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Strategic Restructuring in Higher Education: A Case Study of a Consolidation of Two Institutions

Claudia D. Lyerly

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STRATEGIC RESTRUCTURING IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
A CASE STUDY OF A CONSOLIDATION OF TWO INSTITUTIONS

By

Claudia D. Lyerly

A Dissertation
Submitted to in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Education
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ABSTRACT

This in-depth single case study examined the implementation process utilized for the consolidation of two public institutions and the participants' perceptions five years post-consolidation of the extent to which the original expected outcomes of the consolidation have been achieved. The names of the institutions and participants involved in this case study have been replaced with pseudonyms. The case study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research methods, with the qualitative method having more dominance throughout the study. Three primary sources of data were used: semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and field notes. The data collected from all three sources were coded, analyzed and presented based on the study's conceptual framework, theoretical framework, and research questions. An in-depth analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed 4 recurring themes: 1) uncertainty and unexpected work load, 2) communication, 3) managing change and culture gaps, and 4) managing geographical challenges. The research also revealed that the perceived underlying rationale for the consolidation was the general need to see greater efficiencies in the organization and delivery of higher education services to the people of Georgia at less cost. The study showed two expected outcomes from the consolidation: fiscal prudence and the creation of a regional university.

The study revealed that the newly consolidated institution has achieved the creation of a regional university but fiscal prudence, among other areas, remain a work in progress. The overall perception of participants five years post-consolidation however, is relatively positive in that, having gone through a tedious consolidation they can now, in hindsight, see some of the benefits/results of the process. Overall, the study did not reveal

a step-by- step process or blueprint that was utilized during the consolidation process.

The study did however, show several key steps that were taken toward the completion of the consolidation.

While the results of case studies are not typically generalizable, the researcher offered several recommendations to current institutional administrators, system administrators, and highlighted topics for future research that could aid in bridging the gap in literature surrounding higher education mergers (consolidations).

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this paper to my mother, Gloria Miller. The foundation on which I carefully build today was laid by my mother. The results seen today is due to diligence, devotion and tenacious spirit in support of her family's well-being. She was not able to see the fulfillment of her life's work in her children today, but I celebrate her knowing that I will continue to build on that precious foundation forged by the love and tenderness of a mother. She was so resolute and untiring in her faith and concern for her family. I can truly say thank you Mom for planting those seeds of perseverance in me. You remain for me the epitome of success, love, commitment and dedication. I love you Mom.

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I would be amiss if I did not express my extreme appreciation for those who, each in their own way and actions, paved the way for my doctoral success.

Reflecting on the many hurdles I have had to overcome during my doctoral study and all of the setbacks that were never meant to hold me back, but propel me to a new level in the formulation of my dissertation, I look on with gratitude.

Throughout the entire process I received profound supervision and insightful leadership from my Dissertation Committee Chair, Dr. Wendi Jenkins, who kept me organized and focused right through to the finish line. She was always available to provide the feedback and encouragement needed during this life-changing project. Her assistance helped me avoid the pitfalls normally associated with the process of writing, gathering, and filtering the information in order to reach the end state. I was also fortunate enough to have in my corner, my mentor and former Director of the Doctoral Program, Dr. Michael D. Richardson, who constantly monitored my progress and guided me with scholarly inspiration. He constantly challenged my critical thinking and helped me to set higher goals both personally and professionally. I am very appreciative for the members of my Dissertation Committee: Dr. Michael D. Richardson, Dr. Chip Reese, and Dr. John Lester. I am thankful to have been able to conduct my doctoral studies at the illustrious Columbus State University.

I recall all of those times of laughter that I shared with my doctoral colleagues, the heartfelt discussions that it took to keep me on track with my deadlines and the long and arduous hours of research that was sacrificed to get here today, and I am grateful. Most assuredly I give all the glory to God, for His lovingkindness and unrelenting favor in

seeing me through to the end. Completing this doctoral degree wouldn't have been possible without my husband and best friend Larry, my two children Alana and Kaldane, and my extended family who showed me unwavering support, patience, and understanding throughout the entire process. Thanks for believing in me. Lastly, I would like to express my overwhelming gratitude and elation to my colleagues, who have helped set the stage for development and created a working atmosphere that was conducive to success, innovation, and determination.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The University System of Georgia (USG) in 2017 has maintained its leading position in the number of consolidation (type of merger) efforts of higher education institutions nationwide (Hayes, 2015; Hodges, 2013). Internationally, restructuring through institutional mergers has become a prevalent strategy to increase local, regional, and global competitiveness (Valimaa, Aittola & Ursin, 2014; Becker & Toutkoushian, 2013; Pinheiro, Geschwind & Aarevaara, 2013; Nyeu; 2006). With higher education being dubbed as one of the main vehicles to growth in any country, region, state, or city, authorities use this leverage to create strategic linkages that provide resource dependence leadership (Lazaroiu, 2012; Pinheiro, 2012; Eastman & Lang, 2001). It is important to point out however, that a decision to merge two or more higher education institutions is typically located at the extreme end of the continuum after a series of other strategies have been utilized (Eastman & Lang, 2001; Lang, 2002; Ripkey, 2016). While mergers are critiqued and thought to be dramatic and drastic, it is becoming a prevalent strategy during tumultuous challenges that threaten the sustainability of institutions (Skodvin, 1999; Mulvey, 1993; Lang, 2002).

The greater part of the literature on mergers surrounds corporate mergers. The literature on corporate mergers lays a solid foundation for understanding the underlying causes and ultimate expected outcomes of higher education mergers. Synonymous to the corporate world, the higher education sector faces increasing competition, growing demands from customers (students) for greater productivity and better service, financial constraints, economic and political pressures, all of which may point to the goal of

achieving a grander bottom line. Both the literature for corporate mergers and higher education mergers however, show a growing need for greater research and analysis beyond the bottom line.

The lack of immunity against external pressures was further seen in the effects of World War II on higher education institutions in key countries such as Australia, Britain, and the United States of America. Whether restructuring through mergers were government initiated or institutionally mandated, they were all done in response to external pressures or to create greater resource dependence (Skodvin, 1999; Eastman & Lang, 200; Goedegebuure, 1992; Meek, 1994). Literature also speaks to the natural selection of institutions and likens them to organisms that will evolve and keep on changing by creating balance in an effort to sustain itself (Lang, 2003).

Higher education institutions are complex and were not designed with the functionality of a business (McBain, 2009). Regardless of this, there is still pressure to be cost effective while at the same time held to the high standard of making students and their educational success its core mission. This dynamic amalgam presents an even greater and daunting task for constituents who are involved in a merger process. The models used to implement these mergers typically fall into two broad categories; structural and process. Authors such as Jemison and Sitkins (1986) share that the decisions made during the implementation of the merger model play a critical role in the success or failure of a merger. The researcher portrayed the importance of the efficiency theory and process perspective theory in the conceptual and theoretical framework areas for this study.

Administrators play a pivotal role in the execution of the merger process, but to have the best practices of merging institutions, senior administrators need to bear in mind institutional traditions, and informal networks both within and outside of the boundaries of the merging institutions (Drowley, Duncan & Brooks, 2013; European Commission Directorate, 2014; Martin, Samels, & Associates, 2012). Institutional traditions, internal and external informal networks are shaped extensively by human interactions. The human element of every institutional process can dictate its success or failure (Jemison & Sitkins, 1986). It is therefore pertinent that time is taken to further examine, in a very fundamental way, the perceptions of constituents of these merged or consolidated institutions; more specifically in the state of Georgia. Conducting the research helps to better understand the views of key constituents involved in the merger process.

Given the possible disparities between academic missions, institutional policies, target populations, human resource allocation decisions, and economic climates, the entire merger process could be extremely lengthy and futile (Hinfelaar, 2012; Martin & Samels, 2015). With lack of homogeneity or similarities in human perceptions and difficulty to merge intellectual property, physical assets, and auxiliary services, there is a high probability that higher education administrators may engage in seemingly unproductive mergers (McBain, 2012; Pinheiro, 2012; Curaj, Georghiou, Cassinger, & Polak, 2015). Given the incongruences above, it is critical that each governing system authority and the administrators of a newly merged institution strategically track and assess the progress of its post-merger activities. Ideally, as stated in the literature examined, this needs to be done within the first three to five years after the merger is completed (Martin & Samels, 1994; Drowley, Lewis and Brooks, 2013). Such

information will drive the strategic plan of the new institution and help to provide tactical information for future mergers and research. The intent of the researcher is to explore the extent to which the initially perceived objectives were achieved after five years and to examine the implementation model utilized. This research study will provide a sound baseline for future medium or long- term longitudinal studies of the specific merger (consolidation) being examined.

The underlying reasons for mergers are general and not specifically unique to any one institution. College and university system administrators, such as those of the USG, gave very similar underlying reasons why consolidations (mergers) were imminent. Since 2012 the USG has announced the consolidation of eighteen of its once 35 institutions. With two consolidations still under-way at the time of this study, the number of USG institutions now stands at 26 (University System of Georgia, 2017; Hayes, 2015; Sigo, 2012; Salzer, 2011; McBain, 2012; Hodges, 2013). A dominant factor influencing the occurrence of the consolidations/mergers in Georgia is the urgent need to increase the educational attainment level of Georgians (Hayes, 2015). By 2020 over 60 percent of jobs in the state of Georgia will require a certificate or degree; this leaves a gap of 250,000 graduates to be achieved (Hudson, 2015; Becker & Toutkoushian, 2013; Perna & Callan, 2012, Targeted News Service, 2014). To aid in the achievement of 250,000 graduates by 2020, the USG saw among other inevitables, a need to increase the system's resource efficiency given the onset of the 2007 economic recession, decreasing local government appropriation, growing knowledge economy, and the galloping tuition rate above inflation rate (Hayes, 2015).

Regardless of the uncertainty surrounding mergers, to overcome possible issues of poor hierarchical structures, lack of financial fortitude, poor academic resourcefulness, and dwindling enrollment numbers, the option to merge is becoming one of the better extreme options (Thomas & Chobotar, 2015). The researcher intends to describe and better understand the merger process, and also examine the extent to which expected outcomes have been realized.

Statement of the Problem

Higher education mergers are a growing phenomenon but there is limited documentation of the details surrounding implementation strategies, constituent perceptions, and the successes or failures of such mergers (Eastman & Lang, 2001; Botha, 1992; Haynes, 2015; Kalra, Gupta, & Bagga). The decision by the USG to restructure the system through consolidations (mergers) was driven by The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) mergers in 2008 (Hayes, 2015; Hodges, 2015). The TCSG mergers were the USG's only point of reference for such a huge system-wide consolidation effort (Hayes, 2015; Hodges, 2013). Multiple models have been utilized internationally over the years to merge two or more higher education institutions. The literature review done on corporate mergers describes the success or failure of mergers based on the financial performance of the new organization. This performance could include the rate of productivity, shareholder value, revenue growth and cost efficiency. Given the complexity of colleges and universities and their ultimate goal of meeting the needs of students through quality academic programming, it is difficult to use this one-sided financial analysis. Research has indicated that the higher education merger process

requires greater analysis due to its complexity. Such an analysis necessitates a deeper and more concentrated look at the outcomes in relation to the intended objectives (Larsson & Finkelstein, 1999; Schoenberg, 2006; & Epstein, 2005)

The USG, at the time of this study, is implementing its ninth system-wide consolidation. There is limited information on the methodical model(s) being utilized and the extent to which the expected outcomes have been achieved after five years.

With a lack of multiple points of reference for the USG, it is therefore pertinent that a thorough examination be done of the process utilized to implement its consolidations (mergers). Conducting a mixed method case study of this institutional merger will help to describe and better understand the consolidation/merger implementation process and capture the perceptions of its constituents on the expected outcomes of the merger.

The researcher proposes to examine how the implementation model utilized was perceived by constituents in the Southern City State College and Southern Point College consolidation/merger. By extension, the study will also capture the extent to which the initially perceived opportunities and strengths for engaging in the merger have been realized after five years. The study will add to the limited body of literature and help future decisions of higher education policy makers and administrators at the state, national and international level.

Research Questions

The research questions to be addressed by this study include:

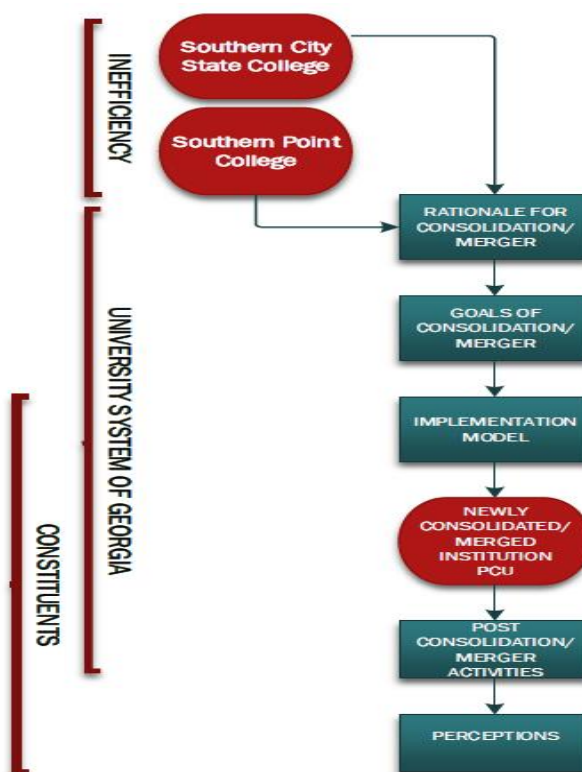
1. What were the perceived expected outcomes of the consolidation?

2. To what extent have these perceived expected outcomes been realized?
3. What was the implementation process used for the consolidation?

Conceptual Framework

“A conceptual framework explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main dimensions to be studied – the key factors, or variables – and the presumed relationships among them” (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The conceptual framework used for this study will be presented graphically with a brief narrative elaboration.

Figure 1: Graphical Conceptual Framework



The names of the institutions examined in this study will be disguised with pseudonyms, namely Southern City State College and Southern Point College.

Subsequent names for the consolidated institutions will also be replaced with pseudonyms throughout the study. Pseudonyms will also be used for all participants involved in the study. The conceptual framework above, graphically illustrates the general underlying reason for most higher education mergers: inefficiency. Inefficiency can be related to areas such as resource usage, academic programming, finances, or staffing. Having institution(s) operating subpar the expectations of system goals have caused and will continue to result in last resort *top-down* decisions to initiate mergers. During this initially involuntary period, a rationale is developed and decided on by system administrators. In some instances, senior administrators of the merging institutions are brought to the table to discuss the goals and the implementation model to be utilized. Establishing goals before embarking on an institutional merger provides a baseline on which to match post-merger outcomes.

Over the past years the implementation model process has typically involved representations from key areas in both institutions. The merger process can be tedious and time-consuming for constituents. The conceptual framework demonstrates the critical importance of tracking post-merger activities beyond the formation of the newly merged institutions and the importance of capturing the perceptions of the constituents who brought the system restructuring goal to fruition.

The conceptual framework portrayed above feeds into the theoretical framework for the study. The researcher draws from the business theories of efficiency theory and process theory to guide the study. These two theories will be discussed during the literature review in chapter two.

Importance of the Study

The final result of this study will add to the limited literature on higher education merger implementation models and the perceptions of key constituents involved in a merger after five years of post-merger activity. The USG, up to the completion of this study, has embarked on seven institutional mergers. Completing this study five years after the Southern City State College and Southern Point College merger (consolidation) will provide a baseline for further longitudinal studies concerning the series of mergers done by the USG since 2012.

Utilizing a case study approach allows the researcher to thoroughly describe the merger (consolidation) process and examine the newly formed Point Consolidated University in comparison to the expected outcomes. This approach allows the researcher to look at the extent to which the initially perceived expected outcomes for the merger (consolidation) were realized after five years. The study also examines the perceptions of key constituents or participants as it relates to the merger (consolidation) implementation model. These results will help to further inform higher education administrators, system level administrator, and policy makers about the perceived effectiveness of the implementation model utilized during the merging of Southern City State College and Southern Point College.

The researcher finds this study important because it can provide guidance for future mergers in the state of Georgia, nationally and internationally. There is limited literature about higher education merger models and constituent or participant perceptions. The researcher believes that the study will help bridge this gap in the literature.

Procedures

The researcher will perform a single case study of a five-year-old merger of two University System of Georgia institutions, that will be referenced in this study as Southern City State College and Southern Point College. The intent is to explore the extent to which the initially perceived objectives were achieved after five years and to examine the implementation model utilized. A case study provides the opportunity to do “an extensive analysis of an individual unit (as a person or community) stressing developmental factors in relation to environment” (Flyvbjerg, 2013 p.1). The in-depth case study approach allows the researcher to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. Data collection will be done by: (a) conducting interviews with senior administrators at the newly merged university (these senior administrators are those with broad responsibility over numerous areas of the university), senior department level administrators (those administrators who oversee a specific unit or area of the university), and faculty members; (b) carrying out an in-depth and extensive document analysis of USG and institutional archives relating to the consolidation; (c) capturing comprehensive field notes regarding observations of the newly consolidated institutional structure or interactions with constituents relating to the consolidation process. Chapter three explores in greater detail the research methodology used to cover this study.

Limitations

This research will be limited because one of the primary data collection method is interviews. Including participants in the study who had a negative or positive personal

experience may cause bias. Inaccuracy may also be encountered while capturing initial perceptions of the merger if there has been other experiences that have occurred since the merger (Hawks, 2015). Post-merger experiences may cause participants to intentionally alter the accuracy of the information shared during the study. It is also very important to acknowledge that the merger happened over five years ago and this may affect the memory of the participants. The researcher, in an attempt to mitigate such limitations, will conduct multiple interviews of participants from both institutions prior to the consolidation/merger (Yin (2009). The questions within the interview protocol, even after conducting a pilot study, may result in some level of discomfort and may limit the openness of some participant. The researcher will attempt to appease each participants through the use of semi-structured interviews to establish rapport and guarantee confidentiality.

Delimitations

The single case study is delimited to a small purposive sample which allows the researcher to adequately manage and execute the study in a timely fashion. Another delimitation worth acknowledging is the amount of time that has passed since the merger of both institutions. After five years the researcher believes that participants will be more likely to share their personal experiences and thus enhance the study. Pseudonyms were also used to disguise the names of the institutions involved in the study in an effort to protect the anonymity of all individual participants. The researcher also replaced the names of individual participants with pseudonyms. Specific positions of individual participants were also not shared during this study. This was done to protect the identity

of participants and increase the level difficulty in identifying specific quotes from participants.

Definition of Terms

It is important to note that a *merger* is not the first strategy typically used by higher education administrators to possibly restore institutional balance or create opportunities for growth. It is instead, located at the far end of a continuum that may include a series of other inter-institutional cooperative agreements (Eastman & Lang, 2001; Lang, 2002; Ripkey, 2016). Based on the literary review the term merger is an umbrella term used to describe different types of agreement or ventures including two or more entities. These include acquisitions, consolidations, joint ventures, federations and associations, consortia, and transfer of assets (Martin & Samels, 1994). The term *consolidation* is used synonymously with the term merger throughout this study when making reference to USG institutions. A *consolidation* occurs when one institution is combined with another institution to establish a completely new institutions that fully governs its administrative, managerial, financial, educational, and operational processes (Eastman & Lang, 2001; Ripkey, 2016; Etschmaier, 2010). This type of merger has been utilized by USG.

Restructuring, when looking at corporations, can be defined as the radical changing of a company's operating, organizational, and financial structure to quickly and permanently address serious issues that could potentially lead to a corporation's liquidation or shutdown (Wright, n.d.). This definition is applicable to the strategy being

used by the USG to downsize the number of institutions within its system through consolidations.

The *University System of Georgia* (USG) is the organizational body that includes approximately 29 public colleges in the state of Georgia. The USG is governed by the Board of Regents (BOR) which is comprised of governor-appointed members.

Assumptions

This study is being done under the assumption that the growing higher education merger phenomena will continue, hence a growing need for more contemporary literature. When conducting interviews, the researcher is assuming that there will be an adequate number of participants to represent the population and drive the reliability of the data. It is also being assumed that all participants will answer all interview questions honestly.

Summary

The growing phenomenon of mergers in higher education was introduced in chapter one. Literature shows that this is largely due to increasing external and internal pressures on their resources. It was also highlighted that there is a lack of literature addressing merger implementation models and the perceptions of its constituents. In summary, the researcher seeks to bridge this gap by conducting an in-depth mixed methods single-case study of a five year old USG merger. The intention is to describe and gain a greater understanding of the implementation process through the perceptions of its constituents. The researcher will also look at the extent to which the initial goals set out

by the USG have been achieved post-merger. Ultimately, the results of this study will add to the limited literature on mergers, inform the future decisions of higher education administrators and policy makers both locally, statewide, nationally, and internationally.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Section One

Introduction

The increasing complexity of higher education institutions in the 21st century has caused cost efficiency and mergers to become topics of popular discussion (McBain, 2009; Eastman & Lang, 2001). With the American for-profit higher education sector tapping into non-traditional markets and offering educational programs in more cost-effective ways, stakeholders of the public higher education sector are prodding for even greater cost-effective resource allocation (Hayes, 2015; McBain, 2009; Sigo, 2012; Salzer; 2011; Martin & Samuels, 1994; Hodges, 2013; Pick, 2003). According to Harman (1988), dating back to 1970, mergers in higher education fell into four main categories: small women's institutional mergers with more established coeducational institutions; mergers of independent public institutions with state-wide systems; mergers for facilitations of court orders toward racial desegregation; and mergers toward complementary foci, opportunities, and strengths. Merging or restructuring toward more complementary missions, opportunities, and strengths have been associated with the needs of stakeholders in the 21st century.

Traditionally, the ultimate aim of mergers is to strengthen the bottom line of the new organization and therefore the success of a merger is based on the earnings after assets are consolidated and new markets penetrated. It is interesting to note that in higher education there is little literature on the outcomes of the mergers and their perceived impact on its constituents. As such, further examination will be done to assess the extent

to which the initially perceived opportunities or strengths for the merger were realized after five years of post-merger activity.

Martin and Samels (1994) reported that when considering college mergers toward mutual growth there are some core principles that exist. Relevant to this study are two of the ten principles highlighted. These two principles are: one, the overall strengthening of academic offerings. By extension in order to strengthen the overall academic offering, Martin and Samels (1994) purports that this principle requires that the combined curriculum be reviewed and revised, complementary programs be enhanced, redundancies be eliminated, and faculty resources be deepened. Second, the stabilization of student enrollment and market share. Following controversial decisions surrounding reduction in force, tenure, and possible campus closures the most pressing question is the number of students the new institution will draw and retain within the first three to five years (Martin & Samels, 1994).

According to Martin and Samels (1994) the general observation was that a new institution originating out of a merger, typically experienced a slight decline in their enrollment in their first year compared to the enrollment numbers at the beginning of merger discussion (1994). Regardless of the observed decline Martin and Samels (1994) stated that it is typical for merged colleges and universities to overcome this decline in one to two years and that accomplishments of mergers cannot be adequately assessed until three to five years later (1994). Martin and Samels (1994) purport that acknowledging this phenomenon dictates the factors to consider when preparing the development plan for the first five years. This section of the literature was pivotal in the researcher's decision to examine the five-year-old USG merger of Southern City State

College and Southern Point College. Literature also shows a post-merger research done by Drowley, Lewis and Brooks (2013) after the 18-month old implementation of the merger between the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and the University of Glamorgan in South East Wales of the United Kingdom. The study of an institutional merger in the USG after five years of post-merger activity provides critical knowledge for tracking the perceived fortitude of its process and its short-term impact.

The literature review is organized into five sections. Section one has introduced the paradigms and types of mergers that helped to demonstrate the underlying behavior of higher education institutions that may lead to mergers. The framework or models of mergers was also explored. Section two of the literature review delved further into restructuring done through corporate mergers, their prevalence, underlying reasons for their occurrences, and the philosophies transferred into higher education that help to shape expected outcomes in colleges and universities. The section then transitioned into looking at higher education restructuring efforts through mergers at the global level, national level, and then at the state level - more specifically Georgia. A general review of USG mergers since the year 2012 was done in section three to build on the underlying reasons for the mergers and the ultimate goals or guiding principles outlined by the USG. Section four summarized the overall outcome of higher education mergers. In section five the researcher briefly introduced the pre-merger institutions selected for the case study.

Paradigms & Types of Mergers

Eastman and Lang (2001) adopted three main paradigms from Robert Birnbaum that are associated with behaviors linked to higher education mergers. The paradigms discussed by Eastman and Lang (2001) are based on the assumption that mergers are prompted based on vicissitudes in the external environment and is simply a response to external threats or opportunities (2001). Changes could take the form of “escalating demands for education and research, diminishing resources, changing markets, threats to the continuous supply of critical resources, obstacles to organic growth, or changing ecological niches” (Eastman & Lang, 2001). Through the paradigms, Eastman and Lang (2001) explain how specific behaviors demonstrated by institutions lead to diversification and change.

The Need to Compete

The underlying need for institutions to maintain autonomy and a competitive edge will dictate the direction in which they go. This includes the fortitude of colleges and universities to respond to external pressures independent of government planning and influence.

Natural Selection

Colleges and universities can be viewed as evolving organisms, which are a part of an ecosystem. Lang (2003) states that natural selection is a dominant paradigm which can be aligned with the Darwinian model of ecological organisms to describe groups of higher education institutions. The overall goal of the rational organization is to constantly create balance and survive in what could be a changing ecosystem.

Resource Dependence

Although this paradigm is similar to natural selection, the main focus of it is money or resources and the ability to raise it. Eastman and Lang (2001) liken the resource dependence paradigm to that of merging to create monopolistic characteristics. The intention based on this analogy is to gain control and authority over the resources needed to sustain itself. In cases of public colleges and universities where state governments control resources, the decision to merge maybe involuntary (Lang, 2003).

The behaviors identified by Eastman and Lang (2001), which are often dictated by environmental factors, help to determine the type of mergers that higher education institutions engage in.

