focus organizational attention on specific issues that they believe to be important. The ultimate goal of the



policy entrepreneur is to establish a sense of urgency about the issue. Policy entrepreneurs create this sense of urgency by influencing others who have the authority to address the issue to share their belief in the criticality of the issue so that it is brought to the forefront. Sensegiving employed in this way can flow either vertically or horizontally in the organization depending upon where the person most critical to addressing the issue is positioned within the organization.

In addition to framing issues for themselves (sensemaking) and others (sensegiving), mid-level administrators can create venues for others to collectively make sense of an issue for themselves. Boyce (1995) states that collective sensemaking “can be understood as the process whereby groups interactively create social reality, which becomes the organizational reality” (p. 109). Through collective sensemaking, group members work together to interpret and assign meaning to an issue or an experience in which they are engaged. Mid-level administrators can facilitate collective sensemaking by creating teams or committees that have responsibility for interpreting issues, data, or trends that are not yet well understood by the organization. Mid-level administrators could simultaneously serve as facilitator and as participant in the collective sensemaking process, as they work to make sense of an issue alongside others. This collective process is studied at the group level (Boyce, 1995).

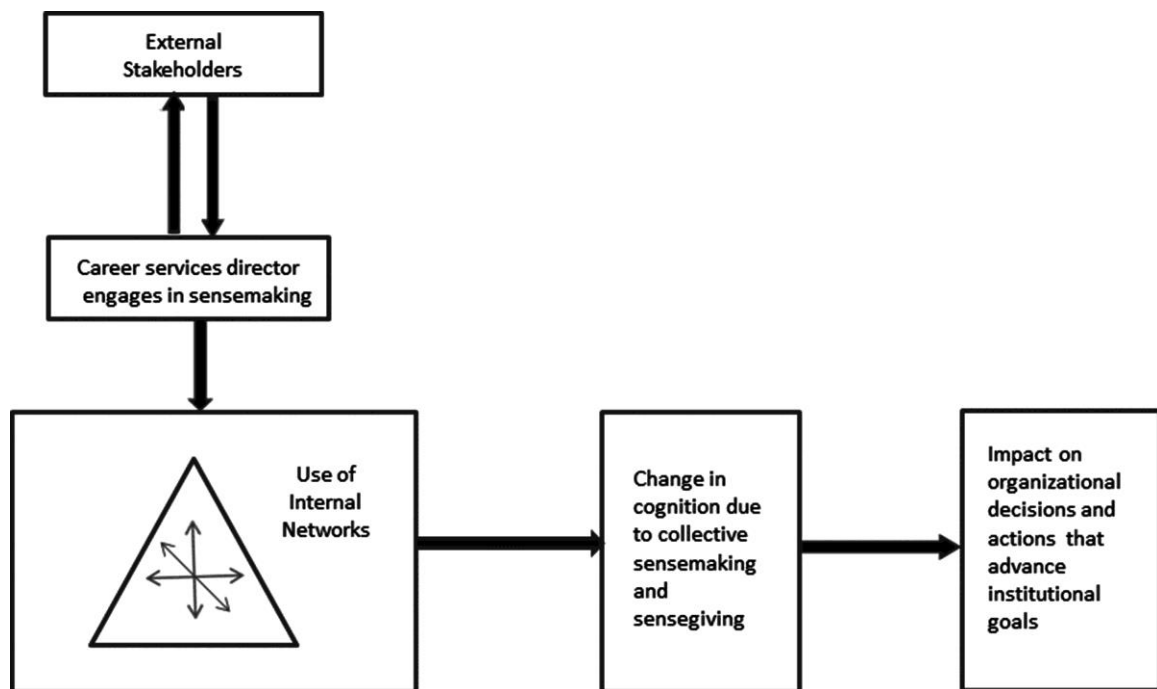
Collective sensemaking differs from sensegiving in some important ways. In sensegiving, an organizational member has already developed an interpretation of an issue, and is attempting to influence others to frame the issue in a similar way. In collective sensemaking, organizational members have not yet arrived at a clear interpretation of an issue. In this context where clarity is lacking, people interact with

others to build a common interpretation of the issue, which in turn, provides more clarity and certainty for taking action. To summarize, sensegiving is enacted by an individual who seeks to influence how others interpret an issue, while collective sensemaking is enacted by group members who take an uncertain issue and attempt to create a common understanding that will guide their actions going forward (Boyce, 1995).

One way in which mid-level administrators can facilitate collective sensemaking is to adopt the blending of both dialogue and discussion as conceptualized by Senge (2006). Senge writes about how dialogue and discussion serve as vehicles through which groups engage in a shared process of making sense of a situation. He suggests that through dialogue new ways of understanding are discovered as a result of group members presenting differing viewpoints. After a period of open dialogue, discussion can then be used to identify a preferred view or collective understanding. Dialogues, he wrote, "...are diverging, they do not seek agreement, but a richer grasp of complex issues" (p. 230), while discussions "converge on a conclusion" (p. 230). Raelin (2003) did not distinguish between dialogue and discussion as vehicles to advance collective sensemaking, but rather described it in more simplistic terms. He wrote, "To make meaning one has to merely help the group make sense of what people do when they work together" (p. 138). Raelin's conceptualization of collective sensemaking – bringing a group together to engage in a blend of expanding understanding and adopting a shared interpretation of the work they do together -- informs how collective sensemaking is defined in this study.

The three dimensions of the conceptual framework adopted for this study include boundary spanning, networking, and sensemaking/sensegiving. They are not enacted in isolation from one another. Figure 1 illustrates the interplay among the three dimensions enabling career services directors to enact mid-level leadership. Career services directors regularly work across the institution's boundary as they interact with external stakeholders (e.g. alumni, parents, and employers seeking to hire the institution's graduates). As a result of these interactions, career services directors share information about the institution with external stakeholders. Additionally, career services directors access information that is critical to their institutions and to which other institutional actors may not have access. Before they channel that information back into their institutions, they engage in a sensemaking process by which they make meaning of the information for themselves. Once they have made meaning of the information, they leverage their internal networks as the mechanisms by which they can cross functional areas and/or hierarchical levels to engage in sensegiving, the act of persuading others to adopt their interpretation or framing of the information. Alternatively, career services directors may utilize their internal networks to engage others in a process of collective sensemaking whereby they develop their own shared understanding or interpretation of the information. Through these sensegiving and collective sensemaking activities, they can have impact on organizational decisions and actions that ultimately advance institutional goals.

Figure 1 Dimensions of the conceptual framework



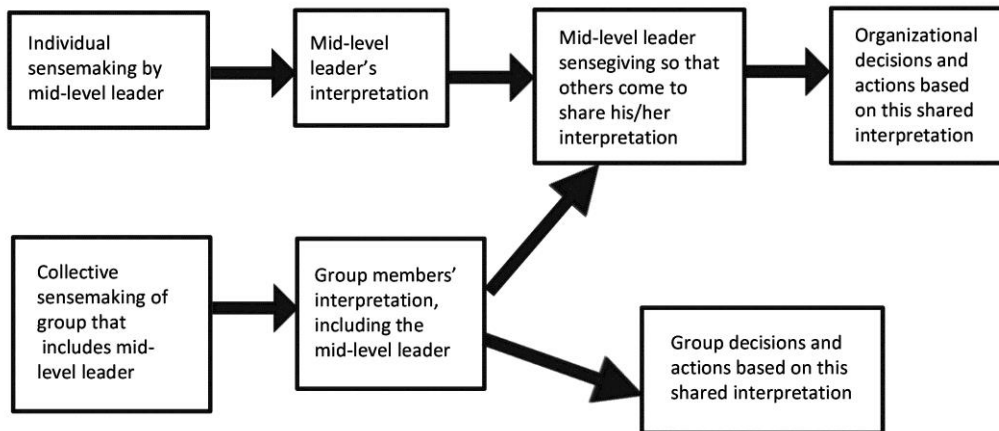
Without formal authority granted by positional power, career services directors, as mid-level leaders, rely on their ability to effectively engage in sensegiving with others working at the top-level of the institution. Before they can engage in sensegiving, however, career services directors need to engage in their own individual sensemaking, or they can facilitate a collective sensemaking process in which they are also participants. Figure 2 illustrates how the processes of sensemaking and collective sensemaking can lead to career services directors' impact on organizational decisions that advance institutional goals.

Consider the top part of Figure 2. Individual sensemaking enables the career services director to attach his or her own interpretation to an issue or situation. He or she

then engages in sensegiving so that others are persuaded to adopt this same interpretation as their own. When other organizational members adopt the same interpretation as the career services director, they will use that interpretation to inform organizational decisions and actions. The top part of Figure 2 displays this sequence.

If a career services director instead begins the process by engaging in collective sensemaking, the shared interpretation of the issue or situation (to which they have contributed) will frame the interpretation that drives the sensegiving process, which in turn, influences organizational decisions and advances institutional goals. The shared interpretation will also lead the group that engaged in the collective sensemaking process to make decisions and take actions based on their shared interpretation. The bottom part of Figure 2 displays this sequence.

Figure 2 How sensemaking and collective sensemaking impact institutional goals



**Conclusion**

Three components – external boundary spanning, internal networks, and sensemaking/sensegiving – can explain how mid-level administrators develop and use social influence, and thus enact leadership within their employing institutions. These

three components are interrelated and interactive. For instance, crossing organizational boundaries to access information in the external environment suggests that for the information to have value to the organization, the mid-level boundary spanner must have an internal network through which he or she can channel the information back into the organization. Additionally, an external stakeholder may want to influence internal stakeholders to embrace their interpretation of a particular situation. The boundary spanner is both their link internally and the interpreter of the issue on their behalf. This suggests that the boundary spanner will enact sensegiving so that internal actors will be influenced to frame their understanding of the issue from the perspective of the external stakeholder.

This conceptualization of mid-level leadership, as a process that involves external boundary spanning, internal networking, and making/giving sense, allows leadership to flow laterally, vertically, and/or diagonally, and these leadership flows are not constrained by organizational function or hierarchical level. Based on the CAS (2001) standards and the NACE (2009) professional standards, these three components are also consistent with the ways in which career services directors engage in their work. Therefore, these dimensions will frame this study's examination of how career services directors enact mid-level leadership within their employing institutions. Specifically, the examination of these dimensions will further our understanding of how career services directors can develop the capacity for social influence, how they can use that social influence to cut across institutional functions and hierarchical levels, and how they can identify which organizational goals and outcomes are impacted when they do so.

## **Definitions**

*Leadership* is “a process of social influence through which one person is able to enlist the aid of others in reaching a goal” (Chemers, 1997, p. 5).

*Mid-level leadership* is a process of social interaction that originates with a middle manager and that cuts across organizational functions and/or hierarchical levels to impact an institutional goal.

*Mid-level administrators* are those professionals, technicians, and specialists working at the director or coordinator level, who report to either a senior administrator or dean and whose positions tend to be differentiated by functional specialization, skills, training, and experiences (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2000; Rosser, 2004).

*Non-academic mid-level administrators* are non-faculty managers working within administrative areas such as admissions, institutional research, registration, business operations, computing and technology, human resources, communications, alumni affairs, students affairs, placement and counseling, financial aid, residential life, and development and planned giving (Rosser, 2004).

*Career services directors* are non-academic, mid-level administrators who have organizational authority for those units responsible for providing employment-related services to students.

*Boundary spanning* is the linking of external stakeholders to the organization by “collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and exchanging information, ideas, resources, and people” (Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999, p. 62).

*Networking* is the linking of internal organizational stakeholders by “collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and exchanging information, ideas, resources, and people” (Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999, p. 62).

*Unit leadership* is the management of a specific organizational division, department, or unit, which incorporates the oversight of unit responsibilities, while simultaneously operating strategically to promote unit growth (Gardner, 2000).

*Sensemaking* is the ability to frame understanding or perception of an issue for oneself (Weick, 1995).

*Sensegiving* is the ability to impact the cognition of others by framing how they understand or perceive issues (Eddy, 2003).

*Collective sensemaking* is a process in which a group develops a shared understanding of a situation or issue by engaging in dialogue and discussion (Boyce, 1995; Senge, 2006).



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature suggests that mid-level leadership can be carried out in multiple ways. Specifically, mid-level leadership can be enacted through boundary spanning activities that connect the organization to its environment and external stakeholders (Erb 1991; Lipsky, 1980; Miller 2008; Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999), as well as through the development and utilization of internal networks among colleagues within the organization (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999), and through the cognitive and social processes associated with sensemaking and sensegiving (Eddy, 2003; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Smith et al., 2010). For mid-level administrators to have credibility as organizational leaders, they may need not only to engage with organizational units beyond career services, but they may also need to effectively manage and lead within their official organizational capacity. That is, they must enact effective unit leadership, as well.

This review will examine the literature pertaining to mid-level leadership as it is conceptualized for this study. This chapter will examine research on external boundary spanning and internal networking. Also it will examine the phenomena of sensemaking

and sensegiving in relation to leadership. Finally, this chapter will address the challenges inherent in mid-level organizational leadership.

### **Boundary Spanning**

For organizations to be viable, it is critical that professionals step outside their units, their divisions, and even the “ivory tower” itself to interact across organizational boundaries (Lipsky, 1980; Miller, 2008; Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999; Smith et al., 2010). Institutions need to have robust interactions with external stakeholders if they are to have access to knowledge and resources in the external environment that enable them to maintain equilibrium and remain adaptable to changing conditions (Middaugh, 1984). Additionally, colleges and universities need to have robust interactions with external stakeholders if they are to carry out key functions such as attracting prospective student applicants, accessing funding sources, and participating in community partnerships (Miller, 2008).

Actions that take place across the formally established boundaries separating one entity from another are referred to as “boundary spanning.” More specifically, boundary spanning may be defined as “...the intra-, inter-, and extra-organizational transfer of information, ideas, resources, and even people across boundaries” (Pruitt, 1995, p. 62). This section of the literature review will address the characteristics of effective boundary spanners, how internal units can be structured to facilitate boundary spanning for the benefit of the institution, and the relationship between boundary spanning and individual and organizational performance. Intra-organizational boundary spanning will be addressed in the section on networking.

### **Characteristics of effective boundary spanners.**

The act of crossing boundaries itself does not insure that boundary spanning activities will result in positive outcomes for organizations or that the boundary spanner will have internal influence. Characteristics of the boundary spanners themselves are critical to the effectiveness of the boundary spanning process. Among these boundary-spanner characteristics are contextual knowledge of the different agencies and groups that are linked to the organization (Miller, 2008), and field/functional expertise (Middaugh, 1984).

Miller (2008) found that having contextual knowledge of the external entities connected to the organization is critical if boundary spanners are to have influence. His study participants had previous involvement with various external groups and organizations with which the institution was collaborating. For example, one college administrator in the study had previously worked for 10 years supporting poor families as an educational and social policy advocate, and was now leading a collaboration designed to better link community neighborhoods to the college. The external networks established through prior work experience resulted in the boundary spanners having an understanding of the different groups and the issues critical to each. Their contextual knowledge of various external stakeholders lent credibility and trust to their actions as leaders, enabling them to work across boundaries effectively. The boundary spanners in Miller's study were also found to have interpersonal skills and to have trust and a connectedness with the other individuals involved in the collaborative partnerships.

Tushman and Scanlan (1981) also found that personal characteristics played a role in institutional actors' ability to effectively engage in boundary spanning. Specifically,

this study examined informational boundary spanning, which the authors defined in terms of the transfer of information from the external environment into the organization.

Characteristics related to effective informational boundary spanning included strong communication skills, an understanding of both the internal and external environments, and work-related competence as perceived by others. Their research explored two interrelated questions:

1. How do new ideas and information enter organizations? (p. 300)
2. What are the antecedents of those individuals who provide this informational link? (p. 300)

Their study was conducted in the R&D division of an American high-technology medical instrument corporation that employed 210 professionals across four departments. The 210 professionals provided data on work-related, oral communication that took place on work days over a five week period. Purely social communication and written communication were excluded from the analysis. The analysis identified three types of “communication stars” in the organization: 1) those who excelled at external communication, 2) those who excelled at internal communication, and 3) “those individuals who are both internal and external communication stars (boundary spanning individuals)” (p. 290).

Tushman and Scanlan (1981) hypothesized that informational boundary spanning includes both obtaining information from external sources and then disseminating that information to others within the organization. They further hypothesized that only those individuals with strong internal and external networks, and only those individuals who could translate across boundaries with an understanding of both internal and external

contexts, would be able to accomplish this. Study findings showed that those who were identified by their colleagues as being a valuable source of new information and ideas were those who communicated extensively across both internal and external boundaries. They also found that while formal status might facilitate boundary spanning, boundary spanning transcends position within the formal organizational hierarchy. Status as a boundary spanner contributed more than formal position to being perceived as a valuable source of new information and ideas. They also found that perceived work-related competence had a direct impact on informational boundary spanning. Those who were perceived as more competent in their jobs were more likely to be viewed as a valuable source of new information and ideas.

#### **Boundary spanning and organizational performance.**

Boundary spanning has important implications for overall organizational performance. Specifically, boundary-spanning activities can bring new information into the organization, which can increase the organization's capacity for innovation and adaptability, and thereby impact organizational performance. Those who engage in boundary-spanning activities have access to information and resources from external sources which are critical to the organization's ability to adapt and maintain equilibrium (Middaugh, 1984; Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981), perform at a higher level (Rosenkopf & Nerkar, 2001), and secure new markets for the organization (Geiger & Finch, 2009).

Middaugh (1984) explored how the boundary-spanning activities of institutional research (IR) staff contributed to organizational adaptability. In a study of 173 two- and four-year public and private institutions in nine northeast and mid-Atlantic states,

Middaugh sent surveys to IR professionals, asking for information regarding the structure of the IR role (e.g. whether it was a separate office or was combined with other functions), professionalization of the role (e.g. whether the people carrying out the IR function had field-specific training), and trend data on enrollment and IR workload. Middaugh argued that those working in IR had access to information from external resources and that this placed them in key boundary spanning roles for their employing institutions. He also argued that the greater the amount of boundary spanning that took place, the greater the organizational adaptability.

Middaugh (1984) found that both role and departmental structure impacted how boundary spanning was carried out and how boundary spanning impacted institutional capacity for adaptability. The number of roles held by the person responsible for institutional research was most strongly associated with organizational adaptability. The fewer the roles held by the incumbent, the higher the institutional adaptability score. In other words, in organizations showing the highest adaptability, IR staff had fewer non-IR responsibilities attached to their positions. The clear focus on IR responsibilities enabled them to engage more in boundary spanning activities. These boundary spanning activities, in turn, led to greater institutional adaptability.

Middaugh's (1984) findings also indicated that there was a relationship between organizational adaptability and how the IR office was structured. When the institutional research function was one among several functions for which an office had responsibility, organizational adaptability was lessened. In contrast, when institutional research was the sole designated function of an office, findings indicated higher organizational adaptability scores. These findings held for both private two-year institutions and four-

year public institutions. When their office focused only on IR functions, IR professionals were better able to remain focused on their work as boundary spanners, rather than having their efforts redirected to other non-IR, non-boundary spanning activities. Middaugh (1984) also found that the organizational adaptability score was higher for those institutions that engaged regularly in a larger number of institutional research projects. This was not surprising because it was assumed that the larger the number of projects, the more boundary spanning would take place, thus allowing for more information to flow into the institution.

There are various ways in which organizational performance can be characterized. In the Middaugh (1984) study, organizational adaptability was linked to organizational performance. Organizational performance can also be characterized as an organization's ability to evolve technologically. Rosenkopf and Nerkar (2001) engaged in a study to explore the impact of intra- and inter-organizational boundary spanning activities on technological evolution and knowledge generation within the optical disc industry. To do so, they reviewed 25 years of patent data for each of 22 firms that accounted for 60% of patents filed/granted between 1971 and October 1995. Because patents contain information about the "technological antecedents" (p. 294) that precede current developments, they were considered evidence of the firms' technology evolution.

This study sought to determine the impact of boundary spanning on technological exploration. The authors examined two types of impact: 1) domain impact, which refers to a firm's influence within a specific technological domain, and 2) overall impact, which reflects "the firm's ability to create broadly useful technological developments" (p. 291). In relation to domain impact, the study found that exploration that took place within

organizational boundaries was found to have less domain impact than exploration that took place beyond organizational boundaries. The highest impact on technological evolution within the domain was found to come about as a result of external boundary spanning, while internal boundary spanning was found to have somewhat lower impact on technological evolution within the domain. It was also found that exploration that did not span technological boundaries generated less domain impact than exploration that did span technological boundaries. In relation to overall impact, the study found that internal boundary-spanning exploration generated less overall impact than external boundary-spanning exploration.

Conway (1997) also studied the relationship between boundary spanning activity and technological development. This study hypothesized “that successful innovation teams are more likely to be those that combine a dense set of internal linkages, that facilitate efficient and effective internal team communication, with a variety of external linkages between team members, and other sociometrically distant cliques, that expose the team to new ideas and information” (p. 227). In other words, teams are more likely to foster successful innovation when their members have strong internal networks and robust external linkages. Conway conducted a cross-sector study “on the role, nature and importance of informal links and networks in the development of thirty-five commercially successful technological innovations” (p. 229). Conway found that indirect links to external entities were of great importance to the innovation process and the development of new technologies. These indirect links may have resulted from someone facilitating strategic or informal links on behalf of the organization to external parties that fell into one of five external clusters: 1) scientific and technical specialty, 2) profession,



3) user or potential user of the innovation, 4) leisure activity, and 5) friendship. These indirect links translated into five types of networks: 1) research and design; 2) profession; 3) user networks; 4) recreation networks, and 5) friendship networks.

Conway found that organizations connected their projects to external networks in three ways. First, they created liaison roles, which served to connect at the organization to organization level. A designated individual served as an intermediary between the organizations. Second, they created bridges which served to connect networks within the organization to networks within the other organization. A designated individual with membership in the internal network was linked directly to someone in the external network. Finally, organizations also created link-pin structures. A designated individual who had dual membership – formal membership in the internal network and formal membership in the external network -- served to connect the two networks.

In addition to enhancing organizational adaptability and technological innovation, boundary spanning can also serve as a mechanism by which new markets are created. In their multi-case study of sales people working within the production chemistry industry, Geiger and Finch (2009) examined how boundary spanning changed the conceptualization of salespersons' interactions from transactional or relational to market shaping. That is, through the course of boundary-spanning activities, boundary spanners can create new markets and shape the external environment in which interactions take place. Geiger and Finch adopted Tushman and Scanlan's (1981) definition of boundary spanners as "... those individuals who operate across their organization's boundaries and who relate their organization to its environment" (p. 609). Furthermore, Geiger and Finch suggested that organizational boundaries are more fluid than fixed. These

boundaries are always being renegotiated, and thus they can be reshaped by salespeople who span organizational boundaries.

For their study, Geiger and Finch selected seven on-going projects at a trans-national chemical company with a specific focus on the UK and Scandinavian operations. They reviewed documents, conducted 23 face-to-face interviews with senior managers as well as sales, technical, and operations personnel, and attended account review meetings between the studied organization and its two most significant customer organizations. It was found that one of the ways in which sales personnel shape their market is via boundary spanning. For example, sales personnel partnered with one specific customer to develop a new product that met changing environmental standards. Once the new product became available, other firms began to compete for it.

While most of the literature demonstrates a positive relationship between boundary-spanning activity and organizational effectiveness, some research points to the limitations of boundary-spanning. Zhao and Anand (2013), for example, note that boundary spanning is a communication linkage in which a single individual establishes a connection across a particular boundary. This focus on the actions of a single individual is consistent with this study's conceptualization of mid-level leadership at the individual level of analysis. However, a limitation of boundary-spanning is that if an organization relies on a single individual to span a particular boundary, then the organization might experience decision delays if that individual encounters communication overload. Moreover, if the information that needs to cross the boundary is highly complex, a single individual as a boundary spanner might not have sufficient expertise to interpret and translate that information for the organization. In contrast to boundary spanning, Zhao

and Anand focused their discussion on a concept that they labeled the “collective bridge.” A collective bridge facilitates the crossing of boundaries to facilitate the transfer of knowledge in a way that differs from boundary spanning which has a single individual as the connecting point between the two entities. The focus of the collective bridge is not on individual boundary spanners but rather on multiple individuals simultaneously engaged in boundary spanning, each with unique connections to the other entity. This arrangement allows for more direct interunit ties.

Zhao and Anand (2013) found that the effectiveness of knowledge transfer structures is linked to the type of knowledge being transmitted. They noted that boundary spanning structures are effective for the transmission of individually held or discrete knowledge, but as knowledge complexity increases, the effectiveness of the boundary spanning model decreases as the boundary spanner must rely on intermediaries to help translate information about which they themselves are not experts. The complexity and scope of knowledge to be transferred into the organization could exceed the capacity of a boundary spanner to transfer it, thus resulting in “role overload, knowledge loss or distortion, and time delay” (p. 1519). Additionally, utilization of the boundary spanning structure as a means to transfer complex knowledge can lead to motivational problems due to the potential of role overload and also the scope of work associated with the development of the direct ties needed for knowledge transfer.

Zhao and Anand argued that the collective bridge model is a more effective model for the transfer of complex knowledge. The transfer of more complex knowledge through a collective bridge requires shorter pathways – from one interunit expert to another, rather than through intermediaries. The collective bridge allows for more

interunit connections and cross-expertise communication. It reduces communication overload for individual boundary spanners, allows multiple members of the organization to receive new information simultaneously, and instills empowerment and autonomy. They also argued that the collective bridge is a more effective model even for the transfer of knowledge of lower complexity. But they question its efficiency as defined by cost relative to productivity. Collective bridges are costly models to develop and maintain with each individual tie incurring costs related to training, travel, and IT support. It is expensive in relation to the allocation of other resources such as the time it takes to develop and maintain contacts to the potential detriment of performing other unit activities. They recommend that organizations strategically use one model over the other after weighing the benefits of both effectiveness and efficiency.

#### **Boundary spanning and individual performance.**

Boundary-spanning activity can have an impact on individual performance, as well as on organizational performance. For individuals, engaging in boundary-spanning activities can increase performance in key areas such as creativity, decision-making, task execution, and teamwork. Boundary spanning can also have an impact on the influence an individual has within the organization.

Zou and Ingram (2013) conducted a study of 318 managers who were working full-time while simultaneously attending an executive MBA program at a US business school. At the beginning of their MBA work, the participants had engaged in a 360° feedback exercise where they requested job performance feedback from a minimum of four work colleagues. Colleagues were asked to rate the managers on their creativity, decision-making, task execution, and teamwork. These colleagues were also asked to

indicate how well they knew the participant. Study participants were then asked to complete a network survey in which they identified contacts (maximum of 24) who they considered most important within their professional network because of these contacts' ability to provide economic resources, task information, career advice, and/or social support. Participants indicated where each of these contacts was situated: within their work units, within other organizational units, or outside the organization. The purposes of the study were two-fold. The first purpose was to examine the relationship between network structures and job performance in the areas of creativity, decision-making, task execution, and teamwork. The second purpose was to examine the impact of structural holes within and across the organization boundary on those four job performance domains. They explored whether or not structural holes or gaps in organizational boundaries that allow for the development of boundary spanning relationships had an impact on performance.

According to Zou and Ingram (2013), participation in different types of networks affects different dimensions of employee performance. Specifically, they considered participation in closed networks and participation in more open networks with structural holes. The management literature assumes that participation in both types of networks can have positive effects, but with varying impact on different dimensions of job performance. It is assumed that participation in networks with structural holes allows for unique contacts or ties between a network member and those external to the network, which in turn provides access to more diverse information channeled back into the organization. Alternatively, it is assumed that participation in closed networks, in which

there is already considerable interconnectedness among network members, leads to increased cooperation and efficiency.

They found that managers who spanned more cross-boundary structural holes (managers who had more unique network ties to people outside their organization) scored higher on the performance domains for creativity and decision-making. Alternatively, managers with high network constraint at work (that is, managers who had closed networks that exhibited an absence of structural holes within the organization and in which there was a high degree of interconnectedness among network members) scored higher on the performance domains of task execution and teamwork. This study suggests that the optimum network structure leading to high job performance in all four domains (creativity, decision-making, task execution, and teamwork) needs a balance of network openness and network closure. The network should ideally have structural holes at the organization boundary, while structural holes within the organization should be closed.

