

THE ROLE OF STATE P-20 COUNCILS IN PROMOTING COLLABORATION BETWEEN
K-12 AND HIGHER EDUCATION

by

JENNIFER ANN RIPPNER

(Under the Direction of James C. Hearn)

ABSTRACT

National and state education goals concerning college access and success require collaboration between K-12 and higher education state agencies. K-12 students must be prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education, which requires communication between the two sectors. However, K-12 and higher education have traditionally operated in separate spheres including separate governing structures, funding mechanisms, accountability schemes, and cultures. In the 1990s, states began creating councils to bridge the education sectors. How and to what extent these councils influence collaboration between K-12 and higher education is still largely unknown as the state of research on P-20 councils is limited. This study aims to help fill the research gap through a comparative case study of three state P-20 councils. Through the lens of interorganizational relations, it will describe how the organizational structures of state P-20 councils influence or affect the collaboration of K-12 and higher education literature, especially as they work towards college completion goals.

INDEX WORDS: P-20 Council, higher education, K-12, state education policy, interorganizational relations, college completion

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JENNIFER ANN RIPPNER

Bachelor of Arts, University of Florida, 1997

Juris Doctorate, University of Florida, 2000

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JENNIFER ANN RIPPNER

Major Professor: James C. Hearn

Committee: Charles B. Knapp
Erik C. Ness

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Mary K. Berkson, in honor of her continual support, encouragement, and friendship during the course of this research and always. Her example of lifelong learning fosters my pursuit of knowledge. Her commitment to educating at-risk students fuels my quest to help ensure these students have the opportunity to reach their potential.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Dissatisfaction with educational achievement and attainment permeates the history of education in the United States. As early as 1830, a group of American thought leaders gathered to discuss education and “concluded that the level of learning in America was not high enough” (Whitehead, 1973, p. 104). Since then, policy leaders have continued to bemoan the state of education including through the 1893 Committee of Ten Report, the 1983 Nation at Risk report, and the 2001 No Child Left Behind legislation. Today, the focus is on college-level attainment as the United States has seen its preeminence in the percentage of adults with a higher education credential decline. In 1995, the U.S. ranked second in college attainment among 19 countries with comparable data and in 2011, the U.S. fell to 12th among similar countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013). The OECD (2013) found that while the U.S. improved its overall post-secondary attainment rate of 25- to 34-year-olds to 43 percent, other countries improved at greater rates. An adviser to the OECD claims that the U.S. is “the only country in the industrialised world in which the generation entering the workforce does not have higher college attainment levels than the generation about to leave the workforce” (Schleicher, 2012, p. 1).

Given its potential impact on the economy, these statistics have caught the interest of our national and state leaders. In 2009, President Obama set a nationwide goal for 60 percent of U.S.

citizens to attain a college credential by 2020 so that the U.S. regains its position of leadership among developed countries (The White House, 2009). The U.S. is far from meeting that goal. Recent data show that 41 percent of 24- to 34-year olds in the U.S. have at least an Associates' Degree (Lee, Edwards, Menson, & Rawls, 2012). Pulling the U.S. even further from the goal is the disparity in educational attainment between races and ethnicities. Minorities represent the fastest growing populations in the U.S., but proportionally, their postsecondary attainment is lower (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Nunez & Oliva, 2009; U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Sixty-nine percent of Asians, 49 percent of Whites, 29 percent of Blacks, and 19 percent of Hispanics in the 24- to 34-year old age group have a college degree (Lee, Edwards, Menson, & Rawls, 2012). Not only is there disparity in attainment between races, but students of different races are also receiving different educations. "Whites have captured most of the enrollment growth at the 468 most selective and well-funded four-year colleges, while African Americans and Hispanics have captured most of the enrollment growth at the increasingly overcrowded and under-resourced open-access two- and four-year colleges." (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013, p. 6).

The nation must focus on all students achieving at high levels in order to meet national educational attainment goals. Part of the issue is high school graduates not being prepared for college-level work. Between 28 and 40 percent of all first-time undergraduates take at least one remediation class (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2013). This increases to over 50 percent at two-year colleges (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2013). Therefore, it is not surprising that only 60 percent of those entering a bachelors degree program complete it within eight years and only 18 percent of students entering an associates degree program complete within four years (Complete College America, 2011c). The figures are even worse

when considering part-time students (Complete College America, 2011c). Clearly, something must be done differently to meet our national goals.

Problem

Many researchers blame historical and current educational attainment issues on the disjuncture between K-12 and higher education, which prevents seamless and successful transitions from high school to college (Chamberlin & Plucker, 2008; Conklin, 2005; Hodgkinson, 1999; Kirst, 2005; Kirst & Venezia, 2004; Timpane, 1999). In fact, one researcher claims “American K-12 and higher education systems are among the world’s least-linked education structures” (Boswell, 2000, p. 4). This argument is not new. In 1909 the Carnegie Foundation described the U.S. system of education as a system of disparate institutions without any linkage or coordination (VanOverbeke, 2010).

Much has been done over the years to attempt to remedy this disjuncture. As far back as 1655, Harvard College established entry requirements that de facto dictated most grammar school curricula (Cremin, 1970). In the early 20th century, colleges began accrediting high schools to guarantee their graduates were ready for higher education and the College Entrance and Examination Board was established to test high school graduates on their preparation for college (Kirst, 2005; Stocking, 1985). In the 1970s, states experimented with governance structures that brought all levels of education under the auspices of state secretaries of education (Kirst, 2005). While these solutions held some success and definitely impacted the modern educational system, none carried the magic formula to ensure all students matriculated successfully (Kirst, 2005).

A more recent state tactic to achieve seamlessness is the implementation and use of a state P-20¹ council to align efforts of all state educational sectors. Over the past two decades, many states have used these councils to help bridge communication and policy between state education entities. These councils bring a variety of education stakeholders together to discuss statewide issues. Almost thirty states have some form of P-20 council with many states on their second or third iteration. P-20 councils can vary in many ways so that almost no state council mirrors another. Common variables include number and type of members, chairperson, agenda, staff, and resources. The Education Commission of the States (ECS), a national commission of education and political leaders in the states, has perhaps been the most vocal in touting the promise of P-20 councils. They cite several specific advantages including: 1) ability to build consensus among different actors; 2) provision of a venue for discussion of cross-cutting issues; 3) ability to make decisions in the best interests of the student rather than a particular organization; 4) potential to save money through elimination of redundancies in services and more long-term; and 5) a bigger tax base from a more educated population (Dounay, 2009). Some call P-20 councils one of the most promising innovations in the past several years (Chamberlin & Plucker, 2008) while others caution not to put too much stock on a mechanism that merely links already dysfunctional structures (Hess, 2008).

Given the number of states that are investing resources in these councils and the goals with which these councils are charged, it is important to understand their effectiveness in helping to create seamless education governance structures. Many P-20 councils have been tapped to assist states in working towards college completion goals. While it makes common sense to utilize P-20 councils for this effort, there is little empirical data to know whether they are, in fact,

¹ These councils go by many configurations and names – K-16, P-16, K-20. For purposes of this project, I will use the most holistic moniker, P-20.

effective and in what forms. A definition of P-20 council effectiveness has not been developed and is not the goal of this research. However, there is much to be gleaned from understanding the internal operations of these councils and how they strive to meet their objectives. This research is a first step at empirically understanding P-20 councils and providing a foundation for further research.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to describe how the organizational structures of state P-20 councils influence or affect the collaboration of K-12 and higher education, especially as they work towards college completion goals. Most of the previous research on P-20 councils has focused on descriptors: membership, agenda items, and resources. Other research over the past 10 years has taken the form of case studies that describe one or more state councils, their evolution, benefits and challenges; and then culminates in over-arching policy recommendations. This study is uniquely designed to bring together relevant bodies of literature and theory not previously combined, employ empirical methods of case selection, and conduct rigorous qualitative data analysis in the attempt to add an empirically-sound and policy-relevant piece to the foundation of research in this area.

This study's overarching research questions seek to explore the nature of K-12 and higher education collaboration on shared goals through state-level P-20 councils. To achieve the aim of this project, specific research questions are:

1. What organizational barriers to systemic collaboration, if any, exist between state K-12 and higher education agencies as they work towards college completion goals?

2. What, if any, aspects of P-20 councils facilitate meaningful collaboration and how do these aspects vary with state policy and political contexts?
3. To what extent are P-20 councils influencing states' college completion efforts?

Significance and Implications

Research related to improving educational outcomes (however one may define them) could take several forms. The unit of research can be a program, a classroom, an institution, a district/region, a state, or a nation, to name a few. Focus can be on students, teachers, administrators, policymakers, stakeholders, and more. There appears to be no “silver bullet” for improving education so all facets of the industry must be analyzed. This includes state education governance. Researchers have found that state governance structures and policies have an effect on educational performance (see for example Hearn & Holdsworth, 2002; Knott & Payne, 2004; Manna, 2006). Understanding state education governance structures becomes especially important as state and national education and workforce goals depend on the coordination of each separate state education sector.

One method of addressing this facet is by examining state P-20 councils that provide a venue for state education sector collaboration. The focus of this paper, as described above, attempts to contribute to both the empirical research base and the policy landscape. First, it will apply the rich literature of interorganizational relations to state education agencies. This field of literature has the potential to shed a great deal of light on the nature of collaboration between state education agencies in furtherance of overarching state goals. Second, it will aid in understanding how one particular organizational tool, P-20 councils, may foster collaboration between state K-12 and higher education sectors. This can add to a foundation for further

empirical research on P-20 council effectiveness. This research will also identify how certain structural aspects of P-20 councils such as types of members and leaders, meeting frequency, and staff support play a role in fostering collaboration or not and how these structures are developed within state-specific policy and political contexts. There appears to be no research or policy guidance on the development and structuring of these councils in a manner that takes into account state policy and political contexts. Finally, this research may aid policy leaders interested in increasing college completion rates as this research may shed light on how P-20 councils can affect states' college completion efforts.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are three principal areas of literature that inform this research. Indeed, it is the compilation of these various fields that make this research somewhat unique. The first section will cover the historical and legal separation between K-12 and higher education as it is important to understand why there is a need for a bridge between the sectors. The second section will describe historical efforts at bridging the sectors up to and including research on P-20 councils. Finally, interorganizational relations theory will be examined given its unique relevance to state education agency collaboration. These bodies of literature will provide the contextual foundation for this study.

K-12 and Higher Education as Separate Systems²

The historical origins of both secondary and postsecondary education have their roots in the early American settlers' familiarity with England's system of education (Bailyn, 1960). In England, the large, extended families took responsibility for a child's education. There was not a clear boundary where the family ended and society began so distinctly separate primary educational institutions were not common. When children reached a certain age, they began an

² Much has been written about the history of K-12 and higher education. However, because the separation of the two sectors is often taken for granted, many histories do not directly explore the rationale for and nature of the split. One exception to this is "The Standardization of American Schooling – Linking Secondary and Higher Education, 1870-1910" by Marc A. VanOverbeke (2008). This work notwithstanding, the following analysis of the separation is created through a review of the historical and legal histories of both sectors.

apprenticeship to learn a trade. Children of the elite matriculated to universities to study rhetoric, classical languages, and other subjects that gave a foundation of cultural knowledge. Knowledge for knowledge's sake was prized, but these institutions also produced community leaders such as clergy, teachers, and politicians (Bailyn, 1960).

Although this is what early settlers were familiar with, this system was not easily transmitted to the new colonies (Bailyn, 1960). Most importantly, the practical outweighed the cultural. American settlers were busy starting towns and businesses and providing for their families. Education had to further those aims. The family unit was not as vast or strong as in England. The hardships of colonial life resulted in smaller families, often with the children being more adaptable to and comfortable with the new American society than their parents resulting in some loss of parental authority. Because of this, colonies began to devise laws that imposed child obedience requirements, forcing parents to attend to the behavior and education of their children (Bailyn, 1960). This was the first state (colony) foray into education. Around this time colonists who were Oxford and Cambridge graduates wanted to begin similar institutions in the colonies. In 1636, the Massachusetts Bay colony founded Harvard College with an appropriation of 400 pounds (Whitehead, 1973). While the emphasis was on the perpetuation of cultural knowledge, such an institution also served a practical aim to educate clergy and public leaders. By the American Revolution, the colonies had established nine colleges (Rudolph, 1962).

Schools proliferated over the next century mainly due to the rampant growth of religious denominations. Each religious sect wanted to be responsible for inculcating their particular values into congregants so they developed their own grammar schools (Bailyn, 1960).

Attendance at school was voluntary and any attempt to exert state influence or control over education was usually met with fierce resistance from church leaders (Bailyn, 1960).

The 19th century would bring dramatic fluctuations in state support and governance of higher education, which would further its distinction from primary/secondary education. First, higher education shifted from complete state support to more private support. All colonial colleges were legally established by a civil authority (an American colony or British monarchy) and were initially supported and governed by such civil authority (Whitehead, 1973). However, by the late 1800s, a distinction between public and private colleges became apparent (Whitehead, 1973). First, states began to limit their financial support to the nation's colleges. This was likely due to the rise of state support for common schools (primary grades) and other social welfare activities in the mid 1800s, which placed additional demands on state budgets (Whitehead, 1973). This additional state support for common schools stemmed, in part, from court cases resulting in state compulsory attendance laws, requiring students to attend school until a certain age or grade. By 1900, most states had such a law (Hutt, 2012).

Second, Whitehead (1973) argues that not only did the rise of common schools require additional funds but unlike higher education, common schools had state-supported personnel (superintendents) to lobby legislators and engender support. This was at a time when colleges lacked some popular support. "The doubts of the people rested on three major contentions – that the colleges were aristocratic, that they were sectarian, and that they were only for the 'professional classes'" (Whitehead, 1973, p. 123). Further, new territories were required to include provision of education in their constitutions in order to be admitted to statehood (Tyack, James, & Benavot, 1987). The language of most constitutions was stronger for primary and secondary education than higher education. K-12 education was often deemed a right for

citizens while states only had to make provisions for higher education (Tyack, James, & Benavot, 1987). All of these factors helped to shift a greater proportion of state resources to primary/secondary education over higher education.

However, higher education continued to grow during this time period. In 1862, the federal Morrill Act established land-grant colleges in each state for practical mechanical and agricultural education. Institutions specifically for women and Blacks also dotted the landscape. Normal schools for educating teachers numbered in the hundreds and research became important as the first Ph.D. was offered at Johns Hopkins in 1876 (Rudolph, 1962). All of these developments increased both the number and size of higher education institutions.

By 1900, common schools had greatly expanded with the aid of state support and mandatory attendance laws. State-appointed officials governed elementary and secondary education. Higher education had also expanded with a mixture of state and private support but control rested at the institutional rather than state level. By the turn of the 20th century, it was clear that K-12 and higher education had evolved into separate systems.

Linking the Sectors

With the expansion of both primary and postsecondary education and more students attending college, greater linkage was needed between the sectors. This section will provide an overview of historical experiences in connecting K-12 and higher education.

19th Century History

Following the lead of the University of Michigan in 1871, faculty from various institutions of higher education began visiting feeder high schools to observe the academic

program and decide whether graduates of the schools were prepared for college (VanOverbeke, 2008). Graduates of accredited high schools had guaranteed admission to the specific accrediting institution without the need for an entrance exam. This process also benefitted the institutions as feeder high schools adopted the curriculum recommended by the university (VanOverbeke, 2008). There was a larger aim as well. James Angell, the president of the University of Michigan at the time accreditation began, hoped that alignment of expectations throughout the educational levels would lead all teachers and professors to see themselves as “‘parts of one united system’ working to provide a strong education for all students in the state” (VanOverbeke M. A., 2008, p. 39). Overtime, accreditation of feeder high schools by individual colleges and professors became unwieldy as the number of high schools grew and organizations were established to take over the functions on behalf of regions of institutions (VanOverbeke M., 2008).

In the early 1900s, the College Entrance Examination Board developed a uniform assessment for college entry (Karabel, 2005; Kirst, 2005). This helped to establish uniform requirements for college entry and provide common guidance for high school curriculums. As individual colleges began replacing their assessments with this common examination, a more diverse student body from around the nation had the opportunity to take an entrance exam and be admitted to an institution (Karabel, 2005). This, along with accreditation, began sending signals to K-12 on what was required for college entry. Yet, it was generally up to individual schools and districts whether to heed the signals, which resulted in uneven student preparation and access to higher education.

Early 20th Century History

In the early 20th century, the governance divide between K-12 and postsecondary education was marked. Basic education was compulsory and supported by both local and state funding. Local school boards governed the schools under general guidance and requirements from the state. Institutions of higher education received state and federal, rather than local, funding, and remained largely independent of state control (Tyack, James, & Benavot, 1987). In fact, in 1940, 70 percent of postsecondary institutions had their own governing body (Kirst, 2005). This changed drastically just a few years later.

The federal Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1946 opened higher education to the masses as returning World War II soldiers entered colleges by the tens of thousands (Kirst, 2005; Thelin, 2004). Coordination was required to accommodate this growth. The decision of how to coordinate higher education at the state level resulted in another major governance disjuncture with secondary education. Rather than place responsibility for higher education coordination under existing state departments of education, new state-level coordinating bodies dedicated to higher education were created (Hill & Rabineau, 1969). This occurred for several reasons. First, it was thought that state departments of education did not have the capacity to handle new responsibilities concerning higher education (Hill & Rabineau, 1969). The departments' existing duties related to higher education primarily focused on data collection and teacher preparation and even these minor duties were often neglected in favor of focus on K-12 education (Hill & Rabineau, 1969). Even if the departments had the capacity to accommodate higher education, there were other reasons why higher education institutions did not want to be under the auspices of the state departments. Hill and Rabineau (1969) claim that many higher education administrators saw department personnel as bureaucrats beholden to a politician or

politicians, depending on whether the chief state school officer and/or state board of education was elected. Also, some higher education leaders feared that association with a politically-elected governing authority would hamper academic freedom and their quest for truth (Hill & Rabineau, 1969). Further, many affiliated with higher education observed the centralization of K-12 education under state departments of education and did not want to fall into that same model (Hill & Rabineau, 1969). The higher education lobby was successful and most states developed separate bodies to coordinate and/or govern institutions of higher education (Hill & Rabineau, 1969).

Late 20th Century History

Two-year, community colleges, and technical colleges require special mention regarding linkages with K-12 education. Many colleges were funded through local property taxes much like K-12 schools and the nomenclature of professionals mirrored K-12 education more than higher education (e.g. instructors rather than professors) (Kirst, 2005; Thelin, 2004). Starting in the 1970s, as community colleges' missions expanded along with their student growth to include vocational education and community service, they began to move to their own statewide governance structures – either with existing higher education agencies or as separate systems (Kirst, 2005). A noticeable increase in students needing remediation upon entering these colleges was evident after the break with state and local departments of education (Kirst, 2005). Burton Clark (1985) notes that higher education's failure to downward-couple with secondary education is somewhat unique to the United States. Other countries have tighter governance linkages between the two sectors, which ostensibly, help to create a more seamless education pipeline (Clark, 1985; Timpane, 1999).

In the 1970s, several states created secretary of education positions to oversee and link all sectors of state educational systems (Kirst, 2005). Often, these secretaries were an added layer to existing structures, coordinating Chief State School Officers, higher education Chancellors, and state boards without real authority. For instance, some state constitutions and laws called for the K-12 leader to be elected which gave him/her authority and mandates in their own right. State boards, appointed or elected, maintained their authority. Therefore, it is not surprising that (Kirst, 2005) found that after 25 years, these structures did not result in much policy change or higher student outcomes. A few states, including Massachusetts and Oregon, maintain this structure.

Four states (FL, NY, ID, IA) have attempted to permanently remedy the disjuncture through P-20 state governance structures – one state body governing all levels of education (Conklin, 2005; Mokher, 2008). These differ from P-20 councils as most councils do not have governing authority. Little research has been done to determine whether this governance structure has an impact on student achievement, but one study found that student achievement rose after Florida adopted a streamlined governance system in 1999 (Winters, 2012). None of these states have stellar track records regarding high school graduation rates, college access and success rates, or closing achievement gaps, potentially indicating that streamlined governance alone may not solve coordination issues.

Federal Government's Role in the Separation

The federal government also has a role in creating and sustaining the disjuncture between secondary and postsecondary higher education (Kirst, 2005). For example, the provision of educational aid varies between the two sectors. For K-12 education, the federal government

gives grants to the states and local districts, which are then disseminated to schools. For higher education, the largest share of monies is given directly to the student who then decides which institution to attend. Funding the centralized bodies of K-12 versus funding individual consumers of higher education perpetuates the different governance structures of each. In recent years, the federal government has attempted to help bridge the two sectors through requirements associated with federal funding. The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009, the Race to the Top competitive grant competition, and others have required states to adopt college- and career-ready K-12 standards, create data systems that link student data between K-12 and higher education, and create shared plans for the implementation of these and other projects.

Creation of P-20 Councils

In the mid-1990s, states began to create state councils to coordinate state education activities and policies. Governors, comfortable with using councils to address cross-cutting policy issues (National Governors' Association Council of Governors' Policy Advisors, 1992), led the charge. Governors have a unique ability to lead this type of work given their ability to focus on the overarching goal, call together the necessary players, provide resources, and demand accountability (Conklin, 2005; Dounay, 2008b). Since the mid-1990s, these councils have seen much iteration. For example, when a new governor was elected in Georgia in 1998, the P-16 council became the Education Coordinating Council (ECC) with a new legislative mandate and a greatly expanded membership (Turner, Jones, & Hearn, 2004). In 2002, under the leadership of yet another governor, the ECC was disbanded with only voluntary collaboration on the part of mid-level agency management until 2005 when another governor created the Alliance of Education Agency Heads (Kettlewell, Kaste, & Jones, 2000).

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, many education organizations also recognized the need for greater collaboration between sectors to advance overarching state goals. The Education Trust, the Education Commission of the States, the National Governors Association, the National Association of System Heads, and Achieve, Inc. all sponsored conferences, workshops, and institutes to bring together state K-12 and higher education leaders to address specific substantive issues usually related to the transition between high school and college (Nunez & Oliva, 2009). Often these efforts were funded by philanthropic organizations such as the Gates Foundation and Lumina Foundation. These efforts continue today as the College Board recently hosted several state teams composed of higher education and K-12 leaders to discuss implementation of the common core state standards (Hughes & Ayres, 2013). The networks have produced some success as many states have or are in the process of aligning high school exit requirements with college entrance/placement exams (Achieve, Inc., 2012). However, these state collaborations usually only last for the length of the convening. Education reforms and developments necessitate continuing conversations between the sectors so a need for more permanent state councils remains.

Current Environment of P-20 Councils

Twenty-seven states have some form of P-20 council. This has decreased from 2008 when there were 38 state councils (Education Commission of the States, 2013). Table 1 lists those states with an active P-20 Council as of October 2013. Specialized committees with multi-sector participants focusing on a single issue (e.g. STEM, teacher quality, longitudinal data system) were not included.

Table 1

States with a P-20 Council

Arizona	Georgia	Minnesota	Ohio	Washington
Arkansas	Hawaii	Mississippi	Oregon	Wisconsin
California	Illinois	Missouri	Tennessee	Wyoming
Colorado	Indiana	Nebraska	Texas	
Connecticut	Kansas	Nevada	Utah	
Delaware	Maryland	North Carolina	Vermont	

Council membership ranges from 5 to 52 members and most meet at least quarterly (Shulock, 2009). Some P-20 council typologies have been proposed. One sorts the councils by level. Nunez & Oliva (2009) list four types of P-20 relationships: 1) those that focus on individual schools and universities; 2) those that focus on state level actors; 3) those that focus on the relationship between the federal government, states, schools, and colleges; and 4) those that include the relationship of schools, colleges, and external actors. This research will focus only on the relationship between state-level education actors.

Mokher (2008) created a typology of state P-20 councils according to formation. Some councils are mandatory, meaning they were created by gubernatorial executive order, legislation, or state board of education regulation. Others are voluntary depending on an initiator (e.g. governor) or the agencies themselves. Of the 38 existing councils at the time of her research, Mokher (2008) classified 27 as mandatory and 11 as voluntary.

State P-20 councils could also be sorted by membership as who is on the council is likely as important as how it was formed. The governor leads seven state councils while another 18

councils have gubernatorial participation. Legislators sit on 18 councils. Early learning representatives are on 8 councils. Some councils consist only of state actors while others include representatives from all state education stakeholder groups (Dounay, 2008).

Agendas vary by council as well. Some, like Colorado's P-20 Education Coordinating Council, received specific directives from the governor to turn its recommendations into legislative action (Lopez, 2010). Others, like Georgia's Alliance of Education Agency Heads, are able to create its own agenda. Most councils focus on the transition from high school to college and teacher recruitment and preparation (Education Commission of the States, 2013). Others include items related to early learning and college success on their agendas (Dounay, 2008). Half of the councils have at least a half-time person dedicated to fostering collaboration of members on agenda items (Cech, 2008).