Types of Mergers

While the literature review in this section will mainly examine the most common types of mergers in colleges and universities captured by Martin and Samels (1994), it is worth mentioning that Goedegebuure (1992) and Eastman and Lang (2001) also shared types of mergers that overlapped but showed slight deviation from those proposed by Martin and Samels (1994). Goedegebuure (1992) and Eastman and Lang (2001) highlight four types of mergers, namely, horizontal mergers, vertical mergers, diversification mergers, and conglomerate mergers. These types focused more on the academic fields that each institutions was in, and the direction in which they are heading as it relates to the final product(s) to be offered to the student. Eastman and Lang (2001) however, went on to also include types of mergers that defined the organizational outcome. These

included consolidations, acquisitions, transformation, and subsidiaries and ancillaries (2001).

Martin and Samels (1994) recommended that after key pre-merger planning was completed administrators must grapple with the type of merger model to be used. The common types of mergers expounded on by Martin and Samels (1994) included the following:

Pure Merger

This entails an agreement where institution X is merged with institution Y, with the latter serving as the legal successor (1994). Pure mergers are permanent since one institution would have been dissolved. Factors such as an institution's history, political controversies, and faculty credentials can hinder the decision to engage in a pure merger (1994).

Consolidation

A consolidation occurs when institution X and institution Y is collapsed into a completely new institution - institution Z. This typically includes a different mission, operational scale, and name. (1994). Consolidations are more likely to occur when there are similar administrative efficiency, academic standards, and demographic stratification (1994).

Transfer of Assets

When this occurs, institution X transfers its rights and assets to institution Y which will continue to maintain them and facilitate the execution of institution's X's programs (1994). This arrangement is common when the inheriting institution has already

established a strong market share and the transferring institution's operations are no longer cost-effective to continue offering at the same level (1994).

Consortia, Federation, and Associations

Aimed at eliminating any kind of course duplication and inefficiencies as it relates to library access, facility and database usage. Consortia, federations and associations are collegial collaboration involving several covenants and obligations (1994).

Joint Ventures and Educational Affiliations

Martin and Samels (1994) describes this type of merger as "shared investment and campus-sensitive" style that preserves each campus' identity, governance structure, and promotes creative collaborations in key areas (p. 30). Collaborations could include shared faculty, articulation agreements, and shared facilities.

Theoretical Framework

It is important that the theoretical framework used to shape this study be discussed to add further context and purpose to the organization of the research.

Mergers and Acquisition is a popular terminology in the corporate world and provides a solid point of reference for this study. Higher education administrators typically use business research to shape its theories for mergers. Key theories associated with mergers and acquisitions in business and those applicable to this study are *efficiency theory* and *process perspective theory*.

While there are several rationales or motives for engaging in a merger the researcher, for this study, sees the efficiency theory to be one of the most general and applicable reasons. Hellgren, Lowstedt, and Werr (2011) state that in general mergers are typically planned and done to achieve great net surplus through synergies under the

efficiency theory. These could include financial synergies, managerial synergies, or operational synergies. As shared in the study's conceptual framework the researcher is proposing, given the literature review, that elements of inefficiency occurred in either institutions that lead to the USG decision to merge (consolidate).

The process perspective as shared by Jemison and Sitkins (1986) is an approach that should be used in conjunction with the strategic fit and organizational fit theory when considering corporate mergers and acquisitions. They purport that while benefits exist there are impediments present in the strategic and organizational fit of merging firms (1986). These four impediments include activity segmentation, escalating momentum, expectational ambiguity, and management system misapplication (1986). These impediments are easily overlooked because they are embedded in the day-to-day process of a merger. The process perspective highlights that the success or failure of a merger is found in identifying the underlying process-driven impediments (1986). This theory relates to the study in that the researcher seeks to examine the implementation model from the perspective of the constituents. This shows the application of the process perspective theory in the examination of the merger between Southern City State College and Southern Point College.

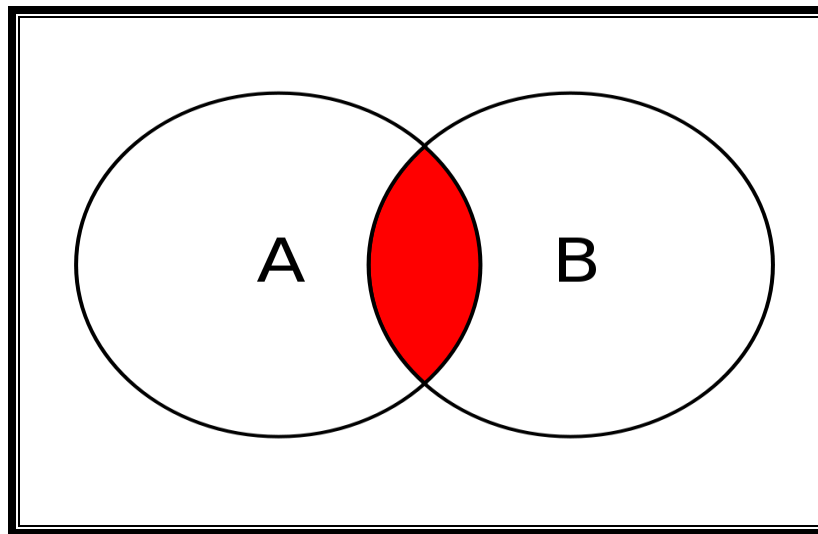
Models for Mergers in Higher Education

Structural Models

Botha (2001) referenced unpublished structural models formulated by the Consortium of Open Learning Institutions of South Africa (COLISA) in his article "*Models of Mergers in Higher Education.*" Two models were shared, the structural and process model. Botha (2001) communicated that the structural model is further broken

down into three sub-categories. These are the confederal structure, federal structure and the unitary structure. The confederation structure is a formal and relatively permanent arrangement where each institution maintains their individual autonomy. There is a mutual consent to co-operate and collaborate on mutually beneficial ventures (Botha, 2001). The diagram below portrays the confederation structure where two institutions A and B collaborate on mutual interest and retain their autonomy.

Figure 2: Confederation Structure



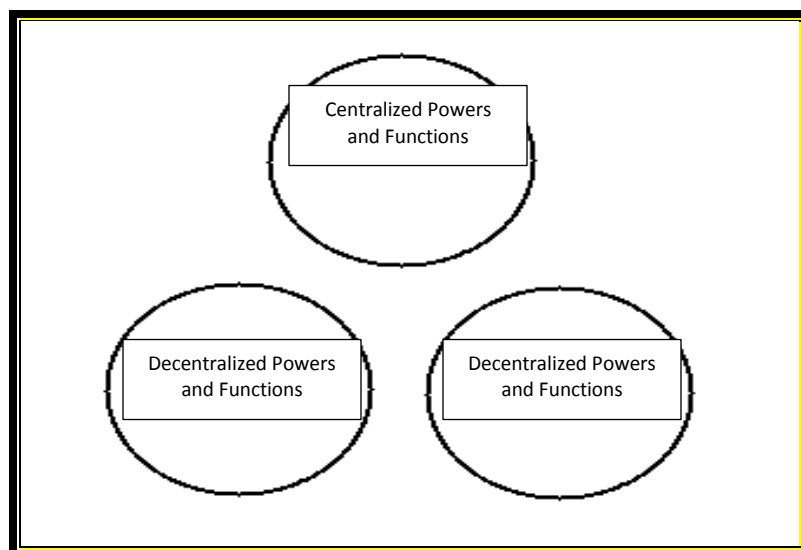
Source: Botha (2001) Models for mergers in higher education

The confederal structural benefits both institutions in that it has little impact on faculty and staff, the small opportunities act as a testing ground for bigger collaborations, it promotes cost effectiveness, and enhances economies of scale. On the contrary, Botha (2001) shared that there may be a possible loss of institutional identity, and a perceived threat concerning income earning potential and local interest.

The federal structure takes two main forms, one where “centralized powers and functions are specified while the decentralized powers and functions (i.e. the rest) remain

with the individual members of the federation” (Botha, 2001 p. 277) and the other where “devolved powers and functions are specified, while everything else is centralized” (Botha, 2001 p. 277). Botha (2001) highlights that the advantages of the federal structure lies in the ability to preserve each institution’s niche markets, potential for increase economies of scale, and enhanced unity in the specific educational sector. The disadvantages, Botha purports, lies in the negative effects on morale, the serious implications for staff, and the level of implementation difficulty when compared to the confederation structure (Botha, 2001). The diagram below depicts the federal structure where A represents the specific functions that are centralized, and B and C represents functions that are delegated to individual institutions.

Figure 3: Federal Structure



Source: Botha (2001) Models for mergers in higher education.

The unitary structure occurs when both parties merge into a single body thereby giving up individual autonomy (2001). The advantages of this structure lies in increase economies of scale, greater resource efficiency, and a decrease in the duplication of

staffing and academic programs (2001). The disadvantages occur when there are different missions and cultures, a loss of institutional identity, and there is negative impact on staff.

Process Models

In a review of the literature there was no distinct model process for a merger to follow. The difficulty in finding a well laid out blueprint lies in the fact that the process used during a merger is unique to the institutions involved and the dynamics of the underlying factors interplayed in the merger (Skodvin, 1999; Botha, 2001). Authors such as Littler and Leverick (1995), when looking at the merger process, focused more on six key areas that required careful attention. These included “selecting a partner, establishing the ground rules, setting up a task force, managing the process, ensuring quality, and maintaining an external focus” (p.61). Other authors such as Shaughnessy (1995) purports that it is more important to zoom in on the skills needed to facilitate the merger process. These maybe those skills needed to establish a partnership philosophy, match differing goals and objectives, and develop a human resource plan. Skodvin (1999) switches gears and looks at the directional flow of the process. Skodvin distinguishes between the *top down* process, *bottom-up* process, and a combination of the two. State-initiated mergers generally reflected a *top-down* process but are considered to be associated with conflict and tensions between constituents (1999). The *bottom-up* process created greater consensus among partners (1999). The various approaches above to the process model reflects the lack of a blueprint for mergers.

Eastman and Lang (2001) however, in the examination of a higher education institutional merger case in Canada summarized key steps thought to be widely applicable to other higher education mergers. The table below depicts these key steps.

Table 1: The process steps in mergers

-
1. Getting to know the other party
 2. Deciding to pursue the option of merger
 3. Setting objectives for merger
 4. Preparing the organization for merger
 5. Entering discussion of merger
 6. Performing due diligence
 7. Agreeing to merge
 8. Securing government sanctions(if necessary) and continuity of funding
 9. Giving legal effect to the merger
 10. Putting the old order to rest
 11. Implementing the new organization
-

Source: Eastman & Lang (2001). Mergers in higher education

Martin and Samels (1994) emphasize the need for institutions to pay keen attention to the legal process or structure when attempting to merge for mutual growth.

The legal structure as outlined by Martin and Samels (1994) is seen below:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Engage experienced merger counsel | 10. Conduct legal audit |
| 2. Complete strategic plan | 11. Structure negotiations |
| 3. Assess educational complementarity | 12. Complete merger contract development |
| 4. Coordinate trustee governance models | 13. Consummate merger contract |
| 5. Determine post-merger institutional name | 14. Arrange for capital outlay financing and new facilities development |
| 6. Develop non-competition covenants | 15. Anticipate educational consumer claims |
| 7. Clarify residual liabilities | 16. Prepare combined financial aid model |
| 8. Articulate human resource systems | 17. Conserve student records |
| 9. Assess collective bargaining implications | 18. Secure appropriate licensure and accreditation |

The literature above indicates the uniqueness of the higher education merger process and how difficult it can be for institutions to find a solid point of reference. The common practice is for administrators to observe best practices and adapt strategies that may best suit their institution. A primary source for strategies is corporate mergers. Corporate mergers are the most prevalent and most documented sector. The following section is a summary of corporate mergers, the underlying reasons for their occurrence, and the philosophies that have been transferred into higher education.

Section Two

Mergers in the Corporate World

The literature on corporate mergers does not directly point out the linkages to mergers of higher education institutions but is highly transferable and applicable to understanding the dynamics and underlying reasons for higher education mergers successes and failures. The theoretical framework used to implement and manage corporate mergers is also used as the foundation or reference point for mergers by higher education administrators (Drowley, Lewis, & Brooks, 2013)

Within the corporate world the term *mergers* is used interchangeably with the term *mergers and acquisitions*, M &A, (Sherman, 2010). Sherman purports that the term M &A, which is interpreted as a single concept, has become identical with the notion of financial capital, success, and business power.

Corporate mergers have developed a permeating presence since the beginning of the 21st century (Eastman & Lang, 2001). Global corporate M & A volume was approximately \$4.7 trillion at the end of 2015 just surpassing the 2007 global M & A

volume of \$4.296 trillion (Farrell, 2015). Farrell's perception of the underlying reasons for this escalating thrust toward M & A is congruent with those of Sherman's (2010). Farrell states that the breakneck pace in 2015 is as a result of "increased boardroom confidence, cheap debt, pressure to become more efficient in a slow-growth economy and a desire to keep up with consolidating rivals" (Farrell, 2015). This analysis is synonymous to frequently communicated reasons for the occurrence of mergers in higher education (Eastman & Lang, 2001; McBain, 2009; Lang, 2002)

The literature on corporate mergers ignites reason to further consider the perceived benefits of or motives for engaging in corporate mergers. According to Stearns and Allan (1996) organizations may simply engage in mergers because previous mergers were proven to be successful, and not necessarily because there was convincing evidence that the arrangement or strategy would be ideal for them. Hogarty (1970) went further to state that for a merger to be successful it "must increase the value of the owner's interest" in the new organization when compared to its original state. Given the variation in value of wealth of the owners of firms that participated in the mergers examined Hogarty concluded that M & A "are risky... and very few successful acquirers obtain very large returns, and the prospects of these large returns tempts other firms to engage in merger activity." Often times, however, with lurking threats against the viability of their organization leaders may link a merger with the potential for growth or diversification (Kalra, Gupta, & Bagga, 2013; Vazirani, 2015). In examining the literature on the success or failure of higher education mergers there was little to validate the measurable outcomes experienced from mergers (Drowley, Lewis, & Brooks, 2013; Banal-Estañol & Seldeslachts, 2011). Regardless of the lack of literature to support the success of higher

education mergers its prevalence as in the case of corporate mergers continue to grow (Harman & Harman, 2008; Skodvin, 1999; Lang, 2002).

Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991) expounded on the multiple motives or perceived benefits that CEOs of merging organization may have. These included; firstly, inefficient management which is seen as an effort to develop the discipline of the management of the target organization. Secondly, synergy, and is based upon the expectation of greater shareholder value from gained market share and the elimination of competition. Thirdly, diversification, from acquiring a whole different line of products or services resulting in greater stability in earnings. Fourthly, to fix organizational problems or the elimination of a conflict between the goals of management and owners. The fifth motive or benefit was tax considerations when writing off the losses of the acquired company against the new organization's combined taxable income. Rapid market expansion was the sixth benefit or possible motive behind a merger. Typically achieving market growth requires time, people, and the overcoming of regulatory red tape. Merging with another company that has already penetrated a viable market might be deemed to be advantageous. The seventh benefit or motive shared by Haspeslagh and Jemison (1994) was the ability to purchase the acquired organization's assets below the current replacement cost. The motives shared by Haspeslagh and Jemison (1994) helps to gain insight on the types of higher education mergers already highlighted by Martin and Samuels (1994), Goedegebuurre (1992), & Eastman & Lang (2001).

While the perceptions of the benefits or motives for embarking on a merger may never materialize (Kalra, Gupta, & Bagga, 2013; Vazirani, 2015; Haspeslagh & Jemison 1991) leaders often still embark on the mission and encounter multiple setbacks. The

literature on failures of corporate mergers attributes failure to several key factors. Banal-Estañol and Seldeslachts (2011) in their analysis of merger failures state that this is based on poor pre-merger informational asymmetries, and the lack of post-merger cooperation and coordination from its management. Wyngaard and Kapp (2004) on the other hand, in their analysis of failures of higher education mergers believe that problems encountered fall largely on the poor choice of the merger partner, burdensome legislation and policies, timing of merger announcement, process management, and the manner in which human related issues are managed. Choosing the right partner for a merger requires in-depth research on the dynamics and compatibility of each organization's culture (Wyngaard & Kapp, 2004; Heterick, 2000; Wang et al., 2013; Eastman & Lang, 200; Haspeslagh & Jemison 1991). Organizational culture is a major factor to take into consideration as literature that examines post-merger activities reveal that it could be the sole reason for the failure of a merger (Heterick, 2000). There is more literature covering the dynamics of organizational culture in corporate mergers than that seen in the literature on higher education mergers. This makes the literature on corporate mergers a key reference point for understanding the human elements of mergers.

Literature reveals that the theories used in corporate world mergers are continuously used as the foundation for higher education mergers. It can be also be gathered that human, economic, political, and environmental factors whether directly or indirectly affect all organizations, colleges and universities included. These factors, when operating out of sync with the strategic goals of higher education institutions, may cause college and university administrators, just like corporate CEOs, to consider the option of merging (Eastman & Lang, 2001).

Mergers in Higher Education

Studies of the corporate world and its aggressive capitalist nature would suggest that merger discussions are not appropriate or applicable to the higher education environment since traditionally the focus of higher education has been more of a communitarian role as opposed to more contemporary practices toward market oriented roles (Kezar, 2009). In the communitarian role, higher education is seen as providing a public good to society, where students are educated to evoke social change and moral development. The communitarian approach which defined the charter between higher education and society dates back to 1636, a time when just a handful of supposedly young leaders were given the privilege to attend religious based institutions (Renn & Reason, 2013).

The landscape of society as a whole has drastically changed and a more contemporary neo-liberal role sees higher education tending to favor free-market capitalism (Kezar, 2009). American colleges and universities were not initially created in accordance to a functional business structure or with the intention to support a unified national plan (McBain, 2009). However, with the shift of the financial burden of a college education from the American government to the college student (Zumeta, Breneman, Callan, & Finney, 2012), society can fairly expect that with a generation of students that is focussed more on self rather than the greater good of society, a personal return on investment will be considered upfront and growing demand for administrators to steer a financially sound institution (Sanyal & Johnstone, 2011). This mindset of students, increasing privatization, along with the continuous decline in state appropriations since the 2008 great depression (Altbach, 2011; Sanyal & Johnstone,

2011) has caused the higher education market to become extremely competitive resulting in greater strain on the resources of American colleges and universities.

Even though new challenges such as economic pressures, decreasing state funding, unpredictable student demographics, and declining endowments have been causing colleges and universities to rethink their strategies toward sustainability, the phenomenon of mergers in higher education is often a last resort (McBain, 2009; Lang, 2002; Eastman & Lang, 2001; Jaschik, 2008). Others have thought mergers to be dramatic and drastic (Skodvin, 1999). Mulvey (1993) coins mergers to be the most extreme type of inter-institutional solution and the resounding inability to reverse the creation of the newly created institution. While mergers might not be the most sought after resolution to emerging challenges, it is looked at as a very viable means to mitigating recurring issues that threaten the sustainability of institutions (Lang, 2002). Higher education leaders nationally and globally have been known to draw for mergers before bowing out or to simply utilize it as a strategy to achieve institutional growth and meet growing students' demand (Harman & Harman, 2008; Skodvin, 1999; Lang, 2002). What follows in the literature review is a summary of the perspectives on higher education mergers in three countries that have used mergers as a key strategy to restructure their higher education systems. A transition into American higher education mergers will follow.

Global Mergers in Higher Education

Higher education institutions have been known globally for their 'go it alone' approach which is most times linked to behaviors such as being "often cranky and eccentric in their individuality, jealous of their autonomy, and aloof in their relationships

with other institutions and social estates” (Eastman and Lang, 2001 p. 5). Regardless of the “zealous independence” or disparities in worldwide geographical location colleges and universities were not immune to the waves of mergers in the late 20th century (Eastman & Lang, 2001 p. 5). In examining the resource dependency theory institutions, when faced with constraints, will usually demonstrate this underlying behavior towards a merger in an effort to maintain some amount of autonomy and control (2001).

The forces behind the waves of mergers globally can be categorized into two general areas; government initiated (forced) or institutionally initiated (voluntary) (Skodvin, 1999; Eastman & Lang, 200; Goedegebuure, 1992). Literature reveals that in most countries, mergers have been involuntary; used by educational authorities as a response to educational policy and as a strategy to curtail competition amongst colleges and universities (Skodvin, 1999). The table below shows that higher education restructuring efforts that took place in key countries throughout the world between 1960 and 1997 were mainly decided on by local or regional authorities (Skodvin, 1999).

Table 2: Overview of Forced and Voluntary Mergers

An overview of forced and voluntary mergers in a few countries		
Countries	Forced	Voluntary
Australia (1960s ‘the binary system’, 1987–90 ‘the unified system’)	X	
USA (1960–1997)	X	X
Canada (the reform of college education; the creation of Cegeps in the 1960s. The establishment of a new regional network university in the 1990s)	X	X
Norway (the state college reform in 1994)	X	
Sweden (the university and college reform in 1977, and the establishment of Mid-Sweden University in 1993)	X	X
The Netherlands (HBO reform 1983–87, and the new voluntary mergers from 1988)	X	X
Belgium (Flemish college reform 1994)	X	
Germany (<i>Gesamthochschulen</i> during the 1970s, <i>Fachhochschulen</i> during the 1980s)	X	X
Great Britain (the polytechnic reform during the 1960s and 1970s, and new voluntary mergers in 1980–1990s)	X	X
Finland (the polytechnic reform, (1991–95)	X	

Source: Skodvin – Mergers in Higher Education – Success or Failure?

Higher Education Mergers in Australia

Beginning in the 1960s Australian authorities used mergers to create polytechnics and colleges of advance education (CAEs). In Australia, this was due to the growing demand after World War II, to fulfil the need for manpower training and development in the field of science and technology (Goedegebuure, 1992; Meek, 1994). The creation of the CAEs in Australia marked the start of their binary system of higher education; students in CAEs would get associate degrees from pursuing vocational training while those in universities would be awarded degrees from pursuing academic and research work (Goedegebuure, 1992). Further federally imposed mergers occurred in Australia in the 1970s and 1980s to bring about the idea of “rationalizing teacher education” – with the intention of reducing the supply of teachers (Eastman & Lang, 2001 p. 5). Harman (1986) however, purported that between the 1960s to the 1980s there resulted a range in the types of Australian higher education mergers from involuntary to those that were semi-voluntary. Some institutions were forced to merge while others were initiated by the institutions with “some government encouragement or, perhaps, gentle pressure” (Harman, 1986, p. 570).

With the economic depression of the late 1980s along with political pressure, CAEs with a predominant focus on teacher education were told by the Commonwealth Government to merge with other multi- school CAEs or their federal funding would be blocked (Goedegebuure, 1992; Harman & Harman, 2003). A total of two universities and 39 CAEs underwent mergers by the end of 1983 (Harman, 1986). By 1987 even after resistance, a total of 26 out of 30 institutions were combined to make larger and more dominant CAEs or became a part of other universities (Harman & Harman, 2003).

Notable benefits as pointed out by Harman (1986) were a reduction in student teacher enrollment, redirected funding to other areas of study that showed growth, and more versatile CAEs as it related to their program offerings. Harman (1992) further pointed out, and was corroborated by Gamage (1992), that the CAE mergers resulted in unclear boundaries between the CAEs and universities as CAEs expanded.

The Commonwealth then went on to switch the binary system over to a unified higher education system throughout 1987 to 1990 (Skodvin, 1999). During this wave of mergers a size criteria was used as the determinant for commonwealth funding. “A minimum of 2000 equivalent full-time student units (EFTSU) was set to attract funding, 5000 EFTSU to attract teaching funding plus limited research funding, and 8000 EFTSU to achieve funding as a comprehensive research university” (Harman & Harman 2003 p. 7). According to Eastman and Lang (2001) even though the commonwealth government was faced with heavy resistance, they provided powerful incentives that caused institutions to rationalize themselves and seek out viable partners to merge with. In the end, about 56 of the 74 institutions participated in mergers (Harman & Harman, 2003). It is instrumental to point out that higher education institutions in an effort to survive will reinvent themselves and seek out viable partnerships without being told to do so.

Mergers in Britain

The pressures of World War II that caused the Australian higher education system to expand were also present in Britain. The demands for higher education after World War II gave rise to numerous upgrades of colleges to full-fledge universities (Brennan & Shah, 1994). Eastman and Lang (2001) stated that both the Australian and British

Government used mergers to create CAEs in an effort to restructure and expand their higher education system. Harman (2004) in the table below provides a concise table displaying the similarities between higher education mergers in Australia and Britain.

Table 3: Dominant Forms of Merger Activity in Australia and Britain

Stages	Australia	Britain
1	Mergers used as basis to create major colleges	Mergers used as basis to create some new universities and major colleges
2	Mergers used as instruments to address problems of sub-system institutional fragmentation, and duplication in non-university sector Number of independent specialist institutions drawn into universities or CAEs.	Mergers as instruments to address problems of sub-system fragmentation and duplication in non-university sector. Number of major specialist institutions drawn into universities, polytechnics or institutes of higher education
3	Mergers as policy instruments used to address problems of over-supply of teacher education places and relatively small institutions	Mergers used as policy instrument to address problems of over-supply of teacher education places and relatively small institutions.
4	System level restructuring with the use of mergers as key policy tool	Voluntary mergers of colleges, some universities, and London medical schools
5	Small number of voluntary mergers of universities with TAFE institutes	Proposed voluntary mergers of particular leading research universities

Source: Derived from session one delivered by Grant Harman at the COE International Seminar Publication Series 7 on Mergers and Cooperation among Higher education institutions: Australia, Japan and Europe March 2004.

Even though Britain used CAEs to expand higher education, in 1967 they extended this even further by creating a second lower-tier sector and called them *polytechnics* (Nyeu, 2006). The intention was to have traditional universities focus on research and academic roles, while polytechnics would develop programs toward

vocational training for part-time or sub-degree courses and give students a heightened sense of being associated with a bigger and more versatile institution (Harman & Harman, 2003; Nyeu, 2006). Literature revealed that by 1971, 30 polytechnics were established by merging 70 colleges of technology, education, and commerce (Fulton, 1991). With a minimum FTE of 2000 for continued funding to exist colleges of education, commerce and art had to quickly figure out merging partners (Pratt & Burgess, 1974; Harman & Harman, 2003). Again, the element of using mergers as a restructuring tool was visible in the 1970s and 1980s in Britain (Harman & Harman, 2003). Locke, Pratt & Burgess (1985) stated polytechnics and mergers as a whole were done mainly to deal with issues of fragmentation and relatively small colleges of education. The results of the reorganization between 1980 – 1981 were: “37 amalgamated with polytechnics, 12 integrated with universities, 24 merged with colleges of further education, 26 merged with other colleges of education, 27 continued as freestanding colleges, 25 ceased initial teach training without a merger to sustain them and closed, and one ceased initial teacher training without a merger and survived as a free standing college” (Locke, Pratt & Burgess 1985). Fulton (1991) stated that the steps taken by the British government to create polytechnics through mergers contributed immensely to the development of higher education in Britain and the move toward a mass system.

