

Academic Diversity Officers' Collaboration Capacity:
A Case Study on Staff Needs in Higher Education

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends for their unconditional support.

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I thank my parents, Richard and Thelma Echols for their love, support, and understanding during this long and exhausting scholastic journey. Thanks to my advisor, Dr. Jennifer Morrow, for your patience, guidance, deadlines, scheduled meetings, and my new life motto “It depends.” Thank you to my dissertation committee for sacrificing your time in the middle of a pandemic to offer your suggestions and expertise during my journey.

ABSTRACT

To combat barriers to success and foster student achievement and retention of underrepresented minority (URM) students, institutions have incorporated various academic enrichment and student engagement activities to address the campus climate through diversity support offices on campus. In addition to creating and expanding Academic Diversity Officer (ADO) roles, many institutions have begun to enact diversity strategic plans as “the most effective instrument for facilitating long-lasting systemic change on college campuses” (Henderson, 2020). A pending need exists to reveal how leaders in higher education are creating inclusive campuses and the threshold for capacity building regarding diversity efforts (Henderson, 2020; McRae-Yates, 2009; Rubin, 2011).

The purpose of this exploratory qualitative case study was to seek a better understanding of 1) how academic diversity officers define diversity, 2) how they manage their institutional role to promote student success, and 3) how they work collaboratively with other academic and student support offices at a large public university in the southern United States.

Utilizing Systems Thinking Leadership framework, ADO’s definitions of diversity, diversity values, and overall role goals were in alignment (discovery); relationships exist among the ADOs at the institution and ADOs have a well-connected system with regular meetings among other diversity staff at the institution, led by an administrative campus unit diversity officer (framing); and diversity staff meetings assist in collaboration and partnership among ADOs who participate regularly (action). One

strategy for increasing faculty and administrative involvement is for academic units and ADOs to encourage faculty to include diversity, equity, and inclusion into their research, teaching, and grant submissions. As ADOs continue their diversity work, it is imperative that the institution finds value in diversity and makes diversity an integral part of their mission, research, and teaching.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Racial gaps in achievement and retention continue to persist in today's educational landscape. A pending need exists to reveal how leaders in higher education are creating inclusive campuses and the threshold for capacity building regarding diversity efforts (Henderson, 2020; McRae-Yates, 2009; Rubin, 2011). In addition to creating and expanding Academic Diversity Officer roles, many institutions have begun to enact diversity strategic plans as “the most effective instrument for facilitating long-lasting systemic change on college campuses” (Henderson, 2020). Peña, Bensimon, and Colyar (2006) reported that

“not only do African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans have lower graduation rates than Whites and Asian Americans, they also experience inequalities in just about every indicator of academic success—from earned grade point average to placement on the dean's list to graduation rates in competitive majors” (p. 48).

For underrepresented minority (URM) students, academic under-preparation, English as a second language, and unwelcoming campus climate were identified as common barriers to academic achievement (Carthon et al., 2014). To combat barriers to success and foster student achievement and retention of URM students, institutions have incorporated various academic enrichment and student engagement activities to address the campus climate through diversity support offices on campus. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (2008) has highlighted a number of activities such as in-

depth conversations with diverse peers, participating in student organizations and out-of-class activities, digitally collaborating with others on assignments, being a part of learning communities and formal support programs to foster student learning and development. More recently, NSSE (2020) has further expanded the multidimensional nature of student engagement into two categories engagement indicators and high-impact practices. NSSE presented ten engagement indicators characterized within four themes: academic challenge, learning with peers, experiences with faculty, and campus environment (NSSE, 2020). In addition to engagement indicators, NSSE (2020) identified six high-impact practices to enhance student experiences: service-learning, learning community, research with faculty, internship/field experience, study abroad, and culminating senior experience.

Student retention factors vary between URM students and their majority counterparts. Persistence and retention of URM undergraduate students have been predicted by precollege experiential factors such their high school rank and their desire to complete college, as opposed to high school rank and parental education influences for non-minority students (Allen, 1999). Generally, college students with high levels of student engagement, both inside and outside of the classroom, are more likely to have higher levels of student achievement and retention than their lesser-engaged peers (Harper, 2009). Underrepresented minority students often have lower retention due to perceptions of a non-supportive campus environments (Carey, 2004; Pascarella et al., 1996). Diversity focused retention efforts that promote sense of belonging (Hurtado &

Carter, 1996) and validation (Nora et al., 2005) positively influence retention of URM students.

Institutional strategies for improving student achievement are seen at both the institutional and academic college. Within the past 20 years, American universities have seen increases in academic support programs which include varying types of centers for tutoring and academic support (Cromley et al., 2016). Along with these campus-wide centers, Cromley et al. (2016) highlighted enrichment programs for URM students such as TRIO Ronald E. McNair program (funded by the United States Department of Education) and the Meyerhoff Scholars program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. These enrichment programs and others have shown positive results in academic achievement and retention of URM students in STEM (Cromley et al., 2016). Programs such as these are often multifaceted to include not only academic support, but also enrichment workshops (research, graduate school, career, study, time management, financial), mentoring, and counseling.

In order to further meet institutional goals and facilitate strategic planning in diversity, equity, and inclusion work, many campuses have developed positions at the academic-unit level to assist in this work to “lead, coordinate, support, execute, and create structures of accountability for their units’ diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plans (Grim et al., 2019, p. 134).” Greater need has led academic colleges to increase and expand their diversity support services for the enhancement of the learning environment for all students, no matter the racial or minority status background (Arnold & Braun, 2012; Duderstadt, 2000; Kinzie, 2008; Terenzini et al., 2001; Tierney, 1997).

Socio-cultural influences incorporated with student engagement can increase retention of non-traditional students by combatting the “inherent social and cultural bias within educational institutions in favour of dominant social groups (Kahu, 2013, p. 763).”

Feelings of alienation and culture shock experienced by URM and other underrepresented groups such as female, low-income, first generation, and LGBT students present a barrier to student engagement, and ultimately retention (Grace & Gouthro, 2000; Ellis, 2009; Kahu, 2013; Stalker, 2001; Quaye et al., 2020). Figure 1 highlights these potential threats to graduation rates of underrepresented populations despite increased enrollment.

Diversity foci are not only beneficial to ethnically underrepresented students, but also to promote support for gender diversity as well. A study examining persistence of women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines found one expansion of support services that has been discussed in the literature are the utilization of college diversity coordinators. Anderson and Northwood (2002) reported gender expansion within their College of Engineering began with a Women in Engineering Committee in 1989, then moving to a part-time coordinator in 1991, later to a full-time coordinator in 1999. The coordinator not only served as a personal, career, and academic counselor, but hosted drop-in hours for students to express questions or concerns (Anderson & Northwood, 2002). Anderson and Northwood (2002) noted that “The Coordinator provides counselling and referrals (personal, career, academic), when appropriate, to students in need. Having a consistent, identifiable service available to students is essential in ensuring a supportive learning climate for women in engineering”

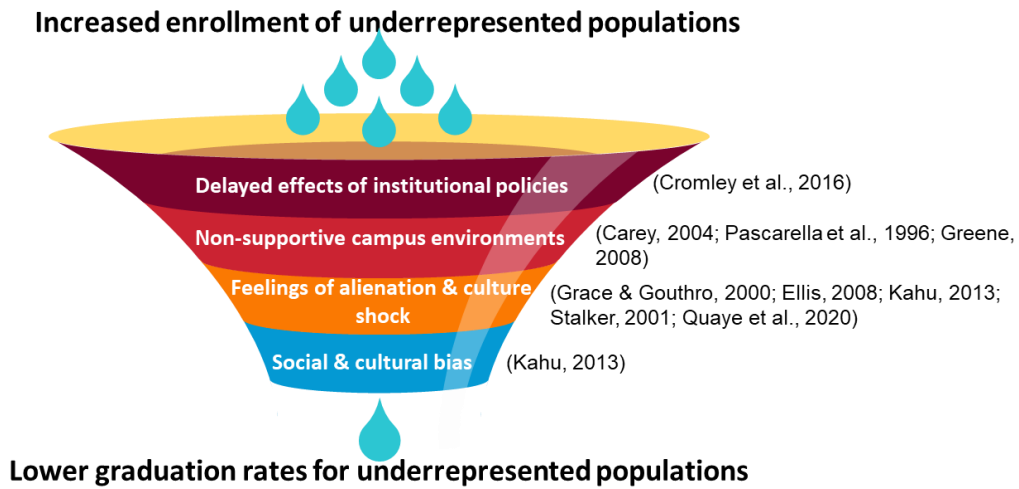


Figure 1. Potential threats to graduation rates of underrepresented population.

(p. 4). In general, students who felt supported by and connected to their campus are more successful and have increased rates of degree completion (Tinto, 1993).

Although there is extensive research in this area to quantitatively examining benefits of student engagement and diversity in higher education from varied student-level perspectives (Allen, 1992; Astin, 1993; Denson & Chang, 2009; Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado et al. 1998), what is lacking in the literature thus far are studies gaining in-depth perspectives of diversity officers. International literature from countries such as the United Kingdom (Mercer-Mapstone & Bovill, 2020; Thornton et al., 2010; Trowler, 2010) and Australia (Taylor & Bedford, 2004) highlights staff perceptions of diverse student engagement experiences in higher education, but little existing literature is available regarding diversity officer perspectives within American higher education. In order to combat these threats to attrition of underrepresented students, it is an imperative requirement for leaders in higher education to “act differently to meet the challenges and opportunities of diversity, because, ultimately, diversity is a matter of environmental and social sustainability” (Williams, 2013, p.76). The current study reviews the perceptions of the academic support officers’ (ADOs) current roles, perceptions on their ability to effectively collaborate and coordinate with other support areas on campus, and what their needs are in order to effectively do their job.

Statement of the Problem

Between the years of 1979 to 2017, enrollment of Black students in degree-granting postsecondary institutions have risen from 9.6% to 13.6% (NCES, 2018). The National Center for Education Statistics (2018) also reports that enrollment has risen

from 3.6% to 18.9% for Hispanic students during the same time period. Six-year graduation rates for black students entering college during cohort entry years 2006 and 2011 have graduation rates of 40.2% and 39.8% (NCES, 2018). For Hispanic students, their graduation rates for the same cohorts were 51.9% and 55%, respectively (NCES, 2018). These graduation rates trail their white (62.5% for 2006, 64.3% for 2011) and Asian (70.6% for 2006, 74.1% for 2011) counterparts (NCES, 2018). Although enrollment of racially underrepresented groups have risen over the years, diversity and inclusion issues in higher education still remain as more persons from underrepresented groups enter the academic pipelines and changes to the institutional structure are necessary (Tierney, 1993).

Although graduation rates among underrepresented ethnic minorities are a concern, other populations face barriers to college access and success. Graduation rates vary highly among place of residence within the United States, with lower enrollment and degree attainment seen in students from rural areas (Ruiz & Perna, 2017). In the Southeast, most areas have historically low graduation rates, however areas with relatively high degree attainment are located in more urban areas (Ruiz & Perna, 2017). For first-time students with disabilities, Shaewitz and Crandall (2020) note a 25% attrition rate by the end of freshman year, increasing to 35% by the end of sophomore year. For LGBT students, a recent study reports lower perceived sense of school belonging and student engagement within the campus environment decreases their educational outcomes (Sansone, 2019). Underrepresented students from diverse

backgrounds entering “racially indifferent or non-inclusive campus climates (Greene et al., 2008, p. 516)” are at greater risk of low academic performance and attrition.

Tierney (1993) reports that institutions are not only challenged with the responsibility to create inclusive spaces for a diverse population of students, staff, and faculty, but also to help them thrive in the campus environment. When compared to students’ cognitive and motivational characteristics, institutional obstacles to achievement and retention are more difficult to address due to delayed effects of institutional policies that are not immediately evident (Cromley et al., 2016). Delayed effects such as student dropout due to lack of semester course offering effects (i.e. institutional policy) for students with a strict course sequence may not be apparent to administrators and staff who are the forefronts of course scheduling, finance, and registration. Likewise, administrators and staff may be blind to “a lack of coordination, or even competing emphases, among academic advising, academic support, career counseling, and other resources” (Cromley et al., 2016, p. 4). Much research has been done on effects of student engagement and institutional supports on student achievement and retention from a student or faculty perspective, but research is lacking on administrator and staff perceptions, specifically from academic diversity officers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this exploratory qualitative case study is to seek a better understanding of 1) how academic diversity officers define diversity, 2) how they manage their institutional role to promote student success, and 3) how they work collaboratively with other academic and student support offices at a large public

university in the southern United States. Findings from this study may present current methods and best practices of diversity support administrators and staff, elucidate collaborations that exist among offices, and additional needs assessment for future progress in their diversity efforts.

Research Questions

Following the purpose of this study, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How do academic diversity officers define diversity and manage their role at their institution?
2. What do academic diversity officers need in order to be effective in their role?
3. How do academic diversity officers collaborate with academic and student engagement support offices on campus?

Significance of the Study

Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek (2006) noted that “effective partnerships among those who have the most contact with students—faculty and student affairs professionals—are important to creating a campus culture that supports student success” (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005, p.72). “Institutions that have established a sense of shared responsibility for student success are characterized by a high degree of respect and collaboration among community members and have made student success important to everyone” (Kuh et al., 2011, p. 99). Campus initiatives that utilize collaboration among academic and student affairs units create a more comprehensive educational experience for students while contributing to a campus culture of success (Schroeder, Minor, & Tarkow, 1999).

Although previous research has been done to review student perceptions on benefits received from academic and student affairs collaborations (Allen, 1992; Astin, 1993; Denson & Chang, 2009; Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado et al. 1998), studies reviewing the perceptions and needs of academic support staff, specifically diversity staff, is limited. “Little attention has been paid to the staff contribution to diversity efforts or the staff experience related to diversity on university campuses” (Carpenter, 2009, p. 3). Findings may be of interest to academic and student affairs professionals in order to build and strengthen cultural diversity and academic support collaborations to promote student engagement and retention. The result of having a systems-thinking mindset among these professionals has the potential to benefit not only underrepresented students, but all student populations. This work could impact institutional practice to create a systems-thinking approach that discourages offices from working independently in silos and encourages collaboration and shared knowledge that leads to data driven decision making.

Theoretical Framework

The framework for this study utilized a conceptual model of systems thinking leadership introduced by Davis, Dent, and Wharff (2015). This conceptual model identifies three unique areas (discover, framing, and action) that can be implemented individually or in sequence to “enhance organizational performance” (Davis, Dent, & Wharff, 2015, p. 346). A systems thinking approach encourages collaboration among leaders creating collective leadership throughout an organization as opposed to reliance upon single leaders working in silo (Davis, Dent, & Wharff, 2015). Literature points to

systems thinking leadership as an effective tool to model behaviors of interdependence and interconnectedness in higher education (Bento, 2010; Debowski & Blake, 2007; Gilstrap, 2009; Maroulis et al., 2010). This study examines applications of systems thinking leadership on CAS in higher education, specifically assigning each academic diversity officer to represent a unique member of this complex adaptive system.

Assumptions of the Study

I have work experience in diversity initiatives, both as a coordinator of diversity support programs and as an external evaluator of diversity initiatives at several universities. My historical perspective and background drive the motivation for this study; however this does provide opportunity for potential bias. Although my experience may provide credibility with study participants (Patton, 2014), there was a risk of researcher bias in the implementation of this study. Throughout data collection and analysis, I was aware to avoid personal bias during the implementation and analysis of this study by strengthening the trustworthiness of my study through intercoder reliability, member checking, data triangulation, and keeping an audit trail.

Assumptions of this study include diversity officers have clearly identified roles and are progressive in their approaches to student engagement and retention but may need additional resources to be more effective in their work. Another assumption is that study participants will willingly participate in this study and answer questions openly and honestly. Although responses are confidential, participants may be hesitant to share information regarding departmental or institutional limitations and barriers restricting optimal student impact.

Delimitations of the Study

In order establish significance and limit the scope of this study, several delimitations were enacted. Only one southern, public institution was used for this study. Secondly, participants invited to participate in this study were staff members who were associated with college-specific diversity units on campus. Diversity officers in offices focused on campus wide affairs or employee/human resources will not be included in this study due to their limited ongoing interactions and direct involvement with students.

Limitations of the Study

Due to the delimitations of the study, findings and suggestions made from this study may not be broadly generalizable to other regions of the country or at private or for-profit institutions. Also, by excluding campus-wide diversity affairs offices, the scope and potential knowledge gained from this study is limited to views expressed solely from perspectives relative to the academic colleges.

This study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic which may have limited participation of ADOs due to extenuating circumstances resulting from the pandemic. Interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom, however only audio recordings were captured. Due to the online nature of interviews, there were minor technical difficulties that were experienced during two of the seven interviews concerning audio quality. These issues were resolved at the beginning of the interviews and data was collected without further concerns.

Another limitation of the study includes use of case study methodology to examine this population. Although there are limited historical studies focused on ADO

perspectives, some recent literature (Smith-Doerr, 2021; Grim et al., 2019; Stanley et al., 2019; and Thomas, 2018) highlighted current status of academic diversity officers and implantation of strategic college diversity plans, however, additional contributions to literature are needed to further investigate strategies of success and collaboration for these officers. Use of case study methodology in this research may provide limited generalization to other university campuses but has potential to provide baseline data that highlights strengths and weaknesses at the target institution that could guide further future research at other institutions.

Definitions of Key Terms

Several key terms used throughout this work should be understood as outlined below.

1. Academic Diversity Officers (ADOs) (Grimm et al., 2019)
2. Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) – “highly connected networks of semi-independent agents from which system wide patterns emerge” (Davis, Dent, & Wharff, 2015, p. 334)
3. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2018)
4. National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (2008, 2020)
5. Predominately White Institution (PWI) - higher education institutions with a White student enrollment of 50% or higher (Brown & Dancy, 2010).
6. Socioeconomic status (SES) – a combination of a person’s economic and social status based commonly on education, income, and occupation (Baker, 2014)

7. Underrepresented Minority (URM)– Historically underrepresented minorities include African Americans, American Indians including Native Alaskans, Hispanics and Native Pacific Islanders (NSF, 2021)
8. Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) – plural of URM

Overview of the Study

This initial chapter has introduced the current study to be presented. The problem of lack of diversity support administrator and staff perspectives in the higher education literature and how their efforts impact student achievement and from the retention and graduation of underrepresented minority students was explained. Study rationale was presented through statement of the problem, purpose of the study, and research questions.

Chapter Two outlines a review of literature pertaining to the changing landscape of diversity in higher education; connections between diversity and student engagement; and background on diversity student support programs in higher education. Information on my theoretical framework is presented, along with my research questions for this study.

Chapter Three outlines the qualitative methods chosen for the study, including participant selection, instrument development, and data analysis methods. Chapter Four presents a summary of results, followed by conclusions and future implications presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the previous chapter, I introduced the purpose of my study which is to conduct an exploratory qualitative case study on diversity support officers' perceptions of their role and impact of student engagement on student success. This study will examine the perceptions of the diversity officers' successes and assess the needs to make future progress, particularly the capacity to collaborate with other academic and student engagement offices across campus. This work will not be focused on a specific academic discipline, but rather, an inclusive look among academic colleges and other diversity leaders on campus to examine the interdependence of each diversity area.

I began my initial search in "Google Scholar" with the term "diversity office". This search returned over 3 million results, with top results being too broad for my topic. I then searched using "diversity officer" which narrowed my search to 628,000 results, two articles were helpful here. My next search included "diversity officer on graduation rates" which led to a narrower scope of literature (71,400). Among this list, I found several helpful articles. A common thread among all searches named previously was a particular article entitled "Adapting to diversity: Organizational influences on student achievement" by Richardson and Sinner (1990). From these initial literature sources, I began tracking literature reported in these articles that sounded close to my topic. I continued to build on sources in this manner. I then used these articles to formulate a list of key words for future, more in-depth searches through my institution's library website (OneSource) as a resource to find additional articles. Common key words included

university diversity staff perceptions; staff perceptions student engagement; diversity experiences on learning outcomes; minority student engagement; international student engagement; international staff perceptions; international diversity staff perceptions; diversity officer higher education; and higher education diversity staff perceptions.

Diversity: A racially changing landscape in higher education

Between the years of 1997 and 2017, the U.S. population increased by 20% (Espinosa, Turk, Taylor, & Chessman, 2019). During this time, the population has become more racially diverse due to decreases in Whites from approximately 73% to 61% and the growth of Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native, and more than one race populations growing from approximately 27% to 39% (Espinosa et al., 2019). Although the U.S. continues to see growth in racial minority populations, this increase is not positively reflected in educational attainment of these populations, specifically in Hispanic and African American groups. Espinosa et al. (2019) report increases in educational attainment of bachelor's degrees from 27.5% to 30.7% for Asians, 17.5% to 23.7% for Whites, 9.5% to 15.3% for Blacks, 7.4% to 12.2% for Hispanics, 7.8% to 13.4% for American Indian or Alaska Natives for adults aged 25 and older between 1997 and 2017 (Espinosa et al., 2019). Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and more than one race groups are excluded from this educational attainment list due to lack of data in 1997.

Despite these increases in educational attainment at the bachelor's level across all demographics, we must also examine the path to graduation as a context for the importance of diversity initiatives in higher education. As previously highlighted in

Chapter 1, enrollment numbers of Black students and Hispanic students in degree-granting postsecondary institutions has continued to rise. Despite this increase in enrollment, six-year graduation rates for black students entering college during cohort entry years 2006 and 2011 have graduation rates of 40.2% and 39.8%; with Hispanic students reporting rates of 51.9% and 55% (NCES, 2018). These graduation rates continue to trail their White (62.5% for 2006, 64.3% for 2011) and Asian (70.6% for 2006, 74.1% for 2011) counterparts (NCES, 2018). Black and Hispanic students have a higher likelihood of being from a low socioeconomic status (SES) background and/or first-generation college students (Fischer, 2007; Allen, 1992). These hinderances can prove substantial when acclimating to the university environment, particularly for URM students transitioning to a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Racial incidents such as racist literature distribution, name-calling, and physical attacks have been reported on many PWI campuses, even within diverse institutions such as “the Citadel, the University of Michigan, Princeton University, the University of Texas, and the University of California at Los Angeles” (Allen, 1992, p. 27). Black students frequently have the need to seek out or create their own cultural and social networks to supplement the lack of connection to their majority campus peers (Allen, 1992). Baber (2014) suggested that further insights on systems of support are needed to increase academic success among URM students. The historical diversity landscape in higher education has changed drastically since its inception. As American demographics continue to change, higher education has continued to transform and shift to meet varying changes in the campus

climate, including academic, social, and emotional variables (Clauss-Ehlers & Parham, 2014).

Retention of underrepresented students

Among the competing priorities in higher education, a common goal is retention of college students leading ultimately to graduation. Attributes of family and cultural background; academic skills and abilities; and values influence students' decisions to attend college (Tinto, 1993). In Tinto's model of student retention and attrition, it is suggested that URMs adapt to the campus culture in which they reside. This adaptation to the new, and sometimes unfamiliar environment causes concern that URM students' own culture is often not valued, encouraged, or nurtured at their institution (Tierney, 1993).

Cultural capital theory, originally introduced by Bourdieu (1977), suggests that being "familiar with the dominant cultural codes in society" (Jaeger & Mollegaard, 2017, p. 130) will lead to academic success. Jaeger and Mollegaard (2017) report that students with high cultural capital are often view as high academic achievers, however this view, especially by teachers, can create biased student evaluations for students portraying low cultural competence. Underrepresented students are at risk for having lower cultural capital, thus resulting in bearing the brunt of this bias. Lamont & Lareau (1988) consider cultural capital as "high status social signals used in cultural and social selection" (p. 153). Authors report that individuals who have and utilize cultural capital are able to convert this to academic success (Lamont & Lareau (1988). Although Bourdieu's work is commonly accepted as connecting "social privilege and academic success" (Kingston, 2001, p. 88), future research should not be confined to placing value on one dominant

culture while neglecting cultures of others. Kingston (2001) asserts “cultural practices that enhance school success should not be passed off as “conformity to dominant norms,” with the implication that some other norms could be just as beneficial, or even that these norms are somehow illegitimate” (p. 97). URM students often feel the need to “code-switch” or assimilate to the common culture of their academic environment. The feelings of having to neglect or downplay areas of their culture can be negatively impactful to the motivation and retention of students adjusting to campus life at a PWI. From an institutional standpoint, “a panoply of services” (p. 88) have been implemented at universities with the goal of retaining undergraduate students, particularly underrepresented students (Tierney, 1993). Tierney (1993) argued that institutions should work to not only build cultural capital, but also build cultural integrity.

