

Resource Allocation, Marketing Strategies, the College Choice Process: A Collective  
Case Study Analysis of Community College Marketing Administrators

by

Benjamin Martin, B.A., M.Ed.

A Dissertation

In

Higher Education

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty  
of Texas Tech University in  
Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for  
the Degree of

DOCTORATE OF EDUCATION

Approved

Dr. Stephanie J. Jones  
Chair of the Committee

Dr. Mike Dreith

Dr. Dimitra Jackson Smith

Dr. Mark Sheridan  
Dean of the Graduate School

May 2016

Copyright 2016, Benjamin Martin

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ..... vii**

**ABSTRACT ..... x**

**I. INTRODUCTION ..... 1**

    Statement of the Problem ..... 3

    Purpose of the Study ..... 5

    Research Questions ..... 6

    Significance of the Study ..... 6

    Summary of the Conceptual Framework ..... 8

    Summary of the Methodology ..... 9

    Definition of Terms ..... 10

    Assumptions of the Study ..... 10

    Limitations to the Study ..... 11

    Summary ..... 11

    Overview of the Remainder of the Study ..... 12

**II. LITERATURE REVIEW ..... 13**

    Overview of Community Colleges ..... 13

    Evolution of Enrollment Management in Community Colleges ..... 15

    Evolution of the College Choice Process ..... 17

    College Choice Models ..... 24

        Chapman Model ..... 24

Hossler and Gallagher Model .....	27
Influencing Factors in College Choice .....	28
Influence of Cost on College Choice .....	28
Influence of Economic Factors on College Choice .....	29
Influence of Student-Perceived Benefits of Attending College.....	30
Influence of Parents on College Choice Decisions.....	32
Influence of Siblings on the College Choice Process .....	34
Influence of Institutional Marketing on the College Choice Process .....	35
Marketing of Higher Education .....	38
Marketing of Community Colleges .....	40
Resources for Marketing.....	43
Marketing Leadership in Higher Education.....	46
Conceptual Framework of the Study .....	50
Tangible Resources.....	50
Intangible Resources.....	52
Summary .....	53
<b>III. METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>55</b>
Research Questions.....	55
Research Design.....	56
Establish the Paradigm.....	56
Type of Study.....	57
Study Setting.....	58
Participants.....	62

Data Collection .....	63
Data Analysis .....	66
Trustworthiness.....	69
Context of the Study and Researcher.....	71
Context of the Study .....	71
Context of the Researcher.....	72
Summary.....	73
<b>IV. Results.....</b>	<b>75</b>
Summary of the Research Design.....	76
Data Collection Process .....	76
Data Analysis .....	78
Profiles of the Study Institutions and Participants.....	80
Profiles of the Study Institutions.....	80
Participant Profiles.....	83
Findings.....	85
Developing Support for the Marketing Mission through Informing the Campus ... .....	85
Allocation of Institutional Resources for Marketing.....	95
Benefits and Challenges of Marketing a Community College.....	121
Measuring Effects of Marketing Efforts .....	131
Summary .....	138
<b>V. Discussion.....</b>	<b>140</b>
Overview of Study .....	140

Discussion of the Findings.....	142
Developing Support for the Marketing Mission through Informing the Campus ... .....	142
Allocation of Institutional Resources for Marketing.....	146
Benefits and Challenges of Marketing a Community College.....	151
Measuring Effects of Marketing Efforts .....	157
Implications for Higher Education Practice.....	160
Recommendation for Higher Education Practice .....	163
Recommendations for Future Research .....	165
Conclusion .....	167
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>170</b>
<b>Appendix A .....</b>	<b>187</b>
<b>Appendix B .....</b>	<b>188</b>
<b>Appendix C .....</b>	<b>190</b>
<b>Appendix D .....</b>	<b>191</b>

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Throughout writing this dissertation, I would create many different ways to procrastinate instead of being productive. One way I would procrastinate was by reading acknowledgements from other dissertations; I would think about the day that I would finally get to write my own acknowledgement. Well, that day is finally here, and honestly, it is a day that I never knew would really come. The narrative I remember the most, from all those acknowledgements, was the one that taught that me that finishing this dissertation does not mean I am smarter than anyone; however, I can persevere. For the rest of my life, I will probably not be able to find the words to adequately describe the process of earning a doctorate.

I am grateful and appreciative of the faculty of the College of Education at Texas Tech University. I am beyond thankful for the time and energy they dedicated to conduct class, lecture, and other presentations. There are individuals in your life that it is difficult to quantify the impact they have had, and Dr. Stephanie J. Jones is one of those individuals in my life. She served as the committee chair of my dissertation, had to trudge through my sub-mediocre writing, and yet never gave up on me. The time she sacrificed for me, I will probably never understand or be able to pay back. One of my favorite parts of this journey was watching our relationship go from professor/student to transforming into friends. I would also like to acknowledge and thank Dr. Mike Dreith for the time, leadership example, input, and serving on my committee. Getting to observe Dr. Dreith's leadership style for three years at Western Texas College was incredibly

valuable for me professionally. I also appreciate Dr. Dimitra Jackson Smith for her time and input while serving on my dissertation committee.

One does not complete a doctorate without unimaginable support from co-workers, classmates, friends, and family. I truly believe that I could not have completed this degree without having such a supportive and understanding boss like Ralph Ramon. To all my co-workers who checked on me and supported me, thank you. I am so thankful that God placed me at Western Texas College during this journey. I was beyond blessed to be placed into cohort three at Texas Tech University's Higher Education program. I am thankful for the friendships made with Eddie, Troy, Conrad, Kara, Gaye Lynn, and Marcie. I know I am a blessed individual because of the friends that I have in my life. I appreciate Byron Potter, Michael Criner, Josh Myers, Zac Harrell, Chris Galban, David Trevey, and Max Drum for listening to me lament at times and celebrating when there were breakthroughs.

On December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1982, when my parents did not know the severity of their baby's heart defect, they probably did not expect the baby to complete a doctoral program. To my parents, Woody and Miki Martin, thank you for support, love, and encouragement through this incredible journey. To my sister, Sarah Martin, who always provided a word of encouragement when I needed it, thank you. To my in-laws, Pam, Angie, and Mandy Breuer, thank you for dealing with me during this crazy time. To my grandparents, thanks for all the perfectly timed cheers.

A special thank you to Julie Sentell, who gave up many hours, tirelessly editing my dissertation. The words "thank you" do not describe how grateful and appreciative I am of her.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, who over the last three and half years has shown what true sacrifice and selflessness is. You have taken on so many extra burdens and struggles through this journey. Thank you for your love, encouragement, and being my steady rock over the last three and half years. To Brinson, Rylan, and Leander, I hope watching your Dad's journey over the last three and half years encourages you to dream the biggest dreams and believe you can accomplish anything.

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to explore how community college marketing administrators allocate institutional resources to market the institution to affect the student college choice process. This qualitative collective case study was conducted through the lens of the constructivist paradigm. The conceptual framework that framed this study was based on institutional capacity, which assesses how well a college performs. The study was guided by four research questions. Data collection tools used were the lens of the researcher, semi-structured interviews, field notes, and documents. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight participants from seven community colleges located in Texas. The data collected was analyzed through the constant comparative method, and open and axial coding. Trustworthiness of the study was ensured through various qualitative strategies such as member checking and the use of rich, thick narratives throughout the reporting of the findings.

There were several findings of this study that can be used to advance the practice of higher education. The first is that in order for marketing administrators to develop support for the marketing mission at their institution, they must disseminate and communicate information about the marketing plan and its objectives throughout the campus. They also must be willing to accept feedback from both internal and external stakeholders on the marketing strategies used, and be willing to deal with the non-supporters of the marketing mission. An additional finding is that decisions about how to allocate resources to marketing is driven by the needs of the institution. All of the participants identified that enrollment growth is important to how their decisions are made. The findings also indicate that there are benefits and challenges to marketing a

community college, specifically in times of decreased funding, economic downturns of communities, and competition from neighboring institutions. The final finding was that marketing administrators have not successfully figured out how to assess their marketing efforts for their effectiveness.

The findings of this study have several implications and recommendations for higher education practice. These include that community college marketing departments need to ensure they are communicating the vision and strategies of the department throughout the institution. In addition, with a shift toward digital marketing strategies, marketing departments need to be able to assess their marketing efforts for their effectiveness. This recommendation is closely tied to assessing institutional capacity, which is used to determine how well an institution is performing. Community college marketing administrators must be able to assess the effectiveness of the types of marketing they use and how these marketing strategies effect student enrollments.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Community colleges have only been actively marketing themselves since the 1980s, when the decline in the number of high school graduates began to impact enrollment (Brannick, 1987; Clagett, 2012). According to Clagett (2012), it was during this time that these institutions began to view their students as customers and their curriculum and programs as products. Since the 1980s, community colleges have worked to establish their market position within the higher education environment (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014; Crocker, 2014). Marketing for community colleges consists of more than creative pictures and slogans. Many institutions utilize market information, analyses of their competitors, as well as quantitative and qualitative measures; and they have found success and enrollment growth through converting these measures into a marketing plan (Clagett, 2012). The objective for community college marketing “is to persuade the target audience that it must invest in (buy) a product and/or service” (Tucciarone, 2008, p. 76).

Higher education institutions are able to position themselves in a competitive marketplace by using marketing and advertising to influence the college choice process. For the purpose of this study, college choice is defined as the decision-making process by which a student selects a higher education institution to attend (Alfred, Shults, Jacquette, & Strickland, 2009). Community colleges need a marketing strategy that has both short-term and long-term goals for the institution, which includes the implementation and management of its brand (Tokuhama, 2011). A brand is defined as “a sign that is capable of distinguishing the goods or services of a company that can have a certain meaning for consumers both in material and immaterial terms” (Booth & Hayes, 2006, p. 44).

Marketing strategies are used in branding the institution and can lead to enrollment growth, community promotion, and communication of the institutional mission (Clagett, 2012); as well as they can have an effect on prospective students' college choice process (Anctil, 2008; Ma & Baum, 2012).

There are multiple factors that can influence the college choice decision-making process of prospective students (Chapman, 1981). Attending a higher education institution is a consumer decision; therefore, the cost of attending is a factor that affects potential students (University Research Partners, 2013). Another factor that affects the college choice process is the perceived benefits of attending a higher education institution (Schultz & Lucido, 2011). Some perceived benefits can be campus environment, potential income from an academic program, and student services that are provided (Cooper, 2010; Schultz & Lucido, 2011). Parents and siblings can also influence the decision on what institution to attend (Burdet, 2013; Goodman, Hurwitz, & Smith, 2014). A specific focus when using marketing to influence the college choice process of potential students is how attaining higher education can lead to increased salaries, job security, job skills, career mobility, and a better quality of life (Tucciarone, 2008).

Marketing administrators in higher education investigate the factors that influence the college choice process of potential students, and then create marketing avenues and strategies for the institution (Tucciarone, 2008). They have to strategically make decisions that improve the institution's market share (Clagett, 2012; Kirp, 2003; Lewison & Hawes, 2007). In addition, marketing administrators are responsible for promoting the institution's brand and understanding the influence marketing has on the college choice process (Tucciarone, 2008).

Marketing is an important aspect of an institution's strategic plan and a tool for achieving the goals of the college (Anctil, 2008). Higher education institutions need to explore how to effectively use marketing in all aspects of the institution, especially as it relates to increasing tuition revenues and enrollment, and this can be done through influencing the college choice process through marketing (Anctil, 2008; Hayes, 2007; Noel-Levitz, 2009).

### **Statement of the Problem**

State appropriations for community colleges across the U.S. have declined over the past 30 years (Holda, 2011). In Texas alone, according to Holda, state appropriations accounted for 68% of total revenues for public community colleges in 1980. By 2010, this number had decreased to only 29% of revenues. State funding for Texas community colleges was again reduced in 2012 to only 21% of revenues, resulting in a total community college budget for the state of \$1.77 billion (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 2013). While state appropriations for Texas community colleges continue to diminish, competition for limited state funds continues to increase, with other entities such as K-12 education, Medicaid, transportation, and corrections also competing for limited state funds (Katsinas, Tollefson, & Reamey, 2009).

Different departments across a campus, including marketing departments, have been affected by the decreases in state funding (Noel-Levitz, 2011). Noel-Levitz conducted a study in 2011 about the cost of recruiting and marketing to potential college students. There were 236 higher education institutions that responded to the survey, and of those, 165 were four-year private institutions, 49 were four-year public institutions, and 22 were two-year public institutions (Noel-Levitz, 2011). The findings of the study were that 27% of the 22 two-year institutions decreased their marketing budget and only

9% increased their budget, demonstrating the financial burden marketing departments were experiencing at that time.

Another challenge that some community colleges are facing is a decrease in enrollment. In the academic year 2011-2012 and again in 2013-2014, community college enrollments declined 3% nationwide (American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), 2014; Juskiewicz, 2014). This was on top of a decrease in enrollments the 2010-2011 academic year of 1.6% (AACC, 2014; Juskiewicz, 2014). In addition, in academic year 2013-2014, the nationwide enrollment of students over the age of 24 declined 6% out of more than seven million students (Juskiewicz, 2014). In 2013, the National Student Clearinghouse reported that community colleges had seen declines in enrollment every year since 2010, and these institutions were expected to continue to see this trend in the future (Ginder & Kelly-Reid, 2013; Juskiewicz, 2014).

Higher education institutions utilize increased tuition revenues to offset decreases in institutional budgets caused by decreased state allocations (Dembicki, 2011; Katsinas et al., 2008). In 2011, two-year institutions nationwide raised tuition approximately 8.7% (Dembicki, 2011). Colleges in California took even more drastic steps by increasing their tuition by 21% in the academic year of 2011 (Dembicki, 2011).

Therefore, community colleges must find a way to increase revenues without further increasing tuition, which can lead to decreases in enrollment (Dembicki, 2011; Katsinas et al., 2008). A way that higher education institutions can increase revenues is by increasing enrollment (Rowe, 2002). According to Bergerson (2009), the college choice process is one area that colleges can focus on to increase student enrollment. The college choice process is important to higher education institutions, as there are many factors in the choice process that affect where potential students attend college. Their decision to attend a specific college can result in increased enrollments for the institution, as well as increased revenues (Bergerson, 2009; Rowe, 2002; Moody's Investor Service, 2013).

A student's decision to attend college is influenced by many different factors, including cost, student-perceived benefits, family, and marketing by an institution, among

others (Anctil; 2008; Burdet, 2013; Eklund, 2009; Farnsworth, 2005; Schultz & Lucido, 2011). As discussed previously, state-supported community college budgets are decreasing due to reductions in state allocations. These institutions must effectively and efficiently allocate and utilize already limited resources in marketing themselves to potential students (Alfred et al., 2009; Noel-Levitz, 2011; Rowe, 2002).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore how community college marketing administrators allocate institutional resources to market the institution to affect the student college choice process. The foci of this study were the perceptions and experiences of how marketing administrators disseminate information about their marketing plans throughout their institution, how marketing administrators allocate resources to market the institution, the benefits and challenges of marketing community colleges, and how marketing administrators measure the effects of their institution's marketing on the student college choice process.

The results of this study can be used to advance the practice of higher education in how community college marketing administrators can effectively allocate institutional resources to affect the student college choice process through marketing. In addition, this study also contributes to the existing body of literature on community college marketing administrators and how they influence students during the college choice process through their marketing strategies.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by four research questions:

1. How do community college marketing administrators communicate information about the marketing mission of the institution?

2. How do community college marketing administrators determine how to allocate institutional resources for marketing their institution?
3. Based on the perceptions and experiences of community college marketing administrators, what are the benefits and challenges of marketing community colleges?
4. How do community college marketing administrators measure the effect of institutional marketing on student college choice?

### **Significance of the Study**

State appropriations for community colleges have been declining nationally since the peak in 1976, and funding is down 40.2 % since 1980 (Mortenson, 2012). There has been a reduction of state appropriations to community colleges in the state of Texas of 48% over the last 35 years (THECB, 2013). Due to the decreases in state funding, community colleges have had to decrease the financial resources that they allocate to the marketing of their institution (Noel-Levitz, 2011).