As noted above, many of these councils have been created since 2005 (Cech, 2008) and some have changed shape. Seven states in 2012 and two states thus far in 2013 have passed legislation affecting their P-20 council (Education Commission of the States, 2013). Arizona and Delaware changed membership requirements; Rhode Island, Wisconsin, and Washington codified their councils; and Illinois charged its council with additional work (Education Commission of the States, 2013). West Virginia and Utah both added councils in 2013 (Education Commission of the States, 2013).

P-20 Council Research

This is a very timely education innovation that requires expenditures of time and money, both of which are scarce for state leaders. Therefore, it merits study. Does requiring/encouraging state education sectors to collaborate result in greater educational

outcomes – or at least meeting the goals the collaboration was set out to meet? What configurations (e.g. membership, formation) are more effective? Does gubernatorial leadership make a difference in the councils’ effectiveness?

Unfortunately, too little research has occurred to date and many researchers and policy analysts have cited the need for more empirical research on this topic (Dounay, 2008a; Kirst, 2005; McLendon, Heller, & Lee, 2009; Mokher, 2010). The bulk of the literature on state P-20 councils is in the form of qualitative case studies. Some of these are published in scholarly journals while policy and association groups produce others. Overall, the research points to mixed results. Although there is no definition of council effectiveness which makes assessment of these structures difficult, most research papers and policy briefs find at least some benefit to these councils and often provide recommendations for implementation based on oft noted “barriers to success”. For example, Nunez and Oliva’s (2009) review of existing research found that “successful” P-20 councils “build trust” and “maintain communications” between stakeholders, have adequate support for the council through staffing and funding, and have connected data systems (p. 331). ECS has also published several briefs aimed at providing specific and detailed direction to P-20 councils including “landmines to avoid” (See Dounay, 2009; Dounay, 2008a).

Michael Kirst, Andrea Venezia, and others, of the Stanford University Bridge Project are leaders in studying how the connections between secondary and postsecondary education affect educational outcomes and have conducted several case studies (Kirst, 2005; Kirst & Venezia, 2004; Kirst, Usdan, Evans, & Valant, 2011). Their book (Kirst & Venezia, 2004) is the foundation for much of the subsequent work on the topic. The authors include six state case studies (California, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Oregon, Texas) examining how K-12 and higher

education work together to align high school exit requirements with college entrance requirements/placement tests in order to create a stronger pipeline between high school and college (2004). They also contracted with the RAND Corporation to conduct a content analysis of state high school graduation tests and college placement/entry tests to determine alignment (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). While Kirst & Venezia (2004) found that P-20 councils or some type of overarching governance can aid in alignment, their main focus was the status and process of alignment of high school graduation tests and college placement/entry tests. Further, the case studies, while illuminating how individual states address these issues, do not seem to follow traditional qualitative methods. For example, no rationale was given for state case selection, which would allow for meaningful distinctions between states. Yet, the findings provide impetus for further research. A synthesis of the case studies suggested that states do not fully utilize accountability and finance mechanisms to encourage coordination between secondary and postsecondary education organizations. The authors concluded that more state leadership and encouragement could help facilitate coordination (Kirst & Venezia, 2004).

In 2005, Venezia, Kirst, and others authored a report on state governance structures needed to improve college readiness and success (Venezia, Callan, Finney, Kirst, & Usdan, 2005). This report detailed findings from case studies of Florida, Georgia, New York, and Oregon. The authors' overall finding was that special task forces or commissions established to solve specific issues surrounding college readiness and success may have some impact, but will not result in lasting reform (Venezia, Callan, Finney, Kirst, & Usdan, 2005). Rather,

[t]o be lasting and effective, K-16 deliberations must be anchored in policy and infrastructure reform. These bodies should be charged with specific responsibilities, provided the requisite resources, have enough influence and authority to make real

change, and be held accountable for performance. State agency collaboration – both in terms of the content of work and the organizational structures supporting that work – is essential” (Venezia, Callan, Finney, Kirst, & Usdan, 2005, p. 22).

In 2009, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (NCPPE) conducted research on P-20 councils. They reviewed results from a 2007 State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) survey of members as well as conducted a three-state case study (Arizona, Kentucky, Rhode Island). The SHEEO survey focused on higher education’s collaboration with K-12. Beyond basic descriptive data about P-20 collaborations, NCPPE found that higher education respondents most often cited a lack of resources as an impediment to initiate and sustain collaborations with K-12 (2009). The three states included in the case study were selected for their robust efforts to bridge the gap between K-12 and higher education. More specific state selection criteria were not given. The authors found a strong disconnect between P-20 council planning and action. They found much time was spent on discussing and planning initiatives, but action towards implementation was often absent. To remedy this, the authors suggested greater legislative involvement on councils so that council agenda items become codified and implemented (Shulock, 2009). Others have also criticized P-20 councils for lack of implementation as well as unclear goals, vague agendas, and limited leadership (Cech, 2008; Dounay, 2008a). Further, the authors noted a lack of desire on the part of higher education to engage in the collaborations (Shulock, 2009). Finally, the case study suggests that national organizations can have an impact in spurring K-12 and higher education collaboration (Shulock, 2009).

Noted higher education researcher Laura Perna and Michael Armijo (2012) contributed to the P-20 council literature through data analysis of case studies in 10 states to explore the origin,

implementation, and accomplishments of the councils. Drawing on previous case studies and their own work in several states, the authors used the characteristics of Ostrom's (1999) action situations and actors to examine the role of policy leaders in various lifespan stages of a P-20 council (Perna & Armijo, 2012). There are many interesting findings from this study including the most consistent positive outcome of the P-20 councils was "the development of a shared statewide agenda for P-20 education reform and the promotion of coordination and collaboration among education agencies" (Perna & Armijo, 2012, p. 37). Further, Perna and Armijo (2012) found the role and personality of the individual affiliated with the P-20 council (e.g. governor, higher education leader, legislator) can affect their impact on policy change through the P-20 council. The authors conclude,

The results of the study suggest that, to create policy change, members of a P-20 council must not only apply 'decision-making procedures, rules, and norms' as suggested in Venezia et al.'s (2005) conceptual model, but also apply procedures, rules, and norms that address the characteristics of the organizational structure and other characteristics of the action situation (as conceptualized by Ostrom, 1999) that restrict change (Perna & Armijo, 2012, p. 39).

A single case study on Maryland's P-20 council followed its evolution from a voluntary structure to one mandated by a gubernatorial executive order (Knepler, Lee, Williams, Shapiro, Morgan, & Susskind, 2013). The authors' "analysis suggests that legislated relationships do not carry the same benefits as relationships that were created voluntarily" (Knepler, Lee, Williams, Shapiro, Morgan, & Susskind, 2013, p. 8). They found that grassroots executive leadership was key to buy-in of these integral players who brought clout to the work as well as the ability to turn conversation into action. At the same time, the researchers found that having the governor

champion the council brought increased influence and visibility to the council. One respondent said that it “made the group more focused and increased the pace of work” (Knepler, Lee, Williams, Shapiro, Morgan, & Susskind, 2013, p. 28). They conclude by recommending states focus “on developing networks for communication, establishing the council in a grassroots environment but with executive leaders, supporting membership and participation with appropriate resources, and avoiding politicization of the work as much as possible” (Knepler, Lee, Williams, Shapiro, Morgan, & Susskind, 2013, p. 31).

While the bulk of research on state P-20 councils has been through case study methods, researchers have used other methods as well. Mokher (2008, 2010) focused on the diffusion of P-20 councils across states. Utilizing network theory and event history analysis methods, she predicted whether a state would adopt a P-20 council based on gubernatorial and state demographic characteristics. Mokher (2010) found that states where governors dedicated a relatively high percentage of their first and third year state of the state speeches to education were more likely to adopt mandatory P-20 councils. States that created voluntary P-20 councils hinged more on the percent of the state population attending college and the economic climate (Mokher, 2010). These results make sense. Governors who gear a large part of their agenda towards education would be more likely to see coordination as a way to further goals. States without this type of leadership may still develop such councils if the issues (such as low college attainment) warrant. Voluntary P-20 councils were more frequently adopted in states with economic climates on the rise as education leaders may have the time and resources to enter collaboration when not struggling to protect their budgets and implement cuts (Mokher, 2008, 2010). While Mokher’s (2008, 2010) research is instrumental in providing basic descriptive

statistics about P-20 councils and predictors of their development, it does not address how collaboration occurs within the councils and the interplay of council structure and collaboration.

Nunez & Oliva (2009) conducted an overview of existing P-20 research. Much of the cited research is descriptive and prescriptive, presented by various policy organizations and media outlets rather than scholarly journals. Still, the authors contend there are conclusions that can be made about effective P-20 collaborations: trust between collaborative members is key; strong communication networks must be in place; and collaborations must have sufficient resources to carry out and sustain their work (Nunez & Oliva, 2009).

Domina & Ruzek (2012) attempted to quantify the success of secondary and postsecondary collaboration by examining data from California's local K-12 and higher education collaborations. California has a long history of these collaborations. Some are programmatic, focused on only one or two specific initiatives while others are comprehensive. Domina & Ruzek (2012) looked at districts with both types of collaboration and assembled a fixed effects panel data set consisting of the percentage of 9th graders graduating high school four years later; percentage of high school graduates completing a college preparatory curriculum; and percentage of high school graduates enrolling in California's community colleges, California State, or University of California systems between 1980 and 1995 (Domina & Ruzek, 2012). They found that initial partnerships had no significant effect on any of these indicators; however comprehensive partnerships had a significant effect over time on the percentage of 9th graders graduating high school and the percent enrolling in community colleges and the California State University system (Domina & Ruzek, 2012). There was no effect on the percentage completing a college preparatory program or enrolling in the elite University of California system (Domina & Ruzek, 2012). This research is a solid quantitative analysis of K-20 collaboration that could,

perhaps, be a model for further quantitative analysis at the state level. It should be noted that local P-20 partnership agendas are very different from state agendas. Local agendas usually focus on specific problems, issues, activities, and policies between a handful of institutions. State agendas focus on broader policies and consequently, there is a greater likelihood for other intervening causes between the P-20 council and the outcome, which makes quantitative analysis more difficult. Still, the findings from this study contribute positively towards the growing base of P-20 research.

The state of P-20 council research is limited. A good deal of descriptive information is available through the research described above as well as policy organizations. A few peer-reviewed academic papers address collaboration, but there is relatively little empirical research on P-20 councils. This study aims to add to the research base by using rigorous empirical methods to identify cases, gather/analyze data, and draw conclusions regarding how P-20 council structures facilitate (or not) collaboration between K-12 and higher education.

Theoretical Foundation

Several theoretical lenses could be used to study K-12 and higher education collaboration through state P-20 councils. Given research in this area is in its infancy, it seems most appropriate to begin with the nature of the collaboration itself rather than attempting to quantify council effectiveness. Since P-20 councils are primarily used to address coordination issues between public agencies, literature on interorganizational relations may shed light on council catalysts and barriers. First, institutional theory and the concept of loose-coupling shed light on the nature of state education agencies.

Institutional theory is a broad concept for explaining why organizations do what they do to seek legitimacy (Selznick, 1996). Organizations strive to look and act like what they think an organization should look and act like and hence gain legitimacy. Meyer and Rowan (1977) found that educational organizations have an institutionalized myth about who they are and what they should be doing even if that is not what the organization actually does. Organizations will often respond to environmental conditions or change by carrying out the work needed, but not by changing the basic structure of the organization so as not to lose its perceived legitimacy. This often leads to isomorphism, the nature of organizations to look and act similarly over time as they respond to environmental cues about what constitutes a legitimate organization (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Institutional theory and isomorphism are critical to understanding state education organizations. Institutional theory posits that education as a whole and each organization/sector has its own sense of legitimacy from which it operates. This is evidenced by the consistent way education governance is structured across states. For instance, states routinely divide their educational systems into PreK, K-12, and higher education sectors. Even in the four states with shared governance for all sectors, there are still departments for each of the educational levels. Alternative configurations are rare. Institutional theory suggests that to gain legitimacy as an organization, educational organizations will act and be structured like what their leaders think such organizations should look like and therefore, all organizations begin to look the same. Any move away from this, such as to share governance across sectors, could result in loss of perceived legitimacy.

Yet, many state educational agency leaders realize the need for coordination in order to reach organizational and overarching state goals and choose to interact on an occasional or even

regular basis. These organizations, as a sector of education agencies in a state government, can be described as loosely-coupled. Loosely-coupled organizations are roughly connected, occasionally interacting to meet some objective or goal, but without a formal hierarchy or tight structure controlling the interactions (March & Olsen, 1976; Weick, 1982). While the downside to loose-coupling is lack of structured, consistent, and regulated connections, there are some benefits. Loose-coupling within an institution or among institutions allows parts of organizations to adapt to changing conditions without affecting the entire organization as a whole. For example, implementation of the common core state standards³ has radically changed many states' K-12 curricula and related instructional methods. Higher education may take note of this, hope for more prepared freshmen, and perhaps readjust its entrance exams/standards to accommodate the new K-12 standards, but it would likely not introduce a whole-scale change to the extent that occurs in K-12. Quite possibly, most state education coordination to date has occurred as a result of loose-coupling; therefore one of the potential downsides to creating more permanent, structured coordinating bodies through P-20 councils is losing the organizational adaptability that loose-coupling allows.

This research will primarily focus on the rich tradition of interorganizational research, which can be applied to education organizations in order to better understand how and why linkages between sectors do or do not occur. First, as noted above, education agencies engage in joint efforts from time to time. Levine and White (1961) developed exchange theory to explain when and why organizations would voluntarily collaborate. Organizations will collaborate when each can achieve some goal (economic or otherwise) through the interaction (Levine & White,

³ Common core state standards were developed in 2008. The National Governors' Association and Council of Chief State School Officers lead their development as leaders agreed that a common set of college- and career-ready standards were needed in all states. To date, 46 states have adopted the common core standards.

1961; Schermerhorn Jr., 1975). Indeed, each organization may gain additional resources (e.g. materials, products, revenues) through cooperation (Galaskiewicz, 1985). This helps to explain why some state education agencies have voluntarily engaged in collaboration. There may be overarching and/or agency-specific goals (e.g. increase the state's college completion rate) for which agency leaders are being held accountable and only by working with other agencies can additional funds be accessed and/or those goals be achieved. Keeping with the example above, a state higher education agency may need to collaborate with the state K-12 agency to ensure that students graduate high school prepared for college-level work.

While there are certainly many plausible reasons for collaboration, Cohen and March (1974) posit that sometimes collaboration is a symbolic form of planning. The process of planning as well as the plan itself can serve different functions. It can be a symbol, perhaps of success, collaboration, or whatever messages the group needs to convey. It can be an advertisement, possibly to businesses that the state is serious about creating an educated workforce (Cohen & March, 1974). It can be a game – collaboration mandated by the governor, legislature, or another entity to keep agencies “busy” or focused on one thing rather than another (Cohen & March, 1974). Finally, planning can be an excuse for interaction – participants come together to create a plan, a concrete outcome, but instead, the relationships and networks become more important and sustaining over time (Cohen & March, 1974).

Collaboration can take many different forms. As discussed above, organizations may voluntarily come together and create a self-perpetuating structure that fosters regular interaction if the need for such an entity is apparent. If voluntary collaboration does not occur, mandating collaboration is an option. About half of state P-20 councils are mandated through gubernatorial executive order or legislation, some with specified agendas and members (Mokher, 2009). There

are still considerations for mandating such collaboration as the mandate itself does not guarantee effectiveness (Knepler, Lee, Williams, Shapiro, Morgan, & Susskind, 2013; Whetten, 1981). Agencies have to be aware of the mandate and its rationale (Whetten, 1981). Because those in the agency who are carrying out the collaboration may often be bureaucrats with perhaps their own agenda, they must buy-in to the collaboration so as not to see it as a political agenda that can be outlived (Whetten, 1981). Agencies also must have the resources and capacity to engage in the collaboration and must not see the collaboration as a threat to its legitimacy or existence. This is true of both voluntary and mandatory collaborations (Whetten, 1981).

Whether mandated or voluntary, obstacles to collaboration can still occur. Whetten and Bozeman's (1991) identified potential barriers to interagency collaboration. These include:

- a. Mission barriers: the missions of the organizations do not overlap or are in conflict;
- b. Political barriers: different agencies have allegiance to different politicians thereby preventing meaningful collaboration;
- c. Resource barriers: agencies are in competition for budget funding and/or agencies do not have the capacity to engage in and sustain collaboration;
- d. Legal barriers: constitutionally fragmented governance maintains separate institutions;
- e. Constituent barriers: agencies' constituencies overlap thereby causing competition and/or agencies are coopted by their constituency making real collaboration difficult; and
- f. Bureaucratic barriers: agencies engage in bureaupathology – taking the good things about bureaucracies to the extreme (e.g. routinization becomes apathy); most of the

knowledge needed for collaboration is stored at lower levels in the agency and is not at the collaboration table.

State education governance could evidence many of Whetten and Bozeman's (1991) barriers to collaboration. For example, if one or more education agency leaders are elected or appointed by different leaders, political barriers may abound. Well-entrenched and long-time agency staff may protract, complicate, or block new education initiatives, which would serve as a bureaucratic barrier. Finally, a state higher education agency with planning or coordinating powers rather than governing powers may face legal barriers in holding the state's higher education institutions to any policies created through collaboration. Any attempt to bring together P-20 agencies must deal with real and/or perceived barriers.

While common sense suggests that the benefits of collaboration are plentiful (e.g. greater efficiency and effectiveness), there are also downsides that must be considered. As noted above, greater coordination can limit adaptability. Individual organizations are not as free to adapt to changing conditions if they have an agreement with or must consult with other organizations. Loss of innovation can occur during negotiation as agencies settle upon "safe" answers and focus on means rather than ends in order to reach a consensus (Whetten & Bozeman, 1991). New market entrants can be stifled as the coordinating group, because of its coordination, thinks it has it all needs covered (Whetten & Bozeman, 1991). Further, redundancies in the provision of services (greater efficiency) can be eliminated thereby removing crucial stopgaps in services (Whetten & Bozeman, 1991). If these potential issues are kept in mind, they may be avoided.

These considerations are important because it is becoming increasingly clear that greater coordination of education sectors is needed to address current goals. The sectors can no longer afford to operate in a vacuum – creating policies and programs that duplicate (lost efficiency) or

are at cross-purposes (lost effectiveness) with each other. The theories noted above may help explain and predict interactions among state education agencies on a P-20 council. Exchange theory may illuminate why P-20 councils are formed. Whetten and Bozeman's (1991) list of barriers to interagency collaboration may help researchers and policymakers understand the nature of participant relationships on a P-20 council and perhaps address such barriers if they do indeed exist. This type of organizational theory has not yet been applied to education sector cooperation and may prove enlightening and ultimately useful in promoting effective collaboration.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

P-20 councils consume state resources in the form of time and money, yet there is not a robust research literature on the effectiveness of P-20 organizations in meeting educational goals. Much of the existing research is atheoretical and descriptive and/or prescriptive (McLendon, Heller & Lee, 2009). Solid research on P-20 councils is important given the effect education state governance structures and policy can have on educational outcomes (Hearn & Holdsworth, 2002; Manna, 2006). McLendon, Heller, & Lee (2009) suggest new research on the topic evolve from a conceptual basis, be sufficiently comprehensive, and utilize a rigorous comparison process. This research attempts to fulfill that suggestion through a qualitative comparative case study to explore the nature of K-12 and higher education collaboration on shared goals through state-level P-20 councils.

State P-20 councils are somewhat attenuated from student outcomes, including college completion, as there are many other variables between the council and the classroom that could affect student educational performance and attainment. Student motivation on the day of a test, the quality of teaching, institutional leadership and policies, and interventions also have an impact on student outcomes. State policy certainly guides the actions of schools, districts, and postsecondary institutions, but it is removed from direct interaction with the student. That is why this research is focused on the nature of the collaboration – understanding how these councils promote collaboration (or not) on state education policy issues including college

completion efforts and ideally gaining insight that can later lead to more direct reviews of council effectiveness.

Because of the relatively undeveloped state of knowledge regarding P-20 councils, an exploratory, qualitative methods approach is warranted for addressing the research questions for this project. As Creswell (2009) noted, such an approach is appropriate when the research question is open-ended rather than binary or numerical in nature. Creswell (2009) states that qualitative research “involves emerging questions ... [and] data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes” (p. 4). It provides advantages over quantification such as “rich insight into human behavior” and the ability to generalize from individual cases (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Further, a comparative case study is the most appropriate qualitative technique to use in studying state-level P-20 councils. Although there are multiple definitions of a case study, most authorities agree that the singular uniqueness of a case study is its focus on a bounded unit(s) (Merriam, 2009; Toma, 2006; Yin, 2009). In this research, I am interested in examining state P-20 councils (bounded entity) in their most recent incarnations (bounded in time). Case studies are also particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic, which allows them to provide more concrete and contextual information than other research methods and allows readers to further the findings through their own interpretations (Merriam, 2009). Rich description and context will be important to understanding P-20 councils given the paucity of current literature on their internal operations.

Comparative case studies increase the rigor of research (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). One case may provide information about how a particular state developed a P-20 council or

lessons learned, but multiple cases allow for comparison of state approaches, strategies, and outcomes and help to further generalize the findings.

Case Selection

Because the goal of this study includes examining K-12 and higher education collaboration in a variety of state contexts, maximum variation sampling was employed (Merriam, 2009). Maximum variation sampling lends itself to building grounded theories (Merriam, 2009) and given the lack of research in the P-20 field, new theories may develop from the evidence collected through this research.

First, to be included in the study, a state had to have an active P-20 council and be involved in college completion policy efforts. Specifically:

1. *The state's P-20 council must have been actively meeting.* Almost all states utilized some form of P-20 council since the mid 1990s, but many of those changed form or were not currently active. Research was conducted to ensure that the council had been in operation for at least 18 months prior to this research (since July 2011) and was not in danger of being changed or disbanded during the course of the research project due to impending gubernatorial election. Twenty-seven states met this criterion.

2. *The state must have been a member of the Complete College America (CCA) alliance as of January 2013.* As of January 2013, 32 states and the District of Columbia were members of CCA (Complete College America, 2012). Membership demonstrated that college completion was a top priority for state leaders, including the Governor. To be a member, states

had to commit to 1) set college completion goals; 2) develop action plans and move key policy levers (that involve both K-12 and higher education); and 3) collect and report common measures of progress (Complete College America, 2013).

3. *The P-20 council agenda included college completion efforts.* Some P-20 councils do not have a stated agenda or goals, but rather operate ad hoc. In order to ensure ability to research and compare approaches to similar situations, states had to include college completion on the P-20 council agenda.

Once these criteria were employed, 10 states remained viable candidates. These included Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas. Three additional factors were then applied to ensure maximum variation among cases. These factors included the state's higher education governance structure, the *Education Week* Quality Counts 2013 Report State Grade for College Readiness (Education Week, 2013), and the P-20 council structure.

1. *State Higher Education Governance Structure:* This variable was chosen in order to determine whether the nature of collaboration varies with differences in state higher education governance structure. For example, how does a state higher education agency with constitutional governance authority differ in their collaboration on a P-20 council with a state agency that only holds weak coordinating abilities? The ECS database on state-level post-secondary agencies (Education Commission of the States, 2013) was used to identify state structures. Table 2 below provides an admittedly simple categorization of the governance structure (coordinating / governing and unified / multiple boards).

2. *Education Week's Quality Counts 2013 measure on college readiness:* The K-12 national newspaper *Education Week* publishes an annual report grading states on their policies and student outcomes (Education Week, 2013). Each state receives an overall grade and category grades. One category focuses on “Transitions and Alignment: College Readiness”. The components of this grade include:

“College-Readiness Definition: State has formal expectations for what students will need to know and be able to do in order to be admitted to the state’s postsecondary institutions and enroll in credit-bearing courses. Ibid.

College-Prep Required: State requires all students to take courses designed for students bound for four-year colleges or universities in order to receive a standard high school diploma. States receiving credit have defined a college-preparatory curriculum or identified its components. Ibid.

Course Credits Aligned: State has aligned course-credit requirements for earning a standard high school diploma with requirements for admission into the state’s postsecondary institutions. Ibid.

Aligning High School Assessments: State has aligned the content of high school assessments with academic expectations for two-year and/or four-year colleges and universities. Ibid.

Postsecondary Decisions: State uses results from its standardized high school assessments to determine whether students will be admitted to state universities, be permitted to enroll in credit-bearing college courses in particular academic subjects, or be selected to receive academic scholarships. Ibid.” (Education Week, 2013).

The grades awarded to states on this component indicate the nature of progress on issues that require K-12 and higher education collaboration. Selection of states with variable grades for this component allowed for examination of differences in collaboration for state(s) with a very high college readiness grade versus a lower grade.