In addition to impacting an individual's performance in the areas of creativity and decision-making, boundary spanning can also impact the influence that people have within their organization. Manev and Stevenson (2001) conducted a case study focused on understanding the relationship between boundary-spanning activities and individual influence within an organization. The purpose of the study was to gain a better understanding of the relationship between boundary-spanning communication and the organizational influence of managers working at different levels within the organizational hierarchy. This study addressed the following questions: "1) Who in the organizational hierarchy engages in boundary-spanning communication? 2) Is there a relationship between boundary spanning and individual influence? and 3) If there is a relationship

what is its form?" (p. 185). The case study was conducted at an urban transit authority in the western US that was perceived to be typical of organizations within the industry; it was publicly held, had a multi-layered management hierarchy (top, middle, and lower), and utilized relatively complex coordination mechanisms. Study participants included 108 managers.

Manev and Stevenson (2001) argued that as organizations flattened structurally, their boundaries become more permeable, thus allowing for increased communication across those boundaries. That argument led them to employ a network approach to study communication that took place within the organization by its members (primary actors) and communication that took place across the organizational boundary with individuals (secondary actors) who were critical to the organization and with whom organizational members interacted regularly. They also took into consideration the fact that a range of organizational members, not just those in positions with formally designated boundary-spanning responsibilities (e.g. sales and customer service), engage in direct communication with customers and that these employees were situated throughout the organizational hierarchy. Furthermore, they conceptualized influence in terms of self-perceived influence on the part of the primary actor in relation to decision-making and in terms of attributed influence, that is, how others rated the primary actors' influence in relation to their own work performance. Also critical to their framework was the hierarchical level of the boundary spanner, the boundary spanner's centrality (that is, their access to and control over resources) within the network, and network balance (that is, their ties to individuals both internal and external to the organization).

Study results found a relationship between hierarchical level and the number of external contacts a manager had; managers at higher hierarchical levels had more externally-oriented work contacts than did those working at lower levels. They also found a similar relationship between hierarchical level and external boundary-spanning orientation. That is, managers working at the highest levels engaged in more external interactions both in real numbers and relative to the total number of internal ties within their networks than did managers working at the lowest level. Centrality within external networks was found to be positively associated with organizational influence and had no relationship to the hierarchical level at which a person worked. Findings related to the prediction that centrality within external networks would have a stronger association with organizational influence than would centrality within internal networks were inconclusive. Finally, they found that individuals were more organizationally influential if they had balanced their participation in external and internal networks, rather than if they had either externally or internally oriented networks.

Overall, Manev and Stevenson (2001) found positive connections between boundary-spanning communication and organizational influence that had no relationship to where individuals were positioned within the organizational hierarchy. Degree of organizational influence was highest for those individuals who had a balance between their boundary-spanning and their internal contacts. This suggests that external contacts provide access to resources and that internal contacts provide the mechanisms through which boundary spanners can channel those resources back into their organizations, thus allowing for organizational influence.



## **Networking**

In addition to boundary spanning, the development and use of internal networks can enable a mid-level manager to provide organizational leadership. In fact, mid-level managers may need to be skilled in both boundary spanning and internal networking. For influence to be realized, boundary spanners may need to rely upon established internal networks in order to channel information and resources back into their institutions (Kezar & Lester 2009; Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999). The literature on boundary spanning conceives of boundaries that separate an organization from its external environment (Lipsky, 1980; Miller, 2008; Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999) or that differentiate the various internal structures of the organization (Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999). This study frames internal boundary spanning as “networking,” a mid-level leadership function distinct from external boundary spanning.

The literature suggests that working in collaboration with organizational members in different departments and offices is important to worklife quality (Rosser, 2004). It is also important in relation to having the capacity for influence within one’s employing organization (Kezar & Lester, 2009). In their case study of four public comprehensive institutions engaged in high levels of collaborative work, Kezar and Lester found that while access to information and resources may happen as a result of working in a boundary-spanning role, that access by itself did not guarantee organizational influence. Rather, for boundary spanners to have organizational influence, they needed to be connected internally to formal and informal networks within the organization. In Kezar and Lester’s study, these networks provided the vehicles through which information was disseminated and resources were channeled throughout the organization. Organizational

members who were able to develop and utilize these networks had the capacity for organizational impact/influence. This section of the literature review focuses on the importance of network creation and the utilization of networks.

### **Creation of networks.**

Kezar and Lester (2009) determined that networks – both formal and informal – play integral roles in generating and supporting collaboration that contributes to organizational change. They determined that networks might evolve naturally or they might be deliberately constructed by organizational members. Study findings also showed that network development depended upon relationships and trust, which are established over time. Kezar and Lester encouraged institutions to create environments that foster network generation in order to accelerate a process that would take longer if networks developed only naturally/organically. Their study findings indicated that organizations that promoted collaboration actually had multiple, active collaborations in place that were deliberately facilitated through internal network development.

Kezar and Lester (2009) found that leaders at highly collaborative campuses were committed to deliberately developing strong relationships among their members and did so by hosting events that would bring them together. In recognition of the fact that different types of events would draw different people, events included those with an intellectual bent (e.g. symposia), those that provided professional development opportunities (e.g. leadership topics), and those that provided venues for people to meet others and socialize informally. While the types of events and who organized the events (e.g. human resources, schools, or departments) differed by campus and reflected campus culture, they served similar purposes: 1) provided those already interested in

collaboration with ways to remain engaged, 2) brought together those who might have previously been isolated, 3) allowed for new organizational members with similar interests to join with like-minded colleagues, and 4) provided informal channels for new collaborations to surface.

Kezar and Lester (2009) also found that on campuses engaged in collaborations, there existed “natural network builders,” that is, organizational members who connected campus members with one another, thus supporting the establishment of new relationships. Network builders tended to be those who had worked at the institution for long periods of time and who themselves had wide-reaching networks. However, there were also some network builders newer to their employing institutions but who had a history of building networks in previous jobs. Most network builders tended to work in roles positioned within cross-functional units; some had formal responsibility for units charged with organizing networking activities across their campuses. Kezar and Lester identified assessment, community service, community outreach, and international affairs as examples of the types of cross-functional units in which these network builders worked.

Another finding from the Kezar and Lester (2009) study concerned the creation of incentives as a vehicle to catalyze network development. Incentives that targeted multiple constituent groups and that required cross-functional projects generated networks that in turn resulted in new collaborative initiatives. Because the offering of incentives necessitates a financial obligation on the part of the institution, Kezar and Lester’s discussion seemed to imply that organizational support for network development would come from senior administrators.

In addition to the creation of incentives, institution-wide committees were important to network development. The utilization of existing committees and encouraging committee involvement were found to contribute to network development and facilitate collaboration. In Kezar and Lester's (2009) study, the campuses that had the largest number of collaborations utilized committee formation as an intentional means to create networks. They capitalized on the formal structure provided by committees and staffed them with members deliberately selected for purposes of network building.

Additional research points to how organizational structures can foster network building. Chen and Krauskopf's (2013) case study of the merger of two non-profit organizations in the microfinancing sector sheds light on how organizational structure can facilitate and/or constrain the creation of formal and informal networks. Their purpose in conducting this study was to offer a better understanding to managers about how they might implement post-merger integration. To that end, they applied a social network analysis to focus on the dyadic level to examine patterns of interactions. They asked the following questions:

Does intraorganizational networking among employees differ by their prior organizational affiliations with the acquirer, the acquired, and new hires? (p. 327)

Does this interaction pattern vary across different types of networks? (p. 327)

Do different types of networks overlap with each other? (p. 327)

Chen and Krauskopf examined five types of intraorganizational networks to better understand post-merger integration. These five network types included workflow, problem solving, mentoring, friendship, and socioemotional support. These networks can be classified as either formal or informal, and as either instrumental or expressive.

Specifically, workflow networks are formal and instrumental to getting the work of the organization done. They revolve around officially designated tasks that require interactions between organizational members based on how work is formally assigned to employees. Problem solving networks are less formal than workflow networks, but they are also instrumental in nature. Employees are linked through their need for access to resources to solve workplace challenges. Mentoring networks are a balance of formal and informal, and of instrumental and expressive. They are seen as having both career functions (e.g. sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, production, and challenge) and psychosocial functions (e.g. role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, and counseling). Friendship networks are informal and expressive. These networks are reflective of individual choice, mutual liking, and/or similarity of attitudes. Finally, socioemotional networks are characterized as informal, expressive networks. Their purpose is to support the coping of those dealing with major issues within their personal lives.

According to Chen and Krauskopf (2013), when organizations merge there often is negativity towards employees who had worked in the other organization. This leads to a pattern of homophily, that is, connecting with those who are the same or familiar. For their study, they frame homophily as prior organizational affiliation and examine it in relation to the five types of intraorganizational networks. They also examine multiplexity in relation to intraorganizational networks. Multiplexity is evident when parties are involved in more than one type of network relationship with each other (e.g. members of the same workflow and friendship networks). Multiplex relationships are characterized

by high trust and reliability stemming from the fact that individuals involved in them have gotten to know each other in a variety of differing ways (Ibarra, 1995).

With the support of management, Chen and Krauskopf invited all employees (the acquirers, the acquired, and new hires) to participate in a web-based social network survey over the course of six months. The 57 (92%) survey respondents were asked to identify colleagues within the merged organization with whom their work intersected, to whom they asked for assistance in solving work-related problems, from whom they received mentoring, whom they had befriended, and from whom they sought socioemotional support.

First, regarding workflow networks, the study found that more working relationships formed within group (e.g. acquired to acquired) than across group (e.g. acquired to acquirer) for those who had been previously employed by one of the merged organizations. The within group emphasis was stronger for employees from the acquiring organization than for employees from the acquired organization; that is, the acquirers tended to interact primarily with their former colleagues. Those from the acquired organization had a somewhat more balanced combination of in-group and out-group interactions. New hires, in contrast, were the group that interacted most frequently with both the acquirers and the acquired.

Second, their examination of problem-solving networks found a slight tendency towards in-group interactions for all employees regardless of their previous organizational affiliation. Third, regarding mentoring networks, new hires were more likely to establish mentoring relationships with members of the other groups, while the acquired group and the acquiring group had a tendency to establish in-group mentoring

relationships. Fourth, the friendship network was found to be especially in-group oriented. New hires established their friendships outside their group, while acquirers and the acquired solidified friendships within their respective groups. Finally, among all of the networks, the socioemotional network was found to be strongest for those group members who had worked together pre-merger.

In relation to multiplexity, findings indicated that there were higher levels of correlation between connections that took place from formal network to formal network than there were between connections that took place from formal network to informal network. For instance, employees with relationships in workflow networks were more likely to have relationships in problem solving networks than they were to have relationships in either the friendship or socioemotional networks.

Chen and Krauskopf (2013) found that for the most part, employees (other than those newly hired) tended to establish their workplace networks with those with whom they had worked previously. Eight months post-merger, the newly formed organization had not yet integrated. They suggest that for managers of merged organizations looking to more effectively integrate employees, they should focus on the cultivation of informal networks rather than focusing solely on structural integration. Because mentoring networks serve a bridging function, it is suggested that formal mentoring programs be established rather than allowing mentoring relationships to only develop organically.

While Kezar and Lester (2009) and Chen and Krauskopf (2013) focused on what institutions can do in support of network creation, Srivastava and Banaji (2011) engaged in a study that focused on how the characteristics of individuals contributed to their ability to network across organizational functions and hierarchical levels. Srivastava and

Banaji's study revealed how collaborations develop based upon the explicit and implicit perceptions that organizational members have of themselves as collaborators. The explicit perception of self as collaborator refers to how a person deliberately views him/herself in relation to collaboration where collaboration is held as a critical organizational norm. The implicit perception of self as collaborator refers to how a person views him/herself in relation to collaboration on a more automatic, less conscious basis. Srivastava and Banaji expected that in an organization that espoused collaboration, individuals might be more likely to publicly express themselves as collaborators than they might actually be. There was also the expectation that how disposed an individual actually was to collaboration could be detected by others.

Srivastava and Banaji defined collaboration as "help or support that individuals within organizations seek from and provide to one another toward the accomplishment of work-related objectives" (p. 209) and conceptualized collaboration as having two distinct aspects, "enlisting" (p. 209) and "supporting" (p. 209). Enlisting refers to recruiting or engaging "organizationally distant colleagues," (p. 211), that is, colleagues who work in different departments or at different hierarchical levels (as defined by salary grade), to help the individual with her/his own work. Supporting refers to being successfully enlisted by those colleagues to help them with their work.

Their study took place at a mid-sized biotechnology firm that employed approximately 1000 people. They invited into the study 174 individuals who held positions that involved internal cross-boundary collaboration. A total of 106 provided usable responses to an online survey designed to measure implicit collaborative self-concept (ICS). Participants identified an unlimited number of individuals in their



collaboration network. They were also asked to identify individuals who had successfully recruited them to work on their projects. Given this information, the researchers were able to determine where within the organization and at what hierarchical level the collaborators worked.

Srivastava and Banaji (2011) found a statistically significant positive correlation between implicit collaborative self-concept and the number of colleagues that an individual enlisted to work on their projects, either from other departments or different hierarchical levels. They also found a statically significant positive correlation between implicit collaborative self-concept and individuals being successfully enlisted into collaboration by colleagues working in different departments or at different hierarchical levels. There was also a significant positive correlation between implicit collaborative self-concept and the number of horizontally distant (different departments) colleagues individuals were able to enlist in collaborative efforts. There was, however, no correlation between implicit collaborative self-concept and the number of vertically distant (different hierarchical levels) colleagues that individuals were able to enlist.

Their research suggests that the collaborative choices people make – to enlist support from and to support others -- may be made at a less conscious level than organizational members are aware. It also suggests that within a culture strongly supportive of collaboration, people are able to distinguish between those individuals who have a genuine collaborative orientation and those individuals who publicly present themselves as having a genuine collaborative orientation but in actuality do not.

### **Networking – implications for performance.**

The establishment and utilization of networks can have an impact on individual performance within organizations. The strength of ties within those networks can have the potential to determine how effective they will be. Granovetter (1973) notes that one might think that networks in which the principal actor has strong interpersonal ties with other network members would provide greater access to actors outside the original network. Instead, Granovetter argues, weak ties, rather than strong ties, serve as more effective bridges between the original network and the larger community outside it. He defines the strength of an interpersonal tie as “a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie” (p. 1361).

Strong ties convey a relationship in which the actors communicate frequently and interact often. In contrast, weak ties refer to a relationship in which the actors are acquainted with one another, but they seldom communicate and do not work together very often. Given the amount of time needed to maintain strong ties, through extensive communication and interaction, an organizational member is likely to have a somewhat limited set of people with whom he or she has strong ties. In contrast, an organizational member can have a large number of weak ties with people in a variety of units and departments. This larger network of weak ties can link an organizational member to important information and resources located throughout the organization. For example, a career services director might need to involve faculty members in a new initiative. The career services director might have weak ties to a few department chairs. The director could then call upon these department chairs to encourage faculty in their units to

participate in the new initiative. If the career services director had relied instead on strong ties, the director would likely have reached out to fewer department chairs and would have received less collaboration as a result. Granovetter bases his argument on the fact that strong ties among network members are often duplicated by others within the network. Because people tend to be connected to those who are similar to themselves, the more people within a network who are similar to each other, the greater likelihood there will be multiple ways in which they connect with each other. A weak tie, in contrast, then becomes increasingly important as a conduit as it is an alternative way to diffuse information to a larger number of people across greater social distances.

Predicated on the argument above, an additional finding suggested by Granovetter's analysis (1973) indicates that weak ties are more likely to channel previously inaccessible information to a central actor. Stronger ties, in contrast, would more likely travel in the same circles as the actor and have access to similar knowledge. Those less directly connected to the actor are more likely to travel in different circles and thus have access to different information or resources. Granovetter also perceives strong ties as reinforcing small cliques that isolate themselves from one another, thus constraining their ability to come together to address issues impacting the community as a whole. Finally, Granovetter asserts that weak ties cut across different groups and link them together, while strong ties serve to isolate different groups from one another.

Other research has examined the effects of internal networking on individual and organizational performance. In their grounded theory study of high performing salespeople within a Fortune 100 high technology firm, Steward, Walker, Hutt, and Kumar (2010) examined team-based collaboration. Because of the nature of the high

tech industry, customer solutions often necessitate that salespeople acquire expertise from others within the organization. The teams assembled by salespeople were not formally established teams. Rather, they were ad hoc teams assembled by the salesperson based on his or her internal networks. Their composition was made up of organizational experts with autonomy over how they allocated their time and who the salesperson was able to enlist to collaborate. Steward et al. assumed that willingness to join an ad hoc team might be dependent upon the relationship between the expert being recruited and the salesperson doing the recruiting.

Steward et al. found that the reputation of the salesperson's internal networks was a significant predictor of their ability to coordinate expertise. That is, salespeople who had more extensive internal networks were better able to access organizational actors who had the expertise needed for the team. They also found that the salesperson's coordination of expertise and the reputation of the salesperson's internal networks were both positively related to their sales performance. Overall study findings indicated that salespeople characterized by sales executives as high performers operated differently than those characterized as low performers. High performers were more likely to take into consideration both the relational and technical skills of experts when identifying who within the organization would be best suited for inclusion on their ad hoc teams. Findings also indicated that high performers were more successful at recruiting the talent they wanted for their teams.

The literature suggests that internal networks can provide organizational actors with access to information that will in turn positively impact their performance. In their study of a medium-sized Scandinavian telecommunications company, Rodan and Galunic

(2004) examined the relationship between the performance and innovativeness of middle managers and the level of knowledge heterogeneity existing in their social networks. They asserted that while "...an association between knowledge heterogeneity and network structure has been an article of faith..." (p. 542), it was their intent to test the assumption and determine the importance of access to diverse types of knowledge to performance and innovativeness.

Rodan and Galunic (2004) conceive of knowledge heterogeneity as social capital that is embedded in networks, but they believe that network structure alone does not fully explain the value of that capital. Rather, the aim of their study is to consider both factors – network content (knowledge heterogeneity) and network structure – in relation to organizational performance and innovativeness. They worked from the assumption that the ideal/preferred network structure is characterized by sparseness. A sparse network is characterized by multiple structural holes. In a sparse network, a network member would have unique ties or relationships not shared by other organizational actors. These ties or relationships would provide the network member with access to diverse information to which others did not have access. They hypothesized that sparse social networks would confer greater status and prestige, lower constraint, and greater political maneuverability, leading to greater overall performance and innovativeness. They also hypothesized that the heterogeneity of knowledge situated within a manager's network would be positively associated with overall performance and innovativeness. Finally, they hypothesized that knowledge heterogeneity and network sparseness in combination would positively influence overall performance and innovativeness.

To test their hypotheses, Rodan and Galunic (2004) administered a computer-based survey. Respondents were asked to generate a list of contacts with whom they connected for social support, innovation, buy-in, and task advice. They were then asked questions about each of the contacts identified (e.g. length of relationship, frequency of contact, average length of interaction, and whether they believed the contact could provide new knowledge or expertise). Finally, they were asked to rate the similarity of the knowledge and expertise held by their contacts. They had 106 usable responses.

Their findings revealed that while sparse networks did not have much impact on innovativeness, they did have a significant and positive impact on overall performance, as did knowledge heterogeneity. Knowledge heterogeneity also had a positive impact on innovativeness. Finally, they found that a sparse network in combination with access to heterogeneous knowledge positively contributed to overall performance. In summation, knowledge heterogeneity and network sparseness play a nearly equivalent role in relation to overall organizational performance. However, knowledge heterogeneity has a larger role than network sparseness in relation to innovativeness.

### **Making and Giving Sense**

This section of the literature review will focus on the making of meaning for self and others. It addresses how individuals influence or help others frame their understanding of information, experiences, or situations. This section will also address the impact of sensemaking and sensegiving on the organization in which it occurs. Specifically, the following three subsections examine: 1) sensemaking in the context of uncertainty and ambiguity, 2) how individuals engage in sensegiving, and 3) the different mechanisms that organizational members use in the sensegiving process.

### **Sensemaking: Dealing with uncertainty and ambiguity.**

A prominent theme in the literature on sensemaking relates to how individuals and groups make sense of their experiences when the context is highly uncertain or when they experience high levels of ambiguity regarding the information that they have received. Weick (1993) has studied sensemaking in the context of information deficits and high levels of ambiguity. In his analysis of the Mann Gulch fire disaster, Weick found that a deficit of accurate information and high levels of ambiguity can lead to an inability to make sense of a situation, which in turn can produce catastrophic results. The Mann Gulch fire disaster occurred in Montana in August 1949. Thirteen firefighters died when they responded to a forest fire that had initiated with a lightning strike. The fire crew consisted of a foreman, a second in command, and 14 firefighters. The fire crew held a collective understanding that while the potential for a fire of explosive proportions was high, they were responding to a fire of much lesser threat. The fire, however, did not respond as the crew had anticipated, and their lives soon were in jeopardy. As panic ensued, clearly defined structures for responding to orders and enacting firefighting protocol disintegrated, resulting in deaths.

For this study, Weick (1993) reviewed a previous case study of the fire as reported in Norman Maclean's book, *Young Men and Fire*, published in 1992. Maclean conducted interviews with Mann Gulch fire survivors, relatives of the deceased firefighters, and fire experts. He obtained trace records (e.g. a cross placed at the location and supply remains) during a site visit. He reviewed a range of archival records which included reports obtained from the Forest Service, the official report of the Forest Service Board of Review; court reports of law suits brought against the Forest Service,

photographs, early records of the smokejumpers organization to which the firefighters belonged, a task force crew safety report from 1957, and more recent media reports of the fire. He made direct observations from the three trips he made to the Gulch in an effort to reconstruct the event and gain more insight into the conditions the firefighters faced. He drew from his personal experiences of a 1949 visit to the gulch while the fire was still burning, his own experience as a Forest Service firefighter, and his experience as a woodsman. Finally, Maclean worked with two mathematicians to apply mathematical models of how fires spread to better understand what occurred at the gulch.

Weick (1993) concluded that the firefighters were unable to engage in sensemaking to reframe their assumptions about the level of the fire threat, even when those assumptions were revealing themselves as inaccurate. As a result, the crew was unable to develop new strategies to combat the fire, which in turn contributed to organizational vulnerability and the subsequent loss of life.

Weick's (1993) re-analysis of the Mann Gulch fire revealed "four potential sources of resilience that make groups less vulnerable to disruptions of sensemaking" (p. 628). These sources of resilience could be applied to other organizations which, like the group of firefighters, exhibit the following characteristics: 1) coordination by direct supervision, 2) strategy planned at the top, 3) little formalized behavior, 4) organic structure, and 5) the person in charge tending to formulate plans intuitively. The potential sources of resilience include: 1) improvisation and bricolage, 2) virtual role systems, 3) the attitude of wisdom, and 4) norms of respectful interaction. Improvisation and bricolage refer to an individual's capacity to work with what is at hand to reconstruct order in the face of disruption. Virtual role systems refer to an individual's ability to



envision and subsequently take on the role of another actor when that actor, for whatever reason, is no longer able to carry out functions critical to sustaining the organization. Attitude of wisdom refers to the capacity to make good decisions without being overly confident or overly cautious. Confidence can lead to the assumption that the decision one is making is the correct decision, and subsequently the person becomes closed to curiosity about other interpretations of a situation and perhaps more effective decisions. Caution is reflective of uncertainty and can lead to avoidance of situations or information that reinforce uncertainty. Finally, norms of respectful interactions refer to the engagement with others in ways that demonstrate honesty, trust, and self-respect. Based on his re-analysis of the Mann Gulch disaster, Weick concluded that the inability of the fire crew to access these sources of resilience was a contributing factor to the situation escalating and to the loss of life.

Weick (2010) continued to examine sensemaking in relation to uncertainty and ambiguity through his reanalysis of the Bhopal disaster at a Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, India. In this disaster, toxic chemicals were released from the plant, resulting in thousands of deaths. Similar to the Mann Gulch disaster, the Bhopal disaster provides evidence of the catastrophic impact that a lack of accurate information and high levels of ambiguity can have when actors are unable to make sense of a situation.

In brief, the disaster took place in a plant that was staffed but off-line. Much of the equipment at the plant was either inadequately functioning or non-functioning. This had been an ongoing condition and plant workers were accustomed to not attaching credibility to equipment readouts. Additionally, they had embraced the concept that “...nothing serious could happen in a factory when all the installations were turned off”

(p. 537). Yet the routine flushing of pipes triggered a back-up, mixing water in a tank containing methyl. This led to the build-up of heat and pressure and to the ultimate release of deadly chemicals. Between the commencing of the pipe flushing and the release of toxic chemicals, there were opportunities to intervene and potentially stem the disaster. These opportunities to intervene, however, were not realized due to a “combination of missing leading cues” (p. 538).

Weick (2010) concluded that problems of abduction, awareness, reliability, and certainty were more serious than was first thought. Expanded analysis shows that the tight coupling between cognition and action normally associated with enacted sensemaking, broke down at Bhopal. The breakdowns included a low standard of plausibility, minimal doubt, infrequent updating of both mental models and current hunches, and mindless action.

Plant workers had no context from which to draw meaningful conclusions about what was going on within the factory. The condition of the plant had been deteriorated for so long that the signals being given out by the equipment did not engender faith in their accuracy. A loss of expertise coupled with reduced training resulted in limited capacity to know what to look for that would suggest a problem, how to recognize it, and how to interpret it when they did see it. Even as a plant worker was starting to make sense of the situation (e.g. a worker smelling methyl), other workers rejected his assertion for a more plausible one (e.g. it is another chemical) because these workers collectively held an assumption that they were working in a non-functioning facility and as a non-functioning facility, there was no possibility that something could go wrong.

Other research has explored how people engage in sensemaking in the absence of information. In a study that examined the relationship between leadership and the sensemaking processes of subordinates, Erb (1991) found that the amount of information deliberately shared or deliberately withheld by the supervisor impacted how people made sense of whether or not they were expected to engage in leadership. Erb's study focused on when and to what extent the members of a 10-person technical support work group at a large Midwestern university would engage in participatory leadership. In situations when the supervisor expected subordinates to participate in leadership, the supervisor managed meaning by being vague, providing little detail, and not specifically assigning tasks or identifying priorities. The supervisor deliberately created an environment in which the subordinates were compelled to create their own meaning. In response to a deficit of information and a lack of direction, Erb (1991) found that subordinates made their own meaning or made sense for themselves about how to proceed with their work in the deliberate information "blank" created by the supervisor. Conversely, when the supervisor expected that team members would not participate in leadership and assumed that they would be aware of this expectation, the supervisor then deliberately and concretely framed meaning for group members by providing specific, detailed, and factual information.

Erb (1991) also found that there was not necessarily consistency in how subordinates made sense of the same situation. When subordinates were presented with a situation that required them to make sense for themselves, how one subordinate made sense of the situation was not necessarily consistent with how other subordinates made sense of it. When subordinates were presented with deliberately constructed messages

designed to communicate specific meaning from their supervisor, the same inconsistency was apparent. How one subordinate attached meaning to the deliberately constructed message was not necessarily consistent with their supervisor's intent, nor was it consistent with how their colleagues interpreted that same message.

Mid-level administrators often work within an information vacuum. They may receive directives from their supervisors about actions that need to be taken without corresponding explanation or context. They may receive no direction or information and are left to interpret what needs to be done based on their expertise and understanding of the organizational culture. Balogun and Johnson (2004) add to our understanding of sensemaking in the absence of information with their longitudinal interpretive case study of 26 middle managers working for a recently privatized utility in the UK. The purpose of their study was to "...understand how middle managers interpret change, and how their schemata or interpretive frameworks develop and change" (p. 523).

At the time of the study, senior management had imposed a new organizational structure which divided their core business into three new divisions. This new structure signified a shift from a more hierarchical, centralized, integrated model of operation to a flatter, decentralized, semiautonomous model of operation. In the new model, departments would interact with one another within a customer-supplier dynamic, contracting with each other for services. The change took place in what Balogun and Johnson identified as three distinct phases: 1) a two month period in which new work assignments were finalized, 2) a six month period in which the middle managers developed and enacted roles and responsibilities consistent with the new organizational structure while simultaneously carrying out previous work responsibilities, and 3) full

implementation of the new contractual model. What senior management did not do was provide middle managers with schematics for how the change was to be operationalized. This left middle managers in the roles of both recipients of and implementers of change and with the need to negotiate horizontally with their mid-level colleagues as access to senior management was limited.

Balogun and Johnson (2004) found that the schema held by the middle managers prior to the imposition of the new organizational structure became obsolete. Senior managers did not help the middle managers negotiate the structural changes; instead, middle managers had to negotiate horizontally with one another. As middle managers interacted with one another and shaped how each other interpreted the new organizational structure, they began to re-identify with their new divisions. As their new identities solidified, new schema that allowed them to make sense of the structural changes surfaced to replace those that had become obsolete.