Another problem community colleges face is a decline in enrollment. Between 2010 and 2014 community college enrollment trended downward (AACC, 2014; Dembicki, 2011; Juskiewicz, 2014). This is partly due to the decline in the number of high school graduates, which can be attributed to lower birth rates, migration, and dropouts, among others (Prescott & Bransberger, 2012). Another factor contributing to the decline in enrollment is the impact a poor economy has on non-traditional students who are drawn back into the work force from community colleges (Fain, 2014). This comes at a time when competition in the higher education marketplace has increased (Clagett, 2012).

When marketing against competition, the objective for community colleges “is to persuade the target audience that it must invest in (buy) a product and/or service” (Tucciarone, 2008, p. 76). Community colleges have to find ways and gather data to compete in the marketplace of higher education to increase their enrollment (Clagett, 2012). Marketing administrators gather data to help understand where to allocate resources to affect the college choice process, and tools they can use to gather data include surveys, focus groups, and other alternative ways (Clagett, 2012).

A strategy to help community colleges with decreasing funding, declining enrollment, lack of resources, and a competitive marketplace is to efficiently use their resources to influence potential students’ college choice process (Clagett, 2012). Administrators in higher education institutions have determined to address the decrease in funding by increasing enrollment and doing so through business models (Anctil, 2008). Therefore, community colleges must understand how and why prospective students choose their institution in order to maximize marketing effectiveness (Kinzie et al., 2004). There are many different factors that influence a prospective student’s college choice process, such as cost, perceived benefits, parents, siblings, and marketing (Anctil, 2008; Burdet, 2013; Farnsworth, 2005; Schultz & Lucido, 2011). Marketing administrators can also use events and institutional facilities to have an influence on the college choice process of potential students (Johnson, 2011, Noel-Levitz, 2009).

This study is significant as it provides empirical evidence about how community college marketing administrators allocate their resources to market their institutions. Community colleges must allocate resources to accomplish all the elements of marketing that directly influence the college choice process (Clagett, 2012).

### **Summary of the Conceptual Framework**

Community colleges utilize different strategies to accomplish their marketing. These strategies are supported through institutional resources provided by higher education institutions (Clagett, 2012; Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011; Tucciarone, 2008). The conceptual framework that was used to guide this study is based on institutional capacity, which is “how well a college performs” (Alfred et al., 2009, p. 77). Alfred et al. (2009) address the concept of institutional capacity within the context of institutional resources. According to Alfred et al., institutional capacity refers to the tangible and intangible resources of a higher education institution. Tangible resources include financial resources, facilities and properties, human resources, and technology. Intangible resources include people, culture, organizational architecture, time, systems, and reputation. Institutional capacity was an appropriate concept through which to frame this study because it recognized the importance of the institutional resources that are available to community colleges for allocation to marketing to affect the student college choice process.

### **Summary of the Methodology**

This qualitative study was conducted through the lens of the constructivist paradigm. A collective case study research design was used. The study setting was seven community colleges located in Texas. Of the seven study institutions, five were rural-serving institutions located in the western region of the state. The sixth community college was an urban-serving institution located in the northern region of Texas. The seventh institution was a rural serving four-year public college in the Permian Basin of Texas that predominately awards associate degrees.

The participants were eight marketing administrators who were purposefully selected. Inclusion criteria for the participants were that they had to be full-time

administrators directly involved with marketing of their community college. In addition, they had to have three years of experience in higher education marketing, and they must have had a role in the decision making process of how marketing funds are allocated. Maximum variation was used during the purposeful selection of the participants to ensure a diverse population. Data collection for this study included the researcher as the lens, semi-structured interviews, field notes, and institutional documents. Analysis of the data collected was accomplished through the constant-comparative method. In addition, open coding and axial coding were used. Trustworthiness in this study was ensured through appropriate qualitative strategies.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms were used throughout this study and are defined as follows:

**Brand:** A brand is “defined as a sign that is capable of distinguishing the goods or services of a company that can have a certain meaning for consumers both in material and immaterial terms” (Booth & Hayes, 2006, p. 44)

**College access:** College access is a comprehensive term used to describe ability to enroll in higher education. In addition, access can be related to many student and institutional characteristics that influence enrollment including financial, geographic, academic, psychological, and cultural factors (Eklund, 2009).

**College choice process:** The college choice process is the decision-making process by which a student selects a higher education institution to attend (Alfred et al., 2009).

**Enrollment management:** Enrollment management is “an organizational concept and practice of maintaining optimum size and characteristics of its student body

satisfying an ‘institutional desirability’ perspective” (Jones, Das, Huggins, & McNeely III, 2008, p.168).

**Marketing:** Marketing is the activity and process for “creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (American Marketing Association, 2014).

### **Assumptions of the Study**

This study was conducted based on the following assumptions. The first is that the participants had an understanding of the decision-making process at their institution regarding resources allocated to the marketing of the institution to affect the student college choice process. The second assumption was that the participants were able to speak about the benefits and challenges of marketing a community college. The final assumption was that the participants would respond to the interview questions openly and honestly, and would be forthright with any biases they held concerning resource allocations within their institution.

### **Limitations to the Study**

With any research, there are limiting circumstances and restrictions (Glesne, 2011). There were three limitations that were identified for this study. The first was that the vast geographical locations of community colleges within the state of Texas limited the ability of the researcher to travel to all institutions. Therefore, the study was conducted at seven community colleges in Texas. The second limitation was that the researcher did not interview all administrators in Texas who are involved in how institutional resources are allocated towards marketing for the institution to affect the college choice process, therefore limiting the perspective of all administrators involved in

marketing in Texas. A final limitation to this study is that the transferability of the findings are at the discretion of the reader.

### **Summary**

State funding for community colleges has decreased over the last thirty years, which has had a significant impact on the financial resources of community colleges (Holda, 2011). Because of the shortfall in state funding, community colleges have had to look for other ways to increase revenue, including raising tuition (Holda, 2011). However, for this strategy to be successful as a solution for the financial shortfall, community colleges must increase their enrollment. This requires them to find ways to be proficient in understanding the factors that influence the college choice process (Holda, 2011). Marketing is one of the factors that influence the college choice process that can impact enrollment. Effective marketing can help increase enrollment, which will help with the financial deficit caused by decreases in state appropriations to community colleges.

The purpose of this study was to explore how community college marketing administrators allocate institutional resources to market the institution to affect the student college choice process. Community colleges will benefit from this study because it provides information on how community college marketing administrators communicate information about the marketing mission of the institution, how administrators designate institutional resources to marketing, perceptions of marketing administrators about the benefits and challenges of marketing, and how administrators involved in marketing measure the marketing effects on the student college choice process.

### **Overview of the Remainder of the Study**

Chapter II presents a review of the literature that relates to marketing within higher education institutions, with specific focus on community colleges. Chapter III details the methodology and research design proposed for this study, while Chapter IV provides the findings of the study. Chapter V presents a discussion of the findings, implications, and recommendations for community colleges' practice, and suggestions for future research.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter presents the review of the literature on community colleges and how they use marketing to influence the college choice decision. The following topics will be discussed: 1) overview of community colleges; 2) evolution of the college choice process; 3) college choice models; 4) influencing factors in the college choice decision; 5) marketing in higher education; 6) higher education marketing administrators; and 6) the conceptual framework that guided this study.

The purpose of this study was to explore how community college marketing administrators allocate institutional resources to market the institution to affect the student college choice process. The specific foci of this study were how these administrators make decisions to allocate institutional resources for marketing; administrator perceptions of the benefits and challenges of marketing a community college; how administrators measure marketing effects on the student college choice process; and how administrators communicate information about the marketing mission of the institution.

#### **Overview of Community Colleges**

From the early 1850s to the late 1860s, university administrators perceived that universities needed a lower division of colleges, which would allow faculty to focus on research and the education of professionals (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). The solution to create more time for research was the creation of junior colleges (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). The first junior college was established in 1901 in Joliet, Illinois (Coley, 2000). During the first 10-year period following the establishment of junior colleges, their number grew from 20 to 170 (Crocker, 2014). Even with the

growth in the number of junior colleges, there were differing views about their purpose and the reasons for their growth during this time period. Some perceived that junior colleges were designed to break down educational barriers, while others perceived they were located in various regions across America to help accommodate the local industry workforce demand (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). Junior colleges experienced another era of growth between 1909 and 1919, primarily because of the community appeal and prestige an institution of higher education brought to a local community (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). Growth at junior colleges continued through the 1930s and 1940s as they began to offer occupational training (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). Junior colleges were able to offer job skills training, as well as prepare students for baccalaureate degrees (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). In addition, another change occurred during the 1940s, which was the use of the term *community college*. This term was used in the 1947 Truman Commission report, which began the shift towards the designation of two-year colleges as *community colleges* instead of *junior colleges*. During the 1950s and 1960s, the College Board became more involved with regulation of higher education and began implementing changes to help colleges manage the enrollment growth (Martinez, 2010). These changes included implementing standardized testing and admission requirements (Martinez, 2010). Community colleges now had a better understanding of their students' academic capabilities from these new requirements, which allowed them to adapt to the growth of enrollment (Cohen & Kisker, 2010).

Enrollment growth in community colleges continued into the 1970s when enrollment increased from 2.2 million to 4.3 million students (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014; Kasper, 2003). There were several possible reasons for this growth, including the fact that young men were using college as a way to escape the draft for the Vietnam War

(Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014; Kasper, 2003). Another explanation for the growth was the increase in the number of 18- to 24-year-olds because of the Baby Boom effect (an increase in the number of babies born between 1946 and 1964) following World War II (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). By 2005, community college enrollment had grown to over six million students (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). In 2013, over 12 million students attended a community college (American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), 2014).

There were many different reasons for the growth of community colleges, including prestige, economic development, and population growth, but colleges also grew because they provided academic solutions for students. According to Hoachlander, Sikora, Horn, and Carroll's (2003) study (which did not report the total number of participants), 58% of community college students said they were seeking to transfer to a four-year institution or to earn an associate's degree or certificate, 23% wanted to gain job skills, and 16% were attending for personal interest. Similarly, Voorhees and Zhou (2000) surveyed 3,002 community college students about their educational goals and their intention to attend a community college. They found that 66% of the students were seeking either a certificate or degree or transfer credit, 21% enrolled to improve job skills, and 11% were enrolled for personal interest.

### **Evolution of Enrollment Management in Community Colleges**

Due to the increase in the number of students who were seeking degrees, transfer credits, and job skills, community colleges had to adjust their organizational structure to handle the increase in admissions (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014; Coomes, 2000). According to Schultz and Lucido (2011, p. 2), "Colleges and universities found themselves in need of more formalized administrative structures to manage rising

enrollments”.

An organizational change that occurred during the 1970s was the development of enrollment management departments in colleges and universities (Coomes, 2000).

*Enrollment management* is the theory and science of maintaining the institutional size while recruiting students for the institution (Dolence, 1993). Hossler and Bean (1990) suggest there are four concepts that define enrollment management: 1) using institutional research to position the campus in the marketplace, examine the correlates to student persistence and develop appropriate marketing and pricing strategies; 2) monitoring student interests and academic program demand; 3) matching student demand with curricular offerings that are consistent with institutional mission; and 4) paying attention to academic, social, and institutional factors that affect student retention.

There are three main factors that have been the catalyst for the creation and flourishing of enrollment management in higher education: 1) awareness of the need to improve higher education access for students (Kraft, 2007); 2) growth in the number of studies of the college choice process and the factors that prompt students to enroll (Coomes, 2000; Kraft, 2007); and 3) results from predictive models that indicated there would be a decline in college enrollment because of the graduating Baby Boomers (1946-1964) (Coomes, 2000).

As enrollment management practices continued to develop, higher education institutions began in the 1980s to merge recruiting, admissions, testing, and marketing together (Henderson, 2001; Kraft, 2007). The structure of enrollment management became functional in the 1980s. Tom Huddleston, known for creating a functional enrollment management department, integrated marketing and market research into the enrollment management department at Bradley University (Henderson, 2001).

Enrollment management as a profession changed because Huddleston chose to use market research to meet the needs of the college (Henderson, 2001; Kraft, 2007). Other higher education administrators and institutions are also credited with improving the functionality of enrollment management, including Jack McGuire at Boston College, and institutions such as California State University at Long Beach, Carnegie-Mellon University, and Northwestern University (Henderson, 2001; Kraft, 2007). With the merging of recruiting, admissions, testing, and marketing together within the enrollment management department, the focus of marketing to potential students and their influencers changed from being centered on higher education campuses to demonstrating what could be offered to prospective students (Henderson, 2001; Kraft, 2007).

A trend among higher education institutions in 2014 was to focus upon the enrollment management processes at their campus (Lawlor, 2014). There were consultants, researchers, business services, and computer software to guide and assist colleges with their enrollment management processes (Lawlor, 2014; Schultz & Lucido, 2011). Even though enrollment, recruiting, and the elements that are involved in these processes are in the forefront of campus leadership's minds today, they are not new for higher education (Schultz & Lucido, 2011).

### **Evolution of the College Choice Process**

Higher education went through reorganization after the Civil War, and the catalyst for the shift included social, political, cultural, and economic factors, which ended up shaping the college choice process (Lucas, 2006). The *college choice process* is defined as the process by which a student decides “whether and where to go to college” (Bergerson, 2009, p. 2). Prior to the Civil War, the curriculum of higher education institutions was based on regional needs, so students did not have to leave home to attend

college (Lucas, 2006; Martinez, 2010). However, after the war, during the period from 1880-1920, higher education institutions began to seek ways to recruit students from outside the region, to draw them away from their homes (Martinez, 2010). During this time, students did not leave their homes readily; therefore, the college choice process was not so much about *where* to attend college, but *whether* to attend college (Lucas, 2006; Martinez, 2010).

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, high school students were poorly prepared academically for college (Lucas, 2006). By the beginning of the 1900s, colleges started to adopt admission requirements for enrollment (Martinez, 2010; Thelin, 2004). As a result of the adoption of admission requirements, respect for students who attended college grew, and students aspired to attend (Martinez, 2010; Thelin, 2004). Through the early 1900s, as students' interest in attending college grew, colleges began to reach out to the public through popular literature to reach aspiring students who wanted to attend college (Martinez, 2010).

The college choice process evolved over time from one in which students decided *whether* to attend college (Lucas, 2006; Martinez, 2010) to one in which students and family members considered a variety of factors to choose *which* college the student would attend (Kinzie et al., 2004). Between 1920 and 1940, the college experience was primarily available to children of affluent parents who aided in the college decision (Kinzie et al., 2004). After that time, the process of choosing and attending a college became more commonplace for young college students (Kinzie et al., 2004). Literature from this era communicates that factors students considered when choosing a college included curriculum offered, location of the institution, the college's policy on male and female interactions, and type of institution (e.g., Comfort, 1925; Kinzie et al., 2004).

Even though families and students attempted to be logical when choosing an institution, there were also irrational factors being considered, some of which were outdoor life, the strength of the football team, landscaping of the campus, and whether the student or parent met the dean or president (Rowe, 2002).

While many factors impacted the college choice decision, the most significant ones during this period were family and friends (Kinzie et al., 2004). The influence of family and friends was important because of the lack of information provided by colleges and universities (Kinzie et al., 2004). Even into the late 1930s, there was no principal organization providing higher education information for the family, which left parents and students to navigate the college choice process unaided by the institution (Kinzie et al., 2004).

Between 1940 and 1960, financial aid began to revolutionize higher education (Kinzie et al., 2004). Up until the 1940s, there was limited financial aid offered by colleges or universities to assist students with costs (Kinzie et al.). In 1944, the U.S. Congress passed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, also known as the G.I. Bill, in order to help "reduce postwar unemployment among returning veterans, boost college enrollments and expand access to postsecondary education" (Kinzie et al., 2004, p. 8). Between 1940 and 1960, colleges and universities faced the difficult challenge of declining enrollment due primarily to the fact that college-age men were fighting in World War II and then in the Korean War (Kinzie et al., 2004; Rudolph, 1990). As returning veterans began to consider enrolling in college, financial aid became a new factor to be considered in the college choice process (Kinzie et al., 2004; Lucas, 1994). In addition to the G.I. Bill, another important piece of financial aid legislation was the National Defense Education Act, passed in 1958 (History of Student Financial Aid,

2015). This act included funding for the National Defense Student Loan Program, the precursor for the Perkins Loan Program, which was the first federal financial aid program for low-income students (History of Student Financial Aid, 2015).