Meek (1988) further corroborates comments of Harman and Harman (2003), Eastman and Lang (2001), and Pratt and Burgess (1974) in stating that mergers were used extensively to mitigate unpredictable demographics, fiscal pressures, and the surplus supply of teachers. It is worth pointing out that the literature reveals that even though the major reorganization effort of some 160 colleges of education in the early 1970s was

initiated by the government, they entertained conversations with institutions that were interested in mergers and placed before them possible merging options. (Locke, Pratt, & Burgess, 1985).

Milestone mergers such as the sub-sector merger in 1983 between New University of Ulster and the Ulster Polytechnic created a wave of *Polyversity* merger attempts in Britain (Nyeu, 2006; Meek, 1988; Pratt & Burgess, 1974). By 1992 a transition of polytechnics into universities was done as a part of Britain's switch from the Binary system to a unified system (Nyeu, 2006). The unified system provide more autonomy and structure to higher education in Britain.

Over the years the British government has encouraged strategic alliances and added incentives for higher education institutions to do so; however, since 1992 there has only been a ten percent reduction in the number of institutions (Ramsden, 2001). Havergal (2015) with his reliance on experience in predicting mergers in the UK commented that "leading universities may consider international mergers in order to boost their reputation" and survival rate in the next five years. The predictions are driven by the changing global education market and policies that addresses educational boundaries. A summary of mergers and collaborations in nine European countries between 2003 and 2014 follows, this highlights from the literature the ongoing effort of higher education authorities to use mergers as a strategic tool to mitigate recurring issues.

Table 4: Higher education systems and restructuring in European Countries

Group 1	HE System	Policy – driven restructuring and mergers
Belgium	5 universities (3 public, 2 private) 17 university colleges(6 public, 11 private) 5 Private specialized HEIs	Transfer of long-term academic programs from university colleges to universities. The number of university colleges reduced from 30 to 17 and a further reduction to 13 is under planning.
Finland	14 public universities (2 public foundations) 24 polytechnics/universities of applied sciences (limited companies as of 2015)	HE System Reform since 2005 with a string of mergers: In 2010, the University of Eastern Finland (universities of Kuopio and Joensuu), the University of Turku (merger with School of Economics), and Aalto University (Helsinki Uni technology, School of Economics, Uni of Arts and Design). In 2013, the University of Arts Helsinki (3 performing art institutions). Several mergers completed or ongoing in the polytechnic sector. Restructuring of state research centers with universities under way.
Ireland	33 public HEIs (7 universities, 14 institutes of technology, 11 colleges of education, 1 specialist art college) and private HEIs	HE Landscape Reform since 2012: ongoing mergers of Institutes of Technology: 4 groups of institute of technology alliances have been formed, including Dublin Institute of Technology-IT Tallaght-IT Blanchardstown. New institutes will apply for the status of universities of technology in 2014
Poland	434 HEIs: 134 public (98 academic, 36 vocational) and 300 non-public HEIs	The KNOW program to build leading institutional or cross-institutional research centers. Changes in the law to facilitate HE consolidation, but so far only one public sector merger: the West Pomeranian University of Technology (based on a merger of

		Szczecin HEIs: Agricultural Academy and Polytechnic in 2008). 10 mergers of non-public HEIs 2012-2014 through absorption of one non-public institution by another.
Latvia	34 Public HEIs (6 universities, 11 other HEIs, 17 public colleges) 24 private HEIs 25 College (17 public and 8 private)	Several small HEIs have been incorporated into larger universities. 2 medical colleges were merged with the University of Latvia and 2 colleges with Riga Stradins University. The process of college integration into universities continues. Currently plans to integrate 3 more colleges into larger HEIs
Romania	92 accredited HEIs (55 state, 37 private)	The Technical University of Cluj-Napoca (TUCN) absorbed the North University of Baia Mare in 2012-2013.
Netherlands	55 public HEIs: 18 universities (including 4 theological), 37 UAS; around 60 privately funded HEIs	Most mergers took place from 1990 to 2000. A shift of focus in the 2000s towards small scale education which led to divisions. In recent years the government has encouraged bottom-up co-operation. After the Merger Control Law 2011, only a few mergers of small HEIs

Source: Extracted from European Commission Directorate- General for Education and Culture. Country Focus Workshop: **“Changing the higher education landscape: specialization, consolidation and territorial development”** - Riga, 3-4 April 2014

Mergers in the United States of America

World War II, as in the case of Australia and Britain, had its effects on higher education in the United States of America. Unlike Australia and Britain however, initiatives to restructure higher education in the United States have never been initiated by the federal government. Restructuring is typically done at the state or local

government level. State or local governments have no control over private independent colleges and universities (Stadtman, 1991). World War II brought about two major changes both at the state and federal level (Richardson & Marinez, 2009). These changes included the furtherance of federal funding for major universities' research and development programs, which was encouraged with the motive and expectation of improved national defense and advanced education in most disciplines (2009). The second change was a huge thrust in enrollment of returning soldiers using the GI Bill formally known as *The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944* (2009).

Despite these major development in higher education, by 1973 the National Commission on financing of Postsecondary Education issued a report stating that there were already seven mergers, six transfers of private sponsorship to public sponsorship, and a total of 29 institutional closures (Millet, 1976). Bates and Santerre (2000) in their historic time series analysis of private four-year colleges shared that in 1969 the merger rate was at an all-time high of 9.1 per 1000 and in 1994 at 1.2 per 1000. Millet posits that while the report might have been suspect, the vast number of mergers and closures at the time was an indication of the financial distress being faced by independent colleges and universities. The decline of the independent sector caused grave concern and warranted a special study ordered by President Ford in 1975 (Millet, 1976). While the study went unpublished, the National Commission on Financing of Postsecondary Education had previously accredited the independent sector's demise to its downward trending enrollment numbers (Millet, 1976). In an effort to curtail the impact on the independent sector, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education in 1972 communicated recommendations to set upper and lower limits for student enrollment in public

institutions (Millet, 1976). These limits included “2,000 and 5,000 for community colleges; 1000 and 2500 for liberal arts colleges; 5000 and 10,000 for comprehensive universities; and 5,000 and 20,000 for doctoral – granting universities” (Millet, 1976 p.11). Enrollment limits were not placed on independent colleges and universities. Millet (1976) states that this was intentionally done to boost their growth and limit the number of mergers and closures.

Martin and Samels (1994) chimes into the discussion surrounding United States academic mergers to say that they have been commonly characterized by financial insolvencies, involuntary closings, forced reorganizations, and huge human programmatic downturn. By 1980 it was thought that approximately 2 million jobs were lost in the manufacturing sector but alarmingly, proportionally twice the number had been lost through the failure and closures of colleges and universities during this time period (Cameron, Chaffee, Kim, & Whetten, 1987).

According to Richardson and Marinez (2009), up to the latter part of the 20th century little was expected from higher education institution as far as accountability and effectiveness were concerned. Lawrence however, points out that the concept of accountability was intended to be an objective for colleges and universities as outlined in the National Commission on Financing of Postsecondary Education 1973 report (Lawrence, 1974). The literature reveals that initiatives were taken by state legislators, system-wide coordinating boards, and chief executive officers to explore the advantages of mergers. Martin and Samels (1994) shares that these effort took place in Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Massachusetts, Florida, Georgia, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Texas and Oregon.

From 1971 through to 1975 a single higher education system was created in Wisconsin by merging the Wisconsin State Universities system with the University of Wisconsin system. (McBain, 2009). In 1991 the Arkansas Department of higher education, in an effort to increase access to two-year college education, implemented four mergers between vocational technical system and the technical and community institutions also, with the creation of 10 new technical colleges (Martin and Samels, 1994). In 1995 the Minnesota system merged “21 Minnesota community colleges, 34 technical colleges, and seven state universities were consolidated to create a new Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system consisting of five community colleges, 12 merged community and technical colleges, and seven state universities” (McBain, 2009).

Below is a summary of some more recent higher education institutional mergers in the United States of America between 2000 and 2017.

Table 5: Higher Education Mergers in the USA 2000 - 2017

Merged Institutions	Newly Created Institution	Year Completed
Georgia Southern University & Armstrong State University	Georgia Southern University	Anticipated 2018
Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College & Bainbridge State College	Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College	Anticipated 2018
Darton State College & Albany State University	Albany State University	2017
Georgia State University & Georgia Perimeter College	Georgia State University	2016
Kennesaw State University & Southern Polytechnic State University	Kennesaw State University	2014
Rutgers University & Rowan University	Rutgers-Camden Rowan	2013
New York University & Polytechnic University	New York University	2013
Waycross College & South Georgia College	South Georgia State College	2013

Middle Georgia College & Macon State College	Middle Georgia State College	2013
Gainesville State University & North Georgia College and State University	University of North Georgia	2013
Augusta State University & Georgia Health Sciences University	Augusta University	2013
Utah State University & College of Eastern Utah	Utah State University-East	2008
University of Toledo & Medical University of Ohio	University of Toledo	2006
University of Colorado-Denver & Colorado Health Sciences Center	University of Denver	2004
Penn State University & Dickinson School of Law	Penn State University	2002
Fordham University & Marymount College	Fordham University	2002
DePaul University & Barat College	DePaul University	2000
Trenholm State Technical College/ John M. Patterson State Technical College	Trenholm State Technical College	2000

The phenomenon of accountability was more greatly emphasized by state authorities in the wake of the 2008 economic depression. State governments, who have the legislative and financial responsibility over higher education institutions, have been hit with major financial constraints due to the economic downturn and had to transfer some of the impact to institutions in the form of decreasing state appropriations and increasing accountability (Zumeta, et al, 2012; McBain, 2012; Nyeu, 2006). This in turn invoked the further need for higher education institutions to increase partnerships and restructuring in recent times (McBain, 2012; Zumeta et al, 2012; Hayes, 2015).

Community colleges are considered to be the largest part of the American higher education system. They account for over 40% of college enrollments in America making

them a prime platform for effecting structural change (Driscoll, Comm & Mathaisel, 2013; Goedegebuure, 1992). American community colleges have also had their fair share of economical, organizational, and financial constraints that warranted structural changes. Literature shows that in 2010 a total of 13 technical colleges in the Technical College System of Georgia (TSSG) were merged with at least four more between 2011 and 2016. President Barak Obama in 2009 in an effort to promote an economically viable future and global leadership in education by 2020, encouraged each American to pursue at least a year of higher education (Driscoll, Comm & Mathaisel, 2013; American Association of Community Colleges, 2009). The strategy, though controversial, proposed to inject a total of \$12 billion into community colleges through upgraded facilities, improved academic programs, and courses (Fischer, 2009). By 2015 President Obama pushed an additional proposal to offer tuition-free community college education. Leonhardt (2011) posits that there are much better ways to allocate this \$12 billion to enhance higher education in America. Leonhardt's recommendation was that the government should concentrate more on raising the graduation rate of students in America (2011). Even with increasing injections in higher education by the federal government Woodhouse (2015) posits that due to economic pressures the trend of mergers will double its current 10-year average of two or three per year and will reach up to four or six per year. Woodhouse' statement reaffirms the theory proposed by Eastman and Lang (2001) when discussing the paradigms of mergers and that they are simply prompted by changes in the external environment.

Section Three

Higher Education Development and Restructuring in Georgia

Higher education in Georgia is comprised of two very distinct college systems. These are the University System of Georgia (USG) and the Technical College System of Georgia (TSCG) formerly known as the Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE) originally established in 1984 (University System of Georgia, 2009; Hodges, 2013; georgiaencyclopedia.org).

The establishment in 1931 of the Board of Regents (BOR) of the USG marked the inaugural move to organize public higher education in Georgia under a single authorizing body (University System of Georgia, 2009). The USG is recognized as a constitutionally approved authorizing body headed by a chancellor who is chosen by governor-appointed BOR members. (Hodges, 2013; University System of Georgia, 2009). The BOR has oversight of all 29 public colleges and universities along with the Georgia Archives and the Georgia Public Library System (University System of Georgia, 2009).

The commissioner-led TSCG operates as part of the state government. Its standards, policies, and regulations for its day-to-day operations are established by the TSCG commissioner and the state board of the TCSG. The TCSG has oversight of the 23 state's technical colleges, programs for adult education, and the development programs to meet the state's economic and workforce needs (georgiaencyclopedia.org). The urgency for vocational training dates back to 1917 in the decline of the cotton economy. This need was further enhanced throughout 1941 - 1945 to produce over seven million vocationally skilled workers for World War II (georgiaencyclopedia.org). Literature shows that today

the TCSG offers affordable specialized training in approximately 600 diplomas, certificates, and two-year associate programs (Georgia.org).

Literature reveal a myriad of efforts that have gone into improving higher education in Georgia. The need for such prompt action is evident in statistics surrounding the future of higher education in Georgia. In comparison to a 42 percent attainment level in 2015, it is estimated that by the year 2020 over 60 percent of Georgia jobs will require a degree or certificate, leaving a gap for 250,000 graduates (Hudson, 2015; Perna & Callan, 2012, Targeted News Service, 2014). Therefore, one of the ultimate goals of each effort is to address the underlying issue of needed growth in the number of post-secondary graduates in Georgia to fill the widening workforce gap (Hudson, 2015; completega.org).

As seen above, the chancellor of the USG reports to BOR while the commissioner of the TCSG reports directly to the TCSG board. Hodges (2013) purports that this reporting structure has made it difficult to collaborate on development efforts toward higher education in Georgia. Rodney (2011) states that similar to the 1930s, higher education today is operating in “an era of increased scrutiny, accountability, and student focus which makes having two separate systems that provide similar postsecondary education at the two year level a cause for concern” (p. 38). The separation of systems in Georgia have been a long standing topic of debate over the decades. The *Tough Choices or Rough Times* (2009) Sonny Perdue initiated education work group, recommended the merging of the technical colleges and USG two-year colleges. The USG Faculty Council position statement (2009) however, in rebuttal to the working group’s report communicated a lack of support for the group’s recommendation on the premise that both

missions although separate, continued to remain intact. The ultimate decision was made to maintain separate systems as it relates to the technical and two-year colleges and improve the overall articulation agreements between the two (Diamond, 2009). Hank Huckaby, then chancellor of the USG said that there is still a lot to be desired when pondering the level of partnerships between the TCSG and the USG (Hayes, 2015).

Regardless of the challenge, literature shows a number of projects that have been embarked on between the two systems that was proposed to work in favor of students and to improve state-wide educational attainment (2013). In an effort to enhance partnerships and promote college readiness, literature shows partnerships between the USG, K -12, and the TCSG. These partnerships are visible in numerous references in literature about the P-16 program, which got its popularity in the state of Georgia since 1995 (Hodges, 2013; Stark education partnership, 2016; Venezia, Callan, Kirst & Usdan, 2006; Henry & Kettlewell, 1999). Developmental efforts were also shown in literature addressing changes from the quarter system to the semester system by the USG in 1998 with TSCG following suit in 2011 to allow ease of transferability of its graduates (Hodges, 2013). The 13-year gap in the TCSG following suit might be based on the drastic system-wide enrollment decline of approximately 5,000 students due to students taking fewer courses (Crist, 2010). Crist (2010) posits that the decline in system-wide enrollment resulted in increased allocations of funds by the state legislature to USG institutions.

Irrespective of the decline, enrollment later rebounded and in 2011 further partnerships were visible in an increase in the number of courses transferable to USG from the TCSG system (Targeted News Service, 2011). Another popular partnership effort aimed at fostering increasing educational attainment in Georgia is the Complete

College Georgia program. Initiated by Governor Nathan Deal in 2011, the Complete College Georgia encompasses “research driven strategies aligned with the primary goal of the initiative: to increase student access to, progression through, and successful graduation from institutions of higher education” (Completega.org). Other efforts include Georgia’s comparatively substantial merit based Hope Scholarship, the Move on When Ready (MOWR) program, Achieving the Dream, and the TCSG Quick Start Program aimed at increasing collaboration between technical college training and the needs of companies (Perna & Callan, 2012; Knapp & Alford, 2012). In reviewing the numerous collaborative efforts to promote higher education in Georgia, the literature falls shy of a record of recent concrete discussions to merge both higher education systems.

Key to this research study is the major effort made by TCSG Governor Jackson when he announced a series of administrative mergers in 2008. The popular topic of discussion during the time was to merge the then 33 technical colleges with the eight USG two-year colleges (Diamond, 2009). The governor opted to merge institutions within the TCSG system (2009). The mergers were primarily aimed at mitigating the impact of the 2008 economic downturn, improving the operational efficiencies to match at least a 14 percent reduction in state appropriations and effectively deploying and keeping instructors in key growth areas, all of which would strategically improve the TCSG system and lead to enhanced student success (Salzer, 2011; Hodges, 2013,). The TCSG mergers, as seen in literature, has resulted in a reduction in system-wide cost of at least \$6.7 million per year (Salzer, 2011). Similar to corporate mergers much of the success surrounding mergers is based on financial fortitude. What follows next is a discussion of the USG mergers that followed the bold step taken by the TCSG in 2008 to

restructure the technical system. The USG mergers announced in 2012 were yet another effort to restructure higher education in Georgia.

University System of Georgia Consolidations Since 2012

Table 6: USG mergers since 2012

Merged Institutions	Newly Created Institution	Year Completed
Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College & Bainbridge State College	Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College	Anticipated 2018
Georgia Southern University & Armstrong State University	Georgia Southern University	Anticipated 2018
Albany State University & Darton State College	Albany State University	2017
Georgia State University & Georgia Perimeter College	Georgia State University	2016
Kennesaw State University & Southern Polytechnic State	Kennesaw State University	2014
Waycross College & South Georgia College	South Georgia State College	2013
Middle Georgia College & Macon State College	Middle Georgia State College	2013
Gainesville State University & North Georgia College and State University	University of North Georgia	2013
Augusta State University & Georgia Health Sciences University	Augusta University	2013

Source: Compiled based on information gathered from University System of Georgia website <http://www.usg.edu/consolidation/>

In 2012 Hank Huckaby, Chancellor of the USG, validated discussions of upcoming mergers, when the announcement was made that eight of its 35 colleges and

universities would be merged (Sigo, 2012; Salzer, 2011). As seen in the table above, since the initial announcement in 2012 four new institutions were established in 2013 with an additional six institutions considered for mergers. Only two consolidations at the time of this study remained incomplete, namely, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and Bainbridge College, and Georgia Southern University and Armstrong State University which will ultimately leave the USG with 26 institutions. The move made by the TCSG impacted the decision by the USG to merge key campuses and was in fact the only case of reference for a significant system wide consolidation effort (Hayes, 2015; Hodges, 2013). A review of the literature however, shows that while a positive impression might have been made, there were reservations about the strategy utilized by the TCSG to accomplish its mergers (Hayes, 2015; McBain, 2012; Slazer, 2012; University System of Georgia, 2012). This position supports Goedegeburre's (1992) view of the complexities of higher education restructuring and in particular the dynamics of unanticipated institutional cultures and as such requires careful scrutiny, research and execution. This study will help to add to the limited pool of literature surrounding higher education mergers.

In an analysis of the USG between the periods of 1931-1943 Cottingham (1990) makes reference to Fred Kelly's statement made in 1933.

This multiplicity of governing boards of educational institutions in each State could hardly be expected to build up a coordinated system of higher education in the State. With the advice and under the leadership of the president of the institution in each case, the board members would almost inevitably become zealous advocates of the institution's desires to expand and multiply services. That

other institutions were already giving the contemplated service or were in the position to give it more economically was quite as likely to stimulate as to deter the determination of the board to take on the task. Institutional growth and institutional prestige were the primary considerations, rather than the dovetailing of the programs of all institutions into the most effective scheme for providing a complete but economical system of higher education for the State.

(Kelly, F. 1933- The U. S. Office of Education)

The statement above is befitting one of the rationales of increase resource efficiency given by Huckaby for the series of mergers since 2012. The following additional reasons were given for embarking on the mergers:

- the onset of the economic recession which begun in 2007;
- decreasing state appropriation for higher education;
- rate of increase in tuition and fees above the rate of inflation;
- need for increase graduation rates of Georgia students to meet workforce needs;
- need to strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders (TCSG); and
- need to reinforce the importance of higher education and improved standard of living (Hayes, 2015; Hodges 2013)

While the underlying reasons given points to the bottom line, the USG communicated “upfront that the purpose was not to reduce the bottom line. The purpose was to be more efficient, reduce administration, and direct those savings into the academic enterprise” (Hayes, 2015). This intended goal will be expounded on when assessing the overall outcomes of the institutional consolidation between Southern City State College and Southern Point College, completed in 2013.

USG's Guiding Principles for Consolidations

Similar to any major venture or project, it is imperative that given the underlying paradigms, goals are established as a measuring stick for future outcomes. Prior to announcing four consolidations in 2012, six guiding principles or goals were shared by Huckaby in November of 2011 (University System of Georgia, 2011). Literature reveals that the drive behind this was so that the USG was organized, and had a structure that could meet the growing needs of the 21st century (University System of Georgia, 2011).

The principles as directly outlined by the USG are to:

- increase opportunities to raise education attainment levels;
- improve accessibility, regional identity, and compatibility;
- avoid duplication of academic programs while optimizing access to instruction;
- create significant potential for economies of scale and scope;
- enhance regional economic development; and
- streamline administrative services while maintaining or improving service level and quality

The guiding principles acts as a reference point for the USG to judge the accomplishments of each consolidation and their contribution to the overall strategic goals of the state of Georgia (University of Georgia, 2011; Hayes, 2015).

This study seeks to use the guiding principles shared by the USG to help in understanding the expected outcomes and implementation process of the Southern City State College and Southern Point College consolidation.

Section Four

Outcome of Mergers of Higher Education Institutions

While literature shows some authors such as Hogarty (1970) believing that mergers are measurable and that the success of a merger can be seen in the value of the owner's interest. Others such as Eastman and Lang (2001) Kalra, Gupta, and Bagga (2013), Vazirani (2015), Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991) believe that it is difficult even for CEOs of corporate mergers, to measure or define the success of a merger. Bengston (1992) commented that it is also difficult to pin point when a merger is actually complete. "It is even more difficult to measure the success of mergers in the higher education sector, in which agreement on basic goals is lacking and the very concept of institutional performance measurement remains controversial" (Eastman & Lang, 2001). Literature reveals that the typical problems that are experienced in mergers usually stem from the choice of the institutional merging partner (sometimes involuntary), existing policies and legislations, merger timing, process management, and the handling of people issues (Botha, 2001; MacNeil, 2000; Marks, 1997).

As already explored in the literature, there are a number of reasons why mergers occur and this might form the criteria for the interpretations of outcome evaluations. Skodvin (1999) in assessing the results of higher education mergers worldwide states that the outcomes fell into three dimensions. Namely:

- academic activities;
- economics; and
- governance, administration, and management

The interpretation of basic goal achievements for a merger may differ based on the institution (2001). Relating to merger outcomes, reference was made to increases in an institution's faculty/student ratio, which may appear to some to be improved economies of scale while it can also be viewed as a decline in instructional quality (2001). Fielden and Markham (1997) warn to be careful when assessing potential economies of scale from a merger. Economies of scale may also include increased institutional size, graduations, and enrollment rates (Etschmaier, 2010). In some cases, as those in the UK and Britain, gains from restructuring were transformed into major expansions resulting into capital development for a smaller number of institutions (Harman & Harman, 2003). McBain (2009) concisely summarizes his recommendations on what to consider in regards to outcomes when contemplating a merger:

American public higher education is not a monolithic system: its components range from research universities to regional comprehensive institutions to community and technical colleges. Thus, different types of institutions' constituencies and missions may not necessarily be best served by a merger, despite what a balance sheet might predict in savings. Or, depending on the circumstance, two institutions may be better served by something less than a full merger that preserves their unique strengths while allowing them to leverage combined resources to better serve more students and community members. In the end every merger is different and no single set of operating principles can guarantee its success (McBain, 2009).

Wyngaard and Kapp (2004) support McBain's statement above in stating that there is a need to consider the readiness of each institution to go through the myriad of changes that come with the merger process. The ability of constituencies to cope with these range of changes can predict the outcome of the merger. Educational units need to cope with the leadership transformations, new strategies to outcome based teaching approaches, modifications to academic offerings, staffing, and enrolment changes (Wyngaard & Kapp, 2004).

To support the information presented in this literature review, the researcher compiled a list of all published studies related to the topic of this study. This tabular list is presented below. The consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College will be examined in detail in Chapter Four. Chapter Four will delve into the consolidation of both institutions using a case study approach. Beyond the Conceptual Analysis Chart, what follows next is a detailed explanation of the methodology used for this study.