This study indicates that when there is a deficit of information and much ambiguity, middle managers will make sense with one another in ways that fall outside the influence of senior management and beyond senior managers' ability to influence the sensemaking of middle managers. This study also indicates that sensemaking can occur through horizontal interactions and is not limited to vertical (hierarchical) interactions. Additionally, the study findings indicate that sensemaking can take place without the intervention of senior management.

#### **Individuals as sensegivers.**

Sensegiving may be directed toward individuals, groups, or entire organizations. Those who engage in sensegiving activities, regardless of who is the object of

sensegiving, have the capacity for institutional impact. Institutional impact may be evidenced in a variety of ways: in day-to-day activities (Smith et al., 2010) and/or in the forward momentum that comes with organizational change initiatives (Eddy, 2003; Kezar & Eckel, 2002).

There are multiple ways in which individuals frame meaning for or give sense to others. Some engage in sensegiving by adopting a specific frame or means of conceptualizing (Eddy 2003; Smith et al., 2010). These frames are then used for filtering, understanding, and focusing information. Others engage in sensegiving by moderating the level of specificity in the information that they communicate (Erb, 1991). For instance, a manager might provide information about expected outcomes along with detailed directions as to how the outcome should be reached, or the manager might just provide information about the expected outcome and leave the process open for individuals to make sense for themselves (Balogun & Johnson, 2004).

In a study of how community college presidents frame organizational change, Eddy (2003) found that there are multiple ways in which people frame issues or give sense. For Eddy, "... a framing or framing perspective refers to actions used by the president to create a particular interpretation of ongoing campus events" (p. 454). Initially, Eddy used a cultural lens through which to understand the framing/sensegiving process. She found, however, that a single lens was too narrow and did not allow for understanding the multiple ways in which sensegiving was carried out. Subsequently, she employed a second lens – the structural lens – to view and understand the different ways in which each of the presidents in her study framed change for their campus constituencies.

Eddy (2003) used data from two community college presidents to illustrate her study findings. Applying a cultural lens, she found that one president utilized visionary framing to help organizational members understand the need for change. Visionary framing, which had a forward orientation, encouraged the generation of new and/or alternative approaches to campus issues, and connected the vision for the future with the present “everyday lives of campus members” (p. 457). In this framing, the president presented challenges as opportunities for improvement rather than as threats, and focused on forward momentum and a longer-term vision.

When examining the second president’s approach through a structural lens, Eddy (2003) found that this president utilized operational framing. This type of operational framing led to a focus on the assessment of issues and the subsequent development of plans and ideas to bring about organizational change. This president took a more methods-oriented approach than did the first president; issues were first assessed, ideas for solutions then solicited, and finally plans developed. The second president assumed a problem solving perspective that engaged campus members in breaking down larger issues into smaller concerns and matching them with steps toward solution. This president focused on addressing current problems as a means to establish a foundation for future growth.

Similar to Eddy, Smith et al. (2010) also conceptualized sensegiving as an ongoing process of shaping meaning, rather than as an episodic activity associated with discrete events. They studied successful mid-level manufacturing plant managers who ran “high-performing subunits within large corporate enterprises” (p. 224). At the onset of the study, Smith et al. anticipated that the mid-level plant managers would employ

operational framing, focusing on the management of the tangibles (e.g. equipment costs). However, when interviewed about their leadership style, rather than focusing on daily operational functions linked to goal implementation, the plant managers instead focused on the “interpersonal, relationship, and symbolic aspects of their roles” (p. 223).

The plant managers in the Smith et al. (2010) study displayed four key framing themes or “patterns of values”: 1) value placed on people, 2) value placed on openness, 3) valued placed on positivity, and 4) valued placed on being connected to a community. Valuing people included such things as the development of personal relationships with those supervised, acknowledging and learning about their lives outside of the work environment, genuine concern for employee growth, and paying attention to employee needs as a means of communicating that they had value to the organization and were worth investing in. Valuing openness focused on the desire to solicit and receive input from employees and to be accessible to them; actively reaching out to them in the places where they carried out their responsibilities (e.g. the plant floor). Valuing positivity reflected the plant managers’ awareness that they were highly visible to their employees and as such wanted to model the positive attitude that they wanted as a work atmosphere. Plant managers considered positivity as key to morale and mood building. Finally, valuing community connection related to the plant not being an isolated unit, but rather having connections to the external environment that linked both plant and community survival (e.g. keeping jobs from being shipped overseas). Plant managers themselves engaged in and supported their workers in being active in the community (e.g. charity donations, coaching sports teams, volunteerism) as a means of connecting the two entities.



### **Sensegiving mechanisms.**

Once leaders have a notion of how they want to frame meaning for stakeholders, they can carry out sensegiving through different mechanisms. Some mechanisms for sensegiving are enacted at a group or institution-wide level (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Eddy, 2003; Smith et al., 2010) or even within a specific community of practice (Humphreys et al., 2011). Other mechanisms for sensegiving are implemented on a person-to-person basis (Smith et al., 2010).

In an attempt to understand the beginning stages of strategic change, Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) conducted an ethnographic study at a large, multi-campus university that had recently hired a new president. This new president brought with him a new vision for the institution – that it would become a “‘Top Ten’ public university” (p. 436). Not only were Gioia and Chittipeddi interested in the processes underlying the initiation of strategic change, but they were also interested in how the initial vision for the change effort was developed by the new president and senior administration, as well as how the vision would be integrated into institutional practices given that it was likely to be received with resistance from some quarters. To that end, the questions driving their study were:

What are the central features of the beginning phases of a strategic change effort?  
(p. 434)

How does the leadership of an organization set the stage and actually launch the strategic change process? (p. 434)

To answer these questions, Gioia and Chittipeddi engaged in on-site research that took place for over 2.5 years beginning when the new president first arrived on campus.

First order findings indicated that the beginning stage of the strategic change initiative was itself broken into four stages that Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) labeled as envisioning, signaling, re-visioning, and energizing. In the envision phase (~ 3 mos.), the president visited the institution before his official start date to collect information and to begin to develop an early stage strategic vision which evolved from his experience at his previous employing institution. During the signaling phase (~ 3 mos. and overlapping with the envisioning phase), the president publicly announced the strategic change. This was done via “ambiguity-by-design” (p. 439), that is, an intentional disruption of institutional stability to create space into which he could introduce his own interpretation of the strategic change. One source of disrupted stability came from dismissing some long-term senior administrators. During the re-visioning phase (~ 6 mos.), the president played a highly visible and prominent role as a symbol of the change effort. It was during this period that resistance/opposition to the strategic change initiative began to coalesce, and the president adapted his strategy somewhat to accommodate the multiple stakeholder cultures residing within the institution. During the final phase, the energizing phase, (somewhat overlapping with the re-visioning phase), more stakeholders were actively engaged in the change process, resulting in “reciprocal influence” (p. 441) as their ideas were incorporated into the planning. Their engagement contributed to more widely spread commitment and motivation in support of the strategic change initiative.

From these first order findings came the second order findings and with them a framework for understanding the anatomy of the early stages of strategic change in relation to sensemaking and sensegiving. For this study, Gioia and Chittipeddi conceptualized sensemaking as “...meaning construction and reconstruction by the

involved parties as they attempted to develop a meaningful framework for understanding the nature of the intended strategic change” (p. 442). They conceptualized sensegiving as “...the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality” (p. 442).

Gioia and Chittipeddi found that sensemaking and sensegiving shaped each of the four phases of the strategic change process. In the envisioning stage, the president engaged in sensemaking as he began to frame for himself his vision for the strategic change initiative. Moving into the signaling phase, the president shifted from sensemaking to sensegiving as he communicated his vision to stakeholders and created the space for change to take hold by injecting ambiguity-by-design. The president’s sensegiving was followed by a period of sensemaking by organizational stakeholders during the re-visioning phase. Once organizational stakeholders had made sense of what was being communicated to them about the strategic change initiative, the stakeholders shifted from sensemaking to sensegiving during the energizing phase, where they engaged in reciprocal influence with the president and university administrators.

As the stakeholders began to understand the vision articulated by the president, their cognition was impacted; however, their subsequent attempt to engage in reciprocal influence required action. For instance, stakeholders would respond with feedback designed to reinforce or reshape the president’s initial vision. What this study revealed about the early stages of the strategic change process is that while it may be initiated by a single individual, the change process becomes an organic cycle of sensemaking and sensegiving, of understanding and of influence, of cognition and of action.

In a study of community college presidents, Eddy (2003) found that presidents employed four different methods by which to communicate with campus members about ongoing changes. These methods included: 1) talking the frame, 2) walking the frame, 3) writing the frame, and 4) symbolizing the frame. “Talking the frame” involved formal and informal verbal communication about the change initiative. Public speeches, forums, and focus groups were among the mechanisms used by presidents when talking the frame. “Walking the frame” involved taking the message out of the presidential suite and to the campus community. Ways in which presidents walked the frame included attending departmental/divisional meetings and increasing their visibility around campus overall. “Writing the frame” involved communicating about the change in both formal and informal print and electronic modes such as memos and electronic communications. Finally, “symbolizing the frame” involved the use of symbolism in both verbal messages and visual images. For instance, a president applied the symbolizing frame through the strategic use of locations and space to stage announcements. The more newly renovated spaces on campus were strategically selected as the location of meetings where campus change efforts were discussed. This action served to communicate and underscore the vision of how the campus would eventually evolve physically. Other ways in which this president utilized symbolism included development of a logo specific to the change initiative and the adoption of an informal style where he used less formal language and was more approachable.

The use of multiple mechanisms for sensegiving was also evident in the Smith et al. (2010) study about how plant managers communicated meaning on a daily basis to their workers. In order to communicate four key values (e.g. people, openness, positivity,

and community connection) to their employees, the plant managers used some of the same vehicles as did Eddy's community college presidents. Some managers walked the frame in order to reinforce the values placed on openness and positivity. For instance, they physically walked the plant floor daily to make themselves visible and to facilitate increased input from workers. Walking the frame also served as a technique to symbolize the frame, thus enabling them to act as role models while displaying qualities of energy and positive attitude. In addition, Smith et al. (2010) found that the plant managers symbolized the frame in a variety of other ways. To reinforce the value of people, one manager reported sending personalized birthday cards to staff. To symbolize the importance of community connectivity, another manager integrated community activities into the performance review process.

The appropriateness of various sensegiving mechanisms may depend on one's position in the organizational hierarchy. Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) found that organizational leaders and organizational members relied on different mechanisms for sensegiving. They conducted a longitudinal study of three British symphony orchestras considered to be "mid-level performers" (p. 60). The purpose of their study was to extend understandings of sensegiving by exploring the conditions that catalyze or motivate (triggers) and that facilitate (enablers) sensegiving by organizational leaders and by other organizational members. They asked:

What conditions trigger organizational stakeholders and leaders to engage in sensegiving activities? (p. 59)

What conditions enable sensegiving on the part of stakeholders and leaders motivated to engage in sensegiving activities? (p. 59)

Maitlis and Lawrence framed sensemaking and sensegiving as integrated processes that play off one another; leaders shape stakeholder sensemaking processes through the use of language and symbols, as they move organizational members intentionally towards a deliberate understanding of reality. In turn, stakeholders have a role to play in organizational sensegiving, as they try to influence top-level leaders “...through activities such as issue selling, questioning, and propagation of ideas in consultative committees” (p. 58).

Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) found that sensegiving triggers were different for stakeholders and for organizational leaders. Stakeholders were catalyzed to engage in sensegiving when the following conditions were present: their belief that an issue has importance to themselves, to another stakeholder group they might represent (as in the case of union representatives), or the orchestra overall. They were also catalyzed to engage in sensegiving when they perceived that organizational leaders lacked the competence to deal with the issue. In contrast, leaders were catalyzed to engage in sensegiving when they perceived an issue to be uncertain and when stakeholders involved with the issue had divergent interests.

They found that sensegiving enablers were also different for stakeholders and for organizational leaders. The three enablers for stakeholder sensegiving were the possession of expertise aligned with the issue, that the stakeholder had legitimate involvement in the issue, and there was opportunity for their engagement in sensegiving around the particular issue. The two enablers for leader sensegiving were 1) “issue-related expertise” (p. 73) – that leaders believed they had expertise related to the issue

and 2) that the issue was connected to an area of organizational performance in which the orchestra was strong.

In summary, Maitlis and Lawrence identified both differences and commonalities that served to catalyze and subsequently enable sensegiving within the organizations they studied. Stakeholder sensegiving triggers were related to “bounded responsibility” (p. 76), that is, when they believed that they had the responsibility to act on a specific issue because it was important and because they believed leaders did not have the competence to deal with it. Leader sensegiving triggers were related to the complexity of issues. Areas of commonality included the “perception of anticipation of a sensemaking gap” (p. 77) and temporal conditions. First, both stakeholders and leaders were motivated to engage in sensegiving when they believed no one else would or was capable of doing so (hence, a sensemaking gap). Second, stakeholders and leaders engaged in sensegiving in the right moment: there was a perceived need and there was an opportunity to do so (hence, temporal conditions).

Humphreys, Ucbasaran, and Lockett (2011) provide an expanded understanding of how sensemaking and sensegiving are enacted within a community of practice that is characterized by individuality and creativity. Their study explored the use of storytelling as a template for sensemaking and sensegiving by which jazz musicians came to understand leadership and organizing. They also explored the contested nature of storytelling and how, when stories are not consistent with the dominant narrative in the organization, their capacity for sensegiving may be restricted.

Their data were drawn from 20 interviews with “internationally renowned musicians” (p. 45), 42 conversations during rehearsals and performances that were

transcribed as field notes, and archival data that included autobiographies, artist biographies, album sleeve notes, published critical commentaries and reviews, and artist web pages. Analysis of the data revealed two story types – stories of orchestration and stories of education. One of the tensions inherent in jazz is the “tension between the creative diversity of individual musicians and the cohesion of the band” (p. 46). This tension formed the basis for stories of orchestration. The musicians told these stories as they engaged in sensemaking. For example, stories were told within the jazz community about Duke Ellington and Miles Davis. Both leaders developed and implemented structures for their bands. These structures, however, supported rather than impeded creativity. Ellington played to the strengths of and adapted to the idiosyncrasies of the band members. This resulted in low turnover, which in turn, resulted in band cohesion. Davis’s approach was different. Unlike Ellington who had low turnover, Davis’s bands were characterized by high turnover, as his preference was to continually form and reform groups. Both models allowed the musicians to draw from their creativity and play music that made sense within the context of the band structure.

In addition to stories of orchestration, the study participants indicated that they told stories of education, which fostered the sensegiving nature of storytelling. Stories were told to educate or to frame the musicians’ and the public’s understanding of what jazz is or what jazz should be. Unlike the stories of orchestration that fostered sensemaking, the stories of education served the purpose of sensegiving. But these sensegiving stories could be rejected by listeners when the stories were not in alignment with the dominant narrative. Specifically, stories designed to educate are perceived as stories designed to frame or limit. Such limitations, however, are countercultural to the



dominant narrative in the jazz community, which underscores individuality and creativity. Many of the stories of education commonly told within the jazz community relate to Wynton Marsalis. Marsalis, who was both an interviewee and a leader about whom many stories were told throughout the course of data collection, is seen as having consciously adopted the role of sensegiver in his attempt to define the parameters of jazz music – what it is and what it is not. As educator, his podia included his curatorial role at the Lincoln Center as well as interactions with the media and involvement in educational programs. Some listeners were receptive to and inspired by his stories, while others rejected them as privileging one form of jazz over another. Those who rejected his stories found his depiction of jazz to be in contrast with other stories that integrated cultural norms that emphasized individuality and creativity. Rather than being an accepted narrative, Marsalis’s narrative was viewed as an “antenarrative” that was frequently rejected in the jazz community. This rejection constrained Marsalis’s capacity to enact sensegiving and frame for others what jazz is.

### **Working from the Middle – the Challenges**

Findings from studies of mid-level leaders and their intent to stay or leave their employing institutions provide insight into the range of challenges related to mid-level leadership. Johnsrud and Heck (2000) found two sources of frustration unique/specific to mid-level administrators and their morale and intent to stay or leave their employing organization. These sources included the “midlevel nature” of their roles and the lack of recognition within the institution for their organizational contributions.

Rosser (2004), too, found that professional recognition – or lack thereof – is important to mid-level leaders. In a national study of mid-level leaders’ worklife,

satisfaction, morale, and intent to leave, Rosser found that institutional recognition for contributions was important to mid-level leaders. Study findings revealed that positive perceptions of having been recognized and respected for organizational contributions contributed to higher levels of satisfaction and lower levels of intent to leave their employing institutions.

Campus decision making was also connected to levels of frustration articulated by mid-level administrators. Johnsrud, Heck, and Rosser (1998) found that one source of frustration experienced by mid-level administrators was catalyzed by the disconnect between being held accountable for outcomes related to decisions made over which they had no influence. The study found that while mid-level administrators were asked to provide data that informed those decisions, they were not permitted to play a role in the decision-making process itself.

The literature suggests that for those who assume mid-level leadership roles within higher education there is a gap between the newly assumed responsibilities and the requisite skills needed to carry out those responsibilities (Inman, 2009). Studies of faculty leadership – both formal and informal – provide insight into mid-level leadership challenges (Inman, 2009; Kezar & Lester 2009). In a study of faculty members in England and Wales who had assumed formal leadership roles, Inman (2009) found that most felt ill prepared for these new roles. They reported that they had not had the benefit of any formalized training or development for their administrative roles; rather most reported that they relied on informal training gained on the job or as a result of attending conferences. While there was not consensus on what kind of training they would have preferred, all specified a need for training around human resources, as well as induction

into their new role and training that supported the functional aspects of their position. Many suggested that mentors would be invaluable.

Finally, Inman's (2009) findings indicated that while overall leadership development takes place on the job and develops incrementally over time, there is a distinct need for a more deliberate effort to train/prepare professionals who aspire to take on leadership roles within their institutions. Participants indicated that reliance on the authority vested in positional power was neither an effective nor appropriate leadership technique. Simply being named leader neither made them leaders nor gave them credibility as leaders.

Similar to Inman (2009), Kezar and Lester (2009) found that a lack of leadership skills served as a barrier to faculty seeking to lead within their institutions. In their study of grassroots faculty leadership and how it might be formally supported administratively, Kezar and Lester examined initiatives where faculty were working outside of their formal roles of teaching, research, and service to have a wider impact on the organization. In addition to the need for leadership skills, faculty in the Kezar and Lester (2009) study identified other barriers to institutional leadership that could be mitigated by administrative support. These included obstacle removal and the need for membership in campus networks. Both barriers suggest that leadership is not a process that can be enacted within a vacuum, but rather is a process that must be enacted in concert with others. Faculty indicated the need for someone in a formal institutional leadership position (e.g. department chair) to remove obstacles in their efforts to enact informal, upward flowing leadership. Faculty also stressed the importance of being connected to others within the institution and that formal intervention on the part of administrators to

facilitate these connections was critical, in part because networks that develop more organically take considerably more time to establish.

This chapter examined the literature on mid-level leadership in relation to how this construct was conceptualized for this study. This literature review focused on boundary spanning, networking, and sensemaking/sensegiving, the elements that organizational behavior researchers (Granovetter, 1973; Weick, 1995) have identified as critical for the development and use of social influence. Additionally, this chapter examined the literature about mid-level leaders and the challenges associated with working from the middle.

Boundary spanning was addressed in relation to characteristics of effective boundary spanners as well as its impact on both organizational and individual performance. Networking was addressed in relation to how networks are created as well as their impact on both organizational and individual performance. Finally, sensemaking/sensegiving was addressed in relation to how individuals make meaning for themselves in the context of uncertainty and ambiguity, the processes associated with how individuals engage in sensegiving, and the different mechanisms that organizational members use in the sensegiving process.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This chapter describes the qualitative research design chosen for this study along with the accompanying rationale. Specifically, the study employed the collective case study as the vehicle for conducting the research. The chapter discusses the criteria and processes used for selecting study participants, as well as how the data were collected and subsequently analyzed. Finally, the chapter addresses this researcher's stance within the study and potential study limitations.

#### **Research Design**

The phenomenon of interest for this study is mid-level leadership within higher education institutions – specifically, mid-level leadership as enacted by career services directors. Little information is available in the literature to inform mid-level leadership in general, even less about mid-level leadership within higher education, and none about mid-level leadership enacted by those working as career services directors. Because of the minimal information currently available, the purpose of this study is to contribute to establishing a base of knowledge about mid-level leadership by exploring how it is enacted. The study's epistemological approach, therefore, is constructivist with a focus on the experiences of individual actors as they engage in activities consistent with how mid-level leadership has been defined as a process of social influence originating with a

middle manager that cuts across organizational functions and/or hierarchical levels to impact an institutional goal.

The choice of research design is in keeping with Creswell's (2003) conceptualization of qualitative research. Creswell argues that qualitative research focuses on constructivist knowledge claims that reflect the multiple meanings attached to individual experiences. These individual experiences are socially and historically constructed. Researchers examine these experiences with the intent of developing theory or identifying patterns. The anticipated emergence of patterns around the enactment of mid-level leadership can inform our understanding of this phenomenon. This choice of research design is also consistent with Merriam (1998) who argues that the philosophical assumption

...upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds. Qualitative researchers *are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed*, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world (p. 6, emphasis in the original).

The specific form of qualitative research selected for this study is the case study. The rationale for selecting case study as the methodology for this research is laid out by Merriam (1998), "Qualitative case studies can be characterized as being particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic" (p. 29). The study aligns with Merriam's characteristics. It is particularistic in its focus on a particular phenomenon – mid-level leadership enacted by career services directors. It is descriptive in yielding "rich, 'thick' description" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29) of the phenomenon of interest. Finally, the study is heuristic in

the potential of its results to "...bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader's experience, or confirm what is known" (p. 30).

The form of case study employed in this research is what Stake (1995) calls the collective case study. Merriam (1998) refers to this same approach as a multi-case or multi-site study. Stake (1995) argued for the use of a collective case study, as opposed to the individual case study, when each case will be "instrumental to learning" (p. 2) more about the phenomenon of interest. Stake's argument is consistent with the motivation for this study – to learn about how mid-level leadership is enacted by career services directors. Focusing the study on a single case or single site would have limited the range of understanding mid-level leadership to a single context. Additionally, the inclusion of multiple cases can enhance validity and provide a more compelling interpretation resulting from greater variation occurring across the cases (Merriam, 1998).

### **Data Collection**

The focus of this study is on mid-level leadership rather than on individual leaders. Therefore, the unit of analysis was mid-level leadership as enacted by career services directors. Each career services director was considered a separate case.

Semi-structured interviews were employed to allow participants to share their unique experiences and perspectives. Twelve career services directors were interviewed to gain an understanding of how they enacted mid-level leadership within their employing institutions. Each participant was interviewed directly by this researcher; five were interviewed by Skype and seven were interviewed by telephone. Interview length varied from 40 minutes to approximately 75 minutes.

### **Recruiting study participants.**

Recruitment and identification of study participants took place in a two-part process. First, an initial email was sent on behalf of the researcher from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) to its 978 members (including this researcher) working at the director level (that is, members with the titles of director, executive director, assistant dean, or associate dean) at institutions located in the northeast, mid-Atlantic, and southeast regions of the U.S. The specific states included Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee, along with the District of Columbia (Washington DC). The email message contained information about the purpose of the study and an invitation to participate in it. This email message also contained a link to a short survey (estimated time of completion five minutes) to determine initial eligibility for participation. Initial eligibility requirements included the number of years working at the director level in career services overall (minimum of five), the number of years working at the director level in career services at their current employing institution (minimum of three), and the highest degree earned (minimum of a master's degree). These minimums were established because it was important to identify study participants who had time to develop an understanding of what it means to work at the director level within career services and who had time to develop an understanding of the role within the context of their current employing institution. Moreover, Rosser's (2004) depiction of mid-level leaders suggests that they have specialized training to carry out the work for which they have institutional responsibility. The completion of a



master's degree was selected as an indicator of specialized training because it is a common qualification set forth in job postings for career services. Of the job postings for career services directors of centralized offices at not-for-profit colleges and universities found on [higheredjobs.com](http://higheredjobs.com) between July 1 and August 18, 2016, 13 required a master's degree, one required a master's degree but preferred a doctorate, and three required a bachelor's degree but preferred a master's.

Three hundred ninety seven directors (N=397) completed the initial survey, resulting in a 41% response rate. I then sent a second email inviting those whose responses were consistent with study criteria (N=172) to complete a more detailed survey (estimated time of completion ten to fifteen minutes) accessible via an embedded link in the text of the email. This second survey included questions regarding the characteristics of the career services unit over which the director had formal authority, characteristics of the institution where the career services director was employed, and characteristics of the director him/herself. Questions related to professional characteristics addressed their campus committee involvement, leadership training/development, and involvement in organizations external to their employing institutions (e.g. professional association membership and activity). Unit characteristics focused on the size of the career services unit over which they have responsibility, the scope of services offered, staffing patterns, and the organizational division to which the career services office reported. Institutional characteristics focused on the size of the student body, institutional control (that is, public or private), and geographic location. Ninety four directors completed the second survey, resulting in a 55% response rate. Of the 94, 46 had responses that reflected a preferred combination of characteristics consistent with the goal of identifying study participants

who were mostly likely to be enacting a high degree of mid-level leadership. These 46 respondents were considered as possible study participants.

The final stage of selecting study participants involved confirming that their overall profiles reflected the preferred combination of characteristics consistent with study criteria. What follows is a more detailed description of the characteristics of career services directors, of the units they manage, and of the institutions where they are employed that, in combination, qualified them as study participants. Because the titles of those who have direct, formal institutional authority over career services are not consistent across institutions, for purposes of simplification, they will be referred to throughout the study as directors regardless of formal institutional title.

The career services directors who qualified as potential study participants had professional characteristics and responsibilities consistent with how mid-level leaders are characterized in the literature. They are practitioners whose backgrounds show evidence of skills, training, and experiences as suggested by Johnsrud, Sagaria, and Heck (1992) and Rosser (2004). Their scope of responsibility is consistent with the categories outlined in the NACE Standards of Professional Practice (2009).

As noted above, all selected participants had worked at the director level within higher education career services for a minimum of five years and at the director level within the institution where they are currently employed for a minimum of three years. This level of experience was selected to ensure that study participants had the time to develop an understanding of the higher education environment from a mid-level perspective, to develop director level skills in general, and to develop the capacity for leadership within their current employing institution. In addition to a requisite number of

years both as a career services director overall and as a career services director within their employing institution, participants completed at least a master's degree.

Beyond these minimum requirements for work experience and education, the study also selected participants on the basis of their involvement in activities likely to connote leadership. Kezar and Lester (2009) found that organizational members in colleges and universities needed to have extensive internal networks before they could have institutional impact/influence. Committee work is one way in which these internal networks can be established. Therefore, this study selected participants who had served on at least one institutional committee at some point over the past three years. Their committee involvement may have resulted from their volunteering or from having been appointed to a committee. Alternatively, their committee involvement may have been a function defined by their job description. Furthermore, career services directors who qualified as study participants had served in a committee leadership role either within their employing institution or within an external professional association. Specifically, they had assumed a leadership role on a campus committee and/or had served at the committee or board level of a professional association or other organization related to career services.

Committee leadership either on-campus or within external organizations, in addition to facilitating the development of networks, also served to identify which prospective study participants had an overall demonstrated interest in leadership. A commitment to developing leadership skills as evidenced by engagement in formal and/or informal activities designed to develop leadership skills was also considered evidence of

interest in leadership. Examples of these activities include NACE's Management Leadership Institute, leadership trainings or coursework, or readings about leadership.

Not all career services directors who have the professional profile delineated above qualified as study participants. Certain key characteristics of the units that they manage and of the institutions where they are employed also contributed to the ultimate determination of who met study criteria.

The selected study participants led centralized career services units. Those institutions where career services are delivered in an entirely decentralized model were not considered for this study. Centralized offices provide services to students across the entire institution. These centralized units are likely to have a greater volume of users than decentralized units that serve particular academic areas (e.g. a career services office in a university's law school). Higher volume of use suggests that these offices are more likely to have the delivery of career services as their primary, if not only, area of responsibility. Patterns of high usage and primary designation for a particular function are in keeping with what Middaugh (1984) found in his study of offices of institutional research and their capacity to impact organizational goals. Furthermore, the directors selected for this study led units that offered the range of services consistent with those identified in the NACE Standards of Professional Practice (2009). These services include career advising/counseling, career information, employer services, graduate school planning, and experiential education.

The selected study participants led offices that had a minimum unit staff size of four, including the director. For directors to be selected for this study, their offices needed to employ a minimum of one professional staff member, in addition to the

director and any support/clerical staff members. These minimums were established so that there would be enough staff to assist the director with carrying out the operational functions of the unit, allowing time for the director to engage in organizational leadership activities.