As important as financial aid became during this time period, another influencer on the college choice process was the student's parents (Martinez, 2010). Between 1940 and 1960, colleges and universities produced more marketing materials to assist students and parents with the college choice process (Bergerson, 2009; Martinez, 2010). In addition, other factors that influenced college choice included geographical location of the school and economic impact, such as cost and benefits of attending a college or university (Bergerson, 2009; Martinez, 2010).

Other influences occurred during the 15-year timespan between 1960 and 1975, which was a high point in the history of higher education because of large increases in enrollment (Jencks & Riesman, 1977; Kinzie et al., 2004). During this time, the new social norm became one in which high school graduates went through the college choice process and attended college (Kinzie et al., 2004). Beneficiaries of this new social norm were community colleges because of the opportunities they offered students graduating from high school to have an opportunity for the middle-class life style (Jencks & Riesman, 1977; Martinez, 2010). Between 1960 and 1975, women and minorities had better access to higher education, also contributing to the college choice process and enrollment growth (Levine & Nidiffer, 1996). Title IX legislation that was passed in 1972 was a main factor that contributed to the growth of women in college (Kinzie et al., 2004). The passage of this federal act led to improved access for women, because the legislation outlawed discrimination by gender (Miller, 1999). Another factor that contributed to college and university enrollment growth and the college choice process

was Guaranteed Student Loans (GSL) (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). GSL was a federal program that guaranteed bank loans made to college students to pay for their education (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). This program lowered the risk for banks and interest rates for students, making college more accessible (Cohen & Kisker, 2010).

During the 1960s and 1970s, students began to have greater access to higher education because of the G.I. Bill, Higher Education Act, Title IX, as well as open admission (Kinzie et al., 2004). *Open admission* is when a higher education institution has no academic requirements to be admitted to its campus (College Board, 2014). Through this time of increased access, the college choice decision became a process by which students and family members analyzed an array of factors to determine the student's college preference (Kinzie et al., 2004). As noted above, factors that created a more multifaceted decision were distance, cost, and academic reputation (Martinez, 2010).

Between 1975 and 1990, the college choice process changed from one primarily directed by parents to one in which students became more actively involved in choosing a higher education institution (Martinez, 2010). Some of the same factors that influenced students in previous years, such as parents, location, and cost, also influenced them during this 15-year period (Martinez, 2010). However, during the 1980s, other influences on college choice included student academic ability and significant others. In addition, colleges and universities "aggressively courted and marketed" to students more "than ever before" (Martinez, 2010, p. 30). Not only were students being inundated with marketing materials, colleges were marketing to parents as well (Kinzie et al., 2004).

A major admission policy that impacted minority and underprivileged students during this time was affirmative action, which caused colleges and universities to pursue

a better mix of ethnically underrepresented students (Miller, 1999). Affirmative action focuses on ensuring that minority students have equal access when it comes to college admissions (Miller, 1999). Following the decision in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* in 1978, which created a new path to generate diversity for college campuses, colleges and universities were able to take race into consideration when reviewing applications for admission (Kinzie et al., 2004).

Throughout the period from 1990 to 2005, there was an increase in the number of higher education institutions, which intensified competition between them (Martinez, 2010). Competition amplified the information that colleges and universities produced for students and parents to aid in the decision of choosing a college (Bergerson, 2009). The information included academic rankings, student demographics, and prestige of the institution (Bergerson, 2009).

Between 1990 and 2005, technology became increasingly influential on higher education (Reay, David, & Ball, 2005). Martinez (2010) suggests technology in higher education has had a large impact on the college choice decision. With the availability of the Internet, students and parents were able to gather information about a college or a university without having to travel (Martinez, 2010) and were able to explore many college options because of the newly available information (Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011). In addition, another significant influence on college choice between 1990 and 2005 was the growth of organizations that focused on the college choice process. During this period many businesses such as enrollment and database services were established to help higher education institutions increase their enrollment (Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011). Competition between these enrollment management services increased the amount of information students had to process through, which resulted in

students having to rely more on parents and high school counselors to comprehend the information to make informed college choice decisions (Kinzie et al., 2004).

Between 2005 and 2012, mobile devices such as Smartphones and tablet computers made a significant impact on the college choice process (Clagett, 2012). These devices now made information even more readily available to students and parents (Clagett, 2012). According to Martinez (2010), some of the largest influences on parents and students in the college choice process have come from:

...social networking sites, virtual campus tours, mobile phone updates, and related computer and mobile phone applications. Emails, texts, chats, video conferencing and distance education also have affected how students and parents receive information about potential institutions and compare them to other choices open to the student. (p. 34)

Between the years 1990 and 2014, many information delivery avenues have been added to the college choice process, such as Internet, mobile devices, and social networking websites (Lawlor, 2014). However, from the early 1800s, there have been consistent elements as well, such as parents, geographical location, and cost (Kinzie et al., 2004).

### **College Choice Models**

During the 1970s and 1980s, two different foundational types of college choice models - the econometric model and the sociological model - were developed to conceptually explain the college decision-making process (Kinzie et al., 2004). The purpose of the econometric model is to assist in predicting whether a student will choose a certain institution (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989). It is also used to determine if attending one institution economically outweighs not attending or attending

another institution (Hossler et al., 1989). The sociological model was developed to help determine what academic objectives are molded “by socioeconomic status, student academic ability, high school context, gender and the views of significant others” (Kinzie et al., 2004, p. 26). These two types of models helped build the foundation for the primary college choice models, which include the Chapman Model and the Hossler and Gallagher Model (Kinzie et al., 2004).

### **Chapman Model**

The Chapman Model for the college decision-making process was developed in 1981 by David Chapman, professor of education at State University of New York at Albany (Chapman, 1981). This model has two significant components: 1) student characteristics such as academic aspirations and performance; and 2) external influences such as significant people, fixed college characteristics, and college communication to students.

Chapman (1981) perceives that there are two different factors that impact *student characteristics*: 1) level of education aspiration, and 2) high school performance. This model supports the theory that the decision to attend college and which one to attend is dependent on student aspirations. What a student perceives he or she could accomplish influences the decision on whether to go to college.

The second student characteristic affecting the college choice decision is the high school performance of the student (Chapman, 1981). Chapman perceives that high school graduates try to gauge the college by its academic environment, “for example, the level of competition they expect to encounter, the aptitude of students they would meet, their chances of admission” (p. 494). In addition, Chapman observed that students who had academic success in high school are encouraged by teachers, family, and friends to

pursue higher education. Students who had higher academic aspirations and performed well academically in high school were more likely to go through the college choice process.

The second component of Chapman's model is *external factors*, which are significant people, fixed college characteristics, and college efforts to communicate with students. The first phase of external factors is significant people, which could include counselors, peers, teachers, and parents (Chapman). Chapman determined there are three ways that a student can be influenced by significant people: 1) comments from them about educational expectations; 2) advice from them on where to attend college; and 3) persuasion by close peers to follow them to a certain college (Chapman).

The second phase of Chapman's external factors is fixed college characteristics, which include location, cost, campus environment, and existing academic programs (Chapman, 1981). These external factors influence students toward or away from colleges. Fixed factors that Chapman (1981) perceives have an impact on students attending a particular college are cost, financial aid, location, and availability of courses.

The final phase in the external influences of Chapman's model is the higher education institution's communication with potential students (Chapman, 1981). Chapman found three elements that are important in a college or university's communication with potential students: 1) research, 2) marketing plan, and 3) new strategies. The first element of communicating with students necessitates that the institution research current and prospective students as well as the institution's market position as it relates to the regional and national higher education competition. The last two elements of communicating with students involve developing marketing plans and new ways to correspond with potential or current students. Colleges and universities

have to determine what avenues they want to take in interacting with students. For example, it could be a publication-based strategy or personal interaction with a college recruiter (Chapman, 1981).

When Chapman (1981) composed this model, he knew he had not exhausted all avenues of the college choice process; however, he perceived he had identified the major factors that impact the college choice process. Chapman perceived that colleges need to recognize the intricacies of the college choice process and reevaluate the way they attract potential students.

### **Hossler and Gallagher Model**

Hossler and Gallagher (1987) were among the first researchers to examine the college choice process. Their model outlines the college choice process in three phases: 1) predisposition, 2) search, and 3) choice. Predisposition reflects a student's future academic ambitions. Hossler and Gallagher perceive that this stage begins in seventh grade and is greatly influenced by family, peers, financial situations, academic capabilities, and potential economic benefit from a higher education degree. Within this stage, students begin to conceptualize the future self and how higher education could connect.

The second phase in Hossler and Gallagher's model is the search phase, the action part of the model. Students become involved in the research of institutions, inquiring for information, and developing their decision process (Stevenson, 2011). During this phase, the student's family learns about the cost of higher education and what type of financial support it will take for their child to attend a college (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). In addition, the student begins to rely less on the parents' information and more on peers and individuals who are associated with the colleges (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model concludes with the choice stage. The main factor for the choice phase is the attributes of the institution. Attributes of the institution that affect college choice are geographical location, academic offerings, social environment, and the reputation of prestige. The influence of parents and peers decreases during this phase, and the student begins to place greater value on the attributes of the institution in making his or her college choice. After making the decision on what institution to attend, the student completes the necessary application process and enrollment follows.

### **Influencing Factors in College Choice**

From the 1920s, when students hardly left home to attend college, through 2016, when students not only leave home to attend college, but are also actively involved in choosing which college to attend, the college choice process has evolved (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2016; Lucas, 2006; Martinez, 2010). There is an array of factors that influence a student's college choice decision. Those that were investigated are cost, economic factors, benefits, parents, siblings, and marketing.

#### **Influence of Cost on College Choice**

As consumers, individuals consider what the cost of a product is and whether its purchase has sufficient value to them (Schultz & Lucido, 2011; University Research Partners, 2013). This same concept is true of potential students as they consider colleges (Broekemier & Seshadri, 1999; Cagampang, 1992; University Research Partners, 2013). A study conducted by Broekemier and Seshadri's (1999) researched both rural and urban high schools in a Midwestern state and collected 395 surveys from high school students. They found that high school students surveyed about college choice criteria ranked cost second most important and financial aid/scholarships the most important when deciding on a college to attend. In another study, University Research Partners (2013) surveyed

2,046 parents of college-bound high school students in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Results of this study revealed that parents also ranked cost of their child's first choice as their primary concern about college.

Students and parents often misunderstand information about the cost of attending college and financial aid, and may also misunderstand who is eligible to receive financial aid (Avery & Turner, 2012). The chances of misunderstanding occur when students progress halfway through their high school career without having any information about college (Avery & Turner, 2012; Cagampang, 1992). Additionally, students who receive information about a college's tuition cost earlier in the college choice process are more likely to apply to that institution (Cabera & La Nasa, 2000; Zarate & Pachon, 2006).

### **Influence of Economic Factors on College Choice**

Economic factors also influence a student's decision about what type of educational program to enroll in (Community College Survey of Student Engagement [CCSSE], 2008; Hayden, 2000; Jimenez & Salas-Velasco, 2000; Rowe, 2002). Jimenez and Salas-Velasco (2000) report that students examine educational programs based on the length of time it will take to complete them because of monetary reasons (three-year degree versus a four-year degree).

When students examine a higher education institution, they not only examine the future economic impact on their life but also the economic assistance provided by colleges (Nurnberg, Schapiro, & Zimmerman, 2012). Nurnberg et al. (2012) conducted a study of 2,000 undergraduate students at a private university. The students reported they based some of their college choice on the financial aid package that was presented to them. Nurnberg et al.'s study also gave examples of how higher education institutions can predict the enrollment of potential students based on the financial aid the student

receives.

### **Influence of Student-Perceived Benefits of Attending College**

Farnsworth (2005) suggests that not only cost and value affect product purchase; the benefits received from the product or services are also considered. He also asserts that deciding on a college is no different from the process of choosing a service. For example, potential students evaluate what benefits or services will be available for their education during the college choice process. Perceived benefits for a college student can range from campus environment to national ranking of an academic program (Schultz & Lucido, 2011). Academic benefits for a college student can include a diverse environment, student success, athletic programs, and course availability (Schultz & Lucido, 2011).

Coleman and Hoffer (1987) conducted a study regarding the impact and benefits of a higher education institution's surrounding community on a student's education completion. The sample size and demographics of the participants of the study were not provided. The study divided the community surrounding a student into three categories: 1) physical capital, 2) human capital, and 3) social capital. Coleman and Hoffer define physical capital as quantifiable resources that produce educational attainment. Human capital refers to the individuals who are available to assist and encourage success. Social capital includes interaction and relationships between individuals such as parents, friends, peers, events, and school.

An example of physical capital is quality academics (Schultz & Lucido, 2011). Students understand that a college education is an important decision for their future, so they seek a quality academic program (Schultz & Lucido, 2011). Another academic consideration is the academic and faculty reputation, both regionally and nationally

(Briggs, 2006; Soedijati & Pratminingsih, 2011). In 2009, 56% of 450 freshmen surveyed by Burdett (2013) on a university campus mentioned academic reputation was the most influential factor. Not only were prestige, quality, and diverse environments important, but students were also interested in the academic fit. Students in the above study mentioned that when they were investigating whether they could fit in academically, they made sure no one “is too much above my range or too much below my range” (Burdett, 2013, p. 132). Another aspect of academics is the major field of study the student is interested in and whether the institution offers the particular degree (Burdett).

Another benefit that impacts a student’s decision on where to attend college is the future educational access that the institution can provide (Broekemier, 2002; Cejda & Stick, 2008). The community college is the starting point in higher education for many students, and a majority of them go on to pursue a bachelor’s degree (Broekemier, 2002; Cejda & Stick, 2008). For students moving on to four-year colleges or universities, an issue of great concern is acceptance of transfer credits by the receiving institution (Adelman, 2003; Broekemier, 2002; Cejda & Stick, 2008). Students understand that one of the benefits of attending a community college is that they are able to “formally transfer” if four-year institutions accept their credits (Adelman, 2003, p. 28).

In addition to the physical capital factors prospective students consider as they work their way through the college choice process, they also investigate human capital factors on a college campus. For example, students research the services that a college offers to determine the available benefits, such as advising, tutoring, and housing services (Cooper, 2010). Cooper investigated the services that students receive and the effect they have on recruiting students to a specific college or university. The sample size or demographics of the students were not disclosed. Cooper recognized that students are

relational and suggests a need for better relational support throughout the campus for students. In addition, she identified that potential students considered academic advising, mentoring, and peer networks when they began to make their college visits (Cooper, 2010). Human capital is needed to successfully serve students from the services that are offered on campus (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Cooper, 2010).

Finally, prospective students consider social capital factors, the third category in Coleman and Hoffer's (1987) description of the community surrounding a student. According to Ashburn (2007), athletics is one example of social capital that students consider. It impacts not only student athletes and the general student population in their choice of where to attend college, but also the morale of students on campus (Ashburn, 2007). Consumerist viewpoints of college students have altered the way they view attending college (Ashburn, 2007). Whether or not the college has athletic programs is now a significant consideration for students in deciding which institution to attend (Ashburn, 2007). Therefore, although facilities, faculty, and academic programs are significant factors that are considered when choosing a college, athletic programs also have an impact on a student's college choice (Ashburn, 2007).