Ultimately, students’ motivation and commitment, coupled with their collegiate experiences result in both academic and social integration which play substantial roles in retention. As such, higher education has continually moved to more inclusive programming and education to support URM students. Students of color thrive in environments containing both academic and social engagement (Allen, 1992). Recabarren (2016) states “Institutions can play a significant role in creating programs that will support underrepresented students (e.g., mentorship programs, tutoring, and extracurricular activities), yet it is equally important to understand the campus climate of a university and how it impacts students’ well-being, sense of adjustment, and integration.” (p. 5). Academic supports such as university diversity offices (at both the department and academic college level) are positioned to fill this gap and provide support and

programming that engages students both academically and socially within the campus environment.

Educational outcomes of diversity campus climates

Student bodies comprised of cultural, ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, sexual-orientation, disability status, and religious diversity show enhanced student enrichment (Clauss-Ehlers & Parham, 2014). Educational outcomes of diversity campus climates include “complex thinking (Antonio et al., 2004), cognitive openness, attitudes favoring equal opportunity (Gottfredson et al., 2008), increased course participation (Hurtado, 2005), and positive outcomes after college associated with working in a diverse society (Gurin, 1999)” (Clauss-Ehlers & Parham, 2014, p. 70).

Diverse campus climates promote higher learning and more complex ways of thinking for students (Gurin, 1999). Gurin (1999) cites an early study relating to the theoretical foundations of diversity effects in higher education including Newcomb (1943) which highlights the socio-political transformation that takes place in young adolescents when students matriculate to a college different from their home background. This transformation of students’ socio-political views forms what Gurin (1999) and Erikson (1946) called “social identity”. This identity is cultivated by an enhanced knowing of oneself coupled with a consistent sharing and interaction with others (Erikson, 1946). Although these early studies do not directly address diversity in today’s terms of cultural, ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, sexual-orientation, disability status, and religious aspects, they lay a foundation of social identity formation benefits due to exposure to environments and experiences different than their social norm. According to

Coser (1975), students begin to navigate these complex social structures of collegiate campuses, they are challenged to change their thought and actions towards others through interactions with those different than themselves. If these challenges are overcome, students strengthen their social identity while gaining a more in-depth understanding of the social world surrounding them (Coser, 1975). “A university composed of racially and ethnically diverse students, a curriculum that deals explicitly with social and cultural diversity, and interaction with diverse peers produce a learning environment that fosters conscious, effortful, deep thinking” (Gurin, 1999, p. 372).

Diversity and Student Engagement

Greene, Marti, and McClenney (2008) define student engagement as “the effort, both in time and energy, students commit to educationally purposeful activities as well as the institutional conditions that encourage students to engage in such practices” (p. 514). Substantial evidence exists on the positive impact student engagement lends to the college student experience (Allen, 1992; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; NSSE, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). Initial motivations of students of color at the time of enrollment are often faced with challenges of hostile campus environments and lack of institutional support.

Racial differences in higher education have been examined encompassing a range of undergraduate college experiences and outcomes. Gurin (1999) found “strong evidence of impact of diversity experiences on learning outcomes” (p. 388). African-American, Latino, and White students showed “consistent, positive relationships between student learning in college and both classroom diversity and informal interaction

diversity” (Gurin, 1999, p. 388). Students with more diversity exposure also showed growth in academic and intellectual skills (Gurin, 1999).

In Allen’s 1992 study, findings suggest that Black students attending a PWI show significantly lower social involvement, however students with positive relationships with faculty and positive peer connections with other races were a result of higher social involvement. Black males and females (Black and White) and showed less “cognitive growth, social participation, assertiveness, academic success, satisfaction, and general social-psychological adjustment” than White males at predominantly white institutions (Allen, 1992, p. 30). Student engagement, particularly with a diversity focus and academic support, can equip underrepresented students to better navigate campus environments.

Student engagement and student achievement for underrepresented minorities

Black and Hispanic students have lower college enrollment and are more likely to be first-generation college students when compared to their White peers (Bailey et al., 2005). These items coupled with “racially indifferent or non-inclusive campus climates (Greene, 2008, p. 516)” puts underrepresented students at greater risk of low academic performance and attrition. Literature identifies student engagement as an impactful factor in improving student achievement, specifically for underrepresented minority students (Astin, 1993; Kuh et al., 1998; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Tinto, 1994). Student engagement through formal activities such as campus organizations, student support offices, or cultural centers increase college satisfaction and academic success for Black and Hispanic students compared to that of their White and

Asian peers (Fischer, 2007). Black and Hispanic students participating in formal activities were also more likely to persist to graduation at their university (Fischer, 2007).

Diversity Student Support Programs in Higher Education

Federal and state legislative initiatives to broaden participation have included STEM policy and programming. The National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Institute of Health (NIH) have funded initiatives to broaden participation and improve STEM policy and programming such as Advancement of Women in Academic Science and Engineering Careers (ADVANCE), Alliance for Broadening Participation in STEM (ABP), Historically Black Colleges and Universities Undergraduate Programs (HBCU-UP), Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP), and Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) (Briggs, 2016). Federal TRIO programs such as the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement, Student Support Services, Upward Bound, Talent Search program, and Training Program for Federal TRIO Programs Staff were established to “serve and assist low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to postbaccalaureate programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). These programs have proved successful in broadening participation in the past, however have limited capacity to serve an increasing need for a diverse workforce, specifically in STEM.

Higher education institutions began to creating diversity offices in the 1960s and 1970s in order to increase enrollment of minority students (Gose, 2013). The first diversity offices were typically staffed with a minority affairs director whose sole

purpose was recruiting and retaining minority students (Gose, 2013). More recent diversity student support programs are more robust and are charged with aims to break through “structural and societal barriers” to create more inclusive environments for all students to thrive in diverse spaces (Gose, 2013). In addition to the changing diversity landscape, these diversity support officers come from varying professional backgrounds including general higher education administration, student affairs, community organizing, and faculty (Grim et al., 2019). Grim et al. (2019) outlines how each professional background tends to make sense of their roles differently through past professional experiences (Table 1).

Grim et al. (2019) report that diversity support officers from general higher education administration backgrounds had strengths in policy, process, and budget reform; student affairs backgrounds had more direct student support and outreach; community organizing backgrounds valued collaboration and transparency in communication; and faculty perceived their role as utilizing data, increasing recruitment and retention of both students and faculty (Grim et al., 2019). Among other findings, Grim et al. (2019) make recommendations for diversity support officers to “develop strategic relationships with necessary stakeholders both internal and external to the academic unit” (p.147). In connecting perceptions of diversity support officers to systems-thinking leadership dynamics, it is vital to understand professional backgrounds of staff and how that drives their interactions with current and potential collaborators.

Table 1. Diversity support officers' professional background impact on role sensemaking.

Professional Background	Professional Logistics	Role Sensemaking
Community Organizing	• Create tension and dissonance for change • Engage stakeholders for change	• Leadership and communication transparency • Community-building and supportive responses
Faculty	• Focus on academic experience • Guided by disciplinary norms	• Utilize data • Recruitment/Retention of faculty & students • Advance inclusive pedagogical techniques
General Higher Education Administration	• Focus on process and outcomes • Adherence to rules and policies	• Focus on micro-processes • Detail and future-oriented with structured plans and goals
Student Affairs	• Individual student attention • Student support • Identity representation	• Individual support and counseling • Focus on marginalized students • Strategic coalition building

Note: Adapted from (Grim et al., 2019, p. 137)

Faculty, Staff, and Administrator Perceptions of Student Engagement

Faculty, staff, and administrator perspectives can provide insight on how their work directly aligns with student engagement and academic learning outcomes. Engagement is often viewed differently by students when compared to views of faculty, staff, and administrators. Heller, Beil, Dam, and Haerum (2010) reported that faculty view engagement as student action such as in class participation combined with out of class interactions, whereas students define engagement “as a commodity supplied by the faculty” (p. 259). Blimling and Whitt (1998) present an interesting finding that most student affairs staff see themselves as educators, as opposed to service providers. Student affairs staff had intrinsic motivation to educate their students and extrinsic motivation to support them and contribute to their academic success. Gose (2013) reports that many diversity officers feel their primary role is to urge others to prioritize diversity. These perceptions of service vs. education will examine the diversity officer’s perception of their role in facilitating student success.

As previously highlighted in Chapter One, studies reviewing the perceptions and needs of academic support staff, specifically diversity staff, is limited with minimal highlight of “the staff contribution to diversity efforts or the staff experience related to diversity on university campuses (Carpenter, 2009, p. 3).”

Diversity offices and student engagement

Efforts to create and sustain a culturally diverse and student friendly campus cultures are crux in promoting academic success for underrepresented student populations partially due to differences in their own culture and the dominant culture of the institution

(Kuh et al., 2006). Campuses have implemented student engagement strategies such as community-based-experiential learning (Kuh et al., 2006 and expansion of student affairs services (Blimling and Whitt, 1999) to create an inclusive and engaging campus culture that is mutually beneficial to the student and the institution.

Among the recommendations for improving students' academic success and increase institutional effectiveness provided by Kuh et al. (2006), the need for all students to be involved in student engagement or with a positive role model within the campus landscape was identified. "Advisors, counselors, and others who have routine contact with students must persuade or otherwise induce them to get involved with one or more of these kinds of activities or people (i.e., faculty or staff members) (Kuh et al., 2006, p. 96)."

Measuring student engagement and understanding its impact on student success requires a multi-faceted approach. Kahu (2013) presents a conceptual model that uses a behavioral approach for measuring student engagement in three areas: affect (student motivation and sense of belonging), cognition (deep learning and self-regulation), and behavior (time spent in interaction and participation on campus). This model begins with the structural influences of the institutional culture and students' culture of origin and incorporates psychosocial inputs students' academic workload coupled with support received from and relationships with faculty and staff (Kahu, 2013). This model identifies specific outcomes of immediate academic success and social well-being, as well as long-term outcomes of student growth, retention, and positive workforce contribution (Kahu, 2013). One campus entity is not the sole input on student success, however there are

many campus inputs that work collectively to promote student retention. This study will utilize systems thinking leadership model to assess the level of collaboration of diversity offices on campus and identify student engagement and success outcomes they view as a result of their work.

Theoretical framework

The framework for this study utilized a conceptual model of systems thinking leadership introduced by Davis, Dent, and Wharff (2015). The authors suggest that “the pluralistic and often competing goals of myriad constituents, the changing demographics of students, the uncertainty of funding, and the growing demands for accountability from stakeholders have increased the complexity of systems (Davis, Dent, & Wharff, 2015).” The literature suggests the following conceptual model (Figure 2

) for achieving systems thinking leadership.

This conceptual model identifies three unique areas (discover, framing, and action) that can be implemented individually or in sequence to “enhance organizational performance” (Davis, Dent, & Wharff, 2015, p. 346). A systems thinking approach encourages collaboration among leaders creating collective leadership throughout an organization as opposed to reliance upon single leaders working in silo (Davis, Dent, & Wharff, 2015). Institutions can be viewed as complex adaptive systems (CAS), full of “highly connected networks of semi-independent agents from which system wide patterns emerge” (Davis, Dent, & Wharff, 2015, p. 334). Diverse and independent entities within CAS not only have the ability to learn over time and self-organize, but also have non-

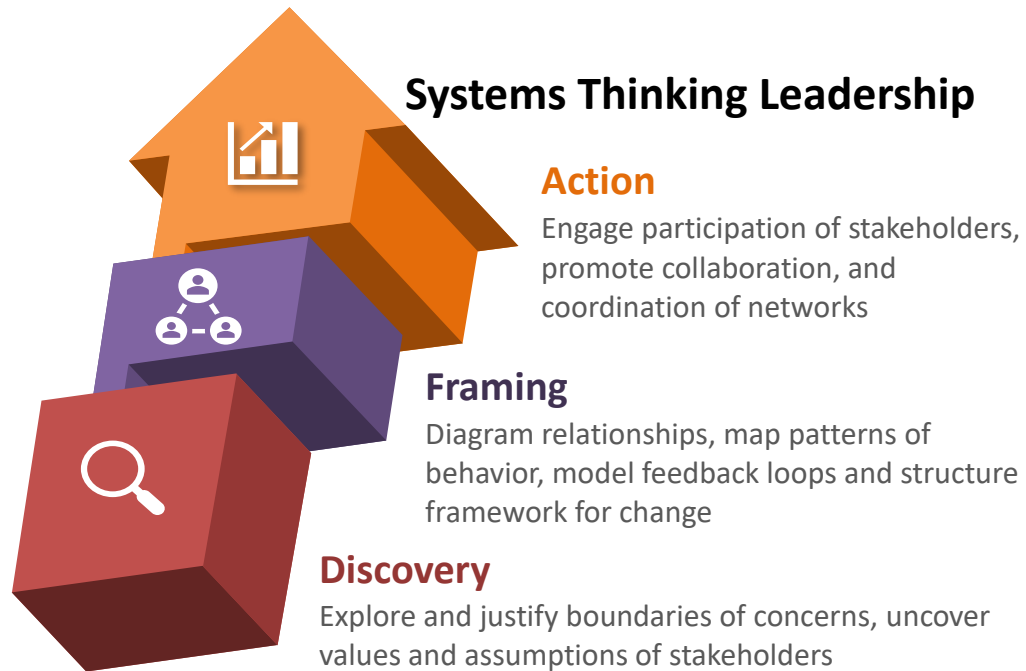


Figure 2. Conceptual Model of Systems Thinking Leadership.

Note: Adapted from Davis, Dent, & Wharff (2015)

linear interactions and are connected by a shared goal (Davis, Dent, & Wharff, 2015; Anderson, 1999; Bento, 2010; Gell-Mann, 1994).

Literature points to systems thinking leadership as an effective tool to model behaviors of interdependence and interconnectedness in higher education (Bento, 2010; Debowski & Blake, 2007; Gilstrap, 2009; Maroulis et al., 2010). The following excerpt by Cromley et al. (2016) provides an example highlighting the need for student support services to work together and that students may benefit from multiple sources of support:

“For example, career counselors need to know where to send struggling (and potential dropout) STEM students for academic help. Would they receive the most appropriate support at the STEM-specific academic support center, the academic support center for National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) student-athletes, or the university counseling center? Furthermore, many students will need more than one of these supports.” (p. 7)

The result of having a systems-thinking mindset among these professionals has the potential to benefit not only underrepresented students, but all student populations.

Systems thinking can help people tell a new and more productive story. It honors their individual efforts and surfaces the limitations of these efforts. It distinguishes the short- and long-term impacts of their actions. It aligns their diverse views and stories into a bigger picture where individual contributors can see their part in relation to the whole. Seeing the big picture and their role in it, people are more motivated and able to work together to redesign the whole. (Stroh, 2015, p. 52)

Additionally, Williams & Wade Golden (2013) stated that “We need to stop thinking of our diversity efforts as disparate and distinct capacities sprinkled across campus and begin thinking of them as a connected network of capabilities that, if deployed in a more cohesive manner, could lead to even greater levels of diversity-related change on campus. (p. 133)” Each diversity officer should not be regarded in isolation, but creating committees, taskforces, communities of practice, common brochures, or even having the diversity officers merged into the same organizational structure to interconnect, clarify, and strengthen their relationships with one another (Williams & Wade Golden, 2013). Williams and Wade Golden (2013) outlined historical organizational models found in diversity offices (Table 2). Further applications of the organizational model were explored in Chapter Five.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Two has provided a literature review of the changing racial landscape of higher education, along with issues of retention for not just racially and ethnically underrepresented students, but all students from diverse backgrounds. Educational outcomes of diverse campus climates and the effects of student engagement were also discussed. An overview of diversity support programs and their contribution to retention and improving student engagement were presented. Chapter Three will present an overview of methodology used for this study.

Table 2. Summary of Organizational Diversity Models adapted from Williams and Wade Golden (2013).

Dimension	Affirmative Action and Equity (p. 137)	Multicultural & Inclusion (p. 142)	Learning, Diversity, and Research Model (p. 149)
Historical Launching Point	1950s, 1960s, and 1970s	1960s and 1970s	Late 1990s
Definition	Focused institutional effort designed to enhance the demographic diversity of the institution's faculty, staff and students, and to eliminate discriminatory practices	Institutional efforts designed to nurture, promote, and understand the culture of ethnic and racially diverse minorities, women, members of the LGBT community, and other traditionally disadvantaged groups	Focused agenda centered on integrating diversity into the curriculum and promoting research on diversity issues
Drivers of Change	Civil rights movement	Nationalist movements and campus protests that raise awareness and support	Changing demographics, globalization, workforce needs, persistent inequalities, legal and political dynamics
Goals of change	• Increased compositional diversity • Reduced incidents of racism, sexism, and intolerance	• Supporting diverse constituents • Improving campus climate • Fostering intergroup understanding • Scholarly engagement with issues of diversity	• Intergroup relation skills • Cognitive complexity • Scholarly understanding of diversity

Table 2 continued

Dimension	Affirmative Action and Equity (p. 137)	Multicultural & Inclusion (p. 142)	Learning, Diversity, and Research Model (p. 149)
Strategy of Change	Organizational Technology – Affirmative action offices, plans, and policy statements; race-sensitive admissions and financial aid programs; and equal opportunity programs like Upward Bound, Talent Search, etc.	Organizational Technology – Multicultural affairs units, cultural centers, gender-neutral bathrooms, lactation centers, ethnic and gender studies institutes and programs, international area studies programs	Organizational Technology – Centralized diversity requirements; diversity elective courses; and diversity programs like intergroup relation offices, dialogue programs, living–learning communities, and study abroad programs; also, service learning efforts, ethnic studies, gender studies, international affairs offices, etc.

CHAPTER THREE

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this exploratory qualitative case study is to seek a better understanding of 1) how academic diversity officers define diversity, 2) how they manage their institutional role to promote student success, and 3) how they work collaboratively with other academic and student support offices at a large public university in the southern United States. Following the purpose of this study, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How do academic diversity officers define diversity and manage their role at their institution?
2. What do academic diversity officers need in order to be effective in their role?
3. How do academic diversity officers collaborate with academic and student engagement support offices on campus?

In aligning these research questions with the systems-thinking framework, RQ1 aligns with framing, RQ2 discovery, and RQ3 action.

Design of the Study

The paramount advantage of qualitative research is that it “involves studying the meaning of people’s lives as experienced under real-world conditions” (Yin, 2015, p. 9). Case study research, typically based in real-life situations, produce a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon which can be used to advance a field’s knowledge base and support future research (Merriam, 2009). An exploratory case study approach will be utilized to gain reflective narratives from participants to address the research questions.

This approach was chosen because in-depth knowledge of a phenomenon occurring within a bound system is being researched (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2015). This study used one institution as the critical case in a single-case design which contained diversity support officers as embedded units of analysis (Yin, 2015). Yin (2015) reports that critical case designs suggest that the case in question was “critical to your theory or theoretical proposition” (p. 84). Case studies have a distinct advantage in answering “how” and “why” questions (Yin, 2008) and provide insight, discovery, and interpretation of the case as opposed to conducting hypothesis testing (Merriam, 2009). The prime limitation of case study research is often viewed that results are not broadly generalizable, however Flyvbjerg (2001) suggests that “Case study reasoning should be seen as a strong form of hypothetico-deductive theorizing, not as a weak form of statistical inference. We do not infer things “from” a case study; we impose a construction, a pattern on meaning, “onto” the case” (p. 290). Along these lines, case study is the ideal method for this work.

External validity of was addressed by adhering to systems-thinking leadership theory in this single-case study (Yin, 2015). The use of semi-structured interviews in this research provides several advantages such as allowing both structure and flexibility to ask follow-up questions for deeper questioning (Kallio et al., 2016). Using a constructivist paradigm builds validity in the semi-structured interview process by following a systematic process of questioning and triangulating interview responses to support surfacing themes (Morrow, 2005). Merriam (2014, p. 9) cites an excerpt from Creswell

(2007) explaining how individuals use their historical perceptions influence their worldview stating:

In this worldview, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences.... These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views.... Often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. In other words, they are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others (hence social constructivism) and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives. (pp. 20 – 21)

Researchers using constructivist paradigm seek to understand how participants subjectively interpret and understand their experiences and circumstances to construct social meanings of reality (Leavy, 2017). At the beginning of the interview, it was important to building an understanding with participants that questions were not accusatory nor threatening, but simply aimed to build an understanding of their experiences using systems-thinking leadership in their daily work.

Potential study participants were contacted via email using recruitment cover letters which included informed consent forms for them to return should they agree to participate in the study. At the beginning of each interview, participants were asked to self-select a pseudonym they would like to be used in data reporting to ensure anonymity. Gender, race/ethnicity, and educational background were self-reported by participants.

Context of the Study

In order establish significance and limit the scope of this study, several delimitations were enacted. This research was collected within the context of a large, public, predominately white institution in the Southeast. This study was categorized as an embedded case study where the institution served as the case with the Academic Diversity Officers as embedded subcases. Miles & Huberman (1994) stated that multiple cases, or subcases in this instance, allow researchers to understand case processes and outcomes on a deeper level and gain a “good picture of locally grounded causality” (p. 26). Within the case of the institution, the conceptual model of systems thinking was applied to address the research questions.

Secondly, subcases were purposively sampled by identifying diversity support staff within specific boundaries. Stratified purposive sampling was used to “illustrate subgroups and facilitate comparisons” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 28). Boundaries included selecting participants responsible for leading student-centered diversity engagement and academic support offices. Other boundaries included selecting participants from a single institution and inviting student-focused diversity support staff will allow the researcher to narrow the scope and context of data collected to focus specifically on their perceptions of role, collaboration capacity, and needs for diversity engagement in a common setting and context. Academic Diversity Officers focused on administrative affairs or employee/human resources were not included in this study due to their limited ongoing interactions and direct involvement with students.

Due to the delimitations of the study, findings and suggestions made from this study may not be broadly generalizable to other regions of the country or at private or for-profit institutions. Also, by excluding campus-wide diversity affairs offices, the scope and potential knowledge gained from this study is limited to views expressed solely from perspectives relative to the academic colleges and student support units.

Participant Selection

Patton (2002) suggests that “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling” (p. 230). This research followed the guide to “purposive sampling” outlined by Merriam & Tisdell (2014, p.77) by first establishing essential selection criteria for participants. Criteria for participants include selecting participants who “directly reflect the purpose of the study and guide in the identification of information-rich cases” (Merriam, 2009, p. 78). A typical site sampling strategy was used and all participants meeting the criteria were invited to participate in the study (Patton, 2002). An initial list of all diversity support officers on campus was compiled using the selected university’s website. Due to high variation in the number of office staff and organizational reporting structure among these diversity officers, only lead personnel (assistant/associate deans, directors, coordinators, etc.) were invited to participate in this study. The population of participants invited to participate in this study included 12 diversity support officers representing 11 academic colleges at the institution. Participants varied in professional background and degree status. Details on participant

recruitment pool demographics are in Table 3. Prior to beginning data collection, a goal of 50% participation rate was set. In the event a majority of participants were unable to participate in interviews, ADOs would have been asked to refer a member of their office or staff (if applicable) to participate. If there were no referrals, participant pool would have been expanded to include other diversity officers from student centered diversity officers in areas such as disability, veteran's, LGBTQ, and international affairs offices. A total of seven participants (58% participation) agreed to participate in the study, so these additional participant recruitment measures were not taken.

ADO Roles and Reporting Structure

Of the seven ADOs interviewed for this study, there were two full-time staff diversity directors (Lee and Bob), one full-time staff coordinators (Elise), one faculty/diversity officer (Madison), one faculty/DEI coordinator (Bentley) one faculty/DEI committee chair (Beverly), and one associate dean/DEI director (Carmyn) (See Table 4). All of the ADOs report directly to the dean or executive dean of their unit. For diversity directors, 100% of their work time is dedicated to diversity initiatives in their departments. For the coordinators, Bentley dedicates a majority of her time to DEI efforts, but still has other faculty responsibilities. Elise's job role is approximately 50% DEI and 50% student affairs support for the college.

Table 3. Participant recruitment pool demographics.

Academic College	Lead Diversity Officer Title	Faculty/Full-Time Staff
Academic College 1	Coordinator	Full-Time Staff
Academic College 2	Director	Faculty
Academic College 3	Associate Dean	Faculty
Academic College 4	Director	Full-Time Staff
Academic College 5	Diversity Committee Chair	Faculty Faculty
Academic College 6	Director	
Academic College 7	Director	Full-Time Staff Administrative Staff
Academic College 8	Director	
Academic College 9	Diversity Committee Co-Chair	Full-Time Staff
Academic College 10	Associate Dean/Director	Faculty Faculty
Academic College 11	Director	

Table 4. ADO Participant Role Descriptions.