3. *P-20 Council Size:* Although it would be an impossible endeavor to ensure case study states are exactly comparable to other P-20 councils given the wide variety of council structures, they may share general characteristics that can be translatable to other states. One general characteristic of councils that may have a direct impact on collaboration is the size of the council; therefore variation of P-20 council size in the sample states was sought.

The following table outlines how the 10 possible case study states fared on these variables:

Table 2

Characteristics of Case Study State Finalists

	State Higher Education Structure / Governing Authority	Education Week's Quality Counts 2013 measure on College Readiness Score	P-20 Council Membership Size
Colorado	Unified / Coordinating	82.1 / B	31
Connecticut	Unified / Coordinating	78.6 / C	32
Georgia	Multiple / Governing	100 / A	8
Illinois	Multiple / Coordinating	75.0 / C	43
Maine	Unified / Governing	82.1 / B	15
Maryland	Unified / Coordinating	96.4 / A	35
Minnesota	Multiple / Governing and Planning	71.4 / C	28
Mississippi	Multiple / Governing and coordinating	82.1 / B	12
Tennessee	Unified / Coordinating	92.9 / A	9
Texas	Unified / Coordinating	92.9 / A	5

When these additional factors were taken into account, three states appeared as viable candidates for study. Georgia, Illinois, and Minnesota provided maximum variability within the stated confines of the control variables. Georgia was one of two eligible states with a state higher education governing body. As Georgia also had scored a 100 percent on *Education Week's* measure of college readiness, it seemed a better candidate than Maine as it represented the extreme of two important variables. Illinois had the largest council size of the 10 eligible states (n=43), which provided a nice contrast to Georgia with a very small council of eight

people. Illinois also has multiple higher education boards that play a coordinating role. Therefore, Minnesota was chosen as the third state as its higher education structure included a planning agency and its council size represented the mid-range. The following table below provides additional pertinent information about each state.

Table 3

Selected Characteristics of Case Study States

	Georgia	Illinois	Minnesota
Name of P-20 Council	Alliance of Education Agency Heads	Illinois P-20 Council	Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership
Year current P-20 Council Began and Manner of Establishment	2005 through encouragement by Governor	2009 by statute	2007 by statute
Number of P-20 Council Members	8	43	28 voting and 9 non-voting members
Membership	7 state education agency heads and governor's advisor	State agency leads and staff; governor's office staff; legislators, university administrators and faculty; foundation and community representatives, associations	Legislators, associations, state agency heads, university president
Governor's Involvement	Provides expectation that council meets and provides some direction through advisor	Designates chair and provides some facilitation through staff	None

Data Collection

“[A] major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence” (Yin, 2009, p. 14). The use of multiple sources of evidence increases the

rigor of the research by allowing for triangulation and corroboration (Yin, 2009). Data collection for this research included documents and interviews.

Documents

Documents can be used in research studies to “corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (Yin, 2009, p.103). They are a particularly good source of evidence as they contain “exact ... details of an event” (Yin, 2009, p.102). All three states had websites devoted to their P-20 councils although the Illinois⁴ and Minnesota⁵ websites were more developed than Georgia’s⁶ website. These provided a rich source of information about the structure of each state’s P-20 council, the councils’ current agenda items, and previous accomplishments. The main types of documents used were as follows:

1. Forming legislation (if mandatory council);
2. P-20 council membership roster;
3. Written goals and objectives of the council;
4. Agendas and minutes of previous and upcoming council meetings;
5. Memos, surveys, and reports concerning the council;
6. Gubernatorial press releases concerning the P-20 council and college completion; and
7. State college completion plans.

Most of these documents were accessible from the Internet, usually the state’s P-20 council website. Some respondents provided documents during or immediately after the interview. Given that source documents must be authentic and the primary source whenever available to help ensure reliability and validity of the study (Merriam, 2009), care was taken to

⁴ <http://www2.illinois.gov/gov/P20/Pages/default.aspx>

⁵ <http://www.mnp20.org>

⁶ <http://www.gaeducationalliance.org>

confirm that all documents originated from a reputable website or personal source affiliated with the state's government. Overall, 26 documents were analyzed (6 related to Georgia; 10 for Illinois; and 10 for Minnesota). In Georgia, core documents included the state's Complete College America grant application, Race to the Top application, and AEAH strategic plan. In Illinois, core documents included council agendas, minutes, and historical memos. For Minnesota, core documents included agendas, minutes, and historical memos.

Interview Targets

Interviews are useful to gain information that cannot be directly observed as it either happened in the past or consists of one's thoughts/reactions to a subject (Merriam, 2009). In this research, I was interested in P-20 council participants' views on the nature of collaboration as they worked towards college completion goals. This information is not usually directly observable or obtainable through documents.

Respondents were identified in two ways. First, initial document reviews, mainly P-20 council membership rosters, provided the bulk of the potential interview pool. Beyond P-20 council members, I also sought to interview gubernatorial staff familiar with the P-20 council and/or the governor's education agenda, state K-12 and higher education agency heads, and key P-20 council and agency staff. Often, these individuals were noted as members of their state P-20 council, but not always. To narrow down which members of the councils would be interviewed, I spoke with knowledgeable sources that could provide information on the more engaged members of the council. During the course of conducting interviews, some respondents suggested that others might have useful information to share. This "snowballing" technique is a recognized method for identifying additional relevant respondents (Merriam, 2009).

In total, interviews with 30 people were conducted: 11 in Georgia, 11 in Illinois⁷, and 8 in Minnesota. Table 4 below shows the roles of respondents in each state. Note that designations may overlap as, for example, one person may be a P-20 council member *and* the state K-12 agency head. In all states, an attempt was made to interview members of the council, K-12 and higher education agency heads, and governor's office staff. In only one instance, a key constituency denied a request for an interview. In each case study state initial interviews lead to recommendations for further interviews with respondents not on the original interview list. Role and membership of the council also played a part in identifying respondents. For example, the governor's office has no role with the P-20 council in Minnesota and no Minnesota respondents recommended I interview the governor's office. Further, I believe the fewer respondents in Minnesota versus Georgia and Illinois is reflected in the relative activity of that state's council, which will be further discussed in later chapters. However, as many of the same themes echoed throughout documents reviewed and interviews conducted, I am confident that a data saturation point was met and sufficient data were collected in all states.

Table 4

Roles of State Respondents

	Georgia	Illinois	Minnesota
P-20 Council Member	5	7	2
P-20 Council or Agency Staff	2	4	3
Governor's office staff	2	1	0
K-12 agency head	1	1	0
Higher education agency head	2	2	1
Former P-20 Council Member	3	0	3

⁷ One Illinois respondent submitted written rather than verbal answers to interview questions. Also, in two instances, two respondents were interviewed at the same time.

Interview Protocol

A responsive interviewing structure was employed for this research as it offers many benefits to this particular research design. Among its characteristics are 1) an emphasis on context and richness; 2) conversational tone; 3) the ability of the respondent to act “as a partner in the research whose ideas impact subsequent questioning” (p. 38); and 4) a flexible interview design (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Given the participants’ familiarity with the councils and its inner workings, a responsive design allowed for respondents’ insights to be cultivated and mined. Often, respondents revealed that they, too, had thought about the impact of P-20 councils on collaboration and were eager to contribute their insights to this project in hopes of broadening the knowledge base and perhaps strengthening their council.

In order to provide some focus to the conversation with respondents, I used a semi-structured interviewing protocol. I entered the interviews with a list of pre-determined questions, but utilized a conversational tone and allowed for relevant digressions in order to efficiently mine the participants’ knowledge and observations (Merriam, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Yin, 2009). The major themes of the interview protocol included 1) the respondent’s role with the P-20 council; 2) the history of the P-20 council including, if applicable, the transition to a new form; 3) how the collaboration between K-12 and higher education operates within the council; and 4) the extent to which college completion has been addressed by the P-20 council. A full copy of the basic protocol is included in Appendix A.

The average length of each interview was 45 minutes with a range of 30 to 60 minutes each. The preference was to conduct each interview in-person at a place of the respondent’s convenience (usually their work place) as in-person interviews allow for ease of establishing a relationship and observing visual cues (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). However, given the schedules of

the high-level officials and staff I chose to interview, in-person conversations were not always feasible. In those cases, I conducted telephone interviews. Almost all interviews were recorded in order to transcribe and more accurately analyze the information. All respondents were provided a letter prior to the interview that outlined their rights as respondents and provisions for confidentiality. In one case, the respondent agreed to be recorded, but appeared extremely hesitant during the initial minutes of the interview and I voluntarily offered to cease recording in order to have a more natural conversation with the respondent. In another instance, the respondent, by phone, began to immediately provide information on the topic and there was no graceful way to interrupt the respondent to ask permission to record. In both of those cases, as with all interviews, I kept detailed field notes and later wrote a memo about the interview for the case file. Finally, one respondent asked to respond in writing to interview questions and I accommodated that request. The goal in all facets of the interview protocol was to obtain as much information as possible in the most reliable and valid manner possible.

Data Analysis

Multiple case studies produce volumes of data and therefore, it is important to integrate it as it comes in and keep it organized (Merriam, 2009). An organized and specific process of data collection and analysis leads to more trustworthy results.

Data analysis was an on-going process. Separate files for each state contained documents and interview memos. Some contextual research was done prior to the interviews in order to generate the interview protocol. As interviews were conducted and memos were written, initial analysis influenced further data gathering. For instance, communications with one noted P-20 researcher called into question whether P-20 councils would still be needed after implementation

of the Common Core State Standards. This was an interesting question, which I incorporated into future interviews and follow-up e-mails with previous respondents.

Coding, a systematic process of assigning labels to and organizing data (Merriam, 2009), was used with the documents and interview transcripts. A pre-determined set of codes was established based on the research questions. Other codes were created as the analysis developed (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Micro-coding of documents and interview transcripts consisted of line-by-line analysis to pick up key phrases and concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 2007). Axial coding consisted of scaffolding initial codes into bigger and broader themes that then informed the findings (Strauss & Corbin, 2007). I ensured the codes were exhaustive and captured all relevant data points; were mutually exclusive and did not overlap; and were specific to the data (Merriam, 2009).

Trustworthiness

I contend that one of the issues with existing research on P-20 councils is the overabundance of anecdotal policy and descriptive pieces. As some works exhibit less than rigorous research techniques, it is difficult to generalize from or replicate the studies. This study used rigorous methodology from case selection to analysis in order to increase the reliability and validity of the results.

Reliability ensures that the results can be replicated (Toma, 2006). To allow others to build off of the knowledge gained from this study, it is important that researchers can replicate and build from its results. Reliability can be enhanced by a clear and clean audit trail (Merriam, 2009). This makes organized data collection and analysis even more important.

Along with reliability, results must be valid. Internal validity occurs when the results are accurate - what a researcher finds is actually what happened (Merriam, 2009). This is especially important in research that attempts to establish a causal relationship (Yin, 2009). Internal validity is missing from a good deal of the existing research on P-20 councils. For example, a 2005 report from NGA suggests that gubernatorial leadership is crucial to effective P-20 councils (Conklin, 2005). How does the author know this? What theory supports this hypothesis? What methods were used to support the conclusion? How do we know it is not another variable causing effective council functioning? It is possible the most significant contribution this study will make to the literature is injecting internal validity to commentary on P-20 council operations. Internal validity is enhanced in this study through triangulation of data (e.g. multiple cases and multiple data samples within each case), member checks with those being interviewed/studied, peer review, keeping a detailed audit trail, and constant review for alternate explanations and conflicting data (Merriam, 2009; Toma, 2006).

Results must also be externally valid or generalizable to a broader population (Merriam, 2009; Toma, 2006; Yin, 2009). Even a single case study can be generalizable if it is done well. A thick description of the case and its context can provide the reader with enough information to be able to generalize to other situations (Merriam, 2009; Toma, 2006). Although no two P-20 councils are alike, there is enough commonality regarding membership, agenda, and functioning that, if done correctly, this research can be generalizable to other states.

Without reliability, internal validity, and external validity, this study will only continue the descriptive and prescriptive work already occurring regarding P-20 councils without adding to the empirical literature base. It is important that this study further the literature as there is so much more to study, especially when state longitudinal databases are fully functioning and

researchers can track the progress of students through the P-20 system and more tightly connect policy innovations and outcomes.

Limitations

While due care has been taken to ensure this research is as trustworthy and informational as possible, there are some limitations. First, I must be very cognizant of my potential biases. Ideally, a researcher is completely impartial to the subject he/she is studying. This allows for more trustworthy results. Given my policy background, I come to this research with some already-formed research questions that occur from my previous experiences. This means there is the potential for my experience to bias, rather than inform, my research. To curb any potential biases, I detailed all steps in the research process; documented all data that led to conclusions; and consistently reviewed the data for alternate explanations (Merriam, 2009). I also conducted member checks by providing draft case study reports to a few respondents in each state to ensure there were no factual errors or gross errors in analysis.

It is also possible that my policy background, including serving as a governor's education advisor and reorganizing a state P-20 council in one of the case study states (Georgia), could have influenced data gathering for this project. Interview participants could assume I know or understand certain nuances and fail to describe them in detail. Instructions to respondents to assume I am a "blank slate" were intended to help overcome this limitation. Further, I have many personal and professional contacts with state education leaders in Georgia. This likely aided in access to data and respondents, but could have also posed issues if respondents were reluctant to be candid about the state's P-20 council for fear of insulting my previous work if they hold objectionable opinions and/or fear a lack of confidentiality. I informed all respondents

that conversations were for purposes of research only and would not be shared. On balance, my judgment is that the questions I asked, the responses I received, the inferences I made, and the conclusions I have reached are not significantly different from those that would be asked and received by a researcher without my experience.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY - GEORGIA

Georgia is a large, diverse, and growing state. With almost 10 million citizens, it is the union's 9th most populous state (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2013). Its growth can be reflected in the number of high school graduates, which are projected to grow at twice the rate of the national average (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2013). The per capita income of \$36,869 is lower than the national average of \$42,693, and the poverty rate is higher than the national average at 19 percent (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2013). Twenty-eight percent of adults have at least a BA degree (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2013) and 50 percent of young adults are currently involved in some type of postsecondary education (Editorial Projects in Education, 2013). Blacks constitute almost a third of the state's population and Hispanics a tenth (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2013).

Overall, the state's high school graduation rate is at 64 percent and is trending upward (Editorial Projects in Education, 2013). On the National Assessment of Educational Progress, Georgia students generally score a bit lower than national averages in 4th and 8th grade reading and math (Editorial Projects in Education, 2013). For those who enter college, only 62 percent seeking a Bachelors' degree graduate within 8 years (Complete College America, 2011a). This gets worse at the Associate Degree level as 18 percent of entering students graduate in four years (Complete College America, 2011a). An impetus to increase educational achievement and attainment and thereby increase individual and statewide economic outcomes is clearly present.

Republican lawmakers lead every facet of state government. Since 2010, the governor, both U.S. Senators, and every other statewide elected constitutional officer identifies as a Republican. Sixty-eight (68) percent of state senators and 66 percent of state house members are Republican. Although the state currently leans Republican, until 2002, there had not been a Republican governor since reconstruction.

There are seven state-level education-related agencies in Georgia. Only one of these, the state schools superintendent, is an elected position, operating on the same election cycle as the governor, although there are no term limits for the state superintendent. A Republican has held this position since 2002. Kathy Cox was a teacher and state house member when she was elected in 2002. She held the position until 2009 when she resigned to take a position with Achieve, Inc. in Washington, D.C. Governor Perdue appointed Brad Bryant, former state board of education member and lawyer, to the position. Superintendent Bryant made an attempt to qualify for the ballot by obtaining citizen signatures given that Superintendent Cox resigned after the state deadline for registering to run as a political party member. Bryant was not successful in gaining enough signatures in the allotted time so Republican John Barge, a long-time educator and former DOE employee, was elected state superintendent in 2010.

Public higher education in Georgia is composed of two sectors: the University System of Georgia (USG) and the Technical College System of Georgia (TSCG). The USG is one of the most simple state higher education structures in the nation (Richardson, Bracco, Callan, & Finney, 1999). In 1931, all 2- and 4-year institutions were placed under a single governing board and in 1941 the system was granted constitutional status “to govern, control, and manage the system” (p. 106) by the legislature in order to thwart the governor’s attempt to intervene in its administrative affairs (Richardson, Bracco, Callan, & Finney, 1999). As of 2013, there are 31

institutions educating 259,654 full-time equivalents (FTEs). After a recent reconfiguration of status and mission, there are four research institutions, four comprehensive universities, 10 state universities, and 10 state colleges. The governor appoints the regents of the USG and the regents select their chancellor (although the governor is thought to have significant influence on the decision). While the USG maintains constitutional status, the governor and legislature have influence over the system through the budget process. The regents may allocate funds however they wish, but the governor and legislature decide how much to give the USG. In 2011, the most recent chancellor, Hank Huckaby, assumed office. Chancellor Huckaby was most recently a state house member, Senior Vice-President at the University of Georgia, and Director of the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget. Prior to Chancellor Huckaby, Erroll Davis, a former corporate executive from Wisconsin, served as chancellor.

The TCSG has also recently undergone restructuring and is now composed of 25 institutions with 90,531 FTEs. The governor appoints the TCSG's governing board and the commissioner. Ron Jackson was elevated to commissioner from deputy commissioner in 2006 and remains in that position. He also was formerly in state government and has a pre-existing relationship with USG Chancellor Huckaby.

Other statewide education agencies include:

- The Professional Standards Commission, which is responsible for the preparation, certification, and professional conduct of certified personnel in public schools. The governor appoints commission members and the agency head.
- The Georgia Student Finance Commission that handles state- and lottery-funded scholarships, grants, and service-cancellable loans. The governor appoints commission members and the agency head.

- The Department of Early Care and Learning that administers a wide range of programs for children from birth to school age including the state’s universal PreK program. The governor appoints all board members and the commissioner.
- The Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, formerly of the Office of Educational Accountability, which is the state’s PreK through college accountability agency and also houses the state’s longitudinal student database system. There is no board and the governor appoints the agency head.

History of P-20 Council

Modern agency collaborative efforts began in earnest in 1994 under Governor Zell Miller⁸. Governor Miller urged USG and TCSG to work together to sort out overlapping programs and articulation agreements (Venezia, Callan, Finney, Kirst, & Usdan, 2005). In 1995, Governor Miller appointed, through an executive order, a P-16 council to oversee and coordinate this and other collaborations (Venezia, Callan, Finney, Kirst, & Usdan, 2005). Governor Miller’s initial mission for Georgia’s P-16 council was to improve “the academic achievement of all students at all levels” (Kettlewell, Kaste, & Jones, 2000, p. 78). Unlike later P-20 efforts in Georgia, this effort had both a state and local focus with a statewide P-16 council and 15 regional councils sponsored by the USG (Turner, Jones, & Hearn, 2004). There were 49 members of the statewide council and it met four times per year. It was co-chaired through a rotation of the early childhood agency, state department of education, university system, and technical college system agency heads (Kettlewell, Kaste, & Jones, 2000). Sub-committees were used to carry out the work and individual agency boards had to approve any new policies given the P-16 council had

⁸ Zell Miller later served as a U.S. Senator from Georgia.

no authority of its own. The initial goals of the council included development of preschool through postsecondary learning standards and curriculum, strengthening teacher quality, and creation of a statewide longitudinal database (Kettlewell, Kaste, & Jones, 2000).

In 2000, Governor Barnes extended what Governor Miller had done, by including an Education Coordinating Council (ECC) in his overarching education legislation package (Venezia, Callan, Finney, Kirst, & Usdan, 2005). The ECC was similar to Governor Miller's P-16 council, but included all education agency heads and their board chairs. Governor Barnes established himself as chair of the council and included a laundry list of priorities for the council including, again, a statewide student information system (Venezia, Callan, Finney, Kirst, & Usdan, 2005). Turner, Jones, & Hearn (2004) found that the impetus for Georgia's P-16 reforms during this time was "the state's desire to increase intellectual capital, which [would] then enhance economic development" (p. 184).

Over its two year tenure, Venezia et al. (2005) found that the ECC's accomplishments included "the reconstitution of the existing statewide P-16 Council to avoid duplication; investigations into distance learning possibilities and the use of shared facilities; the release of the Office of Education Accountability's Performance Report and Report Card; and the adoption of initial accountability indicators for each of the ECC's member agencies" (p. 8). Venezia et al.'s (2005) research also unearthed some issues with the ECC. First, the governor and state superintendent were of different political parties and did not work well together. To be fair, the state superintendent was later indicted on federal criminal charges, so it may not have been for lack of the governor's efforts to connect. Further, the USG housed a P-16 office which included several grant projects related to P-16 work in Georgia. USG chancellors of the 1990s and early 2000s were major supporters of P-16 work, but this seemed to thwart other agencies' buy-in as

they identified P-16 with the USG rather than as a project of the whole (Turner, Jones, & Hearn, 2004). The following statement from a P-16 Council member in the Venezia et al. (2005) study seems to sum up sentiments of several P-16 Council members during this time: “We had meetings – people came – but they didn’t really sit around and gnaw on the real policy questions...That has yet to happen” (p. 19).

Lack of adequate resources exacerbated ECC issues. The governor charged his Office of Educational Accountability to staff the ECC, but they did not have the capacity to do so effectively (Venezia, Callan, Finney, Kirst, & Usdan, 2005). Venezia et al. (2005) found that “if [the P-16] vision is to be fully institutionalized, much work remains...There was little consensus about what actually constitutes P-16 reform, although almost every interviewee was supportive of the concept” (p. 23). Turner et al. (2004) concluded “most state-level education respondents agreed that there is a long way to go to improve the communication and collaboration leading to policy alignment across education sectors. At the same time, many feel that the initiatives are making a difference...” (p. 214).

Georgia was a forerunner of P-20 collaboration. Researchers found that “gubernatorial support gave the P-16 issue momentum, visibility, and a degree of institutionalism” (Venezia, Callan, Finney, Kirst, & Usdan, 2005, p. 3). Yet, with each change of governor came a change in the structure of collaboration. When Governor Perdue and Superintendent Kathy Cox were elected in 2002, the ECC stopped meeting. Governor Perdue had campaigned on reducing the proliferation of education acronyms, as he believed that his predecessor had established too many new programs and entities. Superintendent Cox campaigned on putting the DOE back together after Governor Barnes, given his inability to work with the previous superintendent, had dispersed traditional DOE functions (e.g. data system, development of new curriculum) to

outside entities. In the midst of reorganizing the educational structure, the ECC was put aside (B. Scafidi, personal communication, September 23, 2013). Staff from various agencies, spurred on by the USG's P-16 office, continued to meet informally until Governor Perdue resurrected a P-20 structure of his own.

In the summer of 2005, the Executive Secretary of the Professional Standards Commission called Governor Perdue's office requesting permission to initiate a change to teacher licensure standards. However, the Executive Secretary had not consulted with the USG Chancellor who was in the process of expanding teacher education offerings based on current standards. This was but an example of the lack of communication between agencies that could result in inefficient use of resources and mixed messages to stakeholders. To prevent this from happening, it made sense for the agency heads, with their experience and knowledge, to collaborate with each other rather than the governor's office mediating between them on all issues. Governor Perdue's message on the initial AEAH website in 2008 stated,

...I have asked the leaders of our state's education agencies to work together to guarantee that Georgia's students receive an excellent education – from Pre-K to Ph.D. ... Separately, each of these agencies are doing outstanding work. But working together, they can change the course of Georgia's future for all of its citizens.

Interestingly, all respondents who were part of the initial formation of the new P-20 council do not mention Governor Perdue mandating their involvement. Rather, respondents recall the formation occurring somewhat spontaneously to further the alignment work already happening at agency staff levels. For example, one former agency leader stated, "I did raise the issue of 'why aren't we talking with each other' and certainly the people to whom I asked that question thought it would be a good idea."

Barriers to Establishing P-20 Collaboration

Georgia's education governance structure gives rise to several of Whetten and Bozeman's (1991) barriers to agency collaboration. Five of the six barriers to collaboration were evident in some fashion.

Mission Barriers

On a broad scale, it is easy to assume education of the citizenry is every state education agency's mission, yet each of Georgia's seven education-related agencies has specific missions and mandates and these often overlap and sometimes conflict. There is no more notable case of mission barriers due to overlap than the historic tension between the USG and TCSG often caused by arguments over which institutions offer which program and to whom.

Conflict in missions also occurs. For instance, the USG works to increase the number of citizens with degrees, including advanced degrees. The PSC works to ensure very qualified teachers are in every K-12 classroom. Consequently, a USG initiative to offer more masters degrees in educational leadership programs may conflict with the PSC's initiative to halt pay raises for educational leadership degrees for classroom teachers in an effort to encourage subject-related advanced degrees.