### **Influence of Parents on College Choice Decisions**

As previously discussed within the college choice models, there are sociological factors that impact the college decision process for students. A major factor is a student's parents (Burdet, 2013). Not only are parents involved in the college choice process; such as visiting colleges, the application process, and other activities; but they also expect to be involved in the college choice decision (Burdet, 2013; Edelman, 2013). Edelman (2013) reports that parents are involved in their child's college selection process, the application process, orientation, moving-in, and financial commitments. Parents are a

significant influence on students because of the involvement that is necessary to enroll a student in a higher education institution (Edelman, 2013). Edelman determined from a qualitative study of six university freshman students that parents have a significant impact on students in the college choice process when they have a close relationship with their son or daughter. Edelman's study also indicated that parents not only encouraged their student to attend college, but also journeyed through the process by assisting with researching colleges. Edelman's findings supported his hypothesis that parents have a significant influence on a potential student's college choice process.

In order to accurately understand the scope of parental influence in a student's choice of college, Bateman and Hossler (1996) conducted a study that investigated the influences on the college choice process of African American and Caucasian ninth grade students. The findings in the study revealed that the number one influencer for both African American and Caucasian students was that their parents expected them to have college in their future academic plans (Bateman & Hossler, 1996). Unfortunately, the sample size and percentage findings in their study were not reported. In addition to Bateman and Hossler's research, Freeman (1999) found that not only was expectation to attend college an influencer, but encouragement from parents also motivated students to strive to extend their education to the next level.

With parents being significant influencers on students in the college choice process, higher education institutions have begun to conduct research on the characteristics of parents and ways to engage them (Noel-Levitz, 2009). Some of the ways institutions are appealing to parents are through branding, e-communication between parents, and parental involvement in their student's life (Noel-Levitz, 2009). Actions of parents who have meaningful influence on their children include assisting in

enrolling their child in SAT/ACT tests; volunteering at the school; reading letters, brochures, and viewbooks from higher education institutions; and visiting the college's website (Noel-Levitz, 2009). Colleges and universities have also found that parents who are "digitally tethered to their offspring" (Johnson, 2011, para. 3) can influence the college choice process. Since parents are such a significant part of the college choice process, colleges have developed ways to engage, communicate with, and market to the parents of potential students (Noel-Levitz, 2009).

### **Influence of Siblings on the College Choice Process**

Older siblings also play a vital role in a student's college choice process because of the experience they bring to their younger siblings (Goodman, Hurwitz, & Smith, 2014). Older college-attending siblings are helpful to their younger siblings because their parents are more familiar with the college choice process (Goodman, et al, 2014). Ceja (2006) conducted a study about siblings and parental influence on potential students in which he interviewed 20 Chicana high school students from the greater Los Angeles area. Ceja found that older siblings also assisted by describing their own experiences in deciding on an institution. For example, answering questions and providing information about the college choice process to their younger siblings, as well as serving as a sounding board for younger siblings who were navigating the college decision process.

Goodman et al. (2014) investigated the influence of one sibling's college choice on the college choice of his/her brothers or sisters and concluded that his/her influence could be a significant factor. Goodman et al. (2014) merged SAT data with the National Student Clearinghouse data to examine where high school students attended a higher education institution. The sample size included 46.1% males and 57.3% females (total sample size not provided by the author). Goodman et al. concluded that younger siblings

*apply* to the college where the older sibling is enrolled 32.9% of the time, but they actually *enrolled* at the older sibling's college 21.2% of the time. Goodman et al. also reported that Asians, Hispanics, and men were more likely to follow their older siblings to college. On the other hand, women and Caucasians were less likely to follow their siblings to college.

College and university administrators have also noticed the impact siblings have in the college choice process and are trying to find ways to leverage this relationship (Hopkins, 2012). These institutions use different resources, such as sibling discounts, marketing publications specifically aimed at family units, and family on-campus events to engage and market to siblings (Hopkins, 2012). Hopkins notes that one way colleges are utilizing their resources is by encouraging their enrolled students to influence their siblings to attend their college by offering sibling discounts. Some colleges and universities offer the enrolled student and the sibling tuition discounts ranging from \$1,000 up to \$12,000, depending on how many siblings are enrolled at the same time (Hopkins). These sibling discounts, along with tuition waivers and family grants, aid institutions in their ability to maximize their financial resources and attract more students.

### **Influence of Institutional Marketing on the College Choice Process**

According to Anctil (2008) and Ma (2012), marketing is a significant factor in the college choice process. Because parents and older siblings can be significant influencers on students as they decide what college to enroll in, higher education institutions are beginning to look for ways to market to them. Durkin, McKenna, and Cummins (2012) and Noel-Levitz (2009) suggest that parents who have significant impact on their student need to be viewed as co-purchasers by higher education institutions. A strategy that colleges and universities are using to engage parents is to create a Facebook page just for

parents, which allows prospective parents to connect with other parents of children who attend the same institution (Noel-Levitz, 2009). Other online resources colleges and universities utilize for marketing include their website, online chats, and specific parent emails to target parents of potential students (Durkin et al., 2012; Johnson, 2011).

In addition to online resources, higher education institutions are using a variety of other ways to market to parents, including financial aid and special on-campus events. Colleges and universities can use financial aid to market to parents by addressing financial aid letters directly to them (Johnson, 2011). Another way that colleges and universities have marketed to parents is by creating events for them that coincide with a potential student's campus visit or orientation (Noel-Levitz, 2009). At these events, colleges and universities have used parents of currently enrolled students to answer questions of visiting parents about the institution (Johnson, 2011). In addition, institutions have designed a faux class for parents to attend, thereby allowing colleges and universities to demonstrate and market the academic environment of that particular institution (Johnson, 2011).

Further highlighting how parents can be utilized for both marketing and recruiting, higher education institutions have discovered that legacy parents (parents who are alumni of the institution) demonstrate significant influence on a potential student's college choice (Noel-Levitz, 2009). These legacy parents are able to connect with potential parents and market the benefits of the higher education institution (Noel-Levitz, 2009). Colleges and universities have developed ways to communicate and engage with alumni, including "creating admissions advocates out of your alumni [which] can be a very simple, cost-effective way to recruit their children" (Noel-Levitz, p. 6). Higher education institutions are marketing to parents, including legacy parents, in a variety of

ways, such as promoting the benefits of the institution, providing information about the institution, and calming parents' concerns about leaving their child at a higher education institution (Taylor, 2006).

Additionally, colleges and universities have also developed strategies to market their institution to potential college students through publications, such as magazines and informational materials (Beltramini, 2009). Higher education institutions have developed publications to send to enrolled students' families periodically through the year, which simultaneously engage parents and younger siblings (Beltramini).

Colleges and universities are also using events to market the institution to siblings of enrolled students, using orientations to present the institution to prospective siblings of all ages (Wertheimer, 2007). While the older siblings are in college preparation sessions, the institution offers age-appropriate activities such as science labs, craft projects, and others for the younger children in the family (Wertheimer, 2007). These types of activities help younger siblings make meaningful connections with the educational institution, and because colleges understand the influence siblings have on other siblings, many have used orientation and similar events, such as sibling weekends, as "a marketing tool" (Wertheimer, 2007, para. 15). By using resources such as events, financial aid, and publications, higher education institutions are able to connect with the siblings of their enrolled students in meaningful ways (Beltramini, 2009; Goodman et al., 2014; Hopkins, 2012; Wertheimer, 2007).

### **Marketing in Higher Education**

Resources available for marketing of higher education institutions include both tangible and intangible resources on the campus (Alfred et al., 2009). Individuals who decide on what resources and factors to use are the administrators involved in the

marketing of higher education (Grossman, 2013). The following describes how the integration of administrators, factors, and resources influences the marketing of higher education institutions generally and community colleges in particular.

Marketing administrators investigate the college choice process influences on potential students and then create marketing avenues and strategies for the institution based on their findings (Tucciarone, 2008). A popular advertising avenue for higher education institutions is the use of social media (Peruta, Ryan, & Engelsman, 2013). Social media is described as a new generation of Internet application, which allows the user to create the content and connect with other individuals using the application (Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011). Social media applications include blogs, online communities, social networks, and online bulletin boards (Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011). Social media and other web applications are becoming crucial for higher education institutions (Peruta et al., 2013).

During the Spring 2010, Constantinides and Zinck Stagno (2011) surveyed 403 students in their last two years of high school about their use of social media. They found that 95.1% of the students surveyed maintained a social media profile, and 77.5% of students logged in at least once per day. Colleges and universities are understanding students' activities on social media and are placing more of their focus on social networking, because of its influence on potential students (Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011). According to Constantinides and Zinck Stagno (2011), students investigating higher education institutions expect to see blogs and discussion forums. Because social media is a user-driven marketing tool, colleges need to have strategies to “stimulate influential individuals and brand advocates to provide comments and reviews in university-sponsored forums” (Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011, p. 21). Further,

Constantinides and Zinck Stagno suggest that colleges need to evaluate their social media strategies because:

... simple presence in the social media space is not enough for successful higher education marketing. Recruitment officers should actively and continuously engage with social media in their promotional mix, understand the online behavior of potential students, and accept that the customer is a powerful partner in the social relationship. Strong institutional commitment is very important and university marketers must be willing to allocate resources to this form of communication. (p. 21)

A challenge created by social media that higher education institutions must address is interaction with students (Davis, Deil-Amen, Rios-Aguilar, & González, 2015). Higher education institutions' interactions with students through social media is a one-sided conversation. Institutions need to create a solution to "facilitate multiway" interaction with students (Davis et al., 2015, p. 7). Institutions must find ways to assist potential students by initiating the conversation through social media, and one way is by having enrolled students compose blogs on the institution's official website (Davis et al., 2015). Higher education institutions are still trying to find ways to change the online communication trend to a two-sided conversation (Davis et al., 2015).

### **Marketing of Community Colleges**

Community colleges have only been actively marketing since the 1980s, when the decline in the number of high school graduates began to impact enrollment (Brannick, 1987; Clagett, 2012). Community colleges began to view their students as customers and their curriculum and programs as products (Clagett, 2012), and developed a recruiting strategy that consisted of "market information, competitor analyses, survey findings, and

qualitative data” (Clagett, 2012, p. 51). The objective for community college marketing is to persuade a specific audience that it must “invest in (buy) a product and/or service” (Tucciarone, 2008, p. 76). Community colleges find success and enrollment growth through their measures to collect and analyze data that is then converted into a marketing plan (Clagett, 2012).

In order to effectively market to a target audience, community colleges must first investigate and gather data of their current and potential students (Tucciarone, 2008). Clagett (2012) suggests that marketing for these institutions is based on data gathering from three different sources: 1) surveys, 2) focus groups, and 3) other alternative ways to gather data. Community colleges utilize survey results to determine their position in the marketplace they are serving and competing in (Clagett). In addition, these institutions gather data through qualitative research focus groups, which provide insight about desirability of the college, institutional website preferences, social media engagement, and publication projects, among other things (Clagett, 2012; Nickels & Marriott, 2006). Another method one community college used to collect data was to allow students to take pictures of what they enjoyed and disliked about the college they attended (Clagett, 2012). The community college students took 449 pictures with this activity, then gathered together and explained in a group why they took the picture and whether it represented enjoyment or dislike of their campus experience. The institution was able to take the enjoyable moments and the moments of dislike and use that data to help formulate a marketing strategy for future students. In addition, marketing administrators use both positive and negative feedback from across the campus to create the marketing plan for their institution (Potter, 2012).

Once the data that has been gathered is analyzed, the community college can decide if it wants to do mass or target marketing (Lewison & Hawes, 2007; Tucciarone, 2008). Mass marketing allows colleges a cost advantage because of low cost production and cost effective distribution of marketing materials and other marketing strategies (Franklin, 2012; Lewison & Hawes, 2007). On the other hand, mass marketing has some weaknesses, such as being vulnerable to other institutions who use target marketing, limited options for marketing to specific demographics, and lower satisfaction scores among individuals who experience the marketing (Lewison & Hawes, 2007). Target marketing allows colleges to engage specific students by segmenting them based on different factors (Lewison & Hawes, 2007; Stanton, 2013). Segmentation of markets can be based on demographic, geographic, behavioral, and psychographic variables, which allows higher education institutions to advertise to the type of student that meets their strategic plan (Lewison & Hawes, 2007; Stanton, 2013).

The general message of community colleges is that the potential benefits of attending their college include increased salary, job security, job skills, career mobility, and higher quality of life (Tucciarone, 2008). Community colleges must craft their advertising message in such a way that they gain the attention of prospective students, such as by demonstrating that the product or service coincides with students' needs and wants (Tucciarone, 2008).

Tucciarone (2008) found that community colleges have to investigate what motivates students in order to develop a marketing strategy that can be used to persuade them to attend their college. Students can be motivated through a variety of advertising avenues, including billboards, newspapers, magazines, television, and radio (Claggett, 2012; Tucciarone, 2008). Some community colleges have found ways to create unique

advertising campaigns (Clagett, 2012; Tucciarone, 2008). Tucciarone (2008) reported that a college in a southern state in the U.S. advertised on a NASCAR car, and this institution extended its campaign to quick oil-change shops where it provided an opportunity for students to register for classes. Other institutions have used public transportation as a path to advertise their college (Tucciarone, 2008). Another unique college advertising campaign created a partnership with Mountain Dew, in which Mountain Dew printed the college's information on the side of their cans in the college's region (Tucciarone, 2008). Although Tucciarone (2008) documented various creative advertising ideas colleges have used, results and findings from the advertising were not documented.

Community colleges need a marketing strategy that includes the institution's long-term goals (Tokuhama, 2011). A component of long-term goals related to a marketing strategy is the institution's implementation and management of its brand (Tokuhama, 2011). Hayes (2007) explains the importance of branding for higher education institutions:

...branding is important to set a specific institution apart from other colleges and universities. Successful branding efforts are introspective and build from data analysis. A brand is a promise made to constituents. Brand builders must keep the promise if the brand is to be successful. The effort to make the institution relevant and distinctive has become crucial to survival. (p. 930)

Structuring a brand can involve many different aspects, including image, language, and identity (Lowrie, 2007; Tokuhama, 2011). When colleges are creating and promoting their brand, they have to consider how students want to portray their higher

education institution to their friends, families, and peers, because a segment of students chooses a college based on the lifestyle it projects to their peer circle (Tokuhama, 2011). Another aspect to be considered is the language of the brand (Lowrie, 2007). As community colleges structure their brand, they need to evaluate how the language of their brand communicates in their community (Lowrie, 2007). Further, community colleges need to evaluate how their brand articulates the college's identity inside and outside their region (Lowrie).

### **Resources for Marketing**

Higher education institutions have many different resources they can dedicate to the marketing of their institution. Some of these resources include human resources, technology, organizational structure, and reputation (Alfred et al., 2009; Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014; Kirp, 2003). However, many higher education institutions are having difficulties with financial resources and the burden that this creates across the campus (Alfred et al., 2009). Limited resources create financial stress, understaffed departments, stress on the faculty, and underdeveloped departments (Edwards, 2011; Katsinas et al., 2008; Zeidenberg, 2008).

A primary resource for marketing higher education institutions is the human resources of the organization (Alfred et al., 2009). Institutions find ways to improve and grow their student population when they find the correct people for the correct positions who know effective ways to market their institution (Kirp, 2003). For example, Kirp explained that Arcadia University began growing when they hired enrollment management staff members with the correct job skills, such as understanding how to connect with students and having experience related to the job description, which helped enrollment flourish.

Community colleges can also utilize technology as a resource to market to potential students. Prior research indicates that potential students are influenced when an institution has invested in up-to-date technology for the campus (e.g., Alfred et al., 2009; Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). Luzer (2014) and Maslowsky (2013) encourage institutions to invest in technology, because their research shows higher education institutions do not invest in technology. This includes having a sufficient amount of broadband for wireless Internet for students, computer labs with the most recent software, and other technology devices available to students (Alfred et al., 2009; Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). Institutions also can use their campuses to create and market experiences so that potential students find the institution attractive and appealing (Johnson, 2011).

In addition to the tangible resources higher education institutions have available to devote to marketing, they also have intangible resources, which include organizational structure, time, systems, and reputation (Alfred et al., 2009; Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). The organizational structure and system of a community college can impact how the institution reaches and engages potential students (Alfred et al., 2009; Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). Another intangible resource is the time a community college devotes towards marketing the institution (Alfred et al., 2009). Finally, the prestige and reputation of a higher education institution impacts how it is able to market to prospective students (Alfred et al., 2009; Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014).