Conceptual Analysis Chart

The following table highlights studies that align with the topic of this research paper

Table 7: Conceptual Analysis

TOPIC: Studies related to mergers of higher education institutions				
STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Wingaard and Kapp (2004)	Examines the impact of mergers on human side and people issues related to mergers	35 Participants from universities, technikons, colleges of education, and technical colleges	Focus Groups Survey (open-ended questions)	<p>Positive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better utilization of staff qualifications -Sharing of resources & facilities -A more cost effective operation in terms of econ of scale -Improved academic quality overtime <p>Negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Process took too long -Resignations, low morale, fear of loss of jobs & authority
Warren (2008)	Comparison of faculty and administrator's perceptions of merger of Kentucky's community colleges and vocational institutes	569 faculty and administrators	Qualitative - Survey	Administrators held more positive views of the merger than faculty

Etschmaier (2010)	Assessment of mergers and their success	15 participants from 3 institutional mergers. Namely, Art Institute of Boston/Lesley College; Mount Vernon College/George Washington University; Kentucky Community Colleges and Technical Institutes	Qualitative Approach: Interviews Historical document Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mergers similar to businesses, may have broader strategic goal of building market strength. - Assessment measures for HE are different than those of businesses but ultimately based on economic indicators. - Each merger had some level of struggle with blending human resources - The quality of transformational leadership was a strong determinant of the success of each merger.
Hawks (2015)	Assess the consolidation of a regional university	39 Participants comprised of Staff, Faculty, Administrators And Students.	Case Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consolidation had a positive effect on the institution - Consolidation is not applicable to every institution - Results generalizable to theory but not to entire population of colleges & universities

McClanahan (2011)	Capture perceptions of mid & senior level leaders involved in vocational and technical institute mergers in Arkansas	44 mid & senior level leaders involved in vocational and technical institutional mergers in Arkansas since 2003	Qualitative - Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Imperative that effective communication is upheld at all phases of the merger process - Cumbersome operational procedures and employee attitudes were the primary disadvantages of the merger - Fiscal advantages were the primary advantage of the mergers
TOPIC: Studies related to frameworks or models for mergers in higher education				
STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Fong-Yee (2006)	Implementation Process of mergers in china	59 Participants - Faculty, administrators & students	Qualitative - Individual & group interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Constituents are more optimistic about a merger that is perceived to bring better working conditions and academic prestige. - Mergers involving a larger institution provides a backbone for the smaller and makes the physical transitions easier since the

				<p>larger institution's policies and regulations can be adopted by the new institution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Merging with a larger institution creates a mixed sense of superiority and inferiority among the constituencies - Synchronization of the people are difficult during a merger. - Mergers provide an opportunity to review and revise institutional operations for advancement - The greater environment, its social, economic, and political environment has a profound effect on the performance of the newly merged institution. - The quality of leadership determines the outcome of a merger. - Delegated leadership is needed for multi-campus universities.
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				However, it may slow down decision making.
Ripkey (2016)	Study of an Institutional Merger: Considerations for theory and practice.	23 participants comprised of individuals from executive university level, senior university level, and senior department level	Case Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identified 7 distinct phases of the merger process - Silent, Assessment, Alignment, Integration, Acceleration, and Refinement
Botha M. (2001)	Models for mergers and problems encountered during Higher Education mergers	Review of Collection of institutional senior leader's comments in the NPHE report	Document Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No distinct blueprint or model for mergers - Mergers are complex and unique with high opportunity for failure - Requires detailed advanced planning and effective management
Jackson-Fobbs (1997).	Significant steps for instituting mergers	<p>2 Historical institutional merger Cases – University of Bridgeport & University of New Haven. Savannah State & Armstrong State</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 20 faculty and administrators in total were interviewed from both institutions 	<p>Qualitative Approach</p> <p>Interviews Document Analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - White – White (predominant population) mergers far more successful than black – white mergers - Having input in the merger negotiations aids in having a positive mindset toward the merger itself - 5 -10 year assessment needed of

				transitions completed or incompleted
TOPIC: Studies related to Rationale for Mergers				
STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Kinser and Hill (February, 2011)	Facing Market Forces & promoting the common good	38 participants (institutional leaders from Canada, Europe, & America) in the American Council on Education Translantic Dialogue	Qualitative Discussions	

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The literature review has shown that higher education merger processes can be tedious, overwhelming, and time-consuming. This lengthy process has caused institutions to lose their institutional identity, missions, cultures, and erode the morale of remaining employees (Botha, 2001). Regardless of the drawbacks, institutions embark on mergers to potentially gain organizational, managerial, financial, and/or operational efficiency (Martin & Samels, 2001). Motivations for embarking on mergers could range from mandated state-wide economic goals toward workforce skill development to institutional need to enhance research capacity, increase academic course offerings, spread the span of control over markets, or resource monopolization (Etschmaier, 2010, Hayes, 2015; Kalra, Gupta, & Bagga, 2013; Vazirani, 2015). Within the United States of America and throughout the year 2000 – 2016 a total of 15 mergers took place with higher education institutions. Of those fifteen mergers, seven of them (approximately 50%) in the form of consolidations, a type of merger, occurred in the state of Georgia. The reason for these consolidations according to Hayes (2015), included the need to enhance the educational attainment of Georgians, create greater resource efficiency within institutions, and promote economic development. While nine consolidations have been executed by the USG at the completion of this study, there is limited literature to capture the implementation process and the perceptions of its constituents within and outside the consolidated institutions.

With each merger having its own unique set of cultural, political, environmental, and economical factors implementing this phenomenon using a systematic blueprint is difficult if not impossible; there is no single point of reference (Skodvin, 1999; Botha, 2001). While literature on corporate mergers is used as a primary source for strategies, the success or failure of corporate mergers are typically measured by the newly merged organization's financial performance or earnings per share over time (Drowley, Lewis, & Brooks, 2013; Banal-Estañol & Seldeslachts, 2011). Higher education institutional mergers on the other hand, are more complex and require greater analysis to understand their success or failure.

The increasing occurrence of higher education mergers prompts the need for more literature on this merger type to gain a greater understanding of different implementation models and the perceptions of its constituents as it relates to the expected outcomes (Harman & Harman, 2008; Skodvin, 1999; Lang, 2002). This study examined the extent to which the perceived expected outcomes of a USG consolidation have been actualized. To gain this understanding, the researcher carried out a single case study of a 5-year old USG consolidation.

Research Questions

As mentioned in Chapter One this researcher answered three main questions concerning the consolidation (merger) of two higher education institutions in the USG: Southern City State College and Southern Point College. The three main research questions were:

1. What were the perceived expected outcomes of the consolidation?

2. To what extent have these perceived expected outcomes been realized?
3. What was the implementation process used for the consolidation?

To further capture the specific data needed the researcher formulated additional semi-structured interview questions that were brief and easy to answer (Gay & Airasian 2003). All questions were listed and carefully outlined according to the category of the participants. This document is located in the appendix of the study.

Research Design

This single case study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research methods, with the qualitative research method having more dominance than the latter throughout the study. By way of a purposeful sampling strategy, the qualitative aspect of the study included semi-structured interviews of senior-level administrators and faculty members, along with a detailed document analysis. The quantitative portion of the study incorporated the descriptive analysis of statistical data including but not limited to student enrollment, graduations rates, and student faculty ratio. The researcher also analyzed other relevant statistical data discovered while conducting the case study.

Using mixed methods within the case study approach aided in better solidifying the conceptual framework described in Chapter One. Based on the study's conceptual framework, the underlying reason for higher education mergers is typically some element of inefficiency related to areas of resource usage, finances, academic programming, or staffing. Analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data allowed the researcher to gain a greater understanding of the reasons for the institutional merger and fully examine the merger process and constituents' perceptions of the expected outcomes.

Yin (2003), states that the distinctive necessity for a case study strategy is predicated on the desire of the researcher to delve into a phenomena that is socially complex. Yin (2003) states that the “case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (p. 2). According to Hartley (2004) a more formal definition of a case study is “a detailed investigation, often with data collected over a period of time, of a phenomena, within their context...to provide an analysis of the context and processes which illuminate the theoretical issues being studied” (p. 323). Kohlbacher (2006) purports that a case study should not be viewed as a method but more as a strategy that encompasses numerous methods; qualitative, quantitative or a combination of both. Utilizing the case study strategy allowed the researcher to embrace all types of data during the study; it provided the best of both the quantitative and qualitative worlds.

With multiple sources, a case study database was developed in order to maintain the chain of evidence collected (Yin, 2003). Beyond the collection of evidence specific to the consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College, the researcher analyzed the data using content analysis. Content analysis involves the reduction of volumes of information into more understandable and manageable bits (Patton, 2002). Specifically, the analysis of interview data and document contents pertaining to the consolidation was done in an effort to answer the research questions that drove this study. Yin (2003) holds that within the data analysis process there needs to be “examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise a recombining of both quantitative and qualitative evidence to address the initial propositions of a study” (p.

109). In essence the researcher endeavored to identify patterns within the data gathered and ultimately reported the results and findings identified at the end of the study.

The researcher's goal in conducting this research was not to predict an outcome of higher education mergers but rather to gain an in-depth understanding of the complex phenomenon of higher education mergers and the real life environment in which they occur (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). According to Yin (1994) case studies are efficient under three circumstances: 1) where the study ask *why* or *how* questions, 2) the focus of the study is on contemporary events, 3) and the study's topic does not require that the researcher have control over its external elements. This study satisfied all the requirements identified above by Yin (1994). The researcher therefore believed that the case study strategy adequately fulfilled this unique goal.

Population

Gay and Airasian (2003 p. 102) defines the term population as “the group of interest to the researcher, the group which the results of the study will ideally generalize.” This study was aimed at targeting constituents at Point Consolidated University who were classified as employees. More specifically, the population will consist of employees who were employed to either institutions prior to the consolidation and remains employed to the newly consolidated institution post-consolidation. According to Creswell (2007) it is critical that participants in a study have experienced the phenomenon being studied. Employees within a higher education institution generally include faculty and staff. The results of this study generalized the position or perceptions of faculty and staff at Point Consolidated University.

Sample Selection

Capturing the lived experiences of the constituents or participants in the study was pivotal to understanding their perceptions and the consolidation implementation process (Ripkey, 2016). To ensure that reliable and content rich data is gathered, the researcher utilized a purposeful sampling strategy to identify and recruit participants (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2003; Gay & Airasian, 2003).

Purposeful sampling can be otherwise called judgment sampling. When utilizing this strategy, the researcher typically identified and selects a sample based on his or her prior experience or knowledge of the phenomena or population being studied (Gay & Airasian, 2003). Literature shows that researchers who choose to conduct purposive sampling are typically interested in “case study analysis – why particular people (or groups) feel particular ways, and the processes by which these attitudes are constructed...” (Palys, 2008 p. 1). It is on this premise that authors such as Palys believe that intentionally choosing an articulate informant who is knowledgeable of the areas of interest is critical and could advance the study (Palys, 2008). Purposive sampling is also considered to be cost-effective and time efficient. Disadvantages associated with the purposive sampling strategy include its vulnerability toward researcher bias and difficulty in generalizing research findings (Dudovskiy, n.d).

The researcher employed a purposeful sampling to select the representative sample for the case study. Theoretically, under this strategy the researcher intentionally selected the participants and the location or site for the case study because these participants could purposefully provide insight and bring greater understanding of the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Gay & Airasian, 2003; Berg, 2007; Patton, 2002).

Typically, the researcher's attempt to narrow down the ideal sample size for a case study is challenging since literature shows an "obvious tension between those who adhere to qualitative research principles, by not quantifying their samples – and those who feel that providing guidance on samples sizes is useful" (Morris, 2010 p. 3). Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) however, based on their systematic analysis data research, purport that studies that show a high level of homogeneity within its population requires a sample of six participants to sufficiently achieve meaningful themes and valuable interpretations (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Miles and Huberman (1994) also shares similar sentiments in that qualitative sampling is typically small with the main intention of capturing depth and detail which brings richness to the data. The sample they state, should continue until no new information is forthcoming (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Beyond six interviews Guest, et al (2006) thought there will be a heightened level saturation of data collected. The researcher believed that including faculty members and senior-level administrators enhanced the level of equality and objectivity amongst interviewees.

In summary, the researcher intentionally selected and recruited participants from the consolidated institutions. This was done in an effort to create neutrality and lessen any remaining institutional cultural bias that may negatively influence the outcome of the study (Botha, 2001; Ripkey, 2016). The researcher identified senior-level administrators and faculty members who were employed to either Southern City State College or Southern Point College pre-consolidation and who are now employed to Point Consolidated University. Selecting at least six participants from the consolidated institution is based on Guest et al (2006) who, based on the findings from their research,

stated that data saturation begins to occur after interviewing six participants bearing similar characteristics. In an effort to capture additional constituent's viewpoint on the expected outcomes of the consolidation the researcher had sought to interview administrators at the USG office, alumni association leaders, and a community organization leader.

Considering all the proposed constituents above, the researcher intended to interview between 8 to 15 participants. These 8 to 15 potential participants for interviews included senior-level administrators, faculty, USG administrators, alumni association leaders, and community organization leaders. The actual outcome and number of respondents during the data collection process was reported in detail in Chapter Four.

Participants

The researcher acknowledged the sensitivity of the topic of institutional consolidations and understood why interviewees might have been wary of divulging personal information or organizational perspectives. This discomfort might have been even greater if the researcher was seen as an outsider with no vested interest in the well-being of their system or institution. Based on this awareness, the researcher established a sense of trust and utilized key personal contacts to enlist the support of potential participants at Point Consolidated University. This was done to gauge the level of support the researcher would have gotten during the actual field research. Participants were assumed to be willing to impart information because it gave them an opportunity to share their experiences now that the event had already taken place.

The researcher also took another measure and conducted a pilot study to test the interview protocol instrument used in the actual research study. Three participants were recruited from another USG institution that was currently under-going a consolidation. Participants were targeted based on the integral role played in their institution's consolidation implementation. The section on *pilot study* provided further details of the steps taken.

For this research study, a purposeful sampling strategy was used to identify and recruit 8 to 15 potential participants to avoid data saturation. The study's conceptual framework tracked consolidation decisions from the system level (top) down to the institution and community level. Therefore, administrators from the USG level, institution level administrators, faculty, and key community level participants were recruited. Administrators at the system level were selected based on their involvement in the Southern City State College and Southern Point College consolidation. Given the researcher's involvement in a USG consolidation, interviewing people in key leadership positions at the system-wide level were thought to be appropriate for the study. These positions included but were not limited to assistant vice chancellors and directors. Criteria for institutional level administrators were senior administrators who had employment at either institution prior to consolidation and was currently employed at the newly consolidated institution. Senior level administrators were those with broad responsibility over several departments or those with responsibility over specific departments within the institution. Examples of senior positions include: provost, associate provost, assistant provost, associate vice presidents, and assistant vice presidents, and directors. To select senior administrative participants, the researcher

consulted with a current colleague who was a part of the consolidation efforts between Southern City State College and Southern Point College. Names provided of senior administrators matching this criterion was listed and further narrowed down based on confirmations via the PCU website that they are still employed to the institution. Two positions were selected for faculty. These were faculty senate presidents of both institutions prior to consolidation. Community level participants were limited to a key leader of a community organization focused on economic development during consolidation, and the leaders of each alumni associations prior to the consolidation.

The principal investigator operated on the premise that the above participants were articulate informants who had lived experiences of the consolidation, were knowledgeable of the areas of interest, objective, and could advance the study.

Below is a table showing the data sources selected for the study and the expected information to be gathered in relation to the study's instrumentations.

Table 8: Data Sources

Data Sources	Why Selected	Instrumentation	What Can They Tell?	To What Extent?
System (USG) Administrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integral in the initial decision to consolidate any USG institutions • Provides guidance throughout the consolidation process 	Interviews Documents Field Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the specific rationale for the SCSC and SPC consolidation • Better clarify and give reason for the steps taken to consolidate SCSC and SPC 	The answers provided will be used to answer the three broad research questions. Specifically the questions of the perceived expected outcomes of the consolidation. The answer will

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the expected outcomes for consolidation • Discuss the factors affecting the consolidation • Discuss the impact of the consolidation on the community 	also provide the reason for consolidation.
University Level Administrator	Provide the skills, expertise, and leadership needed at the institutional level to initiate and implement the consolidation	Interviews Documents Field Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how working groups were set up • Discuss the hurdles transitioning from two institutions to one consolidated institution • Clarify the steps taken to consolidate SCSC and SPC • Discuss the understood expected outcomes • Discuss the extent to which the expected outcomes have been achieved • Discuss the assessment and evaluation of the newly consolidated institution 	The responses provided will be used to answer all of the main research questions. The answers will also provide a better understanding of the day to day processes and experiences of stakeholders

Faculty Senate	Has oversight of faculty related matters and is integral in the decisions concerning academics and faculty during the consolidation implementation	Interviews Documents Field Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the role of faculty and experiences during the consolidation process • Discuss expected outcomes • The extent to which expected outcomes have been achieved • Discuss the transition of the academic organizational structure 	Use the answers to address all three research questions and more specifically the role of faculty in the implementation their perception of the expected outcomes of the consolidation
University Alumni	Direct involvement in the community of both institution prior and post consolidation. Had a vested interest in preserving the historical and cultural experiences of each institution	Interviews Documents Field Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe their perception of the expected outcomes of the consolidation • Discuss the progress of the newly consolidated institution • Discuss their perception of the implementation process • Describe the transition of the alumni organization 	Use this information to address the implementation process and the rationale for the consolidation
Community Agency	Direct involvement with faculty, staff, and students to foster geographical development	Interviews Documents Field notes	Discuss the impact of the consolidation on the development of the area	Use this information to address the expected outcomes of the consolidation and the extent to

				which the expected outcomes have been achieved in the community of [specific city].
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Instrumentation

Interviews, document analysis, and field notes were the primary sources of data for this study. For interviews, an interview protocol developed by Fong Yee Nyeu (2006) was modified and reproduced in this study. The modified interview protocol is located in Appendix A. The letter granting permission from Fong Yee Nyeu is located in Appendix B. The interview protocol was developed and published in May 2006 by Nyeu and was used as the primary instrument for Nyeu’s dissertation entitled “The implementation of higher education mergers in China.” Permission was received via email from Fong Yee Nyeu. Nyeu’s semi-structured interview questions directly addresses the research questions that this study answered.

In an effort to better understand and answer the research question, “What were the perceived expected outcomes of the consolidation?” and “To what extent have the perceived expected outcomes been realized?” each participant was asked to supply information on the consolidation/merger rationale, their perceptions of the merger, and the political, economic, cultural, and social factors associated with the consolidation (Nyeu, 2006). The third research question, “What was the implementation process used for the consolidation?” of Southern City State College and Southern Point College was addressed by having participants share information about the implementation plan used

for the consolidation, their perception of the plan, and their level of involvement in the process.

The interview protocol further allowed the researcher to delve into and collect data on the possible issues that were experienced during the consolidation. This was addressed by asking participants to share information about the barriers experienced throughout the consolidation process. Further inquiry was made by asking participants about their perceptions on how the institution had improved in key areas such as academics and resource efficiency.

Pilot Study

In order to improve the content validity of a study, Creswell (2009) shared the importance of conducting a pilot study when utilizing a survey instrument. This single case study used as its data collection methods document analysis, interviews, and field notes. The researcher believed, similar to surveys, conducting a pilot study helped to validate the general framework used for the interview protocol. The pilot study helped to identify the appropriateness of terminologies used in each question, the clarity of each question, and the pilot study participant's perceptions of each question in relation to the intended purpose. Pilot testing enhanced the overall accuracy of the data obtained during the interviews (Hawks, 2015).

The pilot testing process began with the researcher's doctoral committee being used as a panel of experts to review the modified interview protocol in an effort to further reduce and narrow the length of the instrument. The pilot study was conducted at a separate USG institution which was currently undergoing a consolidation. After IRB

approval was granted, the researcher made contact via email using the Initial Contact Letter (See Appendix E) with the appropriate office for research and sponsored programs to gain support for the pilot study. Once support was gained, based on the purposive sampling technique, three potential participants for the pilot study at the chosen USG institution was contacted via email using the Participant Invitation Email (see Appendix B). Participants chosen for the pilot study were senior administrators who were integral in their institution's consolidation implementation. Upon receiving an email response from a potential participant expressing a willingness to participate in the pilot study, the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix A) was sent out via email for signature. The researcher then set up and conducted of semi-structured interviews with the three senior administrators. The researcher conducted all pilot interviews onsite, each of which lasted an average of 1 ½ hours. The pilot study tested the interview protocol for appropriateness of terminologies, clarity and the perceptions of questions. The feedback derived from each participant was documented and used to edit and improve the interview protocol. All documentation, electronic or digitized audio files related to the pilot study will be destroyed after five years. Data collected during the pilot study was not presented in any reports from this study and will remain confidential. What follows next is an overview of the ways in which data was collected in an effort to minimize any inherent bias on the half of the researcher.

Validation and Reliability

The researcher at the outset of the study was an active participant in the implementation of one of USG's nine consolidations. To eliminate any unforeseen and

unintended biases, several strategies were utilized by the researcher to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. These strategies included triangulation, in-depth interviews of multiple people, and the member checking of interview transcriptions. These steps were taken to mitigate the presence of researcher bias in the data analysis and collection processes.

Triangulation is based on the premise that no one method is ever adequate in answering a study's research questions (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) states that a study's validity and reliability is strengthened when different methods or approaches are combined. The researcher demonstrated three types of triangulation in this study as outlined by Patton (2002); methodological triangulation, data triangulation and theory triangulation. Methodological triangulation was shown by combining both the qualitative and quantitative research methods for this study. Data triangulation was demonstrated by the use of multiple data sources throughout the study. Theory triangulation was depicted by examining the case study from both an efficiency theory and process theory perspective (2002).

The conducting of in-depth interviews with multiple individuals helped to solidify the validity and reliability of the study. Senior level administrators from each institutions prior to the consolidation who are now working at the newly consolidated institution will provide fair and objective perspectives of the consolidation. Coupled with this is the independent transcription of each recorded interview. These steps provided a more thorough and rich data analysis.

Data Collection

Typically, data collection for a case study utilizes multiple-methods (Maxwell, 1996; Creswell, 2007). The researcher, for this study, used multiple sources of information to answer the research questions. These included in-depth individual interviews, field notes, and document analysis. The researcher was limited by time, allowing two and half months to collect all the data. What follows next is an overview of each data collection method that was used for this study.

Interviews

Utilizing interviews for this case study was essential because they captured the degree and involvement of an individual in the planning, implementation, and assessment of the consolidation (Nyeu, 2006; Yin, 2009). Interviews also helped to gain insight into and captured the individual's perception of the entire consolidation process. Interviews for this study took on a face to face semi-structured approach. The interview protocol contained semi-structured and probing questions (see appendices). Using this approach allowed the interviewee to freely and comfortably elaborate on answers and gave the researcher the opportunity to use these answers to prompt further discussion. This allowed for the collection of rich data. The researcher however, was keen on controlling the interview and guided the questioning back to structured questions. At the outset of all interviews the researcher re-stated the purpose of the research, the steps to be followed during the interview, re-affirmed the interviewee's consent, confidentiality, and asked for permission to record the session. In the event that the interviewee denied fully or in part the request to record the researcher would have taken copious notes.

To test the interview protocol, the researcher conducted a pilot study. Permission was sought from a USG institution that was currently under-going a consolidation. To conduct the interviews for the pilot study the researcher used a purposive sampling approach to choose three participants. Participants for the pilot study were senior administrators who had been integral in their institution's consolidation implementation. The interview protocol was used during the semi-structured interviews during the pilot study. The data collected was used to edit and refine the appropriateness of terminologies, and clarify of the perceptions of each questions in the interview protocol. All data, hard copy, electronic, and digitized audio recording, collected during pilot study interviews will remain confidential, disposed of after five years, and will not be published in any reports derived from this study.

The researcher used the conceptual framework for the study to guide the purposive selection of participants interviewed during this research. The conceptual framework showed that the consolidations in the USG has taken a top-down flow and as such should include participants from the system level, institutional administrative and faculty level, and community level. The general criterion for each participant is that they were active participants in the implementation of the consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College and have either remained employed to the newly consolidated institution and/or had the opportunity to assess the outcomes of the consolidation. Again, this allowed the researcher to capture the perceptions of participants prior, during, and after the consolidation.

Table 9: Expected Distribution of Interview Participants for study

Position	Number of Participants
USG Administrator	3
Institutional Senior Level Administrator	7
Faculty	2
Alumni Association Leader	2
Community Organization Leader	1
TOTAL	15

Distribution of participants for interviews. All must have been employed at one of the institutions involved in the merger and employed at the newly merged institution.

The interview protocol used in this study was developed by Fong Yee Nyeu (2006) and used during a multiple case study of higher education mergers in China. Permission was received to modify and reproduce the interview protocol as shown in Appendix D. To concretize and complement the data received from the interviews the researcher conducted a detailed document review.

Document Review

Performing a review of documents related to the consolidation provided an opportunity to gather detailed data that was not captured during the interviews. Documents are typically created simultaneously with the process therefore where participants may suffer from memory loss or distortion documents will fill the gap (Nyeu, 2006). This approach also helped the researcher to gather background information, track

the actual implementation process for the consolidation and compare it to the initial plans, develop and inform questions used during interviews, and complement or solidify data collected during interviews (CDC, 2009).

Given the researcher's experience with a higher education consolidation and a review of multiple case studies relating to higher education mergers, purposive sampling was used to select key documents for review. These included institutional historical records, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) prospectus and substantive change consolidation reports, USG publications, final reports of organizational working groups, minutes of meetings, campus newspapers, press releases, strategic plans, organizational charts, and internal and external publications of performance measurement for example Factbooks and IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System). Sourcing of these documents was done through searches of reputable websites, submission of open records request to the institution, and through key contacts within the newly formed institutions. The researcher exercised caution and bore in mind the context and purpose of each document (CDC, 2009). After compiling the necessary documents directly related to the study a detail analysis was done to code, categorize and establish common themes. Documents were not analyzed in isolation but was triangulated with other documents, data collected form interviews, and with field notes (Hawks, 2015).

Field Notes

The researcher understood that there was valuable data to be gathered through observations and uncontrolled interactions in the field throughout the course of this single

case study. It was important that this data was thoroughly documented for future triangulation (Patton, 2002). Field notes gave the researcher the opportunity to document how something was said, reactions before or after an interview, and informal introductions with people at the newly consolidated institution's campus (Patton, 2002).

In the event that participants opted to not record parts of or the whole interview the researcher would have elected to take field notes. This however, could have been a distraction during the interview or interfered with the participant's comfort level. In this event, it was pertinent that the researcher build trust and a strong rapport at the beginning. Patton (2002) recommends that the researcher remains reflexive and reflective while taking field notes and to include personal experiences and reactions during observations. The researcher also documented the origin and implications of each personal perspective (2002). All field notes were hand written initially and later transcribed using Microsoft Word. This was eventually uploaded in the NVIVO software for content analysis.

Data Analysis

The researcher used content analysis to search the text gathered from interviews and documents to identify recurring words or themes. According to Patton (2002 p. 453) content analysis can be defined as "any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings." Content analysis embodies the execution of inductive and deductive analysis. Inductive analysis entails the developing of codes, and the discovering of themes, patterns, and categories in the data. Deductive analysis on the

other hand looks at analyzing the data based on an already established framework (Patton, 2002).

As previously stated the researcher used a purposeful sampling approach to identify and collect documents that were directly related to the consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College. All interviews were also transcribed. All transcriptions and documents were uploaded to NVIVO, a software used for qualitative data analysis. Using NVIVO greatly diminished the amount of time spent on coding, establishing categories, discovering patterns, and recognizing relationships. Overall, it significantly enhanced the researcher's ability to understand the growing phenomenon (Hilal & Alabri, 2013).