Once it was confirmed that the professional experiences of the career services director and the characteristics of the career services unit were consistent with study criteria, the researcher considered institutional characteristics. The selected study participants worked in public or private four-year institutions designated as small (FTE enrollment of 1000 – 2999), mid-sized (FTE enrollment of 3000 – 9999), or large (FTE enrollment of 10,000 or more) according to classifications of the Carnegie Foundation. Mid-level leadership, as conceptualized for this study, is not bounded by functional area and/or hierarchical level. Larger-sized institutions would have more functional areas and hierarchical levels across which mid-level leadership might be enacted. This rationale contributed to the exclusion of very small institutions (FTE enrollment of less than 1000) where there might be few levels of hierarchy and only a small number of distinct functional areas in the organization.

The choice of four-year institutions over two-year institutions was made because career services at a two-year institution may not be the only area for which the career services director has responsibility. The director may also be responsible for transfer as well as other seemingly unrelated functions such as new student orientation. A position with blended responsibilities may be evidence of low utilization so that there is no need to dedicate a position solely to career services. Alternatively it may be evidence of resource constraints that require staff to absorb additional responsibilities that fall outside

their job descriptions. Additionally, the range of services provided at the two-year level is less likely to be consistent with those put forward by NACE. For instance, two-year institutions would not offer graduate school planning. Also, career services functions within a two-year setting are not always centralized but might be distributed across different departments. While career services might be responsible for the placement or employment function, choice of major falls in the responsibility of academic advising, and self-assessment and decision-making are the responsibilities of the counseling center. Furthermore, for-profit institutions were excluded from the study. This decision was based on organizational structures that are more aligned with for-profit business models than traditional higher education models. While employment outcomes are important in both for-profit and not-for-profit institutions, employment outcomes play a more dominant role with the for-profit higher education sector. Within not-for-profit institutions, there is greater balance in career services between employment outcomes and processes (e.g. self-assessment and decision-making) that lead to those outcomes. Table 3 highlights the characteristics of career services directors, the units they manage, and the institutions where they are employed, which were required for consideration as study participants.

Table 3

*Required participant selection criteria*

<i>Director</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Institution</i>
3 years (minimum) working in current position	Minimum staff size of 4 (inclusive of director)	Public or private 4-year institution
5 years (minimum) working at director level within career services	At least one support staff member	Minimum FTE enrollment of 1000
Minimum of master's degree completed	At least one professional staff member in addition to director	Located in northeast, mid-Atlantic, or southeast regions of US
Title of director, executive director, assistant dean or associate dean	Centralized center offering range of services consistent with those defined by NACE	

**Selecting study participants.**

The researcher used the survey data to identify the respondents who met the selection criteria, and then the pool of eligible participants was narrowed to 12. The goal was to select cases that were consistent yet diverse – consistent with study criteria identified in Table 2 and different from one another to best leverage the collective case study model and increase overall understanding of mid-level leadership. To achieve that goal, the researcher assessed and compared the information collected from the two qualifying surveys for each of the eligible participants. The purpose of the individual case assessment was to determine who within the pool of eligible participants was most likely to have engaged extensively in mid-level leadership.

Information provided about on- and off-campus committee involvement as well as engagement in leadership development activities was evaluated. I drew upon my expertise and longevity within career services and higher education (27+ years) to make determinations about which experiences were most reflective of leadership that would extend beyond the unit and have broader institutional impact. I drew conclusions about the professional development activities in which they had participated and determined if their level of participation in the activity reflected a leadership contribution to the field of career services.

The profiles of the career services directors who I determined as providing the greatest evidence of mid-level leadership activity were then compared for the purpose of selecting a diverse pool of study participants. Gender was a consideration. The final group of 12 study participants consisted of seven women and five men. Race/ethnicity was not a factor used in the selection processes, but the final grouping did include at least four participants from underrepresented racial/ethnic backgrounds. Collective bargaining unit information was gathered because there was an assumption that obligations defined in a union contract might potentially impact their ability to engage in mid-level leadership. Of the 12 career services directors interviewed, the three who identified as being members of a collective bargaining unit all worked at public institutions.

Unit reporting line was also a consideration. Seven participants reported to student life/student affairs. Three reported to academic affairs. One reported to institutional advancement. One reported to enrollment management.

Additionally, institutional size based on FTE enrollment, geographic location, and control (public or private) were factored in to make the final selection of study



participants. One element of the definition of mid-level leadership adopted for this study suggests that career services directors cut across functional areas and hierarchical levels when enacting mid-level leadership. This characterization of mid-level leadership suggests that institutions need to be large enough to have multiple functional areas and hierarchical levels. Thus, as noted previously, very small institutions were excluded from the study. FTE enrollments of the institutions in which the study participants were employed ranged from 2302 to 55,239. Two participants worked at small institutions, two worked at mid-sized institutions, and eight worked at large institutions. One participant worked in an institution in Massachusetts; one in Vermont; one in North Carolina, one in Pennsylvania, two in New Jersey, two in Virginia; and four in New York. Six study participants worked in private institutions; six worked in public institutions. All study participants were assigned pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. Table 4 highlights the supplementary criteria used to further narrow the pool of potential study participants, while Table 5 provides a demographic overview of the career services directors selected as study participants.

Table 4

*Supplementary selection criteria used to diversify cases*

<i>Director</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Institution</i>
On-campus committee leadership roles	Reporting line	Public or private
Committee leadership roles in career-related professional associations or organizations		Geographic location
Demonstrated evidence of interest in developing leadership skills		Institution size
Gender		
Union membership		

Table 5

*Demographic overview of study participants*

<i>Name</i>	<i>M/F</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>Union</i>	<i>Governance</i>	<i>FTE</i>	<i>Reporting</i>	<i>State</i>
“Tonya”	F	7	N	Private	2539	Student Life	NJ
“Natalie”	F	27	N	Private	17738	Academic Affairs	PA
“Andrew”	M	5	N	Private	2302	Academic Affairs	NC
“James”	M	22	N	Private	12957	Enroll Mgt.	NY
“Louisa”	F	9	N	Private	7355	Advancement	VA
“Michael”	M	8	N	Private	9634	Academic Affairs	NY
“Delilah”	F	12	N	Public	55239	Student Affairs	VA
“Maggie”	F	18	Y	Public	40135	Student Affairs	NY
“Will”	M	8	N	Public	15997	Student Affairs	NJ
“Jack”	M	6	Y	Public	12063	Student Affairs	MA
“Anna”	F	5	Y	Public	20446	Student Affairs	NY
“Pru”	F	19	N	Public	23637	Student Affairs	VT

## **Interviews**

Data from a combination of sources were collected and analyzed. These sources included two surveys distributed by email – the first by NACE and the second by me. The surveys, as noted above, were used to screen for potential study participants. Then, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 selected participants. The survey materials and the interview protocol are included in Appendix A through Appendix H.

Prior to interviewing the study participants, three pilot interviews were conducted with career services directors who qualified as study participants. The pilot interviews sought to ensure that the interview questions were easily understood by the interviewee and that the questions led to responses that provided information about mid-level leadership. Questions were minimally revised and adjusted based upon results of the pilot interviews and direct feedback from the interviewees. Because the revisions to the interview protocol were minimal, the pilot interviewees were given the option to serve as study participants. Two declined due to complexities and time constraints in their work environment. The third agreed and was included as a study participant.

A total of twelve career services directors were interviewed for the study. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed me more flexibility during the interview process. I was able to follow-up on critical information introduced by interviewees but not necessarily anticipated during the development of the interview questions. Additionally, I was able to pursue lines of questioning that reflected the unique situation (e.g. individual contributions, unit organization, and services offered) of the director being interviewed. Seven interviews were conducted by telephone and five interviews were conducted via Skype. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Once

transcribed, I reviewed both the tape recordings and the original transcriptions, correcting for errors (e.g. typographical errors, misspellings, and misinterpreted language).

Summaries of the interviews were provided to the interviewees to review for accuracy.

Ten study participants reviewed their transcripts for accuracy; seven reported that the transcripts were fine as provided while three made minimal corrections. One study participant indicated an intent to review the transcript but did not follow through. The final study participant did not respond to three requests for feedback on the transcript.

Study participants were asked to provide documents that would confirm information shared via survey responses and during the course of the interviews. These documents provided information about the director, the unit they manage, and the employing institution. Ten directors submitted copies of their resumes. Four directors submitted copies of their most recent annual report. Three directors submitted copies of their institutional organizational charts; two of their divisional organizational charts; and one of their unit's organizational chart. Two directors submitted copies of their institution's strategic plan. Finally, one director submitted a copy of what was called an "administrative assessment" which was part of an institution-wide effort to review all units.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis was organized into several phases of coding. During the initial coding phase, each transcript was reviewed within the context of the three themes defining the conceptual framework of the study: 1) boundary spanning, 2) networks, and 3) sensemaking/sensegiving. Codes were assigned accordingly. Codes were also

expanded to account for emerging themes; others were refined to reflect subtleties. For instance, collective sensemaking emerged as different from sensemaking.

After all cases were initially coded, cross-case analysis was conducted to identify thematic commonalities and differences. This second round of analysis led to further refinement of the coding schema. At this point, broader codes were introduced. These broader codes were related to the research questions guiding the study, and they focused on specific elements of the conceptual framework: 1) developing the capacity for social influence, 2) cutting across functional areas and/or hierarchical levels, and 3) impacting institutional goals. The cross-case analysis allowed for a more complex understanding of themes that transcended individual cases to enhance the study's understanding of mid-level leadership.

### **Researcher Stance**

As a researcher, I brought to this study multiple professional experiences, many of which were consistent with those of the career services directors who participated in the study. My professional characteristics match those established as requisite for participation in the study. I hold a master's degree and have more than 27 years of experience working in career services within higher education – approximately 15 at the director level at three different public institutions. I have had and continue to have authority for leading units that offer a comprehensive range of programs and services consistent with those outlined in the NACE Standards for Professional Practice (2009). I supervise/have supervised full-time professional staff, temporary part-time professional staff, full-time support staff, and student workers.

In addition to working at the director level within a career services unit, I have crossed boundaries both internally and externally while carrying out my responsibilities, and I have seen the results of my work have institutional impact. For instance, I actively engage with employers seeking to hire students, and I have served on committees whose membership crosses functional areas and hierarchical levels (e.g. college discipline committee, search committees, strategic planning and accreditation self-study committees).

I have sought to expand my leadership experiences and skills. For years, I have held formal leadership roles at both the committee and board levels within the Eastern Association of Colleges and Employers (EACE) whose membership consists of career services professionals working with soon to be or newly graduated college students, the organizations seeking to hire them, and organizations that provide services (e.g. on-line databases) to support these hiring activities. Additionally, I have served on three committees charged with conducting external reviews of career services units at other institutions. Over the course of my career, I have actively sought opportunities to formally participate in structured learning activities that contribute to and enhance my leadership skills. I attended Boston College's Leadership for Change interdisciplinary post-graduate certificate program and NACE's Management Leadership Institute. These experiences suggest that I have an insider's understanding of what many of the study participants have also encountered as they fulfill the multiple responsibilities of career services directors. These experiences also suggest that I am well positioned to take a personal role as researcher as advocated by Stake (1995) and Merriam (1998). Stake and Merriam argue for a personal role for the researcher and state that a commonality found

in all qualitative research is that the researcher serves as the data collection instrument, who then draws upon personal experience to interpret those data. These arguments for the personal role of the researcher are consistent with the role I played throughout the study. I collected the data personally and then applied my professional experience and expertise as both a mid-level administrator and as a career services director to its interpretation. These professional experiences and expertise enabled me to recognize and interpret the more subtle, less obvious themes that emerged within the data.

Certainly the potential for researcher bias existed. It was challenging to hear what the participants shared and to understand what it meant from their perspective, rather than what it would mean through my personal and professional lenses. It was also challenging to adhere to the role of interviewer and to not engage in conversation around topics raised by study participants that captured my professional interest. I believe that potential bias was mitigated, however, by my training and years of practice as a counselor, as well as by the semi-structured interview protocol. The protocol allowed me to ask clarifying questions without deviating from the study design and then to listen non-judgmentally as people shared their stories, experiences, and interpretations of events. The outcome of asking and listening was a clearer understanding of people's stories from their unique perspective, rather than filtered through my own.

### **Study Limitations**

In addition to the potential of researcher bias, there were a variety of other limitations to this study. These additional limitations include the range of sources of information, as well as the potential for a presentation effect in the interviews. Only the career services director at each institution was interviewed about activities and outcomes

related to the mid-level leadership that each director enacted. That approach limited the study's perspective to a single view. Also, some of the documents reviewed for this study were either generated by the study participant (e.g. annual report, resume) or approved by the study participant (e.g. center brochure). Missing from the research were the perspectives of those with whom the career services director interacted when enacting mid-level leadership. Missing perspectives include those of internal stakeholders working at different hierarchical levels (e.g. senior administration, colleagues, or staff reporting to the career services director) and organizational members in different functional areas (e.g. staff from units with different reporting lines). Also missing were the perspectives of external stakeholders with whom career services directors interact. By relying on the perspective of the career services director solely, we are not exposed to alternative interpretations of interactions or events that might lead to a different understanding of the role that career services directors played and the impact they had – perhaps things not consistent with the enactment of mid-level leadership. Also, these alternative interpretations might surface evidence of mid-level leadership that career services directors did not couch in those terms.

The participants and I are colleagues working within the same field – a field that is closely networked. Even in those instances when we had not previously met, we were sometimes known to each other by reputation. This suggests two possible concerns. The first concern is researcher bias linked to the possibility of preconceptions about someone who is not a complete stranger. The second concern is a presentation effect – that is, the depiction of oneself in the best possible light to the researcher who is also colleague. Professional expertise and reputation are critical forms of capital that someone in the



career services field will not want to jeopardize. Sharing information that might be perceived as being negative may, therefore, be viewed as risky.

The choice of interview questions also introduced limitations as they ultimately impacted the study findings. Based on the choice of questions and how they were worded they, they influenced what information a study participant might choose to share in response. For instance, one study finding focused on the use of sensegiving as a vehicle used by career services directors to neutralize resistance to change. Much of the data regarding stories of sensegiving linked it to the neutralization of resistance, but this by no means suggests that sensegiving was limited to neutralizing resistance or that it was the only vehicle used. Finally, there was inconsistency in the documents collected. Not all study participants were able to provide the same documents for analysis.

### **Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of qualitative studies is linked to the employment of several processes. Creswell (2013) referenced eight: 1) prolonged engagement and persistent observation, 2) triangulation, 3) peer review or debriefing, 4) negative case analysis, 5) clarifying researcher bias, 6) member checking, 7) rich thick description, and 8) external audits. He recommends that qualitative researchers employ at least two to enhance study trustworthiness. I employed four that in addition to being recommended by Creswell, were also recommended by other experts on qualitative research design: 1) triangulation (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 1998), 2) member checking (Creswell, 2003; Stake, 1995); 3) thick description (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 1998) and 4) clarification of researcher bias (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 1998).

I relied on information submitted via the two qualifying surveys, interview transcripts, and submitted documents for the purposes of triangulation. All study participants responded to the same survey questions. A semi-structured interview protocol was employed so that all participants responded to similar questions asked in mostly the same order. Because the stories they shared differed, it made sense to shift the order of some questions for a smoother interview. Also, given their specific responses, some study participants were asked follow-up questions to those originally outlined in the protocol. The nature of the responses to the original question informed when follow-up questions were asked and what those follow-up questions were. Some follow-up questions were asked for purposes of clarification while others were asked to encourage the study participants to expand upon their initial response. Finally, not all study participants submitted the same documents. One submitted no documents even after repeated outreach.

Once the interviews were completed and transcribed, I reviewed them, and I asked each study participant to engage in member checking. The directors interviewed were generous with their time and told long stories in response to interview questions that provided the thick description, much of which was incorporated into this study to allow readers an enhanced understanding of mid-level leadership as described by the study participants themselves. Finally, issues of researcher bias were addressed as discussed previously in the section on researcher stance.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to expand our understanding of higher education leadership by examining leadership that originates at the mid-level and that is enacted by career services directors. The importance of such a study derives from the scope of leadership challenges currently facing higher education. Among these challenges are the need to contain costs, demands for increased accountability, globalization, technology integration, efforts to promote increased student retention, changing demographics, and the measurement and assessment of student learning outcomes (Kezar, 2000; Kezar & Lester, 2009). To address these challenges effectively, colleges and universities may need members at all hierarchical levels to contribute knowledge that spans a wide range of expertise. Given the high level of complexity in which colleges and universities operate, it is unlikely that a small core of leaders, positioned at the top level of an institution, will have either the time or the range of expertise and skills needed to address the expanded range of challenges currently facing higher education. Therefore, under these conditions, colleges and universities need to increase their capacity for leadership.

One way in which institutions can increase their overall capacity for leadership is to integrate a wider range of stakeholders into their leadership processes. More inclusive leadership not only expands the pool of institutional actors available to contribute to

leadership, but it also provides access to a wider range of expertise existing throughout the organization. Mid-level administrators, in particular, can be utilized to enhance leadership capacity in colleges and universities. Their unique position at the mid-level requires that they interact regularly with people working both above and below them within the hierarchical structure of the institution. It can be expected that to interact effectively with these groups they have developed an understanding of different perspectives and how to incorporate them into their work. This understanding, along with relationships across the institution position them to have impact; in other words position them to contribute to organizational leadership.

By providing insight into mid-level leadership as enacted by career services directors, this study will add to what is currently known about organizational leadership in higher education and provide a new lens through which to examine and perhaps advance our understanding of its multiple sources. Mid-level leadership, within the context of this study, is defined as a process of social interaction, originating with a middle manager, that cuts across organizational functions and/or hierarchical levels and that advances an institution-wide goal. To that end, the following research questions were explored:

1. How do career services directors develop the capacity for social influence within their institutions?
2. How do career services directors use their social influence to cut across functional areas and hierarchical levels?
3. What institutional goals are advanced when career services directors enact mid-level leadership?

Regarding the first research question, the study revealed that career services directors engaged in various activities that allowed them to develop the capacity for social influence within their institutions. First, they developed internal relationships that formed the basis for formal and informal networks. Second, they actively involved career services staff members in increasing the visibility of career services on campus. Finally, career services directors established themselves and/or their units as a critical institutional resource.

In terms of the second research question, the study revealed that career services directors utilized their social influence to cut across functional areas and hierarchical levels. They did this in several ways. They actively engaged their networks by using them to channel information or to have individual network members advocate for the career services unit. They provided access to resources in the form of information and expertise. They also impacted cognition by framing issues for institutional stakeholders on topics such as decisions made by top-level leaders and experiential learning.

Additionally, for the third research question, the study revealed that when career services directors utilized their social influence multiple institutional goals were advanced. These goals included strategic planning, curriculum development and student learning, and diversity initiatives. What follows is a more in-depth discussion of the study findings.

### **Capacity for Social Influence**

The first research question examined how career services directors can build their capacity for social influence. Mid-level administrators need that capacity for social influence in order to enact organizational leadership. The career services directors in this

study deliberately engaged in various activities that enabled them to develop the capacity for social influence within their employing institutions. They developed relationships that formed the basis for establishing networks of colleagues at different hierarchical levels and in different functional areas of the institution. They took the initiative to engage others and they leveraged opportunities to establish and/or expand their internal networks. The career services directors in this study also developed formal structures that enabled their career services staff members to develop their own internal networks. Finally, these career services directors established themselves and/or their unit as a critical resource to other on-campus stakeholders. They (or their units) served as a repository for information gathered from external stakeholders as a result of their boundary spanning activities. In addition to providing valuable information about the external environment, these career services directors also supplied professional expertise that was viewed as critical by other campus stakeholders.

#### **Development of internal relationships.**

Study findings indicate that the establishment of internal networks was critical to career services directors' ability to develop the capacity for social influence. All twelve study participants identified a range of relationships with campus stakeholders, both within and across functional areas and hierarchical levels. Not all of the relationships were established in the same way. Some relationships were the result of director-initiated activity. Some relationships were the result of others within the institution making first contact. Some relationships were attributed to the longevity of the director at the institution. Finally, other relationships were catalyzed as the directors carried out their formal organizational responsibilities.

*Director-initiated relationships.*

All study participants indicated that they deliberately engaged in formal and/or informal activities that led to relationship development with others at their employing institution. Each study participant identified relationships with specific individuals, as well as relationships with other departments and units. Will, the director at a large, public institution, described his efforts this way, “I tend to broker with pretty much everybody on campus.”

Some of the directors who had recently been hired from other institutions indicated that they frequently engaged in formal outreach to build relationships at their new institutions. Three directors (Will – large public; Michael – mid-sized religiously-affiliated; and Anna - large public) discussed how becoming a director at a new institution triggered self-initiated network development. Michael, the director at a mid-sized religiously-affiliated institution, talked about the formal, deliberate actions he took to begin to develop relationships with individuals and groups soon after his arrival on campus: “Well, when I first got here, I made it kind of a goal to reach out and see who is out there, see what partners were on campus, potential partners, so a lot of meetings happened [based] on my own proactive initiative.” Anna, the director at a large, public institution, also leveraged her role with a new institution to strategically begin network development, or as she described it “network establishment:”

So, I’m all about relationships. Well, established, established was me reaching out to people very intentionally and strategically when I came. And basically saying if this department is going to be effective, we need to understand what your needs are and how we can help you achieve your goals. So we had that

conversation. So ... and that was a very intentional strategy on my part to reach out to as many of those partners that I talked about as allies as possible on the very front end.

This self-initiated, formal outreach was not limited to the timeframe in which participants were first hired into their current positions; all of the directors talked about their outreach efforts as ongoing strategies. Some of the most commonly mentioned areas to which they conducted outreach were academic departments, divisional colleagues, and alumni relations.

Similar to Anna's strategy of connecting with stakeholders to identify areas of intersection, Tonya, the director at a small, religiously-affiliated college, articulated the importance of establishing a foundation from which relationships might be developed – specifically finding common ground that would allow for mutually beneficial outcomes:

I think building that [relationship] first is important. I liken it to when we talk to students about using social media and about LinkedIn. So what we say to them is “if you want to go out and ask someone if you can connect to them, that should be a mutually helpful relationship that you're in. You're not just asking them for their expertise. Find out a little bit about them. Shoot them some information that you might see that they might not have seen before. Maybe there's an article that you saw that could be helpful, or whatever.” But it should be a win-win situation and not a “I take from you and I give nothing back.” And I think that's exactly the thing for collaborations on campus. It's relationship building first.

Other examples of director-initiated efforts at relationship development include crossing functional areas to make student referrals or to engage in collaboration. Michael



(small religiously-affiliated) discussed his use of both strategies: "... with Academic Advising in particular, we work a lot with the pre-professional advisors, ...there's a mutual referral society going on, as well as doing events or workshops together." Maggie (large public) described working through formal channels as yet another strategy to gain access to people in different functional areas with whom she desired to establish relationships: "With Deans, I make appointments with their secretaries and I go to their office."

In addition to formal outreach efforts, the study participants also built their internal networks through informal outreach. Andrew (small religiously-affiliated), Will (large public), Louisa (mid-sized private), and Maggie (large public) specifically mentioned that one of their strategies for making "first contact" with someone with whom they desired to establish a relationship was to extend an invitation to meet over coffee. Maggie described her coffee strategy:

I am a huge proponent of coffee dates, and let me explain. Coffee is cheap and it's quick, and I am the person on campus who drinks coffee with everybody. It is a social thing. It's purposeful. It's relationship development. It's a way to develop relations on a campus but in a slightly less formal way. I'm telling you, the gallons of coffee I drink every year are worth their weight in gold.

Louisa indicated that her coffee strategy is in alignment with her institution's culture: "Again, our institution is very relational, so lunches and coffee. It is really a place where people are more prone to partner if they feel you are invested in their success."

In addition to connecting over coffee, the directors reported that they leveraged other social situations in which they came into contact with colleagues to expand their

networks. Three directors reported that they took advantage of opportunities when they presented themselves. Consistent with these opportunities is common ground – both literally and figuratively. Some of these opportunities came about from being in a common physical location at the same time, such as an after hours’ reception. Still others were about engaging in common functions at the same time, such as serving on a committee.

Occasionally, informal networks grew from informal outreach (such as an invitation to meet for coffee), while in other instances, informal relationships emerged as a residual benefit of participating with others in a formal activity (such as committee service). Pru, the director at a large, public institution discussed capitalizing on both formal and informal opportunities to develop relationships that have expanded her campus network:

Some of it is just opportunistic. So, if I’m on a committee, and I get into a conversation with a faculty member, or if I am at somebody’s house for dinner, and I get into a conversation with a faculty member, that could be the beginning of a relationship, and some of it is intentional. I’ll go and meet with every dean privately, every other year or so, and I get invited with the provost to be on the provost advisory council, which is all the deans, a couple times a year, just to talk about things that are going on.

Similarly, Delilah, the director at a large, public institution, discussed taking advantage of her attendance at formal gatherings to informally connect with colleagues:

So, meeting new administrators and new directors, new vice presidents or assistant vice presidents, or assistant provosts. I’ve had the opportunity to meet

with them either going about my business or I am in receptions or in meetings where I will, if I don't know somebody in the room, I'll make sure that I meet them ... So I think it's important that definitely with stakeholders and key relationships to do the work I do. I do seek people out when I'm in public events or if I see them across the room, I will go talk with them and so forth, so I think definitely one thing is the relationship building.

Maggie (large public) described deliberately leveraging her participation in formal activities as a path toward network development:

So, we created this corporate relations task force. It is not charged by the provost. It is something that we all decided together we needed ... my office decided that we needed better communication with folks who do corporate relations on the campus, and they're very important. So we gathered a group of stakeholders, of people representing departments that I described earlier. And we get together once every six or eight weeks to talk about who's on our target list. What companies do we know? Who has interest in which companies for what purpose?

As a result of her interactions with internal stakeholders in relation to the shared task of working with the same group of external stakeholders, Maggie developed relationships with colleagues with whom she may not otherwise have interacted and thus expanded her network across functional areas.

***Other initiated.***

In addition to their own formal and informal networking activities, study participants reported that they were invited by others to collaborate or join forces to advance a new initiative. Through their engagement in these activities, relationships

developed and their networks were expanded. James, the director at a large, private institution, spoke about the relationship his unit now has with the Honors Program and the work they do collaboratively that came about as a result of the Honors Program reaching out to career services. Delilah (large public) reported that the academic departments at her institution have implemented a first-year experience program that requires departments to identify a partner within the division of student affairs for the purpose of program or service delivery. Career services, according to Delilah, has been “the department of choice.”

James (large private), Anna (large public), Jack (large public), and Tonya (small religiously-affiliated) discussed how the delivery of quality career services can enhance the good reputation of the unit, which in turn, can lead to more people and departments seeking out career services for the purpose of relationship building. James described it this way, “I would go back to some of the relationships and previous work done to allow people to see the commitment and the seriousness and at the same time, willingness to be creative, and to do the work.” Anna, while underscoring the importance of quality work and its impact on network development, made the distinction between what she perceived as “network establishment” which she defined as the initial connection with an individual or department and “network development” which she defined as actually following through with quality deliverables:

And then I say on the developing end, once they’re established, I’m a big believer in [the idea that] relationships only get stronger, better if you actually deliver on what you promised. So it was one thing to introduce myself and say, “I’m really interested in what worries you, and what concerns you have. And I’d love to talk

with you about how I can contribute to what concerns you.” But at the end of the day, if all of that was conversation, and I never did a thing. What good is that?

Right?

Jack, the director at a large, public institution, talked about relationships that came about through referrals – that is, one member of his network encouraging someone else to connect with him based upon the positive experiences they have had working with him. Specifically, he referenced faculty-to-faculty conversations. It was not uncommon for one professor to ask another professor who already had an existing relationship with Jack to facilitate a connection for her and her class with career services.

Tonya (small religiously-affiliated) linked the quality of deliverables and the related perception of expertise to the collaborations in which she was involved. “So, one of the things that happened that I think is really helpful is that you know, they see us, they view us, as having an area of expertise, but that was built up over a period of time.” She went on to say, “So faculty have learned over time, and we work together on this, that yes I can come in, I can deliver what you need delivered to your students in whatever way you want me to do it. And so now, we have more demands than I have time for ...”