Community colleges find ways to use their resources or increase resources on their campus to have an influence on the college choice process of potential students (Alfred et al., 2009; Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014; Kirp, 2003). However, in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, community colleges struggle from financial pressures to be able to have and provide resources to students (Edwards, 2011; Zeidenberg, 2008).

A resource that is affected by financial burdens is human resources. Limited financial resources can leave departments understaffed (Edwards, 2011). For example, Edwards (2011) received 294 responses to a survey of counseling professionals employed by community colleges, and one finding from the survey was that counseling departments are financially stressed, under-resourced, and understaffed. Another stress on community colleges' human resources is the faculty, and one of the reasons is these colleges' inability to compete with four-year colleges and universities in terms of faculty pay (Zeidenberg, 2008). Therefore, faculty have less compensation and larger work demands, which creates resource stress on a community college campus (Zeidenberg, 2008).

A majority of community colleges' financial resources are generated from tuition, as well as state and local funding. Therefore, community colleges have to adapt to fluctuations in those revenue sources, which impacts what monetary funds will be available for the academic year (Zeidenberg, 2008). The financial resource stress impacts the whole landscape of community colleges (Katsinas et al., 2008). Unfortunately, rural community colleges are a demographic of community colleges that face the most financial burden (Katsinas et al.). A main reason is that states have "failed to fully fund their community college funding formulas" in consecutive years (p. 4). Community colleges of all sizes are having to find ways to adapt to financial burdens, lack of resources, being understaffed, and not being able to provide campus-wide quality services.

### **Higher Education Marketing Administrators**

Administrative supervision of campus marketing is not new; upper administrative management of marketing has been prevalent for many decades (Grossman, 2013). In

the 1910s and 1920s, Harvard University and Columbia University were losing students to the rural universities of Yale and Princeton (Grossman, 2013). Administrators involved with marketing at Harvard and Columbia decided to deemphasize academic merit and market the institution towards wealth, class, and religion (Grossman, 2013). By the 1930s, higher education administrators involved with marketing had to make decisions on what advertising medium they were going to use for their institution (Larson, 2013). In the 1940s and 1950s, administrators involved in marketing needed to plan for the G.I. Bill (Kinzie et al., 2004). This legislation created an opportunity for more individuals who served in the military to receive monetary aid for higher education (Kinzie et al., 2004), therefore creating a scenario where institutions needed leadership to market their institution to a new population of prospective students.

Administrators involved with marketing during the 1960s and 1970s were focused on advertising degree programs that would assist potential students in gainful employment in skilled labor positions (U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2012). During the 1980s and 1990s, state funding declined because of other state funding needs such as healthcare, welfare, and prison construction (Karcher, 2011). The attempts by higher education institutions to increase enrollment during this time were a catalyst for integrating business models into their marketing (Karcher, 2011). The administrators perceived that they needed to make up the decrease in funding by increasing the enrollment of students and therefore adopted business-marketing models to do so (Ancil, 2008).

Another catalyst that encouraged marketing administrators to have commercialized thinking was private, for-profit higher education institutions (Ancil, 2008). Private, for-profit institutions began to market online classes, which provided

students flexibility in their education (Anctil, 2008). Administrators involved in marketing during the 1980s and 1990s began to use commercialized marketing models to create niches in the higher education marketplace to influence the college choice process (Kirp, 2003). Through the late 1990s and into the 2000s, the Internet had a significant marketing impact on higher education, and it became essential for administrators involved in marketing to understand online marketing (Karcher, 2011).

In addition to the challenges marketing administrators faced in incorporating online marketing in their marketing strategies, they faced challenges creating value for their stakeholders, which were “prospective students, current students, alumni, employers of graduates, and financial supporters” in higher education (Lewison & Hawes, 2007, p. 15). A marketing plan is created when marketing leadership integrates their stakeholders with the institutional marketing tasks (Clagett, 2012). The integration is created through communication, which goes throughout the institution to create support for the marketing plan (Cann & George 2003). Integrated in a community college marketing plan are the institution’s enrollment management goals, continuing education goals, goals of other campus departments, and broad institutional goals (Clagett). Administrators have the best success at attracting potential students when they are able to connect students’ compelling emotions with rational arguments about the benefits of enrolling in college (Tucciarone). To accomplish objectives for the institution, marketing leadership must be able to stimulate wants and create feelings for potential students (Tucciarone, 2008). Marketing administrators must be able to set a vision and find new ways to create niches in the academic marketplace (Kirp, 2003).

Community college marketing administrators are responsible for designing a marketing plan, casting the marketing vision, and creating value for stakeholders

(Clagett, 2012; Kirp, 2003; Lewison & Hawes, 2007). Additionally, these individuals have to manage the marketing vision and campaigns (Clagett, 2012). Another responsibility marketing leadership handle is the administration of the social media for the institution (Peruta et al., 2013). The use of social media on a higher education campus has had rapid growth, but it has also created difficulties for marketing leadership (Peruta et al., 2013). More departments on campus are using social media sites to promote their programs and events, which is troublesome for marketing leadership on campus who oversee the institution's marketing and must keep the marketing message uniform across the institution (Peruta et al., 2013). For that reason, social media guidelines have been created for all departments on campus to follow (Peruta et al., 2013). The guidelines insure that the institution's marketing message and branding are consistent across all marketing platforms (Peruta et al., 2013).

Marketing administrators also utilize facilities and properties at higher education institutions to market to prospective students (Johnson, 2011). Johnson (2011) discussed how colleges have developed their welcome centers to create a hospitable atmosphere for potential students and their families. College administrators make sure the first campus building families enter is easy to get to, with ample parking and a hospitality area stocked with complimentary food and drinks (Johnson, 2011).

Finally, marketing administrators who lead the advertising initiatives at their institution have the responsibility of gathering data and measuring the effectiveness of the marketing campaign (Clagett, 2012). Some community colleges use qualitative and quantitative methods to determine the success of the marketing to prospective students (Absher & Crawford, 1996; Clagett, 2012). Strategies include focus groups with potential students about institutional publications, as well as advertising metrics (Absher

& Crawford, 1996; Brannick, 1987; Clagett, 2012). Hrabowski, Suess, Dillon, and Grajeck (2012) encourage more analytics because they reported that there is a lack of analytics used by higher education. However, metrics are quick responses to Internet advertising, as well as the click-through rates from social media websites (Clagett, 2012). Throughout the process, the marketing leadership is evaluating and determining whether or not the measurements are aligning with the goals and objectives the marketing department wants to accomplish (Clagett).

### **Conceptual Framework of the Study**

The conceptual framework of a research study “is the underlying structure, the scaffolding or frame” of the study (Merriam, 2009, p. 66). In addition, the conceptual framework “shapes the types of questions asked, [and] informs how data are collected and analyzed” (Creswell, 2014, p. 65). The conceptual framework that was used to guide this study is based on institutional capacity, which is “how well a college performs” (Alfred et al., 2009, p. 77). Included within college performance are tangible and intangible resources that a higher education institution might use to influence the college choice process of a potential student (Alfred et al.). According to Alfred et al., community colleges’ use of tangible and intangible resources can have a significant impact on the marketing of their institution. Tangible factors to be considered include money, human resources, facilities, and technology, which community colleges use in marketing to influence the college choice process (Alfred et al., 2009). Intangible factors that must be considered include the culture, organizational structure, and reputation of the campus, all which help to shape the marketing and promotion efforts of the institution (Alfred et al.).

### **Tangible Resources**

The tangible resources that colleges and universities have available to use in attempting to influence a prospective student's view of the institution include money, facilities, human resources, and technology (Alfred et al., 2009; Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). The first of those, the revenue resources, are a significant factor for community colleges to influence the college choice process, because the amount of financial resources will dictate how community colleges will be able to market their institution (Edwards, 2011; Zeidenberg, 2008). Community colleges drew their tangible revenue resources in 2013 from tuition (28.9%), state appropriations (28.5%), local governments (17.8%), federal government (15.1%), and other revenue streams (9.9%) (AACC, 2015). In addition to financial resources, the facilities and properties of community colleges are tangible resources that can be used to influence a prospective student's opinion about a college. Students expect to receive at a community college the same "amenities they would receive at a residential four-year college" (Alfred et al., 2009, p. 81).

Human resources are another tangible resource that can be used by community colleges to affect the college choice of potential students. Human resources are essential for community colleges because acquiring and retaining qualified individuals is difficult due to the demand for highly skilled employees in the job market (Alfred et al., 2009; Cohen et al, 2014). Sought-after job skills include the use of technology and understanding current trends (Alfred et al., 2009). Successful colleges will know how to attract, develop, and retain quality staff and faculty members who understand trends and the use of technology (Alfred et al.; Cohen et al, 2014). In addition, successful colleges with qualified human resources aid institutions in attracting students.

The final tangible resource for community colleges is technology, which can be used to reach both enrolled and potential students (Alfred et al., 2009). Community colleges have to decide whether they should purchase, develop in-house, or outsource all technology functions on their campus to influence the college choice process (Alfred et al., 2009).

### **Intangible Resources**

The other element of institutional capacity is intangible resources, which include people, culture, organizational structure, time, systems, and reputation (Alfred et al., 2009; Kirp, 2003). Factors that categorize people as an intangible resource are knowledge, experience, competency, and culture (Alfred et al., 2009). Successful colleges hire the right people to fit their culture and then mentor these new employees through the first year of employment. Community colleges look for individuals who have the knowledge, experience, competency, and culture to assist potential college students to enroll in their institution.

Culture comprises another intangible resource for community colleges, which dictates the attitude that employees have while performing their responsibilities and interacting with students (Alfred et al., 2009). Alfred et al. (2009) suggest that the difficulty for community colleges is to maintain or change the culture in the direction the leadership directs.

Another intangible resource for community colleges is the organizational structure, which is how employees are “deployed and their function in the organization [which] has a lot to do with performance” (Alfred et al., 2009, p. 93). In addition, time is an intangible resource. Community colleges that find success are able to harmonize across the campus to collaborate toward the set goals of the institution in a timely

manner, such as growth of enrollment through the college choice process (Alfred et al., 2009).

Alfred et al. (2009) categorizes systems, policies, and processes as an intangible resource for community colleges, which creates an environment to improve collaboration and performance. Successful community colleges create systems, policies, and processes that allow employees to take ownership of the institutional goals they are trying to achieve. The final intangible resource for community colleges is their reputation, which is achieved when stakeholders place resources in initiatives that increase or improve the status of the institution (Alfred et al., 2009).

### **Summary**

Since the establishment of the first community college in Joliet, Illinois in 1901, there has been a need to fill the classrooms in educational programs with students and provide quality educational curriculum. During the 1970s, enrollment management departments emerged on college and university campuses to influence and manage prospective college students. The most significant variables that influenced the college student choice process included college cost, perceived benefits, parents, siblings, and campus marketing. Because of the demonstrated influence marketing has on the college choice process, marketing has developed into a necessity for community colleges.

Marketing has become highly sophisticated for higher education institutions, placing pressure on institutional leadership to consider how their tangible and intangible resources are designated for the marketing of the institution. Marketing for higher education began to integrate data gathering to improve their marketing strategies to influence the college choice process. Marketing strategies for community colleges have developed into billboards, newspapers, magazines, television, radio, social media, and

other digital marketing avenues. Marketing administrators' responsibilities have developed into balancing the institutions value for prospective students, current students, alumni, employers, and financial supporters. The following chapter, Chapter III, will present the methodology and research design used for this study.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter presents the methodology and research design that were used to conduct this study. The purpose of this study was to explore how community college marketing administrators allocate institutional resources to market the institution to affect the student college choice process. The specific foci of this study were how marketing administrators communicate information about the marketing mission of the institution, how these administrators make decisions to allocate institutional resources for marketing, administrator perceptions of the benefits and challenges of marketing a community college, and how administrators measure marketing effects on the student college choice process.

#### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by four research questions:

1. How do community college marketing administrators communicate information about the marketing mission of the institution?
2. How do community college marketing administrators determine how to allocate institutional resources for marketing their institution?
3. Based on the perceptions and experiences of community college marketing administrators, what are the benefits and challenges of marketing community colleges?
4. How do community college marketing administrators measure the effect of institutional marketing on student college choice?

#### **Research Design**

## **Establishing the Paradigm**

A paradigm is a “framework or philosophy of science that makes assumptions about the nature of reality and truth” (Glesne, 2011, p. 5). It is the foundation of what questions to explore and actions to take as they relate to research (Glesne, 2011). The paradigm through which this study was conducted was social constructivism. The foundation of the social constructivist paradigm is to try to understand individuals and the world they exist in (Creswell, 2014; Glesne, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that social constructivism is when “the investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the ‘findings’ are *literally created* [emphasis added] as the investigation proceeds” (p. 111). The objective of a constructivist inquiry is to rely as much as possible on the participants to explain their views during the research (Creswell, 2014), through the use of expansive and broad-spectrum questions to gather data (Creswell, 2014).

Data viewed through a constructivist paradigm concerns interaction among individuals and shows context for how the participants live and interact together (Creswell, 2014), therefore illuminating the reader of the study on the historical and cultural context of the participants (Creswell, 2014), which can be done through a qualitative methodology.

Qualitative research assists in understanding how individuals translate their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what implications they attribute to their experiences (Merriam, 2011). Data gathered by qualitative researchers can vary from specific details to a wide range of themes (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Glesne, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, qualitative researchers gather data and translate the meaning that individuals bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). A

benefit of qualitative research is the opportunity it presents to conduct face-to-face interviews, which enable the researcher to gather information and conduct research within the context of the natural setting (Creswell, 2014). This qualitative study, conducted through the lens of the social constructivist paradigm, enabled the researcher to explore and understand how community college marketing administrators allocate institutional resources to market the institution to affect the student college choice process.

### **Type of Study**

This qualitative study was conducted using a collective case study research design (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2013). Collective case study is based on gathering data from multiple cases (Merriam, 2009; Glesne, 2011). It focuses on evaluation, in which the researcher does exhaustive analysis of a case, which can be an activity, program, process, or one or more individuals (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995). A benefit of using case study design is that it allows researchers to combine activities and collect detailed material using a myriad of collection techniques over a certain time period (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2013). In addition, a case study approach enables readers to interpret the description provided and then apply their interpretation to other settings (Rossman & Ralis, 2003). The type of case study design used in this study was collective case study. A collective design allows researchers to combine qualitative data across multiple cases (Merriam, 2009). Collective case study design allows the researcher to use in-depth analysis and display different perspectives (Creswell, 2014) related to the different ways community college administrators allocate resources to market their institution to affect the student college choice process.

### **Study Setting**

The setting of a study describes where the researcher decides to conduct the study and who the participants are (Glesne, 2011). The settings for this study were seven public community colleges located in the state of Texas. The profiles of the study institutions follow.

**Community College A** is located in the South Plains region of Texas. According to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014), it is a public, small-sized, rural-serving college. The enrollment of the college in Fall 2014 was 2,069 (THECB, 2014). During Fall 2013 (the latest period for which data are available), there were 58 full-time faculty and 37 part-time faculty, which created a faculty-to-student ratio of 27:1 (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System [IPEDS], 2014). According to IPEDS, during the 2013 academic year, there were 32.2% full-time students and 67.8% part-time students (IPEDS, 2014). The student population in Fall 2014 was 55.0% White, 32.3% Hispanic, 8.2% African American, 1.5% Other, and 2.1% International (THECB, 2014). In 2013, the three-year graduation rate for Community College A was 35.2% (THECB, 2014). The marketing department has two individuals working in the department with a marketing budget of .005% of the overall institutional budget.

**Community College B** is located in the Northwest region of the Rolling Plains of Texas. The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014) classifies this institution as a public, small-sized, rural-serving college. The enrollment of the college in Fall 2014 was 2,989 (THECB, 2014). During Fall 2013 (the latest period for which data are available), there were 83 full-time faculty and 67 part-time faculty, which created a faculty-to-student ratio of 21:1 (IPEDS, 2014). In Fall 2013 there were 64% part-time students, as well as

36% full-time students (IPEDS, 2014). The enrollment by ethnicity for this institution for the Fall 2014 was White, 65.4%; Hispanic, 18.7%; African American, 10.0%; Other, 3.8%; and no international students (THECB, 2014). In 2013, the three-year graduation rate was 28.0% (THECB 2014). This institution has one individual working in its marketing department, and the marketing budget is \$55,000.