The NVIVO software was used to automate the traditional and tedious approach to developing codes. Merriam (2009) simplifies the different types of coding that can be used in qualitative research; open, axial, and selective. Coding is used to methodically organize, and examine data. When utilizing open coding there is little need to relate ideas. The main intention is to find vital chunks of evidence throughout the data. The chunks of evidence highlighted, under axial coding, will then be organized into similar constructs thereby establishing categories, patterns, and themes (Merriam, 2009). Selective coding entails establishing the validity of the patterns and themes identified under axial coding (Merriam, 2009). The steps shared by Merriam (2009) was executed by NVIVO, consequently bringing order to the bulk of information collected through interviews and document analysis. The researcher linked the established patterns and themes to conceptual and theoretical frameworks for the study bringing into play deductive analysis aspect of content analysis.

The data analysis process described above is also depicted by Creswell (2007). Creswell (2007) provides a more detailed step-by-step approach to data analysis and representation for a case study. As previously highlighted these steps were completed using the NVIVO software.

Table 10: Data Analysis and Representation, by Case Study Approach

Data Analysis and Representation	Case Study
Data managing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and organize files for data
Reading, memoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read through text, make margin notes, form initial codes
Describing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the case and its context
Classifying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use categorical aggregation to establish themes or patterns
Interpreting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use direct interpretation • Develop naturalistic generalizations
Representing, visualizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present in-depth picture of the case (or cases) using narrative, tables, and figures

Edited table from Creswell, J. W. (2007 p. 156 -157) showing step by step process for data analysis and representation under the case study approach.

Quantitative data gathered during the document analysis were analyzed by calculating the statistical measures of central tendencies such as mean, mode, median, and standard deviation. The SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software was used to calculate these measurements. SPSS is software used to extrapolate statistical ranges from simple descriptive numbers to intricate multivariate matrices (Arkkelin, 2014). Using the SPSS software saved on time and helped the researcher to better understand and describe the quantifiable changes that have occurred in the performance measures for the pre and post- consolidated institution. Performance measures are

quantifiable indicators that can be used to portray how well an organization is doing (Sullivan et al. 2012). Performance measures include but is not limited to student enrollment, graduations rates, and student faculty ratio.

Reporting the Data

The results of the study were presented in Chapter Four. Content analysis and calculations of central tendencies and variance (mean, mode, median, and standard deviation) was used to analyze qualitative and quantitative data respectively. The findings from the analysis was presented in relations to each research question and based on any major findings discovered in the data. Findings were presented in narrative and tabular form.

Summary

This chapter was used to outline the methods for conducting this single case study on the institutional consolidation between Southern City State College and Southern Point College and the perceptions of its constituents. The researcher shared intentions to use both qualitative and quantitative research methods during the single case study. The data collection process involved semi-structured interviews, extensive document analysis and the taking of detailed field notes. By using a purposive sampling strategy between 8 - 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted using an in-depth interview protocol. Expected participants for the study included senior-level administrators and faculty who were employed to either institutions prior to the consolidation and were currently employed to the newly merged institution. Recruited for the study were administrators

from the USG level, alumni and key community level participants. This allowed for the capturing of perceptions prior, during, and after the consolidation. It was also shared that these interviews were transcribed and became a part of the bulk of documents thoroughly scrutinized using content analysis software NVIVO. Quantitative data which included, but was not limited to, student enrollment, financial reports, and graduation rates were analyzed using SPSS. The categories and patterns that emerged from the single case study were presented in Chapter Four using narratives and tables.

CHAPTER FOUR

REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the in-depth case study of the consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College. The purpose of the case study was to describe the implementation model used for the consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College and to further examine the extent to which the expected outcomes of the consolidation have been realized after five years. The discussion in this chapter begun with a review of the research questions, the study's research design, the demographic profile of the respondents, and ultimately expanded into data collected during the study. The researcher, leading up to the findings of the study, utilized three primary sources of data collection methods namely: semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and field notes. The reliability and validity of the protocol used for the semi-structured interviews was greater solidified through a pilot study conducted by the researcher at another USG institution undergoing a consolidation. The findings of the study presented in this chapter were based on the study's conceptual framework, theoretical framework, and research questions.

Research Questions

The data collected during the case study were guided by the following research questions:

1. What were the perceived expected outcomes of the consolidation?
2. To what extent have these perceived expected outcomes been realized?
3. What was the implementation process used for the consolidation?

Research Design

The case study approach allowed the researcher to delve into the complex phenomena of institutional consolidations and the holistic experiences of participants (Yin, 2003). The case study adopted a mixed methods approach, which included the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data with the qualitative approach having greater dominance throughout the study. The qualitative aspect of the study included data collection via semi-structured interviews of senior-level administrators and faculty members, document analysis and field notes. The inclusion of simple descriptive statistical data on areas such as graduation rates, student faculty ratios, and student enrollment represented the quantitative research approach in the study.

Analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data allowed the researcher to gain a greater understanding of the reasons for the institutional consolidation, while fully examining the consolidation process and the perceptions of the expected outcomes. Beyond data gathering, the researcher analyzed the data using content analysis. Content analysis allowed the researcher to reduce the large volumes of data gathered to small manageable bits (Patton, 2002) and better able to present the results.

The Organization of Data

Prior to conducting the research, the researcher conducted a search of reputable internet sites to locate an instrument that could be used during a case study of a higher education institution consolidation. The researcher selected an interview protocol developed and used by Fong-Yee Nyeu in her United States based study. Fong-Yee Nyeu provided authorization to the researcher to use and modify the interview protocol to

match the researcher's study. Once the protocol was modified, the researcher's dissertation committee was used as an expert panel to eliminate additional questions from the very lengthy protocol. The finalized interview protocol was submitted to the Institutional Review Board for vetting and approval.

The researcher further solidified the interview protocol by conducting a pilot study at another USG institution undergoing a consolidation. The pilot study tested the semi-structured interview protocol for appropriateness of terminologies, clarity, and the perceptions of the questions asked. The study's semi-structured interviews were then conducted. The interviews captured key areas that would address the study's research questions while at the same time allowed for prompts that would flow with the participants thinking. Transcriptions were then done and sent to participants for member checking. The researcher also rewrote observational field notes which was captured throughout the interview and transcription process. The researcher had a total of two months to read and re-read all key documents identified and transcriptions thereby allowing for thematic discoveries prior to any formal analysis. After being fully immersed into the data the researcher used NVIVO software to reduce the large quantity of data into manageable amounts by identifying recurring themes and words (content analysis), (Patton, 2002). This took on both an inductive and deductive approach (Patton, 2002). The data from the case study are presented in this chapter based on the conceptual framework of the study: pre-consolidation, consolidation transition, post-consolidation stages, and the perceptions of participants. Beyond the case study presentation, the consolidation is then analyzed based on the study's theoretical framework and research questions.

Data Collection

The researcher utilized three types of data collection methods: document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and field notes. The researcher used prior experience derived from the involvement in a USG consolidation, the USG's website, and the Point Consolidated University's website to develop a list of key documents for analysis. The semi-structured interview protocol was approved, modified, and solidified via an expert panel review and a test pilot study. The names of the PCU participants were chosen based on the positions listed on the PCU website and recommendations from a current colleague. Due to the high turnover rate mainly due to consolidation, the list derived from a using purposeful sampling technique had to be revised three times. A Point Consolidated University contact was established for submission of the site location application and approval. The contact also advised the researcher of potential participants who had left the institution since consolidation or who were hired after consolidation. Participants were chosen based on their employment at either institution prior to consolidation and employment at the newly consolidated institution during the time of the study. The researcher experienced one snowball effect during the study in that one participant recommended that the researcher consider one individual who satisfied the requirements but had recently retired (Yin, 2009). The researcher agreed to include the potential participant in the targeted group of participant.

One-on-one interviews were done with senior administrators and faculty prior to the end of the spring semester. This increased the likelihood of the participants' availability as the chances of participants going on vacation increases during the summer. The one-hour protocol captured the perceptions of each participant prior, during, and post

consolidation. To allow for continuity and the free flow of information key probing questions were asked. During interview sessions, several candidates provided information on an upcoming question. To maintain consistency, the researcher continued to follow the protocol but acknowledged the participants previous answer and asked for additional comments on the questions. Interviews were then transcribed and codes and themes established.

Study Participants / Respondents

Based on the purposive sampling technique, 12 participants were invited via email to participate in the study. The original number of 15 potential participants was lowered to 12 when the researcher learned that neither institutions had alumni associations and positions previously considered were either eliminated due to restructuring or individuals had previously resigned. The 12 potential participants included system administrators, senior institutional administrators, faculty, and a community leader. Of the 12 potential participants invited to participate in the study, seven participants responded positively, resulting in a 58% response rate. With the inclusion of one additionally recommended participant who fit the requirement, a total of eight participants were interviewed (61% response rate). The eight willing respondents ranged from senior administrators, directors, chairs, and faculty, with some having overlapping roles. To uphold the anonymity of all participants, specific details about their roles were not shared within the study. All participants freely provided detailed and in-depth responses, which resulted in each interview session going beyond one hour. After the interview transcripts were sent to participants for member checking, two participants withdrew from the study. Based on

their signed Informed Consent Form, both were withdrawn from the study. Participants in the study had a total of at least 50 years of employment pre- and post- consolidation.

Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), based on their systematic analysis data research, opine that a sample of six participants will sufficiently bring out meaningful themes and valuable interpretations in studies that have a high level of homogeneity within its population. Beyond six participants, the study will have a high probability of saturated data (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Miles & Huberman (1994) also stated that qualitative sampling is typically small with the main purpose of capturing in-depth detail until no new information is forthcoming. The researcher satisfied the theoretical number of participants recommended by Guest, Bunce, & Johnson (2006) to avoid data saturation. In-depth and detailed data was captured from the semi-structured interviews which will provide valuable interpretation (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Findings

The researcher derived findings from utilizing the qualitative and quantitative approach selected for the case study. Analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data allowed the researcher to gain a broader understanding of the rationale for the decision to consolidate institutions, the consolidation process, and the perceptions of individuals affected by the consolidation. The researcher's mixed method approach involved semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and field notes which made up the qualitative aspects. The key documents that the researcher analyzed and discussed in this section originated from the USG website and the Point Consolidated University's website, which provided information related to the consolidation. The quantitative data came from

descriptive statistical data on areas such as graduation rates, student faculty ratios, and student enrollment.

The researcher organized the findings beginning with the major themes that emerged from the researcher's interviews followed by the mixed methods approach to examining the Consolidation Proposal, Pre-Consolidation Implementation Preparation, the Consolidation Transition/ Implementation, and the Post-Consolidation Operation of the Institution.

Major Themes from Interviews

While the researcher was fully immersed in reviewing the data from the interviews and with the help of the NVIVO software to reduce large volumes of data to manageable bits, recognizable thematic patterns emerged throughout all interviews. The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to include multiple realities and show that history, people, and experiences shaped realities (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The researcher chose to use interviews to elicit truthful and reliable data. The researcher found emerging meaningful themes and valuable interpretations from the participants. (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006 & Miles & Huberman, 1994, Patton, 2002). The themes are portrayed below.

Theme 1: Uncertainty and Unexpected Work Load

The researcher transcribed, reduced, coded, and extracted major recurring themes from the interview transcripts. The first recurring theme to emerge was uncertainty.

When participants were asked about their perceptions at the time regarding consolidation

announcement, it was evident that they were unsure about what to expect, the implications for each institution, how it would affect them personally, and what implementation process they would encounter. Interviewee 3 (May 19, 2017) shared that “we had heard that they were considering consolidating schools, and to be quite honest, I didn’t think that we were going to be one.” Interviewee 2 (May 17, 2017) stated, “I never heard a person say they had any inclination at all and it was very, very unpleasant.” It was also shared by Interviewee 5 (May 18, 2017) that other campus constituents had a lot of questions about when additional information would be forthcoming or released by the USG, and why Southern City State College and Southern Point College were chosen for consolidation. Interviewee 1 (May 18, 2017) said, “We were all in a very deep state of shock; a lot of us were concerned because we realized that we were two very different institutions.”

The element of uncertainty was evident in the lack of information on the implementation process. Participants shared that they lacked direct information from the USG about how to go about implementing the consolidation. The general assignment was received from the USG to consolidate both institutions but no blueprint was given.

Interviewee 4 (May 18, 2017) shared that:

I don’t think the BOR had any idea of what they were asking us to do. They had general ideas, but I think that they were saying “this is what you need to do.”

They were pretty hands off and instead of giving us a list of say five broad outcomes, which they might have shared with both institutions, they were just sort of general aspirational goals but not very detailed... foolishly thinking they would have given us a plan.

Interviewee 5 (May 18, 2017) shared that based on their organizational development experience they had no expectations to receive a blueprint for the consolidation.

Interview 4 (May 18, 2017) spoke to the formation of a consolidation implementation work group and that it was set up to include key individuals from both campuses, but beyond that, campus personnel had to figure it out as they went. Interviewee 3 (May 19, 2017) likened the experience to “building an aircraft in mid-air.” With no explicitly explained or written consolidation process, constituents from both campuses shared that they were faced with an atmosphere filled with anxiety and stress (Interviewee 3, May 19, 2017; Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017). This contributed to ongoing employee turnover throughout the 18-month consolidation period and forced constituents to create unprecedented implementation strategies (Interviewee 6, May 19, 2017; Interviewee 3, May 19, 2017; Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017; Interviewee 4, May 2017;) . The anxiety and stress was further heightened due to the uncertainty surrounding institutional leadership during the 18-month period (Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017; Interviewee 3, May 19, 2017). Three participants shared that an internal tracker and website were developed over time to document minutes of big group meetings and to share decisions that were made over time (Interviewee 2, 2017; Interviewee 3, May 19, 2017; Interviewee 5, May 18, 2017).

The uncertainty of consolidating two institutions meant that constituents were unaware of the heavy and unforeseen workload that accompanied it. Interviewee 5 (May 18, 2017) stated that:

It wasn't difficult but people were willing to work together. It just made for longer days, longer weeks, processes would be held up because you'd start something

and now it was time to post semester grades. It was a matter of prioritizing. You know there are only so many hours in the day, and if you're a staff person, you're not getting paid for overtime so what's prioritized in the work flow? Who assumes responsibility for that?

Interviewee 6 (May 19, 2017) shared that "I felt like we were just all going to get together and do this, this, and this and all right we would be done. I could not grasp how big a task it was and how long it would take...Still going on even though we have come this far. I mean we have, but it's still out there. It's like a continuum". Interviewee 4 (May 18, 2017) shared the following statement in connection with the expectations of the Board of Regents and the heavy workload.

They Board of Regents expected us to create within a short year a Prospectus for consolidation. They expected us to do curricular crossovers so that the curriculums were blended so that there weren't two general studies degrees, but one. They expected us to come up with a unified academic calendar. They expected us to join two foundations, join two budgets, join the two strategic plans, come up with a strategic plan, and to get through all of this by the generation of so-called work teams that came down from the vice presidents. (Interviewee 4, May 18, 2017)

Interviewee 5 (May 18, 2017) shared that there was ongoing work toward accreditation. While SACSCOC work had to be reauthorized at consolidation and for a post-consolidation visit, separate SACSCOC work had to be done simultaneously for the new institution. Interviewee 5 (May 18, 2017) also shared that, "this institution has been

engaged in SACSCOC work daily since 2012.” This was also confirmed in the documents analyzed by the researcher.

Theme 2: Communication

The researcher understood from participants that from the initial consolidation announcement by the USG there was a lack of communication about the specific expected outcome of the consolidation between Southern City State College and Southern Point College. Interviewee 4 (May 18, 2017) expressed that there was no written document provided with specific expected outcomes, just general aspirational goals. Interviewee 2 (May 17, 2017) stated that they never saw any written process/goals or heard any thoroughly explained. Participants shared that they gathered based on the chancellor’s statewide institutional visits in fall 2011, that consolidations in general was about *financial prudence* which was further translated into one or two of the six guiding principles for consolidations (Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017; Interviewee 3, May 19, 2017; Interviewee 5, May 18, 2017; Interviewee 6 May 19, 2017; Interviewee 1, May 18, 2017; Interviewee 4, May 18, 2017). Interviewee 5 (May 18, 2017) spoke about communication at the committee level. Interviewee 5 shared that the senior leader with oversight “had a very clear statement to all of us and charged each committee with the work and how we’d do the work. At the committee level it was very clear but I don’t know above that, I really don’t know.” Interviewee 3 (May 19, 2017) shared that a website was developed to put minutes of large group meetings, in general share what they were doing and the decisions that were being made. Interviewee 3 (May 19, 2017) also shared that a tracker was developed and made available but it provided no detail. Interviewee 4 (May 18, 2017)

shared that “there were documents that were circulated that were really more guidelines and working structures...there were some updates.”

Interviewee 5 (May 18, 2017) shared that it would have been helpful if the communication from the chancellor or governor was “this is the outcome I want and I am going to tell you now these are the non-negotiables.” Getting clear directives from the top would have helped the downward communication to members of the main consolidation implementation work group, and by extension to the multiple campus wide working groups. Clear non-negotiables would have eliminated unnecessary conflict and delays.

When non-negotiables are not articulated a tremendous amount of time is wasted in getting the work done. People work together better when there is a common enemy. With some directives, consolidation becomes a manageable task. When you have to find the task or create the task, and execute the plan and circle back in that whole workflow, it’s tiring and sometimes demoralizing (Interviewee 5, May 18, 2017).

Overall, at least three participants showed a willingness to have accepted mandates that were clearly, accurately, and consistently communicated to campus leadership. There was a dislike of the rumors surrounding consolidation within the University System of Georgia prior to the formal announcement in January 2012 and a preference for more straight forward and outright communication about the consideration of specific institutional consolidation (Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017; Interviewee 5, May 18, 2017; Interviewee 6, May 19, 2017).

In general participants shared that the lack of clear and effective communication prior and during the consolidation cost the institution time, resulted in confusion and caused the loss of positive working relationships (Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017; Interviewee 3, May 19, 2017; Interviewee 5, May 18, 2017; Interviewee 6 May 19, 2017; Interviewee 1, May 18, 2017; Interviewee 4, May 18, 2017).

Theme 3: Managing Change and Culture Gaps

The consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College meant that faculty and staff had to come together and form new working relationships. Participants shared that key administrators and faculty from each campus who were to oversee campus-wide working groups were unfamiliar with each other and also the location of consolidating campuses (Interviewee 5, May 18, 2017; Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017). The uncertainty surrounding jobs and layoffs created added anxiety and caused tension for those meeting each other for the first time (Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017; Interviewee 1, May 18, 2017, Interviewee 3, May 19, 2017). It was unknown who would still have jobs after consolidation (Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017). Participants shared that time had to be taken to meet and visit different campuses prior to initiating consolidation meetings, which helped to bridge some amount of culture gaps (Interviewee 5, May 18, 2017; Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017).

Interviewee 5 (May 18, 2017) shared that “each campus is unique, so they were unique pre-consolidation and they continue to be unique post-consolidation so bringing those two institutions together did not affect that to date.” Prior to consolidation, each institution had unique historical paths and had a different focus on research and teaching.

Participants shared that from the outset it was established that both campuses had unique characteristics that continued post-consolidation (Interviewee 1, May 19, 2017; Interviewee 5, May 18, 2017). It was and continues to be difficult to bridge those culture gaps since some constituents still cannot see the need for the consolidation and it has taken a lot of effort to see themselves as one institution (Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017; Interviewee 3, May 19, 2017). Participants also shared that based on the different credentialing requirements for faculty and the level of degree offerings, individuals from one institution might have seen themselves superior to the other (Interviewee 4, May 18, 2017; Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017). There was one instance where a participant shared that they felt offended when discussions or questions came up pertaining to the institution to which they were employed prior to consolidation and answers are sought from them. The participant reported taking offense to being perceived as a representative of the old institution after trying to blend into the consolidated institution. The researcher understood from the participant that some constituents have more willingly accepted the message and is speaking the language of oneness than others (Interviewee 3, May 19, 2017).

Mention was made of the impassioned conversations centered around the naming of the Southern City State College campus as the main location for the new institution and how it appeared that Southern City State College was the lead on all matters (Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017; Interviewee 1, May 18, 2017). Relationships were further strained when the term *takeover* was used to describe the consolidation process.

From the beginning we were told you are coming together. This is not a one institution taking over another so there was a tremendous amount of effort put

into thinking and understanding and accepting that that's what we were doing.

We were coming together to take the best of each and build something new

(Interviewee 5, May 18, 2017).

Interviewee 4 (May 18, 2017) shared that difficult decisions had to be made without consensus during the consolidation process. This has created estranged relationship amongst individuals who still need to continue working together causing seemingly easy conversations to turn into difficult negotiations.

Because the Southern City State College and Southern Point College were among the first set of 2012 consolidations, there were limited points of reference. Bringing the campus working groups together meant a lot of brainstorming and discussions around solution oriented activities (Interviewee 5, May 18, 2017; Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017; Interviewee 1, May 18, 2017). With differing cultures, that meant dealing with a lot of criticisms and change based challenges. Interviewee 3 (May 19, 2017) likened the consolidation process to building an aircraft in mid-air and the challenges with managing change like rowing a boat. Within the boat are three sets of people: the leaders or workers up front that are leaning forward and rowing to keep the momentum going; the people in the middle that are just sitting there doing only what they need to do and observing the rowers; and the people on the back who want nothing to do with the change and are jumping off at every chance they get. During this change management process the people in the back, who are disgruntled and slowing down the boat, end up either moving up to the front or moving to the back where they eventually jump off (Interviewee 3, May 19, 2017). Interviewee 3 (May 19, 2017) reported a sense of gratefulness when the middle stragglers jumped off the boat.

The struggles of change management in the midst of competing institutional cultures can be even more difficult when immediate decisions are needed to determine the strategic direction of the new institution and how limited resources are to be utilized. During the 12 – 18 month period this became a struggle with numerous delays. However, at least two participants shared that the appointment of a permanent president provided more defined vision for Point Consolidated College and helped to bridge differences or culture gaps among different groups (Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017; Interviewee 6, May 19, 2017).

Theme 4: Managing Geographical Challenges

When the USG announced the consolidation in January 2012 it communicated that there would be a unique challenge to establish operational efficiencies from multiple de-centralized locations. All participants commented on the frustrations encountered by constituents in trying to carry out their required duties or conduct activities from multiple campuses. All [specific number] campuses span over a 175 miles geographical radius.

Logistically it's problematic because geographically when you have the [specific number] campuses within approximately a 175 miles geographic radius, we needed to pull people together from each of those campuses to be a working committee around a particular process or procedure. Where do they meet? Who has to do most of the driving? Can they drive? Who pays for their mileage to come together? It's a very expensive process, very expensive so from the [specific name] campus to the [specific name] campus is over [specific number] miles so it's [specific number] miles roundtrip at 52 cents a mile. Very expensive.

Where do you meet and at that time there was no video conferencing technology so you couldn't be in [specific name] campus and beam yourself to the [specific name] campus ... so everybody was driving their cars. Very expensive to drive an hour to get to a meeting, the meeting last 30 minutes, you drive another hour to get back, 4 hours out of a work day that could have been invested doing something else.

The distance between each campus hindered collaboration efforts to get campus working groups together. Two participants shared that while it was still challenging, it was easier for senior leaders to travel to multiple campuses since it was merely two individuals that might need to need. On the other hand, it was difficult to determine where different working groups would meet since each was comprised of multiple campus representatives. The logistics and daily decision making around geographical distances were described by participants as problematic and a nightmare. Efforts were made to utilize teleconferencing for meetings and some classes but this, participants shared were not always functional and lacked the total human experience (Interviewee 5, May 18, 2017; Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017; Interviewee 1, May 18, 2017).

The daily challenges metamorphosed into medium and long-term challenges to overcome this wide geographical radius. Point Consolidated University is still faced with identifying niche markets for all its campuses and how to provide an efficient means by which to connect all its constituents to each campus without taking away from their total experience.

In fact, that was asked by faculty coming out of several of the governance structure meetings. How are we going to make this work, how are we going to

have departmental meetings when it takes an hour plus to go from one place to another? Who's going to pay for the gas? I can tell you now, the gasoline mileage became a factor, it became a factor, it was in the notes of the senate, it was in meeting after meeting after meeting... it was very unpleasant that these [specific number] campuses were to be considered one... (Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017).

Participants shared that the expected outcome of fiscal prudence may have been accomplished with the elimination of one president and some administrative processes, but it was neutralized by the enormous increase in travel requisition and hence payments made by the institution to employees who had to continuously travel from campus to campus. These payments limited the accomplishment of the expectation or goal of saving money (Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017; Interviewee 3, May 19, 2017; Interviewee 5, May 18, 2017; Interviewee 6 May 19, 2017; Interviewee 1, May 18, 2017; Interviewee 4, May 18, 2017).

What follows next is a continued examination of key points in the consolidation process based on the analysis of documents, interviews, and field notes.

The Consolidation Proposal

This section of the chapter delves into the implementation process used for the consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College. The data gathered for the study came from detailed document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and field notes. Findings presented in this section was a combination of information from all three sources.

The consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College by the USG was consistent with its mission and constitutional authority (SACSCOC, 2013). In September 2011, the idea of possible statewide consolidations was mentioned publicly for the first time by the Chancellor of USG in his report to Board of Regents. The Chancellor communicated that the USG would study potential consolidations along with other steps to save money (Hayes, 2015; BOR Press Release, 2012). By November of 2011, additional information was published by the Board of Regents detailing the approved guidelines or principles that would be used by staff when considering or implementing a consolidation (SACSCOC, 2013). The six guiding principles established were:

- Increase opportunities to raise education attainment levels;
- Improve accessibility, regional identity, and compatibility;
- Avoid duplication of academic programs while optimizing access to instruction;
- Create significant potential for economies of scale and scope;
- Enhance regional economic development; and
- Streamline administrative services, while maintaining or improving service level and quality.