### ***Longevity.***

Four directors, Jack (large public), Natalie (large private), Will (large public), and Delilah (large public) suggested that some of their relationships resulted from the fact that they simply have been employed at their current institution for extended lengths of time. Their longevity provided them with access to a wide range of organizational members. This access, in turn, facilitated their network development and enhanced their social influence in the institution. Natalie said, “It’s not hard for me to have

conversations with people. I have access to people. I've been around long enough that I also don't call people for every little thing, so when I do call, I think people take my call." Delilah also referenced picking up the phone, confident that her call will be taken due to the relationships she has collected along the way. Will suggested that longevity contributed to the blending of personal relationships with his professional connections:

A lot of us have worked together for a long time here at the college, so we're at the point where, you know, we're interested in our children, our family members, so on and so forth. So, I have casual conversations [with colleagues] about things outside of the workplace.

Will's example illustrates how longevity can lead to less distinct boundaries between professional and personal interactions as he established connections in those two domains simultaneously. He seemed to suggest that his network, which blends personal relationships with professional relationships, is stronger than if it consisted solely of professional relationships. Its strength may be embedded in the fact that sharing personal information is a choice based on trust and not a formal responsibility of the position. It also suggests that powerful, informal networks require time and trust before they can be firmly established.

**Involve staff in increasing the visibility of the unit.**

While the focus of this study was specifically on the directors of career services units and the actions they take to enact mid-level leadership, all twelve directors conflated their actions with those of their unit at some point during the interview. The interview protocol addressed what they did in their role as director; at times during the interviews, the researcher clarified that the study participants were being asked

specifically about their own actions. Nevertheless, study participants still shifted frequently between talking about their actions and talking about the actions of their office. Therefore, they did not always clearly delineate between actions that they initiated and those that emerged from the office as a whole. Most of the study participants were not aware of their shift from first person singular (“I did this”) to first person plural (“The office did this”). Natalie (large private), Maggie (large public), and Pru (large public), however, specifically realized that they were doing so during their respective interviews. Maggie said, “I’m sorry if I’m conflating my office and myself. But I think of us as one.” Pru expressed it this way, “I am sorry, we tend to talk about ourselves as a team. I don’t mean the royal ‘we’ so much as we cannot get anything done without one another, so it is kind of a habit.” Conflating their unit members’ actions with their own suggests that the directors intuitively linked their unit’s capacity for social influence to their own.

Study findings indicate that the directors took deliberate steps to create visibility for their units that extended beyond their individual efforts to establish their own institutional networks. To do this, they implemented formal structures that supported their staff in the development of their own networks and simultaneously held them accountable for doing so. One technique in which four directors (Delilah – large public; Maggie - large public; Jack - large public; and Louisa - mid-sized private) engaged was to implement a liaison model where individual staff members were formally assigned to serve as the career services liaison to different academic departments. In addition, Pru (large public) held her staff accountable for developing relationships with individual faculty members rather than departments. “So every staff member or every counselor has

an assignment to reach out to key faculty members, per semester, in personal conversation. And we ask them to build new relationships each year in that process and then we track them.”

Directors who supported the development of networks for their staff members fostered linkages not only to academic units, but also to other functional areas. Anna, the director at a large, public institution, spoke about relationships or alliances in general:

...when I came here, one of the things I said to everybody here, “We are not going to be playing inside baseball,” meaning we’re only going to talk to each other, we’re only going to play with each other, we’re only going to worry about ourselves. We’re going to get out there, and we’re going to create alliances. We’re going to ask other people what their concerns are, and we’re going to engage others in helping us solve ours.

**Establish selves and/or unit as a critical institutional resource.**

Study findings indicate that being a repository for resources that would ultimately be important to other institutional stakeholders played a critical role in career services directors’ ability to develop the capacity for social influence. These resources include: 1) general information to which they have access as a result of their external relationships and interactions, 2) formally collected data, and 3) their professional expertise. The information that contributed to the unit being a critical institutional resource came from multiple sources. Sometimes the director acquired the information informally through engagement with their internal and external networks. For example, they might have been speaking with employers and through the course of the conversation they might learn that the organization has a need (e.g. the development of a new marketing plan) that



could serve as a class project for credit. At other times, the information came from an employment outcomes survey for which the career services unit had formal institutional responsibility for carrying out.

***External knowledge.***

Because career services directors work in boundary-spanning roles, they come into contact with information from external sources. Much of this information is related to trends in the field generally, as well as to hiring trends specifically. Delilah (large public) and Louisa (mid-sized private) identified product vendors (e.g. information regarding global markets) as providing information sought by others on campus. Andrew (small religiously-affiliated) and Maggie (large public) identified organizations that employ their students as sources of information, and Will (large public) mentioned conversations with members of the local Chamber of Commerce. Both Tonya (small religiously-affiliated) and Maggie (large public) referenced interacting with colleagues at professional association conferences.

Jack (large public) identified his professional association specifically as providing access to articles containing information sought by other institutional stakeholders such as hiring trends and starting salaries by major. Louisa (mid-sized private), Andrew (small religiously-affiliated), and Maggie (large public) mentioned reading articles in general. Maggie and Tonya (small religiously-affiliated) specifically mentioned subscribing to Business Week and The Chronicle of Higher Education, respectively.

*Formally collected data.*

All of the study participants, with the exception of Pru (large public) and Anna (mid-sized public), discussed the importance of the data that they formally collected.

Andrew (small religiously-affiliated) said:

... and all the things that help when there are those conflicts, because when a VP has an issue, if you've got data, real data, and that data ties into the student experience, and ties into the mission of the college, then that's the leverage, that's how you can bridge the understanding. And so, if you don't have the data, or if your data's got lots of holes, or whatever, then that's problematic.

These ten directors referred to the employment data that they collected through formal surveys (e.g. first-destination and alumni). Depending upon the institution, these formal surveys were designed and conducted by either the career services office or the institutional research office; at a few institutions, the two offices collaborated in designing and conducting the survey. The survey data included information about where students secured initial employment or attended graduate school upon completion of their undergraduate degree. Survey data sometimes included salary information. In addition to data acquired through first destination and alumni surveys, Delilah (large public) indicated that her unit utilizes a swipe system to collect and track student utilization patterns linked to office visits and event attendance. The swipe system scans a student's identification card when the student checks-in for a visit or attends an event. Depending upon what is important to the entity collecting this information, the swipe system captures a range of information that might include major, year of graduation, contact

information, date and time, and with whom the student will meet and for what reason if it is an appointment with a staff member.

*Expertise.*

In addition to being a repository for sought after data, many of the directors in this study indicated that they themselves had expertise on subjects (in addition to their career services knowledge) that were important to other institutional stakeholders. Directors discussed skills that they brought from previous professional experiences that gave them credibility as experts at their current institution, as well as expertise that they developed in their current positions.

Both Andrew (small religiously-affiliated) and Louisa (mid-size private) identified themselves as experts in experiential learning; Louisa also expressed that she had expertise in diversity-related issues. Both Michael (mid-sized religiously-affiliated) and Tonya (small religiously-affiliated) indicated that they had expertise in assessment; Tonya added that she had expertise in strategic planning. Finally, Maggie (large public) articulated her expertise in the areas of external relations and alumni involvement.

**Social Influence - Cutting Across Functional Areas and Hierarchical Levels**

The second research question examined how career services directors used their social influence to cut across functional areas and hierarchical levels. Study findings indicate that career services directors used their social influence in multiple ways. They actively engaged their networks to gain access to organizational members who were not yet in their existing networks. They engaged their networks to communicate and share information with stakeholders with whom they did not have direct access. Also, career services directors engaged their networks to advocate directly and indirectly on behalf of

the unit. Furthermore, these career services directors enacted social influence by providing access to institution-critical resources, and by impacting cognition by framing issues for institutional stakeholders.

### **Active engagement of networks.**

While study findings indicate that the development of networks was critical to career services directors' capacity to develop social influence, study findings also indicate that active engagement of these networks was one of the ways in which these directors were able to leverage their social influence within their employing institutions. When career services directors engaged their networks, they gave themselves pathways to connect informally with internal stakeholders with whom they might not be connected through the course of carrying out their job responsibilities. They also relied on members of their network to communicate information or to advocate for career services with other stakeholders to whom they did not have direct access. Study findings also indicated that career services directors were strategic about whom they chose within their networks to provide access or to advocate on behalf of the unit. The directors used this strategy in ways that appeared to be aligned with institutional culture.

Michael (mid-sized religiously-affiliated), Natalie (large private), and Delilah (large public) all said that one of the ways in which they engaged their networks was to pick up the phone and make a call to whomever they wanted to speak. Michael talked about making and receiving student referrals across functional areas via phone. Natalie discussed her confidence that people knew her and, based on the relationships she had established with them, they would take her calls. Delilah discussed engaging her supervisor (whom she identified as a member of her network) on her behalf:

...if I feel like something's important, I have learned that I can't wait for somebody to call me on the phone or ask for my opinion if it's something I feel very strongly about. So, if I know that something is brewing or there's a conversation on the table that impacts our staff and/or the work that we do, I see what I can do to either have direct communication or communicate through my chain of command on it.

In addition to Delilah, Will (large public) and Tonya (small religiously-affiliated) also identified their supervisors as key members of their networks who were critical to their ability to cut across hierarchical levels. Delilah offered the following example of a time when she specifically engaged her supervisor to advocate on her behalf when she became aware of an ongoing conversation about internships in which she was not involved:

So I think that I've been kind of waving my hand at my boss, at my Vice President just saying, "I know we've talked about this. You've come to me but could you please make it clear to the Provost and the President that I would love to be involved in higher level discussion on it, on an ongoing basis about this." Because I think it would be a huge oversight if we were left out of the big conversation.

Tonya discussed how she utilized her network as a vehicle through which she could "manage up." She expressed her belief that the only way that she could navigate across more senior administrative levels was to engage her supervisor:

Trying to do things only from the bottom up doesn't work, as far as I'm concerned. You want to establish those good relationships at the bottom, but you

really, really need an advocate at the top, at that higher level, whatever the institutional structure is. I happen to be very lucky because I've got a great boss. Additionally, Will provided an example of how he utilizes his network to "manage up." He described the environment in which he works as hierarchical and stressed the necessity to channel information up via his supervisor if he is to generate support for career services initiatives.

One of the interview questions asked career services directors how they characterized the leadership style of the president at their employing institution. Some directors equated the president's leadership style with institutional culture, and they discussed how they modified their strategies to align with that culture in order to increase their capacity for impact. Maggie (large public) described the leadership culture at her institution as "the antonym of transparent" and indicated that the lack of transparency does inform her overall strategy for enacting mid-level leadership:

Clearly, that style of leadership does not support any efforts that I, as a lonely career director, might take to influence the campus. However, it does help me, because I know what the focus is. So, therefore, when I interact with stakeholders, I position the stuff I want to get done in terms of the singular focus of the institution. So maybe that's simple, but that's how you get stuff done. It's helping people see how what you want contributes to what they want and need and aligns with the priorities of the institution.

The previous examples provided by Natalie (large private), Tonya (small religiously-affiliated), and Delilah (large public) illustrate how the leadership culture at their institutions specifically informed their approach to engaging their networks. Natalie

(large private) characterized the leadership culture on her campus as being “very open door” and within that leadership culture, her network included the president whom she felt free to contact directly without engaging others to intervene on her behalf. Tonya engaged her network differently. She found that grassroots efforts were not effective strategies in an environment that she characterized as having a “highly directive leadership style at the top level.” She recruited her supervisor to advocate on behalf of the career services unit and subsequently relied on indirect impact as a vehicle through which she enacted mid-level leadership. Delilah has worked at her current institution for over 20 years, 12 of them as director. During that time, there have been different presidents who have modeled different leadership styles that she attributes to different personality types. At times, the leadership culture has been top-down, while at other times it has been collaborative. She discussed how she modified her networking strategies based on the type of culture prevalent at the time.

Separate from institutional culture as informed by presidential leadership style, Louisa (mid-sized private) characterized the overarching culture of her institution as relational. This was evidenced by network development that took place over lunches and coffee. Louisa extended the relational culture in the liaison structure that she developed to link staff in her office to various academic departments. Louisa talked about the liaison model in terms of the relational culture on her campus. She said that the liaison structure “personalized” career services.

#### **Providing access to resources.**

Another way in which career services directors were found to develop the capacity for social influence was to establish themselves and/or their unit as a critical

institutional resource. It is not enough, however, to simply be a repository for resources. Study findings indicate that the actual sharing of those resources was a primary way in which career services directors utilized their social influence to cut across functional areas and hierarchical levels. Study findings also indicate that career services directors shared their resources in two distinctly different ways. First, they provided access to those resources in response to requests from organizational members who were actively seeking them. Additionally, they took the initiative to share resources even when those resources were not actively sought out.

***Sharing resources upon request.***

Study participants reported being deliberately sought out for specific data collected or held by their units. The stakeholders who sought the data represented a variety of functions and hierarchical levels. Nine directors described instances in which they were asked to share data (much of which was outcomes data on recent graduates). Four of those directors reported receiving requests for outcomes data from alumni relations offices. Three of those directors reported receiving requests from admissions offices. Three indicated that they received data requests from faculty and two from various vice presidents. Two reported requests from the president of the institution and two received requests from the board of trustees. One received requests from institutional research and advancement, one from athletic coaches, and three from their institution's communications/external relations department.

Not all of the directors discussed how the data were utilized by the requestors. However, five directors provided examples of how data they had collected were utilized



by institutional stakeholders. Louisa (mid-sized private) and Pru (large public) were tapped by their communications departments for quotes for articles; Pru reported:

I have a very strong relationship with the Office of University Communications ... You know, there's reasons that in some ways we're a small town. And so I have a personal phone number, cell number, for the guys from University Communications who will call every semester and say "so, whatcha got going on? What kind of stories can you help me pitch?" So we got in USA Today a year and a half ago about an initiative we were doing. We're not an institution, we're not NYU, we don't get called by the national press to come do things all the time. It's pretty rare for us and so they are always wanting to know, "Have you got people with good profiles: Have you got a broader story that we can pitch nationally? How can we collaborate with you guys?"

Some of the internal stakeholders requested data that they in turn utilized to carry out their own responsibilities. Other internal stakeholders requested that the career services directors themselves communicate the data. Delilah provided an example of why her supervisor taps her for data:

... from time to time, my Vice President will contact me to say "What's happening in the job market today? What are you hearing from companies? Is there a statement out there from national professional associations or what do you have that could help me put together a presentation, or I'm going to meet with a group of people or an individual who could contribute funds ... during a fundraising trip, etc."

Tonya (small, religiously-affiliated) spoke about being contacted by faculty members who were seeking partners to develop a grant proposal. These faculty members asked

Tonya if she could help identify employers in the community with whom she might connect them.

Career services directors were not only tapped for data to share internally, but they were also tapped to share it directly with external constituencies. Jack (large public) described a time when he was asked to provide data to a Congressman specifically about student participation in internships in support of an initiative to develop a Center for Student Engagement. “They wanted me to mention to the Congressman specifically where our students have gone, what type of impact we’ve had in the community, what types of organizations ... for profits and non-profits ... I had probably about 10 minutes to just sell our story to the Congressman.”

In addition to being sought after for data, study findings indicate that these career services directors were actively sought out for their expertise. Some of the expertise was in relation to the work they do in their capacity as director of career services; at other times, it was in relation to areas of expertise they had developed outside of their work in career services.

Louisa (mid-sized private) described a time when she was invited to meet with a faculty committee convened for the purpose of discussing the value of the humanities. Due to her interactions with employers in her role as career services director, she was tapped to share the “employer voice,” to inform the committee about the key competencies employers seek and how those employers view the humanities. Similarly, Andrew (small religiously-affiliated) talked about how he has become “the accidental ambassador for experiential learning” on his campus. Pru (large public) was invited by the dean of one of the colleges on her campus to present a workshop for faculty focusing

on a new university-wide career initiative that she helped to develop and to discuss its impact on the students studying in their majors. Prior to joining the institution where she is currently employed, Anna (large public) had expertise in philanthropy. Due to her background, she was invited to serve on a search committee for a development and philanthropy officer who would report to the president.

Study findings also indicate that career services directors were accessed for their expertise in ways that enabled them to contribute to larger campus initiatives, most commonly through committee participation. In most cases, the directors indicated that they were invited to participate on the committees. However, two directors specifically discussed advocating for their inclusion on a specific committee. Pru (large public) advocated for her role on the campus-wide committee established to develop an institutional career development initiative, and Anna (large public) advocated for her role on a committee charged with the development of a program that guaranteed that students would graduate within four years.

While all of the directors interviewed provided examples of institution wide committees on which they served, eight directors specifically chose to elaborate on the expertise they brought to those committees. Natalie (large private), Michael (mid-sized religiously-affiliated), and Maggie (large public) all participated on their institution's accreditation teams. Natalie contributed her student affairs expertise, Michael his assessment background, and Maggie her knowledge of external relations and alumni involvement. Michael was also tapped for his knowledge of the interrelation of academics and careers for a committee on first-year students.

Tonya (small religiously-affiliated) brought her knowledge of strategic planning and assessment to her institution's strategic planning committee. While not specifically committee work, she was also asked to support other units within her own division, as well as non-division units as they worked to develop their own assessment strategies. Louisa (mid-sized private) also participated on her institution's strategic planning committee because her expertise related directly to two of the five pillars of the plan – experiential learning and diversity. Her knowledge of experiential learning came from her work as career services director; her perspective on diversity was framed by being one of the few professionals of color working in a highly-visible administrative role at the institution. Additionally, Pru (large public) contributed her career services expertise to her university's campus-wide career initiative. As discussed previously, Anna (large public) was tapped for her expertise in philanthropy. Finally, Delilah (large public) was invited to serve on the search committee for a vice president of student affairs based on her knowledge of student affairs not reflected elsewhere on the committee, as well as her ability to contribute an historical perspective having worked for more than 20 years at the institution.

***Taking the initiative to share resources.***

Career services directors did not always wait to be approached by other stakeholders before sharing resources. Rather, they frequently took the initiative to share resources when they deemed it appropriate. For instance, when asked how he goes about sharing information with a range of internal stakeholders who had not specifically requested it, Andrew (small religiously-affiliated) provided the following example:

I share it internally as much as possible. And depending on the information, with different constituencies. So, for example, best practices information and information on job searching processes, we share with students in a variety of ways, social media, email, one-on-ones, etc. When I visit employer panels or when we do employer site visits, I share that information sort of in aggregate with the staff here, because sometimes it's just me out there with them. We don't have an employer relations person. But then also, data from NACE and from other sources I share with division chairs, like the academic division heads, with Vice Presidents, with Trustees.

Other directors also discussed taking the initiative to share information across stakeholder groups. Maggie (large public) talked about bringing data with her to meetings with academic deans, and Delilah (large public) shared information with different departments about how students used various career resources.

In addition to taking the initiative to actively reach out to stakeholders and share information, several of the directors discussed how they indirectly disseminated information through various channels. Pru and Will -- both directors at mid-sized public institutions -- provided examples of how they put information out for public consumption. Pru utilized the career services unit's blog, newsletter, and Facebook page, while Will put information onto the unit's website and capitalized on social media.

### **Framing issues for institutional stakeholders.**

In addition to engaging networks and sharing resources, career services directors were able to utilize their social influence by framing issues for institutional stakeholders. They did this by engaging in sensegiving, and by fostering and participating in collective

sensemaking. As defined previously, sensegiving is the ability to impact the cognition of others by framing how they understand or perceive issues (Eddy, 2003). Weick (1995) defined sensemaking as the ability to frame understanding or perception of an issue for oneself. Given Weick's (1995) definition of sensemaking, collective sensemaking is a process in which group members frame their collective understanding or perception of an issue for themselves (Boyce, 1995).

The directors who participated in this study engaged in sensegiving and collective sensemaking as vehicles to neutralize resistance or potential resistance. They did this by informally enacting various roles that included educator, interpreter, and facilitator. These are not formal roles linked to the literature. Rather, they reflect common patterns of behavior in which the directors engaged. For the purpose of this discussion, these roles will be defined as follows:

*Educator* – person who introduces data or provides a rationale that supports an issue or decision for the purpose of increasing the level of understanding among resistant parties

*Facilitator* – person who engages the resistant parties in a shared process by raising questions that lead the group to generate a new collective understanding of the situation (that is, facilitates collective sensemaking)

*Interpreter* – person who works with resistant parties to interpret or explain situations in such a way that the parties are able to connect around a common purpose or shared values

### *Neutralizing resistance.*

Eleven directors, with the exception of Michael (mid-sized religiously-affiliated), spoke of various situations in which they experienced resistance from institutional stakeholders. Maggie (large public), Andrew (small religiously-affiliated), Tonya (small religiously-affiliated), Pru (large public), Natalie (large private), James (large private), Delilah (large public), Louisa (mid-sized private), and Jack (large public) all reported experiencing resistance from their career services staff members in relation to decisions that they had made or decisions that had been made further up the hierarchy. Will (large public), Natalie (large private), Tonya (small religiously-affiliated), Jack (large public), and Delilah (large public) all reported experiencing resistance from more senior-level administrators in response to something related to career services. Tonya (small religiously-affiliated) and Louisa (mid-sized private) reported resistance coming from faculty members in relation to career services initiatives. Finally, Anna (large public) and Maggie (large public) referred to generalized resistance to something related to career services without specifying the source of that resistance.

### *Educator.*

One role that directors enacted in order to neutralize resistance was that of “educator.” “Educate, educate, educate,” was exactly the response given by both James (large private) and Andrew (small religiously-affiliated) when asked how they responded to resistance to their efforts on campus. They went on to state their belief that it was their responsibility to be an educator on their respective campuses. Similarly, Pru (large public), Tonya (small religiously-affiliated), Natalie (large private), Maggie (large public), Delilah (large public), and Will (large public) also provided examples of the

different ways in which they employed education as a strategy leading to reduced resistance and increased buy-in.

Maggie (large public) discussed how she enacted the role of educator to neutralize resistance in response to a decision she had made about how to better align staff responsibilities with their skills in order to improve performance. She redesigned two positions within the career services unit to achieve this outcome and experienced resistance from her associate directors. The associate directors believed that the other members of the unit might misinterpret her intentions and negatively perceive her actions. Her strategy was to share the rationale on which she based her decision:

So I have the good fortune of having a leadership team in the office. So I'm the director, and I have two associate directors, each of whom sits like a little angel or devil on each shoulder. They are so opposite, it's hysterical. And I really do feel like I have these two little people inside of my head whispering in my ear, although we don't do that. And so when I first presented this idea to the leadership team, I go "Well, do you think that's a good idea?" It was so fun, I really do love my work, my staff. So what was the resistance? ... I like a lot of input in decisions, but I am not a ... I don't need consensus. Maybe that sounds really rude. Some cases I think I need consensus to do things, but in this particular case, I didn't need consensus. I made the decision anyway. And I was ... extremely clear about communication to my leadership team, why I made the decision I made despite their concerns. I acknowledged their concerns, I kind of drew the longer term picture, the bigger picture for them about why this was the right move and to honor their concerns about how other people on the staff might



feel, I engaged them in a conversation of what we could do to make sure that people who are performing exceptionally were praised, were rewarded in some way, because again, it's very difficult ... so I think it worked out really well, I have to say. It wasn't a bad story.

Will (large public) and Maggie (large public) both discussed their use of data to neutralize anticipated resistance. In an effort to decrease student wait-time to meet with members of his staff, Will made the decision to cut back the number of time slots available for scheduled appointments and expand walk-in hours. He anticipated resistance from higher administration based on past resistance to changes he had made within the unit. Will was able to effectively neutralize the anticipated resistance by leveraging available data to educate more senior administrators about historical utilization patterns. Maggie also spoke about using education strategies for neutralizing anticipated resistance -- in this case, from faculty who were reluctant to engage in relationships with the career services unit. She stressed the importance that both she and her staff utilize their networks to increase their understanding of the challenges facing faculty, so that they could understand the root of potential resistance and subsequently find effective ways to neutralize it:

I'll say one more thing about this idea of building relationships outside of coffee. I am personally, and I try to help my staff see this as well, we view our roles as supporters of faculty and what they do in the classroom. And I'm not saying that we position ourselves as subservient. That is not what I'm looking to do here. But I find a lot of student affairs people tend to be cranky and complain about how faculty don't get involved in anything. Well, I try to take their perspective

on what their job is and what their pressures are and ask them about their research. So, if it's not clear, I work for a research university and this is how they live and die. They don't live and die by teaching undergraduates. And it's not that that isn't important to them, but it's extremely important for me as a career services director and for my team as they develop faculty relationships to understand what's important to the faculty as we have conversations with them. When we ask them for things, we have to be cognizant of what they get paid to do, which may or may not be aligned with what we're asking them for. And that has helped in a huge, huge way in terms of our success.

Four directors (Pru – large public; Tonya – small religiously-affiliated; Andrew – small religiously-affiliated; and Natalie – large private) talked about the importance of employing common language or language that specifically resonates with those engaged in resistance when working to educate them about a situation or issue. Natalie offered a specific example of when she needed to educate another unit about the work of career services by linking it to a common language and model they were likely to understand. She assumed the role of educator in response to resistance from senior administrators who did not understand the scope of the work done by her unit. She impacted their understanding of her unit's challenges by framing the conversation using language specific to units whose work they better understood:

I think that basically they don't understand ... and this is an on-going thing ... that they don't understand the level of work that we need to do, especially around employer relationships. I think they just feel we post jobs and what's the big deal. But they don't realize ... I have three people on my employer relations team, and

you can imagine a school of our size has relationships with thousands of employers. And I don't think they understand that it involves phone calls, and things change, and so it's a very personal, hand-holding kind of approach that we need to have for a targeted group. And where we're actually more like development. And I try and communicate that ... you know how they have relationships with donors. We need to have that same level of relationships with our employers.

*Facilitator.*

A second role that four directors enacted in order to neutralize resistance was that of "facilitator." This role relates to fostering collective sensemaking. These directors included Andrew (small religiously-affiliated), Delilah (large public), Pru (large public), and Maggie (large public). Andrew provided an example of the general approach he takes as a facilitator in relation to problem solving within his unit. He stated that he perceives his role "... as the facilitator and the un-coverer of solutions, not the one that provides the solution." To achieve this goal, Andrew engages his staff in collective sensemaking:

Well, usually, it starts with "what's the problem?" So the staff sits together and we identify a problem. And then we brainstorm, "what are the potential solutions to the problem?" So some of these problems were very easy to see when I got here, but yet there was still a lot of value in going through the process of discussing the problem as a community and discussing the solutions as a community, because there was more buy-in on things we had to change. So the process, I guess, is once we identify a problem, we talk about ... we brainstorm.

What are the ways we think we might be able to solve this problem? And then my job is to sort of, number one, make sure that everyone on the team is heard, and not just heard, but feels heard, which I think are two different things. And then also make sure that they are hearing each other ... and I'm trying to facilitate consensus to the best of my ability.

Delilah and Pru also enacted this role as they each facilitated a conversation with staff about changes that needed to take place within their respective units. In Delilah's case, she acted as facilitator in a conversation with her associate directors and how they would be able to neutralize resistance to the change from the rest of the unit. In Pru's case, she acted as facilitator with the entire staff to neutralize resistance to a plan that would shift the primary focus of their work from individual support of students, which they enjoyed greatly, to a model that included employer relations, a function they did not enjoy.

Maggie also enacted the role of facilitator with her entire staff but in a somewhat different way; she needed to neutralize her own resistance as well as theirs to a decision made by top-level administrators that had a negative impact on unit marketing efforts.

The decision centered on the institution's intent to modify highly visible physical characteristics of the building in which career services was housed. These characteristics had been in place for years and were ones with which students identified. Because students specifically associated them with career services, the characteristics formed the basis of all marketing publications that served to brand the center. Changing these physical characteristics would impact their marketing strategy and alter the unit identity they had established over years.

*Interpreter.*

A third role that directors enacted to neutralize resistance was that of “interpreter.” When operating as an interpreter, Andrew (small religiously-affiliated), James (large private), Maggie (large public), and Anna (large public) were able to reframe situations, which allowed the involved parties to come together for the common good. Andrew provided evidence of his enacting the interpreter role when dealing with cross-functional resistance:

And other times when I would experience resistance, I think overcoming it sometimes is a matter of making sure the conversation is about the mission, and about how the decisions are going to impact our students. And then at other times it’s sort of side-stepping the resistance, and finding a coalition that’s willing to go out on a limb together and say, “Yeah, we all agree in doing this, and sure there’s going to be some, a person or two in the corner, who’s not going to like this, but let’s do it together and let’s do it together for the benefit of our students.”

James encountered resistance while serving on a cross-functional committee charged with exploring the prospect of creating a one-stop student resource center that would house career services, academic advising, and counseling among other functions. He told the following story illustrating how he enacted the role of interpreter on the committee:

Shared thoughts about creating just that kind of a ... you know, shared ideas where we’re all in different locations and yet we all have ... it was all about a common theme of assisting students with their career, academic and personal direction, and I think all of a sudden ... the light bulb went off, and that’s kind of what prompted this.