ADO	Highest degree attained	Title	Time in role	Reporting structure	Job statement provided
Bentley	Master's degree	Coordinator/ Faculty	>5 years	Reports to Dean	No – had to build and create their own
Beverly	Doctoral degree	DEI committee co-chair/ Faculty	<1 year	Reports to Dean	No - new position and job statement is being created
Bob	Master's degree	Director	>5 years	Reports to Dean	Yes
Carmyn	Doctoral degree	DEI Director (dual student affairs role)	1-5 years	Reports to Dean	Yes, but with little details on role and responsibilities
Elise	Master's degree	DEI Coordinator (dual student affairs role)	1-5 years	Reports to Dean	Yes
Lee	Master's degree	Director	1-5 years	Reports to Dean	Yes
Madison	Doctoral degree	Faculty / Diversity officer for academic unit	<1 year	Reports to Dean	Yes, but a new position is being created and job statement is still under revision.

Data Collection and Instruments

This study involved conducting semi-structured interviews with each participant. Semi-structured interviews provide more flexibility than structured interviews allowing “the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). Interviews were ethnographic in nature inquiring about the culture within the group of Diversity Officers within the case. When developing the interview protocol, use of multiple questions and yes-or-no questions were avoided to ensure clear communication to participants and leading questions were avoided to limit bias in questioning (Merriam, 2009). Interview protocol was reviewed by an expert panel. Table 5 outlines the interview questions and their alignment with each research question.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis approach was used to create codes that align directly with the data. Thematic analysis provides a strong, yet adaptable method for qualitative analysis that can be utilized with different paradigms and epistemologies, to ensure trustworthiness of the findings according to selected paradigms and epistemologies, and to better understand and categorize the data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Braun & Clarke (2006) suggested that thematic analysis also provided more detailed data that aligns with research questions. The six-step process of thematic analysis included becoming familiar with the data, populating initial codes, creating themes, reviewing created themes, developing names and definitions for themes, and reporting results (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

Table 5. Research-Interview Question Alignment

Research Questions	Framework Alignment	Semi-structured Interview Question
1. How do academic diversity officers define diversity and perceive their role at their institution?	Discovery	1. What are the diversity officers' academic and professional backgrounds? 2. What is their role within their academic unit? 3. What are diversity officers' typical activities within their role? 4. How do diversity officers define "diversity"? 5. What are diversity officers' perceptions of their institutional role in retention and graduation of diverse student populations?
2. What are academic diversity officers' perceived needs in order to be effective in their role?	Framing	6. Have diversity officers participated in any professional development activated (on or off campus) related to diversity? 7. How do their academic units define success in their role? 8. How do they define success in their role? 9. Do diversity officers feel they are achieving the institutional and personal goals set for their role? 10. What resources do their academic units provide that are particularly helpful in achieving success in their role? 11. Are there any resources that would help diversity officers be more successful in their role?

Table 5 continued

Research Questions	Framework Alignment	Semi-structured Interview Question
3. How do academic diversity officers collaborate with academic and student engagement support offices on campus?	Action	12. What institutional offices have diversity officers collaborated with? 13. What activities do they typically collaborate on with institutional entities? 14. What entities external to the institution have they collaborated with? 15. What activities do they typically collaborate on with external entities? 16. Have diversity officers encountered any successes/challenges in regard to collaboration? 17. Are there any collaborations that may be helpful that have not been explored to date?

Interviews were conducted, followed by transcription by the researcher to become more familiar with the data. After participant interviews are transcribed, interrater reliability was established by using a team of multiple coders which consisted of the myself and two additional researchers to serve as coders. The two additional coders were selected from doctoral students with a minimum of two years qualitative analysis experience in the Evaluation, Statistics, and Methodology program in the Department of Educational Psychology & Counseling at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville for the analysis process and intercoder reliability was assessed (Creswell, 2003). Inductive coding was used to review transcripts line by line to create codes (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The researcher reviewed two transcripts and created initial codes and codebook with definitions. Although minimal consensus exists on the proportion of the dataset used with intercoder reliability (Campbell et al., 2013), O'Connor and Joffe (2020) reported that intercoder review of 10-25% of the dataset is typical. The codebook and two transcripts (28.5% of the dataset) were given to the coding team to review and code. Coding team was instructed to read each transcript in Microsoft Word and identify passages to be coded by highlighting the selected sentence(s) and placing a comment using the Microsoft review feature to insert the desired code as a comment. A macro was then used export codes and passages to Microsoft Excel. Once codes and passages were in Microsoft Excel, comments were sorted by page number and reviewed by the team to establish agreement or disagreement for each passage.

Miles & Huberman (1994) presented a formula to calculate reliability among multiple coders:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{number of agreements}}{\text{number of agreements} + \text{number of disagreements}}$$

Other methods for calculating inter-rater reliability include Cohen's Kappa (1960), Krippendorff's Alpha (1980), and Scott's Pi (1955). Although other methods were available for calculating interrater reliability, Miles and Huberman (1994) has been commonly used in studies utilizing Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel software (McAlister et. al, 2017). Among the three coders, an overall reliability of 88% was established, with a reliability of 82% for the first transcript and 94% for the second transcript.

Once initial thematic analysis was complete, member checking was conducted for all participants to validate participants' responses with initial codes. Maxwell (2005) argues that member checking "is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstanding of what you observed" (p. 111). Deidentified and coded transcripts were returned to each participant using the UT Vault secure data transmission system. Participants were given two weeks from date of transmission to review their transcript and submit any additions or redactions they deemed necessary. Only one ADO responded with edits. This ADO made minor grammar updates and requested that one phrase be redacted from analysis. After I made updates to this participant's transcript, I continued with thematic analysis of the data.

Trustworthiness

In addition to the rigor of the theoretical constructs, case context, and methods of sampling, data collection and analysis, trustworthiness was enacted through several other factors outlined in Tracy's (2010) "Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research" (p. 840). Member checking was also used to ensure credibility (Tracy, 2010) and validity (Merriam & Tisdale, 2015). Merriam & Tisdale (2015) defined internal validity as the extent to which research findings match reality. In order to ensure internal validity, credibility, and trustworthiness, this research used investigator triangulation methods during data analysis. Credibility was also established by using triangulation of data between participant interviews and College Strategic Action Plans for Diversity established by each academic unit. College Strategic Action Plans for Diversity were reviewed and compared among the seven participants for recurring themes and benchmarks for diversity activities within each unit. In addition to measures taken to ensure internal validity, reliability will be assessed using a semi-structured case study protocol.

Internal validity was also tested through pattern matching and explanation building through use of multiple coders (Yin, 2015). Data was reported in aggregate to ensure participant anonymity. Sincerity of this work was addressed through self-reflexivity by keeping a reflective journal (or audit trail) throughout data collection and analysis. The audit trail contains information on how data were collected, how themes were derived, how research decisions were made, and general researcher reflections throughout the data collection and analysis process (Merriam, 2009). I also created resonance with the reader

by making “naturalistic generalizations” (Tracy, 2010, p. 840) in my data analysis rather than broad claims based on my own understanding to stay true to these data and reduce bias. Ethical considerations were made to protect participants’ anonymity through deidentifying the institution and redacting identifiable information from transcripts and having participants use pseudonyms instead of their real names.

Researcher Positionality

As a cis-gender, heterosexual, African American female with a rural, southern upbringing, my career experience include two years as an evaluation specialist in STEM evaluation and research and 10 years working with underrepresented student populations in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) both at a predominately white institution (PWI) and a historically black college and university (HBCU). My experiences working with both grant funded programs and diversity support offices gives me working knowledge on both positive professional outcomes such as student academic success, growth, and graduation, as well as challenges (budgeting and staffing restraints, hostile political and campus climates, counseling students through difficult times) faced by diversity support officers. As an undergraduate and graduate student, I have also been a recipient of support services and programs offered through various diversity support offices. My professional and personal experience with diversity offices motivates my research to understand how higher education diversity professionals define and perceive diversity in their offices, as well as how they view their institutional role and form campus collaborations to further support students. My historical perspective and background drive the motivation for this study, however, does provide opportunity for

potential bias. Although my experience may provide credibility with study participants (Patton, 2015), there was risk of researcher bias in the implementation of this study. Throughout data collection and analysis, I will rely on the reliability and validity of my interview protocol and be aware to avoid personal bias during the implementation and analysis of this study. In order to strengthen reliability and validity of themes and combat researcher bias, member checking will also be utilized by returning created themes to participants to ensure that participants are able to align their views with established themes (Birt et al., 2016).

A Reflexive Note on Data Collection

A majority of study participants were currently in staff positions, as opposed to faculty positions. An interesting note during participant recruitment was that only one faculty ADO participated in the study. Also, all participants were of a minority background. Female participants were more open to share stories about personal and student challenges they have encountered in their role. Interviews with female faculty typically extended beyond the hour time frame originally slated for the interview. As the hour time frame was ending, I would let the participant know how many questions I had remaining. I asked those participants if they had an upcoming meeting and if they had time to continue for approximately another 10 to 15 minutes.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Three outlined study methodology for this exploratory case study. Methods include use of semi-structured interviews using a constructivist paradigm building trustworthiness through systematic questioning, expert panel review of interview

protocol within a systems-thinking leadership framework, intercoder reliability measures, and data triangulation. Participants were purposively selected by identifying diversity support staff responsible for leading student-centered diversity engagement and academic support offices. Selecting participants from a single institution and inviting on academic diversity support staff will allow the researcher to narrow the scope and context of data collected to focus specifically on their perceptions of role, collaboration capacity, and needs for diversity engagement in a common setting and context. Chapter Four presents a summary of results from this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory qualitative case study is to seek a better understanding of 1) how academic diversity officers define diversity, 2) how they manage their institutional role to promote student success, and 3) how they work collaboratively with other academic and student support offices at a large public university in the southern United States. Following the purpose of this study, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How do academic diversity officers define diversity and manage their role at their institution?
2. What do academic diversity officers need in order to be effective in their role?
3. How do academic diversity officers collaborate with academic and student engagement support offices on campus?

In aligning these research questions with the systems-thinking framework, RQ1 aligns with framing, RQ2 discovery, and RQ3 action.

This chapter presents results from data collected from semi-structured interviews conducted with ADOs at a land-grant PWI in the South. Data for this exploratory case study were collected using qualitative methods. Data collection began by sending study recruitment emails to eleven university ADOs. Of the eleven ADOs, seven agreed to participate in the study, a 64% participation rate. ADO participants were asked to provide pseudonyms to be used in data analysis and reporting for deidentification purposes. The

ADOs in this study were referred to as: Bentley, Beverly, Bob, Carmyn, Elise, Lee, and Madison. Results presented in this chapter include themes pertaining to each research question listed in Tables 6, 7, and 8.

Overview of Data Analysis

As stated in Chapter 3, inductive coding was used to review transcripts line by line to create codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The researcher reviewed two transcripts (28.5% of the dataset) for and created initial codes and codebook with definitions. The two transcripts review were not randomly selected. Transcripts for review included one ADO that was staff and one ADO that was faculty in a part-time ADO role. These transcripts were selected to provide a broader spectrum of codes due to the difference in role. After an initial codebook was created in Microsoft Excel, the two transcripts were given to a coding team of two researchers from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville Evaluation, Statistics, and Methodology program in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling to review and code. Coding team was instructed to read each transcript in Microsoft Word and identify passages to be coded by highlighting the selected sentence(s) and placing a comment using the Microsoft review feature to insert the desired code as a comment. A macro was then used export codes and passages to Microsoft Excel. Once codes and passages were in Microsoft Excel, comments were sorted by page number and reviewed by the team to establish agreement or disagreement for each passage. Miles & Huberman's (1994) formula was used to calculate reliability among multiple coders. Among the three coders, an overall reliability of 88% was

Table 6. Themes and sub-themes for research question 1.

Research Question	Theme	Definition	Sub-theme
RQ1: How do academic diversity officers define diversity and manage their role at their institution?	Defining diversity	Participants shared their personal definition of diversity.	
	Motivation for role	Participants described what led them to this role/line of work.	
	Academic and professional background	Participants shared their academic and professional background prior to entering their current role.	
	Job statement	Participants shared if a position description was given to them when they entered the role or if they had to create themselves.	
	Typical role activities	Participants listed typical activities associated with their role.	
	Advantages of role structure	Participants gave benefits of how their role was structured that assisted in role success.	a. Importance of DEI committees b. Developing and implementing strategic college diversity plans c. Reporting directly to the dean of their college
	Disadvantages of role structure	Participants identified challenges that created barriers when achieving role success.	a. Leading up when it comes to diversity b. Competing job roles
	Role in retention and graduation of diverse student populations	Participants identified how their components of their role and activities contributed to retention and graduation of diverse student populations.	a. Using programming to develop and connect with diversity champions b. Hosting summer programs to recruit minoritized students c. Offering student scholarships to minimize financial barriers to graduation d. Offering student mentoring programs for retention e. Creating inclusive environment spaces for students f. Diversifying college faculty and staff g. Addressing student needs

Table 7. Themes and sub-themes for research question 2.

Research Question	Theme	Definition	Sub-theme
RQ2: What do academic diversity officers need in order to be effective in their role?	Perceptions of effectiveness per academic unit	How ADOs perceive their effectiveness in their role is measured by their academic unit.	a. Publications, outreach, research, and service b. Job description and strategic college diversity plan metrics c. Value added to academic unit d. Student satisfaction e. Student recruitment and retention
	Perceptions of effectiveness per ADO	How ADOs perceive their own effectiveness in their role.	a. Publications b. Making a difference c. Positive trends in diversity metrics d. Being clear on job role and diversity expectations
	ADO self-reported effectiveness	ADOs perception of whether they are being effective in their role and achieving success or not.	
	Resources that promote role effectiveness	Resources provided by academic unit that promote ADO role effectiveness.	a. Financial and personnel support b. Investment and support from colleagues c. Empowerment from campus appreciation and value in work d. Professional development
	Resources needed to increase role effectiveness	Resources needed from academic unit to increase role effectiveness.	a. Additional support personnel b. Assistance identifying new partnerships c. Support from dean and faculty d. Opportunity for growth e. Connecting with alumni f. Time to plan and think g. Corporate partnerships

Table 8. Themes and sub-themes for research question 3.

Research Question	Theme	Definition	Sub-theme
RQ3: How do academic diversity officers collaborate with academic and student engagement support offices on campus?	Current collaborations	Current partnerships with entities on campus and external to campus.	a. On-campus collaboration b. Off-campus collaboration
	Collaboration success	Successes identified by ADOs as a result of current collaborations with campus partners and external campus entities.	a. Programming – seeing things come to fruition b. Familial impact – seeing families graduate c. Visibility on campus d. Combined efforts to work smarter not harder e. Professional development opportunities f. Recognizing marginalization of underrepresented populations g. Identifying new diversity champions
	Collaboration challenges	Challenges identified by ADOs as a result of current collaborations with campus partners and external campus entities.	a. Identifying new ways to connect with students b. Student recruitment c. Getting faculty on board d. Seeing challenges as opportunities e. Knowing all available resources f. Competing goals among collaborators g. Prioritizing time and being strategic with initiatives h. Pandemic restrictions

established, with a reliability of 82% for the first transcript and 94% for the second transcript.

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{number of agreements}}{\text{number of agreements} + \text{number of disagreements}}$$

After coding, drafts of transcripts were sent to ADO participants using the UT Vault secure transmission system for security purposes per Institutional Review Board guidelines. Deidentified and coded transcripts were returned to each participant using the UT Vault secure data transmission system. Participants were given two weeks from date of transmission to review their transcript and submit any additions or redactions they deemed necessary. Only one ADO responded with edits. This ADO made minor grammar updates and requested that one phrase be redacted from analysis. After I made updates to this participant's transcript, I continued with thematic analysis of the data.

Thematic analysis continued with creating a thematic map of the codes using MindMup 2.0. The initial codes were then grouped into themes by each research question. Results from thematic analysis is presented in this chapter. A thematic map of themes and sub-themes available in Figure 3.

How ADOs Define Diversity and Manage Their Role at Their Institution (RQ1)

The purpose of the first research question was to determine how ADOs define diversity and how they manage their roles at their institution. Of the five interview questions aligned with RQ1, the first three interview questions focused on their academic/professional background, their specific role in their unit, and typical role activities. The fourth interview question asked ADOs to define diversity, and the fifth

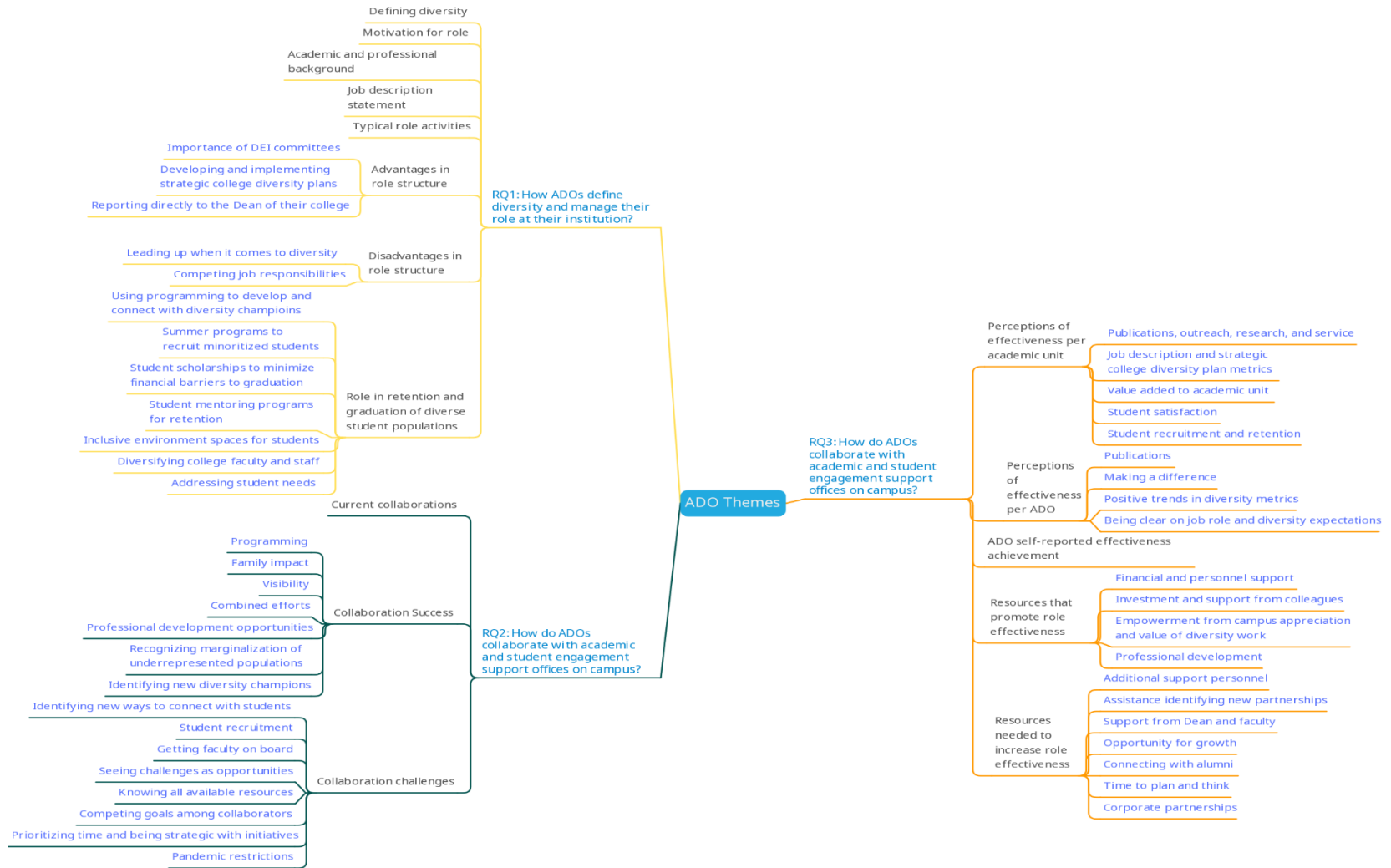


Figure 3. Thematic Map of Themes and Sub-themes

question asked about their institutional role in retention and graduation of diverse student populations. A total of eight themes were identified.

Defining Diversity

During the course of the interviews, each ADO gave their personal definition of diversity. ADO diversity definitions included recurring references to differences in race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, class status, single parents, widower, ability, educational preparation, first generation, thought, and access to resources and experiences. Although their definitions of diversity included descriptions of individual identities, ADOs felt that diversity was only the first step in the broader view of diversity, equity, and inclusion. ADOs stressed the importance of being able to bring “your whole authentic self” into any situation and still feeling included within their colleges.

ADOs also felt that representation mattered regarding diversity. An interesting note from one ADO was that representation should not only focus on numerical or compositional representation but move to an inclusive pattern of thought to be able to truly work with those different from you to achieve a common goal to provide a fecund environment for students, faculty, and staff.

A collective ADO definition of diversity was developed using responses from the seven ADOs. This definition reflects the common thoughts and goals of identifying and creating a diverse and inclusive campus.

Diversity is a compilation of identities that make us who we are individually, and who we are collectively. It's not only race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, class status, it's everything that makes an individual who they

are. Single parent, widower, ability, it's not one thing. Diversity is being different on a number of levels – looking different, bringing different things to the table, diversity in gender, race and ethnicity, educational preparation, first generation, but also as individuals who have not had access to experiences. Diversity is being unlimited in the way that you approach, not only people, but resources. Diversity is having access to whatever we need to gain understanding about life, work, and creativity. Learning how to work with each other, but also learning how to grow and make progress. Diversity is being acceptable and receptive to all things, beings, and ideas that may come up. Diversity is having a community of varying backgrounds of varying perspectives of varying motivations, but all in all within a cohesive space so that there's something still bringing everybody together, it's not just individual silos. There's a shared something that binds us all together in this endeavor.

Diversity includes diversity of thought, but that can't be your go to response about diversity. Diversity has to be about the individual and their socially constructed identities. Diversity is what makes an individual who they are, and then that individual, along with everyone else, bringing all of themselves into an environment and there being representation. Not compositional or structural representation, this is not about numbers, this is about inclusivity. Diversity is bringing your whole self, everything that has brought you to this point, your family, your race, your ethnicity, how you express yourself via gender, all of that and still feeling that there is a place for you as you are authentically in this profession and

in this college. Diversity always comes in part and parcel with belonging, inclusivity, equity, and justice. It's not a separate piece. Diversity is a very important part of the trifecta of diversity, equity and inclusion. Diversity is only the first step in creating a full diversity profile. Diversity in itself is being – making space, place and time for cultures, race, ethnicity, all the different ways that individuals can be different, and making sure that those differences are represented in organizations, institutions, and in individual units.

Diversity is a part of everything that we do, not only from outward appearance of who we are, but also our thoughts, our generational differences, even geographical differences. Diversity plays a significant role in everything that we do every day and is woven into everything that we touch and do throughout our life experiences. Diversity is understanding that we all are different, but we all are the same in our life. When it comes to that, there is no one that's more superior or inferior to the other. We all have the same makeup, but with the makeup, there are things that have disenfranchised certain parts of our human population for years and centuries. To take a blind eye to that, is not really being true in the sense of being in a human scope in that space when you overlook those things.

Motivation for Role

The ADOs shared what led them to their current positions at their institution. ADOs were all intrinsically motivated to pursue DEI work and were already doing the work in some form prior to beginning their position. ADOs noted that they were led to these roles either from prior life and work experiences. ADO Carmyn was drawn to the

position because of “the time and space to connect individually with students more often” and continue diversity work at an “institution that really has a lot of work to do in that [diversity] fight.”

Bob

I would probably say my undergraduate experience. I had very similar experiences at another research one institution, where we had support available for underrepresented students. Right before I finished my undergrad, I said I really wanted to work in that type of profession as well. When I was in my junior year, diversity administrators were becoming to be very popular in academic units. We had our first diversity coordinator when I was at my alma mater, during my undergraduate years. When I saw the role of that profession, I said, “That’s exactly what I want to do.” [...] One thing I would say is that having a chance to make an impact on an individual who is who is seeking to move one step higher, or probably one step closer to a long-term profession, it’s a dream come true.