What followed next was a formal announcement in January 2012 of eight institutions to be consolidated into four. Southern City State College and Southern Point College were among the first eight institutions to be consolidated (SACSCOC Prospectus, 2012). Based on the USG Press Release on January 5, 2012 the Chancellor stated that consolidation would take on average 12 – 18 months. The Chancellor's

recommendation for institutional consolidation was approved by the Board of Regents on January 10, 2012 (BOR Press Release, January 10, 2012). When study participants were asked about whose decision it was to consolidate, the majority shared that they understood it to be the Chancellor's. In addition to this *top-down* directive, neither presidents were included in the decision-making surrounding consolidation nor knew of the consolidation well in advance of the Chancellor's announcement. According to Interviewee 5, (May 18, 2017) the President of Southern City State College at the time was also not aware of the upcoming institutional consolidation announcement.

It was the Chancellor's, it was a dictate, it was not an option. What I can tell you is that the President we had at the time was not even aware that they were going to do that. He'd only been with us for about [unique number] and he was called to the Chancellor's office who said you're going to consolidate with another institution. He was surprised.

Interviewee 4 (May 19, 2017) also agreed that it was the Chancellor's decision but further added that the Chancellor's professional history was in budgets and upon becoming Chancellor, he was expected to come in and streamline and create efficiencies.

Interviewee 4 (May 19, 2017) shared that even though constitutionally the Board of Regents should be separate from the Office of the Governor, the effort to consolidate was also encouraged by the governor. The researcher did not find any supporting information to corroborate Interviewee 4's perception on the connection between the Chancellor and the Office of the Governor. However, literature does support a decrease in the level of funding from state appropriations and the shift of the financial burden to higher education institutions/systems that are now required to come up with more efficient and sustainable

strategies such as increased partnerships and more restructuring (Zumeta, et al, 2012; McBain, 2012; Nyeu, 2006; Hayes, 2015). A review of the SACSCOC substantive change document submitted in 2013 highlighted that the proposal was made by the Chancellor in an effort to “create a more educated Georgia.” Interviewee #6 (May 18, 2017) shared that consolidations were the brain child of a regent but it was handed down by the Chancellor.

Initial Reactions

Interviewee 5 (May 18, 2017) shared that when the announcement was made they remember questions from people asking why these two institutions and what was the purpose. Interviewee 3 (May 19, 2017) did not expect the talk about consolidation to affect their institution and was therefore shocked when both Southern City State College and Southern Point College were named. In hindsight, Interviewee 3 shared that they can definitely see now why both were included, but at the time it was not clear. Interviewee 6 (May 19, 2017) had a more open and receptive reaction, “I’m always optimistic about change and the opportunities that change bring,” but at the time was eager to find out how it would be done and what the end product would look like. Interviewee 1 (May 18, 2017) expressed that they were all in a state of shock and actually quite concerned because both institutions had very different missions. Additionally, they said they had heard negative rumors about the other institution from transfer students, thought that their institution was a wonderful family, and was being run quite efficiently. Interviewee 6 (May 19, 2017) thought “Okay, let’s jump in and get this done...we will do it.”

Interviewee 2 commented on the initial reaction experienced and also the mode of communication:

So, I frankly was pretty aggravated. I thought it was rude and inappropriate and I realized the chairs and deans and all kinds of other people needed to be notified, but there were 280 some faculty combined and I never heard a single person admit...or say they had any inclination at all and it was very, very unpleasant.

The researcher found, based on the responses, that there were a mixture of emotions surrounding the initial announcement. Participants also shared mixed feeling about the security of their jobs when they first heard word of their institutions consolidating. The researcher gathered, based on the interactions with each participant that information regarding their reactions were freely and honestly given.

Student's initial reactions were briefly captured in a post-consolidation article in the *Southern City State College Today* spring 2013 publication. The article highlighted that there was also a mixture of emotions in that there was a contingent of students from both institutions who were upset while others were open and excited about the possible opportunities (Smith, 2013).

Rationale and Expected Outcomes

Prior to the Chancellor's September 11, 2011 announcement of possible consolidations, he visited all the campuses within the USG. Based on the responses from the study participants and the post-tour statements from the Chancellor, the understanding was that consolidations would create greater efficiencies. One of the Chancellor's statements can be seen below.

Looking ahead, we must ensure that our system has the appropriate number of campuses around the state. We need to be organized in ways that truly foster service to our students in the most effective way and that we ensure our faculty are properly deployed and supported. Therefore, I believe it is time for the system to study if campus consolidations are justified and will enhance our ability to serve the people of [the state] at less cost. Our staff will begin right away to assess if any campus consolidations would further teaching, researching and service missions in a more fiscally prudent way (USG.edu).

The publishing of the six guiding principles further expanded and solidified the rationale for the announced consolidation. The researcher found that the guiding principles did not disguise the need for fiscal prudence and efficiencies but better articulated the areas in which the USG expected to see such improvements. The SACSCOC Substantive Change Prospectus (2012) document further reiterated the guiding principles and highlighted four main factors or rationale for the consolidation. One was the underlying state-wide weakened economic conditions which was associated with the 2008 national recession. Such conditions had resulted in substantial budget cutbacks. Secondly, the repeated annual calls from the state governor and legislature for more state-wide cost-efficient operations. Thirdly, increasing demands for higher education opportunities and services. Fourthly, the alignment of the Complete College Georgia with the Complete College America campaign toward enhanced global competitiveness. Reference was also made to the state technical school system which had already started to conserve resources and improve efficiency through consolidations. The SACSCOC (2012) is referenced below.

In 2011, the new Chancellor of the USG and the Board of Regents determined that institutional consolidation was also necessary in the USG to achieve improved efficiencies and to redirect freed resources to the strengthening of instructional services in four specific regions of the state... The Chancellor concluded that business as usual in the USG was not sustainable in the long run and had to change if the BOR's vision, mission, and goals were to be realized. (SACSCOC Prospectus, 2012)

Participants were asked what they perceived to have been the reasons behind the consolidations. As the researcher analyzed the responses from each participant, a pattern emerged that showed all participants adamantly sharing that the consolidation was done “to save money” (Interviewee 5). “Well at the time they were trying to find efficiencies. Save money, cut down on costs. And that’s what they told us. And it made sense” (Interviewee 3, May 20, 2017). No direct mention was made of the guiding principles. Some participants however, due to the free-flowing setting of a semi-structured interview, went on to expand on areas of inefficiencies (indirectly connected to the guiding principles) where they understood, if improved, would help to ultimately save money. Responses included “there would be economic good from combining departments and services...increase student population” (Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017); “they gave us broad horizons of the efficiency, cutting budgets, reducing the number of institutions state-wide, delivering education to the citizens of Georgia. But my sense was that it was really cost cutting” (Interviewee 4, May 20, 2017); “it would provide opportunities to expand educational services to students in remote areas” (Interviewee 1, May 20, 2017); “cost savings was the driving factor and his [Chancellor’s] understanding

that the world of higher education is changing and we weren't going to be able to continue to grow, and to continue to raise tuition and get more state appropriations” (Interviewee 6, May 19, 2017). Interviewee # 4 (May 18, 2017) added that the consolidation was sold as a cost-savings measure and that it was also the Chancellor's chance to leave a legacy. Overall, while participants expressed a clear understanding of the existence of the guiding principles the underlying reason provided for the consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College was financial prudence.

Thus, the qualitative approach of conducting the one-on-one interviews resulted in the researcher uncovering a match among the rationale presented by the Chancellor, the ensuing published guidelines, and the respondents' memories of what was said during the tour.

The natural progression was to ask participants to share the overall goals or expected outcomes of the consolidation. All participants emphatically stated that broad reasons or talks of efficiency were given, but there were no specific goals that were broken down and given to the leadership of either institutions. Separate from the effort to save money, participants shared that they understood that since both institutions were state colleges and that there was no regional university in that part of Georgia. Coming together would open up the opportunity to eventually upgrade the newly consolidated institution to a regional university. The disposition gathered from the participants was that the goal of becoming a regional university provided hope and great benefits to the geographic region and student population, but this goal also required greater financial investment.

Overall, based on an analysis of the responses from all the participants, the researcher found that two main goals or expectations emerged.

Those two goals were to:

1. Save money and;
2. Create a regional university.

Pre-consolidation Implementation Preparation

State of Each Institution Pre-Consolidation

The researcher understood from the participants that even though their institutions had been recommended for consolidation they knew nothing of each other and had no working relationship prior to consolidation. The absence of a pre-established working relationship created many barriers to open communication upon consolidation announcement. Based on this, it was imperative that some time was taken to understand each campus and assess the state of all locations.

Southern Point College in fall 2012 had an approximate headcount enrollment of 3100 students, a 9.5% decline from its fall 2011 enrollment. (SACSCOC Prospectus, 2012; 2013-2014 Fact Book). Its main campus was located in [specific town] with two satellite campuses within an average of 28 miles. Southern Point College's main focus was to offer transfer programs (associate degrees) in sciences, humanities, pre-professional areas, and social sciences (Sheffield, 2015). Southern City State College in fall 2012 had an approximate headcount enrollment of 5780 students, a 1.4% increase over its fall 2011 enrollment (SACSCOC Prospectus, 2012; 2013-2014 Fact Book). Its main campus was in [specific town] with one satellite campus within 20 miles. The main

focus of Southern City State College was to offer four year degrees that were immediately applicable to the job market or offering associates degrees that could prepare its students for its four year liberal arts programs (Tate, 2015). All campus locations remained within a 34-mile radius of the region of focus.

The 2013-2014 Fact Book revealed that both institutions, up to the point of consolidation announcement, had been experiencing a consistent decline in enrollment since 2009 with one exception where Southern City State College experienced a slight increase of 1.4% in fall 2012. Overall, based on the timeline from fall 2009 through to fall 2012 Southern City State College experienced a higher decline in headcount enrollment of 835 students compared to a headcount decline of 514 students at Southern Point College. Southern City State College did however, have a lower percentage decline of 12.6% total headcount compared to Southern Point College's percentage decline of 14.2%.

Participants, when asked about the state of each institution, shared that Southern City State College was about two weeks away from submitting their SACSCOC continuing accreditation report and was also working feverishly on creating master's degrees to be sent to the USG within two days from consolidation announcement. The researcher gathered that participants who commented on the major projects that ended prematurely were very disappointed that such detailed work had not materialized. One participant highlighted what they believed to be two unhappy realities that Southern Point College faced: one was the powerful political influence from the outside and the second was the high level of debt it had because of the declining enrollment and dormitories with mortgage notes that were nowhere close to being filled (Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017).

The general understanding was that Southern Point College had PPV (Private/Public Venture) residence halls in which the rent paid the bonds. Any default on the bonds would ripple through the entire state, so residence halls were a huge issue (Interviewee 6, May 18, 2017). Interviewee 4 (May 19, 2017) shared that there were also concerns about federal financial aid paperwork. Interviewee 1 (May 18, 2017) shared that there was no faculty senate at Southern Point College and a relatively new faculty senate at Southern City State College. Interviewee 1 (May 18, 2017) also shared that they thought Southern Point College was doing great; had streamlined several electronic processes, was in a good place financially, and the only issue was that previous leadership had recruited people who really weren't qualified to attend the college. Based on an analysis of additional responses the researcher found that the recruiting of unqualified students to attend both institutions was given as an underlying reason for lowering enrollment levels. Interviewee 6 (May 18, 2017) shared that Southern City State College was a financially strong institution that had just gone into the student housing business. The move to the housing business had to be stopped when consolidation was announced.

Economic, Political, Geographic & Social Conditions

Interviews and document analysis prompted the researcher to note the economic, political, geographical and social conditions surrounding Southern City State College and Southern Point College. The overall mission of the University System of Georgia is to “contribute to the educational, cultural, economic, social advancement of Georgia” (USG.edu). Based on this, the system is influenced by the past, current, and future economic and governmental conditions and concerns related to specific geographical

areas. These could be issues such as degree completion rates, public demand for higher education, and educational attainment of the workforce (PCU.edu). Since the economic downturn of 2008, state appropriations have consistently declined resulting in a negative impact on higher education institution. The decrease in enrollment and the inability to increase tuition and fees to offset the decline have further perpetuated the slowing of economic activity of the state and by extension specific regions. As it relates to educational attainment of the workforce, it is estimated that by the year 2020, 60 percent of the jobs in Georgia will require a certificate or degree of some kind (Perna & Callan, 2012). This target leaves a gap of 250,000 graduates and a concerted need to improve the growth of post-secondary graduates to fill the workforce gap in Georgia (Hudson, 2015). The vast majority of the students from both Southern City State College and Southern Point College remain in the region after graduation, and therefore feeds the region's businesses (PCU.edu). Interviewee 3 (May 19, 2017) shared that without consolidation Southern Point College would have closed and that would have been a huge negative impact on the [specific community] since the college was the second largest employer in the area. The negative spin-offs would have had a larger domino effect than consolidation.

Concerning the political conditions, it was shared that politically it was a nightmare, and that it was not well received by the communities being served by the consolidating institutions. Participants shared that the decision to consolidate was influenced directly by the governor of the state and also by specific members of the Board of Regents who thought consolidation would help the region. The researcher found that there was a lot of speculation around whose brainchild it was to consolidate higher

education institutions in Georgia and found no information to validate the impetus to consolidate beyond the chancellor's announcement in 2011. Up to the completion of this study a total of nine consolidations have been announced in Georgia since January 2012, with two of those nine currently underway.

As previously mentioned, all campuses had approximately 180 miles in geographical radius. When participants were asked to share their perceptions on the geographical conditions surrounding the consolidation they shared that logistically it was problematic. Questions concerning the maneuvering and managing faculty, staff, and students between [specific number] campuses were asked upfront as this was perceived to be a major hindrance to efficiency (Interviewee 1, May 18, 2017; Interview 3, May 19, 2017; Interviewee 5, May 18, 2017; Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017; Interviewee 4, May 19; Interviewee 6, May 18, 2017).

Socially, both institutions/campuses were unique prior to consolidation and actually still remains unique post-consolidation (Interviewee 5, May 18, 2017). Due to the fact that Southern City State College offered baccalaureate degrees and Southern Point College offered only associate degrees that brought with it a sense of superiority amongst those at Southern City State College (Interviewee 3, May 17, 2017). A considerable amount of time had to be spent addressing the perception that some constituents had that it was more of a take-over of one institution by another and not a consolidation as communicated (Interviewee 5, May 18, 2017). Southern Point College community was perceived to have more of a small-town family atmosphere (Interviewee 1, May 18, 2017). The researcher gathered that this may have influenced the level of constituent acceptance of the proposed consolidation.

Appointing the Leaders of the New Institution

The consolidation of two independent University of System institutions typically results in the retention of only one of the presidents. After the consolidation announcement the system chancellor identified the current president of Southern City State College as the “lead president” for all consolidation planning and implementation. The expectation at the time was that the appointed lead president would become the chief executive officer for the newly consolidated institution (SACSCOC Substantive Change, 2013). The then president of Southern Point College continued in that role acting as a support to the lead president with the understanding that the lead president would become the CEO of the newly consolidated institution. By July 2012 however, the lead president resigned and a new interim lead president for Southern City State College was appointed who consequently became the first interim president of the newly consolidated Point Consolidated College. Based on the responses from each participant, the researcher found uncertainty surrounding leadership made the consolidation process very challenging and created a lack of trust in leadership and their commitment to the institution.

Consolidation Implementation

Top-Down Procedure

The expectation after the announcement of the Southern City State College and Southern Point College was that the Board of Regents would review and approve the recommendation. The chancellor’s proposed timeline for each consolidation implementation plan was 12-18 months. Next, a consolidation working group (this has

also been called the CIC – Consolidation Implementation Committee) was appointed by the Chancellor and given the responsibility of developing detailed recommendations for the campus consolidation. The consolidation working group was expected to submit their detailed action plan for review and approval by the Regent’s Special Committee on Consolidation and the entire board (BOR Press Release, January 10, 2012).

This responsibility was translated into the formation a joint consolidation committee, was comprised of faculty, staff, and community constituents from both Southern City State College community and the Southern Point College community (Interviewee 4, May 19, 2017). Participants shared that a list of committees was given to leaders of respective areas to aid in moving the both institutions into the same direction (Interview 5, May 19, 2017). Leaders were expected to get their groups together and figure out what needed to get done within their area. This entailed deciphering the similarities and differences among the two institutions, determining the staffing model needed, and ultimately proposing the manner in which the new institution should operate (Interviewee 3, May 19, 2017). The researcher based on an analysis of the of the responses found that participants were honest in sharing that while attempts were made to set up work teams and to communicate via an institutional website and a tracker, they still felt the frustration in the “learn as you” go type of experience. All participants agreed that consolidations occurring after the first eight have benefited tremendously from the hurdles they had to cross or overcome during their implementation process. The USG has developed a much better listing of committees and operational working groups since the Southern City State College and Southern Point College consolidation.

Naming the Newly Consolidated Institution

The name of the newly consolidated institution was not given at announcement by the chancellor. Hence, this topic attracted a lot of discussion. Discussions were facilitated and input was received from faculty, staff and the community about the new institution's name, which were thought to be wasted effort (Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017). However, on May 9, 2012 the Board of Regents approved the name of the new institution, Point Consolidated College along with the new mission (SACSCOC Substantive Change, 2013). There was dissatisfaction surrounding the decision to name the school Point Consolidated College which led people to immediately go on the job market since they perceived that they could not be proud of that name and that everything appeared to be going Southern Point College's way (Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017). Interviewee 2 (May 19, 2017) shared that it made sense for the Board of Regents to name the newly consolidated institution Point Consolidated College since one of the goals was to create a regional university (Interviewee 2, May 19, 2017; Interviewee 6, May 18, 2017). The researcher understood that the perception of two participants was that the history of Southern Point College and the intention to create a regional university resulted in the name but did identify that as with other types of mergers people often struggle with losing any part of their identity or culture and embracing that of another entity (Botha, 2001).

Defining the campuses

The consolidation has been largely additive, in that all campuses and facilities remained operational with a few administrative reassignments and relocations of

functional areas (SACSCOC Substantive Change, 2013). The University System of Georgia however, highlighted from the outset that one of the challenges unique to the consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College was achieving operational efficiencies from [distinct number] de-centralized locations (USG.edu, 2017). This challenge has remained from the beginning of consolidation until present day. The distance between campuses poses a challenge to faculty, staff, and students who need to function in multiple locations (Interview 6; Interview 5; Interviewee 1; Interviewee 4; Interviewee 2; & Interview 3).

The Southern City State College campus was named the main campus and this, based on Interviewee 2 (May 17, 2017), caused many irate discussions that increased the pressure to put more resources into other campuses. Intercollegiate sports such as soccer, baseball, basketball, softball, and tennis were based on one campus (Smith, 2013). This was done in an effort to increase the campus' attractiveness to students, increase resources, improve the headcount, and aid in resolving the residence hall issues (Interviewee 3, May 17, 2017).

Redefining and reintroducing each campus to the student population was a major task during the Southern City State College and Southern Point College consolidation implementation. Considering all the needs of students and their perceptions as the different facets of a consolidation continue to evolve can be a daunting challenge (Smith, 2013). The researcher gathered that decisions surrounding enrollment were also impacted by the changing needs of students and also the difficulty redefining and reintroducing each campus to potential markets.

Articulating the Mission, Vision & Accreditation Approval

The new mission was approved on May 9, 2012. The mission for the newly consolidated institution is shown below.

The mission of Point Consolidated College is to serve the educational needs of a diverse population through high quality programs connected to community needs in a global context and to serve as a leader for the intellectual, economic, and cultural life of the region (PCU.edu).

Students voted on a new college mascot and new institutional colors. A new institutional logo, school seal, and mascot logo was also designed and introduced. The use of the new identity went into full effect in the 2013-2014 academic year (Smith, 2013).

Intertwined in all the facets of consolidation implementation was the need to submit the Substantive Change Prospectus to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) for review and approval in December 2012. What this approval did was to grant accreditation to the newly consolidated institution to offer associate and baccalaureate degrees. The approval of the Substantive Change Prospectus led into the official approval of the consolidation by the Board of Regents and creation of the Point Consolidated College on January 8, 2013. Subsequent to the approval of the Substantive Change Prospectus in December 2012, SACSCOC Substantive Change committee visited the campus in 2013. On September 30, 2013 the documentation for the Substantive Change Committee was submitted to SACSCOC. (SACSCOC Prospectus, 2012; SACSCOC, Substantive Change, 2013).

Reorganizing Offices and Consolidating Personnel

A major task that the consolidation work group had to complete was the finalizing of an institutional organizational structure for the consolidated institution. Prior to this, faculty and administration had to thoroughly sift through different offices, educational programs, and their instructional locations. This included eliminating any redundant program listings and discontinuing inactive and impractical program offerings. The consolidation process however, provided an opportunity to revise or introduce new policies and procedures toward institutional advancement. Regardless, this process meant increased anxiety throughout the campus and an increase in the turnover rate or early retirement pres.

Critical to every higher education consolidation is the ability of senior administrators to manage the anxiety, the clash of varying cultures and the lack of trust and carefully allocate personnel to areas of need in the newly consolidated institution. This means possibly having to lay-off faculty and staff. Based on the feedback from the participants no lay-offs occurred during the consolidation implementation process. Interviewee 2 shared that either individuals naturally moved on due to disagreements with consolidation or it was about time to retire. An intentional effort was made to preserve employee's jobs (Interviewee 6 May 18, 2017; Interviewee 4, May 19, 2017; Interviewee 3, May 17, 2017). For those who remained, it was critical that their name was listed in a box on the published organizational chart (Interviewee 3, May 17, 2017). Regardless of the effort to preserve jobs, there was still resistance due to the personal identity and pride that came with working for an institution.

The biggest cultural backlash is the loss of an identity and years of branding. Former institutions now are ghosts. They don't exist anymore and all the people that have worked to build that institution and its' reputation are very disappointed, very discouraged. (Interviewee 5, May 18, 2017)

Streamlining administrative services, especially those of senior management during the Southern City State College and Southern Point College consolidation was a major source of savings. The consolidation naturally resulted in having more personnel for a job than was actually needed for a position. The researcher gathered from participants that the only visible benefit from this was having only one president. Technically, where excess personnel existed, new positions were created or personnel relocated to an area of need. For example, with multiple campus locations there was a need to have some type of leadership at each location (Interviewee 3; Interviewee 4; Interviewee 1). Participants shared that no lay-offs occurred during or after the consolidation.

Financing the New Institution

Both Southern City State College and Southern Point College at the time of the consolidation announcement had separate accounting/budget systems. The separate accounts continued beyond the Board of Regents official approval of the consolidation in January 2013 since this was in the middle of the fiscal year. Although the budgets remained separate for the first six months of consolidation decisions concerning budgets were centrally coordinated to secure the needs of the newly consolidated institution (SACSCOC Prospectus, 2012).

Both institutions prior to consolidation mainly generated income from state appropriations, tuition and fees, and other sources such as grants, endowments, and auxiliary enterprises (Smith, 2013; SACSCOC Prospectus, 2012). Participants shared that enrollment continued to fall after consolidation was announced. Falling enrollment at both institutions coupled with continued decreases in state appropriations presented its fair amount of challenges throughout the consolidation implementation. Declining enrollment meant less tuition, a negative impact on formula funding for the next year, and it did not help that the lead President resigned a year into consolidation (Interviewee 2; Interviewee 6; Interviewee 4).

The approval of new mascots, new colors, and the reinvention of each campus' image meant that money had to be allocated from the same pool of funds.

It cost us money to consolidate, considering signage, considering simple things, letterheads, new signage, new branding contracts, changing out a lot of old stuff. That cost us money. (Interviewee 6, May 19, 2017)

While aspiring to become a regional university was a major goal of the consolidation, that venture also brought with it increase signage cost. Additional financial challenges occurred during the first year of consolidation when multiple institutions were available as choices on financial aid forms. This created confusion for students and the need to route ISIRS (Institutional Student Information Record) to its appropriate institution. The frustration experienced by students made some say, "you know what? I am going somewhere else" which further affected enrollment (Interviewee 6, May 18, 2017).

The Board of Regents approved the first fully consolidated budget for the new institution in June 2013 for Fiscal Year 2014 (SACSCOC, Substantive Change, 2013). Based on the post-consolidation budget to actual statement, Point Consolidated College in fiscal year 2013 operated at a revenue level of \$10 million under budget. This was accredited to cuts in state appropriations, decreasing enrollment, and an overestimation of auxiliary revenues sponsored operations. The statement shows a year end increase in the net position of the Point Consolidated College (SACSCOC Substantive Change, 2013)

Restructuring Academic Programs

During the initial phase of consolidation, groups comprised of representatives from both campuses collaborated to assess their areas, list similarities and differences, and design a plan of action to advance the newly consolidated institution. This planning was done in the academic affairs division and overseen by the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

Academic programs were centralized to specific campus locations, and bachelor's degrees expanded on the Southern Point College campus. The plan surrounding this effort was to continue working toward the Complete College Georgia campaign, "rely on results-oriented thinking and outcomes accountability... and identify those discipline areas where national accreditation was achievable and practicable in advancing academic reputation and graduation rates (Blake, March 2014). Central to this process was the ongoing submission and approval of documentation to regional, national, and international accrediting bodies toward program and institutional accreditations (Interviewee 5, May 18, 2017; Interview 4, May 19, 2017).

The termination, creation or substantive change to any degree had to be consistent with the mission and vision of the newly consolidated institution, included appropriate academic rigor, and had funding availability. Created, terminated, or any substantive changes to a degree program had to be approved by the faculty senate and vice president for academic affairs and then forwarded to the president. The president or his/her designee in turn forwarded the changes or proposals to the USG for procedural scrutiny (SACSCOC Substantive Change, 2013).

Prior to consolidation, administrators proposed that the newly consolidated institution would have 18 bachelor's degrees, 11 associate's degrees, seven one-year certificate programs, and 18 certificates programs to be completed in less than one year (SACSCOC Prospectus, 2012). Due to the unanimous approval on March 18, 2015 Point Consolidated College was officially granted university status with an official change to Point Consolidated University effective July 1, 2015. Five years after consolidation Point Consolidated University has four master's degrees, 18 bachelor's degrees, one applied bachelors, ten associates degrees, three applied associates, eight one-year certificates, and 16 less than one-year certificates (PCU.edu)

Through all the complexities of streamlining academic programs during a consolidation, participants shared that some inefficiencies in each institution were remedied. Students who had acquired a large number of credit hours and still unable to graduate were better advised and guided toward graduation. Program duplications were eliminated even though some faculty grappled with letting go off curriculum they had personally developed (Interviewee 1, May 19, 2017; Interviewee 4, May 19, 2017; Interviewee 2, May 19, 2017). The challenge of offering academic courses due to

geographical constraints remained. Participants revealed that offering key programs on the main residential campus and other campuses where gaining accreditation was difficult (Interviewee 6, May 18, 2017; Interviewee 1, May 18, 2017; Interviewee 5, May 18, 2017). The researcher understood that the challenges of offering academic courses due to geographical constraints still remained at the time of this case study.