The committee consisted of representatives from varying departments across campus who did not have a history of collaborating. Subsequently, they did not intuitively recognize why the administration would formally house them together. James's work as an interpreter helped the committee members identify their shared values and common goals.

*Enacting multiple roles.*

Directors did not necessarily enact the roles of educator, facilitator, and interpreter in isolation from one another. Maggie (large public) described a very tense time in her office when she assumed both the facilitator and interpreter roles in response to a senior-level directive to which both she and her unit members were resistant but could not alter. The campus had been officially closed during a time when it normally would have been open and all non-essential personnel were given time off. Career services staff did not qualify as essential personnel but since students remained on campus, top-level administration required that the center be open. The directive indicated that although the career services staff had worked during a period of time when they would not normally have been required to do so, they would not be awarded compensatory time.

... so here's what I decided to do, and how it worked out. We kvetched together. We did, and I was just as upset as them, and I wanted them to see that I felt what they felt. ... that we were all in this together. That it was an institutional policy that we didn't agree with. However, we also then talked about, okay, so what now? And as a team and maybe this is an example of success ... but as a team we started talking about why we worked here. Like, we don't work for these

administrative boobs, right? We work for the students. And so, the fact that we came in when we didn't have to ... it was for the students, and those are the people that we have to remember we're here for. And so I think as a group we were able to refocus our energy on this idea that we felt good about what we did for our students, not felt bad about the stupid stuff that ... that was being presented to us.

In her role as interpreter, Maggie presented why top-level administration had made that decision. In her role as facilitator, she engaged the staff in conversation (in which she also actively participated) to help them work through their frustration with the decision.

Another example of a director enacting multiple roles to neutralize resistance came from Delilah (large public) in response to her efforts to make changes in unit structure. In this instance, she enacted the roles of educator and facilitator:

Well, definitely to make that decision, I consulted some trusted colleagues within the department who are associate directors ... there's two of those ... to have some really frank conversations about the dynamic of where that program area was and where we thought of moving it. That was one step. Another step was to have a conversation with the lead person in that program area to talk about rationale, to get buy-in with that person which wasn't going to be dependent on buy-in but to do what I could to say "Hey, this is the change that's going to be done, and this is why, and what kind of questions do you have? What kind of thoughts do you have?" And then to communicate to the entire staff...

As educator, Delilah first spoke with her associate directors and explained the thinking that went into making this decision and the rationale behind it so that they would both

understand and be in a position to support the decision. She then cast herself as facilitator by inviting the person most directly impacted by the decision due to the reconfiguration of their position to meet with her. During the course of the conversation, that staff member was able to raise questions that led to his ability to make sense of the changes for himself.

The analysis in this section has focused on how career services directors use their social influence to cut across functional areas and hierarchical levels within their employing institutions. There is, however, a relationship between the development and use of social influence. It appears that when career services directors use their social influence, a reciprocal relationship is triggered. The more they utilize their social influence, the more capacity they build for enacting social influence in the future. This is both an iterative and a cumulative process. For example, Jack (large public) spoke of the importance of credibility. He argued that because he had established a track record of success within his institution, more people were willing to support him and career services. As more people supported him, he and career services gained greater influence in the institution. In effect, using social influence strengthens the networks through which social influence is exercised. When organizational members use social influence, they are engaging their networks in further interaction and communication, which in turn, serves to strengthen those relationships for future use. Then, when an organizational member engages his or her networks again for assistance with a future issue, those networks will be even more robust. Like physical exercise, the use of social networks strengthens them.



## **Advancement of Institutional Goals**

The third research question addressed the institutional goals that are advanced through the leadership of mid-level administrators. Study findings indicate that career services directors contribute to the advancement of institutional goals when they enact mid-level leadership. Given the diversity of the institutions (e.g. public and private, size, reporting lines, and location) where the different directors work, the goals that were impacted varied greatly. Among the goals advanced were: 1) contributing to the expansion of the institution's "national footprint" by leveraging relationships with external stakeholders at a time when the institution was seeking to change its Carnegie classification from masters to doctoral level (Natalie – large private); 2) impacting the willingness of external stakeholders to fund a Center for Student Engagement (Jack – large public); 3) increasing funding (Natalie – large private and Tonya – small religiously-affiliated); and 4) successfully achieving accreditation at the institutional level (Andrew – small religiously-affiliated) and at the college level (Delilah – large public).

Even with considerable variation among the goals that the career services directors reported impacting, three themes emerged regarding goals and outcomes advanced by the mid-level leadership of career services directors. These themes include the development and/or advancement of the institution's strategic plan, curriculum development and student learning, and advancing the institution's diversity agenda.

### **Strategic plan.**

Six directors indicated that they had involvement with their institution's strategic plan – in its development and/or advancement. Three directors indicated that they had

played an active role in developing their institution's strategic plan. Andrew (small religiously-affiliated) indicated that he served as one of the four co-chairs leading the plan's overall development, while Louisa (mid-sized private) and Tonya (small religiously-affiliated) each served as members of the strategic planning committees at their institutions.

Four directors also mentioned that they or their units impacted the advancement of the strategic plan. Among those four, both Delilah (large public) and Anna (large public) spoke of the strategic plan's focus on "the global" and how their work in career services has contributed to moving their institutions' global initiatives forward. Delilah described her work as contributing to student readiness to enter the global workplace and the global environment; Anna described her involvement this way:

So, for example, as part of the strategic planning dialogue in the last year or two, ... there are two competencies in which the university would like to distinguish itself from any of the thousands of other institutions ... two characteristics that the institution would really like to embed in our students. One is kind of a global view and global experience. And secondly, the whole entrepreneurship thinking and innovation. And so in both cases, what I've done is, knowing that those are two areas of competencies and uniqueness that the institution has insisted in embedding in our students, I'm constantly asking our, my staff, "What are we doing to create opportunities for students to experience that, engage in that, and build those competencies?"

Finally, Tonya (small religiously-affiliated) discussed assessment as one of the goals of her college's plan and how, given her expertise in that area, she was able to help advance the infusion of a culture of assessment institution-wide.

Curriculum development and student learning, as well as advancing the institution's diversity initiatives, were additional goals that the directors identified as areas within the strategic plan that they believe they have impacted. These two goals were also discussed by other directors but not in conjunction with strategic planning. Their impact on these goals will be addressed in the following sections.

### **Curriculum development and student learning.**

Eight directors identified impact on the curriculum as another goal advanced as a result of their work or their unit's work. Interestingly, their ability to impact curriculum development and student learning did not appear to be connected to their reporting line. Only Andrew (small religiously-affiliated) and Natalie (large private) had reporting lines to academic affairs. Louisa (mid-sized private) reported through advancement. The remaining five directors who described impact in this area had reporting lines through student affairs.

Pru (large public) spoke about her impact on curriculum in relation to her institution's strategic plan. She focused her discussion on how the infusion of career development into the curriculum – in which she played a critical role -- increased both retention and graduation rates. Similarly, Louisa (mid-sized private) spoke about curriculum in relation to her institution's strategic plan, as well as more broadly. She discussed her contributions to advancing the strategic plan as: 1) increasing opportunities for experiential learning and 2) her more general impact in relation to her role (as a non-

faculty member) on the faculty committee exploring the value of the humanities curriculum, which was discussed previously.

Natalie (large private), Andrew (small religiously-affiliated), Anna (large public), Delilah (large public), Tonya (small religiously-affiliated), and Maggie (large public) all discussed their impact on curriculum development outside the context of the strategic plan. While Natalie referenced her impact on the curriculum in general, both Andrew and Anna provided specific examples of how, through engaging in unit-related work, they were able to have a broader impact on the curriculum. Andrew spoke about how an emerging leaders program that he developed became the catalyst for the establishment of a leadership minor, while Anna described catalyzing a process which she believes is still ongoing although she is no longer an active participant in it. She had the opportunity to interact with a local employer who was experiencing significant growth. The employer wanted to increase their hiring of the institution's graduates. However, the employer did not feel that the current curriculum was providing students with the requisite competencies. In response to their concerns, Anna convened a meeting between senior executives from the corporation and a group of academic deans and senior vice presidents from her institution. The purpose of the meeting was to begin the dialogue between interested parties, "...to talk about what might be the process they could engage in to explore the possibility of these degree programs, or curriculum changes, that would meet the emerging need of this employer."

Like Louisa (mid-sized private), Tonya (small religiously-affiliated), Delilah (large public), and Maggie (large public) discussed the roles they played in advancing their institutions' goals of expanding experiential education. Tonya played an active role

and subsequently assumed oversight for an office of experiential learning that is housed under the student life umbrella but which cuts across divisional silos to include both for-credit and not-for-credit experiences. Likewise, Delilah discussed how the work that she and her unit perform in the area of employer relations contributes to the advancement of the institution's long range plan:

Also, there is another statement in our Long Range Plan at the institution about developing relationships with public, private, non-profit, and governmental organizations in order to give students experiences to prepare them to be competitive at graduation and beyond. And so we definitely find ourselves right there in the middle ... able to help advance the institution.

And finally, Maggie shared her perceptions on her impact on curriculum and student learning:

I'm just this little person in this little office, and who does my job, but in fact, I think it's not boastful to say I have influenced the institution's future. And I will point to the example of the experiential learning part of our general education. I think because of who I am, and my relationships and my competence, and the Dean that I have, we have elevated the cause of experiential education at this institution, and for that I feel extremely proud. And I will tell you, I don't own all of it. There are lots of stakeholders on the campus who are doing amazing things in experiential education. I think I've been able to pull parties like this together and give them a greater voice to the cause or to the concept, so to speak. And I think the timing is also right, because with all of this focus on college outcomes and scorecard and all of this other stuff, people are ... people at this traditional

research institution are coming to understand that it isn't [an either/or choice between] liberal arts or vocationalism ...”

### **Diversity initiatives.**

The third institutional goal that three study participants reported impacting was in relation to diversity initiatives. The directors who provided examples of when they had impacted diversity initiatives did not necessarily identify with the diverse groups at which the initiatives were targeted. For instance, support for diversity initiatives directed toward populations of color was provided by white professionals as well as professionals of color. One director spoke about diversity in general without specifying how it was being defined, one spoke about her contributions to advancing diversity in relation to race, and the third spoke about advancing diversity in relation to the LGBTQ+ community. Both Tonya (small religiously-affiliated) and Louisa (mid-sized private) indicated that diversity was one of the pillars of their employing institution's strategic plan. Pru (large public) was involved with diversity through a presidential-level initiative.

Tonya spoke about how important it was to connect her unit's goals to her division's (student life) goals. The division's goals, in turn, connected to the institution's goal for advancing diversity as outlined in the strategic plan:

So our overall institutional strategic plan is there, and then our student life unit makes sure they have their overall strategic goals for the whole unit and that every department in the unit has to show how they feed into those, how they help those goals. So for instance, let's see, one of the goals ... one of the strategic goals is in advancing the campus, understanding an education of diversity and what it means

and how you work and learn together, educating together that whole community, with strict attention to diversity issues.

She went on to report that she had developed the following goal in alignment with the student life divisional goal, “Create a comprehensive, two-year plan for the inclusion of ‘diversity in the work place.’” The multiple foci of this goal included: 1) helping students identify whether issues related to diversity would or would not be criteria for considering employment with a specific organization; 2) engaging employers in the delivery of diversity-related programming; and 3) including diversity related topics into courses/workshops delivered by career services staff.

Louisa (mid-sized private) also discussed her work in relation to advancing diversity -- a cornerstone of her institution’s strategic plan:

Faculty and staff are not quite as homogeneous as when I arrived, but I am still one of the few people of color in a senior leadership role, so I think I am able to add my voice to conversations and offer different perspectives, like I did with the faculty committee I mentioned earlier that was working on living and learning communities. I am also, this is not in my role, but something that I think is important, that I maintain contact with students, since I am more of an administrator now, I also have different students in my home for dinner all throughout the year, and I think, in some small way it helps with mentoring and retention and giving students a safe space to talk, and I do get a lot of career information ... that was not my goal ... but I do get a lot of career conversations while they are there, of people who had not historically come to our office.

Finally, Pru (large public), who like Louisa identifies as a professional of color, discussed her involvement with advancing diversity initiatives on her campus. Unlike Louisa, whose discussion of her contributions was specific to race, Pru discussed her role as a member of the President's Committee on LGBTQ Equality on which she served for two years. She also referenced helping to build bridges across diverse communities, specifically race and sexual orientation. She described her role on the committee as "... trying to open the institution's energy on how we could be a more welcoming sort of place that people could identify in." She referenced how she believed that her presence on the committee helped to debunk the perception that Latinos/Latinas are not accepting of LGBTQ identities.

### **Summary of Findings**

In conclusion, the study findings indicate that the career services directors developed the capacity for social influence within their institutions in multiple ways. These ways included: 1) development of internal relationships that formed the basis of both formal and informal networks, 2) involvement of staff in increasing the visibility of the career services unit, and 3) the establishment of themselves and/or their unit as a critical institutional resource. Study findings indicate that these directors utilized their social influence to cut across functional areas and hierarchical levels in the following ways: 1) through actively engaging their networks, 2) through providing access to resources, and 3) through the framing of issues for institutional stakeholders. Finally, when these career services directors enacted mid-level leadership, study findings indicate that the following institutional goals were advanced: 1) development or advancement of the institution's strategic plan, 2) curriculum development and student learning, and 3)



advancement of institutional diversity initiatives. Together these findings form a foundation for answering the grand tour question that this study explored: How do career services directors enact mid-level leadership within their employing institutions?

It appears that career services directors enact mid-level leadership strategically and deliberately. They construct vehicles that enable them to cut across functional areas and hierarchical levels. They utilize these vehicles so that neither they nor their unit members work in isolation. Also, they do not let others isolate them and subsequently minimize their impact. They do not limit their contributions solely to career services. Rather they draw from their expertise and that of their unit members to work systemically in support of institutional goals. They are active in developing relationships, sharing resources, serving on committees, and defining the institution's understanding of issues related to the world of work and its impact on students.

Finally, numerous characteristics were defined for this study in relation to the directors themselves, the units they manage, and the institutions where they are employed. The study used these characteristics as mechanisms to identify study participants and to ensure that the collective case study included sufficient variety in relation to how career services directors enact mid-level leadership. The intent was to employ a range of characteristics that would identify a pool of career services directors most likely to engage in mid-level leadership, not just unit management. The study assumed that in order to learn about mid-level leadership, the study would need to select directors who had a range of professional experiences, and who worked in units and institutions that differed in their missions, structures, and cultures. By examining mid-level leadership in cases that differed in terms of individual, unit, and institutional

characteristics, the study could develop a more extensive understanding of the mid-level leadership phenomenon.

While the individual, unit, and institutional characteristics were used only for participant selection, it is possible that mid-level leadership could vary across these characteristics. For example, mid-level leadership might be enacted differently based on institutional size, gender of the director, or whether the director and his or her staff are members of collective bargaining units. The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the mid-level leadership phenomenon, and the research questions did not extend to examine whether this phenomenon differs across individual, unit, and institutional characteristics. Nevertheless, the researcher examined the data in relation to these characteristics, but the study findings did not indicate that mid-level leadership varied in relation to these characteristics.

The lack of variation in mid-level leadership across these individual, unit, and institutional characteristics suggests that this study may have identified some uniform practices related to mid-level leadership that transcend (or apply across) multiple contexts, regardless of variances in individual and institutional characteristics. Future research could explore whether these general mid-level leadership practices are enacted differently by directors who have different personal and professional experiences, and/or enacted differently in institutions that vary in their missions, structures, and cultures. For instance, in larger institutions, there are more functional areas and hierarchical levels to cross, which might require a career services director to leverage their networks differently than do their colleagues at smaller institutions. Similarly, career services directors might use different strategies to enact mid-level leadership if they work in a

unionized environment in which the scope of a unit member's work is regulated by a union contract. Furthermore, women who serve as career services directors might enact different strategies than male colleagues when attempting to engage in mid-level leadership. These areas for further research are addressed more extensively in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Higher education institutions encounter a range of challenges associated with accountability, effectiveness, and responsiveness to the public. Given the complexity of these challenges, institutions may need to extend the scope of organizational leadership to include those who hold the targeted expertise. This expansion of leadership suggests that leadership will not only be situated at the most senior administrative levels, but also that it will extend to include those who work at varying levels throughout the institution. This includes the mid-level.

Given that many of these challenges relate to relationships between higher education institutions and external stakeholders, it makes sense that those whose work is defined by boundary spanning responsibilities will have the potential to contribute leadership to the institution. Career services directors, by nature of their formal responsibilities, engage in boundary spanning activities as they connect the institution to external stakeholders who seek to hire students. Little is known, however, about how career services directors contribute to institutional leadership.

The purpose of this study is to expand our overall understanding of higher education leadership by focusing on leadership that originates at levels other than the president or the most senior administrators. This study examines leadership that

originates at the mid-level of the organization, specifically by career services directors. This chapter begins with a brief review of the study findings and a discussion about where they are consistent with and differ from previous study findings presented in the literature. Then, this chapter will discuss the implications of the study for practice, and finally, suggest directions for future research.

### **Review of Study Findings**

Career services directors are organizationally positioned at the mid-level of their employing institutions. Their capacity to contribute leadership to the institution as a whole is related to their ability to cut across hierarchical levels and functional areas, so that the information and expertise they possess can inform institutional decisions and impact institutional goals. This study found that social influence is the vehicle that allows them to transcend their positional power and have an effect on the institution as a whole. When career services directors leverage their capacity for social influence, their potential for impact extends beyond their formal positional power. Their knowledge and expertise become available at an institutional level, rather than simply a unit level, and may be tapped to address critical institutional challenges. Career services directors in this study developed the capacity for social influence within their employing institutions by: 1) developing internal relationships that formed the basis of networks, 2) involving career services staff in increasing the visibility of the unit, and 3) establishing themselves and/or their unit as a critical institutional resource.

Internal relationships were developed by these directors through both formal (e.g. scheduled meetings) and informal (e.g. meeting casually over coffee) efforts. The directors' internal networks were also enhanced when others working at the institution

reached out and invited them to participate in various initiatives and programs. Finally, longevity – the length of time a career services director had worked at an institution -- also contributed to their ability to establish network-forming relationships.

In addition to their individual efforts to build internal networks, the directors in this study encouraged career services staff members to build relationships on behalf of the unit. The strategy that these directors most frequently discussed was to create formal structures in which individual unit members were assigned to serve as liaisons to different academic departments. In this liaison role, career services staff served as the face of the unit to the departments to which they were assigned.

The third way in which career services directors developed the capacity for social influence was to establish themselves and/or their unit as a repository of resources that were critical to their institution. These resources included information that others within the institution did not have, as well as expertise in a variety of administrative domains. Career services directors obtained some of this information through their interactions with external stakeholders. For instance, some directors obtained information about local employment trends while attending Chamber of Commerce meetings, and others obtained information about best practices at professional development events. At other times, directors gathered data themselves, often through the administration of exit and first destination surveys of college graduates. In addition to serving as a data resource, career services directors provided expertise to their institutions in administrative areas beyond the scope of their career services duties. For example, some directors developed expertise in strategic planning from being formally responsible for it in another position or by serving on their institution's strategic planning committee.

Kezar and Lester (2009) suggest that it is difficult to cross internal boundaries within institutions of higher education "...because higher education institutions are generally organized in departmental silos and bureaucratic or administrative structures" (p. 5). Given this structure, career services directors may find that their capacity for institutional impact is limited to the unit they manage. However, in order to have institution-wide impact, mid-level leaders need to develop the capacity to bridge the gap between silos and work across the many functional areas of the institution. In this study, not only did social influence serve as a vehicle for cutting across hierarchical levels, it also allowed career services directors to cut across functional areas. Study findings indicate that career services directors leveraged their capacity for social influence to cut across functional areas and hierarchical levels by: 1) actively interacting with people in their networks, 2) providing organizational members with access to the critical information and expertise they have amassed, and 3) impacting how institutional stakeholders frame and understand issues.

Career services directors engaged with members of their networks, who in turn, connected them to others in the institution to whom the career services director might not have had access. Additionally, these directors utilized their networks as vehicles by which they could transmit institution-critical information. In fact, active utilization of their networks became self-perpetuating. That is, the more they used their internal networks, the more that utilization contributed to their ability to further develop their networks. At times, when career services directors had a member of their network connect them with someone outside their network, that new connection became integrated into their network. That in turn, created an expanded pool of prospective

connections for the career services director. The person newly added to their network would themselves have networks to which the career services director then had potential access. This form of network development is reflective of Granovetter's (1973) concept of weak ties in which an individual's social network can be enhanced significantly by maintaining a large number of acquaintances in a variety of organizational positions. In contrast to strong ties, which refer to long-standing relationships with close friends and colleagues, weak ties refer to relationships in which the parties know each other but they do not interact on a regular basis. Granovetter suggests that people who have weak ties share only a minimal overlap in their social networks. Thus, when someone establishes a "weak tie" with another person, he or she gains access to that person's network – a network that is unlikely to overlap much with his or her own existing network. This weak tie will positively impact a career services director's ability to have access to a greater number of people outside their existing networks.

Career services directors also provided critical resources to a variety of institutional stakeholders. At times, they shared critical information, such as providing an admissions office with employment outcomes data that they could share with parents of prospective students. The directors also shared their expertise in response to requests by other organizational members (e.g. during strategic planning processes). At other times, career services directors took the initiative to share the information even when it was not specifically requested by others (e.g. sharing data on hiring trends by major with specific academic departments).

Another way in which career services directors leveraged their social influence was to frame issues for institutional stakeholders. They did this by enacting different



roles to engage in sensegiving or to foster collective sensemaking. These roles included educator, facilitator, and interpreter. These roles were frequently enacted by the directors as a means to neutralize resistance to change. As educators, career services directors introduced data or provided rationales in support of an issue or decision for the purpose of increasing levels of understanding among resistant parties. As facilitators, career services directors engaged resistant parties in a process in which they generated a new collective understanding of an issue. Career services directors posed questions that the group then discussed. Through the course of the discussion, the group then coalesced and resistance was reduced or neutralized. As interpreters, career services directors worked with resistant parties to interpret or explain situations in such a way that the parties were able to connect around a common purpose or set of shared values. For instance, one director chose to interpret and explain a top-down decision to which unit members did not respond favorably. She framed her discussion within the context of cultural values that she knew were important to the staff members. Specifically, she focused on how the shift in reporting lines now better aligned career services with other units that shared similar values around supporting student success.

Study findings indicated that when career services directors leveraged their social influence to cut across functional areas and hierarchical levels they were able to advance institutional goals. These goals included: 1) the development and/or advancement of the institution's strategic plan, 2) curriculum development and student learning, and 3) the advancement of the institution's diversity agenda. In support of the strategic plan, some career services directors indicated that they served on the institution's strategic planning committee, while others identified specific pillars within the plan (e.g. advancement of

global education, infusion of a culture of assessment) that were supported by the work done within their units. In addition to providing leadership for strategic planning, the directors in this study also contributed to enhancements in curriculum and student learning. Study participants primarily used two vehicles to contribute to curriculum development and student learning. They increased experiential learning opportunities at their respective institutions, and they advanced the formal integration of career development concepts into the curriculum. Furthermore, beyond their contributions to strategic planning, curriculum development, and student learning, these directors also worked to advance institutional diversity initiatives. Career services directors advanced diversity initiatives through: 1) establishing a deliberate alignment between unit goals related to diversity and divisional or institutional diversity goals; and 2) actively engaging external stakeholders, such as employers, in diversity related programming both on and off campus. The overall study findings are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

*Summary of study findings*

<i>Dimensions of mid-level leadership</i>	<i>Study findings</i>	<i>Sub-themes</i>
Developing capacity for social influence	Built internal relationships that served as basis for formal and informal networks	Director initiated the relationship Others initiated the relationship Due to longevity
	Involved staff members in efforts to increase visibility of career services at the institution	Liaison model that connected career services to academic departments
	Established themselves and/or their units as a critical institutional resource	Based on external knowledge Based on formally collected data Based on professional expertise
Using social influence	Engaged their networks for specific purposes	Approaches were aligned with institutional culture
	Provided access to information and resources	Sharing resources upon request Taking initiative to share resources
	Framed issues for other organizational stakeholders, through sensegiving and by fostering collective sensemaking	Educator role Facilitate role Interpreter role
Advancing institutional goals	Helped develop or advance institution's strategic plan	
	Promoted curriculum development to support student learning	Advocated for experiential education Aimed to integrate career development concepts into the curriculum
	Advanced institution's diversity initiatives	Aligned career services goals with institutional diversity goals Engaged external stakeholders (e.g. employers) in campus diversity programming

## **Overarching Conclusions from the Study Findings**

The findings of this study demonstrate how these career services directors developed the capacity for social influence within their employing institutions, how they then utilized that social influence to cut across functional areas and hierarchical levels, and how their efforts advanced a variety of institutional goals. When considering the total set of study findings, additional overarching conclusions can be drawn.

Specifically, six additional conclusions emerged from the total set of study findings and provided greater insight into how career services directors can enact mid-level leadership. These overarching conclusions include: 1) indirect impact, 2) the alignment of strategies with institutional culture, 3) leveraging structural models, 4) enactment of roles for purposes beyond resistance neutralization, 5) “writing the frame” (Eddy, 2003), and 6) impact on the academic mission.

### **Indirect impact.**

One overarching conclusion that emerged from this study suggests that career services directors enacted mid-level leadership by impacting institutional goals indirectly as well as directly. They had indirect impact through their efforts to recruit new members to their network, whom they then influenced to take action on their behalf. For example, many career services directors identified their supervisor as a member of their network. They provided examples of when their supervisors intervened to address an issue at their request. These examples ranged from having the supervisor advocate for the career services director’s inclusion on campus-wide committees, to having the supervisor serve as a conduit through which critical information was shared with top-level administrators with whom the career services director did not have direct access. In essence, career

services directors employed “managing up” as a strategy through which they had indirect impact on the institution.

The findings of this study suggest that these career services directors understood how and where to leverage their social influence so that it had the greatest impact on outcomes. For instance, they are aware of the linkage between message and messenger. That is, who delivers the message impacts how it is received and what level of credibility is attached to it. When these directors identified an outcome that they believed they could not achieve on their own, they recruited to their cause a person who could impact or advocate for that outcome. That person was often their supervisor.

In their efforts to “manage up” or to influence their supervisors to act on their behalf, career services directors enacted a strategy similar to that carried out by what Kingdon (1995) called “policy entrepreneurs.” According to Kingdon, policy entrepreneurs are individuals with the ability to focus institutional attention on issues that they believe to be important but over which their positions do not give them formal authority. Policy entrepreneurs, according to Kingdon, have this influence when they frame issues in ways that attract the attention and support of those occupying more senior levels within the institution.

### **Institutional culture.**

Knowing whom to recruit to impact a specific outcome suggests that the career services directors in this study understood their organizational culture and how to work effectively within it. For instance, within a culture understood as hierarchical and in which interaction patterns were defined by level of position, career services directors recruited someone within their network positioned at a more senior level to intervene on

their behalf with others working at that more senior level. This was exemplified by Tonya (small religiously-affiliated) when she rejected a grassroots approach to change and instead recruited her vice president to advocate for career services.

Kezar and Eckel (2002) found that higher education change strategies tended to be more effective when they were aligned with the cultural norms of the institution. For example, in an institution with a bureaucratic culture, change agents were more effective when they relied on formal committees and demonstrated compliance with rules and official procedures. Similarly, the second overarching conclusion that emerged in this study suggested that these career services directors aligned their mid-level leadership strategies with organizational culture. This was especially evident in those institutions where the directors identified their leadership cultures as either being top-down or very relational. In institutions that were described as having a top-down leadership culture, the directors recognized that they either did not have access to or credibility with administrators working at a higher level. Therefore, they strategically relied on their supervisors to be the voice of career services in interactions with more senior level administrators. In institutions that were described as having a more relaxed, relational culture, career services directors did not rely on an intermediary. Rather they were the spokesperson for career services with anyone in the institution as far up the hierarchy as the president.

#### **Enactment of roles for purposes beyond resistance neutralization.**

The roles of educator, facilitator, and interpreter emerged in response to interview questions in which study participants were asked how they addressed resistance to change. There was also evidence that these roles were enacted for more than just the

purpose of resistance neutralization. The educator role, for instance, was used by some directors to shape how other administrators viewed the career services unit. For example, Will (large public) enacted the role of educator to provide historical context to enhance understanding. Specifically, Will used longitudinal trend data to help a new supervisor understand the context and rationale for decisions that Will had made before the new supervisor arrived. Delilah also reported how she often provided historical context as she had experienced repeated turnover in supervisors. The educator role was also enacted in the context of the directors' boundary-spanning activities. Jack, for example, spoke of how he was recruited by other units to educate external stakeholders such as parents of prospective students and members of the Chamber of Commerce about different aspects of the institution, such as employability of its graduates.