Elise

Eating, living indoors, taking care of my children [laughs]. Being an athlete, and not having a clear path to graduate school, to this profession, made me want to be able to transition from athletics to academics. [...] Me and my mentor, who was the vice provost at the time, and my boss in my unit, really encouraged me to look into advising, because it was just such a foundational part of everything that happens at a university. Knowing curriculum, knowing and having relationships with students in this way, would help me move on. I became an academic advisor in the College of [Discipline] working under an African American female, who was there, very engaged in diversity, equity and inclusion throughout [the campus]. She really became a light for me, like a vision for what I could be bringing all of myself into a position. When this position came up, the person who had been in this position before, they were in a stats class in my Ph. D program, and they let me know that they were going to be moving on to another position. Everyone involved thought that it would be a great transition to take all of my experience and be able to funnel it into this very unique hybrid position. So that’s what drew me to it. I have this... much has been given, much is required. That is why I decided to go into coaching, to business, then after 10 or 15 years transition to a whole new career.

Academic and Professional Background

The ADOs came from very diverse academic and professional backgrounds. Most have at least one discipline specific degree in the discipline of their respective college,

with the exception of Elise. In addition to their personal motivations for pursuing ADO roles, some ADOs stated that their prior work experience also prepared them for their role. In addition to their discipline specific degrees, Bob and Carmyn both have at least one degree in student support and counseling areas empowering them to extensively work directly with students in one-on-one and group settings to manage student progress and wellbeing.

Job Description Statement

ADOs were asked if a job description statement was provided when they entered the role or if they had to create one on their own. Bob, Elise, and Lee serve in offices that have been established for more than five years and were given descriptive job statements when they entered their role. Bentley's office has been established for approximately ten years, however there was no job statement developed when the role was created, it had to be developed over time. For Beverly and Madison, their roles are both very new (less than one year), with new positions in the process of being implemented. Beverly and Madison were not given job statements; however they are a part of the development of job statements for the new roles. Carmyn, who has a dual associate dean and director role, was given a job statement, however there was not much detail outlined for the specific roles and responsibilities pertaining to the DEI director position.

Bentley

I had to build and create that on my own. The administration, of course, approved it, but the way that it became integral or more of a practice in the organization, it's just that the work just continues to grow. It does help that the campus has a movement as well that plays into our movement, so it is changing the mindset, the culture, and the energy for this work in the organization.

Carmyn

What's fascinating is that the director of diversity and inclusion role was really, maybe about one and a half bullet points of my larger job description of the Assistant Dean role. It basically just said serve as the Director of Diversity and Inclusion. Let's actually see, "What does that mean? What does that role seeking to do?" [...] It has been basically kind of building it up from the ground up.

Typical role activities

ADOs participated in varying activities depending on their role as full-time vs. part-time. ADO Typical Role Activities were categorized in Figure 4. While all ADOs had a strategic college diversity plan in place and collaborated in some capacity with other academic units, full-time ADOs typically offered more diversity training and programming, pre-college preparation activities, and URM student recruitment and retention efforts. Carmyn expressed the one-on-one consultations that she has with students to build sense of belonging.

Carmyn

I meet individually and sometimes with the full group, with our student organizations, in particular, our affinity student organizations. I do a lot of individual work with students from underrepresented backgrounds, especially in this in the first year of [discipline] school, that transition to this new environment and this whole different way of doing things can be really disorienting for folks, particularly students from underrepresented backgrounds, who maybe don't have [discipline professionals] in their families, are first generation [discipline] student. That sense of belonging and trying to build a sense of belonging, connection, and mattering for those students in particular is one of my top priorities, so I do a lot of individual counseling.

Advantages in Role Structure

ADOs presented some notable advantages and challenges with the way that their roles are currently structured. Primary advantages of their role structure included the importance of DEI committees in the college to assist with planning, implementing, and



Figure 4: ADO Typical Role Activities

communicating ideas, strategies, and initiatives; developing and implementing strategic college diversity plans; and reporting directly to the dean of their college.

Importance of DEI committees. The sub-theme *Importance of DEI committees* referred to participants' reflections on how faculty and staff work collaboratively with ADOs by serving on DEI committees to serve their academic unit in diversity efforts. ADOs also serve on other campus and national committees to stay abreast of current trends and strategies in promoting diversity.

Bentley

I chair the [academic unit's] Diversity Committee. That seems like a lot, but as a committee, I try to be sensible about what we can do and what is not appropriate for committee work. But within that, we do a lot of programming. We try and collaborate with other likeminded organizations, entities, departmental units, or college, whatever. We do a lot of inviting people to partner with us because they bring in the skill sets that we don't have as a committee. So our programs, I would say, is our biggest piece. I serve on a lot of diverse campus diversity committees, so that I can keep myself updated with the needs and the direction that the campus wants to go. And then I'm involved in National Committees so that as these decisions get made for our field, which is going to trickle down to our organization. I try to be at the table to help shape those decisions.

Carmyn

What's been interesting in this role is, even though we have a Director of Diversity and Inclusion, there are a lot of folks in the building who have and feel a lot of ownership around diversity and inclusion efforts. I do a lot of partnering with other folks. There isn't much that comes out just from the Director of Diversity and Inclusion, it is almost always in partnership with other offices, individual professors, or the [DEI] committee. For example, this is the week, Derek Chauvin, the verdict should be coming out any minute. And so it's this, "What do we do it as an institution? What do we do as a college? What supports do our students need? Do our students need support? Does our staff need support? What does that actually look like?" And given all the other things that I do, I don't have the luxury of time to just sit and anticipate these things really long-term. I hate being reactionary, but it almost requires me to be reactionary in some of these things. So like last night, there's a call to figure out like, what do we do? What do we not do? And trying to figure out that piece, that's more of a community piece. The [DEI] Committee, which I sit on, but it's a larger group of

folks who have had a longer tenure at this institution, we sent out an email about like, we're going to have this kind of open space and if folks want to be in community with others, they can come. That email went out just under the label of the Community and Inclusion Committee. It wasn't from the Director of Diversity Inclusion, and that's deliberate. This institution in particular has had a really complicated history with DEI efforts. I think some of the way in which we put this information out is a response to that, is recognizing that. There is still a lot of folks who aren't on board. We paint it in terms of community and inclusion, as opposed to it's coming from the [DEI] Director. It's just received differently. It's perceived differently. I think it brings in a broader group of folks to these sorts of events and discussions.

Madison

Not to mention or not to forget, we have an advisory board of colleagues in the College of faculty, staff and administrators. That advisory board is absolutely the best. Everyone with a PhD agreed not to use a title because we wanted the staff and the administrators that don't have terminal degrees to feel equal. We're all on a first name basis. There's lots of respect. Everybody's opinion is valued. Those individuals are the ones that helped create the diversity strategic action plan. When I say this has been a collaborative lift, it's been collaborative, but there's no day to day. And one other caveat, if there is a crisis, that becomes all time consuming. The most recent example would be the shootings in Atlanta. Crafting a letter with the right tone, the right wording, to support those of Asian Pacific Islander descent, those in the Asia Pacific Islander community. And also, being cognizant of the geopolitical, sociopolitical climate in which we live and work, that was a lot of work. There were at least six or seven individuals, and some of them professional communications administrators, that reviewed that letter. So, it just depends on what happens.

Developing and implementing strategic college diversity plans. ADOs noted that having a campus-wide directive to *develop and implement a strategic college diversity plan* for their unit was helpful in branding a vision, creating accountability, and establishing initiatives and metrics for diversity work in their academic unit.

Lee

The biggest task I will say is the diversity action plan that we have, which is a three-year plan, charged by [University Administration]. We're charged with that so I'm leading those initiatives. It's really setting responsibilities throughout the college of who will carry what responsibilities when it comes to making sure we implement our plan.

Beverly

We had a conversation with [Campus Diversity Leader]. We're looking at our diversity action plan, and [Campus Diversity Leader] said, "Why don't you put in there that you want to get a director, because that's the only way that this thing is going to happen." What we were realizing, there were only three full-time African American faculty members in the College of [Discipline], and of the three of us, there's another person that's part time, but of the three of us that are full-time, only two of us were really, we worked on this diversity action plan over Christmas break.

Madison

I think one of the biggest initiatives has been a [strategic college diversity plan], which was requested by the university. Every college in every unit on campus had to create a diversity strategic action plan over the course of the past year. A lot of time has been spent developing that diversity strategic action plan. At the same time, since this was a newly created office, what was not done?

Reporting directly to the Dean of their college. The sub-theme *Reporting directly to the Dean of their college* highlighted the need for direct and streamlined communication to promote efficient planning, approval, and funding for initiatives.

Bentley

I have the great pleasure of reporting to one of the deans of [academic unit]. That's really great, because I can get approval for whatever we need to do quickly. Whether it's funding, because sometimes you need food for events, or sometimes you just need resources to expand. That might even include bandwidth, can we put this on our front page so that people can see what we're doing so that people can know that we are committed to this work. Reporting directly to a Dean is really, really good, because that cut out a lot of layers, and it cuts out the time because sometimes we need to turn it around quickly.

Disadvantages in Role Structure

ADOs also expressed some disadvantages or challenges with the way that their roles are currently structured. Some challenges of their role structure included leading up when it comes to diversity and competing job responsibilities.

Leading up when it comes to diversity. The sub-theme *Leading up when it comes to diversity* referred to ADO feelings of depreciation when speaking as a subject matter expert on diversity to faculty or administrators with higher rank, title, or role.

Elise

A challenge is that you are leading up when it comes to diversity. You're always leading up because you are the expert, because you are in the trenches. They hire you to check that box, the challenge is avoiding being a checkbox and you do that through your relationships, through showing up, through speaking out, through being a part of all these different things. I don't know if they're aware of [the fact] that they're just getting a piece of me because there's only so much time a day. If you look at how [my boss] evaluated me, it was not on my actual job duties, because they're not really specified.

Competing job responsibilities. The sub-theme *Competing job responsibilities* described ADOs who had multiple job titles with disproportionate or not clearly defined time distributions allocated in their job description. ADOs either felt too little time was allocated for the diversity role within their position descriptions, or that the student affairs side of their job description was a conflict of interest with diversity efforts.

Elise

Another challenge is the fact that diversity is only 30% of what I do, and that it's all kind of popcorn piecemeal, that I still don't really have a clear plan. I'm just kind of putting my fingers in dikes, in the whole in the dike. That could be that could be me, you know, that could be me not figuring it out. So I think that's a challenge. I think it's a challenge having a 30% position when the need is 150%. And that collaboration, of course, is within my own college. And so that's a challenge. So a challenge is recruitment.

Carmyn

I think the hard part is I feel like I have so many different competing roles. I hate feeling like I'm chasing my tail. I hate feeling like I'm not doing everything to the best of my ability. Because there's so many competing things, I just feel like I'm doing everything at like 55% level as opposed to like a 99% level. Some of that is just understaffing. There is no Director of Student Affairs under me. There is a Director of Career Services, there's the Director of Admissions, there's no Director of Student Affairs, it's just me. Plus overseeing all these other functions

plus the diversity and inclusion piece. It's just a lot. It's almost like being spread too thin to be able to sit down and think about how to do this.

Carmyn

I think the other thing, too, is I'm an administrator. I am not a faculty member, although I've been asked to think about teaching starting next year, in addition to my administrative roles. But it's one of these things that, you know, faculty are an interesting group of folks. In some places faculty see high level administration as a partner. Especially in [discipline], most of us have the same level of degree attainment. Most of my [discipline] professors don't have PhDs, they just have [professional degree]. Most of them don't even have master's degrees, they just have [professional degrees]. For some focus, I have more degrees, but I don't teach and that's the kicker. I think some of the challenges have been around a recognition of the role, respect of the role as a source of information. I think a lot of faculty will see administrative roles as, "Oh, that's just for students," and not as a partner with faculty. I think if I was a faculty member who had been appointed as director of diversity and inclusion, I think I would have a lot more faculty who would be like, "Oh, yeah, I hear you and I'll partner with you." I think they just see me more as, "Oh, you're for students." And that's not really the way the role's intended. It's not the way that the role was written up, but I think that's been one of the largest challenges is finding a way to partner with faculty for the benefit of students and faculty members. But frankly, our students spend the bulk of their time in a classroom with our faculty. That's the space that really has to work as well as possible and be as inclusive as possible. That's [also] the space where often these microaggressions are happening, and the faculty may just not realize that it's happening. That's the place that can be most harmful, I think.

Role in retention and graduation of diverse student populations

ADOs felt that their role was contributed greatly to the retention and graduation of diverse student populations by using programing to develop and connect with diversity champions, hosting summer programs to recruit minoritized students to the university, offering student scholarships to minimize financial barriers to graduation, offering student mentoring programs for retention, creating inclusive environment spaces for students, diversifying college faculty and staff, and addressing student needs.

Using programming to develop and connect with diversity champions. ADO

noted that programming has been helpful to develop and connect with diversity champions that would have otherwise gone unknown.

Bentley

It's a mix of both. When we do our programs, sometimes I am so encouraged and amazed about who show up for the topics. Because in my mind, you think that you're designing it for this population, but the population who shows up is [different]. When we did a program once on stress, and so many students showed up, and we thought it was going to be more collegial because that is where we put our effort for promoting it. But the students show up, and not only did they show up, they used their voices. It's just a mix. It was it is our goal to reach all populations, because we're not just trying to reach those populations to be in those populations, we're trying to reach those populations to develop champions because we can't reach all the areas. If we get some likeminded people, and if they find information that they could use, hopefully they will tell others and help us grow the conversation.

Summer programs to recruit minoritized students. Summer programs have been effective in the recruitment of minoritized students to campus.

Beverly

One of the things that we're doing right now is working with the [another college on campus]. They do the [College Exploration Program] every summer. They have the Summer Institute where they have different career tracks come in and talk with them those last two hours of the day. We're going to have a [Discipline] track. We're starting that this year, this is the first time we're going to be doing that. That's one way we are going to be able to expose minoritized students to [Discipline], let them really get an idea of what [Discipline] is, the options that you have in [Discipline], and yes, you can come to [University].

Student scholarships to minimize financial barriers to graduation. ADOs

suggested that offering student scholarships was a way to minimize financial barriers that prevent graduation.

Beverly

One of the things that we were working on while we were working on that grant, was looking at how we can have some sort of sustainability in keeping those students. Because part of the grant was helping to recruit students and recruit faculty as well. Working mainly on students to get them into a program because

they're trying to increase the minority and marginalized students' admission into [Discipline] programs so they can get through so you can increase minority and marginalized people in the workforce. Part of the funds from that grant, we're going to try to get the students in. We were looking at different ways that students' education can be financed. One of the things we were looking at is how the College of [Discipline] with our funds that we have, because our Dean is endowed, and so one of the things we're looking at, we're talking with [the Dean] and trying to be creative in identifying how we can get some funds to help those students. We know that even though they come in, and they have tuition paid, and all those other things like housing is not covered if you are if your income is above, I think it's like \$40,000, or \$42,000, or something like that for the year. So, those are the students that fall through the cracks, because we know room and board is expensive. There is no discount for that. That was one thing that we were looking at, how do we help these students to get funded for that part of the bill and help them to stay in school so that we can get them through. That was one thing that we were working on with the Dean on to work to get them through.

Student mentoring programs for retention. ADOs felt that student mentoring programs provided additional peer support to promote retention of minoritized students in their academic units.

Beverly

Something else that we talked about was developing some sort of mentorship program. I know the university has mentorship programs, but the question is, how comfortable do these students feel coming to the people that are available to be mentored? It's not their lived experience. You can tell me, yeah, this is how you do it, but it [may not] work for me. So that was one thing we were looking at. One of the things was to have students that have graduated be a part of a mentorship corps, where we'll help to support students as they come through. Something else that we were looking at, too, is upperclassmen pairing up with underclassmen in helping them to get through the process and talk them through what they did, what works and that kind of thing. It's a mentorship program students and mentorship as in professionals to the students as well. So those are some of the some of the initiatives that we talked about when we were working on that grant, because all those things needed funding.

Elise

I think that the relationship I have with my students, even the ones who may not rise to leadership roles or may not come to my programs, even being at some of my student events, knowing that there is a plan, that they are thought about, that they are planned for, and that there's someone on the job that is specifically

looking out for them. Whatever difference they may have, being able to see them as human potential. I think that's my main role. I was at a diversity luncheon yesterday and one of my students who's graduating was there. The legacy, you know, or even going to the multicultural graduation event and representing, one of my students that I had in the Living Learning Community, I knew not just her, but her grandmother lives here. I live in the same community. This holistic way of looking at students from diverse backgrounds and being engaged and involved in their lives at different points for different reasons throughout their career, I think makes the biggest difference and I think that's my main role.

Inclusive environment spaces for students. Inclusive Environment Spaces for students provided a dedicated space for students to feel welcome and involved on campus. These spaces also had a support person students felt comfortable coming to talk to when they needed advice or a listening ear.

Beverly

Then just having a place in the College of [Discipline] where students can feel comfortable to come and actually talk with someone about their experience and how we can help them to get through those situations. At this moment, students are not comfortable to come and talk with people about anything, because they don't see many people that look like them. It's that relationship. They're looking for, someone to actually knock on the door, come in close the door, and we can have a conversation and feel like it's not going to go anywhere [that the conversation will be confidential]. But when they don't see anyone that looks like them, it's difficult for them to actually develop that trusting relationship with someone.

Madison

100%. This is not just about faculty and staff. This is about creating an inclusive environment where students will have the best opportunity to gain a quality education. What does that look like? In our diversity strategic action plan, we talk about creating an inclusive classroom environment. We encourage our faculty to pursue educational opportunities so that they enhance or build on the cultural competency that they already have. We encourage them to incorporate this, embed this into the fabric of their syllabus, in their classroom instruction. Our job is to fully support our students in the pursuit of their degree to help them become global citizens. Because the likelihood is you're going to leave this particular institution and you're going to engage in a global community where there are people that don't look like you, people that don't have the same religious identity, people where the gendered identity is blurred. You're going to engage with a

diversity of individuals. We want to ensure that we've done our part in your preparation. If you're from a rural 90 something percent White County in this state, then you get a job in Atlanta, or DC or Charlotte, you're probably going to engage with more diversity than you ever had. Should you go to London or Munich, or somewhere outside the US, you're going to see diversity in multiple fold. That is what we want to be a part of, that is what we see our role as in supporting our students toward degree completion.

Diversifying college faculty and staff. ADOs expressed a need to continue to diversify college faculty and staff so that students can see someone that looks like them in various positions across their campus.

Beverly

With faculty and staff, I think the hiring process has been more at a university level in working really hard to get minority faculty in. We had quite a few minority faculty interview in this rotation. I think there were a couple of directives from the administration to make sure that that happened. With regards to retaining them, I think because I'm new to this university in general, I haven't seen anything specific in place to retain minority faculty, but that doesn't mean it's not something that's going to happen. We've had conversations about it and what we need to do, and that's something we need to get more in depth with in our planning - what we need to do to maintain the minority faculty once we get them in. One thing is mentoring and just pairing people up and serving as support for each other. Educating current faculty about the [University Faculty Diversity Training Program] with their interviewing and identifying appropriate faculty. But there's conversation about training the current faculty that we have. It would become more culturally sensitive and more, let's just leave it at culturally sensitive. Somewhere in there with the training of faculty, there's going to be training of staff. Again, we need to pin those things down. There's a lot of emphasis on the students and emphasis on faculty, we just need to make sure we have something in place for staff.

Elise

I was reflecting on that this morning. I really believe that it is my sheer presence. The fact that as a person of color, representation really matters. And then not just representing, but communicating that you are there for them, and making sure that they are connected to the resources that are available.

Addressing student needs. ADOs felt that their role was highly student focused and a primary goal of their initiative planning involves creating programming and supports that address student specific needs.

Bob

Oh, so I would probably say it is really based on the student's needs. I mean, we do quite a bit of assessment as far as understanding who the students are, also understanding who we are, and identifying what are the strengths, but also what are the gaps as far as what we need to connect the dots. One of the things is that I think the biggest support area is really transition during the first and second year. One of the things is that if there are gaps as far as the students academically, being able to thrive, but also being accepted into that community, it would determine not only your retention numbers, but also your recruitment numbers of other students who can be influenced by the ones who are currently on your campus.

Carmyn

It starts even before orientation. We do sessions for first generation students who are coming into the [discipline] school. We did sessions for folks coming in with families. We did sessions for LGBT students to like talk to current LGBT students to know what it's like to be here. We had a time for students from underrepresented backgrounds, students who had been out of school for five more years, we did a session for them. What's the term that sometimes people use? Like a nontraditional background, which I really do not like, I do not like that term. But we did a session for students who have been out for a while and coming back to school. At orientation, we do a little bit more around diversity and inclusivity. We have a professor who does a whole session around understanding more cultural competence. When they get into classes, we follow up with students as they are in classes. I send birthday emails to every single individual student, just to say hi, and sometimes that's the only communication you have them respond and it opens up a line of communication. I try to be as visible as possible. The pandemic has made it difficult, the visibility piece, and I find that a lot of our students of color have opted to not be on campus through the pandemic. They were given an option of being hybrid or staying virtual, and they stay virtual. I try to send emails individually just be like, "hey, just check it in, how are things going, how's the baby?" Particularly for underrepresented students to make sure that they still feel connected and that somebody knows that they're there. If it's just me, but it's better one than none. I also am in the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs role. I oversee records, exams, accommodations, grades, I see all the pieces of data that come together for any individual student. It gives me a really unique perspective in seeing where there may be trouble, maybe someone performing at a level that they would want for themselves and checking in there. After the first semester

grades, I checked in with every student from underrepresented backgrounds just to be like, “How did it go?” How are you feeling? Let's talk about a gameplan.” Just to make sure that they were ready to go into another semester, and that they didn't automatically just go, I can't do this, because of course they can do this. It is a lot of individual attention. My philosophy is not to do a lot of large programming. I don't like just dragging them all into a room and having somebody out in front just talking at them, but really helping them think about what they want to do with this degree and make a game plan for themselves individually that works for them.

RQ2: What do academic diversity officers need in order to be effective in their role?

ADOs shared how they have been effective in their role from the perspective of their academic unit, as well as how they perceive effectiveness in their role. ADOs were asked if they felt they were effective in their role, resources that promote role effectiveness, and resources needed to increase role effectiveness.

Perceptions of effectiveness per academic unit

ADOs were asked how they perceive their effectiveness in their role as measured by their academic unit. ADOs felt that effectiveness was measured in terms of publications, outreach, research, and service; achieving job description milestones and strategic college diversity plan metrics; value added to academic unit; student satisfaction; and ultimately student retention and graduation.

Publications, outreach, research, and service. One aspect in which ADOs perceived their academic unit measured success included *publications, outreach, research, and service* demonstrated in their roles.

Bentley

Although we're an academic unit, we're not an academic college, but we govern ourselves accordingly. We have tenure in our workplace. We govern ourselves according to the academic standards of the university. We are evaluated on our performance. We do teaching differently, but that includes teaching, and a lot of the work that I've mentioned [such as the outreach] and how we work with

students in our realm of work. We have to publish, publish or perish. If your publication isn't up to par, then you do not get tenure, because we're a tenure track. They look at our publications, creative and research work, and our service work. Service to my organization, within my organization to the campus, to local, regional, and national work, and how will that work be received in our respective fields. That's how we're evaluated.

Job description and strategic college diversity plan metrics. Another aspect of academic unit measured effectiveness included how well ADOs achieved metrics outlined in their *job description and strategic college diversity plans*. This aspect was more prevalent with ADOs in newly created roles.

Beverly

It's going to be difficult to measure that because it's not a formalized roll as yet. I think maybe in a year, if you ask that person that question, they might be able to give you a better answer. I feel that they would measure success based on what those responsibilities are that were that were stated in this process that we're saying in the job description, and how we're doing with progression with regards to the [strategic college diversity plan]. We want to get certain things done within that three-year timeframe. Where are we along that trajectory in terms of accomplishing things based on what we set out to do and based on where we are. That would be a way to sort of measure. It might not be might not be something that you have control over, because if you have anybody else that's involved, you have to depend on their timeframe as well. It's one of those moving targets, I can't quite tell. That's how that's how you'll be able to gauge it.

Madison

That is a great question. Achieving the objectives in the [strategic college diversity plan], whether that's presenting educational initiatives, increasing certain metrics, quantitative aspects, that is success.

Value added to academic unit. In addition to qualitative and quantitative measures, ADO felt that academic units would perceive the ADO and their office as effective if there is *value added to the academic unit* as a whole.