Political Barriers

Political barriers are certainly evident in Georgia where the K-12 state superintendent is a constitutional officer elected by Georgia citizens. Even though the governor, who appoints all of the other education agency heads, and the state superintendent have been of the same party for the past 11 years, tensions ensue given the governor's role in state education policy. The

governor recommends funding for the department of education in his annual budget, appoints the state board of education, and is generally seen as the state's chief education policy leader. This necessitates interaction, and ideally cooperation, between the two offices. However, it often results in friction as the two elected officials negotiate policies, funding, and control.

Legal Barriers

As mentioned previously, with the state superintendent of schools being elected per the Georgia Constitution, an obvious legal barrier to collaboration exists as the agency head for K-12 is a constitutional officer and does not report to the governor like other agency heads. This is not to say that all agency heads *should* report to the governor. Rather, this observation notes the legal separation between integral parts of the state's education governance structure, making collaboration difficult.

Another potential barrier is the constitutional status enjoyed by the USG. Theoretically, the governor cannot compel the chancellor to collaborate with other agencies. However, with Board of Regents appointment powers and influence over the budgeting process, there are sufficient levers for the governor to encourage the chancellor's cooperation.

Constituent Barriers

Constituent barriers to collaboration can be found in Georgia. First, a couple of respondents recognized the state superintendent's constituency being different than the other education agency heads given the position's responsibility to the electorate. A long-term AEAH member noted that the DOE and its leadership have "challenges [the rest of us] just don't have."

This same AEAH member surfaced another potential constituent barrier – agencies fighting over “what student belongs to whom”. This can lead to a myopic view of the educational pipeline (only worried about “my” part) that promotes continuing policy silos.

Bureaucratic Barriers

Several agency leaders noted deeply entrenched staff silos within and between agencies that prevents collaboration. Specifically, several respondents cited work on the statewide longitudinal data system as an example. Staff members of various education agencies have been reluctant to share data or collaborate on building a unified system.

The remainder of this case study will examine how the state’s current P-20 Council affects these barriers and the characteristics of the council that further or impede collaboration between K-12 and higher education.

Structure of the Current P-20 Council

In 2005, Governor Perdue asked the seven education agency heads to come together to work on joint issues for the benefit of the state. He did not mandate the form or function of the group. Rather, the agency heads themselves decided this. Their first decision was to restrict membership to the seven education agency heads and the governor’s education advisor. As one original member stated, “we only wanted people who were responsible and accountable for getting something done as opposed to people who could inform us.” The name of the new council advertised this commitment – the Alliance of Education Agency Heads (AEA). From time to time, the AEAH still considers whether to add members, such as the heads of workforce and labor agencies, but membership has remained closed.

The AEAH also decided that the agency heads must attend each meeting, surrogates were not allowed, and the agency heads could not bring staff unless requested by the entire membership. From the start, the AEAH determined it needed a private forum to discuss the “real” issues occurring between agencies. A relatively new member found this feature of the AEAH very attractive,

We’re there without staff and if someone raises issues, then you know they’re not filtered in any way and I think perhaps, hopefully, some of this is not lost on the respective department head when obviously his view of what’s on the table is different perhaps than what his staff told him or her. I’m encouraged that the only ones who can be at this meeting are the agency heads. ... I’m impressed with that. I appreciate that. That was very important. ... If we were allowed to send reps, no matter how good they are, that’s a temptation that’s hard to resist sometimes because the stress of time.

Further, as many of the agency heads had been in state government for several years and seen the failure of previous P-20 councils, a new form probably made sense to them.

Governor Perdue appointed State Superintendent Kathy Cox chair of the AEAH in recognition of her constitutional officer status. After Superintendent Cox resigned from her position in 2010, the AEAH decided to rotate the chairmanship among the membership. No specific mechanism for electing a chair was established, rather, in a process occurring over three meetings, the Executive Secretary of the PSC, Kelly Henson, was chosen as the new chair. A few respondents noted that having the state superintendent as the permanent chair resulted in K-12 dominance of the agenda. As one AEAH member stated, “we needed someone to ... provide some guidance and structure and organization, but not control...The control came from the membership.” The same respondent further stated that the chair should make sure “the

discussions are structured properly [so that] there is a climate in the meetings of collaboration.” Henson remained chair for three years until TCSG Commissioner Ron Jackson took over in 2013.

Meetings are closed to agency staff, stakeholders, and the public in order to foster frank conversation among the agency heads. Although it is important to the AEAH that its work product be fully transparent, members wanted the freedom to connect over issues in a private atmosphere. Members meet eight to nine times per year for about three hours at a time. One member stated that attendance is expected, “kind of like the Rotary Club” and the members spend a good amount of time scheduling future meetings to ensure calendars are cleared.

Outside of meetings, the only other responsibility of the chair is to supervise the single staff person of the AEAH. The same full-time AEAH director has been in place since 2006 with her salary split between the “Big 3” agencies: the state department of education, the USG, and the TCSG. The chair assumes supervisory authority of the director and her office is located at the chair’s agency headquarters. The director’s primary responsibility is to communicate and coordinate between the AEAH members in preparation for and between meetings. She also monitors project work plans, especially those occurring between two or more agencies. The decision to hire a full-time, professional staff person came after the AEAH developed their first set of goals and objectives. A former member explained,

We had to figure out what we wanted to do and that was done without staff...and we started talking about getting things done and then it became clear to us that we need[ed] to have some structure under us...then we came to the conclusion that we had to have someone.

Since 2005, the AEAH has operated under the same guidelines: only education agency heads and the governor's education advisor as members, no surrogates, one dedicated staff member, and 8 to 9 meetings per year. However, what appears to be a relatively simple structure did not necessarily mean that agenda setting would be simple. As a former AEAH member stated,

We went through varying periods of how granular our planning should be...when we started off it was so granular it was tedious and then we figured, we're not going to get there this way – being so granular on everything and all of these little responsibilities, assignments ...[down to number] 1.3.6.5 and it just didn't make sense and we had...four or five different thrusts and all sorts of sub-plans under them and finally we said we have to back this up to either one or two things we can do and try and focus on that.

Several original AEAH members and staff echoed the sentiment above. At first, the AEAH, through an Implementation Team of agency staff, tried to map and coordinate every point of intersection between the agencies on their five overarching goals:

1. Increase the high school graduation rate, decrease the high school drop-out rate, and increase the post-secondary enrollment rate.
2. Strengthen teacher quality, recruitment, and retention.
3. Improve workforce readiness skills.
4. Develop strong education leaders, particularly at the building level.
5. Improve the SAT/ACT scores of Georgia students. (Alliance, 08)

This resulted in hundreds of spreadsheets and no concrete place to begin work on the goals. An original AEAH member stated, "We bit off more than we could chew [and it] created some

exasperation...we were spinning our wheels because we were not getting anything finalized [and there] were high levels of frustration.”

Eventually, the goals and activities were prioritized and narrowed. The current goals, like before, are aligned with the current governor’s priorities, and are expanded to include a mission and vision statement and statement of high priority initiatives. The new strategic plan was developed over several months in a process that included a two-day retreat of AEAH members, top agency staff, and strategic partners such as the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and the Georgia Partnership for Education Excellence.



Figure 1

2013 AEAH Strategic Plan

Respondents note that a majority of AEAH meeting discussions have focused on the statewide student longitudinal data system, teacher effectiveness, and college and career readiness (through review of proposed agency legislation and rule). Further, the AEAH was a natural oversight body for work on Georgia's successful second-round federal Race to the Top (RTTT) grant application. Although college completion is a goal and high priority initiative of the AEAH, it has not been a significant meeting agenda item. Complete College Georgia, a required plan as a member of the Complete College America Alliance, was developed by the USG, the TCSG, and the governor's office. AEAH members and staff note that the timeline for drafting the plan and getting higher education institutions' buy-in was short and working through the AEAH meeting process was impossible given impending deadlines. However, regular updates on college completion efforts are given to the AEAH.

Catalysts for P-20 Council Success

There are several facets of the AEAH that respondents found particularly helpful in spurring collaboration. These include gubernatorial support, buy-in of agency leaders, and adequate resources.

Gubernatorial Support

Georgia's Alliance of Education Agency Heads is the state's P-20 Council. Through collaboration and partnerships, the education Agency Heads work together to create a stronger education system for all of Georgia's students, from Pre-kindergarten centers, K-12 classrooms, higher education institutions and the workforce. I view education as

Georgia's number one economic development tool, and by improving education we are building a more educated Georgia.

(Governor Nathan Deal, <http://www.gaeducationalliance.org>, 2013)

One of the most striking themes from interviews with Georgia respondents is the proactive alignment of AEAH work with the governor's priorities. All but one respondent seemed proud that the AEAH's work aligns with the governor's agenda and views the governor's interaction with the AEAH as ideal. Granted, the governor appoints the majority of AEAH members so there is some natural allegiance and alignment to his priorities. However, the interview protocol merely asked about the role of the governor without leading questions or requests for evaluative comments. Further, respondents were assured anonymity in the published research. Therefore, it seems plausible that if there were significant issues with the governor's role or influence with the AEAH, it would have surfaced.⁹

Both Governors Perdue and Deal set an expectation that agency heads participate in some type of collaborative effort. The structure, agenda, and members of the effort were not dictated by the governor's office. However, the governor's education advisor is a member of the AEAH and plays an informal role in conveying the governor's policy agenda and expectations to the group. A top staff member in Governor Deal's office described the education advisor's role on the AEAH as follows: "to communicate the governor's priorities and his expectations and then to ensure that...we are making progress, that we are on track to accomplish the goals that he has set

⁹ The researcher also acknowledges the possibility that respondents believed the researcher to have a favorable relationship/view of the governor given her appointment by the governor to a state commission and her existing relationships with gubernatorial staff. Respondents were instructed at the beginning of each interview that their responses would be confidential and that the researcher was looking for their candid perceptions. The overwhelming consistency of positive responses regarding the governor's role is likely due to similar perceptions across respondents rather than deference to the researcher and her perceived relationship with the governor's office.

out.” Yet, it appears none of this is done with a heavy hand. AEAH members and staff praised the governor’s current education advisor for working behind the scenes to shape agendas and establish connections. The deference the governor’s office gives the agency heads and the AEAH as whole to figure out the “how” and “who” of policy implementation must also play a part. One former AEAH member said “the charge ... [was] to come together and really determine what [we] needed to do to be successful.”

AEAH members believed both governors have been very supportive of their work and value the opportunity to discuss emerging and/or difficult issues with his staff on a regular basis and occasionally with the governor at AEAH meetings and retreats. One former AEAH member characterized the AEAH’s deference to the governor in this way:

I would say that every decision the Alliance makes is done with consideration to the governor’s views on things...we don’t have to necessarily do everything the governor says, but at the same time the worst person to make an enemy of is the governor, so you need to pay attention to what the governor’s initiatives are.

It appears that the governor finds value in the AEAH. One respondent relayed an example where an agency head proposed legislation that unraveled policies in place regarding high school graduation requirements. Rather than creating (or exacerbating) poor relationships, creating political and/or publicity issues, the governor asked the AEAH to weigh in. Should the AEAH all agree that, in their expert judgment, this change of policy should go forward, the governor would support it. If they did not, he would not support it. The AEAH did not support the change and the proposed legislation was dropped. In fact, coordination of policy efforts can only help the governor’s education agenda. A long time AEAH member described it this way:

Why would anything else in state government be more important than the education agency heads working together? The governor tells us that. It's what he expects...at this point in time Governor Deal is carrying on what Governor Perdue set in motion and he feels as strongly about it as Governor Perdue did.

Buy-in of Council Members

Another theme that developed during the course of this research was that members believe working with the AEAH will further their agency's goals as well as advance overall state education goals. They have "bought-in" to the premise that collaboration will generate results beyond what any agency could do separately.

This is best exemplified by continuation of the AEAH through a gubernatorial transition. While consistency in staffing of a key leadership position across Governors Perdue and Deal almost certainly contributed to the continuation of the AEAH, there was ample opportunity for the membership to abandon the effort. For example, after Governor Perdue defeated Governor Barnes, the ECC stopped meeting. However, when Governor Deal was elected at the conclusion of Governor Perdue's two terms, the AEAH kept its regular meeting schedule during the transition. In fact, an AEAH member recalled the AEAH requesting a meeting with the new governor to

present a report on the state of the state of education from their perspective, what the AEAH had accomplished, the value, the role of the Alliance and why they believed it was important to ask of the governor that his education policy advisor attend every monthly meeting as his representative.

The governor immediately gave his endorsement and encouraged the AEAH to continue their work. This same key staffer noted, “A part of the P-20 story of Georgia is being flexible through transition ... and being flexible and nimble enough to have an education reform agenda that is constant and that can be sustained through the many transitions.”

Buy-in of agency leaders is also demonstrated by the state superintendent’s participation in the AEAH given the inability of the governor to mandate his/her attendance. Initially, Governor Perdue asked the state superintendent to chair the AEAH, which provided recognition of the position’s constitutional status. Once Superintendent Cox resigned, Superintendents Bryant and then Barge were active members of the AEAH. It is fairly likely that those superintendents understand that working with the other educational agencies can only help achieve his/her goals.

The examples above provide evidence of agency leader buy-in, but why are these agency leaders so invested in the AEAH? One reason is the ability of the AEAH to diffuse inter-agency tensions through the ability to have very frank discussions in closed-door sessions. A forum where everyone’s view can be heard and debated allows the AEAH members to “get on the same page” before making any public statements. One example provided by two respondents involved the Common Core State Standards. Georgia had adopted the standards in 2010 and was in the midst of implementation when some movement occurred within the legislature to drop the standards in fear that they were nationalizing education. There was some sympathy for this argument within the AEAH. Rather than playing out in the media, AEAH members in support of keeping the Common Core were able to address the issue head-on in a private meeting, perhaps preventing a whole-scale abandonment of the effort.

This forum also created greater perceived stability at the agency head level. A long-time agency head that served both Governors Perdue and Deal remarked that an agency head has a platform with the AEAH that allows him/her to test out new ideas or policies with his/her peers and the governor's office before moving forward. This avoids any potential missteps where an agency leader moves forward on something without the support of others. Indeed, a small percentage of agency heads turned over during the transition from Governor Perdue to Governor Deal in 2010. This "safe place" can be very attractive to agency leaders.

Finally, AEAH members have seen the issues that can arise when the AEAH is *not* used for collaboration. An AEAH member recounted the extra effort required of one agency that did not initially work through the AEAH in policy development. The member stated it

would have been a lot better ... if it had been brought as an item of information on an Alliance agenda, agency heads were asked about which staff they wanted to be engaged in this work and there were regular reports throughout the process rather than, "Here it is. We're all done. Are you guys OK with it?"

Adequate Resources

Although Georgia's economy experienced the same downturn as many other states and agency budgets declined, resources did not seem to be a barrier to K-12 and higher education collaboration. No respondents mentioned resources as a potential or actual deterrent to collaboration. This could be because once a need for a professional staff person was identified the agencies came together to fund the position. There was some reluctance towards starting another bureaucracy or a pseudo-agency, but it appears a single staff member has sufficiently met the AEAH's needs for the past seven years. It is also apparent that many top agency staff

members provide support through chairing and serving on AEAH workgroups. Also noteworthy is the governor's office reluctance to interfere in the hiring and supervision of the AEAH's staff person - again demonstrating deference to the will of the AEAH.

Outcomes for Georgia's P-20 Council

Previous sections of this case study have explored the barriers to collaboration and what facilitates breaking down these barriers. This section explores the specific value Georgia finds in its AEAH, at least from its members' perspectives.

Influences on structural and professional relationships

The majority of respondents specifically cited the ability of the AEAH to alleviate bureaucratic barriers. Many cited the recent success in finalizing the statewide longitudinal data system that has been plaguing gubernatorial, state superintendent, and P-16 council agendas for decades. A long-term AEAH member explained that all agency heads were in favor of the data system and provided a united front of their support to staff. In fact, they instructed key agency staff to share data or leave the agency and in fact, some staff members resigned. This same AEAH member also attributed the turf issues between USG and TCSG to staff members. This member, as with other respondents, found the AEAH to be helpful in uncovering staff-created roadblocks in their own agencies given feedback from other agencies. Respondents claim that this type of feedback may not surface if there were other stakeholders or staff in the AEAH meetings.

This unified front of AEAH members provides a strong message to agency constituents such as local education agencies and institutions of higher education. A former AEAH member

said that often, these specific constituents and staff believe they can “wait out” an initiative or policy until a new agency head comes in or the momentum passes. The AEAH provides institutionalization for decisions that carries beyond a single agency head. This member surmises that P-20 councils, such as the AEAH, are useful when there are not entrenched cultures of informal networks between the agencies that break down bureaucratic barriers.

On the other hand, at least one agency staff member felt the AEAH erected additional bureaucratic barriers as staff charged with carrying out the work of the AEAH were not privy to the AEAH discussions about the work. This leads to top agency staff coordinating with each other after each AEAH meeting to determine what is expected of whom. Interestingly, although this does evidence a slight communication barrier, it actually appears to spur increased communication between agencies.

A surprising finding was the sheer number of times respondents credited the AEAH with strengthening relationships between leaders and the effect this has on their individual and collective work. AEAH meetings appear to be part hardball negotiations and part support group – all in the context of improving educational outcomes for students. These new relationships have created a venue for one or more agency heads to influence other agency heads, the provision of support for agency heads as state leaders, and candid discussions between agency heads about the nature of policy and politics.

The influential nature of relationships between agency heads is strong. Specific examples were provided numerous times. One of these examples involved an agency somewhat reluctant to change its information system to coordinate with the statewide data system. When six of the seven education agencies voiced support for ensuring their data systems “spoke” with

the state system, the reluctant agency realized it “had to get on board too” according an AEAH member.

An even more dramatic example occurred when one agency head was considering backing away from a policy that all members and the governor had already agreed upon. An AEAH member stated that the wavering AEAH member would likely respond better to his/her fellow members than gubernatorial intervention so two AEAH members took the wavering member to lunch to “talk real direct turkey.” Peers having more influence, at least at times, than the governor demonstrates a very strong relationship that allows for candid, frank, and often important conversations between members. In fact, one member noted, “in the context of the Alliance it’s a platform that allows us to say - and actually expects us to say - ‘this doesn’t work’ and you can have more honest conversations without appearing to be an enemy.”

AEAHS members appear to derive support from the AEAH. Often this support can come in the form of providing a united front on policy or legislative issues. It also comes in the form of connecting with peers who are doing similar work in a similar climate. The work is “very relational and you have to invest the time in those relationships. ... Members are willing to a great degree...to leave their ego at the door when they enter” notes a former AEAH member. An agency staffer who wished AEAH meetings could be more open also recognized the need for some privacy:

Leadership is such a lonely place and I think in some ways ... it’s an opportunity for them to be themselves, and not in a touchy feely way, but they can be honest because they don’t have that opportunity very much and so if we [staff] were in the room they wouldn’t have that opportunity and so I think in some ways that’s a safe space for them.

A current member stated, “you...feel like someone has your back.”

Finally, strong relationships allow for candid, and sometimes tough, discussions on the work before the AEAH. If there is a conflict between two or more members, the personal relationships help work through “those thorny spots.” One former AEAH member remembered how he once warned another agency head regarding a policy issue, “I’m not ready to go there yet and if you keep going, you’re going to have to go alone”. These relationships also give smaller education agencies a voice at the table during these discussions.

It seems that the AEAH, and potentially any P-20 Council, gives space for the bigger picture to be viewed, a sense that all members are on the same team with shared goals and critical relationships. An agency staff member observed, “If you know where the North Star is then it helps with conflict because if we know what we’re aiming for then you can figure out a lot of the conflict.”

Influences on College Completion

The AEAH’s role regarding college completion policy is somewhat mixed. Certainly, since its inception, the AEAH has been working to ensure students are prepared for college, especially through alignment of high school graduation and college entry requirements. While participation in various consortia such as Achieve, Inc.’s American Diploma Project and the College and Career Ready Policy Institute furthered this too, respondents credit the already-established structure of the AEAH with hastening the work.

More recently, the state has been focused on college completion efforts. In 2010, Georgia entered the Complete College America alliance of states, which required submission of a state plan for increasing college completion. Georgia’s submitted and approved plan presents partnerships as a major theme; however the AEAH is mentioned only once in the context of prior

work on standards and assessments (State of Georgia, 2011). Respondents familiar with the development of the plan state that the plan was built on the work of the AEAH and going forward, the AEAH would assist with its implementation. Indeed, all respondents noted that regular updates are provided to the AEAH regarding Complete College Georgia plan implementation and members are aware, in a higher education member's view, that "to pull that wagon [college completion agenda] a lot of people have to bring a better product and process and do things differently in order to do and that takes us talking together."

Other influences

Respondents provided concrete examples of how the AEAH has influenced policy outcomes. The success cited most consistently was that of the statewide longitudinal data system. Many respondents believe the data system would not be operational if the AEAH did not exist as it took a unified front to get all agencies to collaborate on data sharing.

The AEAH also had a role in Georgia's successful application for a RTTT grant. Georgia was awarded a \$400 million grant in 2010. Throughout Georgia's application are mentions of the AEAH and its role in aligning education policy work across state agencies thereby creating fertile conditions for implementation of a wide-ranging project, such as RTTT. Georgia's application also noted that the AEAH would be critical in the implementation and oversight of the RTTT project (State of Georgia, 2010). Several reviewers of Georgia's RTTT application noted the AEAH as a positive factor in the awarding of points for a "comprehensive, coherent reform agenda" (Technical Review, 2010).

Remaining Impediments to P-20 Council Success

Although Georgia's AEAH seems to be fitting the state's current needs there are some potential drawbacks to its current structure and operations. These include lack of a codified structure and lack of stakeholder participation.

Lack of a codified structure

Although the AEAH has been active for over eight years and survived agency head transitions and a gubernatorial transition, there is no guarantee that it will continue to fuel K-12 and higher education collaboration. The AEAH is not in law or the result of an executive order. It depends solely on the participation of the current agency heads and encouragement from the current governor. It appears that the turnover has occurred in such a manner that champions of AEAH have been able to entice new agency leaders to participate. Often, those new agency leaders become champions themselves. Further, Governor Perdue's policy director, who was a member of the AEAH while she also served as Governor Perdue's education advisor, became Governor Deal's deputy chief of staff for policy. This in-house champion likely affected Governor Deal's willingness to continue gubernatorial support for the AEAH.

Also, there is nothing compelling the elected state superintendent to participate in the AEAH. It is notable that the past three superintendents have chosen to participate, including the current state superintendent, John Barge, since he is running against Governor Deal in the state's 2014 gubernatorial election. This could have resulted in his withdrawal from the AEAH given the tight connection of the AEAH with the governor's office, but it has not hindered his participation.

All of these factors in support of the AEAH are transitory. What happens when a new governor is elected and new agency heads are appointed? Georgia can hope that the tradition continues, but there is nothing to ensure it will. As one former AEAH member noted, “every time you bring [a new agency head] on you are reconstituting a new alliance.”

Lack of Stakeholder Participation

For the past eight years, the AEAH has primarily operated as a convening for statewide education agency leaders and the governor’s office. Occasionally, other stakeholders such as the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and the Georgia Partnership for Education Excellence are invited to participate in planning retreats, but these retreats do not happen on a regular basis. Further, the AEAH members regularly assess the extent to involve agency staff. One AEAH member noted, “We wouldn’t have the conversations that the Alliance has if we had staff [in the meetings] and on the other hand the staff would really like to have more feedback from us on where we are on whatever the initiative is.” A couple of other AEAH members thought that agency boards should be involved in some way since they are the policy making bodies for the agencies.

Summary and Conclusion

The Georgia case illustrates how K-12 and higher education collaboration occurs through a small P-20 council composed only of state leaders and in a context where an elected official leads K-12 education and higher education governance is consolidated. Georgia faces many of Whetten and Bozeman’s (1991) barriers to collaboration, but the state has been able to sustain a continually operating P-20 council that has fostered collaboration for the past eight years, even

through a gubernatorial transition and many agency head transitions. Gubernatorial support, agency leader buy-in, and adequate resources have all contributed to the AEAH's ability to have influence on structural and professional relationships and college access and completion efforts. Most notably, respondents credited the AEAH with furthering development and use of the statewide longitudinal data system and creating the necessary conditions for effective implementation of the federal Race to the Top grant and the state's college completion plan.

Two potential impediments to continued collaboration are possible. These include the voluntary nature of the AEAH and lack of external stakeholder involvement. However, it appears that the AEAH has been successful in allowing agencies to take a broader view of their work and to consider their role in meeting the statewide education mission rather than just a singular agency's statutory duties.

CHAPTER 5

CASE STUDY - ILLINOIS

Illinois is a large state with an aging population. It is the fifth most populous state with almost 13 million citizens (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2013). However, the number of high school graduates is projected to decrease about three percent over the next ten years (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2013). The per capita income of \$44,815 is higher than the national average of \$42,693 and the poverty rate of 15 percent is slightly lower than the national average of 15.9 percent (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2013). Thirty one percent of adults have at least a Bachelors degree (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2013) and 59 percent of young adults are currently involved in some type of postsecondary education (Editorial Projects in Education, 2013).