### **Writing the frame.**

Eddy (2003) found that one of the ways in which community college presidents engage in sensegiving is to write the frame. Community college presidents who enacted this strategy used documents as a way to communicate deliberately framed meaning to the institutional community. The documents that career services directors who participated in this study were asked to submit for purposes of triangulation included annual reports. These documents provided evidence of sensegiving as another vehicle by which career services directors can manage up as well as communicate with other critical audiences. These audiences may include accreditors, families, students, employers, and internal stakeholders.

While it is important to focus on and become adept at showcasing outcomes and accountability, it is not good enough to *tell* your story; you need to think about

*how* to tell your story and to *package* your story for your audience—especially those "above" or "around" you. (Cruzvergara et al, 2015 - retrieved on-line at <http://www.naceweb.org/j112015/does-data-support-career-services-value.aspx>)

The “knowledge center” section of NACE’s web site contains multiple articles written by career services practitioners focused not just on the importance of data itself, but also on strategies for using the data to support deliberately framed messages. Sam Ratcliffe, NACE past president and director of career services at Virginia Military Institute, is known throughout the field by colleagues as a powerful advocate for assessment. He argues that the data collected via assessment must then be used to tell compelling stories about career services’ contributions to student success and to build institutional relevance and influence (<http://www.naceweb.org>). When directors use annual reports and other documents to tell stories about how career services contributes to student success, this is sensegiving consistent with Eddy’s writing the frame.

A review of the documents submitted by study participants revealed the potential for using reports to write the frame, to communicate institutional relevance, and position themselves and/or their units for influence. Some directors’ use of documents revealed missed opportunity, others revealed partial capitalization on documents as a vehicle for conveying deliberately framed meaning, and one director in particular appeared to have effectively leveraged the use of documents. An example of missed opportunity came in response to my request for documents. One director wrote that she was unable to provide an annual report because she had not been required to submit one for approximately five years. This director could have developed and disseminated an annual report, even if it were not requested. Other examples of missed opportunity were reflected in annual



reports that contained utilization numbers only. While they included comparative data from previous years, the data were not accompanied by narrative that helped the reader understand what the numbers meant. These directors missed the opportunity to frame and communicate meaning, leaving it up to the reader to make sense of the data for him/herself in ways that may not have been consistent with the message the director would have wanted to convey.

Examples of documents that were not fully leveraged as sensegiving vehicles included those that provided raw data accompanied by a narrative that did not frame the data as evidence of the unit's contribution to institutional priorities. One such narrative read:

In this time of economic and job market gradual improvement, creativity and strategic planning are still needed on the part of the Career Center team. In 2014-2015, the continuation of career fairs, networking events, alumni initiatives, career panels, site visits, and mentor relationships provided students with access to employers at an impressive level. The staff implemented strategic, cross-media job development efforts that kept the flow of job opportunities and employer involvement on campus at levels near that of years with far better economic outlooks. The overarching goal remains combining enhanced preparation at the earliest stage of college life with the development and maximizing of opportunities, so students will be more ready than ever.

While this report listed ways in which the unit was working, there was no discussion about how these particular strategies led to outcomes aligned with institutional priorities. For instance, it focused on access to employers but did not speak to concrete outcomes

based on those interactions which appears to be of importance given the final sentence that suggests that student readiness is associated with employment.

The report that appeared to be most effective in the use of writing the frame -- that is, in using documents as a vehicle for sensegiving – provided context for the work done within the unit and then very directly linked that work to the institution’s mission and priorities such as student retention:

The Career Development Center is integral to XXXX’s mission in that the department works to connect students’ education, values, experiences and passion in ways that lead to fulfilling careers. Our philosophy is developmental in nature, and we seek to assist students on their journey by equipping them with developmentally appropriate tools for self-exploration, career preparation and jobs searching. An active and engaged Career Development Center impacts recruitment by demonstrating an institutional commitment to career and graduate school preparation. The Career Development Center tracks graduate employment and graduate school enrollment. This information is crucial in demonstrating value to prospective students and their families. Finally, the Career Development Center plays a vital role in retention and student success. Students who have a clearly defined career goal and a major that fits their values, interests and abilities are more likely to make connections to faculty on campus which is a significant factor in retention.

Documents provide structured ways in which career services directors can communicate meaning to other organizational stakeholders. Organizational structures

can also be leveraged by career services directors as a tool for unit organization that contributes to increasing unit visibility.

**Leveraging structural models.**

Career services directors employed the liaison model as a strategy to help their unit members develop their own internal networks and extend unit visibility within their institutions. Most often, unit members were assigned as the primary interface with an academic department or college, where they interacted with students, staff, faculty, and deans. For career services units that reported to academic affairs, this model facilitated their ability to cut across hierarchical levels. For career services units that did not report to academic affairs, this model facilitated their ability to cut across both functional areas and hierarchical levels.

While the liaison model facilitated the development of networks and enhanced the directors' capacity for social influence, the liaison model also has the potential to limit the scope of connections to a single domain if not paired with models that intersect the institution in other ways. Specifically, within career services, the liaison model is not limited only to connections with academic departments. Often it is used to connect with specific student populations such as the LGBTQ+ community, student-athletes, veterans, and student organizations that attract participants from a variety of academic departments. Using a blend of liaison structures – those that connect to academic units and those that link to a variety of student characteristics -- can expand the unit's networks and subsequently increase the director's overall capacity for influence and mid-level leadership.

Other units in addition to career services, such as academic advising and the library, may also assign academic liaisons. Because the liaison model facilitates linkages, this model positions those functioning as liaisons to have institutional impact. Mid-level administrators in functional areas beyond career services could also employ the liaison model to foster network development, thereby increasing their capacity for social influence and advancing mid-level leadership across the entire institution.

**Impact on academic mission.**

Perhaps the most surprising and important of these six additional conclusions was the extent to which career services directors impacted the academic mission of their institutions. It is surprising because academics is the traditional domain of the faculty, yet non-academics – the career services directors in this study -- were able to cross this much protected boundary, often by invitation. The ways in which career services directors crossed that boundary to impact the academic mission varied. One director reported being invited into conversations with faculty about the value of the arts and sciences curriculum and how it needed to be modified to have relevance outside the institution to the world of work. Other directors reported that they played active roles in connecting faculty with external stakeholders to develop more relevant experiential learning opportunities. This additional conclusion of the study is important because the academic mission is the core function of higher education and career services directors, as non-academic mid-level administrators, not only play but also are invited to play a critical role in its advancement.

## **Connecting to the Literature: Boundary Spanning**

This section of the chapter will examine how the findings of this study relate to the four areas of literature that were reviewed: 1) boundary spanning, 2) internal networks, 3) sensemaking and sensegiving, and 4) challenges associated with working from the mid-level. First, much of the boundary spanning literature reviewed for this study did not target higher education specifically, nor did it target professionals working at the mid-level within their employing organizations. Instead, the boundary spanning literature focused on various types of boundary spanning activities (Lipsky, 1980; Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999), the characteristics of effective boundary spanners (Middaugh, 1984; Miller, 2008), boundary spanning and organizational performance (Gieger & Finch, 2009; Middaugh, 1984; Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999; Rosenkopf & Nerkar, 2001), and boundary spanning and individual performance (Manev & Stevenson, 2001; Zou & Ingram, 2013). Nevertheless, several themes from the literature were also reflected in the findings from this study. These themes include: 1) access to resources in the external environment, and 2) the criticality of boundary spanning for increasing an individual's organizational influence.

Career services directors participating in this study reported that much of the data they had acquired as a result of their boundary spanning activities was sought after by internal stakeholders. This is consistent with Middaugh (1984) who found that robust interactions with external stakeholders provided access to knowledge and resources in the external environment and that this base of external knowledge and resources was critical to an organization's ability to maintain equilibrium and adapt to changing conditions. Similarly, Rosenkopf and Nerkar (2009), in a study of how boundary spanning

contributes to technological advances, found that boundary spanning activity, along with the relationships embedded in it, provided organizations with access to information from external resources that was critical to their effectiveness. Additionally, Manev and Stevenson (2001) found a connection between organizational influence and the types of networks in which an individual was involved. They found that organizational actors who had a balance of both internal networks and external networks had greater organizational influence. The external networks provided access to valued resources, and the internal networks provided mechanisms through which boundary spanners could then channel those resources back into their organizations. This is consistent with the findings of this study. Career services directors developed the capacity for social influence by obtaining critical information from external sources. It was not enough, however, to simply be in possession of that information. They needed to have internal networks through which they could channel that information in order to cut across functional areas and hierarchical levels.

Career services directors frequently engage in boundary spanning activities when they represent the institution in meetings with external stakeholders. This role is similar to “representing,” which is one of the boundary spanning activities in which senior student affairs officers engaged in Pruitt and Schwartz’s study (1999). Pruitt and Schwartz also found that senior student affairs officers engaged in another boundary spanning activity that they called “linking” where they connected different groups within the institution. This study found that career services directors also engaged in linking. Unlike the senior student affairs officers in the Pruitt and Schwartz study who engaged in internal linking, the career services directors in this study most often engaged in linking

across the boundary separating the institution from its external environment by bringing together internal and external stakeholders. For instance, they often linked faculty with employers looking to hire students studying in their discipline to discuss the possible alignment of curriculum with skills needed for employment in specific industries.

### **Connecting to the Literature: Networks**

This study established that one of the ways in which career services directors developed the capacity for social influence was to be in possession of institution-critical resources. Some of this information was obtained from their engagement in boundary spanning activities such as conversations with external stakeholders. The study also found that career services directors were able to cut across functional areas and hierarchical levels by providing those institution-critical resources to various internal stakeholders. At times, the career services directors responded to requests for access to these resources; other times, they made deliberate decisions to actively disseminate critical information (e.g. sharing employment outcomes data with admissions, faculty committees, and/or deans) even if a request had not been made. Study participants repeatedly identified how a variety of internal stakeholders sought them out for this information. These internal stakeholders were from a variety of functional areas and were working at different hierarchical levels. Additionally, study participants discussed how they frequently took the initiative to utilize their networks to disseminate information across those same internal boundaries even if they were not actively sought out for it.

This use of internal networks is consistent with Kezar and Lester's (2009) and Pruitt and Schwartz's (1999) findings that internal networks are necessary if information

gathered via boundary spanning is to be communicated throughout the organization. The value of information is lost to the institution if networks are not in place to channel that information to the appropriate stakeholders. Also, the capacity for impact on the part of the people possessing that information is diminished if the information stays only with them. Kezar and Lester (2009) found that connections to both formal and informal networks were related to having the capacity for organizational influence. They characterized formal networks as those that were deliberately constructed and informal networks as those that evolved more organically. Additionally, Kezar and Lester found that longevity within an employing institution was critical to the development of both relationships and trust, which ultimately led to network formation. Certain findings from this study have some similarity with those of Kezar and Lester. For instance, some career services directors referenced how their longevity at their current institution meant that they knew many people with whom they had the opportunity to connect and integrate into their networks. They also alluded to the fact that long-term familiarity engendered trust that contributed to people's willingness to become part of their networks.

The career services directors in this study talked about their networks in ways that suggest that they make a distinction between formal and informal networks. They did not, however, make that distinction in quite the same way as do Kezar and Lester (2009). Rather, career services directors distinguished between their formal and informal networks based upon who was in those networks, while Kezar and Lester made the distinction based on how the networks were formed. Career services directors' formal networks appeared to be comprised of institutional members with whom they had relationships defined by the nature of the position, for instance their divisional colleagues



and their supervisors. Their informal networks appeared to include institutional members with whom they were not formally connected based upon position such as a colleague working in a different division with whom they hoped to collaborate. Informal network members included institutional stakeholders with whom career services directors had connected in less formal ways – over coffee or by chance at events. Career services directors did, however, discuss deliberate formation of networks and the steps they took to develop them. They scheduled meetings with deans and reached out across functional areas to introduce themselves to colleagues.

Kezar and Lester (2009) argued for the importance of taking a proactive stand in terms of network development. The argument they advanced was that institutions should engage in activities that would enhance the capacity for and ultimate development of networks for organizational members. Career services directors also embraced the concept of fostering network development. These career services directors took the initiative to develop their own networks. Career services directors enacted the role that Kezar and Lester recommended for institutions in relation to their unit members' network development. They established formal structures such as the academic department liaison model that deliberately fostered network development for their staff members, and by extension, for the unit as a whole. Career services directors added additional structures in the form of accountability by establishing the liaison role as an official component of the unit members' responsibilities.

That career services directors took steps to develop not only their own networks but also those of their unit members is not surprising. Kezar and Lester (2009) suggested that some organizational members in colleges and universities might be natural

networkers— specifically those positioned in cross-functional units who have a formal responsibility for organizing cross-campus activities. While the career services directors in this study were not formally positioned in cross-functional units, they did formally and informally work across the boundaries that separate the institution from its environment, as well as the boundaries that separate different functional areas within the institution. Given their internal and external (boundary spanning) activities, coupled with their formal work responsibilities in which they train students and alumni to become more effective networkers, career services directors enacted a role similar to that played by Kezar and Lester's natural networkers.

Steward et al. (2010) conducted a study on ad hoc, cross-functional networks and their relationship to the performance of high-achieving salespeople. They found that reputation and expertise contributed to whether or not stakeholders were invited onto teams, and that inclusion on teams was positively related to sales performance. While this study of career services directors was not focused on performance, career services directors did report that their positive reputation at their employing institutions led to invitations to serve on committees and to engage in collaborations. Participation in these activities did, in fact, contribute to their ability to enhance their internal networks and increase their level of social influence.

Rodan and Galunic (2004) studied the importance of acquiring information that was not accessible to other organizational members and how that impacted performance by advancing technological innovativeness. Rodan and Galunic found that when organizational actors had higher levels of network heterogeneity, meaning that they had unique access to individuals in possession of information to which others did not have

access, their overall performance and level of innovativeness was positively enhanced. Similarly, study findings on career services directors indicated the importance of being in possession of critical information to which other organizational members did not have access. Access to that information became a vehicle through which career services directors were able to develop their capacity for social influence. Critical information included data derived from the external environment, as well as the expertise that career services directors could apply to institution-wide initiatives. For instance, career services directors might learn about the needs of organizations that have historically employed their students and how the current curriculum does or does not prepare students for positions within those organizations. That information, when shared through the career services director's internal network, can be used to realign curriculum or for the development of new programs.

Finally, Manev and Stevenson (2001) found that centrality within external networks was positively associated with organizational influence. They also found that there was no relationship to hierarchical level. These findings are directly connected with career services directors' capacity for institutional influence as their boundary spanning roles require that they have active external networks. In turn, these networks provide them access to information from the external environment which is critical to their institutions.

### **Connecting to the Literature: Sensemaking/sensegiving**

The sensemaking/sensegiving literature reviewed for this study did not focus on mid-level administrators. Rather it focused on college and university presidents, administrators in corporate settings, and different stakeholder groups associated with not-

for-profit organizations. Eddy (2003) and Smith et al. (2010) found that there were multiple methods in which people framed understanding for stakeholders; that is, how they engaged in sensegiving. Eddy found that while community college presidents might rely more heavily on their preferred method of sensegiving, they still employed multiple frames (the vehicles by which they filtered, understood, and/or focused information for stakeholders). Similarly, Smith et al. found that plant supervisors engaged in using different framing themes with their employees. Both the Eddy study and the Smith et al. study suggest that the use and selection of frames was done strategically to fit specific situations.

This study found that career services directors also deliberately utilized multiple methods when they engaged in sensemaking/sensegiving. For example, the career services directors in this study used different vehicles to shape how they framed issues. Rather than the frames employed by community college presidents, they enacted different roles (e.g. educator, facilitator, and interpreter). Similar to Eddy's community college presidents and Smith et al.'s plant supervisors, career services directors were strategic in their choice of role given the situation at hand. When they needed people to have more information about a situation or to understand the rationale that led to it, career services directors enacted the role of educator. When they wanted people to generate a shared understanding of a situation, they enacted the role of facilitator, thus allowing stakeholders to engage in collective sensemaking. Finally, when they wanted people to coalesce around shared purposes, especially when encountering a decision with which they did not necessarily agree and which was imposed upon them from more senior administrative levels, they enacted the role of interpreter.

Some research focuses on how people holding formal leadership roles can catalyze sensemaking among the people who report to them. Erb (1991) examined the relationship between leadership and the sensemaking processes of subordinates on university technical support teams, and found that the amount of information shared or withheld impacted how people made sense of things. Erb found that when supervisors wanted to allow staff to engage in shared leadership, they enacted a different information sharing strategy than when they wanted staff to enact the role of follower. To encourage shared leadership, Erb's supervisors deliberately withheld some information, thus allowing their staff to fill the information void and make sense of the situation for themselves. To encourage the role of follower, Erb's supervisors took an active role as sensegivers and created a specific meaning or interpretation by providing detailed and factual information.

The strategies employed by the participants in the Erb (1991) study are similar to the strategies employed by career services directors in this study. When career services directors wanted their unit members to create their own shared meaning of a situation, they enacted the role of facilitator and deliberately created an environment in which unit members would engage in collective sensemaking. This might be an effective strategy if the director wants to involve staff members in shared decision-making. For instance, if a budget cut would require the elimination of a specific program or service, it might be more strategic for the staff as a whole to agree upon what, if eliminated, would have the least detrimental impact on the unit and the students it serves. Alternatively, if career services directors want to frame a specific understanding of a situation for their staff, they might employ different strategies. For instance, when the career services directors in this

study wanted to offer an explanation for a decision they themselves made or which was made at a higher administrative level related to staffing patterns, they enacted the role of educator or interpreter. In those roles, they deliberately framed understanding by providing information, rationales, and interpretation that led to a specific understanding consistent with what they or others responsible for the decision had intended.

### **Connecting to the Literature: Challenges of Working at the Mid-level**

The literature documented some of the challenges mid-level administrators face specific to their work roles. These challenges include: 1) their positioning between senior-level administrators and those working at the front lines (Johnsrud, Heck & Rosser, 2000), 2) the lack of recognition for their organizational contributions (Johnsrud, Heck & Rosser, 2000; Rosser, 2004), and 3) the relationship between the provision of data and inclusion in (or exclusion from) the decision-making processes involving those data (Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999). This study did not focus on the challenges faced by career services directors due to the mid-level nature of their positions, but instead examined how they enacted leadership given their mid-level positioning. However, similar themes emerged in this study in relation to the literature on mid-level administrative challenges.

In their study on factors that contributed to the job satisfaction of mid-level leaders working within higher education, Johnsrud and Rosser (1999) found that mid-level leaders often provided the information that factored into decision-making but that they themselves were sometimes not permitted or invited to play an active role in the decision-making process. This disconnect between “providing” and “participating” was found to be a source of dissatisfaction. In another study, Rosser (2004) found that

professional recognition (or lack thereof) was important to mid-level leaders. Mid-level leaders who expressed positive perceptions of having been recognized and respected for their organizational contributions had higher levels of satisfaction and were less likely to leave their employing institutions.

This study found that career services directors possessed information and expertise that others deemed critical to overall institutional effectiveness. Possessing this information and expertise allowed these directors to exert more influence on institutional decision making. Career services directors were actively sought out by stakeholders across the institution, and were frequently invited to serve on important decision-making committees or to collaborate on new initiatives. Being included on decision making bodies (e.g. strategic planning committees) where they could use their expertise and/or information in turn provided them with the opportunity to advance institutional goals and subsequently to have institutional impact; that is, to serve as mid-level leaders. As with the Johnsrud and Rosser study, this level of participation may have enhanced the job satisfaction of the career services directors in this study. Some evidence also suggests that when career services directors held or provided important information, but then were not invited to participate in subsequent decision-making processes, they asked their supervisors to intervene; that is, they “managed up.” For example, some directors asked their supervisors to put them on specific committees that they believed were related to their areas of expertise (e.g. experiential learning) and to which they could contribute. Similarly, some directors asked their supervisors to channel critical information to others at more senior administrative levels to whom they, as career services director, did not have direct access.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

The purpose of this study was to contribute to a foundational understanding of how mid-level administrators – specifically career services directors – enact mid-level leadership within their employing institutions. Because the phenomenon of interest was mid-level leadership, not the mid-level leader him or herself, each director was considered an individual case within the overall context of a collective case study. A high level of variation was reflected across the cases: institution type (e.g. public and private), size of institution (e.g. small, mid-sized, and large), functional reporting line (e.g. academic affairs, student affairs, enrollment management, and advancement), membership in a collective bargaining group, and gender. All of the career services directors who participated in the study worked at the director level for a minimum of five years overall and a minimum of three years at their current employing institutions. The range of work experience at their current institution was from five years to as many as 27 years. While this was not a comparative study, these differences in the experiences and work contexts of career services directors suggest that there may be merit to conducting comparative research. For example, does institutional size impact the capacity to enact mid-level leadership? If so, in what ways? Does the functional area to which a career services director reports impact the capacity to enact mid-level leadership. If so in what ways?

Study findings indicated that involving staff in increasing the unit's visibility impacted the directors' own capacity for social influence. Some of the career services directors in this study work at public institutions where either they or their staff members are part of a union. Union contracts specifically outline job functions. Some institutional



cultures are rigid in their interpretation of contracts, while others are more fluid. This raises questions about whether or not union membership – either the director’s or their staff’s – impacts a career services director’s capacity to enact mid-level leadership due to contractual mandates. If professional staff members are unionized, does that impact a career services director’s ability to engage them in activities that extend unit visibility and subsequently impact institutional goals? Are career services directors’ own actions and subsequently their ability to enact mid-level leadership constrained or enabled by union membership? Does union membership change the ways in which they enact mid-level leadership? Does institutional culture and its impact on how the contract is operationalized impact the capacity to enact mid-level leadership for career services directors who themselves are union members and/or those union members whom career services directors supervise?

Studies that compare mid-level leadership across different individual and institutional characteristics are not the only options for future research on mid-level leadership. The current study did not address the dynamic of change resulting from staff turnover – and its potential to impact career services directors’ ability to enact mid-level leadership. This is a question of sustainability. With an ever-changing group of internal stakeholders, what is the impact of administrative or staff turnover on the ability of career services directors to develop and utilize networks? How might such turnover impact the establishment of structures that allow for the accumulation and dissemination of information, knowledge, and expertise? In the context of turnover, organizations will experience an infusion of new stakeholders whose perspectives are likely to differ from

those of previous organizational members. What does this mean for sensegiving in relation to common understandings and purposes?

Study findings indicated that the development and utilization of internal networks allowed career services directors to advance institutional goals. The fluid nature of networks, however, was not explored in this study. Since the relationships that form the basis of networks develop over time, what happens when key members of the network leave the institution? How does that impact career services directors' ability to develop and utilize networks and to ultimately advance institutional goals?

A similar question with its roots in sustainability applies to unit members. This study found that a key strategy for developing the capacity for social influence was to involve unit members in increasing the visibility of the career services office. One of the ways in which career services directors accomplished this was to develop liaison structures with academic departments that support the development and dissemination of expertise. In an environment where unit members change, however, it may be difficult to retain expertise and to utilize that expertise to cut across functional areas and hierarchical levels. These questions also apply in reverse – what happens when the key people in the academic department with which one is serving as liaison no longer serve in those roles?

Many of the career services directors participating in this study identified their supervisors as key members of their internal networks. The nature of their relationship with their supervisor was not specifically explored in this study. One element of the supervisor-supervisee relationship dynamic connects to whether or not the supervisor made the decision to hire that person into the role of career services director, or if they “inherited” that director from the previous person in their administrative role. How might

this relationship dynamic impact the supervisor's willingness to be supportive of the career services director in ways that enhance their ability to engage in mid-level leadership? How might it impact the supervisor's willingness to expend their own social capital on behalf of the career services director; to advocate for the appointment of the director to institutional committees, or to serve as a conduit and transmit information to colleagues at their own administrative level or higher?

Career services directors are not the only mid-level professionals who can provide leadership within higher education institutions. Others working at the mid-level share similar characteristics such as formal boundary-spanning responsibilities (e.g. alumni affairs, admissions, and community service/service learning), supervision of similar numbers of professional and support staff, and educational qualifications at the master's degree level or above. This suggests that the findings in this study may not be unique to career services directors. Rather, it suggests that the findings may be reflective of how others working at the mid-level can contribute to institutional leadership. A study that focuses on mid-level administrators working in different roles within colleges and universities and how they engage in mid-level leadership would extend our overall understanding of how mid-level leadership is carried out.

One of the additional conclusions that emerged from the study findings focused on the alignment of mid-level leadership strategies and institutional culture, specifically strategies that career services directors used to employ their social influence to enact mid-level leadership. It would be helpful to have an expanded understanding of how different organizational cultures support or constrain the development of capacity for social influence among mid-level administrators.

Another additional conclusion that emerged in relation to the study findings was the surprising extent to which career services directors advanced the academic mission of their employing institutions. It would be both interesting and important to explore this dynamic in greater depth. Most of the directors who discussed this outcome did so in relation to their impact on experiential education. But what, if any impact, do career services directors as mid-level leaders have on other areas of the curriculum?

### **Recommendations for Practice**

The current climate in higher education, with an emphasis on accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency, has complicated the scope of leadership challenges. It is unlikely that top-level administrators alone will have the time or range of expertise and skills to fully address this wide range of institutional challenges. Furthermore, given the long-standing expectation to do more with less (Lipsky, 1980), it is essential that colleges and universities increase their capacity for leadership. The findings of this study indicate that institutional capacity for leadership can be extended by deliberately and strategically involving career services directors in a range of organizational decisions and actions. What follows are recommendations for practice at multiple levels: institutional, unit, and individual.

#### **Recommendations for practice: Institutional level.**

Career services directors, as evidenced by this study, have the capacity and skills to enact mid-level leadership. They are actively engaged in developing the capacity for social influence, and they are using that influence to cut across functional areas and hierarchical levels to advance institutional goals. Top-level administrators can more deliberately and strategically leverage that which is already taking place within their

institutions to expand overall capacity for leadership. It is recommended that they: 1) strengthen network development and utilization, 2) leverage career services directors' capacity for sensegiving and collective sensemaking to move institutional agendas forward, 3) expand and formalize the institution's commitment (conceptually and financially) to ongoing professional development, 4) encourage academic departments to embed career development concepts into the curriculum beginning with first year students, and 5) institute for-credit internships into all majors.

***Strengthen network development and utilization.***

Given study findings that indicate that career services directors develop and utilize networks as a means to advance institutional goals, top-level administrators can create more formal, structured opportunities (e.g. committee involvement) where internal stakeholders from different functional areas and hierarchical levels can join together to work on institutional priorities. There are several advantages to this recommendation. One of the arguments initially introduced for the importance of this study relates to the scope of challenges facing higher education institutions and the need to expand capacity for leadership to address the complexity of those challenges. These types of structured opportunities for networking will allow the institution to more easily access the knowledge and expertise situated across functional areas and at different hierarchical levels for purposes of addressing challenges and advancing institutional priorities. They will also allow individual organizational members to connect more readily across those areas and levels, thus resulting in strengthened and more heterogeneous networks. The expanded networks that develop as a result of structured networking opportunities can

extend an individual's capacity for leadership as well as the institution's leadership capacity overall.

Additionally, top-level leaders can create less formal structures where institutional stakeholders can engage with those whose work might not normally intersect with their own. These informal networking opportunities may have the capacity to expand relationships among those at the mid-level of the organization, and between mid-level professionals and those at other points on the hierarchy. Given their natural propensity to network, career services directors could provide leadership by organizing some of these events designed to catalyze and support network development and utilization.

***Leverage capacity for sensegiving and collective sensemaking.***

Dissent can bring committee work to a standstill unless there is a way to breakthrough and bring the members together around a shared purpose. Study findings indicate that career services directors utilized collective sensemaking and sensegiving as strategies to neutralize resistance to change. Top-level administrators could leverage those abilities and assign career services directors to committees addressing volatile topics where committee members might be likely to assume adversarial roles. For example, both faculty members and student affairs professionals might sit on a committee dealing with academic integrity issues. While all committee members might be in agreement that the student did commit plagiarism, they might be at odds about what constitutes an appropriate sanction (e.g. suspension or warning). Career services directors could then enact the role of facilitator to help committee members coalesce around the shared value of advancing student learning and how that would inform their decision about the most appropriate sanction. Additionally, career services directors

could enact a similar role on committees that have made minimal progress in advancing their work.