The Arrival of the New President

The general feedback gathered from participants was that the permanent president brought some major changes and made a positive impact on the direction of the institution after consolidation. Participants thought that the permanent president not being from the system and not being a part of the consolidation helped to bring a new slate and potential for a new mindset to constituents.

The school's separation from the past and a chance for a new future, what happened as a result of the consolidation came with a new President. It came with [permanent president], someone from the outside... (Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017)

While the permanent president came in after the 12-18 month consolidation timeline, he was knowledgeable upon entry, trusted his cabinet to provide good information, communicated with his faculty and staff representatives, and strategically built an alliance with the community (Interviewee 6, May 18, 2017; Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017). The permanent president had all the information from the consolidation and formed a task force of strategic planners who came from all sides of the campus. The taskforce travelled to all campus locations, engaged constituents to identify the basic issues, collected additional feedback out of which was developed the new mission

statement, the five words the institution was to be known for, and the core values. This was also done via a campus-wide survey (Interviewee 2, May 17, 2017). Strategic planning and development continues on all campuses. The new mission and vision statement are as follows:

New Mission Statement

Point Consolidated University educates and graduates inspired lifelong learners whose scholarship and careers enhance the region through professional leadership, innovative partnerships and community engagement.

Vision

We transform individuals and their communities through extraordinary higher learning.

Post-Consolidation Operation of the Institution

This section of the chapter examines the post-consolidation activities of Point Consolidated College and by extension Point Consolidated University. This timeline ranges from the official announcement of the consolidated institution by Board of Regents in January 2013 to 2017.

Qualitative Growth/Expansion - The Strategic Development Plan (2016 - 2018)

In August 2015, Point Consolidated University published its first strategic plan entitled “Greatness Begins Here.” Five strategic directions were listed, namely:

1. Quality and distinctiveness of student success;

2. Academic reputation, flagship programs, and community outreach;
3. Technology for a 21st century university;
4. Fiscal sustainability and;
5. Point Consolidated University Community of faculty and staff.

What follows next is a breakdown of the 2016 -2017 progressive achievements of Point Consolidated University in relation to its five strategic directions and the action steps associated with each. The data gathered provides an overview of the qualitative accomplishments of Point Consolidated University.

Table 11: Summary of PCU five strategic directions and 2016 -2017 progressive achievements

1. Quality and distinctiveness of student success			
Initiatives Completed	Initiatives In Progress	1 st Step Complete, Pursuing 16-17	Initiative Studied and Infeasible
Develop pathways for special populations of new students (e.g. working adults, veterans, graduate students, transfer students, business professionals)	Implement a cross campus, student-centered advising system	Build a continuing education unit as a digital market place for advancing career/professional credential	Establish a summer bridge program
Successfully launch Master of Science in Information Technology (MSIT) and Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) graduate degrees and prepare two others for Board of Regents' review	Expand Academic Success Centers for freshmen and sophomore students		
Identify potential new baccalaureate programming that integrates arts, sciences, and professional outcomes	Create a diversified online summer school		
Complete the intercampus scheduling plan to ensure balanced access and efficiency	Create cross-divisional collaboration structures and practices to promote recruitment, retention,		

	progression, graduation, and career entry		
Enhance support services focusing on veteran, adult, and learning support populations	Establish the University College at [specific location]		
Advance international educational experiences and partnerships abroad			
Advance residential experiences, including new Greek life programming			
Strengthen operational structures and efficiencies in institutional units, including shared governance via a staff council			
Establish framework and submit application for entry into the African-American Male Initiative of the USG			
• Increase quality and preparedness of students enrolling at PCU			

2. Academic Reputation, Flagship Programs, and Community Outreach			
Initiatives Completed	Initiatives In Progress	1 st Step Complete, Pursuing 16-17	Initiative Studied and Infeasible
Adopt the AAC&U Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) for undergraduate education	Establish community advisory boards to advance community outreach	Develop national accreditation plans for each school	
Implement PCU's "Knowledge Work" via the Quality Enhancement Plan	Create cross-divisional collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs		
Advance the statewide mission of the School of Aviation	Develop living and learning communities for a diverse student population		

Utilize academic master planning to build a robust long-term degree portfolio			
Create 21st century career services			
Prepare proposals for advancing athletic presence and programming in [specific city]			
Develop a comprehensive alumni plan that fosters regular engagement, social networking, philanthropic commitment, and data on career trajectories			

3. Technology for a 21 st Century University			
Initiatives Completed	Initiatives In Progress	1 st Step Complete, Pursuing 16-17	Initiative Studied and Infeasible
Identify the next generation digital learning environments		Create an infrastructure to advance a digitally connected institution across five campuses that supports multiple pathways of instruction	
Benchmark financial, staffing, and operational status with peer institutions	Incorporate data analytics in administrative and fiscal planning		
Utilize enterprise management procedures and processes to advance the institution			

4. Fiscal sustainability			
Initiatives Completed	Initiatives In Progress	1 st Step Complete, Pursuing 16-17	Initiative Studied and Infeasible

Expand conference center outreach and services	Create an infrastructure to pursue grants and contracts		Complete the USG private-public partnership proposal for completion of a new residence facility in [specific city] and reduction of debt housing inventory (Awaiting system action on P3 initiative)
Finalize case statement and plan for major capital campaign and solicit lead gifts	Diversify tuition revenue through new enrollment markets (transfer population, international students, adult degree completers, professional masters, etc.)		
Commence new facilities master planning process			
Develop teaching and support infrastructures to enhance distinctions of each campus			

5. Point Consolidated University Community of faculty and staff			
Initiatives Completed	Initiatives In Progress	1 st Step Complete, Pursuing 16-17	Initiative Studied and Infeasible
Conduct a faculty and staff climate study	Review hiring practices and develop strategies for stronger retention of employees		
Design a faculty reward system aligned with institutional mission			
Ensure compliance with state and federal standards in public safety and professional accountability			

Implement PCU Staff Council			
Develop plan for Leadership Institute for selected faculty and staff			

Quantitative Growth/Expansion

Since the 2012 consolidation announcement the size of Point Consolidated University 's student population (headcount enrollment) has shown a steady decline with the exception of fall 2016 when it experienced a 0.49% increase in its headcount enrollment. In 2012 when the consolidation was announced the combined headcount enrollment was shown to be 8,884. This number has since declined to 7,714. Based on the responses from participants, a contributing factor was the internal issues with financial aid processes.

In referencing the 2016-2017 Fact Book headcount enrollment numbers for Point Consolidated University, the researcher calculated the mean (M) headcount enrollment and the standard deviation (SD) of the headcount enrollment. The mean headcount enrollment between fall 2011 to fall 2016 was 8,219. This meant that over the last six years Point Consolidated University has had an average fall headcount enrollment of 8,219. The standard deviation for headcount enrollment within this period was 624.97. The standard deviation shows how close or concentrated the headcount enrollment for each fall semester (2011 -2016) is around the mean; the more concentrated the set of data is the smaller the deviation. The researcher, in comparing the mean of the headcount enrollment (M = 8,129) to the standard deviation for the headcount enrollment (SD = 624.97) found that the headcount enrollment at Point Consolidated University was tightly clustered around the mean.

The range from headcount enrollment in fall 2011 to 2016 was 1,412. In contrast, when the researcher compared the BOR projected headcount enrollment of 10,000 for the newly consolidated institution and the fall headcount enrollment the range was 2,286. While the latter shows a wider range, both ranges reflect literature surrounding higher education mergers and decreasing enrollment in the first year (Martin & Samels, 1994). What is interesting however, is the continuous decline in enrollment over a four-to-five year period. Further research will need to be done to examine the enrollment pattern for all consolidated institutions in the state of Georgia.

Since consolidation, two graduate programs were implemented. The researcher found that while the enrollment numbers have fluctuated over the three semesters, not enough time has passed to truly capture or extrapolate a trend for further analysis.

The data from the University System of Georgia report depicts that the student body primarily consist of undergraduate students and did not appear to the researcher to include graduate student data. For the 2016 – 2017 academic year, the student population was proportioned with freshmen accounting for 34.2%, sophomore 18.2%, junior 17.2%, senior 21.8%, and other at 8.2% (other included transient students, dual enrollment, and other special student populations).

According to the strategic development plan for Point Consolidated University the target headcount enrollment for 2017 is expected to be 8,931. The researcher found that the actual headcount enrolments between the years 2014 and 2017 has consistently fallen short of the projected numbers published in the 2015 – 2018 strategic plan.

What follows next is a summary of the main themes captured from the interview transcriptions in relations to the consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College.

Review of Research Questions

The data collected during the case study was guided by the following research questions:

Research Question 1

What were the perceived expected outcomes of the consolidation?

A review of the interview transcriptions for the case study revealed two common responses from participants when they addressed the expected outcomes or goals of the consolidation. These were:

1. To save money (Fiscal Prudency) and;
2. To create a regional university.

The participants said they made this conclusion based on the round of talks that the Chancellor had in September 2011 about possible upcoming consolidations and by extension the content of this messages. Participants recalled the chancellor's main message was around creating greater efficiencies in the University System of Georgia. There was a need to assess whether or not the system had the appropriate level of campuses across the state, truly organize and deliver services to students in a more effective way, and ensure the proper deployment of faculty. The ultimate aim as the participants understood it was to achieve all of this at less cost.

A detailed document analysis also revealed that the chancellor's messages during September 2011 showed that emphasis was placed on serving the people of Georgia at less cost. The chancellor shared that his staff would assess if "campus consolidations would further teaching, researching, and service missions in a more fiscally prudent way" (BOR Press Release, September 2011). Several statements from the Chancellor validated the perception of all participants that a major goal was to save money.

The researcher found that the publishing of the six guiding principles further expanded and solidified the need for greater efficiency. Participants were aware of the six guiding principles but did not refer to them directly as outcomes/goals specifically set out for the consolidation between Southern City State College and Southern Point College. The six guiding principles did not disguise the need for fiscal prudence and efficiencies but better articulated the areas in which the USG expected to see such improvement.

Participants also shared that the establishment of a regional university was another major goal shared by chancellor. The understanding was that there were two state colleges and no regional university, it therefore made sense that the consolidation would ultimately result in a regional university. The goal of establishing a regional university brought hope, a sense of growth or evolution into something greater

Research Question 2

To what extent have these perceived expected outcomes been realized?

Fiscal Prudence

In examining the extent to which Point Consolidated University has realized its goal of improved fiscal prudence since its consolidation in January 2012, participants

shared that they did not believe that they had. The researcher found that the common commentary around the institution's goal of fiscal prudence was focused on three main areas: increased travel claims, declining headcount enrollment, and the absorption of high debt from Southern Point College.

As established by the researcher in the thematic patterns of the study's interview transcripts, participants identified that increasing costs associated with having multiple campuses have made it difficult to achieve fiscal prudence. Participants shared that any savings that might have occurred from eliminating one of the two presidents or other administrative processes have been offset by the enormous increase in travel expenses incurred by the institution. While senior administrators are still brainstorming to identify efficient strategies to connect all faculty, staff, and students, establishing operational efficiencies from multiple de-centralized locations remain a challenge. Efforts toward the utilization of video conferencing for meetings or student classes have not fulfilled, in entirety, the objective of delivering improved services to its constituents.

The headcount enrollment prior, during, and post consolidation has and continues to have a direct impact on the flow of revenue to the Point Consolidated University. The USG projected a headcount enrolment prior to consolidation at 10,000 students. Southern City State College and Southern Point College's fall 2011 pre-consolidation headcount enrollment was 5,702 and 3,424 respectively. Since the 2012 consolidation, the headcount enrollment has shown a steady decline over a four to five year period (fall 2011 – fall 2015) with the only exception of a 0.49% increase in fall 2016. Participants partially attributed this to internal issues with merging federal financial aid processes. The institution did not received BOR approval for tuition and fee increases after

consolidation. Since the development of the strategic plan in 2015, actual enrollment has fallen short of the published projected numbers. Participants did however, share the relief of having a marginal increase in fall 2016 and is anticipating an upward trend in the coming years.

Participants also associated the inability to accomplish fiscal prudence to the high level of debt absorbed into the newly consolidated Point Consolidated College. Participants shared that the debt absorbed from Southern Point College was associated with predominantly unoccupied dormitories with high mortgage notes. The PPV (Private/Public Venture) resident halls carried with them bonds that were dependent on the rent paid by occupants. For the newly consolidated Point Consolidated College filling up the rooms at the [specific location] became a priority since failure to pay the bonds would ripple through the entire state of Georgia.

The researcher believes that it is also worth mentioning in this section that even though it was not a major focus of participants, participants stated that no lay-offs were done during or after the consolidation. It was noted that while savings might have occurred due to only retaining one president, little or no saving occurred from administrative lay-offs. During the consolidation process, employees retired or resigned from their positions, which were rarely re-filled. Participants in general, appeared grateful that employees still had their jobs (Interviewee 6 May 18, 2017; Interviewee 4, May 19, 2017; Interviewee 3, May 17, 2017).

Creation of a Regional University

The approval of the Substantive Change Prospectus led to the official approval of the consolidation by the Board of Regents and creation of the Point Consolidated College on January 8, 2013. With the Chancellor's proposition to establish a regional university constituents worked toward this and was given unanimous approval by the BOR on March 18, 2015. Point Consolidated College's name was officially changed to Point Consolidated University. Five years after consolidation, Point Consolidated University has seen an increase in the number and level of degree offerings. It offers four master's degrees, 18 bachelor's degrees, one applied bachelors, ten associates degrees, three applied associates, eight one-year certificates, and 16 less than one-year certificates (PCU.edu). The approval and granting of university status came with multiple submissions and approvals of accreditation applications locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. The process also included site and program visits and assessment from accrediting boards. The researcher understood that accreditation work, which was pivotal to the granting of university status, started prior to consolidation, continued right throughout the consolidation process and continues today.

Regardless of the repeated campus-wide signage cost incurred because of transitions to one Point Consolidated College, then to Point Consolidated University, the journey of reinventing each campus and establishing a new identity was started. New mascots, new institutional colors, logos, and seal were created for Point Consolidated University. The researcher understood that the creation of a new regional university gave the participants a sense of growth and measurable accomplishment. Coupled with this sense of growth and accomplishment was the positive reviews of the new president who

they thought came in at the right time to provide direction for the new Point Consolidated University.

Research Question 3

What was the implementation process used for the consolidation?

The consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College was evidently a top-down procedure initiated by the USG. The USG prior to approaching both institutions decided on state-wide consolidations. Presidents from both institutions were told after the decision was made to consolidate. The researcher gathered from the document analysis and study participants that the decision to consolidate was influenced by the economic and political landscape of the state of Georgia. Given the fact that both consolidating institutions were a part of the USG, all major steps taken during the consolidation process had to be approved by the Board of Regents.

During the analysis of documents and interview transcriptions the researcher did not discover a standard step-by-step process that the USG used to consolidate its institutions. Participants did share that no specific instructions were given (verbal or written) on how to actually consolidate both institutions and had to establish at the campus level, strategic steps to be taken to achieve a successful consolidation. Participants also made mention of an extensive list that was developed overtime to broadly address end goals. For example, the merging of faculty handbooks. Participants shared that they were still uncertain of how to merge the faculty handbook but had to figure it out as they went. Based on this, the researcher gathered that there was no specific process model that was unique to the Southern City State College and Southern

Point College consolidation. The lack of direction on day-to-day processes influenced delays in achieving general USG goals. General instructions were given to consolidate both institutions but then a large majority of the work was done by campus administrators who knew very little about consolidation.

The researcher acknowledges that consolidation implementation processes are unique to the institutions involved and one single approach might not be applicable elsewhere. The researcher was however, interested in tracking the consolidation from start to end to document the flow of events or actions that resulted in the consolidated institution. The researcher discovered that there were some key steps that were either taken by the Board of Regents or administrators to technically consolidate both institutions. What follows next is a list showing the major steps captured during the analysis of documents and interview transcriptions.

Table 12: List of major steps taken during consolidation implementation

1. Chancellor's pre-consolidation tours
2. Board of Regents approves principles of consolidation
3. Board of Regents gives approval for consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College to form new institution
4. Appointing of lead consolidation President
5. Consolidation implementation committee is set up to oversee consolidation
6. Campus wide consolidation working teams are set up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Campus deliberation on how to set up/implement consolidation

7. Presidents of Southern City State College and Southern Point College notify SACSCOC of their intent to consolidate
8. Southern City State College President notifies SACSCOC that Southern City State College and Southern Point College will consolidate and submit Prospectus by 9/1/12
9. Board of Regents approves new mission and name for consolidated institution, Point Consolidated College
10. Southern City State College President notifies SACSCOC that the new institution will be composed of a main campus, [specific number] satellites, and an educational site
11. Prospectus to consolidate Southern City State College and Southern Point College to create Point Consolidated College submitted to SACSCOC
12. SACSCOC approves Substantive Change Prospectus for the consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College to form Point Consolidated College
13. Board of Regents gives final approval of consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College to form Point Consolidated College giving degree granting status
14. Campus-Wide signage changes made
15. SACSCOC Substantive Change Committee visits campus
16. SACSCOC Substantive Change documentation submitted

17. Board of Regents approves Point Consolidated College to become Point Consolidated University .
18. A new institutional logo, school seal, and mascot logo was also designed and introduced. Additional campus-wide signage updates made
19. Fully consolidated the budget for the new institution in June 2013 for Fiscal Year 2014
20. Fully consolidate federal financial aid processes
21. Hiring of new lead President
22. Strategic Plan created and implemented

Summary of Findings

There were 11 major findings from the case study conducted on the consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College. All major findings are listed below.

1. The rationale for the consolidation was based on the Chancellor's general need to see greater efficiencies in the organization and delivery of higher education services to the people of Georgia at less cost (resource dependency). This was based on the:
 1. Underlying state-wide weakened economic conditions that were associated with the 2008 national recession
 - i. Substantial reductions in state appropriations and budget cutbacks

2. Repeated calls from the state governor and legislature for more state-wide cost-efficient operations
 3. Increasing demands for higher education opportunities and services
 4. Alignment of Complete College Georgia with the Complete College America campaign toward enhanced global competitiveness
2. The expected outcomes of the consolidation were to:
 - a. Save money (fiscal prudence)
 - b. Create a regional university
 3. The expected outcome of fiscal prudence is still yet to be accomplished five years post consolidation announcement
 4. Headcount enrollment numbers have not consistently recovered five years post consolidation announcement.
 5. Efficiently synchronizing the operations of multiple campuses remains a challenge five years post consolidation announcement.
 6. The consolidation implementation process was a top-down procedure initiated by the Board of Regents.
 7. All major steps taken during the consolidation required Board of Regents approval.
 8. There was no detailed step-by-step process or blueprint shared with the leadership of the consolidating institutions to carry out the heavily task oriented project.
 9. Interview transcriptions revealed four commonly shared themes: uncertainty and unexpected workload, communication, managing change and culture gaps, and managing geographical challenges.

10. Point Consolidated University was created in 2015 and provided a heightened sense of pride, motivation, and accomplishment for constituents.
11. Participants remain extremely optimistic about the future of the consolidated institution.

Summary

Multiple sources were used to collect the qualitative and quantitative data presented in Chapter Four. Data was gathered from multiple documents, semi-structured interviews, and the collection of researcher field notes. The researcher carried out a detailed analysis of key documents, interview transcriptions, and field notes using NVIVO software. During this analysis, the NVIVO software was used to reduce large quantity of data to bit size amounts by identifying repeated patterns and themes. Themes were pulled using an inductive and deductive approach. The findings presented in Chapter Four were based on the major themes discovered during the analysis of interview, the study's conceptual framework, and the study's research questions.

The information gathered and presented in Chapter Four provided the researcher an opportunity to examine the consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College and offer implications for improvement and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary of the Study

The research regarding mergers (consolidations) has been done mainly in the corporate world (Farrell, 2015; Eastman & Lang, 2001). There is limited literature on higher education mergers (consolidations) and by extension, very limited research carried out on the assessment of expected outcomes or the process utilized to merge (consolidate) institutions. As shared in the literature examined, it is imperative that governing bodies and authorities of newly merged (consolidated) higher education institutions strategically track and assess the progress of post-merger activities within the first three to five years (Martin Samels, 1994; Drowley, Lewis & Brooks, 2013).

Given the complexities of higher education institutions and the increasing call for greater efficiencies, deeper analysis that focuses on the outcomes of mergers (consolidations) in relation to the initial objectives is needed (Larsson & Finkelstein, 1999; Schoenberg, 2006; & Epstein, 2005). To further enhance and contribute to the literature on higher education mergers (consolidations) and the assessment of its processes and expected outcomes this in-depth case study was done. The researcher conducted a detailed document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and captured field notes. The researcher through this case study, has captured the lived experiences of the study participants and specifically addressed the expected outcomes of the consolidation, the extent to which these expectations have been realized, and the implementation process used to create the newly consolidated institution. The data gathered from the mixed methods study was presented based on the major themes that emerged during the

analysis of interview transcriptions, and the study's conceptual framework: Consolidation Proposal, Pre-Consolidation Implementation Preparation, the Consolidation Transition/Implementation, and the Post-Consolidation Operation of the Institution.

Analysis of Research Findings

This section summarizes the study's major findings. There were several major findings in Chapter Four. The finding from the study showed that the rationale for the consolidation was the Chancellor's general need to see greater efficiencies in the organization and delivery of services to the people of Georgia at less cost. The researcher found that the expected outcomes of the consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College were to save money (fiscal prudence) and to create a regional university. While there were six general principles for consolidation, the document review and interview transcriptions narrowed down the specific expected outcomes to the two outlined above. The emergence of the initially consolidated Point Consolidated College into Point Consolidated University provided a sense of pride and motivation to the constituents of the institution and was accomplished in 2015. The researcher gathered that fiscal prudence is still a work in progress and the institution has yet to solidly recover from a downturn in enrollment numbers after a five-year period. Another major finding was that the implementation process was a top-down procedure initiated by the Board of Regents with all major steps taken during the consolidation requiring board approval. There was no detailed step-by-step process or blueprint shared with the leadership of the consolidating institutions to carry out this heavily task-oriented project of consolidation. The researcher found from the analysis of the interview transcriptions that there were

four major commonly shared themes. These were: uncertainty and unexpected workload, communication, managing change and culture gaps, and managing geographical challenges. What follows next is a review of the research findings in relation to the theoretical framework shared in the literature review of Chapter Two.

Discussion of Research Findings

The findings of the study will be discussed in this section in relation to the review of literature presented in Chapter Two. The researcher will look specifically at the merger (consolidation) paradigm and the study's theoretical framework in relation to the findings of the study.

The three paradigms (the need for change, natural selection, and resource dependency) adopted by Eastman and Lang (2001) when addressing the behaviors linked to higher education mergers (consolidation) was thought to be influenced by vicissitudes in the institution's external environment. Such externalities included "escalating demands for education and research, diminishing resources, changing markets, threats to the continuous supply of critical resources, obstacles to growth, or changing ecological niches" (Eastman & Lang, 2001, p.8). In an examination of the study and the findings, the researcher found that there were elements of all externalities presented by Eastman and Lang (2001) in the rationale for the consolidation between Southern City State College and Southern Point College. These included the weakened economic conditions of the state of Georgia due to the 2008 recession, substantial budget cuts, repeated calls from political officials for greater cost-efficient operations, increasing demands for

educational opportunities, greater alignment with national and global competitiveness, and declining enrollments (Hayes, 2015).

Of the three paradigms, the impetus to consolidate both institutions came mainly from the resource dependency perspective. The resource dependency paradigm best explains why the consolidation took place: the USG consolidated both institutions in an effort to secure the critical flow of resources toward both institutions' overall survival. This behavior is synonymous with the underlying reasons given for corporate mergers in that, when stability is threatened, businesses will merge to preserve or restore economic or financial strength (Farrell, 2015; Fong Yee, 2013). In the case of Southern City State College and Southern Point College the chancellor, in his initial visits, communicated the focus of consolidation to be to lessen cost. Participants also communicated that the primary reason was to secure financial stability and to establish a regional university when addressing the rationale and the expected outcomes for the consolidation. Given the state of both institutions when the USG announced the consolidation Southern Point College was in a more destitute financial state and therefore supports the impetus of resource dependency.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on two fundamental theories that feed into mergers (consolidations). These are the efficiency theory and process perspective theory. The researcher will examine both theories in relation to the findings of the study.

Efficiency Theory

The resource dependency paradigm flows into the efficiency theory associated with the consolidation. The efficiency theory highlights that mergers (consolidations) take place to achieve synergies (Hellgren, Lowstedt, & Werr, 2011). The synergies as shared by Hellgren, Lowstedt & Werr (2011) are financial, managerial, and operational synergies. The consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College was done to stabilize the financial state of both institutions especially that of Southern Point College which was faced with decreasing occupancy in their dormitories which carried high mortgage notes. While participants shared that SCSC was more financially stable, in retrospect there were inefficiencies that were linked to declining enrollment. Consolidating both institutions was aimed at decreasing administrative and operational over-heads (managerial and operational synergies) through the elimination of duplicated positions and processes. The outcome/finding however, pointed toward no administrative lay-offs and only the elimination of one institutional president.

While participants were grateful that employees were able to keep their jobs, they believed that the expectation of financial prudence was further strained due to this. The researcher found it difficult to gauge whether or not the consolidation resulted in managerial or operational synergies since participants shared that employees who were in duplicated positions were either relocated within the organization or to newly created positions. The challenge of synchronizing multiple campuses has also delayed visible and needed operational synergy.