**Community College C** is located in the South Plains and Eastern edge of the Permian Basin region of Texas. This community college is described as a public, medium-sized, rural-serving college by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014). The enrollment for Fall 2014 was 3,775 (THECB, 2014). During Fall 2013 (the latest period for which data are available), there were 137 full-time faculty and 75 part-time faculty, which created a faculty-to-student ratio of 15:1 (IPEDS, 2014; THECB, 2014). In Fall 2013, there were 73% part-time students and 27% full-time students (IPEDS, 2014). The enrollment by ethnicity for this institution for the Fall 2013 was White, 48.5%; Hispanic, 43.2%; African American, 4.6%; Other, 2.2%; and International, 0.4% (THECB, 2014). In 2013, the three-year graduation rate was 23.3% (THECB, 2014). This institution has four individuals working in the marketing department. The marketing budget was \$27,350 for the academic year at the time of this study. Therefore, the marketing budget made up .0007% of the overall institutional budget at the time of this study.

**Community College D** is a community college district (with eight campuses) located in a city with high population density in the North Central Plains region of Texas. The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014) classifies the institution as a large-sized, urban-serving public college. The enrollment of the college in Fall 2014 was 64,854 (THECB,

2014). During Fall 2013 (the latest period for which data are available), there were 1,048 full-time faculty and 2,053 part-time faculty, which created a faculty-to-student ratio of 20.8:1 (IPEDS, 2014; THECB, 2014). In Fall 2013, there were 77.2% part-time students and 22.9% full-time students (THECB, 2014). The enrollment by ethnicity for this institution for Fall 2013 was Hispanic, 35.6%; African American, 23.7%; White, 22.8%; Other, 4.3%; and International, 7.1% (THECB, 2014). In 2014, the three-year graduation rate was 9.9% (THECB, 2014). The marketing department that represents the entire district has a budget of \$1.5 million, which is .0039% of the overall district budget. In addition, this institution has 18 individuals working in the marketing department for the district.

**Community College E** is a four-year public institution, which is located in the Permian Basin region of Texas. The college primarily issues associates degrees. It has the designation of a four-year public institution, as it is one of three community colleges in the state of Texas that offers baccalaureate degrees. The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014) classifies the institution as a small four-year institution, which has primarily nonresidential students. The enrollment of the college in Fall 2014 was 4,618 (IPEDS, 2014). During Fall 2013 (the latest period for which data are available), there were 130 full-time faculty and 147 part-time faculty, which created a faculty-to-student ratio of 17:1 (IPEDS, 2014). In the Fall 2013 there were 66% part-time students and 34% full-time students (THECB, 2014). The enrollment by ethnicity for this institution for Fall 2013 was 46.2 % Hispanic, 40.6% White, 6.5% African American, 3.9% Other, and 0.3% International (THECB, 2014). In 2014, the three-year graduation rate was 18 % (THECB,

2014). This institution has a marketing budget of \$265,000, which is a .0064% of the college's overall budget, and has eight individuals working in the marketing department.

**Community College F** is a two-year public institution, which is located in the Panhandle of Texas. The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014) classifies the institution as a small, two-year rural-serving institution. The enrollment of the college in Fall 2014 was 1,348 (IPEDS, 2014). During Fall 2013 (the latest period for which data are available), there were 38 full-time faculty and 69 part-time faculty, which created a faculty-to-student ratio of 17:1 (IPEDS, 2014). In the Fall 2013 (the latest data available), there were 77% part-time students and 23% full-time students (THECB, 2014). The enrollment by ethnicity for this institution for Fall 2013 was White, 58.2%; Hispanic, 33%; African American, 4.2%; Other, 3.9%; and International, 0.2% (THECB, 2014). In 2013, the three-year graduation rate was 17.1% (THECB, 2013). This institution has one individual working in the marketing department with a budget that is less than two percent of the overall budget.

**Community College G** is a two-year public institution, which is located in the Permian Basin of Texas. The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014) classifies the institution as a medium-sized two-year institution, which is rural serving. The enrollment of the college in Fall 2014 was 5,059 (THECB, 2014). During Fall 2013 (the latest period for which data are available), there were 126 full-time faculty and 190 part-time faculty, which created a faculty-to-student ratio of 17:1 (IPEDS, 2014). In the Fall 2013 (the latest data available), there were 96% part-time students and 4% full-time students (THECB, 2014). The enrollment by ethnicity for this institution for Fall 2013 was

Hispanic, 57.8%; White, 29.8%; Other, 6.1%; African American, 3.9%; and International, 0.9% (THECB, 2014). In 2013, the three-year graduation rate was 16.6% (THECB, 2014). The marketing department has 10 employees, and their budget is less than one percent of the overall budget.

### **Participants and Sampling**

The participants in research studies are the individuals who are being studied (Merriam, 2009). The participants in this study were community college marketing administrators who were involved in marketing. Inclusion criteria for the participants were that they were full-time administrators who were directly involved with marketing of their community college; they must have had three years of experience in higher education marketing; and they must have had a role in the decision-making process of how marketing funds are allocated.

Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants for this study. Purposeful sampling is utilized to identify individuals who reflect the situation or interest of the research (Merriam, 2009). It is used by researchers to select a sample that they want to discover, understand, and gain insight from so the investigator can learn as much as possible about the research topic (Merriam, 2009). In addition, the eight participants in this study were selected based on maximum variation, which is used to identify participants with the “widest possible range of the characteristics of interest for the study” (Merriam, 2009, p. 79).

### **Data Collection**

Data collection is defined as the process of accumulating and evaluating information of interest (Responsible Conduct of Research, 2005). Data collection in qualitative research is described as “asking, watching, and reviewing” the activities and

behaviors of the individuals being studied (Merriam, 2009, p. 85). Merriam (2009) outlines three steps for data collection: 1) setting the boundaries for the study; 2) using the data collection tools of interviews and documents; and 3) establishing how the data was recorded.

Boundaries provide the inclusion or exclusion criteria for a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study was bounded by the study settings and the participants. Setting boundaries included the study was conducted at seven community colleges in Texas. Participant boundaries included that all eight participants were the marketing administrators at their institutions, they all had a minimum of three years of marketing experience, and had a minimum of three years of decision-making experience related to the financial resources that are allocated toward the marketing of the institution to affect the student college choice process.

Within these boundaries, qualitative research attempts to answer the *how* and *why* questions of a social experience and give meaning to it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). Data collection tools used in qualitative research include the lens of the researcher, interviews, observations, field notes, reflexive journaling, and documents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). These tools are used to find the answers of how and why.

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). Interviews are encounters between individuals where one person gathers information from another person/persons (Merriam, 2009). Observations in qualitative research provide context through specific incidents and behaviors that can be used as indication points for additional interviews (Merriam, 2009). Field notes are the written notes of the researcher of his observations of the participants'

activities and behaviors during the interviews (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009).

Reflexive journaling is also a data collection tool used in qualitative research. A reflexive journal is where the researcher documents his emotions, perceptions, biases, and research approach throughout the conduction of the study. The reflexive journal allows the researcher to reflect on the process of research while he is conducting the research (Glesne, 2011). Documents provide material and background about the research topic and can be visual, digital, and physical materials applicable to the study (Merriam, 2009).

Documents are not usually created for research purposes and, therefore, have fewer limitations than interviews or observations (Merriam, 2009). In addition, documents do not “intrude upon or alter the setting in ways that the presence” of a researcher might (Merriam, 2009, p. 139). The data collection tools used in this study were the lens of the researcher, semi-structured interviews, field notes, reflexive journaling, and documents.

Semi-structured interviews allow for extended discussion between the interviewer and interviewee on topics or information related to the research (Merriam, 2009).

Interviews can be conducted face-to-face or through the telephone, and contain open-ended questions, which are used to gather opinions from the participants (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). During the interview, there might be instances to stray from the interview guide for supplementary inquiry or to clarify a statement (Merriam, 2009).

This is done in an effort to confirm that all viewpoints and questions during the interview are accurate and understood by the interviewee (Merriam, 2009).

Field notes and reflexive journaling were both used as data collection tools in this study. As noted previously, field notes are the written notes of the researcher of his observations during the participant interviews (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009).

Reflexive journaling allowed the researcher to document his emotions, perceptions,

biases, and research approaches throughout the conduction of the study (Glesne, 2011).

Documents were also analyzed as part of the data collection process in this study.

Marketing plans from the study institution were reviewed.

A research protocol is a detailed plan of the study (Glesne, 2011). A research protocol was developed and used throughout this study to ensure the quality and rigor of the research process (Glesne, 2011). To provide structure for the interview process, Creswell (2014) recommends that an interview guide be assembled that contains explicit questions to assist the researcher with thoughts, compiling notes during the questions, and staying focused on the study's research questions (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). Such an interview guide was constructed for this study.

In qualitative research there is an element of flexibility and shifting for the researcher during the data collection process (Creswell, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and the interview protocol developed for this study aided with the flexibility (Merriam, 2009). An interview protocol is a list of questions or issues created by the researcher to structure the interview (Merriam, 2009). After the basic interview questions are established, the researcher can create his or her questions for the semi-structured interview protocol (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). Following the interview protocol, the researcher collects responses to the questions, then inquires with follow-up questions during the interview, examines interviewee's viewpoints, and concludes by constructing the individual's reality from the research scenario (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An individual's reality allows interpretations made by the researcher that "are drawn directly from actual circumstances, events, behaviors, and expressed sentiments as played out daily by people in the context of their work" (Sirotnik, 1989, p. 95).

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is the process of taking apart the data, in addition to putting the data back together (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2003). Within a qualitative study, data collection and analysis may be intermingled if they happen simultaneously (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2014). There are five different strategies that may be used for case study data analysis (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2003). These strategies include linking data to propositions, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2003). Linking data to propositions is matching different parts of research from the same case to a common theme within the research (Yin, 2003), while explanation building is explaining why one aspect of the research occurred instead of another factor (Yin, 2003). Time-series analysis assumes that systematic patterns occur within data to show trend and seasonality (Yin, 2003). Logic models refer to the logical relationship between the resources and activities of the research (Yin, 2003). Cross-case synthesis is used for validity and a method to study multiple cases (Yin, 2003).

In a qualitative study there is a committed focus to relate the data that is gathered and analyzed to the research questions that guide the research (Yin, 2003). Throughout data-gathering and analysis, the research questions have an integral role in directing the analysis (Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) recommends using the research questions as a guide to help with focused analysis, making sure the research is concentrated on the correct facts and ensuring confidence in findings. Baxter and Jack (2008) suggest guarding against reporting data independently, but instead to focus on converging the data together to comprehend the entire case, not just the diverse parts of the case or the contributing aspects that influence the case.

A way to have research integration is by using the constant comparison method of analysis. Constant comparison analysis is gathering information and comparing one data set to other data sets (Merriam, 2009). Constantly comparing and analyzing data throughout the interview and research process improves the reliability and quality of the research (Creswell, 2014). The research goal from cross-referencing data is to find key topics or ideas from across the data, which improves reliability and quality (Creswell, 2014). For these reasons, constant comparison analysis was used throughout the data collection processes of this study.

To assist in the integration of data, the next step in data analysis is coding the data (Creswell, 2014; Hansen, 2014). Coding is the procedure of organizing the material into segments of text and assigning a word or phrase to the segment, developing a general sense of the research results (Creswell, 2014). Axial coding was also utilized in the data analysis process. Axial coding is used for interpreting and placing meaning to open codes (Merriam, 2009). Axial open code is identifying one open code at the center of the coding as the core category and assigning the other categories into one of the five groups related to the core category (Hansen, 2014). The first category is *causal condition*, which is a category that influences the core category. The *context* category is the specific conditions that influence strategies. The third category is *intervening conditions*, which focus on the general context of the main influential strategies. The fourth category is the *strategies* that are revealed, which are communications or explicit activities that result from the core-coding category. Finally, the fifth category is *consequences*, which is described as the results of using the schemes (Hansen, 2014). While the data is being coded and analyzed, themes are developed from comparative data evaluation and axial coding (Creswell, 2014).

Triangulation was utilized in this study to support the validity and reliability of the data analysis process. Triangulation provides evidence to confirm themes that have been highlighted by the study through cross-checking data gathered from the research (Merriam, 2009). During triangulation, data is gathered from various sources, including interviews, observations, and document analysis (Creswell, 2014). The researcher triangulated the data to confirm the themes that emerged through the data analysis processes (Creswell, 2014; Glesne, 2011).

Concluding the data analysis of this study was the interpretation of the information gathered (Creswell, 2014; Glesne, 2011; Yin, 2003). Interpretations describe the ideas that are developed out of the analysis of the data (Creswell, 2014). The presentation contains detailed descriptions of the data analysis interpretation, which will allow the reader to be placed in the setting of the interview (Creswell, 2014). The goal of the interpretation is for the reader to experience the interview and to understand the themes and information gathered (Glesne, 2011).

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is to help establish rigor and reliability of the study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Trustworthiness measures are incorporated into qualitative research studies to establish and ensure that the research is plausible or credible (Glesne, 2011). To create trustworthiness in the conduction of the study, the researcher was reflexive (Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009). Reflexivity within qualitative research is described as a strategy in which the inquirer reflects about how his role in the research and his personal experiences, culture, and familiarities hold potential for shaping the interpretations, such as the themes that are advanced and the meaning that is ascribed to the data (Creswell, 2014).

An aspect of trustworthiness is that the research questions are appropriate for the research (Russell, Gregory, Ploeg, DiCenso, & Guyatt, 2005). An additional safeguard of trustworthiness is gathering data through field logs, which contain reflections the inquirer maintains as he conducts research (Glesne, 2011). Reflexivity takes place as the researcher is self-reflective through the research process (Glesne, 2011). A researcher can reflect on the interaction when gathering data and when participants seek information from the researcher, and can also reflect on the researcher's background to explain bias and increase the credibility of the research (Glesne, 2011).

To ensure credibility of the study, findings from the reader's, researcher's, and participant's accounts that are accurate and credible should be presented (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). The integration of member checking into the data collection process contributed to the credibility of the study (Creswell, 2014). Member checking occurred throughout the interviews as the researcher asked questions of the participants to confirm precise interpretations (Merriam, 2009). After the interviews were transcribed, the participants were sent an electronic copy of their interview transcripts so that they could confirm the accuracy of the transcribed interview. The first time member checking occurred was during the semi-structured interviews to guarantee quality and accuracy during the conversation exchange, which aligns with Creswell's (2014) strategy for trustworthy data collection. The second time member checking occurred was after the interview was transcribed, and an interview transcription was provided to all participants for final approval.

Through detailed and quality reflection by the researcher, as well as insight and new perspectives, the reader will be transferred to be a witness of the research (Glesne, 2011, Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Transferability of the findings in

qualitative research studies is supported through the use of vivid and meticulous descriptions of the research process and the findings of the study, which allows the reader to experience the research that was compiled (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Trustworthiness was established in this study through the use of a variety of credible procedures, including reflexivity, member checking, and triangulation (Creswell, 2014). Dependability and confirmability of the study were established through the triangulation of the raw data, field notes, and other documentation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Creswell's (2014) validity and transferability strategy is for the researcher to provide comprehensive and meticulous descriptions, also referred to rich, thick descriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which also helps ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

## **Context of the Study and Researcher**

### **Context of the Study**

The study institutions were seven public community colleges located in state of Texas. Of the seven study sites, two were located in the South Plains region, two in the Permian Basin, one in the Panhandle, one in the Northwest Rolling Plains, and one in the North Central region of Texas. The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014) classifies five of the institutions as small, rural community colleges, one as a medium-sized rural community college, and the final site was an urban-serving community college.

The participants in this study were eight marketing administrators who were directly involved with marketing at the seven study institutions. In addition, they had

three years of experience in higher education marketing, and they had a role in the decision-making process of how marketing funds are allocated.