Bob

Wow. I think when you look at success, it comes in variety, shapes, forms, and entities. Of course, you can look at it from a quantitative and a qualitative perspective, but you also look at "does the experience or does the office add

value?” And if so, if someone was to say anything about the office, what would they say? Those are really what I would consider to be success. If there's something that is more of a challenge, I see that as an opportunity.

Student satisfaction. ADOs felt that *student satisfaction* played a significant role in academic unit measured effectiveness. This could come in the form of no complaints from students or serving students from an academic affairs perspective creating a sense of belonging and serving as a mentor for students.

Carmyn

No complaints. [Discipline] students love to complain, so if there are no complaints, they're like, “Okay!” I feel like... I honestly... that's what it means. Part of my review this year, I basically tracked every conference I [attended], how many students I [saw], how many commissions I'm on, how many meetings I [attended], because I do so much of it not at the direction of my supervisor, but just because it's the right thing to do. It's important to grow this role, and for me to be better at it. I gave [my supervisor] a three-page document, [and my supervisor] was like, “Wow, I had no idea.” I was like, I know!

Elise

I've worked a lot with [the college institute] in diversity stuff, yet, I did not get an on campus interview [for a job I applied for]. That caused me to really reflect on not what I thought was successful, but what is it that they're actually asking me to do, because that's how I'll be evaluated. That's how they will think about me. I'm thinking about me a certain way, because I'm doing all these extra amazing things. Yet, they're not really being counted. So I love that you asked that question. Because what it comes down to is at the student level, they see me as a student affairs person that has an expertise in diversity, equity and inclusion. Not really equity, and not really diversity. Well, diversity because they want to see more color, but inclusion, meaning we just want everyone to feel welcome. We want everyone to feel like they matter and they belong. You are the hospitality committee. You are a mentor.

Student recruitment and retention. A final measure of ADO effectiveness by academic unit included increases in *student recruitment and retention* including academic support efforts, supporting at-risk students, and coaching and mentoring students.

Lee

I will say from the academic side of success for this role, first will come with retention, and retention being the primary focus. Second would come with, of course, success from an academic standpoint, because we also look at at-risk students. As for the sophomore mentoring program is really set up for as well, those who are at risk come from the freshman year transitioning, and then we have a lot of faculty that volunteered their time, you know, to help students not so much like a tutor, it's more like a mentor/coach role. We still want to just take advantage of the resources that are out there. Whether it's tutoring or academic counseling, or coaching, this is more so to say, "Hey, you can do this. Have you reached out to this person? Do you know about this resource to help you navigate whatever situations you may have in class, or are you staying in contact?" Those type of things that help them navigate, so I would say from the academic side, those would be the most crucial touch points.

Perceptions of effectiveness per ADO

ADOs were asked how they perceive their own effectiveness in their role. This differed a bit from how they perceived their academic units defined effectiveness. ADOs measured their own effectiveness based on publications; making a difference; positive trends in diversity metrics; and being clear on job role and diversity expectations.

Publications. One aspect in which ADOs measured their own effectiveness in their role included the number of *publications* submitted each year. This was a measure for ADOs who were also in faculty roles.

Bentley

When I'm doing my job well and when I get things published. Because a lot of times within your own organization, people don't appreciate that, but when it's vetted outside by higher esteemed academics who have the knowledge that places them in the role to vet their colleagues work, and they say, "Yes, we find this work to be acceptable and we want to publish it or we want you to present on it," that's how I find my success. That's what I look to. But then I go by the heart and I go by if the programs are being sustained, and people request the program, if I'm building a name for my work, and that is not to be bragging, but that's the way you work in the academy, you've got to demonstrate the need for your scholarship and if that is taking place. I'm just going to add this now, I've been working for the university for a long time. At this point in my career, I feel like I have the authority to judge my own work. And in that vein, if it gives me pleasure, and if I

know and I can see the things, the pieces of success, because I understand and I know what success looks like, so if I could see that materialize, then I celebrate that.

Making a difference. ADOs felt that *making a difference* and educating people was a personal measure of role effectiveness in their academic unit. When they were making a positive impact on the people they serve, it also makes the job more enjoyable.

Bob

Oh, probably waking up every day, going to work, not thinking about the work that you're doing or thinking about the completion of the project, but also feeling that you're making a difference. It doesn't feel like work, it feels like something you just enjoy doing on a day-to-day basis.

Madison

Making a difference, making a positive difference, educating people.

Positive trends in diversity metrics. Another aspect of ADO perceptions of role effectiveness included achieving *positive trends in diversity metrics* outlined by their academic unit.

Carmyn

I want us to see an uptick in the number of students from diverse backgrounds enrolling, who really, just from paper and visits, really feel like they can be here. I need to make sure that all of my students graduate and pass the [professional exam] because that's the big hurdle. They can finish [...] years of [discipline] school, but if you don't pass the [professional exam], your dreams are just not gonna happen. [This discipline] doesn't have to be miserable. It really doesn't, it does not have to suck your soul. I really want to see our students, particularly our students who come in like, "Where are the other people who look like me?" I want them to come in, feel like I belong here, I earned my right to be here, I'm going to be successful, feel genuinely and authentically supported through that process. Just to be able to focus on being a [discipline] student, that's the hard part. When diversity and inclusion isn't working in [academic unit], it's almost like being in high school. Everything's in one building, we have a little cafeteria, they have lockers, we're an island unto ourselves. All of a sudden, you have these students who walk in on this island, and they're like, "Where am I? What just happened?" Almost from the beginning, when they start, it's all of a sudden all these other things that are taking away their ability to focus on the job at hand, which is being the best [student] they can be and getting out of here with this

degree. It's all these other things that are pulling at them and taking away their energy and their confidence. It's a lot about confidence, you really have to believe in yourself to be able to get through this. But when you get all these messages, whether through microaggressions, whether it's through direct messaging, whether through just oh, I just didn't think about you, all of that takes away from their ability to actually get the job done. And so for me, I tell them my job is to make sure that you can do your job and that you can just focus in on what you're here to do and I can take care of the rest. Let's just do this together.

Lee

I define success as consistency. Having metrics in place and being results driven versus --you can have a lot of conversation, you can have a lot of meetings together, a lot of focus groups, you can have a Diversity Council, but where does the rubber meet the road? I look at the data to see are our numbers increasing? Are our students getting opportunities when it comes to career placement? Are they taking advantage of internships? Do we have a vision and also thought process when it comes to the onboarding of our new faculty and staff and even the retention of our existing ones when it comes to understanding the importance of building a welcoming and inclusive space for everyone, but not just building it, but also being a part of it and being involved in that process? I see that as success, not only from a statistical standpoint, because numbers don't lie. Sometimes people may, but numbers don't. The numbers is still where the impact is. I look at the numbers first and see what we're moving the needle there. Second, I look at the culture and are we building the right culture and sustaining the right culture for everyone. Of course, when incidents come, what is that response? Success for me is not only... there are going to be incidents, but success in a sense would be the response. What was the response... you're not gonna have everybody just like, "Oh, that was a great decision and he did the right thing." You're gonna have some naysayers but knowing deep down inside that it matched the mission and vision and values for college, but more importantly, what we focus on as far as what we really mean by having an inclusive environment for everyone. So that to me, I believe would be my definition of success, in addition to other hurdles to take on this role, but that's probably the foundation of what I would consider someone who will be successful in this role.

Being clear on job role and diversity expectations. One ADO felt that in order to achieve optimal effectiveness, it was necessary to have clarity on their job role and diversity expectations from their academic unit in order to better align role activities with academic unit expectations.

Elise

I think success is understanding [...] what [my supervisor and administration] deems as success, like being very clear on what the job role in the job responsibilities, what their expectations are. Because I think that I have been so busy trying to be a great and being the best and taking from other units what success is, and really getting lost. I have to blame myself, like I have to ask my boss, "Okay, what do you think success is?" Right? So, I think getting a clear definition of and staying true to those job responsibilities, and those job roles, and try not to go so far outside of that. While it's a great thing, it's not always a good thing.

ADO self-reported effectiveness achievement

ADOs were asked if they felt that they were effective in achieving success as outlined by their academic unit, as well as themselves. ADOs felt that they were meeting their personal goals and seeing impacts in student performance and retention. However, responses were mixed when it came to effectiveness in meeting academic unit goals. Reasons for an ADO feeling that they were not fully effective at meeting academic unit goals included lack of diversity support from colleagues. ADOs felt that in order to meet institutional diversity goals, everyone at the university should be contributing to the effort.

Bob

I think from a sense of institutional goals, I think we're working within our means. To set institutional goals, I will probably say no. Are we meeting our college goals? I will probably say no. Are we meeting our unit goals? I would say yes. One of the reasons I came up with that is because looking at diversity is not just a one person or one unit job. It is an effort that is inclusive of everyone's efforts to make it to reach institutional efforts. In order for you to meet institutional goals, the entire institution has to be working at it.

Carmyn

Yes. When I look at my Black and Latinx students, and I go through the roll of all of them in my head, I feel like I have a very good connection with all of them. I meet with almost all of them on a regular basis. I truly feel like they all feel like if I need something, I know I've got her. For me, that is the number one thing. Even if everything else isn't going right, if you feel like there's at least one person who's

got you if you need it, to me, that feels like success. Especially in a crazy first 15 months, 13 months of it has been virtual, so that piece, I think is in the success column. I feel like I'm getting recognized on campus. I'm entering spaces and people are like, "I remember seeing you." and "I've been in a meeting with you, right?" I'm starting to make connections on campus, which can only be to the benefit of our students long term. I think that's a success.

Elise

Yes, I mean, shoot, I had [an event], I had collaborated with [Student Engagement], they paid for the food and everything else, but it was my idea. I helped to get everyone on board. Almost 300 students showed up on a really cold Friday afternoon [for this outdoor event]. [...] I actually met with the dean of students to say, I want to collaborate more with your office.

Lee

I'm my worst critic. I'm always hard on myself from the performance review, I'm meeting the goals, so I guess I'm doing something right. I feel like I definitely can do more. But again, just knowing what the environment is like because it's different when you're on Zooms all day versus being in person and scheduling things. One thing, I believe, that can be better is student engagement, because I believe, the fatigue with the online Zoom fatigue, you can see that a lot of times when you're teaching. I do teach a class focused on servant leadership, which is not a responsibility for this role, but it's something you can volunteer and do, which I've jumped in to do, but you can see it. I think one thing for me is that is making sure that we still have the buy and still have the engagement when it comes to meeting the goals and the metrics. On paper, we can do that, but when it comes to building relationships to make sure this office stays not only relevant, but involved with students, that's my primary concern. Especially as we transition back to an in-person setting, we want to make sure we're still having as many touch points as possible with the students so that we can really make sure that we're making an impact. So for me, I know there's a lot of work to be done. On paper, you may say, "hey, you're meeting the goals," but there's a lot of work to be done. But again, as I said earlier, not to overburden ourselves either and to have a specific plan. That's why a [strategic college diversity plan] is very helpful, and we'll stick to that specific plan. There'll be other things other folks or the departments other the other college leadership that have to take on, and it's something that they have interest in.

Madison

Some days, to a degree. To a degree, I can say that. It's never going to be 100%, because just as much as there are people pushing to move forward, there are some that cannot, will not, and don't want to.

Resources that promote role effectiveness

ADOs identified support as the primary resource that promote role effectiveness. This support came as financial support, personnel support, and investment and support from colleagues. Other resources included empowerment from knowing that their work was appreciated and valued by the campus community and professional development in which ADOs have participated.

Financial and Personnel support. *Financial and personnel support* provided by academic units were identified as a primary resource to support role effectiveness. Financial support included support including staff, programs, events, giveaways, and meals for event participants.

Bentley

I can answer that quickly. Number one, their support. They could throw all the money at you that they want, and you do need that money, but if you don't have that support, it's hard emotionally to do the labor. It's really hard to do it. It drains on your creativity. Number two, I do need resources and opportunities to take it into different realms and to change it up if it's not working. I need whatever it takes there, whether it's more free lunches, whether it's prizes so that people get excited and they know that they're being rewarded, and we're not sucking all the air out of them.

Bob

Financial support and personnel. Also, from a sense that collaborating with other partners, I will probably say that those are probably the essential items that are really provided by academic units.

Carmyn

So, I have two staff members for our records office and one of them is the person who manages a lot of the accommodation piece. That's been super helpful. That's at least one piece of service to students who might be 'othered' for their abilities or disabilities. Being able to provide an empathetic, consistent, and really supportive effort on that front has been really, really helpful. She does a fantastic job with that. It's one thing I don't have to worry about, because [my staff member's] got it, and then I just come into play when things don't go well, which

is rare. So that's been helpful. I will say with the offices that I oversee, we are doing a pretty good job. The directors that are in those roles, get it. They really understand making the personal connection with students and recognizing that sometimes students need a little extra, and that's okay and it's not their fault. That's why we're here to do this work and do what needs to be done to help them out. They really embrace that concept, so that's been super helpful.

Elise

Well, one thing is money. I have a budget for my student org, I have a budget for my student life activities. Pretty much if I can justify it, like if I can give good reason for what I want to do and why, I have complete financial support. So if it's a bridge program, if it's an etiquette dinner, I do have those resources. I was able to hire a student assistant for the first time to be able to multiply me a little bit. I think just a general feeling of support that a part of this role is diversity and inclusion. [...] Another support was getting someone else to teach the living and learning community.

Lee

This office has been established. From a monetary standpoint, there's a lot of support, and we're very grateful, because we have a lot that's invested in diversity and inclusion initiatives for the college but also outreach. We can still can always get more, but we have a very strong focus, particularly on recruitment as well, from a foundation that was given from the college namesake, to not only our department, but other departments focus on different areas, but are specific to recruitment.

Madison

Funding, graduate assistants...

Investment and support from colleagues. In addition to financial and personnel support, ADOs also felt that *investment and support from colleagues* was necessary to be effective in their roles.

Lee

I would say the biggest thing is their expertise and the people. We have a lot of involvement and investment from the faculty, those who are subject matter experts to be speakers, to work with our summer programs, to help us lead our leadership development series of our lunch and learns and be in the process to provide presentations and discussion materials for that. So I will say from academic side, just to buy in the commitment of the individuals who want to share

that knowledge and their experiences, to me has superseded everything else. I mean, it's great to have, which is very important, the monetary support that's delegated through the academic side to our office specifically for the things that we do an academic standpoint, but I think people, really, to me, is really where we are very fortunate to have.

Empowerment from campus appreciation and value of diversity work. ADOs

also felt that they were empowered to continue their diversity work when their work was appreciated and valued by the campus community. Seeing diversity permeate in other aspects of their academic unit further solidified the value in their work and impacts in their academic unit.

Bentley

But most of all, and again, at this point of my career, I want to know that I am contributing, and I'm doing my job in a place that my organization appreciates my effort, because it's not an 8-5, Monday through Friday sort of thing. I need to know, whatever I'm doing beyond that, is it being valued.

Madison

Oh, wait... the intangibles -- being empowered to do the work. Because the leadership has said, "This is what we're going to do." That is what has been done. It's not just the resources, it's the intangibles, it's the support, it's the commitment, and I know it's there. I know it by the conversations. I know it by the action being taken. I know it because sometimes you have addition by subtraction, I'm going to venture to say we've probably had some addition by subtraction. Because not everyone is on board with where this and other initiatives are going. Everything has diversity embedded in it now. It's not a standalone. And when I say now, I mean, we're working to get there. We've got work to do, but even if it's not articulated, it's supposed to be. It's supposed to be embedded in everything we do moving forward.

Professional development. ADOs participated in *professional development*

activities such as conferences, workshops, seminars, panels, and meetings with diversity committees to build their knowledge and expand their experiences as diversity professionals.

Bentley

Yes, I am in a lot of conferences. My mind isn't thinking properly, but I would venture to say that I have participated in having diversity conferences and workshops - and workshops go beyond just a program. A workshop is more of a tool and development of a concept. I attend national conferences on diversity and like I said, I serve on national committees, and then I serve on campus committees. And then wherever possible, I serve on panels, and then just because you served on a panel doesn't mean that you're the expert. It means that you need to update yourself and your skill set so that you can answer questions. That requires education process all in itself. I write about it to stretch myself and research so that I could have a scholarly, not just personal interest, but a scholarly foundation for the work that I'm doing. Etcetera, Etcetera, whatever it takes. Oh, and I advise students. I advise, speaking of STEM backgrounds, I am co-advisor for the [STEM Minority Student Organization]. Let me pull up my little student group. Talk about partnerships. I am co-advisor with [faculty member], from [STEM Academic Unit]. [The faculty member] brings the scholarship to the table, and so we're really supporting the students holistically. That's another thing that I can say, I don't have the background, but the STEM communities have embraced me and given me opportunities.

Beverly

Yeah, we had the Zoom diversity symposium that was offered by the [National Discipline Association]. A couple of weekends ago, I attended the women of color event that they had on campus. That's about it that I can recall, personally.

Bob

There are several professional conferences that are available either in your profession, but also available at the institutional level. The university has really improved to provide more additional support, not only for diversity administrators, but also faculty and staff at the institutional level. Collaborating with other partners and going to conferences, I think is good to hear the challenges, but also the opportunities that are available, but also to relate to see commonalities amongst similar administrators.

Carmyn

One of the things that I do is leadership seminars. That's how I started working with [Campus Leadership and Service Center]. I was doing some on campus leadership seminars for them. I did a session last week, I didn't run it, I attended a session last week on working with veterans and how to better support veterans in employment situations, but also as students. Since I oversee our Career Services function, that entire office attended as well to learn more about that. Even tomorrow, there's a conference that I found online called the Return on Investment on DEI (ROI on DEI). I try to attend as many of the ones that are free or low cost as possible. Like last week, I attended a three-day symposium called

Building an Anti-Racist Curriculum. That was run by [University] [discipline] school. I attended was one, “Making Visible the Racialized Experiences of [University] Asian American and Pacific Islander Women Faculty.” I try to sit in on as many of those as I can. We started a social kind of like Latino lunch group on campus to start thinking about petitioning for a Latino Commission on campus. So that's a regular meeting that I hit. I try to put them in purple when they're on my calendar. I think the hard part this year has been the virtual space. Virtual conferences are just really difficult to carve out the time.

Carmyn

I miss all my conferences. I just can't attend any, because then my phone still ringing, and people are still walking in the door. It's been really hard to attend as many as I wanted to. There was like, anti-racism virtual summit, that was a three day summit that I attended online in March. [Discipline specific organization] did a quality conference for two days in early March that I attended. I try to hit at least two a month, wherever I can find them, whether they're on campus or not. That's been really, really helpful in connecting with folks who do this work in other spaces. I attended one, just Monday, and it was folks doing DEI work who had formerly been at institutions, working now in the private sector, and talking about the differences. That was actually pretty interesting. I do some mental health ones when I can just to kind of stay up on things. But they're just really vital to find folks who are doing this work. I am actually the chair elect for our Student Services section for the [Discipline specific organization]. I'll be the chair of our section next year, and a big push has been around diversity and equity in student affairs and doing more research around it and encouraging our faculty to do more on that.

Lee

I would say that a couple of virtual conferences that I've had opportunity to attend. Of course, webinars and sessions through the Harvard [discipline] School, so that I get the emails and the ones that are going to be beneficial, I have taken advantage of those. The PhD project, I [have to] bring it up, again, because it's been very helpful. There's always different sessions and things that are related to DEI spaces but also from a recruitment standpoint, has very helpful the conference. I attended the PhD project conference, and we served as a host during the college career day. That was a really impactful conference and learned a lot from that. [...] So still finding ways to continue to stay sharp, and educate not just myself, but also share that information on my team. My team has done the same doing virtual conferences, or whether it's webinars, sessions, or even just being a part of discussions on diversity panels and attending those events.

Lee

I've been fortunate very blessed to serve on different panels. I feel like a lot of times when I'm serving on panels, I'm learning more than I'm giving. So I'm learning from the experts on the panel just as much as I'm considered the person to talk about it. I'm taking notes as well, and I'm learning so each of those opportunities have been great even when I'm asked to come and speak to students, which I've done a lot of speaking engagements since I've been here. It's been very beneficial though. Each time I look at it, you give a presentation or you share information you learn something new about the same information that you're sharing, so those who may have professional development opportunities, and we offer that to staff. One thing our office does provides professional development fund for staff. So as for the [College] staff members who have an interest, they have to be at least a year within their role, they can apply for the funds to cover when there's a conference, particularly, it's mostly local. They may do a workshop, or a webinar or something and may have a fee assigned to it. We're able to provide those resources for them through that fund.

Elise

I was the chair for the [campus minority commission], and I did that as a way to train myself and get involved with higher levels of diversity that was coming down from the college. I participate in [conferences for] faculty women of color, anything that I can do to be able to grow my knowledge base. I'll tell you that my focus has been more on building me so that I can deliver programming and activities to [College], which is just sorely needed. We just don't have real diversity, equity, inclusion programs. We haven't had a clear plan in the past.

Madison

How the majority of my professional development has been done via some virtual platform, because conferences were canceled or virtual for the most part this year. So there have been a number of those.

Resources needed to increase role effectiveness

ADOs identified several resources needed to increase their role effectiveness.

These additional resources included additional support personnel, assistance identifying new partnerships, support from the Dean and faculty, opportunity for growth, connecting with alumni, time to plan and think, and corporate partnerships.

Additional support personnel. ADOs felt that *additional support personnel* was needed in order to scale activities, grow their offices, and expand their reach in the academic unit.

Carmyn

I think really having that a Director of Student Affairs, even an assistant director, but somebody else in the Student Affairs function to broaden my ability to actually do more consistent programming on a regular cycle would be really, really helpful so that I can focus on the mental health pieces, the counseling pieces, the DEI pieces, all of those other pieces. It would be nice to have someone just making sure that at a base level, we've got the Student Affairs, that kind of basics Student Affairs stuff. Like planning orientation doesn't require the Assistant Dean to do that, but here, that is what I do. A director could absolutely do that and grow with it and love it, and do a fantastic job of that and then I come in and do other pieces, but like, they're just some really key pieces that they're better suited for the director level that could come off my plate really easy.

Elise

I really think splitting the role or having me be the director of... you know [another academic college on campus] has it's diversity office, but it serves all the students as well, but there's a structure, there's a director, there's coordinators. I don't need a whole office, but I can definitely use more administrative support. I can use a graduate assistant, someone who can actually help to coordinate and run programs, kind of like the same model that [Multicultural Student Office] has. I think splitting the role, I think having the person who's in charge of all of student activities and student life, and really having a serious approach to recruiting, retaining, and resourcing underrepresented students, I think it's a big ask. I think it's a heavy lift, and it's a really difficult one. Just because I am doing it, it doesn't mean that I should do it.

Madison

Absolutely. A full-time staff member, a coordinator. It'll be interesting to see what the budget looks like next year. I've been told it will increase significantly. But if there was a full-time administrative support person and a full-time coordinator, watch out, that's all I can say.

Assistance identifying new partnerships. ADOs were also interested in increasing their collaboration capacity and felt that *assistance identifying new partnerships* would be helpful.

Bentley

If I can identify new partnerships, that would be super awesome, because anytime you get different minds into the equation, then it's going to look different. I'm all about things looking different and feeling different. I truly think students' brains are bigger than they were when we were smaller. In order to effectively challenge them intellectually, you have to just keep giving them great things. Case in point, for our first virtual challenge [conference], some of the [adult chaperones] said, regarding our program alignment and the way that we constructed the program, they said, "Oh, this was too difficult. It was too much to do." But guess what, the students loved it. They embraced that challenge. The students did not say that in the survey. It was the [adult chaperones] that said, "Oh, that was a lot to cover." The students said, "I love coding. I enjoyed this." That's the way the students interpreted that experience. And in my brain, I was saying, we don't want the students to come to the event and leave the same way. We want them to exercise the muscle. Talking to my colleagues, they were not convinced, they were just so sure they were right. I thought it was the students, but they said give me a challenge.

Support from Dean and faculty. *Continued support from the Dean and faculty*

in the academic unit was also identified as a resource needed to support ADO effectiveness.