Within the conceptual analysis chart, the researcher summarized several key studies on mergers (consolidations) within higher education. The researcher highlighted

two outcomes from Nyeu's (2006) study on mergers. Nyeu (2006) shared that mergers provide an opportunity to revise and review institutional operations for greater advancement. However, Nyeu also shared that synchronizing people during a merger can be quite difficult. This study of the consolidation between Southern City State College and Southern Point College has also confirmed the findings in literature of the challenges to coordinate the operations of consolidating institutions whether they are managerial or operational. McClanahan (2011) in his study of perceptions of middle and senior level leaders involved in a merger shared that cumbersome operational procedures and the attitude of employees were key disadvantages of the merger examined. Both the literature presented in Chapter Two and the findings of this study in Chapter Four have reaffirmed that the efficiency theory in that, the need for financial, managerial, and operational synergy, propels governing bodies or administrators to undertake mergers (consolidations).

Process Perspective Theory

As shared in Chapter Two, Jemison and Sitkins (1986) in their review of corporate acquisitions shared that while organizational fit and strategic fit are significant factors in the determination of a successful merger, it is the day-to-day processes or decisions made during a merger that will truly dictate or determine the outcome of a merger. Jemison and Sitkins (1986) highlighted that it was critical that day to day decisions are carefully taken and examined in an effort to increase the likelihood of a successful merger. The impediments that would make elements of the process perspective theory difficult as shared by Jemison and Sitkins are, activity segmentation, escalating

momentum, expectational ambiguity, and management system misapplication. Within this study, the researcher found it difficult to truly capture the day to day processes or decisions made during the consolidation. Factors contributing to this were the fact that while participants in the study were integral in the implementation of the consolidation they did not make all the decisions. Also, there was very limited available data surrounding the day to day decisions or implementation of the consolidation. Based on the feedback received from the participants, this lack of information was due to the lack of direction or documentation of the implementation steps. Constituents had to figure it out along the way.

Expectational Ambiguity

The initial talks by the Chancellor about consolidations lent itself to participants in the study determining that the purpose of consolidation was to save money and create a regional university. While the six principles of consolidation were mentioned during semi-structured interviews, participants showed little confusion about why both institutions were consolidating and thought that the six principles were an extension of efficiency and cost savings. Based on Jemison and Sitkins (1986) ambiguity is typical in the negotiating phases of a merger. Due to the USG's top-down procedure used for this consolidation, no negotiation phase took place. Participants made deductions from the round of talks by the chancellor and the limited publications. Participants did share however, that in general constituents did want to know "why the two institutions." The researcher found that heightened anxiety and uncertainty stemmed mainly from the everyday implementation and constituents lack of knowledge and communication about

how to get the tasks done and then perform them with their daily duties and responsibilities.

Escalating Momentum

The underlying rationale for the consolidation or forces driving the quick completion of the merger (consolidation) according to Jemison and Sitkin (1986), can result in less consideration of operational or integration issues and premature solutions. This can in-turn lead to higher probability of an unsuccessful outcome. In assessing the impediment of escalating momentum, participants shared that during and prior to the implementation of the Southern City State College and Southern Point College consolidation, questions were asked about the practicality of synchronizing the operations of multiple campuses without compromising the service offered to students. These questions were acknowledged but did not prevent or slow down the consolidation of both institutions. Once the directive was given by the chancellor, the consolidation continued.

Activity Segmentation

Jemison and Sitkin (1986) shared that dividing up the task amongst different specialists (outsiders) is an insidious contributor to the failure of an acquisition (merger). They opine that tasks are segmented because of the high level of complexity and the lack of expertise internally to carry out the analysis needed but typically result in a lack of integration and a leaning toward strategic fit rather than organizational fit (1986). In the application of this theory to the study of a higher education institutional consolidation, the researcher found that the USG did appear to utilize the expertise at the institutional level. The expertise comprised of faculty and staff who performed specific day-to-day functions; however, study participants shared that they were very inexperienced in the

area of consolidation implementation and was very ill-equipped to carry out the major task. Participants also shared that because their institutions were included in the initial round of consolidations, the USG provided little expertise at the time. Also many of the lessons learned due to the hurdles that they incurred were later adopted and practiced by the Board of Regents in later consolidations.

Management System Misapplication

Jemison and Sitkin (1986) in their reference to corporate acquisitions (mergers) elaborated on this impediment in the case of the acquiring company's imposing their management systems on the target company, which may lead to an unsuccessful outcome. The USG's use of the term "consolidation" was intentional. The researcher was reminded multiple times prior to field research and during field research that the Board of Regents was insistent on the use of the term *consolidation* because as the USG saw it, two institutions were being collapsed into creating an entirely new institution (Martin & Samels, 1994). However, some participants did share that there were times when they felt as if it was a *takeover*. This was based on the dismissal of their suggestions or processes. The researcher did not gather that this viewpoint was consistent with all participants from one institution. Most participants shared that each working group had representatives from each campus. The responses shared allowed the researcher to conclude that the misapplication of management system was minimized due to the composition of the working group. Regardless, there were three participants who believed that a lot of time could have been saved if the USG had shared from the beginning which operating systems would be adopted for the consolidation. One participant shared that constituents would have accepted the directive given and carried out their tasks with a lot more

clarity. Based on the responses from majority of the participants, the researcher found that greater clarity and objectivity about the implementation process was achieved as time elapsed. What follows next is a summary of the major findings and how they are applicable to the study's research questions.

Conclusions

The researcher has synchronized the findings shared in Chapter Four with the study's research questions and have arrived at the following conclusions.

Research Question 1

Each consolidation is unique in its own right, simply because institutions bear different characteristics and are made up of human beings who have varying personalities and value systems. The researcher concludes from this study that similar to business mergers, the typical or fundamental motivation behind higher education mergers is the same. Both are aligned around the need for greater efficiencies; more specifically financial and economic efficiencies. The rationale for the consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College, as shown in documents and interview transcriptions approximately five years after, was for financial and/or economic reasons coupled with the need for a regional university. The rationale of fiscal prudence given by the Board of Regents, was broad-based and given for all the initial consolidations. The rationale however, was primarily deduced from multiple speeches and not from a direct document or communication sent to the consolidating institutions in this study. Given the researcher's experience with consolidations, mixed signals were received by constituents

involved in Board of Regents initiated consolidation when comparing the six principles of consolidation to the rationale of fiscal prudence.

Research Question 2

The data gathered from the document analysis, interview transcriptions, and field notes relating to the consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College led the researcher to conclude that constituents were able to accomplish the creation of a regional university, Point Consolidated University, in 2015 and that the institution is moving in a positive direction post consolidation. It is reasonable to conclude that the challenge of operational synergy as it relates to multiple campuses, continues to frustrate those who must access services or conduct their duties from multiple locations. Challenges relating to the bridging of previous institutional cultures are still evident but are less visible when compared to the initial phases of the consolidation. An examination of the statistical data and interview transcriptions derived from the study led the researcher to conclude that headcount enrollment remains the top priority of the leaders of the new Point Consolidated University. The smallest increase is treasured and points toward hope for the future of Point Consolidated University. The inconsistency in headcount enrollment, effort to reduce its debt, and the downturn in state appropriations have limited the accomplishment of fiscal prudence in the newly consolidated institution. Effort is being constantly made to improve and/or maintain full occupancy in its current dormitories in an effort to switch focus to housing on its main campus.

Within the literature review of Chapter Two it was shared that headcount enrollment of a newly consolidated institution typically takes a dive but tends to recover

one to two years after a consolidation announcement (Martin & Samels, 1994). The results of this study partially supports the literature from Martin and Samels in that, the headcount enrollment did continue to decline after the consolidation announcement. However, headcount enrollment continued to decline up to four years post consolidation announcement, which allows the researcher to conclude that neither the USG nor the constituents of the newly consolidated institution were prepared to deal with the continued downturn in headcount enrollment, which has further slowed the accomplishment of the expected outcome of saving money. This study further adds to the literature in support of the need to strategically assess the consolidated institution three to five years after consolidation. In this instance, the researcher concludes that the regional market for potential students might have changed, and there was a need for earlier market assessment and adequate critical planning to offset such headcount enrollment declines. Participants along with the researcher conclude that fiscal prudence has not been accomplished. Overall it is reasonable to say that the consolidation has had some degree of success being that, Point Consolidated University continues to exist and is working toward its accomplishing elements of its strategic plan.

Research Question 3

The study confirmed several studies shared in the literature review that there was no distinct step-by-step model process to follow (Skodvin, 1999; Botha, 2001). While the Board of Regents announced multiple consolidations in 2012, there was no specific guidance, whether written or explicitly expressed, on how to implement each consolidation. During the initial phases constituents had to “build the plane while flying it.” The researcher, found that the USG, three years after the initial consolidations was

able to provide more guidance relating to major organizational working groups (OWGs) that needed to be formed to carry out the overall implementation. However, while more guidance was provided, the findings of the study still confirmed research in regards to the difficulty surrounding formulating process models for higher education mergers (consolidations). The study also speaks to the multi-faceted nature of higher education institutions that further adds to the complexity of creating such process models. Given the findings of the key steps taken during the consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College there is potential to better document the lived experiences of key leaders who have spearheaded major components of a consolidation implementation process and produce best practices for future leaders.

It is imperative to note that while it was difficult to capture a process model, the researcher concludes that it was possible to capture and document key steps needed to complete a consolidation of higher education institutions within the USG. These steps were outlined in Chapter Four. Given the top-down procedure initiated by the USG and the required approval of all major steps during the consolidation process the researcher gathered that participants, in hindsight, would have been comfortable with clear and dictated directives from the USG regarding crucial steps. Time used for discussions about major or crucial steps at the campus level could have been saved if the USG told the campus what to do about extremely controversial or difficult steps. The delay in processes created added frustration and anxiety. The researcher has found that the Board of Regents has begun to take the lead on providing more clear directives regarding major steps prior or during the consolidation process.

Implications

Carrying out this detailed case study has revealed several implications, however the researcher is choosing to share four main ones. These four implications are: growth and development, the growing need for more literature, emergent efforts toward synchronizing cultures, and proactive research and assessment of potential market needs.

The study indicates that consolidations present opportunities for growth and development. This is demonstrated by the combination of senior leaders toward planning and problem solving but also the combination of facilities to provide better services for students. Consolidation allows for growth in areas such as career and technology. Best practices or more efficient approaches can be adopted to eliminate obsolete and outdated practices. When these newly adopted practices fit in with a wider and more national goal, there is greater benefit at the institutional level.

The Board of Regents since 2012 has embarked on nine consolidation efforts. This implies the growing need for more contemporary literature surrounding this phenomena. Capturing the activities and experiences during each consolidation is of even greater significance if a general process model is to be developed and best practices enhanced. There is an increasing demand from constituents for greater detail and guidance prior to beginning the consolidation process. This could be done by creating a historic document that captures the best practices of consolidation from multiple campuses. The results of the study indicate that the USG has utilized faculty outside of their scope to implement the consolidation with no experience, and should therefore feel confident to utilize faculty within their scope (of teaching and pedagogy) to record the major events surrounding consolidation. Creating a working document will reduce the

likelihood of missing major task during the implementation process. Having a single point of contact for training at the USG level and all things process related would also ease the transition into implementation.

Studies of higher education institutional mergers continuously speak to the difficulty in synchronizing and managing the culture of merging institutions. This case study reveals the implication of planning strategically for the unavoidable challenges of managing and implementing cultural change during a consolidation. During the semi-structured interviews this recurring theme emerged, thus re-affirming the need for system and institutional administrators to invest in conflict resolutions and mediation services during the implementation process. The perceptions and lived experiences captured during this study will provide guidance for future consolidations within the state of Georgia.

The consolidation of both institutions will undoubtedly eliminate the competition amongst themselves, but will likely increase competition with other institutions within the state of Georgia. Given the underlying internal and external factors that drove the rationale for the consolidation the study reveals the implication for more proactive research on the changing markets for potential students for a newly consolidated institution. The case study showed that Point Consolidated University is yet to consistently recover from the decline in headcount enrollment numbers. Delving into and studying the market allows administrators to proactively establish potential market niches for different programs or schools and develop working recruitment strategies to be included in the overall consolidation process. The researcher has found that deciding on

these strategies during an active consolidation, amidst rigid competition, further contributed to declining enrollment numbers.

In general, the conceptual framework developed for this study was valuable to inform future research when addressing the rationale, expected goals, outcomes, implementation models, and the perceptions of constituents surrounding mergers. The findings of the study aided in bridging the gap and added to the limited literature on higher education mergers but more specifically consolidations. The researcher through this study has provided guidance to researchers, institutional administrators, governing system level administrators, and policy makers. This study has also provided a baseline for future longitudinal studies.

Research Limitations

The researcher observed several factors that might have limited the study. As expressed in Chapter Four, the final number of study participants was lower than anticipated. To protect the privacy and confidentiality of the each participant, the researcher was highly reliant on website information that might have been outdated. While the final number met the requirement for a case study and excellent data was gathered from extremely knowledgeable constituents, a more strategic recruiting approach could have increased the number of participants. With the consolidation occurring over five years ago, participants were sometimes unable to recall in-depth details about certain aspects of the consolidation. The study was also limited in that only a single case study was done. Focusing on a single consolidation may limit the generalizability and transferability of study results to future consolidating institutions. It

is important to note that the USG has, in general, approached its consolidations the same way and may benefit from the study when considering future ones.

While the researcher utilized semi-structured interviews and allowed each participant to freely express themselves, it is likely that participants might have limited their sharing on certain topics with fear of their comments being recognized by other participants. As noted before, the researcher has previously participated in a consolidation and, though unintentional, might have demonstrated bias throughout the study. It is important to note that the limitations outlined above might in some way impact the results of this study and care should be taken in utilizing the findings.

Recommendations

Given the in-depth case study conducted on the consolidation of Southern City State College and Southern Point College, the following recommendations have been developed. The recommendations were made based on three areas: recommendations to the institutions, recommendations to system administrators, and recommendations for future research.

Recommendations to the institution

1. Strategically track the accomplishments of the newly consolidated institutions in relation to the original goals of consolidation. For example, show the areas where fiscal prudence has occurred and/or how savings have been reallocated to areas of need or focus.
2. Develop on-going strategies to deal with the complex multi-layered communication needs that have come out of consolidation

3. Continued development and implementation of strategies to improve the operational synergy of multiple campuses.
4. Continued improvement of brand awareness and reshaping perceptions of community constituents toward the efforts needed to build and sustain a regional university. This will also extend into conducting intentional training of senior to mid-level leaders on language that promotes and solidifies unity.

Recommendations to system administrators

1. Engage in prior detail market research to identify potential niches for multiple academic departments and schools toward increasing headcount enrollment. This will help to offset natural enrollment declines related with consolidation.
2. Clearly identify non-negotiables and mandates from the outset to those overseeing the consolidation process. This may help to eliminate ambiguity during the consolidation process
3. Develop a general handbook, or detailed planning document, for consolidation that is accessible by those spearheading a consolidation implementation. The handbook should be carefully structured, written, edited as any other document.
4. Offer careful guidance and services around conflict resolution and mediation toward the synchronizing of varying cultures.

Recommendation for future research

1. Researchers such as Martin and Samels (1994) shared that within three to five years following a merger it is ideal for an institution to track quantifiable data that can be related to its original goals. The researcher recommends additional longitudinal study that continues to assess the outcomes of the consolidation 10, 15, and 20 years post consolidation. These studies will aid future administrators in preparing for consolidations and in their assessment of success and outcome.
2. Multi-case study analysis to compare the performance of all consolidation announced in 2012.
3. Future case studies with higher number and wider pool of participants
4. An analysis of the impact of consolidation on student enrollment, retention, and progression.

Concluding Thoughts

This single mixed methods case study analyzed a consolidation of two institutions announced in 2012 by utilizing multiple sources of data collection. These were in-depth semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and field notes. Common patterns and themes along with central tendencies was used to present the major findings and results of this study. Conclusions drawn in this study were that a regional institution was created, fiscal prudence is still in progress, and that there was very limited outline of a blueprint for the consolidation.

It is clear however, that all study participants believed that the new Point Consolidated University is moving in a progressive direction and that consolidation and a capable President have facilitated a lot of this progress. Participants associated the progress of the newly consolidated institution to areas such as greater investment in specific campus locations and online education, great presidential leadership, improved promotion and tenure, increasing publishing and scholarship, increasing undergraduate and graduate programs, and recent statewide service awards. The tendency of participants to identify the progress of the institution with these areas point toward the complexities of higher education institutions. This is an indication that the originally understood goal of fiscal prudence continues to be work in progress and will obviously take several more years to manifest.

However, what remains true is that research has shown that the higher education landscape of America and by extension the state of Georgia, have changed immensely over the last decade. In the words of the recent USG Chancellor, “business as usual in the USG was not sustainable in the long-run” (SACSCOC, 2012). There is increasing pressure on institutions to consider both internal and external factors when developing their strategic plans. Underlying weakened economic conditions, reductions in state appropriations, pressure from legislatures, and increasing pleas from students for higher educational opportunities have all led to over nine consolidations toward greater efficiency.

The study has shown that consolidations can be quite difficult to implement and may start out as a disheartening and burdensome venture but end up in hindsight, as a needed change to facilitate survival in a quickly changing world. Given the findings of

this study it is more of a reality that documenting and assessing the outcomes of large undertakings such as a consolidation, is essential to the growth and development of higher education.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Claudia D. Lyerly, a student in the Department of Counseling, Foundations, and Educational Leadership at Columbus State University. The faculty member supervising this study is Dr. Wendi Jenkins, Director for Servant Leadership at Columbus State University.

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this project is to conduct a single case study on the consolidation of [REDACTED]. The study will examine the implementation model used for the consolidation and the participant's perceptions of the extent to which the original expected outcomes have been achieved.

The study will add to the limited body of information on the rare phenomenon of mergers, help future decisions of higher education policy makers, and administrators at the state, national and international level. The study will also form a baseline for further longitudinal studies surrounding the seven consolidations done by the University System of Georgia since 2012.

II. Procedures:

Once you have signed this Informed Consent Form the researcher will schedule a day and time for each interview that is mutually agreed upon. The researcher intends to conduct a face to face semi-structured interview with you [REDACTED] but is willing to accommodate telephone interviews at your request. Each interview is expected to last approximately one hour. For each interview, the researcher will collect data using a digitize audio recorder. The researcher, with the aid of the electronic NVIVO software, will manage, classify, interpret, and present the qualitative data gathered.

III. Possible Risks or Discomforts:

The researcher expects no major anticipated risks, or inconveniences with this study. Participants may feel minor discomfort answering questions. To help alleviate this discomfort one on one semi-structured interviews will be done. You will be given a copy of the transcript to review for accuracy and be allowed to clarify comments previously made. To uphold your confidentiality all data collected during the study will be stored electronically by using password protected computers which will only be accessed by the researcher. All hard copies of data and back-up external drives will be stored in a locked filing cabinet within the researcher's office. No personally identifiable information (e.g., your name) will be placed in reports derived from this study. All electronic versions of the data will be disposed of via deletion after five years.

IV. Potential Benefits:

There will be no direct personal benefit derived from your participation in this study. The anticipated benefit from conducting this study will be that it will add to the limited body of information on the rare phenomenon of mergers, help future decisions of higher education policy makers, and administrators at the state, national and international level. The study will also form a baseline for further longitudinal studies surrounding the seven consolidations done by the University System of Georgia since 2012.

V. Costs and Compensation:

You will incur no cost due to your participation in this study. There will also be no compensation to you for participation in this study.

VI. Confidentiality:

Your individual privacy will be maintained throughout the study and in all published and written reports resulting from this study. All data collected will be locked and secured. The principal investigator will be the only individual who will have access to the data. All electronic data collected from the study will be deleted after five years.

VII. Withdrawal:

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time, and your withdrawal will not involve penalty or loss of benefits.

For additional information about this research project, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Claudia Lyerly at [REDACTED] or lyerly_claudia@columbusstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Columbus State University Institutional Review Board at irb@columbusstate.edu.

I have read this informed consent form. If I had any questions, they have been answered. By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research project. My signature below also indicates that I am at least 18 years of age.

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT INVITATION EMAIL

Study Title: Strategic restructuring in higher education: A case study of a consolidation of two University System of Georgia institutions.

Dear _____,

My name is Claudia Lyerly. I am a doctoral candidate in the Counseling, Foundations, and Leadership Department at Columbus State University. In an effort to fulfil all the requirements of my doctoral degree I am conducting a research study and would like to invite you to participate.

I am studying the implementation process for the [REDACTED] consolidation and the perceptions of key stakeholders as it relates to the expected outcomes. If you decide to participate, I, the principal investigator, will conduct one on one semi-structured interviews with you. In particular we will discuss your perceptions of the consolidation process and the extent to which the original goals have been achieved after 5 years. It is my intention to record all sessions using a digitized audio tape. This will be done to accurately capture what was discussed in each interview. The recordings will only be reviewed by members of the research team who will transcribe and analyze them. Over time, they will be destroyed.

Please note that if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions during the interview you may elect to not do so. Apart from the opportunity to share your personal insights about the consolidation there is no direct personal benefit. However, others in the community and society will benefit from the published reports relating to this study.

Participation in this study is confidential. All study information will be kept secure in the principal investigator's office. No personally identifiable information will be revealed in any published reports or presentations relating to this study.

It is solely your decision whether or not you would like to participate in this study. This right is also extended to you throughout the duration of the study. You may quit being in the study at any time or refrain from answering any questions with which you uncomfortable.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions that you might have. You may contact me at [REDACTED] and lyerly_claudia@columbusstate.edu or my faculty advisor, Dr. Wendi Jenkins, at 706-507-8773 and Jenkins_wendi@columbusstate.edu with any study related questions or problems. Specific questions about your rights as a research participant may be directed to the Offices of Research at Columbus State University at 706-565-3672.

Thank you for your kind consideration. If you are interested in being a participant in this study, please reply to this email and let me know. I will then contact you via email to share a copy of the Informed Consent Form and decide on a mutually agreed upon date, time and location for the interview.

Best regards,
 Claudia D. Lyerly
lyerly_claudia@columbusstate.edu

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol
Date/Time of interview:

Good morning/afternoon. I appreciate your taking the time to participate in this interview to discuss the consolidation of [REDACTED]

My name is Claudia Lyerly, the Principal Investigator for this study. I am conducting research on the perceptions of key individuals of the expected outcomes of the consolidation and the implementation process.

Today we will discuss your experiences and perceptions prior, during, and after the consolidation. I will ask semi-structured questions to which you will respond.

Before we begin I want to remind you that the session will be recorded for accuracy. Because I will be recording I recommend that an effort be made to eliminate all possible distractions (for e.g. placing your cell phone on silent and putting them away). It is crucial that you speak up because I do not want to miss any of your comments.

In an effort to maintain your confidentiality, the reports derived from this study will not be linked to your name or department. Please feel comfortable to speak freely.

If it is OK with you, I will turn on the recording device and begin the interview now.

This interview is being conducted for the case study of the consolidation of [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The recorder number is: _____
Start Time: _____

Questions

Part I - Background information and perceptions of the interviewee

1. Give a brief introduction of yourself, your position, and how long you have been working at this institution
2. Please think back to the first discussions about the consolidation of the two institutions.
 - What were your perceptions at that time regarding the consolidation?
 - Whose decision do you believe it was to consolidate?
 - What did you perceive to be the reasons behind the consolidation?
 - *Probing – Share with me what you believe was the state of each institution prior to consolidation? (efficiency)*
 - What did you understand were the expected outcomes or goals of the consolidation of [REDACTED]
 - *Probing – How did you arrive at that conclusion*
 - What were the economic, political, financial, geographical and social factors associated with the consolidation?

- *Probing – Are there any other factors that you can think of?*

Part II - Consolidation planning and implementation

1. Who were the key players in the planning of the consolidation? What were they expected to accomplish with this consolidation?
2. How did you expect the consolidation would be implemented?
3. What was your actual role during the consolidation process?
4. How difficult was it to perform this role?
5. What was your perception of the implementation process during and after the consolidation?
6. Was the consolidation process ever explicitly explained, written down or communicated?

Part III - Post-consolidation conditions of the institution and assessment standards

1. Has the consolidated institution conducted any periodic assessment/evaluation study of the performance of the consolidated institution? Are reviews done internally or do they include outside assistance?
 - *Probing – What are your thoughts on evaluating the outcomes*
2. How would YOU evaluate the success of a consolidation such as this?
3. Were original goals of the consolidation accomplished?
4. Has the consolidation improved academic programs, instructional quality, and efficiency?
 - *Probing – Share some examples of how it has achieved this*
5. What do you perceive to be some solid goals to be achieved in 15 years after this consolidation?
6. Has there been any surprises? Are there any outcomes that you did not expect?

Part IV - Final comments

1. What have you learned in this process that could make future consolidations processes better?
2. What are your feelings toward the growing phenomenon of higher education consolidations in Georgia?
 - *Probing – Is there anything you would like to add?*

APPENDIX D

Columbus State University Mail - Permission to use Interview Protocol in Dissertation

Page 1 of 1



Claudia Lyerly <lyerly_claudia@columbusstate.edu>

Permission to use Interview Protocol in Dissertation

3 messages

Claudia Lyerly <lyerly_claudia@columbusstate.edu>
 To: nyeu@mail.tku.edu.tw, fy.nyeu@gmail.com

Tue, Nov 1, 2016 at 10:25 PM

Hello Dr. Nyeu,

My name is Claudia Lyerly and I am writing to you seeking permission to reproduce your interview protocol which is a part of your Doctoral Dissertation - "THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION MERGERS IN CHINA" published in May 2006.

I am a doctoral student at Columbus State University in Georgia, USA and is currently working on my dissertation. My dissertation topic entails looking at a case study of a higher education merger. Your interview protocol addresses most of my research questions. Your interview protocol will be reference in my dissertation.

I await your response and thank you in advance.

Claudia Lyerly

Fong-Yee Nyeu <fy.nyeu@gmail.com>
 To: Claudia Lyerly <lyerly_claudia@columbusstate.edu>

Thu, Nov 3, 2016 at 2:38 AM

Dear Claudia,

Sure, you have my permission to use my interview protocol. Best wishes for your research and dissertation.

Fong-Yee
 [Quoted text hidden]

Fong-Yee Nyeu 鈕方願
 Assistant Professor
 Graduate Institute of Educational Policy and Leadership
 Tamkang University

Claudia Lyerly <lyerly_claudia@columbusstate.edu>
 To: Fong-Yee Nyeu <fy.nyeu@gmail.com>

Thu, Nov 3, 2016 at 12:35 PM

Dr. Nyeu,

Thank you for allowing me to use your interview protocol in my dissertation. I sincerely appreciate your help and well wishes.

Best regards,

Claudia
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