The state's high school graduation rate is at 78 percent and is increasing over time (Editorial Projects in Education, 2013). On the National Assessment of Educational Progress, Illinois students score at about the national average for 4th and 8th grade reading and math (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013), but their scores are improving at slightly lower rates than national averages (Editorial Projects in Education, 2013). At the post-secondary level, completion rates are far lower for minority students than White students (Complete College America, 2011b). This is troubling as almost a third of the state's population are minorities (Blacks at 15 percent; Hispanics at 16 percent) (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2013).

Democrats currently control the majority of Illinois' state government. Sixty-eight percent of state senators are Democrats and 59 percent of state house members are Democrats. Democratic Governor Pat Quinn narrowly won over his Republican opponent in the 2010 election. There is one Democrat and one Republican U.S. Senator for Illinois. Political party control has fluctuated in Illinois. In the early 1990s, Republicans controlled both chambers of the general assembly and were elected to every major state office (Richardson, Bracco, Callan, & Finney, 1999).

In Illinois, the governor appoints all state board of education members who, in turn, appoint the chief state school officer¹⁰. The current state superintendent is Dr. Christopher A. Koch. Dr. Koch has been with the Illinois State Board of Education (SBOE) since 1994 and has been state superintendent since 2006. During his term as state superintendent, he served as president of the Council of Chief State School Officers, a national association for state school chiefs. Along with core K-12 education responsibilities, the Department of Education has early childhood education and teacher licensure responsibilities.

The Governor's Office of Childhood Development was created in 2009 to support an integrated statewide system of early childhood services. This includes guiding the work of the state's Early Learning Council. The governor appoints the Executive Director of this small office and there is no board.

Higher education is organized through a "system of subsystems" (Richardson, Bracco, Callan, & Finney, 1999, p. 144). The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) is responsible for planning and coordinating all higher education-related agencies (including the community college system and the student assistance commission), 12 public university campuses (each with

¹⁰ Although this is the formal method of selection, respondents often referred to the state superintendent as being appointed by the governor.

its own governing board), state university civil system, and the state university retirement system. The 12 public universities have a FTE of 141,085 as of the 2009-2010 school year. The governor appoints members of the board and they, in turn, hire their executive director. There have been four executive directors in the past three years. The churn at IBHE began when Executive Director Judy Irwin retired in 2010. A long-time IBHE employee, Donald Sevens, was appointed as interim executive director until George A. Reid accepted the permanent position in January 2011. Reid left abruptly in November 2012 and Harry Berman was appointed interim executive director. In April 2013, Berman became the permanent director pending a national search to be completed in 2014. Previously, Berman was Interim Chancellor and Provost for the University of Illinois at Springfield. Perhaps providing some stability throughout these years is the consistent tenure of IBHE chair, Carrie J. Hightman.

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) is the state coordinating board for community colleges. Although it operates under the auspices of the IBHE, it has its own board and executive director. The governor appoints the board members and selects the chair. The board hires its executive director. The system has 48 colleges (each with its own governing board) and one multi-community college center serving 272,956 FTEs as of the 2009-2010 school year. Illinois community colleges account for nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of all students enrolled in Illinois public higher education. In contrast to IBHE, ICCB leadership has been rather stable. Geoffrey Obrzut served as President of the system from 2004 until 2013. Karen Anderson, a long-time employee of ICCB and most recently Obrzut's vice-president, was appointed executive director¹¹ in 2013.

¹¹ When Karen Anderson was chosen to lead the ICCB, the board also changed the leadership title from President to Executive Director.

Also under the auspices of the IBHE is the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC), which works to make college accessible and affordable through administration of a suite of programs, grants, scholarships, and loans. The governor appoints the commission and the commission selects the executive director. Both the ISAC and ICCB board chairs are members of the IBHE board.

History of P-20 Council

Formal K-12 and higher education collaboration began in the 1990s through a Joint Education Committee (JEC), established by statute¹². This committee was comprised of two members each of the SBOE, ICCB, IBHE, and Human Resource Investment Council. Its responsibility was to develop “policy on matters of mutual concern to elementary, secondary, and higher education” such as articulation across the sectors, teacher preparation, education finance, research, and career education (Illinois Board of Higher Education, 1999, p. 1). As of 1997, the JEC was no longer meeting (Illinois Board of Higher Education, 1999). Research conducted during that time noted, “From one K-12 respondent’s perspective, however, the joint education committee is ‘a wonderful idea without authority, a very ineffective group’ where meetings exemplify the gulf [between K-12 and higher education]: ‘They sit on one side, we sit on the other’” (Richardson, Bracco, Callan, & Finney, 1999, p. 165).

In 1999, there was an effort to reestablish the JEC as the “official P-16 Partnership governing body” (Illinois Board of Higher Education, 1999, p. 1). Two respondents noted that

¹² IBHE documents from 1999 reference the statutory provisions of the Joint Education Committee and interviews with respondents support this. However, a reference to the Joint Education Committee cannot be found after an extensive search of legislation and Illinois’ statutes.

the governor's office had a role in re-establishing this committee, partly based on the interest of the Governor's education policy advisor.

The newly reinvigorated JEC, called the "P-16 Partnership for Educational Excellence", set goals and charged staff with various initiatives such as applying for a federal Enhancing Teacher Quality State Grant and partnering with the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. The preamble to the group's March 1999 organizing document states that

"While individual commitments, initiatives and activities of the three boards will continue, a partnership will ensure that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, and that new initiatives will be launched with a deliberate P-16 outlook to benefit students now and into the foreseeable future." (Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Community College Board, Illinois Board of Higher Education, 1999).

The P-16 Partnership would focus on college-ready kids, classroom-ready teachers, and log-on learning. Once the three JEC member boards accepted the proposed P-16 Partnership goals and direction, appointments of individuals to serve on the P-16 Partnership were made and the first meeting was held on September 20, 1999.

There were eight members of this new P-16 Partnership, including the governor's education advisor who also served as a co-chair of the Human Resource Investment Council. An initial outcome of this group was the awarding of \$725,000 in local school-college partnership grants that aligned with the P-16 Partnerships' three areas of focus (Illinois Board of Higher Education, 1999b).

Although this seems like quite a promising start, previous research and some respondents for this research reflected that the partnership fell flat. A key staff member for an agency involved in the 1999 effort recalled that it was "show and tell for many years." Merchant (2004)

found that the partnership “never met publicly, kept minutes, or had an impact on assessment or placement; consequently, it was ineffective” (p. 119). It is unclear when the second round of the JEC sputtered out. Collected data, including reports to the IBHE, stop referring to the JEC as of 2000.

In 2007, the Illinois legislature directed the IBHE to develop a “Public Agenda” for higher education and the state. This began a strategic planning process between the IBHE and the governor’s office and included appointment of a task force to facilitate the work. Working groups and public forums were held across the state. The resulting Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success includes many goals and activities that require K-12 and higher education collaboration (Illinois Board of Higher Education). For example, one recommendation is to “increase success of students at each stage of the P-20 education pipeline to eliminate achievement gaps by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and disability” (Illinois Board of Higher Education, p. 4). The Public Agenda is still very active. IBHE dedicates a portion of their internet home page to the work and a link to the Public Agenda’s own website¹³ that houses accountability updates, news, and research.

It appears that Illinois saw the potential for K-12 and higher education collaboration given its various collaboration attempts over the years. However, these attempts either did not last or were geared towards a specific project and did not provide a continuous mechanism for collaboration.

¹³ <http://www.ibhe.state.il.us/masterPlanning/>

Barriers to Establishing P-20 Collaboration

Illinois's education governance structure evidences a few of Whetten and Bozeman's (1991) barriers to interagency collaboration.

Resource Barriers

As with other case study states, Illinois agencies are doing more with less. The state board of education website presents data to show that Illinois is ranked 50th of all states in terms of state proportion of K-12 funding. An agency staff member noted that it has "been a very, very economically challenging time in the state of Illinois." This leaves little time to develop and staff a collaborative effort.

Legal Barriers

Likely the most significant barrier to collaboration among education agencies in Illinois is the fragmented higher education structure. The IBHE and ICCB are coordinating boards without governing authority. Each community college and four-year institution has its own governing board and sponsors its own legislative lobbying effort (Merchant, 2004). As one long-time state leader noted,

the higher education board is a coordinating board, not a governing board, so there's only so much that they can herd cats along, but they can't tell the cats what to do ... everybody just takes their money and goes and does their own thing.

Even in highly centralized states, higher education institutions enjoy a level of autonomy not found in K-12 education given the tradition of shared governance between institutional faculty and administration. Institutional governance is stronger when the state board retains less power,

as is the case in Illinois. Therefore, IBHE and ICCB can participate in P-20 efforts and set overarching policies and goals, but they wield much less power than governing board states.

Bureaucratic Barriers

Another of Whetten and Bozeman's (1991) barriers to collaboration that surfaced involved bureaucratic blockades. Two respondents recounted reluctance on the part of one agency to participate in the statewide longitudinal data system. This resulted in slower than optimal movement towards a statewide longitudinal data system.

Structure of the Current P-20 Council

In 2007, another push came from the state legislature for education sector collaboration. Respondents provided different accounts of the impetus for the legislation. The current chair of the P-20 council, Miguel del Valles, who was serving as chair of the state senate education committee at the time, stated, "I saw the need to create a statewide vehicle that would ensure the collaboration between the different levels of education and so began talking about the need to create such a vehicle" in order to remedy agency silos and promote seamlessness. Another respondent surmised that the two sponsors of the legislation were very interested in education issues and saw other states using P-20 mechanisms to coordinate their educational systems and thought it would help Illinois, especially with the existence of discrete cross-agency projects at the time including IBHE's Public Agenda and Illinois' involvement with Achieve, Inc.'s American Diploma Project. Another potential impetus for the legislation was the existence of a successful statewide early learning council which demonstrated the potential of cross-agency collaboration. Whatever the reason for the legislation, one long-time agency leader noted that

prior to the legislation, “the different boards did their own thing and nobody knew what they were doing.”

The legislation described the purpose of the P-20 Council, its members, and its duties. The lofty rationale and expectations for the new council are described as follows:

This State needs a framework to guide education policy and integrate education at every level. A statewide coordinating council to study and make recommendations concerning education at all levels can avoid fragmentation of policies, promote improved teaching and learning, and continue to cultivate and demonstrate strong accountability and efficiency. Establishing an Illinois P-20 Council will develop a statewide agenda that will move the State towards the common goals of improving academic achievement, increasing college access and success, improving use of existing data and measurements, developing improved accountability, fostering innovative approaches to education, promoting lifelong learning, easing the transition to college, and reducing remediation (IL Statutes Sec. 22-45 (a)).

The statute calls for 21 voting members and 10 ex-officio, non-voting members. All of the ex-officio members represent state agency heads or their designee. The governor or his designee is a voting member of the Council and serves as chairperson. In all, the governor appoints seven members of the Council. Voting members have terms that range from one to three years, except for the chair who has no term. Term length was decided “by lot” at the initial meeting of the Council. The voting members must come from the following categories:

- Governor or his designee to serve as chairperson

- Four members of the General Assembly, appointed by majority and minority leadership in each chamber
- Six at-large members appointed by the Governor with one representative each from the following categories:
 - civil leaders
 - local government
 - trade unions
 - nonprofit organizations
 - parents' organizations
 - education research expert
- Five members of statewide business organizations
- Six members appointed by statewide professional organizations and associations representing teachers and faculty
- Two members appointed by associations representing local school administrators and school board members
- One member appointed by the Illinois Council of Community College Presidents representing community colleges
- One member appointed by a statewide organization of private higher education institutions representing four-year independent colleges and universities
- One member appointed jointly by university presidents and chancellors representing four-year universities

The current structure goes beyond the membership of the former Joint Education Committee and P-16 Partnership. One respondent who was involved with both previous P-16 efforts and the current P-20 Council hypothesizes that perhaps legislators believed that involving other stakeholders beyond agency leaders and boards would allow this collaborative form to succeed where others had not.

The legislation calls for state appropriations for the Council to fund staff, research, data collection, and dissemination. The Office of the Governor is to staff the Council in coordination with agencies. The Illinois Education Research Council shall provide research and coordinate research collection for the Council.

The list of proscribed Council duties is long. The Council must make recommendations on a laundry list of items including coordination of education “through working at the intersections of educational systems to promote collaborative infrastructure” (IL Statutes Sec. 22-45 (d)(1)). Beyond making recommendations, the Council must advise the governor and other leaders, articulate a framework for systemic educational improvement and innovation, and provide an estimated fiscal impact with any Council recommendations (IL Statutes Sec. 22-45 (d)). The chairperson is authorized to create any necessary working groups and appoint chairpersons of those working groups.

When this legislation passed, Governor Rod Blagojevich issued a statement in support of the legislation through a State Board of Education press release. The governor noted his intent to personally chair the Council and noted the composition of the board was meant to “represent the diverse perspectives of education stakeholders” (Illinois State Board of Education, 2007). However, Governor Blagojevich never appointed anyone to the P-20 Council.

In January 2009, the state legislature impeached Governor Blagojevich for misuse of office. Lieutenant Governor Quinn ascended to the governorship and was elected governor in his own right in 2010. This provided a new opportunity for those invested in the P-20 Council to invigorate it. One respondent noted the influence of a recently formed statewide education non-profit in getting the P-20 Council on the newly elected governor's agenda. The respondent stated that as the new organization analyzed the educational needs of the state, "one of the things that came up over and over is that you really do have to have more of a continuum, you really have to link early childhood to K-12 to higher education." This, coupled with positioning the state for a federal Race to the Top grant bid, the organization suggested that Governor Quinn make his educational mark through the P-20 Council¹⁴.

In 2009, Governor Quinn organized the appointment process for the P-20 Council and appointed Miguel del Valle, a former state senator, as chair. The Council held its first meeting in December 2009. The agenda contained remarks by the new chairman and the legislative sponsors, and a presentation on the state of education in Illinois. Since then, the Council has met quarterly at various education institutions across the state. Although the statute allows designees, a respondent noted that most appointees attend, with the exception of university presidents who usually send designees.

The P-20 Council legislation allows the chairman to create committees as necessary. After over three years in operation, the P-20 Council has an extensive array of committees and an inclusive mode of operation. There are six standing committees with ad hoc working groups developed as needed. The standing committees include:

¹⁴ Illinois was not successful in its first two Race to the Top grant bids, but did receive funding during the Phase 3 competition in 2011. Although the state's P-20 Council was mentioned three times in the lengthy application, it was not a key feature. Scoring rubrics and comments were not available for Phase 3 awardees to determine whether the presence of a P-20 Council made an impact on scoring.

- Data, Assessment, and Accountability
- Family, Youth, and Community Engagement
- Finance and Governance
- School, College, and Career Readiness
- Teacher and Leader Effectiveness
- Implementation Review

These committees “take up the kind of detail work that is necessary to support the overall priorities of the council” noted one respondent. The committees are very inclusive. Any citizen who is interested in a topic, whether or not a member of the P-20 Council, may participate on a committee. Committees are used to generate ideas, solicit statewide feedback on proposals, and disseminate information. Often, these committees work primarily through electronic means with very few in-person meetings.

A coordinating committee of committee chairs meets with the Council chairman prior to each quarterly meeting to give updates on their work and discuss the agenda. A Joint Education Leadership Committee (JELC), chaired by the Lieutenant Governor, is composed of the agency heads, the chair of the P-20 Council, and the governor’s deputy chief of staff. As one respondent noted, the organizational structure is constantly evolving and although it could be considered a very bureaucratic structure, they are “trying to have the right kinds of conversations across the right groups in the right ways.”

Of all of these committees, the JELC deserves some attention. When the P-20 Council began making recommendations, it became clear that there needed to be a place where agencies could discuss implementation issues. The P-20 Council had the option to take their recommendations to the General Assembly, but it seemed more appropriate and practical to

allow the agencies to consider implementation, especially given their access to resources. As one respondent noted,

it is the education agency authorities that make things happen on a day-to-day basis. They are the ones that are primarily responsible for implementing policy so it is important that they, as a group, engage in discussions about how it is that they need to coordinate their work.

The agency heads appeared to agree with this. All agency head respondents agreed that the JELC is useful, if at the very least to have the ability to intercept or weigh in on P-20 recommendations that are unrealistic or counter to law. JELC meets monthly and agency heads are allowed to bring staff members. JELC meetings are open to the public although no one other than members have ever attended.

Although the lieutenant governor is not a member of the P-20 Council, she chairs the JELC. All respondents who commented on this facet of the Council agreed that having someone of her stature chair the JELC was very helpful. They see her as an expert facilitator and she provides a strong connection with the governor's office as the governor asked her to be his point person on education issues. The lieutenant governor also brings resources to the table in the form of staff assistance.

The Council's work is transparent. Its website contains agendas, minutes, and related presentations of all P-20 Council and committee meetings. Resources and measures of progress are also available to the public. The measures of progress include an annual report of P-20 Council recommendations and a companion report from the JELC on the status of recommendation implementation.

The P-20 Council has staff support, but it is all borrowed. A professor at the University of Illinois serves as the coordinator of the Council, working with the chair and agency heads to develop the agenda and coordinating work with the committee chairs. The coordinator also works on securing external funding for the Council. The governor's deputy chief of staff serves as a liaison between the governor's office and the Council and in that way, provides coordination and staffing support. Non-profits and foundations often provide staff support to committees. And as stated above, the lieutenant governor's office provides some staff support for the JELC.

There are no dedicated lines of funding for the P-20 Council although the original legislation calls for state support. Existing agency and institutional staff have provided the bulk of support while non-profits and foundations have also provided in-kind staff support. At the conclusion of this research, the P-20 Council had a \$200,000 line item in the state budget, which had yet to be approved.

The Council adopted an overarching goal to increase the proportion of Illinoisans with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by the year 2025. A review of P-20 Council and JELC agendas show that a good deal of each agenda is consumed with committee reports and agency updates. Respondents cited the statewide longitudinal data system, the teacher evaluation system, college completion, and the revision of the statewide school report card as major topics of information and discussion through these reports.

Catalysts for P-20 Council Success

Given the state barriers to collaboration, it is notable that the current P-20 Council has been operating for over three years. The data points to several catalysts that helped the P-20

Council break through collaboration barriers. These included: an effective council chairman, buy-in of council members, a supportive governor, and adequate resources.

Effective Leadership

This catalyst may be the most important factor in the Council's success in forging collaboration between K-12 and higher education. Miguel del Valle has been the chairman of the P-20 Council since its inception in 2009. The governor's office stated that del Valle was chosen because he is a "highly-respected figure, served in the state senate, was very focused on education issues, and has a good reputation with legislators and members of the education community." "Respect" was a term used by almost every respondent when describing the chairman. There is a sense that Chairman del Valle wields a velvet hammer. A respondent who has seen the history of P-20 collaboration in Illinois remarked that the Chairman "doesn't take any crap, so if he asks someone to do something he pretty much expects them to do it or explain why they're not doing it." The same respondent noted that a "really competent" chair makes a big difference in the efficacy of collaborations.

Chairman del Valle devotes a good deal of volunteer time executing his role as chair. He prepares for and attends all P-20 Council, Coordinating Committee, and JELC meetings. He also participates in agency-level meetings with the governor. Between meetings, he works with P-20 staff and committee chairs to smooth over any real or potential conflicts. One P-20 Council member put it aptly: "the P-20 Council is an opportunity. It is not a recipe for success without a good, mindful cook." In keeping with this analogy, Chairman del Valle crafts his recipes with care.

Buy-in of Council Members

Illinois' P-20 Council is mandatory as state law requires agency participation. As with any effort, compelling participants to attend meetings does not always mean active and engaged participation. Yet, it appears that agency leaders support the Council's premise and are engaged. However, this must be qualified. Most agency head respondents were much more laudatory of the JELC, the monthly agency head meetings chaired by the lieutenant governor, than the P-20 Council as a whole. A long-time agency leader stated that the JELC meetings are "critical." Another agency leader stated that he is "encouraged that the JELC had formed; otherwise we [agency heads] would have been left on the side of the P-20 Council."

A staff member observed that the agency heads have been very active with the Council as a whole and that "they've really seen the advantages of being active participants." Buy-in was not quick or simultaneous across agency leaders. One respondent noted that higher education was a little later to buy-in to the Council and JELC, but now "they are seeing that the conversations are happening and if they don't participate that doesn't mean the conversations aren't going to happen." One P-20 Council member summed it up thusly,

This [P-20 Council] could have been nothing and in many ways it was set-up to be nothing because there wasn't any money attached, but because of the people and the attitudes of which people approached it, it's sort of a virtuous cycle. Once it starts, it only gets better. People are like 'Oh, we can do things, so I'll even do a little more than I was before'.

Gubernatorial Support

Although a few respondents preferred the governor to take a more active role with the P-20 Council by attending more meetings and providing funding for the Council, the data were generally positive regarding the governor's support and encouragement of the council. First, two agency leaders cited the expectation from the governor to participate in P-20 Council meetings. This is a strong lever to encourage participation. Second, several respondents lauded the governor's appointment process. The selection of Miguel del Valle as chairman and the solicitation of nominations for appointments were seen as positives and indicated to some respondents that the governor took his role in creating a strong P-20 Council seriously.

Across all respondents, there was great praise for the governor's deputy chief of staff, Julie Smith, and her role in facilitating the P-20 Council. Even those who wished the governor himself would be more involved with the council praised the involvement of Smith. Her work in coordinating agendas, furthering grant applications, and relaying the governor's policy directions were seen as important benefits to her involvement. Her personal characteristics of honesty and approachability were mentioned several times as well. An agency head stated that Smith's involvement "helps clarify the governor's agenda and it helps us communicate so, for example, if we're in disagreement with a position the governor's office may take, it's a comfortable setting to discuss that."

Adequate Resources

Resources are both a catalyst and a potential challenge. For the past three years, the Council has leaned on non-profits, foundations, and agency/institutional staff to carry out its work. The University of Illinois has allowed one of their professors to serve as the Council's

coordinator. The governor's office allows its deputy chief of staff to play a key coordination role. Advance Illinois, a statewide non-profit, staffs some of the committee work. And Boston Consulting Group provided pro bono services to the Council as they redesigned their school report card. The goodwill and expertise of these individuals and entities allowed the Council to execute many projects. As one respondent noted, "stuff doesn't happen just because you hold the meeting. It's because of what happens in between those [meetings]."

Outcomes for Illinois' P-20 Council

This section discusses the respondents' perception of benefits generated by the Council. Generally, most respondents viewed the P-20 Council's work favorably and found a positive contribution toward collaboration.

Influences on Structural and Professional Relationships

The P-20 Council's influence on relationships occurred at two levels – through the P-20 Council as a whole and through JELC. Relationships formed through the P-20 Council occurred mostly through the committee structure. One non-agency respondent noted that "it's important to have a seat at the table and to be visible" during committee and Council discussions. Another P-20 member recalled, "I was sitting with the union person at a particular meeting and she said, 'in 20 years I've never been in the room with these people'." Connections were being forged where there once were no connections. Some stakeholders felt they now have a voice in policy and this appeared to come from the top. Chairman del Valle stated that he wants to hear from people who are "on the front lines" of education. A non-agency P-20 member confirmed that this happens: "Anytime we come across anyone who wants to have a voice or wants to just be in

the loop, be included in things, we add them in.” These connections around the Council table also aid in mediating disagreements that occur between various P-20 Council members because a shared relationship exists. One P-20 Council member remarked, “There could be choppy waters on top, but what’s happening underneath is in some ways, untouched.” These strengthened relationships also extended between researchers and policymakers. The Illinois Education Research Council provided research support to the Council and infused policy discussions with empirical knowledge.

Many agency heads lauded the relationships formed through JELC. JELC kept the agency leaders informed of each other’s work and promoted collaboration. A higher education agency leader noted that

if there’s a special initiative that one of the agencies have, we delve into that a little bit and we are all focused on it from the perspective of ... trying to move this forward and ... the focus of the meetings is collaboration. Who can help with what and if the presentation comes from ICCB then it’s “how does this affect the Student Assistance Commission with grants or how does this affect the K-12 system”?

JELC also promoted continuity of education goals and initiatives even as agency leaders changed. Others besides the agency heads also noted the importance of JELC. One respondent remarked that there is

the tendency to operate in silos, the tendency for agencies to promote their own agendas first and look at the collaboration second and yet we are in this together and now more than ever you need a seamless system of public education in the state of Illinois.

Influences on College Completion

The P-20 Council's furtherance of collaboration is exemplified in Illinois' college completion work. First, the overall goal of the Council is centered on college completion thereby reminding all stakeholders that all work of the Council, whether it is teacher effectiveness or school report cards, relates back to postsecondary success. In addition, each agency has adopted the Council goal of having 60 percent of the adult population with a postsecondary credential by 2025. Several respondents, when asked about the role of the Council in furthering the state's college completion work, referenced the IBHE's Public Agenda, a strategic plan started in 2008 and includes completion activities. These respondents referenced the Public Agenda in the context that work had already begun on college completion, but the Council helped to specify the goal and direct agencies' work towards that goal.