Beverly

In conversation with the Dean, the diversity advisory council is going to be the support body for that [diversity] director. We have a department per se, but the advisory council will be the support group. So there'll be meetings, everybody's going to have responsibility, and that's what's going to drive the plan. Maintaining the integrity of that group and making sure that they continue to support the position, continue to support the plan, and work the plan that will be important. Support of the Dean, definitely, because as the head, [the Dean] sets the tone as to where things are going to go. If we get support from the Dean, I think it's really going to go well. We also need to get support of the faculty body. In order for us to get the support and the buy in, it's very important for us to provide education. First thing, we need to get them educated, get them knowledgeable, so it'll be easier for us to get them on board. We know we're not going to get 100%, but the faithful few. If we can get people in there that can that are influential, they can help to bring the others along. Again, I know it's not going to be 100%, but at the same time, we still are going to have to have that faculty support, the Dean support, financial (of course), both emotional/mental and financial, however you want to put that, a lot of education, and definitely the support of the University [Office for Diversity], definitely wanting to get that. There's so there's so many things and resources available at the university level and so many initiatives that

are going on at the university level. It is just that the College of [Discipline] has been in such a silo for so long. It's like you have to take a chisel and just break in and then get the stuff to come in. I think the role of the director is going to be to be the liaison between the College of [Discipline] and the University at large, so that we can know what's available at the university level and make those things accessible to our students. Because if the students don't know where to go to look for it or have anyone to show them where to go, then... sometimes students don't read this stuff that comes across [their] email all the time. If [they] have a test and all that stuff, that's in the front, and [they're] not even thinking about all those. I'm not saying all of them are like that, because I had a conversation with a student when we were working on that grant, we interviewed a couple of students. And one of the things was, [the student said they] would love to be engaged and be a part of this stuff, but [they] had classes, and sometimes they just had to not go due to class to be a part of this, whatever it is that they had, because [the student] felt the importance of attending this specific event. So those are all things that we need to work through and work on. Definitely make that connection so that students know what's available. Faculty know what's available, staff know what's available, to help support them as we try to infuse some of this diversity into the College of [Discipline]. I think that's what's going to help and make it successful.

Elise

I think just supporting the building of a real program and like a graduate assistant and connecting my efforts to education. In our [discipline departments of communication and leadership], that's where we get a lot of our students of color and underrepresented students. They also should be doing the work. We have to be connected to academics. Right now, it's a side. It's an appendage, it's a token. So, making it a real part of the educational mission of the college.

Lee

I would say the resources that would be helpful really would be focused on not so much that our staff alone is...it's a five person staff, so it'd be good to have [...] diversity partners in departments across the College. We do have a Diversity Council. My goal is to really charge them with more, to be more engaged and involved when it comes to making sure we reach a campus of over 5000 plus students when it comes to the college itself. So being able to touch all those different points, it's a lot for [my] staff. So really having more resources when it comes to events, planning, and programs, but having others lead it. So others can be somebody who is assigned as a diversity partner, or a person that's on the council, within their particular college and focus - whatever area of study, they can lead those initiatives versus us trying to touch all these different dots and time on together.

Opportunity for growth. Opportunity for growth in the academic unit was also needed for role effectiveness. For ADOs in director positions, there was no clear path for advancement from their current position within their academic unit. Opportunity for growth in their role, coupled with seeing their work valued by the academic unit was needed to promote role effectiveness.

Bob

Oh, I would say probably more opportunity for growth. One thing I see commonly with a lot of diversity administrators, it is said that we want [diversity] but at the same time, I don't feel that it's valued. I sense that with a lot of other administrators across the country that struggle with this as well.

Connecting with alumni. As ADOs considered their collaboration capacity, they felt that there could be better strategies to effectively *connect with alumni* and get them involved with diversity efforts within their academic unit.

Carmyn

One of the things we were talking about today, which I think we really think about, is tying more into our alumni. We don't, as an institution, do a good job of that. I think our student affinity organizations, some of them do a pretty good job with keeping tabs on their alums, but as an institution, I think it'd be really nice for us to do a better job with that. Our [Minority Discipline Specific Organization] has a gala every year, and this was the first year we couldn't do one in person. We had to do a virtual event. One of the things that we realized that people love about that event is getting to see everybody. You go, you just socialize, and it's that connection. You miss it when it's just like, "Here's the next speech." I did a 30-minute reception ahead of time. It was just kind of free flow. We had teams, and they had to come up with the largest list of things that they have in common within their team. The team that came in with the most got a prize. It was a fantastic way of getting our students and alumni and they all had a ball. We were just laughing and joking, and it was just really free flowing. We just don't do enough of that with our alumni, or even with our students. Sometimes you just need to be in a space and have fun, we just take it a little too seriously. We don't have an event planner in the building, somebody who specializes in in doing all of that. There are [other academic units in the discipline at other schools] that are similarly sized who do you have a full-time person who does that kind of work. I think that would be a great resource for our student organizations and for our administrative offices.

Time to plan and think. *Time to plan and think* for ADOs was also needed to promote role effectiveness. This could be in the form of a writing or planning retreat to evaluate the previous initiatives and goals, while planning for the upcoming year.

Elise

I need some space to be able to think. It's hard doing events and having to think about planning for the whole fall. I should have started that a couple months ago, but the events and being a chapter advisor can suck up my time, my energy, my thoughts, to where I need planning time. I almost need like a retreat for myself. I did come up with, during the evaluation phase - after some research that I've done over the last couple of years of other colleges [like ours], I had some benchmarks of what I wanted to see in [the college]. So early access, Summer Bridge, summer internship, is what we fund with our own staff, and these students can come from wherever, and then a diversity educator program, and [student] ambassadors.

Corporate partnerships. Increasing corporate partnerships was another resource to promote ADO effectiveness through student opportunities, program funding, and building collaboration capacity.

Lee

Corporate partners, we always could expand that. You kind of gain some, it's almost like musical chairs, you lose some then gain another big pot, and you lose some the next year. It's continuing to have a reoccurring pool, so to speak, an investor pool of corporate partners, is another resource that we can have that will help us be very successful, because with that comes funding for programs, career opportunities, internships, and we have informational sessions, too. We have those things as well.

RQ3: How do ADOs collaborate with academic and student engagement support offices on campus?

Current Collaborations

ADOs stressed that collaborations and partnerships, both on and off campus, were vital to being effective in their role. More established offices had existing partnerships that ADOs were able to resource when they entered their position, while newer ADO

roles had to build new partnerships along the way. ADOs have a high level of collaboration with other offices on campus, as well as partnerships with stakeholders external to the university.

Figure 5 and Figure 6 show areas of collaboration for ADOs both on and off campus, respectively.

One thing that ADOs found particularly useful was having recurring meetings with other diversity leadership on campus. This core group of directors and diversity representatives meet regularly and provide a space for ADOs to share ideas, offers support, and update each other on current issues.

Beverly

In that, there's a core group, the directors and representatives meet on a monthly basis. Just getting support from those people, we talk about our experiences and how to handle different situations, what's going on in your college, kudos to you, and what recommendations they have. It's like a support group, a networking support group that we do on a monthly basis with all the different colleges. We're having these conversations and we're talking about how is your department or college allocating time for this for your role? How did you handle a situation that came up about diversity? It is a support system in that, it encourages you. For people that are that are a little bit ahead, just let you know that this stuff is it can happen. The discouraging part is when you hear the stories of this person thinks that this whole diversity thing [is going] too far and taking away their funding support for the university. Stuff like that, those things are discouraging, but at the same time, it's making you aware of what's out there, and what you can possibly run into. When you run into it, it's not like you're blindsided. You're proceeding, but proceeding with caution, knowing that these are the things that could happen, so be aware, but don't let that dissuade you from really pushing forward in doing the things that you know need to be done to make a difference, because it just has to be done.

Elise

I think as a diversity person, if you don't have really good relationships with other people who are in this role, then you can really go off the deep end. When I was reviewing the rebuttal that I needed to make [in response to low marks on performance review], and I'll be honest, I didn't have the energy, because I knew I wasn't being seen. I knew no matter how much I jumped up and down, I was

going to be seen less if I jumped up and down. I'm trying to finish this PhD. How do I make a situation to where I put the appropriate amount of energy in yet didn't

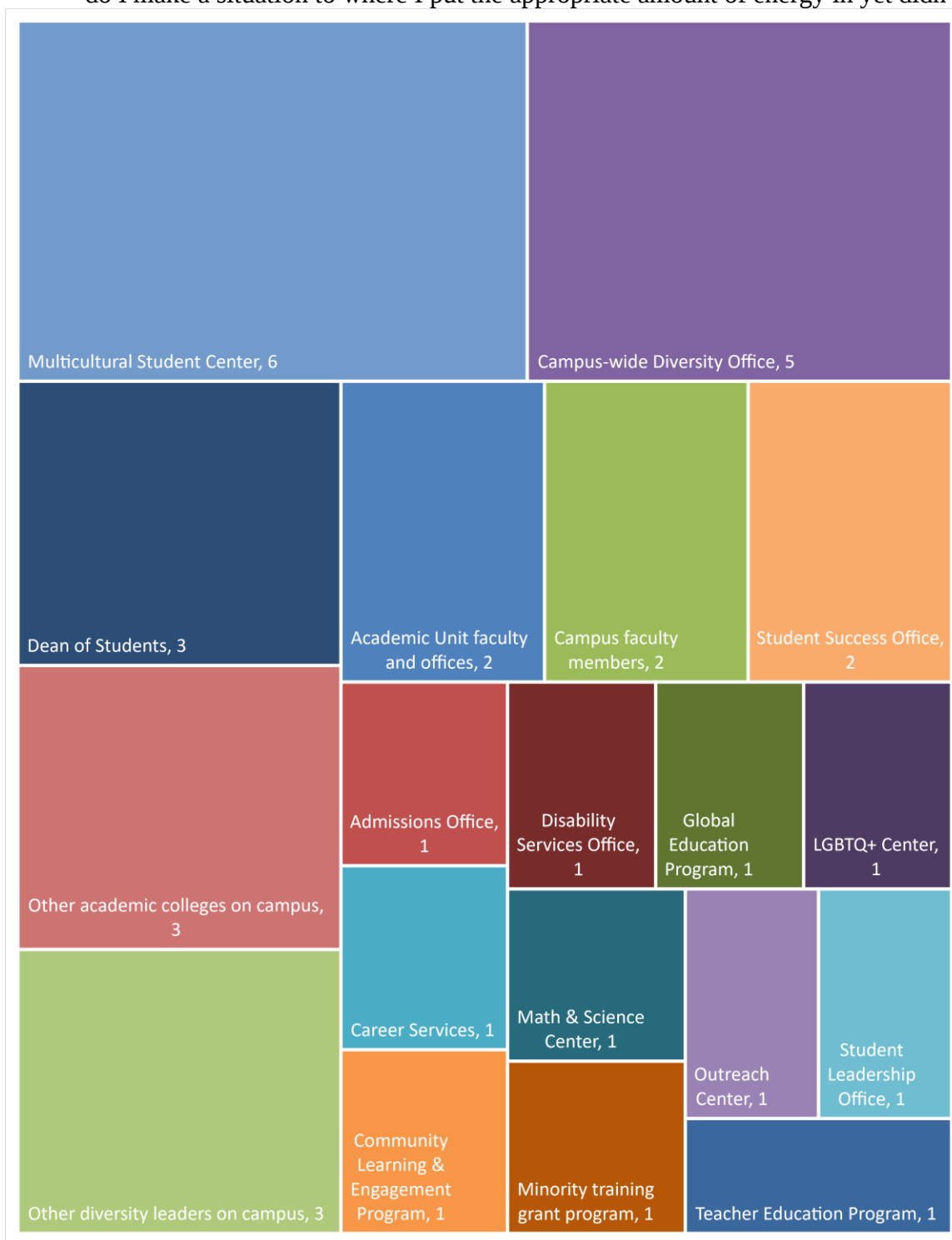


Figure 5. ADO on-campus collaboration.

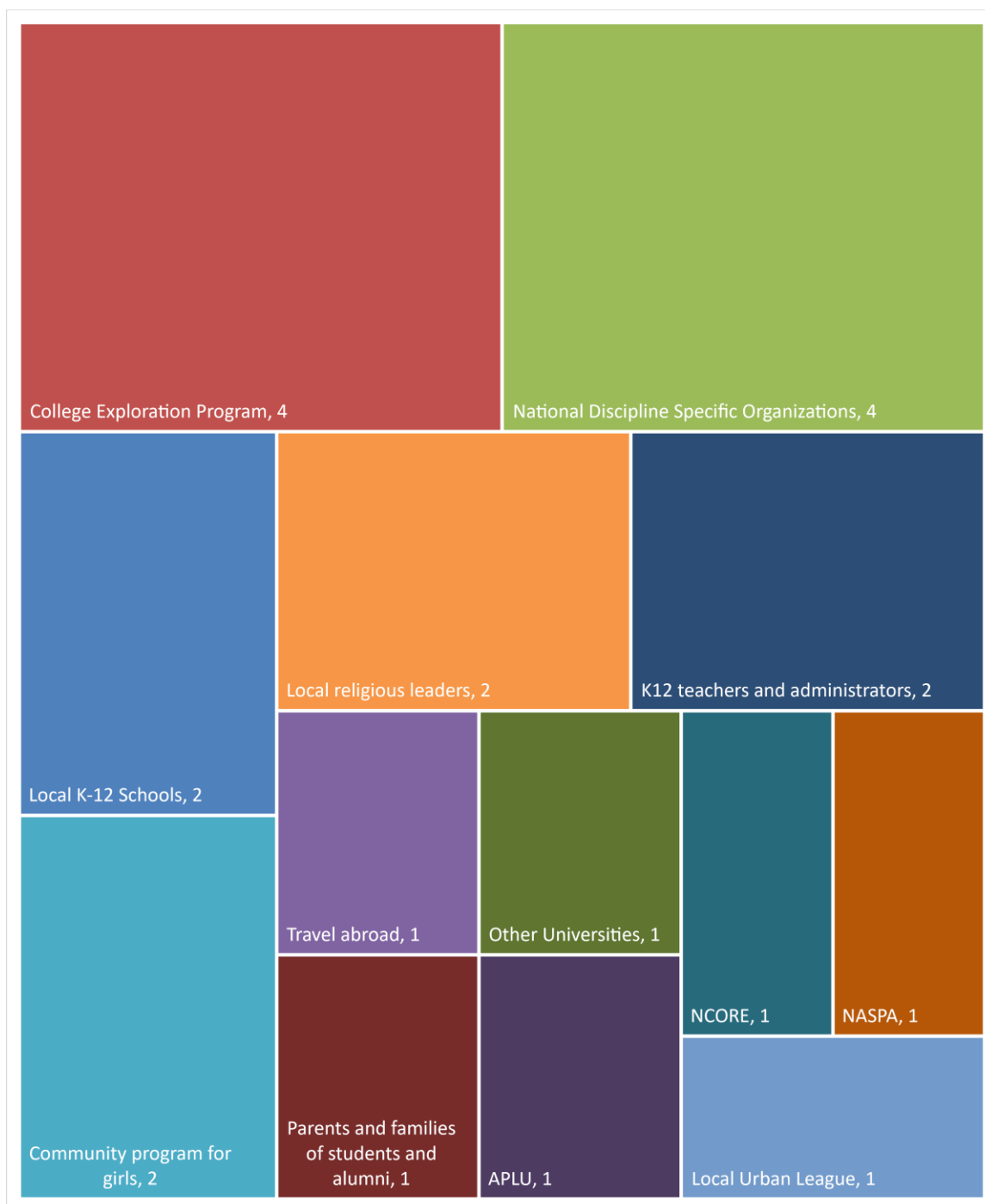


Figure 6: ADO collaboration external to campus

leave myself open in the future for a “bad review.” [...] So [my colleague] helped me to see... [my boss] didn't put anything negative in the actual report, other than the [those specific low numbers] and then I had all [higher numbers], which [doesn't make any] sense, right? So, [my colleague] brought up to me, if [my boss] didn't put anything about how [my boss] came to these decisions, then you should not bring it up. You should write a reflection on what your actual accomplishments were in a productive way. Collaboration, even with your job, is key with other diversity, people who have diversity roles, or portions of their job.

Lee

One, diversity leads, which serve in this role across the campus footprint for those who also are assigned to this role. We have some faculty members could be a professor, a tenured professor, but also their scientists who are director for diversity and inclusion for that particular college. We work closely with them when it comes to meeting regularly. Diversity leads meet each month, and we'll have an agenda really talking about updates, things that we can do collectively to share programs, and we have a website right now being built that will share lists of activities and programs that students can take advantage of.

ADOs Bob and Lee highlighted collaborations external to campus that have been particularly impactful. Bob noted that collaboration with student alumni, parents, and local and state leaders have been effective in getting the word out and showcasing opportunities going on in his unit. Lee highlighted the importance of building relationships with diversity professionals at other universities and partnerships with HBCUs to gain achieve diversity goals.

Bob

Oh, I will probably say the biggest collaboration out there is working with parents. When people look at recruiting students, they always say, “Oh, I just want to recruit the student to the university.” The parent is also part of the package deal. The package deal is even bigger than just the one student. If it is a family of, let's say three or four, and you're recruiting the oldest, you just hit the jackpot. It's going to take a little while before you see the return on your investment, but what I'm saying is if you're able to really look at recruitment from

the total package, not only just the one student, but the whole family, I think you're able to see a lot more collaboration, not only with that family, but also the people who are probably influenced by that family in the community.

Bob

Other partners, local leaders, but also state leaders are very inspirational, but also impactful to getting the word out, but also showcasing the accomplishment of other individuals because of the impacts of the resources that have been put into the community. But really seeing the actual individuals who went through the experience, go back to the communities and invest back. I think that's the biggest collaboration that we've actually seen from partners. I know that was a lot and I ramble, but I think those are probably the two big collaborators that we cannot miss out on.

Lee

I would say the collaborators would be peers in this role at other universities, but primarily in the southeast. I've reached out to some, kind of my listening tour. We reached out to some when it comes to like, University of Georgia, actually in UNC Chapel Hill, working with a great friend of mine I reached out to. I really see those partnerships playing a significant role, and being able to touch base with them. Primarily, we have the SEC [discipline specific] school conference, when we go to different conferences, we're able to connect and build those relationships.

Lee

So I see that something that's going to help expand, and particularly with our HBCUs because another part of my role that I tasked myself with was doing presentations at HBCUs use in the North Carolina's, in this area, but you know, I got to put Florida A&M on the map, North Carolina A&T. I think those relationships, I really believe that's going to be very beneficial. Expanding those relationships, as we know with external partners, outside of just those community and different industries, but particularly to academia, and having those relationships established.

Collaboration Success

ADOs identified several areas of success in collaboration. The seven sub-themes of collaboration success highlighted from ADO interviews included programming; familial impact – seeing families graduate; visibility on campus; combined efforts to work smarter not harder; professional development opportunities; recognizing

marginalization of underrepresented populations; and identifying new diversity champions. Sample quotes for each theme have been listed below.

Programming – *Programming* was defined by participants as initiatives and events hosted by their respective offices, either alone or in collaboration with other entities, to enhance diversity education, recruitment, and training.

Bentley

The biggest success in collaboration was developing a [Academic Unit Signature Event, STEM Conference]. At first, we didn't have the appropriate name, it was named something about a symposium, and it was for Saturday mornings. What student in their right mind wants to get up and come to a supposed Symposium on a Saturday morning? So, we re-named it to [include] the pieces that we need in order to rightly identify. I wish we could have had an acronym with fun in it, because it's fun. But anyway, it's a STEM conference for students. I didn't realize this when I was developing it, but for the students that [attend], they get a lot of the academic pieces, but they didn't get the hands-on piece. You have the academic piece that prepares them for the academic piece, but the conference, in my mind, prepared them for career preparedness, quality in thinking, and confidence. I didn't realize that until I heard the students say, "Why are we doing it like this, and why are we doing it like that." As the years went by, I've heard the students teaching other students about the benefit of this scenario or framework for learning and engaging. The program has been going on for about 10 years. [Because of the] pandemic, we were actually able to do a virtual conference, but we couldn't have done it without our partners who took the role of being conference [inaudible, maybe curators?]. The students loved it so much that we're actually going to do another virtual conference [next week]. In the traditional scenario, we would have never done two conferences like that for the students, but we're able to do that. We want to keep the students woke with our programs. We want to keep them just stretched. This has really been a lovely opportunity, or a successful venture for my role.

Elise

In regard to collaboration, I believe the biggest successes have been, I would say, one is not just having conversations, but seeing things in play. What I mean by that is, our college visitations, to me right now, are our biggest successes, especially during the global pandemic. We just haven't had any student interfacing with anyone. I mean, everything has been this virtual touch. So we were very thankful. We had five student groups come to the college, this was through relationship and keeping those relationships. It was funny, I remember reading something, I think it was online saying that you know who your true

friends are and people you really care about throughout the pandemic, because you either keep a contact with some or you won't hear from any unless it's work related. So still keeping those relationships, still keeping those lines of communication open, so to speak, brought forth what our true purpose is really recruiting the best and brightest, particularly diverse student populations. I will say it was a success. So I will say this continuing that partnership and relationship has been a success for us.

Carmyn

Yeah, this counseling psych [collaboration]. When I talk to my colleagues in other schools are like, "That sounds amazing!" At my last institution, I was the counselor, plus the Associate Dean, so I was doing nonstop therapy, like all day, every day. I do some of it too. It's just it's allowed us to really provide a much-needed service to our students and help them get through some of these pieces. It also allows me to help our faculty as they encounter our students. There just like, "The city did this and that does seem kind of odd." Yeah, let's talk about what that was that you just saw, and how we're going to go about dealing with that. So that's been huge.

Carmyn

The Diversity and Inclusion fellows, I think, has been a real success. It was a grant from [Campus Office of Diversity]. It could have been used one of two ways. We could have come up with a project, as we did, or we could have used that money and basically appoint a faculty member as a diversity and inclusion point person/director. We were like why not get this money in the hands of our students. They're the largest population and building, and why not have them come up with what they think could work and can be helpful. We didn't even expect this to happen, but the fellows have now been seen as like diversity and inclusion resources for other students. So they've been called it to consult with other student organizations about their ideas for programming on diversity and inclusion things. That's just been a really fun, unexpected outcome from the peer-to-peer conversation on the D&I stuff. That has just been really fun.

Elise

I think success was the [Summer Bridge Program]. Just having [our college] be a part of that. Being that we're not a big college, 1400 isn't that big in relation to [another college] with 10,000, however I was able to recruit, and to find my last class [of] students that was willing to come three weeks before school started. Which we know that with students of color or minority students or underrepresented students, that's very difficult because they're usually working, or they usually cannot pull away that soon. They'll be able to just go straight to college and then not get credit for it. So I think that was successful.

Madison

I think our [discipline] initiatives, which have been primarily college sponsored, but reached into the community, and extended throughout campus have been highly successful. The Black History Month program is the program I am most proud of. It was Black History Month, it was an all-black panel, and it focused on disparities in education for black youth K through 12. We had a moderator from campus. We had a school teacher from a nearby metropolitan area, we had a superintendent, we had a school administrator, and a community partner. And it just felt like those five individuals fed off each other. And when one would say something, the next person would build on it. You can just feel the energy, the authenticity, the genuineness, and the idea that we had 130 something people registered for a Zoom in late February 11 months into this pandemic. And at one point, we had as many as 90 plus people on the Zoom. I mean, just the comments from the community, from campus partners, from members of the college. Everything, from one panelist had these [distinctive] glasses. And as soon as that panelist spoke, one of the grad students texted me and said she came to slay the masses and I fell out [laughing]. She brought it and did not hold back. And that particular panelist is in a position that is politically charged. For me, that's the highlight, but I can't dismiss the collective work that this small team is doing. I hate to single out one thing, because the biggest surprise though, are the people.

Family impact – Participant identified *family impact* as an outcome of recruitment and retention efforts. The fact that not only a particular student graduates from the respective program, but the student's success is a recruitment tool for members of their family to attend the university and graduate.

Bob

I will probably say, seeing families graduate. I've seen several members who probably were the first or the oldest in their family, and then seeing the siblings come two or three years apart, right after each other and they are all graduating, that's always been remarkable. Seeing alumni who remember when they maybe have started maybe in one of our bridge programs, are now CEOs or possibly entrepreneurs for Fortune 500 Corporation. Seeing world class inventors who are not only graduates, but also have a chance to give back to their local communities. Seeing individuals who probably have started in grade school, eventually come to an institution of higher learning, but then move on to work in the profession. It's all rewarding and life changing.

Visibility. Participant noted the importance of establishing *visibility* on campus to further establish collaboration and networking connections.