***Expand and formalize commitment to ongoing professional development.***

Given that expertise and information have shelf-lives that expire, it is critical to keep these resources current, even in an environment of constrained resources. Top-level administrators can develop and invest in an organization-wide professional development initiative that supports the acquisition of skills and knowledge bases that are aligned with institutional strategic priorities. The professional development plan can be inclusive of stakeholders working at all levels of the institution. Top-level leaders can build in measures of accountability to assess whether expertise, skills, and areas of knowledge are being channeled back into the institution. For instance, institutional leaders may decide that in order to receive funding for conference attendance, staff members would be required to deliver an open presentation to share more broadly the information that they learned. Alternatively, the participant might be required to use knowledge gained to lead an effort to develop a new program or service that involves different functional areas.

***Embed career development into the curriculum.***

On most campuses, students are not required to engage in career development processes (e.g. self-assessment and decision-making). Study findings indicated that some institutions, however, are moving to formally integrate career initiatives into the overall student experience. Two directors, both working at large public institutions, talked about mandatory career plans integrated into first year seminar programs. For institutions not currently doing so, academic leaders can develop structures that introduce all students to career development concepts early in their academic careers. This exposure to career

development concepts can catalyze informed academic and career decision-making. Specifically, top-level leaders can involve career services professionals in the planning and delivery of course-embedded career development that includes self-assessment and exploratory activities.

***Institute processes that allow all students to pursue for-credit internships.***

Given that study participants reported that one of the ways in which they impact institutional goals is to increase experiential learning opportunities, and given that the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2015) reports that 85% of entry-level hires come from hiring interns, it is important for colleges and universities to construct pathways that support graduates when they seek employment. Career services staff members are not the only people on campus who interact with employers. Faculty members, most often those teaching in professional programs, also interact with organizations to help their students obtain internships. This practice, however, may leave employers confused about with whom they should work to bring interns into their organizations. To mitigate the potential for confusion, institutions can designate a single, institutional point of contact for all employers seeking interns and that point of contact can be the office of career services. This strategy would leverage the existing relationships that career services directors and unit members have with employers to increase experiential opportunities that further skills development (and subsequent employability) for students studying in all majors, not just in those where faculty have external contacts with employers.



### **Recommendations for practice: Unit level.**

Top-level administrators are not the only institutional actors who can enact policies and activities that will impact the capacity for leadership. Career services directors can enhance leadership capacity at the unit level to better position staff members to advance institutional goals. Specifically, career services directors can: 1) develop structures that support unit members in their ability to create and utilize networks that extend the unit's footprint on campus, 2) expand and formalize commitment (conceptual and financial) to ongoing professional development at the unit level, 3) brand the career services unit as an educational partner, and 4) reframe unit members' conceptualizations of themselves and the work done by the unit.

#### ***Develop structures that extend the unit's footprint on campus.***

Given study findings that indicate that career services directors encouraged staff members to increase the unit's visibility, directors in similar roles can develop formal structures that reinforce or support unit members' ability to connect with organizational members across functional areas and/or hierarchical levels. The liaison model, identified by many in this study as one of the strategies they use to strengthen relationships between the career services unit and other units on campus, is one such structure. Because the liaison model specifically defines a stakeholder group (generally an academic department) with whom the unit member will have primary contact, it has the potential limitation of restricting relationships to a prescribed set of individuals. Instead, unit leaders can develop additional structures that cut horizontally across academic majors, such as assigned liaison relationships with various student populations such as cultural/ethnic groups, student-athletes, students with disabilities, and veterans. There

may be value in having a combination of both vertical structures (with academic departments) and horizontal structures (across departments to include students from various groups). This mix of vertical and horizontal structures can foster connections across hierarchical levels and across functional areas. Another recommended strategy is to advocate for unit members to be assigned to specific committees (e.g. accreditation and strategic planning) where they can work alongside stakeholders from different functional areas and from different levels within the organizational hierarchy.

***Expand and formalize commitment to professional development in the unit.***

Just as top-level administrators can expand and formalize their commitment to the professional development of career services directors, so too can career services directors expand and formalize ongoing professional development for unit members. Professional development can become a unit priority in multiple ways. The director can designate monies within the budget for professional development activities and establish a process by which those funds are allocated to staff. Staff members may be required to establish professional development objectives as part of their annual goals and be held accountable for their attainment during performance reviews. Additionally, staff members who receive funding for professional development opportunities in a given budget cycle could be required to share their newly acquired learnings with unit peers. They could, for example, deliver an abbreviated report at a staff meeting on demographic information impacting recent graduates or develop more in-depth trainings for their unit peers on the use of a new assessment instrument.

***Brand the unit as an educational partner.***

Study findings indicate that career services directors are already making contributions to curriculum development and to the expansion of experiential learning opportunities regardless of where they are structurally positioned within the institution. Career services directors, however, do not need to remain a silent educational partner, but rather they can engage in ongoing sensegiving so that other organizational members (e.g. faculty, top-level administrators) understand the full range of ways in which career services contributes to student learning. Ongoing sensegiving could take the form of formal marketing of services. Ongoing sensegiving could also take the form of a message that continually reinforces the importance of participation in experiential learning opportunities and how career services can assist. This message could be consistently shared by the director and unit members in all communications with both internal and external (e.g. prospective students and their parents) stakeholders.

***Reframe unit members' conceptualizations of themselves.***

If unit members' primary identity is with the unit itself or with the career services community of practice rather than with the institution where they are employed, they might not perceive the intersection between the work they do and overall institutional goals. Subsequently, their contributions toward advancing those goals may be limited. Career services directors, therefore, can extend their staff members' field of vision and engage them in collective sensemaking to advance the notion that they are higher educational professionals with expertise in the area of career services, rather than being career services experts who happen to work within higher education. These are two very different ways to conceptualize their roles and will likely lead to very different

interpretations of top-level administrative decisions. A career services professional who identifies more strongly with their career services community of practice is likely to interpret administration's refusal to fund a new position within the unit as a devaluing of the unit itself. Alternatively, a career services professional who identifies more strongly as a higher education professional would interpret that same refusal differently. They would be more likely to understand it as a decision to fund only those positions most directly aligned with the institution's strategic priorities given current financial constraints than as a devaluing of the unit. To facilitate a transformation in how unit members perceive themselves, career services directors can: 1) integrate into staff meetings and retreats the topic of how career services advances institutional goals, 2) engage staff members in redefining the unit mission and vision statements to align with institutional mission and vision statements, 3) engage staff members to develop a unit strategic plan that is aligned with the institutional strategic plan, and 4) require that staff members identify at least one goal each year that is consistent with institutional goals.

The academic year can become very busy as career services staff members meet with students in counseling sessions, develop and deliver programming, and coordinate job and internship fairs among other tasks. The rapid-fire execution of tasks may preclude the ability to reflect on the work they do and how it connects to the larger goals of the institution. This pattern of activity serves to reinforce staff members' identity with the unit, as well as their community of practice, but it has the potential to isolate them from the institution as a whole. In order to combat this pattern, career services directors can create formal structures that serve as a break from the action of carrying out day-to-day job responsibilities. These structures can promote reflection on not what is being

done, but rather why it is being done and its connection to the larger enterprise. These structures may be as simple as modifying a staff meeting agenda to regularly include a discussion about how their most recent program advances an institutional goal. This same conversation could be extended at a more in-depth level if it were placed on the agenda of unit retreats where planning takes place for the upcoming year.

In addition to engaging staff members in discussion about how their work connects with the institution, career services directors can engage staff in activities where they are required to make connections between the work they do and the larger organization. For instance, career services directors can involve staff in a process of redefining the unit's mission and vision statements so that they align with the institution's mission and vision statements. Additionally, career services directors can involve staff in the process of developing a unit strategic plan that is aligned with the institution's strategic plan. These activities may allow staff members to engage in collective sensemaking and draw the parallels between their work, the unit's work, and the institution's goals and mission. It is not enough, however, to simply develop a strategic plan. It will be important to assess progress on the plan, as a group and at formally scheduled times. These times might be incorporated into staff meetings or retreats; they might be examined in separate meetings.

Finally, career services directors can connect a unit member's individual goals annually with overall institutional goals. This connection may be created by requiring that each staff member develop at least one performance goal on which they will be assessed that is in alignment with the larger institutional goals. For instance, if the institution is focused on advancing its diversity agenda, a staff member might develop a

goal focused on how he or she will develop programming that addresses unique challenges faced by members of the LGBTQ+ community during the job search.

**Recommendations for practice: Individual level.**

Career services directors are in a position to increase their own enactment of mid-level leadership and by doing so increase the overall institutional capacity for leadership. In addition to doing for themselves what is recommended that they do for their unit members, they can: 1) make data-based decisions, 2) engage in empirical research, 3) continue to actively engage in collective sensemaking and sensegiving, and 4) be present and visible at institutional events. The following recommendations are likely to have relevance to other mid-level administrators such as those working in admissions, enrollment management, finance, institutional research, and advancement given the boundary spanning nature of their work.

***Make data-based decisions.***

Study findings indicate that career services directors, as well as unit members, often collect data that are viewed as critical by other organizational members. Study findings also indicate that disseminating those data upon request or upon their own initiative is one of the ways in which mid-level leaders can cut across functional areas and hierarchical levels to advance institutional goals. The increased demand for accountability from both internal and external sources means that it is no longer enough to justify decisions with professional intuition based upon expertise; rather, decisions need to be backed up by current relevant data. Career services directors can aim not only to stay current with data but also integrate data into their decisions. For instance, in the context of constrained resources, career services directors who have engaged in ongoing

assessment of unit functions are positioned to make decisions about which programs and services could be eliminated or reduced based on utilization data and information that measures effectiveness. Career services directors can easily access data from a variety of sources such as their professional associations (e.g. NACE's annual salary survey) and government reports (e.g. national, state, and local hiring trends). They can also generate data (e.g. surveys) for consideration in institutional decision-making processes. Once they have the data, they can then apply their professional expertise to interpret it in ways that have impact for their institutions.

***Engage in empirical research.***

In addition to keeping current with existing data, career services directors can contribute to the data pool themselves by engaging in empirical research. Career services directors can engage in research that generates new data on topics about which they are the institution's expert. Internship participation and its relation to long-term career satisfaction would be one topic of importance. Another might be the connection between a liberal arts education and career outcomes and earnings. Engagement in empirical research takes on additional importance for career services directors, because it can enhance their credibility when interacting with stakeholders on the academic side of the institution who themselves engage in and value empirical research.

***Expand and strengthen connections with the academic mission.***

Given study findings that demonstrate career services directors' role in impacting student learning and curriculum development, as well as the potential for increased credibility with faculty that results from engagement in empirical research, it is recommended that career services directors remain focused on ways in which they can

strengthen their relationships with faculty members. These relationships with faculty members will keep career services directors more closely tied with the academic mission of their institutions and provide enhanced opportunities for impact on the core institutional function. They can do this by actively seeking to recruit faculty into their networks, deliberately providing information to faculty that link their discipline with employment outcomes, or inviting faculty to serve in advisory or think tank roles for the unit.

***Continue to engage in collective sensemaking and sensegiving.***

Under conditions of high turnover, career services directors may find that their internal networks have become depleted and that they need to establish relationships with new organizational members. This suggests that collective sensemaking and sensegiving are not static but rather ongoing processes in which career services directors continually engage to retain their capacity for social influence. To engage in ongoing sensegiving, career services directors can continue to educate all organizational members about career services and the role it plays in advancing institutional goals. Career services directors can engage people in other organizational units in dialogues where they can find common ground.

***Be present and visible at institutional events.***

Study findings indicate that being in proximity to institutional stakeholders provided career services directors with the opportunity to expand their internal networks. Study findings also suggest that this came about through both formal and informal situations. Career services directors, therefore, can be more intentional about attending a wider range of institutional activities where they are likely to connect with stakeholders



working in different functional areas and/or at different hierarchical levels. This strategy may enable career services directors to both expand their internal networks and to sustain them in the face of stakeholder turnover.

**Recommendations for practice: Professional associations.**

Professional associations are places to which career services professionals turn to extend their networks. They are also the places where career services professionals turn to extend their learning. It is recommended that career services-related professional associations strengthen their programming (for directors and for those aspiring to directorships). Professional development programs can focus not just on those skills needed for effective unit management, but also on those skills that career services professionals need to enact leadership within their institutions that impacts critical goals. The benefits are two-fold. First, individual career services practitioners will become more skilled leaders. Second, the professional associations will be contributing to the development of a community of career services practitioners who identify as and work as higher education leaders.

**Recommendations for practice: Aspiring career services directors**

Aspiring career services directors can take responsibility for deliberately seeking opportunities to develop skills that will enable them to enact institutional leadership. In addition to embracing some of the recommendations made previously for directors (e.g. learn to use data to drive decisions, engage in empirical research, be present and visible), it would be strategic for aspiring career services directors to expand their institutional field of vision by engaging in activities where they are exposed to multiple understandings or interpretations of issues that have institution-wide impact.

Recommendations include informal shadowing of stakeholders working in different functional units or divisions, or volunteering to serve on committees comprised of stakeholders with whom their work might not ordinarily bring them into contact. Acting on these recommendations has the added benefit of increasing their institutional visibility. Additionally, aspiring career services directors can develop themselves as institution-critical resources. They can develop skills that have relevance beyond the career services unit and that will contribute to the advancement of institutional goals. Some examples of these skills include assessment, strategic planning, and familiarity with early warning/retention technologies.

### **Final Thoughts**

The intent of this study was to contribute to our understanding of higher education leadership by exploring how it is enacted at the mid-level by career services directors. Study findings suggest that mid-level leadership takes place upon a continuum that begins with developing the capacity for social influence and ends with impact on institutional goals. Once capacity for social influence has been developed, it then has to be leveraged effectively in order to contribute to advancing the institution's goals. This is not, however, to suggest that mid-level leadership is a solely sequential process. Utilization of social influence can increase the capacity to develop expanded social influence long before goals may be impacted. Career services directors in this study developed their capacity for social influence by: 1) developing their own networks; 2) involving staff members to expand unit visibility; and 3) establishing the unit as a repository of institution-critical resources in the form of data and expertise. Capacity for social influence does not result in impact unless that capacity is actualized. This requires

career services directors to take action, to utilize their social influence to cut across functional areas and hierarchical levels. They did so by: 1) actively engaging their networks; 2) providing access to resources; and 3) framing issues for institutional stakeholders. There were three institutional goals in particular that were advanced when career services directors enacted mid-level leadership. They had an impact on: 1) the development or advancement of the institution's strategic plan, 2) curriculum development and student learning, and 3) the advancement of the institution's diversity initiatives. The study also found that career services directors did not have to intervene directly to impact institutional goals. They could still have institutional impact even if their actions were indirect; for instance, when they recruited someone from within their network to act on their behalf.

The significance of this study is that it is holistic as well as practical. It does not focus just on the outcomes that resulted from career services directors enacting mid-level leadership. Rather it also explores how career services directors developed the vehicles they need to enact mid-level leadership and how they then utilized those vehicles to have institutional impact. By understanding how career services directors developed their capacity for social influence and how they then employed it, other career services directors can use these findings deliberately to position themselves to enact mid-level leadership on their own campuses and extend the capacity for leadership overall. Because a key component of this study focused on the nature of working from the mid-level, these findings may be operationalized by mid-level administrators working in functions other than career services so that they too can have institutional impact through the enactment of mid-level leadership.

## APPENDIX A

### EMAIL TEXT FOR SURVEY #1

I am currently a candidate for an EdD in higher education administration from the University of Massachusetts at Boston. The purpose of my dissertation research is to examine mid-level leadership within higher education to gain a better understanding about how it is carried out – specifically by the heads of career services units.

The purpose of this brief survey is to identify potential study participants. I hope you find the topic as exciting as I do and invite you to complete the survey by (date – to be determined) – it will take less than 5 minutes to complete. Please click on the link below to access the survey.

I thank you in advance and I thank NACE for their willingness to send this invitation on my behalf.

LINK

Linda Kent Davis

Doctoral Candidate, University of Massachusetts Boston

Director, Career Development Center & Office of Student Employment

Rhode Island College

[lkent@ric.edu](mailto:lkent@ric.edu)

## APPENDIX B

### SURVEY #1

The purpose of this brief survey is to identify potential study participants for my dissertation research on mid-level leadership in higher education as it is carried out by the heads of career services units. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

#### *Survey Questions:*

Name

Title

Institution

Do you currently work at a 4-year college or university? Y N

If N → Go to “thank you message”

Do you work for a for-profit college or university? Y N

If Y → Go to “thank you message”

Is the institution where you work (check one):

Public?

Private?

Have you worked as the head of a college/university career services unit for a minimum of five years? Y N

If N → Go to “thank you message”

Have you worked as the head of a career services unit at your current institution for a minimum of three years? Y N

If N → Go to “thank you message”

Have you completed a master’s degree or higher?

If N → Go to “thank you message”

Thank you for your responses. They are consistent with the focus of this study. Within approximately one week you will receive a follow-up email inviting you to complete a second survey which asks for more detail about your professional background, the unit you direct, and the institution where you work. Your responses to this second survey will help me finalize participants for the study. I thank you in advance for your willingness to complete it.

Linda Kent Davis  
Doctoral Candidate, University of Massachusetts at Boston  
Director, Career Development Center  
Rhode Island College  
[lkent@ric.edu](mailto:lkent@ric.edu)

**Thank you message:** Your responses are not consistent with the focus of this study. I thank you for your interest and look forward to our professional paths crossing in the near future.

## APPENDIX C

### EMAIL MESSAGE FOR SURVEY #2

Thank you for participating in the initial survey designed to identify potential participants for my dissertation research at the University of Massachusetts Boston on mid-level leadership as carried out by heads of career services units. The purpose of this second survey is to collect additional information about you, the unit you manage, and the institution where you currently work.

Responses to this survey will allow me to identify those career services professionals whose background and experiences best match study criteria. The survey will take approximately 10–15 minutes to complete. Please click on the link below to access the survey.

LINK

I thank you in advance for your responses.

Linda Kent Davis  
Doctoral Candidate, University of Massachusetts at Boston  
Director, Career Development Center  
Rhode Island College  
[lkent@ric.edu](mailto:lkent@ric.edu)

## APPENDIX D

### SURVEY #2

The purpose of this survey is to collect additional information about you, the unit you manage, and the institution where you currently work as it relates to mid-level leadership within higher education for my dissertation research.

Responses to this survey will allow me to identify those career services professionals whose background and experiences best match study criteria. The survey will take approximately 10–15 minutes to complete. I thank you in advance for your responses.

#### *Survey Questions:*

How many staff do you supervise? Please include both professional and support staff in your total.

2 or fewer      3 or more

If 2 or fewer → go to “thank you message”

Do you supervise at least one professional staff member? Y N

If N → go to “thank you message”

Do you supervise at least one support staff member? Y N

If N → go to “thank you message”

Is your office the primary provider of career services at your institution? Y N

If N → go to “thank you message”



Which of the following services does your unit offer in some capacity (check all that apply):

Career advising/counseling

Career information

Employer services

Graduate school planning

Experiential education/internships

Other (please indicate additional services)

Have you served on any institution-wide committees at your current institution within the last five years? Y N

If N → go to “thank you message”

Please provide the following information for up to five institution-wide committees of your choice on which you have served:

Name of committee	Length of time on committee	Role on committee (e.g., member, chair, co-chair)

Do you have on-going responsibility for any services/programs in addition to career services? Y N

If Y → for what additional services/programs do you have responsibility?

Please indicate the percentage of your time spent over the course of an academic year on these non-career services/programs combined.

To what division does your unit currently report?

Has your unit reported to any other division(s) while you have been director?

Y N

If Y → To what other division(s)?

For how long has your unit had its current reporting arrangement?

Are you a member of a collective bargaining group on your campus? Y N

Are the professional staff members you supervise members of a collective bargaining group? Y N

Are the support staff members you supervise members of a collective bargaining group?

Y N

Have you served on committees for any national or regional professional associations in the field of career services? Y N

If N → go to “thank you message”

Please provide the following information for up to five committees of your choice on which you have served:

Association	Committee	Length of time on committee	Role on committee (e.g. member, chair, co-chair)

Have you made presentations to career services colleagues at conferences or other professional venues within the past five years? Y N

If Y → Indicate the number of presentations you have made.

Do you participate in on-line career services discussions groups? Y N

If Y → indicate the number of times you have made a comment in response to a discussion within the past year.

Indicate the number of times you have initiated a discussion within the past year.

In which of the following leadership development activities have you participated since working in career services (check all that apply):

NACE Management Leadership Institute

Formal coursework at college/university

Workshops or seminars (in person or on-line)

Other (please list)

Have you served as a mentor (formally or informally) within the past five years for a new career services professional **outside** of your employing institution? Y N

Thank you for participating in this survey. If your responses indicate that your background and experiences match study criteria, I will contact you directly to discuss the study in more detail and explore your interest in participating.

Linda Kent Davis

Doctoral Candidate, University of Massachusetts at Boston

Director, Career Development Center

Rhode Island College

[lkent@ric.edu](mailto:lkent@ric.edu)

**Thank you message:** Your responses are not consistent with the focus of this study. I thank you for your interest and look forward to our professional paths crossing in the near future.

APPENDIX E  
CONSENT FORM

University of Massachusetts Boston  
Department of Leadership in Education  
100 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, MA 02125-3393

**Mid-Level Leadership in Higher Education: How Career Services Directors Enact Leadership**

**Introduction and contact information**

You are asked to take part in a research project that focuses on mid-level leadership within higher education. The researcher is Linda Kent Davis, the director of career development at Rhode Island College and a doctoral candidate for an EdD in Higher Education Administration in the Department of Leadership in Education in the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Please read this form and feel free to ask questions. If you have further questions later, please contact: Linda Kent Davis at [lkent@ric.edu](mailto:lkent@ric.edu).

**Description of the project**

Should you choose to participate in this project, you will be asked to complete an interview that is expected to take one to one and one-half hours. The interview may take place face to face at your or the researcher's employing institution or at another venue such as a regional or national conference. Alternatively, the interview may take place via Skype. The interview will focus on your relationships and involvement on campus, your relationships and involvement external to campus, the leadership of your unit, and your institutional impact. The questions pertain to activities in which you engage as part of your professional responsibilities.

**Risks or discomforts**

The research is of minimal risk and is not anticipated to pose greater risk than might ordinarily be encountered in the performance of your professional responsibilities.

**Confidentiality**

This study is designed to be confidential. The data gathered for this study will not be published or presented in a way that would allow anyone to identify you. The data gathered for this study will be stored in a locked file cabinet and only the researcher will

have access to the data. The interview will be transcribed either by the researcher herself or by a professional transcriptionist hired for this study. Neither your name nor other identifying information will be recorded as part of the interview or included on the transcript.

Numeric identifiers will be assigned to each study participant. An Excel spreadsheet will match the numeric code to the name, job title, employing institution, email address, and phone number. Only the numeric identifier will appear on the interview transcript. The spreadsheet will be destroyed no later than one year after the study has concluded on March 17, 2015.

**Voluntary participation**

The decision to participate or not in this research study is voluntary. If you do decide to take part in this study, you may terminate participation at any time without consequence. If you wish to terminate participation, you should telephone Linda Kent Davis at or send her an email at [lkent@ric.edu](mailto:lkent@ric.edu). Whatever you decide will in no way impact you professionally.

**Rights**

You have the right to ask questions about this research before you sign this form and at any time during the study. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact a representative of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), at the University of Massachusetts Boston, which oversees research involving human participants. The Institutional Review Board may be reached at the following address: IRB, Quinn Administration Building – 2-080, University of Massachusetts Boston, 100 Morrissey Boulevard, MA 02125-3393. You can also contact the Board by telephone or email at 617-287-5374 or at [human.subjects@umb.edu](mailto:human.subjects@umb.edu).

I HAVE READ THE CONSENT FORM. MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. MY SIGNATURE ON THIS FORM MEANS THAT I CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

_____ Signature of Participant	_____ Date	_____ Signature of Researcher
_____ Printed Name of Participant	_____ Date	_____ Linda Kent Davis

APPENDIX F

CONSENT TO AUDIO-TAPING AND TRANSCRIPTION

Mid-level Leadership: Career services directors' contribution to leadership within higher education

Linda Kent Davis, Candidate for EdD  
Department of Leadership in Education  
College of Education and Human Development  
University of Massachusetts Boston

This study involves the audio taping of your interview by the researcher. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audiotape or the transcript. Only the researcher and the transcriptionist will be able to listen to the tapes.

The tapes will be transcribed either by the researcher herself or a professional transcriptionist hired specifically for this study. The tapes will be erased once the transcriptions are checked for accuracy. Transcripts of your interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this study. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study.

Immediately following the interview, you will be given the opportunity to have the tape erased if you wish to withdraw your consent to taping or participation in this study. By signing this form, you are consenting to:

- Having your interview taped
- Having the tape transcribed
- Use of the written transcript in presentations and written products

By checking the line in front of each item, you are consenting to participate in that procedure.

This consent for taping is effective until the following date: \_\_\_\_\_. On or before that date, the tapes will be destroyed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX G  
PROTOCOL FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS –  
INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

Thank you for your willingness to be interviewed as part of my dissertation research. As I have indicated previously, I am currently a candidate for an EdD in higher education administration from UMass Boston. The purpose of my dissertation research is to examine mid-level leadership within higher education to gain a better understanding about how it is carried out – specifically by the heads of career services units.

Before we get started with the interview questions, I would like to review the conditions of your participation and ask you to review and sign the two consent forms. The first relates to your participation in the study in general. The second relates to the actual taping of the interview.

Please know:

- Your participation in the study is voluntary – you may withdraw from the study now, during the interview, or at any time after the interview has been completed.
- The information you share as part of this interview or have shared in the email surveys will be treated as confidential – neither your name nor the name of the college/university where you work will be identified in the study.
- This interview will be tape recorded and transcribed. Neither your name nor the name of the college/university where you work will be identified on the transcript.
- Once the interview has been transcribed, you will be forwarded a copy for your review.



If you have any questions regarding this study, I am happy to answer them at any point in time. You may also direct any questions to Dr. Jay Dee (chair of dissertation committee) at ([jay.dee@umb.edu](mailto:jay.dee@umb.edu)).

Please review and sign the two consent forms.

I will now ask you a series of questions about your work regarding:

Internal relationships and involvement

External relationships and involvement

Leadership of your unit

Institutional impact

APPENDIX H  
PROTOCOL FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

*Questions regarding internal relationships and involvement*

With which departments on your campus do you collaborate most often?

- Tell me about the collaboration(s).
- How did you become involved in the collaborations?
- Do these departments report to the same division as does career services?

Tell me about a time when your opinion or expertise was sought by someone else on campus.

- Who sought it?
- For what reason?

Tell me about an institution-wide committee on which you have served where you've been influential/had impact.

- What impact did you have?
- What actions did you take to have this impact?
- Did you experience any resistance?
  - From whom?
    - How did you overcome the resistance?

Who within the institution do you consider allies? (titles/roles – no names)

- How did you develop your relationship with them?

***Questions regarding external relationships and involvement***

What do you do with the information you receive from external sources?

- Does anyone at your institution seek you out for that information?
  - Who?
  - For what purposes?

In what collaborative initiatives have you been involved with external partners over the past three years?

- Who are/have been your partners?
- What have been the results of your participation in these collaborations?

***Questions pertaining to your leadership of your unit***

Tell me about a decision you made within the past two to three years that impacted operations within your unit.

- What impact did it have?
- What actions did you take to implement the decision?
- Did you experience any resistance?
  - From whom?
    - How did you overcome the resistance?

Tell me about a time when staff in your unit did not understand or support a directive from higher up.

- What did you do in response?

Tell me about a time when a senior administrator did not understand or support something related to career services.

- What did you do in response?

### *Questions regarding institutional impact*

To what extent does the work you do as director advance the institution's strategic plan?

- Please provide example(s).

Describe a change you have made within your unit that has had an impact that extends beyond career services.

- What was the impact?
- Who was impacted?

Tell me about a time when you contributed to a major institutional initiative that impacted a major segment of campus.

- What was your role in the process?
- What actions did you take?
- What was your impact?
- Did you experience any resistance?
  - From whom?
    - How did you overcome it?

Describe a time when you resisted or blocked a proposed institutional initiative.

- Why did you decide to resist/block the initiative?
- What form did your resistance take?
- Tell me more about the impact of that.

Please characterize the style of leadership at your institution.

- Do you think that it supports, constrains, or has no impact on your ability to have influence on your campus?
  - In what ways?

That concludes the interview. Thank you for sharing your experiences. As soon as the tape has been transcribed, I will forward you a copy to review for accuracy along with a target deadline by which I will need the review completed.

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