A K-12 Council member stated that the P-20 Council has "been consistently supportive of college completion. They have reviewed known data, framed questions for further investigation and have provided examples of successful initiatives for Illinois to consider." Higher education respondents agreed that the P-20 Council and JELC will provide a helpful venue for continued work on college completion activities and goals. One P-20 Council member believed that those leading the college completion effort in Illinois could better use the Council, "I would like to see [them] come in and ... say 'here's what we're working on, here are our goals, here are our issues, here are the three things we really need from the P-20 Council. We need you to A) help us think through this or B) a letter of support for this, or C.'" A Council staffer observed that the agencies are not used to working on these types of efforts with the Council, but it is likely to get better in the future.

Other Influences

Several respondents cited the redesigned school report card as a major outcome of the P-20 Council. It went from idea to inception in nine months. The Boston Consulting Group helped the Council design the new report card, forums were held across the state, and once designed, the Council helped to disseminate information on the new form. As a P-20 Council member noted,

When the new report card opportunity came along, I've never seen anything moved so quickly in my life and it was fabulous. I mean to go from "this needs to be done" to "we've identified a pro bono group to do it with us," to where we had a draft, we were out in communities doing groups to talk about it, to make suggestions, we were doing all of that work and before you know it, in nine months it was done. It was approved by the legislature and it's about to come out this year.

Other than the report card, reported outcomes of the Council from respondents were a little less concrete. Reported outcomes or benefits included greater communication with stakeholder groups, a forum for developing ideas, and a mechanism to ensure all stakeholders get the same information about state education initiatives such as Race to the Top grant progress, Common Core implementation, and Complete College Illinois. As one respondent noted, there are "not enough outcomes yet, but ... a lot of the arrows are pointing ... in the same direction instead of at each other or away from each other."

Remaining Impediments to P-20 Council Success

The Council's work is not without current and potential future challenges. These include a reliance on volunteer staffing, lack of structural stability for the JELC, collaboration fatigue, and managing the agenda given the Council's large size.

Reliance on Volunteer Staffing and Foundation Funding

Perhaps the most important potential impediment to Council success is the precarious nature of continuing resources for the Council. As noted above, the Council has been fortunate to tap highly qualified volunteers to staff and support the Council. Some of these volunteers are tired of fitting the P-20 Council work into their “day jobs” and may have to cut back their role. Without a dedicated funding stream for staff, the future of the Council’s work may be in jeopardy. A P-20 Council member observed that someone is needed to make sure the Council “moves from point A to point B to point C because it does not happen automatically. Someone is taking notes, someone is convening those meetings, someone is making sure that the conversations that need to happen are happening.” Further, beyond the volunteer nature of staff, one respondent noted that having a dedicated P-20 Council staff ensures that their loyalty is to the Council rather than their particular organization or institution. The resource issue is further exacerbated within committees. Some committees have significant support because committee members have access to resources. This creates uneven quality across committee work. Further, one respondent noted that professionalization of committee chairs may improve committee work as it take certain policy and leadership expertise to effectively facilitate the committees. The chair recognized these issues. He stated that by encouraging committee chairs to seek private funding, “the agenda is driven by whatever priorities foundations may have ... rather than being an agenda that’s developed and driven by what we feel needs to get done.” As of publication, the P-20 Council had a \$200,000 budget line item pending in the state legislature. If this is funded, greater stability in staffing is likely.

Lack of Structural Stability for JELC

Another challenge is the ad hoc nature of the JELC. The JELC was created as a forum for agency leaders to discuss policy implementation issues and is not part of the P-20 Council statute. The lieutenant governor chairs the JELC solely because of her interest in education and her relationship with the governor. Should that change, the JELC is left without a champion – through exercise of law or leadership. The structural flexibility of the JELC is exemplified in the recent decision to move JELC meetings to every other month rather than every month due to budget cuts to the Lieutenant Governor’s office. A long-time staffer noted, “it’s [JELC] not codified anywhere and so my concern is depending on the leadership, who’s the governor, whether they care about this or not, this should still go on because those agencies should still be collaborating together.”

Collaboration Fatigue

Another potential impediment to collaboration is collaboration fatigue. Since the late 1990s, agency leaders in Illinois witnessed at least two formal collaborative efforts fail¹⁵. Even though there has been a good deal of turnover in agency leadership, many new leaders have come from within the agency or state government so they are aware of the previous attempts at collaboration. A long-time agency leader noted that the Joint Education Committee “met once or twice a year and we just rambled. There wasn’t much structure to it.” Excitement and / or hope that a new collaborative structure can produce benefits may diminish with each failure. The three respondents who had known of the collaborative efforts in the 1990s stated that the efforts just stopped. One of these respondents recalled rolling her eyes when the new Council was

¹⁵ For purposes of this research, when a P-20 Council ceases to exist without a definitive rationale, it is considered a failure.

proposed. A history of failed efforts does not inspire confidence that exertion put forth to establish a new structure won't be for naught.

Managing the Agenda Given the Council's Large Size

Finally, while the structure of the Council may facilitate stakeholder participation and buy-in, which is important in the particular context of this state, there are drawbacks to the large structure. Several respondents noted that the structure lends itself to addressing architectural issues like redesigning the school report card, but is not designed to handle controversial issues, or issues that need a quick turn-around. The Council is

good at taking on big issues that can unfold over a little more time such as creating a [more] diverse teaching pool. What it has not proven very adept at doing so far is handling hot button, fast-moving issues ... anything ... that could be controversial is ill-suited to the P-20 Council because you've got so many different viewpoints around the table.

The inability to move quickly is particularly frustrating to business representatives on the Council who need solutions to their workforce quality issues. A respondent recounted hearing from a business sector P-20 member,

"I've got too many folks out there that have jobs that are going vacant because I can't find people with the skills" and so he wants to us moving faster and I agree with him. We're not moving fast enough and so that urgency, that level of urgency is something that we want everyone to feel so that we can just cover as much ground as possible.

Further, large Councils lend themselves to presentation-laden meetings, as discussion is often difficult to manage in big groups. Almost all respondents wished for a way to include more meaningful discussion during the P-20 Council meetings.

Summary and Conclusion

The Illinois case provides an example of a large state with a large statutorily mandated P-20 Council. After previous attempts at collaboration focused only on agency leaders and boards, the new structure boasts an intricate system of committees composed of external stakeholders with agency leaders serving as ex-officio members of the Council. The Lieutenant Governor through the Joint Education Leadership Council separately convenes agency leaders in order to address policy implementation issues that arise from the Council. The governor has a largely second-hand role with the Council through appointment of the chair and involvement of his staff. While it remains to be seen whether a more active gubernatorial role would further the Council's efforts, the current P-20 Council appears to have momentum. Many of the respondents credit an effective Council chairman, buy-in of the membership, a supportive governor, and adequate resources with furthering the Council's work. To date, the Council touts as one of its main achievements the redesign of the school report card and all respondents were supportive of the overarching Council goal related to postsecondary attainment. Although the Illinois P-20 Council has a good deal of momentum behind it, there are some real and possible impediments to consider. These include reliance on volunteer staffing, lack of structural stability for the JELC, collaboration fatigue, and managing the agenda given the Council's large size.

CHAPTER 6

CASE STUDY – MINNESOTA

Minnesota is a mid-size state with a changing population. The state's current population of 5.3 million makes it the 21st most populous state in the nation (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2013). Almost 86 percent of the state's population is White with Blacks and Hispanics constituting 5 percent of the population each (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2013). However, that population is changing, as minorities are the fastest growing populations in Minnesota (Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership, 2011). An 11 percent increase in high school graduates is expected over the next 10 years (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2013).

While Minnesota is in the middle of states according to population, its citizens have the 12th highest per capita income at \$46,227 (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2013). Approximately 32 percent of Minnesotans have at least a Bachelors degree (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2013) and 62 percent of young adults are involved in some type of postsecondary education (Editorial Projects in Education, 2013).

Minnesota's student achievement is typically high. The 2011 NAEP scores show Minnesota 4th and 8th grade students score above national averages in reading and math (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). These scores have generally increased over the past 10 years with the exception of a small decline in 4th grade reading (Editorial Projects in Education, 2013). The 2010 high school graduation rate was at 80 percent. Although this percentage is relatively high, it represents a slight decrease since 2000 (Editorial Projects in Education, 2013).

Also troubling are differing completion rates for White and minority students. At state colleges, the gap is almost 13 percentage points and at universities, the gap is almost 10 percentage points (Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership, 2011).

Currently, both houses of the state legislature are controlled by the Democratic Party with 58 percent of senators and 54 percent of House members identifying as Democrats. Mark Dayton, elected governor in 2010, is a Democrat. Prior to Governor Dayton, Tim Pawlenty, a Republican, served from 2003. The state's two U.S. Senators are Democrats. Minnesota also has a tradition of strong representation by political independents in statewide races.

An appointed commissioner of education leads the state's department of education (DOE). There is no state board of education. Governor Dayton appointed the current commissioner, Dr. Brenda Cassellius, in 2010. Prior to her appointment, she had a long career as an educational leader in Minnesota and Tennessee. Alice Seagren served as commissioner from 2004 to 2010. Prior to that, she was a state representative for 12 years.

Although there is not a state board of education, a state Board of Teaching provides leadership in teacher education by establishing and maintaining licensure standards and requirements, approving institutions and licensure programs to prepare Minnesota teachers, and by establishing and enforcing the Code of Ethics for Minnesota teachers. A small staff serves this board.

Higher education in Minnesota is overseen by different agencies. The Office of Higher Education (OHE) is a planning / coordinating agency that seeks to achieve student financial access to postsecondary education; enable students to choose among postsecondary educational options; protect and inform educational consumers; produce independent, statewide information on postsecondary education; and facilitate interaction among and collaborate with organizations

that share responsibility for education in Minnesota. The office has a relatively small staff and oversees several advisory groups. Former state senator Larry Pogemiller, who was appointed by Governor Dayton in 2011, leads the office. There is no governing board for the OHE.

The Minnesota State Colleges and University system (MNSCU) coordinates 31 higher education institutions – 24 two-year colleges (enrollment of 135,155 students) and 7 state universities (enrollment of 69,816 students). MNSCU was created in 1995 through legislation that merged the state's community colleges, technical colleges, and state universities into one system. Institutions report to the chancellor and do not have their own governing boards. A board of trustees who are appointed by the governor oversees MNSCU. The current chancellor, Steven Rosenstone, was appointed in August 2011 and was a long time dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Minnesota (UM). Prior to Chancellor Rosenstone, James McCormick led MNSCU for 10 years and was previously the chancellor of the Pennsylvania higher education system.

The University of Minnesota (UM) has five campuses and boasts an enrollment of 69,200 students. Its Board of Regents is elected by a joint convention of the Minnesota legislature. There is one member from each of eight congressional districts and four at-large members. All members serve six-year terms. A Regent Candidate Advisory Council is responsible for submitting nominations to the legislature. The current president, Eric Kaler, was appointed in 2011 by the Regents and was an administrator at Stony Brook University and the University of Delaware. Prior to President Kaler, Robert (Bob) Bruininks served as president for nine years.

History of P-20 Council

Like Georgia and Illinois, Minnesota has a lengthy history of attempts at K-12 and higher education collaboration. Also like the other case study states, this history is fundamental to understanding how collaboration operates today. Minnesota's formal efforts began in 2003 when former MNSCU chancellor James McCormick came up with the idea to join forces with the UM and the DOE "to think about the future of education" recalled one of the founders. This founder further elaborated that the impetus for starting such collaboration was the need for

one entity that really looked at the issues of preparation for higher education by K-12 so students would meet higher academic standards and also be ready for postsecondary access and success and ... issues that involved the articulation between and among different systems including better ways to gather and share data.

Collaboration had been occurring between these agencies, it just needed coordination. Former UM President Bob Bruininks recalled that he had commissioned a study in the early 1990s to map the partnerships of the UM with the local K-12 system and found there were close to 200 such partnerships.

Chancellor McCormick, UM President Bob Bruininks, and Commissioner of Education Alice Seagren hosted an all-day meeting to develop a partnership framework. They included people who could give a perspective to the new group on community and state collaborations. What developed was the Minnesota P-16 Education Partnership with 15 organizational members. One of the founders noted that it was "intended to be a citizens' effort to really work on issues of central importance to the future of education to our state." An initial business community member echoed the intent of this new group stating it was begun "because there was a desire to get all the various players and Pre-K through higher ed[ucation] together in one room to see if

we couldn't work through some issues, come up with some common agenda items that everybody would be able to agree to pursue collectively." A former legislator notes that at the time, bringing these groups together was novel and "seemed like rocket science."

Once the conception for the project was decided, the structural framework had to be developed. One of the founders noted,

We articulated a number of core ideas that we felt were really important. One was we did not want to be a state agency or a legislatively created commission. We wanted to be a voluntary organization and so we didn't ask for money, we didn't raise money; we basically rotated the responsibility for managing it among three leaders: the leader of the University of Minnesota would have the job for a year and then the next year it might be the chancellor of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and then the third year it was the Commissioner of Education.

This structure –no monetary resources, quarterly meetings, and rotating chairs that provided staff was adopted and continues today.

Criteria for membership still had to be decided. The founding group agreed that eligible members "were organizations that ... had a vested interest in the future of education" recalled a founder. A more difficult decision came with whether or not to include state legislators given the desire to balance inclusivity with political independence. A founding member noted, "Initially, it was thought that if legislators were on the panel, that would taint the discussions ... because then people have their agendas and lobby legislators and change how they talk about things." On the other hand, founding members realized that any Partnership resolutions would need legislative action and having legislators' buy-in to the discussion from the beginning would

be helpful. Ultimately, neither legislators nor the governor were included in the Partnership in order to maintain political independence.

The early Partnership utilized an executive committee made up of the rotating chairs. “Sometimes we created an expanded executive committee in particular years just to kind of keep things going, but the three key leaders of the systems worked together and consulted together to shape the agenda and push it,” recalled a founder. This agenda focused on teacher quality and access to college. An e-mentoring program for teachers was an early idea supported by a National Education Association foundation grant.

Another pivotal point in the Partnership history occurred in 2007 when UM President Bob Bruininks became chair. President Bruininks believed deeply in the promise of the Partnership and wanted to use his term as chair to the fullest. He commissioned an independent study of current members to help inform his agenda so that the Partnership could “get beyond talk and into some action,” recalled a former Partnership staffer.

The study offers great insight into the status of the Partnership after four years of operation. Members cited the following accomplishments: improved relationships, increased focus, and more concrete data about the education pipeline. Many members noted a “point of pride that to date, the P16 has remained unfunded, benefitting from in-kind member support where needed” (Tacheny, 2007, p. 2). Other positive aspects of the Partnership included the voluntary nature of the Partnership, progress in building relationships among members, and attendance of organization principals rather than designees (Tacheny, 2007). Potential issues and barriers included: too much of a focus on high school and college; lack of resources; lack of discussion at Partnership meetings; too many workgroups with no follow-up on recommendations; large membership size; turf issues; no institutional accountability; and lack of

action (Tacheny, 2007). Overall, the author found that “all agreed that the mission of this Partnership remains vital; while some felt a refocusing is timely, no one said that the Partnership had outlived its purpose” (Tacheny, 2007, p. 3). Tacheny (2007) also survey members on their core beliefs. Among them was that the “P16 Partnership cannot solve everything and it is not the only venue in which problems are being addressed; the agenda should not strive to be comprehensive, rather it should identify a narrow set of issues where the collective minds of such a broad group are needed” (Tacheny, 2007, p. 3).

Respondents for this study echo the general sentiments found in Tacheny’s (2007) study.

By the time Bob [Bruininks] took over as chair, I don’t think it’s at all unfair to say, up to that point, it had mostly just been used for talking and building relationships, which initially was helpful but by a couple years into it ... people were saying, ‘Okay, we need to do something’ cited a Partnership staffer.

Another transition point occurred in 2009 when the Partnership was codified in law. Most of the structure remained the same, but the name was changed to the P-20 Education Partnership (rather than P-16) and four legislative members were added. Further, the statute required an annual report to the legislature and the governor on the activities and actions of the Partnership (MN Statutes §127A.70). How and why legislation was passed to include legislative members on the Partnership remains unclear. One respondent claimed that there was some movement from both legislators and Partnership members for the official inclusion of legislative members. A long-time Partnership staffer stated,

There was a stage when legislators became more involved or interested in the Partnership - even before 2009 when they formally made it a statute. There were some legislators who thought that should happen and ... the leadership of the P-20 kind of discouraged

that ... I think their belief was there was more frank conversation and less posturing when legislators weren't sitting there watching.

One respondent, who was a legislative leader at the time of this statute's passage, did not recall hearing much about the legislation and "the fact that I hadn't heard any buzz about it indicates to me that it was probably a couple of legislators trying to bring some relevancy to it all to see if they couldn't energize it [the Partnership] a little."

In 2011, MNSCU Chancellor Steven Rosenstone became the Partnership's chair and another attempt was made to focus and energize the Partnership. Chancellor Rosenstone's staff conducted another survey of membership in order to ascertain how the partnership should work to achieve its mandate. Similarly to 2007, members were asked about the Partnership's chief accomplishments and barriers. The most notable accomplishments were the ability to have face-to-face discussions with key players (noted by 15 respondents) and bringing key stakeholders together (noted by 9 respondents). Other accomplishments included movement on the statewide longitudinal data system, having diverse voices at the table, and an increase in communication and trust between members. Twelve respondents noted that the partnership had fallen short of its ambitions due to lack of focus and follow-through. Other drawbacks included changing goals with changing leadership, no continuity in issues, no continuity in staffing, no focus, and lack of maximizing work groups. Overall, seven respondents said they were not sure that the Partnership's work had made a difference. Nevertheless, it appeared that a good number of members wanted to continue by focusing on the achievement gap. Even this wasn't without conflict. Some members believed the focus should be on the gap in early childhood outcomes while others wanted to focus on high school achievement gaps. Another group felt that all gaps in the pipeline should be analyzed. A long-time Partnership staffer recounted,

These are kind of the discussions that would go on at the meetings and this has been true ever since I've known the council. They would have these endless debates and they would never really reach consensus. One group would say "well, we have to pick up early childhood" and the other group would say the other and there was no, "these are two different points, what are we going to do?" In the past what they would usually say is "let's try to do both" or "let's try to do it all and to keep everyone happy" and then really there wasn't much focus.

Although Chancellor Rosenstone was able to get the group more focused, there was still dissension on the method of achievement. Again, this staffer remembered,

That happened about the meeting of December 2011 when they finally narrowed down and agreed that the achievement gap was what they were going to focus on. Then they had some more discussion on, "ok, so that's what we're going to focus on, but what are we going to do with it" and I think this is where it gets really frustrating because again, what people wanted to focus on or what they thought their role was varied. Some people said, "well, our role ought to be to create some legislation that we can take to the legislature and say this is what needs to be done" and other people said "oh no, we don't want to get into that. That's not our role. We ought to be the bully pulpit and we ought to use our authority to speak out where we can about how awful the achievement gap is and we ought to each go back to our organizations and have our own individual organizations work on this and then report back on what we're doing." So again, the group could debate things forever. I don't know if this is just a Minnesota trait or what...So, we kind of decided to focus on what we call the transition points and we said the transition points were from early childhood to kindergarten and from elementary

school to middle school, middle school to high school and high school to college. So, there were kind of four transition points and so the original vision was that we would identify and tackle some strategies that crossed our systems ...at each meeting we would have some time devoted to the collaborative piece ... and the second one more of a reporting out by one of those four categories of education on something that they were doing internally and I would have to say that I think we've had mixed results with that.

Minutes from the September 2012 meeting corroborate this respondent's account of the discussion. Chancellor Rosenstone presented his proposed plan of action, the Partnership discussed, and ultimately did not reach a consensus on the plan of action.

Barriers to Establishing P-20 Collaboration

A few of Whetten and Bozeman's (1991) barriers to interagency collaboration are evident in Minnesota.

Mission Barriers

Mission barriers are not as evident in Minnesota as they are in other case study states, but they do exist. A former Partnership founding member states "The barriers are sort of obvious. In some way you have natural barriers ... when you have different organizations that are run for different purposes or have different responsibilities." Minnesota education agencies are not as fragmented or overlapping as in some other states, but the very nature of separateness causes mission barriers, as each agency will likely advocate in its own interests.

Resource Barriers

There are two ways in which resources pose a barrier to collaboration in Minnesota. The first is the scarcity of overall state resources given the recent economic downturn. This hinders the ability of agencies to focus on substantive collaboration, as their main goal is to find funding. As one respondent observed, these have “been difficult funding years and so I see just about every discussion in education comes back to funding and there is always a concern, well, if that’s a priority does that mean they’re going to transfer that higher ed[ucation] funding to K-12 or that K-12 [funding] to pre-school.” Similarly, peers chastised a higher education official after he expressed his view in a Partnership meeting that any extra state funding should be spent on early childhood efforts. The scramble for scarce resources seems to prevent an open dialogue about and planning for the educational needs of the state.

The second way resources pose a barrier to collaboration is lack of staffing and funding to spur collaboration. Although the Partnership was designed to operate independently of external resources, many respondents cited the lack of consistent full-time staff for the Partnership as a major barrier to its effectiveness. This will be discussed further as a P-20 council impediment.

Legal Barriers

The structure of Minnesota’s education system poses a few legal barriers to collaboration. The first is the fragmented nature of the higher education agencies. The Office of Higher Education is a planning agency. MNSCU governs 31 of the state’s institutions and the UM’s five campuses has its own governing authority. Fortunately, leaders of these separate agencies are members of the Partnership, which helps to overcome this barrier to collaboration.

A similar barrier concerns the differences between higher education and K-12 governance. As one respondent notes, “K-12 is basically ... a state-run operation [where] 95 percent of kids go to public institutions run through state structures ... and most of the funding comes through the state. Higher ed[ucation] on the other hand has historically ... [had] more of a private sector and a federal government contribution.” This is reminiscent of some of the differences in K-12 and higher education explored in the literature review.

Finally, there is at least one instance of state law prohibiting collaboration between K-12 and higher education. A respondent recalled this roadblock in data collaboration,

State statute prohibited the Minnesota Department of Education from sharing data with the Minnesota Office of Higher Education. Yet, they’re both state agencies ... led by cabinet officials appointed by the same governor. I mean it was nonsensical. We had to get the law changed so you could just share individual students records across the K-12 / higher education divide.

Structure of the Current P-20 Council

The current Partnership structure is very similar to the structure created by the founding members. The statute passed in 2009 required partnership membership to include current members of the P-16 Partnership and four additional legislators (§127A.70 Subdivision 1(2)). Current membership includes 28 voting member organizations that choose their own representative and designee:

- Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (rotating chair)
- Minnesota Department of Education (rotating chair)
- University of Minnesota (rotating chair)

- Education Minnesota
- State legislature (four representatives)
- Mentoring Partnership of Minnesota
- Minnesota Association of Charter Schools
- Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
- Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children
- Minnesota Association of School Administrators
- Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals
- Minnesota Business Partnership
- Minnesota Career College Association
- Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
- Minnesota Citizens League
- Minnesota Council on Foundations
- Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association
- Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
- Minnesota Independent School Forum
- Minnesota Minority Education Partnership, Inc.
- Minnesota Office of Higher Education
- Minnesota Parent Teacher Student Association
- Minnesota Private College Council
- Minnesota School Boards Association
- Tribal Nations Executive Committee

There are eight non-voting members representing various staff of voting members. Notably, the state's governor is not on the council; however a few respondents noted that the commissioner of education is seen as his representative. New members may be added through nomination of any current member and a two-thirds vote of the Partnership. The statute requires that member organizations "be represented by the chief executives, presidents, or other formally designated leaders...or their designees" (§127A.70 Subdivision 1(2)). The Partnership is also commanded to "seek input from nonmember organizations whose expertise can help inform the partnership's work" (§127A.70 Subdivision 1(2)).

The statute directs the Partnership to "develop recommendations to the governor and the legislature designed to maximize the achievement of all P-20 students while promoting the efficient use of state resources, thereby helping the state realize the maximum value for its investment" (§127A.70 Subdivision 2). Recommendations should focus on access and quality, preparation for and transitions to college and work; and educator quality (§127A.70 Subdivision 2). The Partnership is further directed to report annually to the governor and legislature on its progress in meeting its goals (§127A.70 Subdivision 2(3)).

To complement the statute, the Partnership developed by-laws. The by-laws primarily track the P-20 Partnership statute with a few additions including: no principal office of the Partnership, no term limits for members, all meetings open to the public, and use of a standing executive committee. The Partnership has passed one amendment to the by-laws, which created a standing longitudinal data system governance committee.