Carmyn

Then I'm just trying to serve on committees on campus and trying to get more visible on campus. I sit on the [Campus Disability Services Office] under faculty advisory board. That's just been really key. I'm trying to get more of our underrepresented students who maybe have never sought testing accommodations in the past who really could benefit from them to seek those accommodations. I'm trying to be as visible as possible. We started a DEI leaders roundtable. We meet maybe once a month, and it's faculty, directors, even though I'm not faculty, faculty and directors of diversity and inclusion from different units. I've consulted with other units who are thinking of starting a DEI position. They'll reach out to me and ask me for my job description and ask me for my opinion on how to maybe structure it, you know, pitfalls and things to watch out for. So I've been trying to do as much of that as possible to.

Combined efforts. Participant noted that *combined efforts* in collaboration allowed ADO to work smarter not harder by utilizing existing resources.

Elise

Another success I think I've had is working with [Multicultural Student Office] and I want more of that, you know, instead of recreating the wheel. They know who our multicultural students are, admissions knows who they are. Depending on my own internal recruiting, which they're not doing specific recruiting in that area, yet, they're asking me to take on that role of recruiting.

Professional development opportunities. Professional development opportunities included workshops, trainings, panels, and conferences that allowed participants to further their knowledge as diversity subject matter experts.

Elise

Another success are the opportunities that have come out of human resources, employer relations. So there was an [Inclusive Leadership Academy]. I was a part of a six-month cohort. Not last year, but the year before. We were able to actually come up with a capstone that helped the diversity action plans to become mobilized. We set up the structure and that was a team of folks from all over campus. You had to apply, and then you got to be a part of that cohort. So the successes have been the leadership and the diversity education that I have received from different units, like, diversity engagement. So everyone that comes, whether it's talking about invisible labor... Even recently, with [Multicultural Student Office], they did a women of color summit and I got to be a table leader. There were women from my campus that were a part of it. So when my students

are coming to these campus wide diversity programs, a success is that I'm there to represent and be a touch point. Gosh, there's just...

Recognizing marginalization of underrepresented populations. Collaboration assisted ADOs to better *recognize marginalized student populations*.

Madison

Yes. Particularly the campus units, just in the work around collectively and collaboratively working to be more inclusive, recognizing how our students from underrepresented populations are marginalized. I think all of those are successes.

Identifying new diversity champions. Collaboration assisted ADOs to identify new diversity champions that may not have otherwise been known.

Madison

I've learned in 11 months, people that I did not even know were committed to equity, justice, etc., they have come to see me and they're like, "I want to be involved in this. I want to talk about this." And we're constantly telling them everybody's got a voice.

Collaboration Challenges

ADOs also identified several challenges in collaboration. The eight themes of collaboration challenges highlighted from ADO interviews included identifying new ways to connect with students; student recruitment; getting faculty on board; seeing challenges as opportunities; knowing all available resources; competing goals among collaborators; prioritizing time and being strategic with initiatives; and pandemic restrictions. Sample quotes for each theme have been listed below.

Identifying new ways to connect with students. ADOs suggested that a challenge to collaboration is to identify new ways to connect with students based on personnel, funding, and time constraints.

Bentley

The most challenging thing is to continue to identify learning opportunities that do stretch to students in a qualitative way, in an affordable way. What are the best building blocks to utilize so that 1) the learning is maximized, and 2) the enjoyment. We have assessment. If they don't enjoy it, then it won't be successful. So, how to identify those pieces, and where to go next to grow my program pieces, especially as it regards to students. I like STEM because it's a small enough area that when you put out the information, there's a clear understanding of the kind of information that [participants] are going to get.

Bentley

Well, I don't know what I don't know, but I am open to find it. That is something that I [think about when I] wake up in the morning or go to bed, "What can I do next? What can I do next?" We haven't had this second virtual conference, but I'm already thinking of what the next thing [is] going to look like. I really do wish I could push the button behind door number two and say, "This is the next list thing, you know, Tap here to find out more." I really wish I could do that, but it just comes [down to] me just meditating on it, and just talking and asking people and looking at things. In that regard, my responsibility is to be open and have imagination.

Student recruitment. ADOs suggested that a challenge to collaboration is to identify new ways to recruit students based on personnel, funding, and time constraints.

Elise

That's a challenge, it's a challenge to push back and to say that's not the best time for me to spend when that's already being should already be being accomplished by our recruiter and by our diversity recruiting that comes from [the university]. I should be able to take that information and that energy and then funnel them into programs. I think a challenge has been to really establish a full program that has an umbrella and then has other activities underneath that is sustainable if I'm not here. I think that all of the diversity training I've received.

Getting faculty on board. ADOs noted that faculty are a key component of the student experience and that more faculty are needed to serve as diversity champions within their academic units.

Beverly

I can't think of anything right now. I guess I haven't been in it long enough to actually feel the effects of any challenges, but I know they will come. You have people that have been in the college for a very long time. People that have been there way back when it was not okay, but it was done anyway, [telling students]

“You really don't belong here. You need to go to a community college.” I actually had a conversation with someone a couple weeks ago [who] said that one of the faculty told [them], “You don't belong, you need to go to community college. This is this is not a place for you.” And that was okay. You know, none of it was okay, but it was just pushed to the side. It wasn't anything that... and you probably couldn't say anything without repercussions, and students probably still feel that way. It might be an open statement like that, but the nonverbals and the other things, that could be their experience.

Madison

We don't have enough time. One of my first initiatives was to meet with the department heads for each academic unit. One department head spent the first 20 minutes of an hour meeting, telling me why we couldn't do everything I was trying to do, or why they couldn't do it. Passive resistance, performative diversity, people showing up and you know they are just showing up to check off the box. Those are big picture. Those are expected.

Carmyn

In my last institution, anything that happened with students, any odd or concerning situation that happened in the classroom, a faculty member was on the phone going, “Here's what has happened, you need to help me figure this out.” You know, somebody makes an odd comment... there was one situation where they had a guest speaker who made a really awful comment to the only black student in the class. The professor didn't know how to handle it, and so didn't in the moment. That was catastrophic for that class. It was a class of like 12 people. And so it was counseling with the faculty member, counseling the student, going into classroom with them and partnering with that faculty. It was much more of a partnership, like you come with me and we're going to do this together. Here, it isn't. Here, it's very much like faculty [separate from] administration, and very rarely do the two really meet. I think that's really honestly the biggest challenge to a cohesive, consistent, supportive environment for students. That's why the collaboration with the counseling psych program, and having this GRA, it's my way of trying to leverage things in a way to do more, with less. A GRA is a lot less expensive than having whole new line for a full-time staff member. Same thing with the diversity and inclusion fellows. I couldn't hire an assistant director, so this was a way of trying to get some things done but not have to have me actually do them.

Seeing challenges as opportunities. ADO noted that challenges present

opportunities for growth and change. Challenges can be used as brainstorming

opportunities to identify new ways of practicing diversity in higher education.

Bob

Yeah, I think with challenges you see opportunity. So with every challenge, there should be an opportunity for improvement. In many cases, I've seen that there may be limited resources, whether it is financial, personnel, possibly the lack of abilities of the student or the school environment, but also the lack of communication and collaboration for looking at the long-term effect of what you're trying to accomplish. But as I shared, with every challenge, there are opportunities. As long as there is a thought of an idea that we think about what the end goal is, but at the same time we think about what the potential impacts would be. One mentor used to tell me when I was at the university for my undergrad, it's bigger than you. And I could never understand that saying until when I graduated, and then I heard it again and they said, "It's bigger than you." And then they say, "Look behind you," and there was my family. Everyone was looking, I was looking at the younger cousins and family members and also the other young people who were in the audience and I really understood exactly what was being what was meant by that saying.

Knowing all available resources. Identifying new resources such as partnerships and existing initiatives on their campus was a challenge reported by ADOs.

Carmyn

I think one of the challenges of being on a large campus is figuring out who the options are, and what the options are for collaborating. We're still learning new pockets of places that we can work with. I started working with the [campus leadership and service center] as a way to think about how we might be able to partner with them going forward. There's so many different offices, it's hard to grasp all of that. Especially on the DEI side, there's so many people doing some really great work on campus, but in small little pockets of places. Figuring out who those folks are and how we can work together would be great.

Competing goals among collaborators. A challenge to collaboration is discovering that partners have competing goals that may not align with the target programming offered. ADOs had to make decisions to best serve the student populations in their academic unit, which sometimes meant dissolving a partnership for a target activity in order to focus on respective academic unit needs.

Elise

I had more students participate in that bridge program than it ever been, and really create a lot of buzz in that collaboration, but then I think a challenge was that

[other colleges] had these hard, fast numbers that they had to reach for math or for certain levels of academic success, other benchmarks that they had to meet in order for their students to be able to be retained. I saw a divergence between the mission and the goals and objectives of what needed to happen for engineering, versus what I needed to have to be successful. Because yes, [one major in our college] is about 600 to 700 students, that is the bulk of [our college]. But the students that are interested in coming and the students that we get into our college, yes, are still predominantly the numbers will be two or three or four [discipline] students out of 10, then we'll have [a few students in other disciplines in college]. While a couple of [these students] are still science, my bridge program couldn't be purely STEM. Right, I had to meet a lot of disparate needs. It made it difficult for us to stay together. Then with [another college], having a very high level director [who] was a person of color and was interested in doing it and a person that was rising in leadership, they didn't have the bandwidth, because they were in advising to be able to have the freedom to do the recruiting and to do the things that would take to get the number of students needed to make the program work and so it disbanded. And so I, I felt like that was a huge challenge.

Prioritizing time and being strategic with initiatives. ADOs had to be strategic in planning initiatives and prioritize their time in order to be more effective and not overburden themselves or their staff.

Lee

Some of the challenges is really navigating because I'm still fairly new to the role, I feel like I'm still starting because I haven't had a full year on the normal campus environment and I've been doing virtual for at least a year, a year tomorrow. So I'll say the challenge would be, I'm speaking for myself, is making sure that we don't overburden ourselves by saying yes to everything and having so much on our plate where we're not effective, but also saying yes to some and no to others. But it's specific to what our strategic vision is. I'm really trying to figure out and put that into play where does that fall when it when it comes to our role, because we do have a lot of demand a lot of requests from our partners, both internal and external, but really being focused on this is our strategic vision. We don't want to overburden ourselves to where you're getting to get overloaded, you get burned out, but also, how are you making an impact? So I would say that, to me, is the biggest challenge, especially as we navigate coming in the fall in August to a full on campus 100%. So those are the things I think to me would be a challenge for myself right now I'm looking forward.

Madison

Lessons learned from doing the work, we tried to do too much. I mean, we just got on a roll. We were trying to get the word out there. And we just started, like,

we did a dialogue with the dean and the director, which is not the official name, but for this purpose, dialogues with the dean and the director. We did six of those this semester, three for grad students, three for undergrads. Some were better attended than others, some had no one attend. We were trying to be available in the midst of a pandemic, we should have done one for undergrad, one for grad. Too many programs compressed between January when classes started and March. So we took our foot off the accelerator, and just said, Hey, we're going to start canceling some things. So you know what we learned? We're having a retreat in May. We're going to sit down, we're going to plan the entire 2021-2022 calendar of events for this office, and go from there. So there have been plenty of lessons. But when you do critical work, you know what's important about the lessons - - that you learn from them. So we've learned, and we will be better next year.

Pandemic restrictions. Many initiatives for the past year had to be virtual due to *pandemic restrictions*. This may have led to burnout or Zoom fatigue among participants and facilitators having an impact to overall effectiveness of their role in the academic unit.

Madison

Absolutely, I think that's an area for growth. I only say that for one reason - COVID. If it had not been for this pandemic, we would have greater community partners. However, there are some entities that are [Discipline] based that are focused on access for historically underrepresented populations, we've had the opportunity to engage with them. I'm sure as this continues to develop, and with some of the reorganization that's happening within our college and the way the dean is envisioning this office and the new Associate Dean position working, once we get past COVID-19, it will be a lot more outward facing. I say that, knowing that this first year was spent in the midst of a pandemic, and trying to build the infrastructure of an office that didn't exist 10 and a half months ago. Honestly, I'm just burned out. I'm zoomed out, ring central, WebEx, whatever virtual platform you want to use, I'm just tired, exhausted but the work has to continue. I mean, to do something like this interview, I'm not going to turn that down because that's me giving back because somebody spent time out of their day to help me get my PhD, so I'm just paying it back. Sometimes, I'll go into a Zoom going, "Oh, I don't want to do this," and it's the most energetic event of the week, because we're all tired, but we're feeding off each other, and you can just feel the collective energy.

Strategic College Diversity Plans

Each academic unit at the university in this study was charged at the institutional level to create strategic college diversity plans. Each academic unit was tasked to create objectives to meet goals in creating an inclusive climate; diversifying faculty, staff, administration, and students; broadening state partnerships; incorporating diversity into curriculum; and diverse preparation of graduate students. While each academic unit had the same goals, each unit identified unique objectives to meet these goals.

Carmyn

The [strategic college diversity plan] is helpful. Our community inclusion committee is the committee that oversaw that process, but I'll be the person, I'm basically the enforcer. I'm the person making sure that everybody who's been highlighted as a responsible party is actually getting their stuff done. It'll be interesting, if you go to the diversity action plan, notice where they put Director Diversity and Inclusion and where they just put Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, which is the same person, the same role, but they split the titles and put one title. It's just really interesting. I think it'll highlight for you how the faculty members see, institutionally, how they see the way the role is split.

Bob, Lee, Elise, and Bentley currently work in academic units that are more established. For these units, the strategic college diversity plans were detailed with metrics such as climate surveys, evaluation assessments on current diversity buy-in, continued recruitment and retention efforts for underrepresented and marginalized students, faculty and staff, providing diversity training and support, and committing financial support to these efforts. For Beverly, Carmyn, and Madison's academic units, their positions were relatively new. In these academic units, strategic college diversity plans had broader objectives with little focus on metrics, and more focus to create and develop initiatives, identify resources and partnerships, and foster engagement and diversity education.

While strategic college diversity plans were a way to create a guided vision to commit to and implement diversity metrics, some ADOs felt that the creation also highlighted issues of invisible labor within the college, and one ADO was not involved in the creation process of the strategic college diversity plan for their unit.

Madison

In some ways I was already doing the work, just not compensated. In many ways, it's that invisible labor, that cultural or racial tax, that many people of color, or underrepresented people discuss when working in academia. Because there are, quote, unquote, so few of us; students, whether they're graduate or undergraduate, will often lean on us, because they're looking for someone that they perceive to have had a shared experience that they think can relate to them, particularly when their experiences are dismissed by those with a majority or dominant identity.

Beverly

So we sense that invisible labor that things just happen and people don't know it happens. And they are like, "Oh, yeah, that's a really great plan." But I mean, the team worked on it initially, but once we got with [Campus Diversity Leader] and started working on it, there were a lot of things that needed to be done to it. There was a lot of tweaking and stuff like that they needed. So, I sent an email to the Dean and said you know, we've been working on this thing, and this is a lot of work. What's been happening is that there's a lot of invisible labor involved, and if we're really serious about this stuff and want to move this needle, then we need to find someone that can be dedicated to doing this. Within a week, she came back and said... because [the Dean] looked at diversity action plan and saw that, she was thinking about it. But you know, I sent her that email. I think we need to do something. [The Dean] got back with me within a week, she said, "Hey, I spoke with the leadership team, we're going to create a position, but this position is going to be 50% time for whoever applies for the position. It'll be 50%." [The Dean] lists all these requirements in the job description, as well as the responsibilities. [The Dean] actually got part of them talking within the team, and [my colleague] and I had sent them examples of different director's job descriptions from around the university. So that's where they kind of put a couple of things together. Then they send it back out, we looked at it, gave them suggestions on wording and stuff like that, and then sent it back. They posted a position probably two weeks ago. The position is there, I'm applying for it, and maybe one or two other people are applying, but I don't know who else. So that's my story and I'm sticking to it.

Elise

What's interesting is I was not a part of the [strategic college diversity plan development]. I wasn't asked. One of the things I noticed about my position is, and I tried to communicate with my associate dean, who I worked directly for, is that the 30% that was a part of my job was really a checkbox. I had to start to really identify what was actually diversity, equity, and inclusion, and what was, for example, a student organization. The [minority student organization] is a student organization is not a diversity program, and yet, that's what one of my main jobs was being in this diversity role. But when it came to the diversity action plan, I wasn't asked, I wasn't a part of those meetings. I wasn't a part of delivering it, which I thought was really interesting. It really kind of "put me in my place" of being a voice when I guess my bosses couldn't be there and being a connection to information for students, but not necessarily leading in that role.

The strategic college diversity plans have allowed ADOs to have unified goals that each academic unit works to attain through personalized objectives relative to their specific unit needs.

Additional feedback and comments from participants

During the course of the interviews, ADOs mentioned several topics regarding the nature of doing diversity work, as well as the personal toll it takes on their energy and well-being. While these topics do not directly align with the research questions, it was important to note these topics regarding taking risks in diversity, significance of diversity and DEI spaces, personal exhaustion in diversity work, and the limited number of people of color in leadership positions at the institution.

Risks in diversity

When considering the risks taken when pursuing diversity education and training, Bentley mentioned positive outcomes that arose from a particular risk. When covering sensitive topics in book group discussions, there was a level of transparency and trust built among participants who shared their experiences openly. Through these

conversations, new diversity champions were identified and levels of respect and appreciation for differing experiences was gained.

Bentley

I wanted to say earlier, if this is about diversity and inclusion. Part of the work of the Diversity Committee is we did a book read about two years ago. One thing about my organization is that they do allow us to take risks, but it has to be someone propelling that risk. The organization isn't just going to. They're a live organization, but you have to feed it. One thing that we did is we created this diversity and inclusive certificate in 2018. So that's almost three years ago. So we did that. [Another center on campus], now they're doing something like that. Another thing that we did was a book read about white fragility. It was hard for our organization, because it was hard in a way because we've never done anything so obvious and so specific. Just in that frame, we were nervous, the Diversity Committee, we were so nervous. As we built the program, you could see our nervousness, but we built it anyway, we went on anyway. What we found out was not 100% percent of people were on board. But the people who signed up and participated, they had stories to tell. The stories were life changing. We had about 50 or so. For the people who really did what they were supposed to do in the program, there was a new level of respect and understanding and tolerance among us. Even as me as a diversity program, when I looked at my white colleagues, I never look at them the same anymore. Those people who I was privileged to hear their story and their fight, I would say we have allies in the most unlikely places.

Significance of diversity and DEI offices

Another topic that came up in interviews was the significance of diversity and DEI offices on campus. A point was made that diversity work is not the sole responsibility of the ADO, but the entire campus community has to take ownership in building a culture of diversity and inclusion.

Bentley

A lot of times with diversity and inclusion work, DEI people just need a space to talk about things. They have kept this inside of them their entire lives, because there are no spaces where they could go to talk about unraveling this ball of confusion. When we give them the opportunity to exhale and detox, then healing, then new practices can take place. If you give someone a career of 30 or 35 years and you don't give them a place to deconstruct, then we're not building a sustainable diversity future.

Carmyn

[People] need to know all of the things we are doing. But it is hard, I think when you just have a person who's the DEI person, because DEI is not just one person to fix. For a space that has been predominantly White for decades, it is not a thing that I can fix [alone]. It really has to be something that we embody from the top down.

Madison

I see it as us having a larger impact in the college. Being able to reach those individuals that a) they might be afraid, b) they don't know, c) just getting them out of their comfort zone. I spend a lot of time one to one with people. The key to this work is relationships. I don't need you to agree with everything I say or do, but I need you to understand why I do what I do. We've got to seek to understand. The way that that happens is for people to develop relationships and understand the other.

Personal exhaustion of diversity work

ADOs also noted the personal exhaustion they have experienced in their diversity work. They suggested that their role was not a “M-F, 9-5” position and often were accessible to students and colleagues after hours for immediate crisis response or student needs. They noted that most professionals in the ADO roles are people of color which creates a greater challenge in the role when there are few other colleagues in positions of leadership at their institution. This further exacerbates the need for faculty and other colleagues to take ownership, pride, and priority in diversity and inclusion efforts.

Carmyn

I just think DEI work is tough work. Almost all the folks I know who do it are folks of color. I think it just makes it more of a challenge for folks to do that kind of work in some of these spaces. In the meeting that we had this week when we're talking about what should we do about this [Derek Chauvin] trial, I was like, “Listen, folks are tired. I'm tired.” I don't want to emote in front of a whole bunch of people I don't know. So having these kind of performative DEI things are fine for folks who aren't feeling on a daily basis what it is to navigate these very white spaces or very unwelcoming spaces for whatever your identity is. That is the hard part about this work. So many of us are motivated based on our own experiences and wanting to make it better for future generations. I remember what it was like

for me as a student, and I want to really make sure... I had somebody like me in an administrative role to help me through and I want to be that person for others, but it does take a toll, especially when you're one in the space as opposed to a few of us.

Elise

What I'd like to add is, I'm just so grateful that even with all the challenges, and with all the unknowns, I'm just glad to be the one standing in the gap. Even during my PhD, I really thought about I can't do this. It takes so much emotional energy to do my job. I get called on the weekends from my main group of multicultural students that want me to go and have dinner on a Sunday because they just want to be around me. And do you know how tough it is to be able to say, I got these revisions to work on, but before you leave to go home, we're going to do something. I think we can't underestimate the emotional quotient and the interpersonal and emotional resources that need to be available for people who are in this position. One of the questions I had for one of my PhD mentors, who's a black female in multicultural education, very well-seasoned, I asked her how do you hold the grief of when things happen? We've had blackface on campus, we've had anti-Semitic marks, we had all these things that happened, and then you're on the front lines of that trying to advocate for your students and advocate for yourself. How do you hold that and continue to do your job continue to do the work? [My PhD mentor] said, "Well, there's some things for you to hold that are yours to hold and then there are things that you have to allow the institution, the organization to hold. I think the crux of this position is to figure out when and what that is.

Elise

I think that there are so few people and women of color in leadership positions in university settings, that the sheer fact of being in the room, and being educated on the issues, and in on the research that it takes to do this work is radical. It is revolutionary that I'm speaking to you, that I was able to garner the position, and that I was able to grow in ways in the position that were really unfettered. I told my boss in order for me to know about this, I have to do this. In order for me to do this, I have to do this. And then to be able to be in the room and to say, well, we are tokenizing in this instance, and we need to avoid that. Or this is not a diversity or inclusion issue, this is an equity issue. So what resources can we find to be able to build those boxes for that particular population? Not just being present but being present and accounted for in terms of the information that I now understand about what it means to not just have diversity not just being in the room, but what does it mean to make equitable the systems and the practices in the programs that exist, and then we can welcome people. But if we welcome and recruit people without being intentional about retention, without providing resources, then we're really a checkbox, and we're really not doing what it is that we need to do.

Chapter Summary

This chapter summarized coding and analysis procedures and presented findings by research question. ADO roles, perceptions of effectiveness, collaboration capacity and needs were explained. ADO development and implementation of strategic college diversity plans were also presented. Final synthesis of results and incorporation of systems-thinking leadership was applied in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS OF FINDINGS

Historically, most diversity offices were created under the affirmative action model seeking to increase racially diverse student populations on campus. A primary limitation of this model remains that increasing diverse student enrollment does not address improving campus climate or reception of these students, nor does it ensure student success and engagement once on campus (Williams & Wade Golden, 2013). As previously stated in chapter two, Tinto (1993) argued that student retention was directly impacted by higher levels of student engagement in both academic and social areas.

ADOs in this study operated within the Multicultural and Inclusion Diversity Model. This model focused on exposing, embracing, and accepting different cultures within the broader institutional culture to ensure that marginalized cultures are able to succeed (Williams & Wade Golden, 2013). Additionally, this model seeks to “advance scholarship and research that enhances our understanding of previously marginalized minority groups and individuals. (Williams & Wade Golden, 2013, p. 140)” Unlike the Affirmative Action Model, where the focus is on marginalized populations, the focus of the Multicultural and Inclusion Diversity Model provides cultural enrichment and education targeted for all students, faculty, and staff, not just marginalized groups. A primary limitation of the Multicultural and Inclusion Diversity Model was that there was often a disconnect between diversity efforts and direct outcomes positively affecting student retention, leadership development, and institutional outcomes (Williams & Wade Golden, 2013).

This limitation of the Multicultural and Inclusion Diversity Model was reflected in responses from ADOs regarding how the institution defined success in their roles versus how they personally defined success. When asked about how their institution defined success, many ADOs mentioned metrics and progress in meeting goals within their strategic college diversity plan as a way of identifying success. However, some of the metrics ADOs used to define their success were based on intangible factors such as increased faculty support, feeling that they were making a difference, and ensuring that academic units see value added to the college. Further exposing this limitation was ADO Elise that needed more clearly defined objectives pertaining to her diversity role. If academic units see diversity activities as supplemental as opposed to essential to student development and success, this could result in ADOs not meeting academic unit defined metrics for successful performance.