### **Context of the Researcher**

In qualitative research, the researcher is the main instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009). The personal experiences and background of the researcher may impact the collection and reporting of data (Merriam, 2009); therefore, understanding the researcher will assist in understanding his or her data analysis.

Moving throughout my life, I have called Texas home but not a particular town. With a father as a football coach and a mother who was a schoolteacher, the family followed the next employment opportunity. However, my heart has always enjoyed West Texas, and I have developed a passion for rural communities. After graduating high school in a semi-rural community and taking classes at a rural community college while completing high school, I moved off to attend a university. I attended a small Baptist university in the West Texas Rolling Plains region. While attending the university, the major I chose was Christian Studies, with business as my minor. From the business courses I took, I began to develop an interest in different business philosophies and concepts. A genre I found especially appealing was marketing.

After receiving my bachelor's degree, I moved to a moderate-sized city in the South Plains of Texas and began a career with the local newspaper. The job title for my position was advertising sales representative. The activities for this job included sales, financial collection, public relations, and the aspect of my job that impacted me the most, marketing. I was in this role for four years, and I truly enjoyed my time as a sales representative. During this time I pursued my master's degree in higher education

administration, which I was inspired to do because of the mentorship I received from other college administrators.

My first position in higher education was with a small rural community college in a West Texas town. The first position I held was part of a federal grant with a focus on online student support services, along with other job duties. An early project I implemented was creating a larger outreach through social media websites. After three years in this position, I was promoted to Assistant Dean of Student Services where I assisted in supervising housing, security, admissions, registrar, financial aid, and advising. After a year in the position, I was given direct supervision over the recruitment department. While supervising the recruitment department, I have gained respect for and a yearning to gain knowledge in the marketing of higher education institutions, particularly community colleges. With my current position I want to be able to put together thoughts and data on how community colleges decide how to allocate their marketing resources to affect the student college choice process.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore how community college marketing administrators allocate institutional resources to market the institution to affect the student college choice process. The participants for this study were eight full-time campus administrators from seven community colleges in Texas. The participants were administrators who are involved in deciding how institutional resources are allocated for marketing. The data collected answered four foundational research questions. The data collection methods that were used included interviews, observations, and documents. Throughout the data collection process there was analysis, in addition to axial coding, which assisted in developing themes. Furthermore, triangulation of the data, reflexivity

writing, and member checking established trustworthiness of the research that was conducted.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS**

Chapter IV presents the results of the study. The topics that will be addressed include: 1) summary of the research design, 2) profiles of the study institutions and participants, and 3) the study's findings. The purpose of this study was to explore how community college marketing administrators allocate institutional resources to market the institution to affect the student college choice process. Of specific foci in this study were how marketing administrators allocate resources to market the institution, the benefits and challenges of marketing community colleges, how they disseminate information of their marketing plans to develop support for the marketing mission related to influencing student college choice, and how these administrators measure the effects of the institution's marketing on the student college choice process. For the purpose of this study, the college choice process is defined as the decision-making process by which a student selects a higher education institution to attend (Alfred, Shults, & Strickland, 2009).

This study was guided by the following four research questions:

1. How do community college marketing administrators communicate information about the marketing mission of the institution?
2. How do community college marketing administrators determine how to allocate institutional resources for marketing their institution?
3. Based on the perceptions and experiences of community college marketing administrators, what are the benefits and challenges of marketing community colleges?

4. How do community college marketing administrators measure the effect of institutional marketing on student college choice?

### **Summary of the Research Design**

This qualitative research study was conducted through the lens of the social constructivist paradigm, with the purpose of seeking to understand how community college marketing administrators allocate institutional resources to market the institution to affect the student college choice process. A collective case study research design was used to address the purpose of the study through collecting and analyzing data to answer the four research questions. Data collection processes included setting the boundaries of the study, conducting semi-structured interviews with community college marketing administrators, and analyzing and interpreting the data results for refined understanding of the research (Creswell, 2014). Prior to collecting data for this study, approval was sought from the Texas Tech University Human Subjects Review Board. The study began after this approval was received (see Appendix A).

### **Data Collection Process**

The data collection process for this study began with the identification of potential participants. Potential participants were identified through a search of public websites of community colleges in Texas for marketing administrators at the colleges. Once identified, an email was sent to the marketing directors at seven institutions. The email included an introduction to the study and the Description of the Study document, which provided more details about the study (see Appendices C and D). From the seven community colleges contacted, six colleges agreed to participate. From these six institutions, seven marketing administrators responded with interest to participate in the study, and all were invited to participate. The goal of the study was to have eight

participants, so contact was made with an additional public community college in Texas, and the introductory email and Description of the Study document were sent to the marketing director at that institution. The individual agreed to participate. Once the eight participants were identified, interview dates, times, and locations were arranged through email with the participants.

All semi-structured interviews were conducted in person at each participant's community college (please see Appendix B). Before the interview, the researcher introduced himself and allowed the participant to get to know the researcher. The participants were given the opportunity to ask questions relating to the study before the interviews began. The same interview protocol ensued with each participant, which included an introduction and relaxed conversation, as well as a review, explanation, and overview of the study. In addition, participants were verbally notified that contribution to this research was voluntary, that any question from the semi-structured interview protocol could be skipped, and that the participant could stop the interview at any time. All eight participants agreed to audio recording of their interview. Following each participant's agreement to the recording, the interview protocol proceeded with an opportunity for participants to ask questions. Finally, the participants were notified when the recording began.

All in-person interviews consisted of the same foundational interview questions and followed the same format. Questions were asked in a constant inflection and tone during each of the eight in-person interviews (Creswell, 2014). The researcher used his judgment on when to probe, clarify, or inquire with secondary questions to elicit greater depth of research information (Creswell, 2014). The length of the interviews varied between 30 minutes and 85 minutes, which was attributed to the differences between the

participants and their perceptions and experiences with the study topic. Member checking of the data collected occurred throughout the data collection process, and clarification and validation were requested throughout the interview to ensure the participants' responses were understood (Merriam, 2009). When the interview concluded, the researcher expressed his gratitude for the participant's time, perceptions, knowledge, and contribution.

There were four recorded interviews that were transcribed verbatim by the researcher within two weeks of each interview. A third-party transcriptionist was used to transcribe the remaining four interviews verbatim within two weeks of each interview. Each transcription was compared to the audio recording of the interview to confirm the accuracy of the transcription. In addition, transcriptions were evaluated for typographical errors and compared to field notes to reveal any discrepancies. Also, the participants were involved with member checking; they were sent an email requesting that they assess their attached interview transcript and approve or edit the document (Merriam, 2009). From those emails, six of the eight participants responded, and three made edits to their transcript.

### **Data Analysis**

Throughout this study all data analysis was done manually, and no computer software was used in the evaluation of data. Also, reflexive journaling was used throughout the study to assess and document any biases of the researcher, which helped when evaluating the interview transcripts and field notes. All data gathered for this study was analyzed through the constant comparison method, beginning with data collection and continuing throughout the data evaluation process (Glesne, 2011). Initially, field notes and interview transcripts were evaluated multiple times to gain

knowledge of the participants' perceptions and experiences. Then, each aspect of the data from the interview transcripts and field notes was constantly compared with each other to identify key words and help with the development of themes. Through constant comparison, key terms and expressions were noted throughout the data, as were similarities and differences.

The themes were compiled into broad categories through open coding, and then narrowed down into specific themes through axial coding. Open coding consisted of manually reviewing transcripts line by line (Merriam, 2009) and color-coding key information, expressions, and information with assigned colors. The data were assessed multiple times and grouped into broad categories (Creswell, 2014) of similar data.

After open coding was completed, axial coding was used to classify similar coded data, to organize and re-label the data into categories (Merriam, 2009), and finally to evaluate and interpret the meaning from the open coding. Index cards were used to sort open codes into axial codes. Then open codes that were not color-coded were pasted onto index cards, and the data on the index cards were sorted several times, classified, and re-classified until themes developed (Merriam, 2009). This format of axial coding provided accuracy and consistency, and represented the information collected from all interviews. After uniformity was established in sorting of the data into reliable groups, the data was synthesized into themes with primary wording representing each theme (Creswell, 2014). Following the origination of themes, the key information was then placed into an outline format to best present the developed themes.

### **Profiles of the Study Institutions and Participants**

Of the seven study institutions, six had only one individual who met the inclusion criteria for the study; one had two who met the criteria. The following are the profiles of the study institutions and the eight participants.

### **Profiles of the Study Institutions**

Hendricks Community College is located in the South Plains region of Texas. According to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2015), it is a public, small-sized, rural-serving college. The enrollment of the college in Fall 2014 was 2,069 (THECB, 2014). During Fall 2014 (the latest period for which data were available), there were 61 full-time faculty and 38 part-time faculty, which created a faculty-to-student ratio of 17:1 (IPEDS, 2014). Hendricks Community College's marketing department had two individuals working in the department and the marketing budget was .005% of the overall institutional budget at the time of this study.

Gibbs Community College is located in the Northwest region of the Rolling Plains of Texas. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2015) classifies this institution as a public, small-sized, rural-serving college. The enrollment of the college in Fall 2014 was 2,989 (THECB, 2014). During Fall 2014 (the latest period for which data were available) there were 91 full-time faculty and 68 part-time faculty, which created a faculty-to-student ratio of 16:1 (IPEDS, 2014). Gibbs Community College had one individual working in its marketing department and the marketing budget was \$55,000 for the academic year at the time of this study.

Haas Stewart Community College is located in the South Plains and eastern edge of the Permian Basin regions of Texas. This community college is described as a public, medium-sized, rural-serving college by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2015). The enrollment for Fall 2014 was 3,775 (THECB, 2014). During Fall

2014 (the latest period for which data were available), there were 133 full-time faculty and 16 part-time faculty, which created a faculty-to-student ratio of 15:1 (IPEDS, 2014; THECB, 2014). Haas Stewart Community College had four individuals working in the marketing department, and the marketing budget was \$27,350 for the academic year at the time of this study. Therefore, the marketing budget made up .0007% of the overall institutional budget at the time of this study.

Penske Community College is a community college district (with eight campuses) located in a city with high population density in the North Central Plains of Texas. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2015) classifies the institution as a large-sized, urban-serving public college. The enrollment of the college in Fall 2014 was 71,433 (THECB, 2014). During Fall 2014 (the latest period for which data were available), there were 797 full-time faculty and 2,252 part-time faculty, which created a faculty-to-student ratio of 20.8:1 (IPEDS, 2014; THECB, 2014). There are 18 marketing professionals within the marketing department at Penske Community College. The district budget for marketing was \$1.5 million, which is .0039% of the overall district budget, at the time of this study.

Petty Community College is a four-year public institution that is located in the Permian Basin of Texas. The college primarily issues associates degrees. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2015) classifies the institution as a small four-year institution that has primarily nonresidential students. The enrollment of the college in Fall 2014 was 4,618 (IPEDS, 2014). During Fall 2014 (the latest period for which data were available), there were 130 full-time faculty and 147 part-time faculty, which created a faculty-to-student ratio of 17:1 (IPEDS, 2014). Petty Community College had eight marketing professionals in the marketing department and had a

marketing budget of \$265,000, which is a .0064% of the college's overall budget, at the time of this study.

Woods Community College is a two-year public institution that is located in the Panhandle of Texas. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2015) classifies the institution as a small, two-year rural-serving institution. The enrollment of the college in Fall 2014 was 1,348 (IPEDS, 2014). During Fall 2014 (the latest period for which data were available), there were 38 full-time faculty and 69 part-time faculty, which created a faculty-to-student ratio of 17:1 (IPEDS, 2014). Woods Community College had one individual working in the marketing department and had a budget that was less than 2% of the overall budget institutional budget at the time of this study.

Roush Community College is a two-year public institution that is located in the Permian Basin of Texas. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2015) classifies the institution as a medium-sized two-year institution that is rural serving. The enrollment of the college in Fall 2014 was 5,059 (IPEDS, 2014). During Fall 2014 (the latest period for which data were available), there were 126 full-time faculty and 190 part-time faculty, which created a faculty-to-student ratio of 17:1 (IPEDS, 2014). The marketing department at Roush Community College had 10 marketing professionals and the marketing department budget was less than 1% of the overall institutional budget at the time of this study.

### **Participant Profiles**

**Chandler** is the President at Woods Community College. He had been the President at this college for five years at the time of this study, and balances the additional responsibilities of serving as the Chief Financial Officer, Athletic Director, Marketing Administrator, and instructor of economics. He holds a master's degree in

business administration, a doctorate in higher education, and he is a certified public accountant. Prior to the positions in higher education that he currently holds, he served in private industry for over 20 years, where he was able to gain experience in marketing.

**Janice** is the Director of Marketing at the district level for the Penske Community College District, and she has been in this position for 29 years. She spends a majority of her time with marketing and promotions for the district. Janice has over 37 years of experience with marketing, all of which have been at the study institution. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Texas at Austin.

**Joey** is the Director of Marketing and Recruiting at Roush Community College and has been in this position for 15 years. He spends 50% of his time towards marketing and 50% towards recruiting. Joey has a bachelor's degree in radio and television and a master's degree in higher education administration. In addition, he has marketing experience from his work in television, sportscasting, and radio.

**Monica** is the Director of Marketing on one campus of the Penske Community College District and has been in this position for 15 years. She devotes all of her time to the marketing of that one campus. Before taking the position with the study institution, Monica oversaw the marketing for a non-profit organization. At the time of this study, she had a total of over 17 years of marketing experience. She has a bachelor's degree in business administration and a master's degree in communication.

**Phoebe** is the Coordinator of Marketing and Alumni Relations at Gibbs Community College, and she has been in this position for 11 years. She spends 75% of her time on marketing and 25% on alumni relations. Phoebe holds a bachelor's degree in management and gained marketing knowledge from classes she took while attaining her degree.

**Rachel** is the Director of Information and Effectiveness at Haas Stewart Community College, and she has been in this position for nine years. Her time is split 60% towards campus effectiveness and 40% towards marketing for the campus. Rachel has nine years of marketing experience from employment with two public organizations. She has a bachelor's degree in environmental design and consumer economics.

**Ross** is the Chief Technology Officer at Hendricks Community College, and he has been the marketing administrator on campus for eight years. He spends 60% of his time on technology, 15% on marketing, and 25% on other responsibilities. Ross has master's-level work in music performance, a master's degree in education, and has done doctoral coursework in higher education as well. Prior to being hired at Hendricks Community College, Ross worked at a private company, where he gained marketing experience in web design, publishing, and broadcasting.

**Ursula** is the Dean of Community Relations and Special Events at Petty Community College and is the public information officer for the college. She has been in this role for six years and has been at the college for 25 years. She spends 60% of her time on public relations, 10% on marketing, and 30% on other responsibilities. Ursula has a bachelor's degree in business administration and has over six years of marketing experience.

## **Findings**

### **Developing Support for the Marketing Mission through Informing the Campus**

Research question one sought to understand how community college marketing administrators communicate information about the marketing mission of the institution. There were three main themes that emerged through the analysis of the data collected to address this research question: 1) dissemination of marketing information to address the

institutional mission, 2) negative and positive feedback regarding the marketing mission of the institution, and 3) non-support of the marketing mission for the institution.

**Dissemination of marketing information to address the institutional mission.**

As noted in the profiles of the eight study institutions, the organizational structures of the marketing departments were all different and had varying numbers of employees within the department. No matter the size of the marketing department, all of the participants agreed that communications within the department as well as within the institution as a whole were essential to being successful in accomplishing their marketing mission. Communications within the marketing departments as well as throughout the institution assisted the participants in disseminating information to all employees. The participants had similar and dissimilar ways of communicating the mission of the marketing department within their institutions.

Ursula (Petty Community College) discussed that it is important for her department to meet frequently as a group, but identified that she also meets – though infrequently -- with students, recruiters, and other student affairs employees to receive feedback and to coordinate different events and marketing efforts. She also noted that she meets about once a month with leadership at her institution to communicate with them about the department's needs and the marketing efforts they are currently involved in.