The chair of the Partnership continues to rotate between the UM, MNSCU, and DOE. Chancellor Rosenstone of the MNSCU is rotating off as chair while Commissioner Casselius of the DOE is assuming the role again for a two-year term. The most recent Partnership meeting

occurred in May 2013 and Commissioner Casselius' designee noted that the Commissioner would continue the Partnership's focus on the achievement gap.

The executive committee is comprised of the rotating chairs and works between meetings to set the agenda. A variety of eight committees are used to discuss specific issues. A public website provides many resources related to the partnership including meeting agendas and notes, a membership roster, and Partnership annual reports.

Catalysts for P-20 Council Success

Although the majority of respondents focused on impediments to effective use of the P-20 Partnership for collaboration, there were a few items consistently noted as catalysts for collaborative efforts. These include the belief of key leaders that use of the P-20 Partnership promotes collaboration (or buy-in); availability of quality agency professionals to staff the Partnership, and effective Partnership leadership.

Buy-in of Council Members

Several respondents touched on the importance of agency leadership in promoting the P-20 Partnership. One of the founding leaders knew that his position would give him the leverage needed to get others on board. It worked. A higher education agency staffer noted, "a number of key political leaders ... are on the P-20 committee so ... engaging them and seeking their counsel in what we've been working on is critical." Once key leaders agreed to participate with the Partnership and agencies saw the benefit of bringing things to the Partnership, other organizations wanted to join.

Further, at the time of founding, higher education and agency leaders seemed to share an agenda, or at least a vision. One former Partnership staffer remembered, “they were able to work across ... divides really well. ... this little project just kind of kept chugging along.” Another respondent noted, “they [K-12 and higher education] are both equally focused on the transition to postsecondary education and realize that for our economy, it’s critical to have more students actually completing.”

The importance of Partnership leaders’ engagement becomes even more evident when the impediments to collaboration are reviewed. In fact, lack of a consistent, passionate champion may be an impediment in itself to an optimally functioning Partnership.

Quality Staff

Praise was given for two particular agency professionals who provided staff support when their leader was chair of the Partnership. In both instances, the staff member’s full-time job dealt with some aspect of high school to college transitions, which may help explain why they were particularly adept at their duties. During their time staffing the Partnership, they coordinated the work of the full Partnership and related committees. One respondent stated “the vastly underappreciated aspect of the effectiveness of the P-20 Partnership ... is the caliber of staff support that they received.” The same respondent noted,

not only does the chair transition, but then the organization that’s supposed to support the partnership transitions with them. What happens is you just don’t have anybody who’s really doing the nitty-gritty work of connecting the dots. ... We had four separate working groups with separate chairs, with separate goals and benchmarks for what they were supposed to achieve. Our job was making sure they were all moving forward in a

reasonable time frame and connecting the dots between them. It's not rocket science, but it's not just a sort of clerical or logistical duty either. I needed to understand the debate that they were having on the science committee about the revision of the earth science strand and the science standards, because that was going to create the train wreck on the committee if they didn't reach consensus on it. ... I think the coordinating role requires both content knowledge, meaning you understand the actual substance of the P-20 issue that you're dealing with, and process skill. You just know how to move a process and herd the cats.

The respondents who focused on quality of Partnership staffing witnessed a variation in the quality and investment of staff throughout the years.

Effective Leadership

There were points of praise for almost all Partnership leaders. It seems to make common sense that a person would not ascend to such positions without effective leadership skills. Two leaders in particular were noted for their leadership skills in connection with the Partnership. Former UM President Bob Bruininks was one of the founding members and was very committed to the idea of the Partnership. His particular leadership style was touted by a couple of respondents including a former staff member, "Part of it is just him. ... Bob Bruininks has political skills for a university president that are sort of Clintonian in nature. He can work a room with the best of them. ... That benefitted a lot. He had a particularly good relationship with the ... commissioner of education at the time."

Current Chancellor of MNSCU and immediate past chair of the Partnership Stephen Rosenstone "is very skilled at facilitating meetings and pulling them [members] back [on topic].

Probably one of the best people I've ever seen at doing that and so he would get them back on course" remarked a Partnership staff member. This seemed to be an important skill for a council that is apt to lose focus. Another staff member noted that Chancellor Rosenstone "has made a valiant effort as chair over the last year to try and bring the group to some action point."

Outcomes for Minnesota's P-20 Council

Minnesota's Partnership has positively influenced K-12 and higher education collaboration, but to a lesser extent than Georgia and Illinois. Respondents find the Partnership to be a good forum for connecting more so than collaborating, which is likely why recent college completion efforts have not been a centerpiece of Partnership work. Even so, progress has been made because of these connections, especially on the statewide longitudinal data system.

Influences on Structural and Professional Relationships

Most respondents agreed that the greatest benefit of the current Partnership is connecting with other stakeholders and receiving updates on current work. A long-time Partnership staffer stated the Partnership is "a place that people could come and get to know each other better and network and have an opportunity to meet each other; ... that sort of personal relationship ... makes it easier to cooperate and do things." Another respondent noticed that "the types of collaboration that have happened in the last seven or eight years have really helped bridge the gap between higher education and secondary education in ways that didn't evolve over night, but they have evolved quite a bit."

Beyond connections, the Partnership is a place where smaller organizations and/or organizations that are not frequently networked to state agencies have a place to connect and

learn about current initiatives. One of the original founders said his vision of the Partnership was to

give light to parts of the system that wouldn't ordinarily be visible or get much attention and it also forces people to listen to one another about issues they really care about. I think it gives you a chance to shape smarter policies, fill gaps that are really important to the success of education more broadly. ... There are a lot of possible benefits that can come from this process particularly if you keep it focused on the future and focus on some of the right issues.

It is not clear that the entirety of the vision has been realized, but respondents uniformly touted the Partnership's value as a venue to connect with other stakeholders.

Influences on College Completion

Not surprisingly, the Partnership has not had a large effect on Minnesota's college completion efforts. There is a committee charged with developing a statewide completion plan, but a review of meeting notes does not indicate progress on its development. One respondent claimed the plan was drafted by agency leaders outside of the Partnership, and was later brought to the Partnership for endorsement.

Another respondent noted that college completion is affected by the current focus of the Partnership on the achievement gap. This is demonstrated, in part, through a review of draft minutes of the May 2013 Partnership meeting. Chancellor Rosenstone provided a detailed update on MNSCU's work in closing the achievement gap. A respondent noted the Partnership's "focus really was the achievement gap and so to the extent one of the gaps is in completion of college ... it was like a sub-theme ... in the achievement gap conversations."

Other Influences

Without exception, respondents cited progress on the statewide student longitudinal data system as the top concrete outcome of the Partnership. An emphatic respondent claimed, “I know darn well this thing [the data system] came up every quarter for discussion and people went back to their home institutions to eliminate the barriers to participating in the process because their data people wanted to keep everything inside their own tent.”

Another respondent cited revision of the state’s math and science standards and development of a definition of college readiness as other outcomes of K-12 and higher education collaboration through the Partnership. A review of the Partnership’s 2012 and 2013 annual reports corroborates respondents’ comments about the extent of the Partnership’s concrete outcomes.

Remaining Impediments to P-20 Council Success

Although Minnesota’s P-20 Education Partnership has influenced collaboration to a certain extent, as noted above, there are several impediments that appear to be preventing more effective collaboration. These include the lack of a well-defined and consistent agenda, few concrete outcomes, no consistent champion, and the state’s unique culture regarding decision-making. These impediments appear to run counter to the vision of the Partnership as published on their website,

The Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership provides a structure that will ensure consistent leadership promoting the interests of all students. By bringing together the leaders of key stakeholder groups, it creates a body that can articulate an encompassing vision of education for today and tomorrow and turn that vision into reality. What sets

this partnership effort apart from previous collaborations is its broad base, fully inclusive of both P-12 and higher education, and the commitment to partnership of key educational leaders and policy makers in Minnesota who are willing to invest their time, energies, and resources to the start-up and on-going operations of this project.

Lack of Well-Defined and Consistent Agenda

In order to have a well-defined and consistent agenda, a state P-20 council must understand its role. This has not happened in Minnesota. As one staff member succinctly states, “we have really struggled with a clear purpose for the council that really is [about] achieving something very concrete.” Another staffer provided more detail on the historic struggle to find a purpose: “[the former commissioner of education] had the sense that the P-20 Partnership was more where you connected processes rather than made policy. I thought the P-20 Partnership should be for making policy ... Policy broadly defined doesn’t just have to be ... legislation. [It could be] launching the data system, revising the standards, developing the common definition of college readiness.” This same respondent noted that a proper P-20 agenda would “define the agenda at the intersection, the best Venn diagram you can draw, to get the P-20 Partnership ... at the point where none of us can do this thing very well alone.”

Another respondent wondered whether the Partnership has too many state agency-related members, which could be co-opting the agenda: “When you have a council that represents the system that’s generally happy with the way things are, but could just use more money, that is generally where the conversations go.”

A former higher education member of the Partnership blames K-12 for weak agendas: “One of the things I’ve noticed is that when [the agenda] was in the hands of the leader of higher

education, the agenda was deeper, richer. When the agenda was under the responsibility of the state department of education, the agenda was generally the state department's agenda." Whether this is true or not, it demonstrates that the agenda changes every two years when the Partnership's leadership changes. Several respondents cited this as a problem:

"When the leadership changed and the priority on that work was, frankly, dramatically diminished, for I think really shortsighted reasons, it just lost a ton of effort." – former Partnership staff member

"Every time there is a new chair of the group, it's kind of like we start over. That person comes in and they have an agenda, we do stuff for two years and then someone else comes in and we do something different." – current Partnership staff member

"Not every two-year period was as productive." – former Partnership leader

Along with changes in leadership are changes in staff given that each chair uses his/her own agency staff in supporting the Partnership. This results in lack of continuity in monitoring work. Notably, one staff member remarked, "there isn't really anybody whose job it is to make sure that the council works." Another staff member noted, "you need somebody who can be out there doing the work, guiding the work, pulling everybody together and that requires a lot more time than generally a staff person can add to on top of their existing work."

Lack of over-arching champion

The comments from respondents above also point to a lack of an over-arching champion ensuring the Partnership is making sure the council “works”. In many states, the governor serves some type of promotional role for the P-20 council. In Minnesota, the governor is not involved at all. According to the founders of the Partnership, this was by design so that the Partnership would not be co-opted by political interests. However, it means that the Partnership lacks the governor’s convening power and bully pulpit, which is important even in Minnesota where governors occasionally win elections with less than 50 percent of the vote due to a large independent contingent. Almost all respondents stated that having the governor more engaged in the Partnership could aid its work, depending on the governor. No respondent was confident that this would definitely improve the Partnership’s work; rather they seemed interested in exploring the idea. One respondent summed up the nature of most remarks, “I think in states where the governor’s very actively involved, that can be very powerful. It just also though depends on the nature of that particular individual and how much they are interested in it...the positional authority matters, but in the end, I think it’s the sort of analytic and persuasive power [that matters].”

A champion could also be someone other than the state’s governor. In the early years of the Partnership, it appeared that the founding members were the champions. The President of the UM, Chancellor of MNSCU, and Commissioner of the DOE are high-level leaders with an impressive combined convening power. However, each of these positions turned over between 2010 and 2011. With a completely new executive committee, it seems that some of the Partnership’s momentum was lost. A Partnership staff member noted, “there were some trusting relationships and good conversations that had been had and they were kind of back to the

beginning and figuring out what the group could be...the organization hasn't gotten onto its feet." Several current Partnership members echoed this sentiment.

Few concrete outcomes

A natural consequence of a continually shifting agenda is few concrete outcomes. Other than progress on the statewide longitudinal data system, there are few things members can point to as examples of Partnership successes. This may be the result of Partnership planning being merely symbolic rather than action-oriented. Cohen and March (1974) found in their study of universities, that planning was often used as something other than to move forward on an agenda. Rather, organizations used it to fulfill other needs such as symbolizing something (e.g. movement) or advertising (Cohen & March, 1974). Collaboration through P-20 councils could be a symbol of coordination rather than action-oriented planning.

Evidence of symbolic planning exists regarding the Partnership, most notably with the amount of collaboration that occurs outside of the Partnership. One long-term member stated,

I think the P-20 is kind of a place for people to come and talk about stuff and maybe get some initial things under way, but I haven't seen it as a place that says "Do we all agree on X and will we pursue that?" I haven't see that the last few years, so it does kind of naturally leave it to others to do it outside of the council.

Another respondent noted, "In the last year, it has been a communication vehicle rather than collaboration vehicle. It's been a learning opportunity, but I don't think that any action has come out of it." A current member candidly stated, "As a policymaker, I never viewed it as this potent activity to make sure we get things done." Almost every respondent familiar with current operations of the Partnership remarked on collaborations outside of the Partnership. Even a

former chair of the Partnership engaged in collaborations with Partnership members outside of the Partnership. Ironically, one respondent, while noting that a benefit of the Partnership is making connections, stated, “if nothing else, occasionally you’ll find someone unexpected that’s on the same page that *you can connect with later and pursue those things*” (emphasis added). “I would say a lot of the work gets done other places just in general,” remarked a long-time Partnership staff member.

State culture of decision-making

Interestingly, several respondents noted the unique culture of Minnesota as an impediment to true collaboration through the Partnership. One of the characteristics of this unique culture is a need for extended discussions with all affected parties. A current member stated,

If you don’t involve the non-profits and various local stakeholders, people just think you’re talking to yourself. Again, that’s a pretty deep cultural thing here. We like to have all stakeholders at the table ... There are different cultures in different states, but in Minnesota we ... meet a lot. We have a lot of task forces, we have a lot of work groups ... and it’s kind of a cultural “everybody has a seat at the table” type thing.

Another respondent said the Partnership was prone to “endless discussion.”

An additional characteristic of Minnesota’s unique culture according to some respondents is the emphasis on local control. As one respondent stated, “We’re a local control kind of place.” In particular, this respondent claimed the Commissioner of Education has limited authority over local school districts. The respondent recalled local superintendents being surprised that the P-20 Partnership thought the state’s commissioner could speak for or represent them.

Summary and Conclusion

Minnesota's P-20 Education Partnership exemplifies a large P-20 council operating without gubernatorial involvement. The Partnership operates within a very fractured higher education governance structure (with OHE, MNSCU, UM). Although it has persisted for 10 years, and was recently codified in statute, most respondents agreed that it has yet to realize its full potential. Buy-in of agency leaders, quality staff support, and effective leadership are aspects of the Partnership that promote collaboration between K-12 and higher education. Agency leaders and other members still attend Partnership meetings and the chairs continue to develop Partnership work plans. There appears to be agreement that collaboration is important in furthering state goals. However, it seems that the Partnership's impediments may outweigh the catalysts. Lack of a well-defined and consistent agenda means that the Partnership is continually trying to define its purpose and consequently realizes few concrete outcomes. Lack of an over-arching champion to spur collaboration leaves the Partnership without accountability for participation and outcomes, which is especially important given the very inclusive culture of state decision-making. The majority of respondents seemed to find more wrong than right with the Partnership

CHAPTER 7

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

As the purpose of this research is to describe how the organizational structures of state P-20 councils influence or affect the collaboration of K-12 and higher education, it is important to compare and contrast the case studies (Georgia, Illinois, Minnesota) in order to extract as much information from the cases as possible. Specific research questions include:

- What organizational barriers to systemic collaboration, if any, exist between state K-12 and higher education agencies as they work towards college completion goals?
- What, if any, aspects of P-20 councils facilitate meaningful collaboration and how do these aspects vary with state policy and political contexts?
- To what extent are P-20 councils influencing states' college completion efforts?

These questions were examined through the lens of organizational theory, specifically interorganizational relations literature. In particular, Whetten and Bozeman (1991) developed a list of barriers to interagency collaboration that can be used to predict hurdles education agencies face in developing and sustaining a P-20 council.

These were examined for each case study state and then, aspects of the P-20 council that acted as catalysts to collaboration were identified. The case studies included details on how catalysts translated into outcomes, including influence on college completion, and then

remaining impediments to collaboration were identified. This chapter will generally follow the same format used in each case study analysis.

Barriers to Collaboration

Whetten and Bozeman (1991) identified six barriers to interagency collaboration: mission, political, resource, legal, constituent, and bureaucratic. Data collected from interviews and documents demonstrated evidence of at least three of these barriers in each of the three case study states. Table 5 demonstrates which barriers were found in each state.

Table 5

Barriers to Collaboration Found in Case Study States

	Georgia	Illinois	Minnesota
Mission	x		x
Political	x		
Resource		x	x
Legal	x	x	x
Constituent	x		
Bureaucratic	x	x	

Georgia's education governance structure gave rise to more barriers than Illinois and Minnesota. Georgia's K-12 agency leader is elected which poses political, legal, and constituent barriers to collaboration. These barriers often occurred in the context of tensions between the state superintendent and the governor, even when both were of the same political party. While the state superintendent is elected to oversee and implement statewide education policies, the

governor has a strong interest in ensuring an educated populace and workforce. This can cause tensions related to budgeting (K-12 education is often the largest piece of Georgia's budget) and policy directions (e.g. common core state standards adoption). Further, the governor appoints all members of the state board of education, other state education boards, and other state education agency heads. Therefore, these leaders are more likely to be aligned with the governor's policies and objectives than the state superintendent. These barriers are not inevitable or insurmountable as the way in which the governor and state superintendent view their respective roles matters as well as the personal characteristics and relationships between the governor and state education leaders. It also appears that a vehicle such as Georgia's AEAH can help initiate and sustain conversations between the governor's office and the state superintendent since there is not a hierarchical reporting relationship.

In Illinois and Minnesota, the governor appoints the state K-12 leader. Although this, by itself, does not ensure harmony and alignment between the two positions, no evidence existed of tensions between these offices in either state. Certainly, the constituent barrier is somewhat minimized in these states as the K-12 leader knows he/she is answerable to the governor whereas Georgia's state superintendent is directly answerable to the electorate.

All three states had legal barriers to collaboration. In Georgia, the elected state superintendent of education and the constitutional status of the USG result in a structure of legally separate institutions. Although the USG governs its higher education institutions, which can help collaboration, the governor does not have strong legal authority over the USG, which can be a barrier to collaboration between the USG and governor-controlled agencies. In contrast, the legal barriers in Illinois and Minnesota center on the nature of the higher education governing structures. In Illinois, the higher education agencies are coordinating, not governing entities;

therefore each higher education institution in Illinois has its own governing board, potentially making unified higher education policy through collaboration difficult. Minnesota's fragmented higher education structure with a planning agency, a governing agency for all but the University of Minnesota, and then the University of Minnesota, means coordination must include representatives from all parties. In any setting, additional parties (with additional viewpoints, constituencies, and more) often means additional effort needed to collaborate. The more fractured higher education structures of Illinois and Minnesota may account for why there were more higher education representatives on the P-20 councils in those states than in Georgia where only the agency heads (USG, TCSG) represented higher education.

Interestingly, only Illinois and Minnesota respondents cited resources as a barrier to collaboration. No Georgia respondents mentioned this barrier even though the state allocations to education have declined over the past several years like the other two states. It is important to note that although some respondents in Illinois and Minnesota mentioned lack of resources for collaboration, it was not a strong theme. In all three states, collaboration was attempted regardless of existence of resources. Resources became more of an issue after collaborative structures were established and needed to be sustained. The role of resources in preventing, initiating, and/or sustaining collaboration merits further study.

Bureaucratic barriers were identified in Georgia and Illinois where respondents stated that agency staff were resistant to or prevented collaboration between education agencies. In both states, this was mentioned in the context of developing statewide student longitudinal data systems. This makes sense as individual agency data systems are expensive and time consuming to create and extreme attention is needed to safeguard private student information. Developing shared data systems requires a good deal of effort and trust between agencies.

Catalysts for Collaboration

There were several themes when examining catalysts for collaboration through P-20 councils. Although a priori codes were developed based on the literature, a bounded set list of catalysts was not used. Therefore, it is striking that many of the same catalysts appeared in more than one state and membership buy-in appeared in all states. Table 6 shows the catalysts found in each state.

Table 6

Catalysts for P-20 Council Success in Case Study States

	Georgia	Illinois	Minnesota
Adequate resources	x	x	
Effective leadership		x	x
Gubernatorial support	x	x	
Membership buy-in	x	x	x
Quality staff			x

Adequate Resources

Both Georgia and Illinois respondents, on the whole, believed their councils' existing resources were adequate to support their work. This was a bit stronger in Georgia where the AEAH employed a full-time professional to coordinate the council's work. In Illinois, an elaborate network of personnel from agencies, non-profits, consulting groups, and higher education institutions provided support to the council and its committees. All respondents marveled at the quality of the current support, but lamented its uneven nature (e.g. some

committees were able to garner support where others were not) and were skeptical about the ability to continue relying on quality volunteers.

Effective Leadership

A major catalyst of the Illinois P-20 Council was its chairman. Appointed by the governor and empowered to organize and direct the council, Miguel del Valle, received only laudatory comments from Illinois respondents. del Valle was able to effectively operate the large council by providing a structure that allowed for input from any interested person in Illinois (through the open committees), yet provided space for those leading state agency work to coordinate through JELC. The chairman's experience in the legislature and knowledge of education issues provided him the background to maneuver in both the political and educational worlds, the nexus of the P-20 Council.

Similarly, many Minnesota respondents gave credit for effective leadership to a couple of the Partnership's chairmen – former UM President Bob Bruininks and current MNSCU Chancellor Steven Rosenstone. Minnesota respondents' comments centered on Bruininks' passion and both Bruininks' and Rosenstone's leadership skills. However, the praise is somewhat tempered by the same respondents' frustration with lack of action and outcomes which may be due to other Partnership characteristics such as a frequently changing focus.

Leadership was not an impediment to collaboration through Georgia's AEAH, but was not frequently referenced in the interviews. This may be because the AEAH chairmanship is not designed to be powerful. The chair does not choose the AEAH focus or take any unilateral actions, but rather serves as the operational caretaker of the organization.

Gubernatorial Support

The role of the governor in connection to the P-20 council was very different in each of the three states. Respondents in Georgia and Illinois frequently mentioned the governor's support as a catalyst for collaboration. Georgia's AEAH has received the support of two governors over its eight year tenure. It appears that both governors found an effective balance of accountability and autonomy in working with the AEAH by providing an expectation of collaboration, but leaving the specifics of implementation to the AEAH members. This is likely due, in part, to the influence of a key policy staff person who served both governors and supported the premise of the AEAH. Illinois respondents who commented on the governor's role were pleased that the current governor lifted the P-20 Council out of dormancy and appointed members. Although a couple of Illinois respondents suggested the governor should have more active participation, he generally received high marks for the dedication of time his staff and lieutenant governor put towards the P-20 Council. Minnesota's governor and his staff had no role with the Partnership and therefore were not mentioned in conjunction with its operations. When questioned whether having gubernatorial participation may energize Minnesota's Partnership respondents were rather ambivalent. This may be because several respondents identified the K-12 commissioner as the governor's representative on the Partnership. Still, the lack of gubernatorial participation with Minnesota's Partnership is notable.

Membership Buy-in

Examples of membership buy-in were abundant in Georgia and Illinois, and evident to a lesser extent in Minnesota. In all three states, the idea of collaboration was important to agency leaders; however the manner and effectiveness of collaboration differed greatly across the states.

In Georgia, all agency leader respondents expressed in some manner the positive contributions of collaboration through the AEAH. This collective belief in its worth led to the continuation of the AEAH during a gubernatorial transition (when no one was providing an expectation that they meet) and resulted in the AEAH members requesting that the new governor support their collective work.

In Illinois, most agency leaders were more enthusiastic of collaboration through JELC, the small committee of agency leaders led by the lieutenant governor, than the P-20 Council. The larger P-20 council with its large membership of external stakeholders was something that could be positive and/or negative for agency leaders. On one hand, it could provide resources and public support for agency projects. On the other hand, it could add to the workload or detract from priorities of agencies. Several non-agency leader members noted their commitment to the P-20 Council and lauded the ability of external stakeholders to participate in state education planning.

In Minnesota, almost all respondents noted in some form that the Partnership was a “good idea” and even this tepid level of buy-in seemed to help sustain the Partnership. However, disappointment at lack of focus and outcomes appeared to have lessened some members’ interest in collaboration through the Partnership.

Of all catalysts, membership buy-in seemed the most important to the continued operations of the P-20 council. Even if resources were lacking or the governor was not involved, council members generally showed up to meetings. The strength of buy-in, as well as other catalysts, determined if more collaboration occurred than “showing up to meetings”.

Quality Staff

Although Minnesota respondents did not cite “adequate resources” as a catalyst to collaboration, several respondents noted the quality of staffing under most Partnership chairs. Often, professionals whose key expertise was in high school to college transitions staffed the Partnership. Although individual staff members were knowledgeable and helpful, many respondents cited the need for greater resources to keep the Partnership afloat.