Adversely, when ADOs stated how they personally defined success in their roles, success most often reflected intangible outcomes such as having buy-in from colleagues and making a difference in addition to metrics and student outcomes. In order for academic units to effectively measure ADO performance and effectiveness, these intangible outcomes need to be considered in ADO performance review. Academic units could benefit from assessing diversity success both inwardly facing within the academic unit, but also outward facing through comparison of other academic units at the institution and among peer institutions (Lang, 2000).

The third model, Learning, Diversity, and Research, connects existing diversity efforts with academic programs at the institution. In this model, diversity is interwoven into the curriculum, incorporating both domestic and international diversity themes (Williams & Wade Golden, 2013). Since this model directly involves faculty and students at the classroom level, a limitation of this model is that institutions could lose focus of “traditional commitments to addressing historical disparities and the ongoing policies that perpetuate these inequalities. (Williams & Wade Golden, 2013, p. 157)”

Although it may be unrealistic to suggest a university move to the Learning, Diversity, and Research Diversity Model, some ADOs have successfully incorporated learning and scholarship into their diversity work. Although faculty involvement at the classroom level did not consistently exist with ADOs in this study, faculty involvement was a recurring theme that ADOs felt could have a great impact but had not been able to garner on a consistent basis. One ADO, Lee, mentioned an academic collaboration that moved DEI topics into the classroom with the possibility to publish with faculty on their work. Other ADOs mentioned it could be beneficial to connect DEI topics into the academic setting, as opposed to viewing DEI as an extracurricular component of education. As faculty, ADOs Bentley and Beverly also mentioned the importance of publishing to stay up-to-date and relevant professionally.

Smith-Doerr (2021) suggested that institutions implement “inwardly facing institutional research and development” to “allow universities to look in the mirror on equity.” Some ADOs with faculty positions noted that publications were a part of their performance review process. With this in mind, it would be helpful for faculty to be

aware of publication opportunities to disseminate their work in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Publication potential could also be an incentive for faculty to become more involved in diversity efforts, both in and out of the classroom. Smith-Doerr (2021) highlighted outcomes of an NSF ADVANCE program award where her institution held focus groups to evaluate faculty mentoring with 85 faculty. These focus groups revealed gender gaps in how men and women obtained mentoring resulting in development of programming targeting specific support areas of resources, relationships, and recognition. One strategy for increasing faculty and administrative involvement is for academic units and ADOs to encourage faculty to include diversity, equity, and inclusion into their research, teaching, and grant submissions. While this may be more easily achieved in social science and education disciplines, STEM programs have found success in adopting inclusive pedagogy in the classroom. STEM departments at Virginia Tech have utilized funding through the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) Inclusive Excellence grant to use undergraduate departmental data to “facilitate learning, conversation, and buy-in amongst participating faculty (Sible et al., 2021, p.4).”

As ADOs, academic units, and institutions work to create a holistic view, value, and implementation of diversity work, considerations to all levels of diversity, equity, inclusion, and multiculturalism need to be incorporated. Figure 7 shows a step-wise progression of engagement and understanding when considering diversity, equity, inclusion, and multiculturalism.

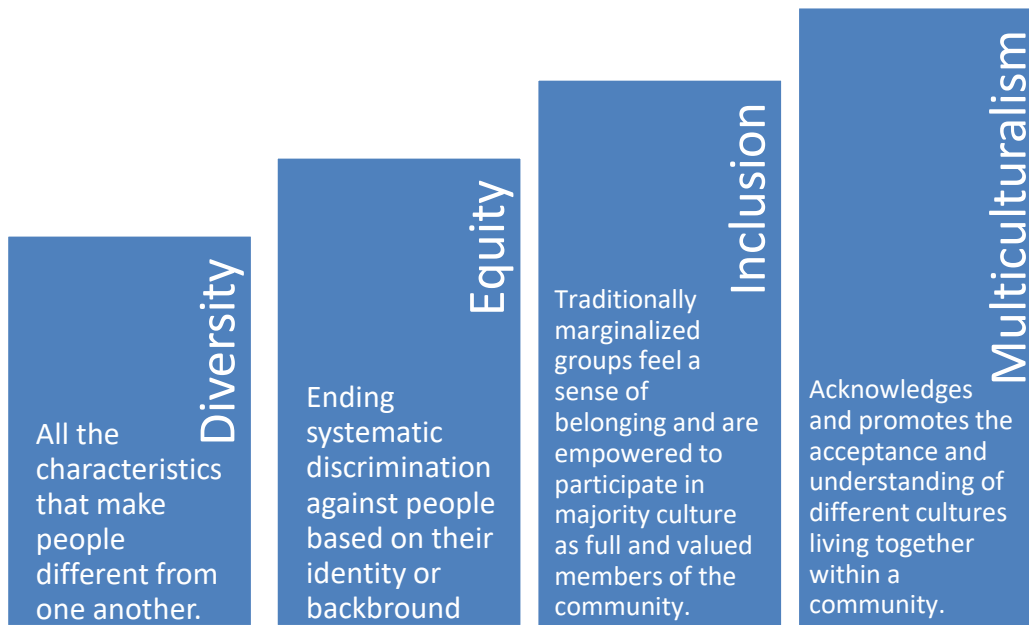


Figure 7. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Multiculturalism Definitions.

Note: Adapted from Williams & Wade Golden (2013), p. 90-91

Under the Discovery level of the Systems Thinking Leadership framework, ADO's definitions of diversity, diversity values, and overall role goals were in alignment. ADOs were able to be effective in their roles, but were limited by factors such as personnel, funding, time, and support from faculty.

Regarding Framing within the Systems Thinking Leadership framework, relationships exist among the ADOs at the institution. ADOs were connected to other student support units on campus, as well as partnerships with community and corporate partners external to campus. ADOs felt that these partnerships were invaluable to their work and offered the opportunity to multiply their effectiveness to the student population by collaborating with other entities.

The Action level of Systems Thinking Leadership engaged active participation of stakeholders to create networks of coordination and collaboration. Stroh (2015) encouraged moving from a conventional mindset where optimizing a system means optimizing the individual parts to systems thinking where optimizing a system means improving relationships among the parts. Several steps have been taken at the institution to aid in Action process. ADOs at the institution in this study have a well-connected system with regular meetings among other diversity staff at the institution, led by an administrative campus unit diversity officer. These meetings assist in collaboration and partnership among ADOs who participate regularly.

Stroh (2015) provided a listing of conventional dynamics that hinder optimal performance within organizations along with strategies to mitigate these negative feedback cycles (Table 9). These conventional dynamics offer insight on building and

strengthening cultural diversity and academic support collaborations among academic and student affairs professionals to promote student engagement and retention. Table 9 provides tangible interventions that can be used depending on the type of dynamic within each office. Areas that ADOs in this study experienced when collaborating with colleagues included drifting goals in initiatives and growth and underinvestment. In regard to drifting goals, ADOs found ways to split a collaborative initiative when they saw that each partner had differing goals and metrics to achieve. Although there may have been cost saving and personnel benefits of collaborating, it was best for the students' interest to separate the initiative into each individual college. Although some ADOs noted the strength of having funding and support to plan and implement initiatives, each ADO felt there was room to grow their role, office, and faculty support. Stroh (2015) suggested that units proactively invest to exceed limitations and effectively manage increasing demands.

Although Davis, Dent, and Wharff's (2015) systems-thinking model of Discovery, Framing, and Action appears in a linear fashion, this study proposes a cyclical feedback model that circles back to discovery to evaluate collaborations that are working and to discover new collaborations to implement (Figure 8). In this applied systems-thinking model, the first step of Discovery begins with ensuring that job descriptions have clearly outlined roles and responsibilities for ADOs, as well as establishing strategic college diversity plans with measurable goals and objectives. The model continues with Framing of relationships, collaborations, and partnerships. At the first iteration of the model, the goal would be to evaluate existing partnerships, while identifying new ones.

Table 9. Interventions for organizational dynamics.

Dynamic	Interventions
Vicious Cycle (simple)	• Identify a weak link – one governed by people's assumptions rather than hardwired • Redirect the causal factor in this link by creating a new goal • Implement reinforcing actions to sustain momentum
Ineffective Balancing Loops	• Make continuous improvements based on a long-term vision • Exercise patience in the face of time delay, or find ways to reduce it without creating negative consequences • Base strategic solutions on clear and agreed-upon goals and a shared picture of current reality (including why it exists)
Drifting Goals	• Hold the vision • Reduce performance shortfalls by sustaining corrective action instead of lowering the goal
Competing Goals	• Look for a higher goal that encompasses the competing ones • If achievement of both goals is mutually exclusive, commit to one • If not, determine different corrective actions that lead to the accomplishment of both goals
Escalation	• Create full awareness of the structure and its costs • Look for ways for all parties to achieve their objectives • Invite the parties to agree to a balanced situation • Slow the rate of escalation • Deescalate unilaterally
Tragedy of the Commons	• Bring attention to the collective costs of individual actions • Focus on the greater common good or vision • Manage the common resource, perhaps through an agreed-upon higher authority • Close off the commons to allow it to replenish or regenerate
Growth and Underinvestment	• Anticipate and invest in advance of limits to be ready to respond to demand • Recognize critical performance standards and hold to them

Note: Adapted from (Stroh, 2015, p. 155)

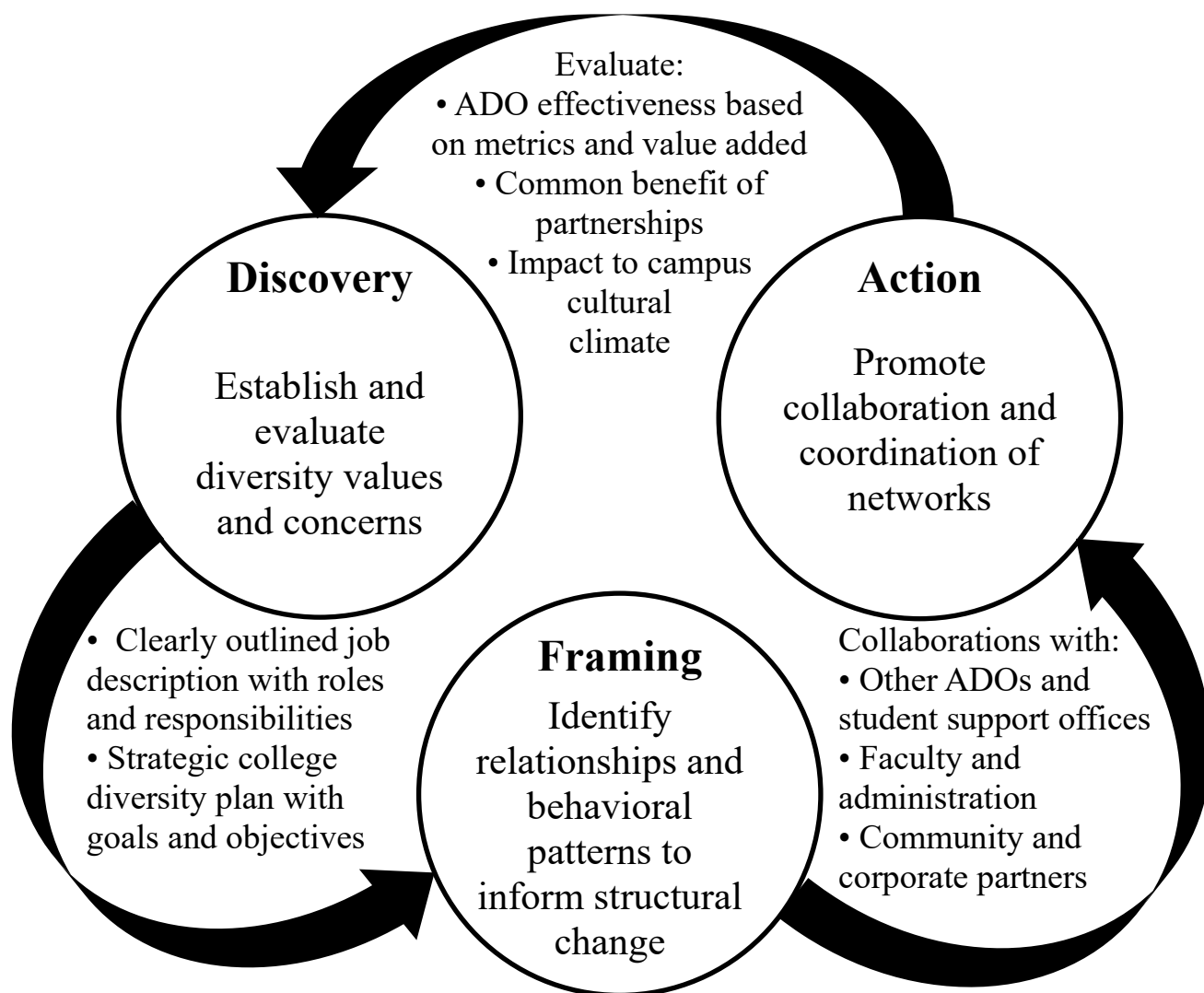


Figure 8. Applied systems thinking framework for Academic Diversity Officers

Once collaborations are identified, ADOs can implement existing initiatives in partnership with collaborators in the Action phase.

An important addition to this model occurs at the end of the Action phase. It is important for ADOs, their office personnel, and supervisory personnel to review effectiveness of diversity efforts in their academic unit within the established metrics of their responsibilities as well as the strategic college diversity plan. In addition to metrics, there should also be attention paid to the value added by ADOs and their offices to their academic unit.

While ADOs continue their diversity work, it is imperative that the institution finds value in diversity and makes diversity an integral part of their mission, research, and teaching. Smith (2015) made a notable comparison of diversity and technology. In her book, she described the investment in building infrastructure to support and prepare for technological advancement moving from typewriters and print into an emerging society of computing and word processing. Institutions made a priority effort to:

- 1) evaluate computer literacy training;
- 2) understand technological effects to student learning;
- 3) make decisions on digitizing administrative infrastructure such as payroll, registration, and admissions; and
- 4) provide monetary and staff commitments to support these efforts (Smith, 2015).

Smith stated, “Technology was no longer the sole domain of science and technical fields; it quickly touched all aspects of the institution” (p.54). Collaboration and synergy among campus diversity leaders, student support offices, faculty, and administration are vital to build institutional capacity to promote diversity in all areas of student success, scholarship, and research.

Smith (2015) highlighted a three-step process for monitoring institutional progress in diversity which included 1) benchmarking the context and background of diversity and campus climate; 2) develop an institutional framework with indicators to monitor progress in diversity efforts; and 3) implement a reporting structure of progress with a dedicated time and place to discuss progress and make necessary changes (Smith, 2015). The institution in this study has also implemented university wide strategic diversity plans, both at the academic unit level and for other functional units at the institution. Strategic college diversity plans allow units to set unit specific objectives to reach unified institutional goals. These plans also offer an opportunity to garner involvement from other academic unit faculty and staff to become involved in various aspects of the diversity plan. The institution would benefit from having campus wide discussions or an annual campus summit for units to present their successes and challenges over the past year and collectively discuss plans and changes needed for upcoming years.

Future Implications

Interview questions for this study had guiding questions directly addressing diversity. Although some ADOs provided comments on equity and inclusion during interviews, areas of diversity, equity, inclusion, and multiculturalism are targets for future research. Considering the diversity, equity, inclusion, and multiculturalism definitions outlined in Figure 7, exploring diversity is only the first step in creating a diverse and inclusive campus culture.

Future research is needed to 1) expand research to not only focus on diversity efforts, but also equity, inclusion, and multiculturalism aspects as well; 2) compare perspectives of ADOs at different universities with differing campus cultures; and 3) longitudinal exploration on the effectiveness of strategic college diversity plans. Research to expand focuses on diversity efforts to include perspectives on diversity, equity, inclusion, and multiculturalism could highlight current organizational structures at institutions and examine how institutions are working toward shifting their efforts and values to include equity, inclusion and multiculturalism. Comparisons of ADO perspectives at different universities with differing campus cultures will benefit future research and DEI work to share effective strategies for progress. As these the cultural landscape continues to change, a longitudinal perspective of this change should be tracked to build knowledge on broadening participation and strategies for maximum DEI impact. Future research with broader target audiences may benefit from differing research methodology to include a national survey of ADOs coupled with follow-up interviews or focus groups for more in-depth views from ADOs.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this exploratory qualitative case study was to seek a better understanding of 1) how academic diversity officers define diversity, 2) how they manage their institutional role to promote student success, and 3) how they work collaboratively with other academic and student support offices at a large public university in the southern United States. Interviews resulted in a compilation of perceptions of diversity, roles, and collaboration capacity of academic diversity officers

whose voices are highly underrepresented in current literature. While ADO's life and work experiences drive their motivation to continue their diversity work, it is imperative that the institution as a whole values diversity and makes diversity an integral part of their mission, research, and teaching. Continued focus on implementing and discussing strategic diversity plan progress collectively and transparently across units can offer more meaningful conversations to improve collaboration in and commitment to diversity efforts within the institutional landscape. After institutional collaboration and communication takes place, institutions may find benefit in broadening the scope of communication to outward-facing entities such as regional and national peer institutions, national conferences, and scholarly publications.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Participant Recruitment Email

Dear *[insert name]*,

My name is Erica Echols and I am a doctoral candidate from the Evaluation, Statistics, and Methodology program in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study examining how diversity academic support officers define diversity, perceive their institutional role to promote student success, and work collaboratively with other academic and student support offices at a large public university in the southern United States. You are eligible to be in this study because you currently serve as an academic diversity partner at your institution. I obtained your contact information from the [REDACTED] website as you were listed as [REDACTED] (WEBSITE REDACTED).

If you decide to participate in this study, you will participate in an interview that will take 45-60 minutes to complete. Your interview will take place via Zoom or in-person (pending your on-campus availability due to social distancing restrictions). I would like to audio record your interview and the information will be used transcribed and used solely for the use of this research project. At the beginning of the interview, you will be asked to provide the researcher with a pseudonym you would like to be used during the interview and for transcription/reporting purposes.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact Erica Echols (eechols1@utk.edu) or Dr. Jennifer Morrow (jamorrow@utk.edu). Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chairperson of the University of Tennessee-Knoxville Institutional Review Board (irbchair@utk.edu).

If you choose to participate, please respond with your consent and I will work with you via Doodle to schedule a time for your interview. Thank you for your consideration! Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Erica Echols, MS
Doctoral Candidate
Evaluation, Statistics, and Methodology
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Email: eechols1@utk.edu
Phone: [REDACTED]

Appendix B

Informed Consent

Academic Diversity Officers' Collaboration Capacity: A Case Study on Staff Needs

You are invited to be part of a research study being conducted by [Erica Echols](#) at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. You are being invited because you serve as an academic diversity officer within [REDACTED]. Being in this research study is voluntary, and you should only agree if you completely understand the study and want to volunteer to allow your [interviews](#) to be used. This form contains information that will help you decide if you want to be part of this research study or not. Please take the time to read it carefully, and if there is anything you don't understand, please ask questions.

Purpose

The purpose of this exploratory, qualitative case study is to examine the how diversity academic support officers define diversity, perceive their institutional role to promote student success, and work collaboratively with other academic and student support offices at a large public university in the southern United States. Outcomes from this study may be of interest to academic and student affairs professionals in order to build and strengthen cultural diversity and academic support collaborations to promote student engagement and retention. I plan to use this information I have collected as my dissertation research project to fulfill my requirements for completing my doctoral degree.

Participation

If you choose to participate, you agree to:

- ☐ Participate in a 45-60 minute, one-on-one interview with a researcher about your experiences as an academic diversity officer.
- ☐ Be included in audio recording during interview.

Risks and discomforts

If you give me permission to participate in this study, findings from the interview will be published in dissertation work and may be featured in scholarly conference presentations. I will always use a pseudonym (a fake name) for you, to protect your identity. The name of your university will also not be disclosed in dissertation writing or future presentations. Still, there is a risk that you may be recognized in presentations and publications. There are no other risks, costs, or discomforts associated with this research that we know of beyond what I have mentioned.

Benefits

There are no potential benefits to you to participate in this project. However, this research and work may provide current methods and best practices of diversity support administrators and staff, current collaborations that exist among offices, as well as needs assessment for future progress in their diversity efforts.

Compensation for participation

Participants will not receive compensation or payment for being in the study.

Confidentiality

If you agree to allow your information to be used in the research, I will assign you a pseudonym and use that instead of your name on all of the materials before we begin analyzing them for the research study. These materials will be stored in a secure location on the UT campus or on a password protected computer. No information which could identify you will be shared in publications and presentations about this study.

Future Research

Your information may be used for future research studies or shared with other researchers for use in future studies without obtaining additional informed consent from you. If this happens, all of your identifiable information will be removed before any future use or sharing with other researchers.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about this research, please contact, Erica Echols (eechols1@utk.edu) or Dr. Jennifer Morrow (jamorrow@utk.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, at utkirb@utk.edu or 865-974-7697. You may also contact the IRB with any problems, complaints or concerns you have about a research study.

Voluntary Participation

It is completely up to you to decide to be in this research study. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind at any time by informing Erica Echols via email. You will not lose any services, benefits, or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer, or if you change your mind and stop being in the study later.

Consent

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I understand that my participation in this research study includes allowing Erica Echols to use my information for research purposes. I agree to be included in this study.

Participant's Name (printed) _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Consent for use of audio

I agree that audio recording of me from this Academic Diversity Officers' study may be analyzed for research purposes.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Academic Diversity Officers' Collaboration Capacity: A Case Study on Staff Needs

Interviewer: Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today on your experiences as an academic support officer. This research study examines how diversity academic support officers define diversity, perceive their institutional role to promote student success, and work collaboratively with other academic and student support offices at a large public university in the southern United States. The information you provide today will be used to as a part of my doctoral dissertation research. You will not be personally identified in reporting of results. In order to preserve anonymity in reporting, I would like for you to provide a pseudonym you would like to be used during the interview and for transcription/reporting purposes.

*Interviewer will make note of pseudonym and use throughout the recording to refer to the participant.

Thank you for completing the informed consent form, I will begin audio/video recording now.

RQ1: How do academic diversity officers define diversity and perceive their role at their institution?

1. Tell me a little bit about your academic and professional background?
 - a. What is your field of study?
2. What is your role within your academic unit?
 - a. What led you to this role?
 - b. How long have you been in this role?
 - c. Were you given a job role statement or did you have to create your own?
 - d. What are your typical activities within your role?
 - e. Is it possible for you to send materials (mission statements, job roles, newsletters, activities reports, list of signature events)?
3. How do you define "diversity"?
4. How does your role within your academic unit contribute to the retention and graduation of diverse student populations?

RQ2: How do diversity officers collaborate with academic and student engagement support offices on campus?

5. What institutional offices have you collaborated with?
 - a. What activities do you typically collaborate on with institutional entities?
 - b. How do you build these collaborations?

6. What entities external to the institution have you collaborated with?
 - a. What activities do you typically collaborate on with external entities?
 - b. How do you build these collaborations?
7. Have you encountered any successes/challenges in regard to collaboration?
8. Are there any collaborations that may be helpful that have not been explored to date?

RQ3: What are diversity officers' perceived needs in order to be successful at their job?

9. Have you participated in any professional development activities (on or off campus) related to diversity?
10. How does your academic unit define success in your role?
11. How do you define success in your role?
12. Do you feel you are achieving the institutional and personal goals set for your role?
13. What resources does your academic unit provide that are particularly helpful in achieving success in their role?
14. Are there any resources that would help you be more successful in their role?

That is all the questions I have for you today. Do you have anything you would like to add or any questions for me?

Thank you again for your participation today. After the interview has been transcribed and coded for thematic analysis, a copy of the final transcript will be provided to you for member checking. Member checking is a process to ensure that I have accurately captured and interpreted your views expressed during our interview. At that time, if there are any statements that you would not like to be used, you can let me know and I will redact them from further analysis.

VITA

Erica Echols graduated with her B.S. in Chemistry from North Carolina A&T State University in 2005 and an M.S. in Environmental Science and Policy from the University of South Florida St. Petersburg in 2009. Her research interests include evaluation and assessment in higher education, with special interest in evaluating and understanding impacts of diverse workforce development on student success in STEM. She currently serves as an Evaluation Specialist for the National Institute for STEM Evaluation and Research (NISER) at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Originally from Blairs, VA, Erica enjoys playing piano, Hammond Organ, and drums.