Outcomes of P-20 Councils

As noted earlier in this paper, tying student academic outcomes to the P-20 council is precarious given the many potential influences between students and the council. Therefore, this study focused on other outcomes of collaboration through P-20 councils. Respondents were asked open-ended questions about benefits and outcomes of their councils as well as a question about the role of the council with the state’s college completion initiatives. Responses across all three states followed similar themes.

Influences on Structural/Professional Relationships

All three P-20 councils positively affected the structural and professional relationships, but in different ways and to different degrees. First, P-20 councils provided a venue for agency leaders to connect with each other. This influenced both discrete policy issues, such as linking student data, and personal relationships. Strong personal relationships can often lead to the prevention of problematic issues as demonstrated by Georgia’s AEAH where members feel comfortable to discuss potentially hot-button issues with each other before they become a problem. Second, in a case like Georgia where the governor does not appoint the K-12 official,

the council can provide a forum for discussion and collaboration between the governor's office and the department of education. Finally, P-20 councils can provide a forum for external stakeholders to interact with agency leaders. This occurred in both Illinois and Minnesota where the state culture seemed to be more insistent on citizen / stakeholder input than in Georgia.

Influences on College Completion

Influence of the P-20 councils on state college completion efforts seemed to be symbolic and informational, at best. All three state councils had some connection to college completion work, but the states' participation in Complete College America did not originate with the P-20 Councils, nor is the work directed from the councils. Illinois' council had the greatest connection to college completion given its overall goal to increase the percentage of state citizens with a postsecondary degree. Reports were made to the Council on the effort, but a couple of respondents noted that the Council could, and hopefully will, be used more effectively through JELC discussions and more specific requests for input and action from higher education agencies to the P-20 Council.

It would seem that the Georgia AEAH would be a proper venue for development of the state's college completion plan given its small size and nimble structure, but the plan was developed separately by the higher education agencies and the governor's office. Higher education respondents claimed that there was not enough time to jointly develop the plan, but that the AEAH has been informed and updated on the work. Some respondents also noted that AEAH goals and objectives all lead to student postsecondary success.

Finally, Minnesota's Partnership has a committee charged with creating a statewide college completion plan, but there is no evidence of development. The only evidence of college

completion on the Partnership agenda was MNSCU's chancellor reporting to the Partnership on its college completion metrics and plans.

Other Influences

Respondents from each council cited specific outcomes of collaboration. In Georgia, almost every respondent cited near-completion of the statewide student data system as the AEAH's top achievement. Georgia has invested many years and tens of millions of dollars in creating this system, but did not gain real traction until the agency heads created a unified front to overcome bureaucratic barriers. This was also true in Minnesota although the state is not as far along in development of its system as Georgia. The majority of Illinois respondents cited the redesign of the school report card as the Council's top achievement to date. K-12 and higher education agencies as well as external stakeholders developed and implemented a new report card outlining goals for K-12 schools. Both statewide longitudinal data systems and school report cards seem like optimal items on which to collaborate through a council as they require multiple points of input and expertise across K-12 and higher education.

The concrete outcomes noted above are important to their respective states, but raise two potential conclusions. First, it appears that concrete outcomes are less frequent than more relational outcomes. It could be that councils must go through a "forming" stage where ground rules and norms are established before concrete outcomes become more common and frequent. The councils in this research all had varying periods of time during which agendas were developed. Determining the breadth and scope of a council's agenda is not an easy task. This leads to the second conclusion regarding council agendas. For the most part, case study states focused on practical, rather than policy, issues. Several Illinois respondents noted that their

council was better suited to concrete rather than abstract policy issues. Minnesota still struggles with creating traction on an agenda as several respondents observed the difficulty of getting past discussions on the achievement gap. Georgia is a slight exception to this conclusion. Although it does not appear that the AEAH develops major statewide education policies, it does wrestle with conflicts between the agencies unlike the Illinois and Minnesota councils, which tend to avoid confrontation. In all, the influences of these P-20 councils were varied, with some respondents in all states hoping for more action and concrete outcomes.

Remaining Impediments to Collaboration

Each state council evidenced outcomes although the number and magnitude of those outcomes varied. Contributing to the variation were the remaining impediments to collaboration. Just as no two state P-20 councils were exactly alike; the impediments to greater collaboration in each case study state were not uniform. They depended on the context of the state, the initial barriers to collaboration, and the particular structure of the state's council.

Georgia's AEAH seemed to be providing a good deal of value to its members given the very few negative comments reported. However, its chosen structure does not provide for interaction between external stakeholders and agency leaders unlike Illinois' and Minnesota's councils. This means collaboration only occurs between agency leaders. This may satisfy the current political and policy context of Georgia, but the AEAH may be missing out on additional expertise and resources from external stakeholders. Further, the AEAH has not been codified in law or provided for by executive order, which means its existence depended on the will of the members and the governor. Fortunately, the AEAH has survived through several agency head transitions and a new governor, but this is not guaranteed to continue.

On the other hand, the mere existence of law or executive order does not make a P-20 council permanent or active. Illinois witnessed its former P-16 council nullified by law in favor of the new P-20 Council. The state's P-20 Council has had "wins" during the first four years of its existence, but it too, has had some impediments to greater collaboration. First, its agency leader committee, JELC, is not codified in law and was an "add-on" to the P-20 Council. And although it has done well with the good will of volunteers staffing the Council and committees, those volunteers are experiencing fatigue. Unless there are others to take their place, the P-20 Council may lack necessary resources to continue its robust operations.

Illinois does well managing a large P-20 Council, but it must take care to monitor its operations so that it does not devolve into endless discussions without action, as many respondents viewed Minnesota's Partnership. Minnesota respondents, in general, lamented the lack of focus and requisite action from the Partnership. By ensuring all stakeholders have a seat and a say, discussions did not reach an action point. Several respondents cited the unique culture of the state as promoting extended discussions, and wished for greater accountability. When questioned whether the governor could provide additional accountability for the Partnership, respondents were somewhat skeptical that the governor, through power of position, could compel member investment.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION

The concept of collaboration is one of those ideas that is sort of like motherhood. Surely you want to do it and should do it and there should be positive outcomes from collaboration. ... I think the public expects and wants state agencies to work together to a common good, so it's something we ought to do. It doesn't mean it's going to be successful. – State higher education leader

As the above quote from an astute respondent reflects, collaboration is harder than it seems, especially when it is between state education agencies. This research sought to describe how the organizational structures of state P-20 councils influence or affect the collaboration of K-12 and higher education. P-20 councils have been operating in a majority of states since the 1990s, serving as a tool for statewide education coordination and collaboration (Cech, 2008; Kirst & Venezia, 2004; Education Commission of the States, 2013). Almost all states have seen their council dissolve or change structure over time indicating that systemic, structured collaboration between state K-12 and higher education agencies is challenging. The interorganizational relations literature suggests that there are common barriers to collaboration between agencies (Whetten & Bozeman, 1991). Other organizational research shows a link between governance structures and education outcomes (Hearn & Holdsworth, 2002; Manna, 2006). Therefore, it is not as easy as putting everyone in a room and “hashing it out”. The structure for collaboration must be sensitive to the context of the state.

P-20 council research to date has focused mostly on description and policy case analyses (Cech, 2008; Chamberlin & Plucker, 2008; Conklin, 2005; Dounay, 2008a; Dounay, 2008b; Dounay, 2009; Education Commission of the States, 2013; Shulock, 2009; Walsh, 2009). There have also been several in-depth case studies (Davis & Hoffman, 2008; Kirst & Venezia, 2004; Knepler, Lee, Williams, Shapiro, Morgan, & Susskind, 2013; Perna & Armijo, 2012; Pitre, 2011). While this foundation is important and needed, new theoretical foundations must be applied to the study of P-20 councils to understand their functions and predict their sustainability. Ostensibly, one of the positive aspects of P-20 councils, beyond serving as a forum for collaboration, is that they can outlast political and personnel transitions thereby creating a more sustainable education improvement agenda (Venezia, Callan, Finney, Kirst, & Usdan, 2005). However, sustainability has proven difficult for most P-20 councils (Kirst, Usdan, Evans, & Valant, 2011).

This research was designed to start filling the research gap through a multi-state case study of P-20 councils. Georgia, Illinois, and Minnesota were selected for study due to their active P-20 councils, participation in the Complete College America alliance, differing education governance structures, and differing P-20 council structures. This allowed for insight into the nature of collaboration on P-20 councils within the state's political and policy context. Interviews of 30 respondents and analysis of 26 documents provided the data set for this research. The research was designed to provide rigor via valid and reliable methods, thus producing robust and trustworthy results.

Findings

Within and cross-case analyses of the data lead to six key findings.

1. State P-20 councils further collaboration between K-12 and higher education.

Although each state exhibited some of the barriers to interagency collaboration noted by Whetten and Bozeman (1991), P-20 councils have clearly facilitated collaboration between K-12 and higher education in the case study states. Each of the state P-20 councils in this study produced outcomes although some outcomes were more numerous than others. The most often cited outcome was stronger relationships. This is consistent with previous research (Davis & Hoffman, 2008; Lopez, 2010) and the importance of this finding cannot be overlooked. Stronger relationships between K-12 and higher education agency leaders could have direct and immediate affects upon students by remedying non- or mis-alignment of policies related to high school exit exams and college entrance standards; articulation between 2- and 4-year colleges, and curriculum alignment. Stronger relationships also mean greater communication about policies and activities. For example, Georgia's AEAH has worked to ensure high school counselors, college admissions counselors, and financial aid counselors have and share the same information with students.

The councils also had policy-oriented outcomes from the collaboration between K-12 and higher education. The development of statewide student data systems has been on many state agendas for years. Both Minnesota and Georgia respondents credited their councils with breaking through agency barriers to further work on connecting data systems. The Illinois P-20 Council redesigned and implemented a new school report card, which exemplifies statewide consensus on accountability metrics for K-12 schools.

2. *There is no ideal P-20 council structure.*

Each state has a unique combination of education governance structure, history, politics, and culture. Therefore, the collaborative structure needed to bridge education sectors must be tailored to the particular state context. This is consistent with findings from previous research (Venezia, Callan, Finney, Kirst, & Usdan, 2005; Walsh, 2009). For example, the AEAH structure that works in Georgia may not work in Illinois and Minnesota. Georgia utilizes its AEAH for agency collaboration and generally does not include external stakeholders. While external stakeholders may scoff at this (and further research could determine if this is the case), the agency heads and governor's office believed they are getting what they need out of the structure, including coordination of policies, stronger relationships, and alignment of agency work with the governor's agenda.

Greater evidence of a culture of inclusion was found in Illinois and Minnesota. Most respondents in both states cited the inclusion of external stakeholders on the P-20 council as a strength. The Illinois P-20 Council goes as far as to allow any citizen to join a Council committee. As one respondent noted, the structure is "about as democratic as you can get." Although some respondents noted skepticism at the Council's potential for collaboration given its large membership size, they credit the chairman for creating a workable structure that accommodated the culture of the state. "We have a lot of advocacy groups within the state that have a very strong voice and ... we also have a lot of special interest groups ... and if you just have the agency heads in a room, those special interest groups would not be represented" noted one long-time agency leader.

Part of the contextual differences between states lies in the higher education structure. Georgia has a governing board for its 2- and 4-year colleges and a governing board for its

technical schools. Illinois' Board of Higher Education is a coordinating board for the state's 4-year colleges as well as the other higher education agencies including the community college board and student assistance board. Minnesota has three separate boards: the MNSCU which governs 31 of the state's universities and college, the UM which governs its five campuses, and the OHE which is a state cabinet-level planning agency. Linkages between the higher education structure and collaboration on the P-20 council were difficult to ascertain. Only a couple of respondents - one in Illinois and one in Minnesota - noted the difficulty higher education agencies faced in coordinating higher education institutions. This affected the agencies' work on the P-20 council because a coordinating agency cannot make many mandates to institutions. Overall, it appeared that a state's higher education structure could make collaboration through a P-20 council a bit more difficult, particularly if there are multiple structures and they lack significant power. Further research is needed to confirm this preliminary finding.

Although there is not one P-20 council structure that fits all states, this research demonstrates that there are a few key P-20 council characteristics that further collaboration in any structure. These are addressed in the following findings.

3. *Education agency leaders need a dedicated collaborative space.*

Georgia set out to create a council that was solely dedicated to agency leaders. Illinois developed a committee, JELC, dedicated to agency leaders within a few months of initiating the P-20 Council's operations. Minnesota's agency leaders collaborate outside of the Partnership. Collaboration of agency leaders is needed and it happens. States would do well to ensure their P-20 structure allows for dedicated collaboration of agency leaders. After all, it is these leaders that have the resources (e.g. funding, staff, ability to create regulations) to implement any

programs or policies developed by the P-20 council, which generally lacks any authority of its own (Shulock, 2009). As one council chair remarked,

It is the education agency authorities that make things happen on a day-to-day basis. They are the ones that are primarily responsible for implementing policy so it is important that they, as a group, engage in discussions about how it is that they need to coordinate their work.

Further, it is the relationships between these leaders that can often prevent adoption of policies that are at odds with each other. As a higher education agency leader noted,

It's easy for the idea of collaboration to get lost in the weeds. Long term, I think we all intuitively know that if we do more collaboration and do it effectively, there will be [fewer] issues that we'll have to deal with on a day-to-day basis.

4. *Action-oriented P-20 councils require a state-level champion that expects results.*

“Leadership at the state level is of crucial importance in sustaining long-term change” (Venezia, Callan, Finney, Kirst, & Usdan, 2005, p. 23). The data from this research support Venezia et al.'s (2005) conclusion as it appears the council members from the two states in this study with a state-level champion expecting results (Georgia and Illinois) responded more favorably about their councils and can point to more P-20 council outcomes. In Georgia, both governors during the AEAH's tenure have expected agency head participation and used the AEAH to resolve agency-level differences.

Illinois demonstrates that the over-arching champion does not have to be the governor. Although a couple of agency leaders stated that they felt the governor expected their participation, almost all respondents referenced the P-20 Council chairman's expectation of

results. Chairman del Valle seemed to be the person that P-20 Council members were looking to for guidance – likely due to both his leadership skills and the residual power he enjoyed from the governor.

Minnesota's lack of champion may contribute to the Partnership's lack of activity. Partnership chairs have put forth effort to develop agendas and try to move the group to consensus and action, but the chairs change every two years, which is not a long period to implement an agenda. Since the governor is not involved with the Partnership, there is not a consistent leader expecting results from the Partnership.

Further, this finding does not hinge on whether the P-20 council is voluntary or mandatory. Illinois' and Minnesota's councils are mandated by law while Georgia's council is voluntary. The presence of a law in Minnesota has not acted as a catalyst for active participation and no respondents in Illinois cited the law as their reason for participating with the P-20 Council. Georgia had active participation without the force of law, including from the separately elected state superintendent of schools. It appears more important that a P-20 council have a champion rather than a law.

5. *Adequate resources for P-20 councils promote sustainability and outcomes.*

From an external perspective, it may seem perplexing that the act of collaboration requires resources. However, this research finds that consistent, quality, professional support is needed for effective and sustainable collaboration through a P-20 council. This is consistent with the results of a 2007 survey of state higher education agency leaders who cited lack of resources as a top “obstacle that limit[s] the capacity of P-16 councils” (Walsh, 2009, p. 25). In all three states, some type of staffing was needed to draft agendas, write minutes, and support the

chairperson. In Georgia and Illinois, where the P-20 councils were more active, staff undertook more of a project management role – coordinating between agencies and external groups and ensuring timelines were met and products delivered.

Georgia is the only state in this study to have a dedicated staff person for the P-20 council. Illinois's Council relies on agency staff and other volunteers and Minnesota relies primarily on agency staff. Reliance on volunteer staff can mean unevenness in the quality and amount of work. Reliance on agency staff can mean the P-20 council work is not a priority to any one person as agency staff likely have several other responsibilities. Professional staff can contribute to stability and sustainability, especially if they remain in place even as the chair changes, which happened with Georgia's AEAH.

6. College completion may be an organizing theme for the P-20 council, but higher education agencies retain primary jurisdiction over completion efforts.

Illinois was the only state to have college attainment as its overarching P-20 Council goal. Georgia and Minnesota council goals alluded to completion efforts and many respondents noted that all council work ultimately leads to increased college completion. In all states, the higher education agencies and the governor's office developed the plan, implemented the activities, and monitored results. Reporting on the plan and metrics were part of one or more P-20 council meetings in all three states, so in that way, the P-20 councils appear to increase the availability and transmission of information about college completion. A Georgia respondent noted that college completion efforts increased the value of the AEAH as both K-12 and higher education could more easily see their worth to each other. However, specific college completion efforts were not a major focus of any P-20 council.

Although state college completion efforts may not be headquartered in any of the P-20 councils, work of the councils can be viewed as integral to the college completion agenda. For example, all three states used their P-20 councils to move development of statewide longitudinal data systems forward. These data systems have major potential for informing college access and success efforts. The impact of the relational and informational roles of the P-20 councils regarding states' college completion efforts may also prove to be vital to the success of the efforts.

Conclusion

Although the above findings concerning common characteristics of more active councils are supported by this research, it is also clear that there was an intangible quality to P-20 council "success" that cannot be easily replicated. This quality is the personalities of the people collaborating. Several respondents in Illinois and Georgia touted personal characteristics as key to the councils' success. One Illinois respondent stated, "We are fortunate. It was a very good group that got it started." A Georgia respondent noted that members "leave their egos at the door." This is summed up well by one council chair, "a lot of this is about personalities and getting just the right combination of people in the room and the right chemistry. You can't always orchestrate that." Further research may be able to pinpoint the type of leader needed for P-20 councils or perhaps a new criterion for agency leadership could be demonstrated ability to collaborate with other leaders.

Research Implications

This study contributes to the slowly expanding field of research on state P-20 councils by examining the nature of collaboration on P-20 councils in Georgia, Illinois, and Minnesota. The collected data point to several findings that confirm and build upon previous research, including that P-20 councils enhance collaboration between K-12 and higher education. Further, although there is no ideal P-20 council structure, there are common characteristics of councils viewed favorably by members; including provisions for agency head collaboration, a state-level champion that holds the council accountable for results, and adequate resources to support council work. However, there is much more to learn. States have been using P-20 councils for more than 20 years and many states have experienced multiple council iterations (Davis & Hoffman, 2008). Research is needed to understand how and why councils change over time to truly understand what makes one council more effective than another under similar circumstances. This presupposes that there is a common definition of effectiveness. More research and thought is needed on this definition. Does “effectiveness” mean more students matriculating to and successful in college? Does it merely mean development of a shared statewide education reform plan or does effectiveness require action on that plan?

More research is needed to understand the relation of the P-20 council structure with state context. The three councils in this study are very different, as are the state contexts. What makes a small, agency head only council work in Georgia while a large council with multiple stakeholders works in Illinois? What type of collaboration works best in what state contexts? This study has provided some insight into these questions, but a study that examines additional states over time could help to provide additional knowledge. State characteristics such as current achievement levels, education governance structure, and political context could be analyzed in

conjunction with P-20 council characteristics such as council size, governor's role, and agenda. For example, Minnesota has an 80 percent high school graduation rate and 62 percent of young adults are in higher education. Is there less of an incentive to collaborate than in a state such as Georgia with a 64 percent high school graduation rate and 50 percent of young adults in post-secondary education?

During the course of this research, several respondents noted the personality of various individuals as being important to the functioning of P-20 councils. One way to look at this more deeply would be to examine the role of policy entrepreneurs in initiating and sustaining P-20 councils. Policy entrepreneurs could be governors, council chairs, and/or particular P-20 council members. Understanding a policy entrepreneur's role could provide additional information on optimal structures for P-20 councils. Finally, given the finding that education agency leaders need a dedicated collaborative space, it would be interesting to study whether states without P-20 councils also evidence education agency leader collaboration.

This study provides a foundation for future research by exposing the nature of collaboration in three very different state councils. Data stemming from interviews and document analyses provides a snapshot of the inner workings of a few P-20 councils. The perspectives of respondents give a sense of whether they believed the council to be effective in promoting collaboration. From there, future research can target more precise terms of effectiveness and take a longer-term view of P-20 councils' work.

Policy Implications

The policy implications of the findings are important, as the stakes for K-12 and higher education collaboration are high. The myriad issues on state education policy agendas, such as

college completion and common core standards implementation, require structured and sustained collaboration between the sectors. Unaligned policies and practices will keep achievement and attainment at current or decreasing levels (Kirst, 2005; Kirst & Venezia, 2004; Shulock, 2009). Therefore, it benefits states to thoughtfully consider the structure of such collaboration and this study contributes new knowledge for this purpose.

First, this study shows that P-20 councils can have a role in furthering collaboration between K-12 and higher education as they work towards shared goals. Each of the councils in this study exhibited buy-in from membership (although in varying strengths) based upon members' belief in the necessity and value of collaboration. A state P-20 council can provide a forum for that collaboration. Second, this research demonstrates that there can be a variety of ways to reach a similar goal. States often look to one another for best practices and national organizations often encourage states to adopt policies similar to one another. This research finds that there may not be one best way to design and sustain a P-20 council as both Georgia and Illinois respondents reacted positively towards their councils even though the councils were very different in structure and focus. For those states that are currently considering development or reorganization of a P-20 council, this research provides lessons gleaned from analysis of three very different councils in three very different states. One of these lessons is to match the structure and focus of the council with the needs and context of the state. Another lesson is to provide some accountability mechanism for the council so that someone is encouraging participation and expecting results. Ideally, research in this area will continue and more will be learned about how states can best utilize P-20 councils to further their statewide educational goals.

Along with additional research, states may benefit from sharing experiences and lessons learned regarding P-20 councils. Certainly, convenings held by national policy organizations aimed at linking K-12 and higher education policy could also focus on creating a sustained structure of collaboration as all too often the sectors only collaborate for one specific purpose or another. An outside entity to help states identify a suitable structure may provide for more thoughtful (re)design of P-20 councils adapted to particular state contexts. Widespread recognition of these councils as an important facet of state education governance could also contribute to their sustainability and result in enduring education reforms.

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APPENDICES

A - Interview Protocol

Jennifer Rippner [researcher]: Thank you for agreeing to discuss higher education and K-12 collaboration on college completion through [state's] P-20 council. As a reminder, you may choose not to answer any question I ask and you may stop this interview at any time. There are no penalties to you for doing such. Further, as we agreed, I will be audio recording this interview for transcription purposes. Once the interview is transcribed, I will destroy the audio recording. You may also review the transcription for accuracy purposes if you would like. Further, if you would like to review any direct quotations attributed to you prior to use/publication that would be fine.

Do you have any questions?

Background Questions:

JR: What is your role with the P-20 Council (e.g. member, Chair, funding)?

The P-20 Council:

JR: For the next couple of questions, you may/may not have the background as it is based on when the P-20 Council was started.

JR: Why was the Council started?

JR: Was there unanimous agreement by stakeholders/members that this type of forum was needed? Why or why not?

JR: What was the nature of K-12 / higher education collaboration prior to creation of the P-20 council?

JR: What barriers to collaboration existed prior to the creation of the P-20 council? [If there were barriers] did the P-20 council address these barriers?

JR: These you should definitely know:

JR: How would you characterize the involvement of K-12 and higher education representatives on the Council? Active/Passive; Engaged/Not Engaged. I understand this question can be a bit difficult given the structure of the Alliance as K-12 and higher ed are represented by an individuals, so I guess this could be two parts – are the individuals involved and are their agencies responsive/involved?

Potential follow-up: Is one a more dominant member than the other?

JR: How do you think the structure of the Council (e.g. number of members, open/closed meetings; staff support) influences (or not) the collaboration?

JR: What is the role of the governor and his/her office with the P-20 council? How does it help (or not) achieve your goals?

JR: Can you describe the leadership of the council?

JR: Does the Council provide a worthwhile venue for which K-12 and higher education can collaborate? If so, how?

JR: Does having the council increase accountability for performance and collaboration?

JR: How are conflicts handled within the Council?

JR: How are new members initiated into the Council?

JR: Are there any new barriers or impediments to collaboration through the P-20 council?

JR: Have there been any surprising or unintended consequences of collaboration through the P-20 council? Politicization?

College Completion:

JR: Now, we'll shift a bit to focus on [state's] college completion efforts.

JR: How did college completion come to be upon the state's education agenda?

JR: Did the Council have any part in developing the plan?

JR: In your opinion, does having an existing collaborative structure facilitate work on shared issues such as college completion?

Conclusion:

JR: Is there anything else you think would be important for me to know about K-12/higher education collaboration on college completion through the P-20 council?

*Potential follow-up: Are there particular individuals you would suggest I speak with?
Are there documents I should examine?*

JR: Thank you for your participation. Your answers were helpful for my research. As I noted at the start, this recording will be transcribed and then destroyed. If you would like to review the transcript for accuracy purposes, I can provide it for you. I can also provide you with a final copy of this research study if you are interested. Again, thank you for your time!