Unlike Ursula (Petty Community College), other participants had a more informal frequency of meetings with the individuals who make decisions to influence the marketing of the college. Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) commented that:

A lot of the times they [employees within the marketing department] meet without me because they are the ones that are doing the day-to-day work.

They can meet without me or I will review the report online or whatever.

But any time we have new strategies we want to implement, we do that [all meet together]. We [as a marketing department] meet every other month. Like at the end of the year, we have to make sure [we] finished [all marketing objectives].

The frequency of meetings within the marketing department fluctuated among the participants, based on what needed to be accomplished or what resources were needed to accomplish the marketing mission. Even though seven of the participants discussed their perceptions and experiences related to communicating the marketing mission throughout the institution, Chandler never discussed how he communicates the marketing strategy throughout his campus.

The participants not only discussed conducting meetings with their department, but they also addressed their communications with other individuals throughout the campus. The three primary methods of communication identified were: 1) campus task forces, 2) campus email and other digital media, and 3) campus meetings. According to Phoebe, Gibbs Community College has a task force that is used to assist the marketing department with communicating their mission. She described the task force as being made up of a broad variety of individuals from within the institution so that all perspectives of the college are represented. Some of the positions represented on the taskforce include the Dean of Students, Associate Dean of Student Services, Student Services Specialist, Director of Admissions, Director of Financial Aid, Director of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as faculty. Joey also noted that Roush Community College has a taskforce that he implemented, which also includes student services personnel, faculty, and other staff, who are helpful in disseminating information

about the marketing department mission. He mentioned that having the task force made up of a variety of individuals across campus helps the marketing department to better understand the marketing landscape across the institution, and also helps the department identify strategies that need to be implemented to accomplish the marketing mission.

The participants also discussed the importance of making sure all departments across campus understand and comprehend the marketing plan and the strategies that need to be implemented to reach prospective students. They all addressed the importance of not only needing the marketing department and campus task force to support the marketing administrator and the department mission, but also the campus as a whole needs to buy in. The participants discussed how they utilize technological tools and/or meetings to communicate their message and strategies to the institution. All of the participants mentioned the use of communication tools such as email and social media. Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) commented that in addition to campus email, her institution uses third-party social media, such as Facebook, to communicate with the institution as a whole. Other participants also noted that they utilize both email and social media to communicate about marketing events that are occurring to ensure the institution as a whole is aware of what is going on.

Some of the participants shared specific ways they utilized technology to communicate about what the marketing department was doing to the campus community. Joey (Roush Community College) discussed that the marketing department at his institution uses campus email to distribute a departmental newsletter to employees. The newsletter allows his department to communicate its marketing strategies and efforts, as well as details about how the marketing strategies used are influencing potential student enrollments. Joey also discussed that how over the past three years his department has

been trying to reconnect with the institution by informing them of the department's marketing objectives. He also shared that colleagues and co-workers have verbally expressed appreciation for the newsletter and informed him that they enjoy knowing about the marketing department's strategies.

Some of the participants discussed the use of a campus-wide intranet to communicate to the employees of the institution about marketing events. Janice (Penske Community College) discussed the intranet portal that is used at her institution to distribute information to the district and specific campuses. She described the portal as "... an employee intranet" that pops "up on their [employees] screen first thing and there'll be news about what's going on throughout the whole system every day." This tool allows Janice and other administrators to keep individuals up to date on strategies and events taking place, which allows them to keep the entire district informed regarding marketing objectives and what the department was doing to ensure they accomplished them.

In addition to using email, social media, and digital newsletters to communicate the marketing message of the department, some of the participants described how they utilize large meetings to inform their campuses about marketing plans, goals, and strategies that involve both academics, and student services. An example of this was shared by Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) whose institution was trying to communicate about the institutions Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for its accrediting board, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (accreditation board for the southern region of the U.S.). Rachel explained that during in-service meetings, information about the institution's QEP was disseminated to inform both the internal

community within the institution as well as the external community and potential students about the QEP. She went on to explain that the:

QEP [is a] huge piece of marketing to our faculty and staff, as well as marketing that to our community, as well as marketing that to students and that is going to be a huge initiative for us. So when we have [in-service] we do utilize [large meetings to introduce and explain new marketing initiatives]. We have an annual professional development day that we have every August and everybody is required to come. In January our faculty gets together for professional development.

Similar to Rachel, Phoebe (Gibbs Community College) also utilizes in-service to introduce the marketing plan to her co-workers, but she uses a more intimate setting. She explained her approach to using breakout sessions during in-service if she has something new to introduce to the college. She provided an example:

Last year we did one [breakout session] on centralization of marketing all being under marketing [department] and why. We set up places where they [faculty and staff] could get logos and letterhead and made all that consistent. Things were just need[ing] to be done, that we finally got it all done and here's the processes, here's the procedures.

Phoebe (Gibbs Community College) also emphasized the importance of using in-service and large meetings to communicate and explain the marketing department's policies and procedures to campus employees.

Monica (Penske Community College) mentioned using meetings but being strategic in only holding meetings for implementation of large projects. She conveyed

that meetings are strategically used to disseminate information based on the importance of the strategy being implemented:

If we're doing something big, like when I get ready to roll out the word of a marketing campaign [a meeting will be used to explain it], for sure. I'll probably have numerous presentations on that and we're getting ready to launch a new website and when we do that, there will be something there. It's on my to do list to start sharing everything we're doing, like to do a presentation on advertising and show people where we advertise and why we do what we do.

Similar to Monica and Phoebe, Ross (Hendricks Community College) holds large campus-wide meetings to make sure all "understand what the marketing goal and purpose is and who they [faculty and staff] can contact for help with their ideas." According to Ross, institutional marketing meetings provide individuals with knowledge and understanding of the institution's marketing mission.

Rachel, Phoebe, and Monica all acknowledged that they utilize large meetings to communicate the institutional marketing mission in hopes of gaining support from across the campus. However, some of the participants noted that faculty and staff on occasion will utilize the same strategy towards the marketing director. Joey (Roush Community College) discussed that because of a decrease in enrollment, the faculty and staff initiated conversations about marketing and recruitment with the marketing department. He commented that the meetings were positive and created quality conversation about the full lifecycle of recruiting a college student. Joey stated that the drop in enrollment was the catalyst to conversations and meetings about how to improve the college's enrollment and recruitment processes. He explained that individuals across campus became

concerned about the enrollment decreases and, therefore, initiated meetings to understand and find ways to assist in the institution's marketing mission.

Even with communication tools and opportunities for large meetings, there were still some participants who recognized that they could do a better job of communicating about marketing strategies throughout the institution. Monica (Penske Community College) discussed the balance between applying the marketing strategies and having conversations with individuals around campus to explain how these strategies were being implemented. She went on to share her struggles with balancing the workload of her position and ensuring she is communicating effectively throughout the institution, "I'm so busy doing the work that I'm not taking enough time to share what we're doing, so that's on me." These perceptions of difficulties with meeting all of the job responsibilities and ensuring the marketing mission was being effectively communicated through the institution was shared by many of the participants.

**Negative and positive feedback regarding the marketing mission of the institution.** Marketing is a public interaction between a community college and its community and potential students. Therefore, when in the public, the institution opens itself up to criticism and analysis from other employees outside the marketing department regarding the marketing mission. Participants in the study discussed the negative feedback and lack of support they receive from within the institution and the community. Janice (district office, Penske Community College) conveyed that she tries to keep all of the feedback she receives about the marketing of the institution in perspective. She mentioned that "Just like anything, when you do work that goes out in the public, everybody's a critic. Some people like it and some people think it's completely bogus."

Janice explained that she feels support from the district but also has learned to handle adverse feedback:

I would say in general I get the negative and not the positive [feedback]. I kind of operate on the assumption that no news is good news because when they're unhappy they complain. When they're happy I don't hear from them. I'm thrilled and I'm not just saying this. I'm really glad that they let me know when they're unhappy because that makes me change what I'm doing.

Most of the participants related to Janice's experiences with feedback from within the institution and they also acknowledged that they have learned to keep everything in perspective and to handle the feedback. However, some of the participants noted how difficult this could be. Some of them mentioned that they do not like receiving negative feedback or comments. Monica (Penske Community College) commented that it took her a while to deal with the negative responses:

It's really, at first I found it irritating, because everybody thinks they're a marketer, but now they're just trying to be helpful, and I think because they're consumers of marketing that they think they get marketing, and that's okay, but it's something people study for a long time and practice for a long time to know what they're doing.

Monica also expressed, though, that she is willing to listen to other's ideas if the institution has chosen not to use a potential marketing strategy.

The participants also expressed that they receive positive feedback about their marketing efforts and strategies. Joey (Roush Community College) expressed that he receives support from the leadership at his institution. He explained that the college

president is continually echoing the marketing mission of the marketing department: “recruit, retain, graduate.” Joey perceives that what the marketing department is doing is seen as positive and effective.

Similar to the positive experiences of Joey, Phoebe (Gibbs Community College) also commented that she receives positive feedback and support from co-workers at her institution. She stated that she appreciates that “people are always willing to work, listen, and understand why we do the things we do.” Monica (Penske Community College) noted that she also receives support from key leadership at her institution for her department’s marketing efforts, mentioning that “I feel really good about the support I get from the president and the president’s team” regarding our marketing of the institution.

**Non-support of the marketing mission created by the marketing department.**

According to Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College), based on her experiences and perceptions, when a marketing administrator receives negative feedback, it usually comes from an individual who does not completely understand the complexities of a community college marketing mission. She discussed how individuals want to have “participatory management” of the marketing department when giving their feedback. In addition, she also understands that they “just don’t know how that works.” Ross (Hendricks Community College) had similar thoughts relative to this, adding that there are aspects of the marketing mission at a community college that others at the institution “can’t really see . . . or they don’t realize [are] there, like the emphasis the website gets.” However, as Janice (district office, Penske Community College) emphasized, when individuals do value the marketing for the institution, it is fulfilling. She went on to explain:

...the people [college employees] that do appreciate marketing really appreciate it. It's nice when you know that they really understand all the work that went into

the marketing efforts. Because things don't just happen– you don't get a whole production done without putting a lot of work into it.

Feedback and support are critical for a marketing administrator, because they help shift and guide the direction of the resources used to implement the institution's marketing mission. Whether it is negative comments regarding modifying a marketing strategy or positive support about the marketing plan that was assembled, the research participants understand the value of how feedback and support shape the marketing mission.

### **Allocation of Institutional Resources for Marketing**

Research question two sought to understand how marketing administrators allocate resources to influence the college choice process. There were four main themes that emerged through the data analysis of the data collected to address this research question: 1) marketing plan development, objectives, strategies, and budget; 2) allocating resources to support marketing strategies, 3) use of advertising agencies, and 4) following marketing trends and implementing marketing strategies.

**Marketing plan development, objectives, strategies, and budget.** The participants discussed the crafting of the marketing plan for their institution, which is used to guide the marketing efforts at the college. The marketing plans discussed by the participants had various time durations, from five years to a monthly plan. Joey (Roush Community College) noted a five-year plan is the standard at his institution, while Chandler explained (Woods Community College) that his institution has a monthly marketing plan. Monica (Penske Community College) identified that her “marketing plan is usually for two years and it's based on the college goals and we look at growing

enrollment in specific programs. We focus on key programs that are unique to Penske Community College.” Similar to Monica and the need for a flexible marketing plan, Phoebe (Gibbs Community College) discussed how her marketing plan is also flexible and changes based on what marketing or advertising has worked in the past. She mentioned “Even if I had my heart set on doing something else and that’s not worked, then we’re going to take that money and move it to something else or try something else.” Chandler (Woods Community College) echoed the strategy of a flexible marketing plan used by Monica and Phoebe, noting that this is based on his observations of a return on the resources his department is spending. Chandler stated that “we’re [leadership] looking at everything to see a return, and if we can’t determine a return, then maybe [we] just get warm fuzzies because you spent that money and think it did something, but did it really?”

Chandler’s marketing plan is flexible and at its foundation are measureable results, but other marketing administrators had different ideological foundations for their marketing plan. Chandler also mentioned that the institution’s marketing plan is focused on “touch points” when students visit his campus. Monica (Penske Community College) spoke about how her marketing plan is developed based on the goals that are created at the district level for the college. The district goals then influence the goals of the president of the campus where Monica works, which then influences the goals she creates for her marketing plan. Monica shared her perceptions and experiences of the difficulties of developing a marketing plan with measureable goals and objectives:

We’re required to have things that we measure. It’s hard for us to measure; we’re not like the rest of the college. We don’t, it’s not about completion and enrollment in a particular program, it’s hard for us to measure what we do so sometimes.

Ross (Hendricks Community College) discussed that the development of his marketing plan is not about one individual, but about getting everyone across the campus involved. Similar to Ross, Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) discussed that she incorporates many individuals across the campus to help the marketing department develop its plan. She said that “We have our meetings. They talk about what they need when they go out to TACRAO [Texas Association of Collegiate Registrar and Admissions Officers]...high schools ...community activities where they are presenting information about Haas Stewart Community College.” Overall, the participants perceive that a marketing plan is instrumental to the success of marketing the institution to potential students.

In addition to the development of their marketing plans, the participants discussed their current marketing objectives and strategies, which are an outflow of their plans. Each of the study institutions is different and each one has developed different strategies that they perceive will help them the marketing of their campus to potential students. Janice stated that the chancellor of the Penske Community College District has directed the strategy of developing new ways to serve the students throughout the community college district. She further explained this directive:

What the chancellor really wants us [the marketing department] to pursue is to become a one-stop shop. There are places in other parts of the country that do this, and we're looking at emulating those. We're [Penske Community College] the education partner, and we have service agency partners, we have business partners, we have all kinds of partnerships. When people [students] come to us [to enroll], we try to eliminate all of

the barriers they have to continuing their education. But that's where we're headed on the fast track.

Janice also mentioned a supplemental objective the chancellor wants for the college district. She discussed that the "chancellor has the big initiative to reach non-consumers and so we're going to do a district team. We're going to do a new ad campaign focused on skills that lead to careers and jobs." In addition, Janice noted that an underlying theme with their objectives is that in today's economy, every individual needs to improve their skills or technical training.

Joey (Roush Community College) also discussed that his institution is creating objectives and strategies around the full lifecycle of a student, which is first being a prospective student, then applying, enrolling, and graduating. He further discussed how the objectives are developed, "We're basically looking at that full lifecycle of the student. It's not just getting them here anymore. That's mainly our job but how do we graduate [students]?" Joey's perceives that his institution understands that it is influencing potential students to attend the institution, yet his college wants students to progress through the full lifecycle with the destination being graduation. For this reason, Joey as the marketing administrator, is allocating resources toward the marketing objective targeted at the full lifecycle of a student and specifically how to ensure students are completing.

Similarly to Janice and Joey, and the objectives of their institutions relative to the full lifecycle of a student, Rachel's institution (Haas Stewart Community College) agrees that marketing to influence the college choice process is not over when the student enrolls on campus. She explains that "We have to continually market to the students we have to get them to stay here." Rachel shared an objective at her institution that focuses on a

district-wide recruiting plan for prospective students. She explained that her institution wants to allocate resources toward both the lifecycle of the student and recruiting potential students.

Ursula (Petty Community College) spoke about a different objective but that was still student focused, the first-generation college student. She explained that:

We [the marketing department] are really focusing on first-generation college students. As the population morphs, there's a huge population out there of college-aged students whose parents did not attend college. Some of the parents did not even graduate from high school. We're finding that you can't attract those students the same way you attract say, my children or your children, because we both went to college so we kind of know the whole college process and everything. They're [first-generation college student's parents] really scared to come on campus.

She also mentioned that the marketing department was also allocating resources towards finding ways to make first-generation students and their parents feel more comfortable.

After development of the marketing plan and establishing specific marketing objectives and strategies, all of the participants have to present their plans to campus leadership through a budget process. The budget process was different at all of the study institutions, but the consensus from all of the participants was that the budgeting process is a formal process that also involves their immediate supervisor or the administration.

Both Phoebe (Gibbs Community College) and Janice (district office, Penske Community College) identified that their marketing budgets were due early in the calendar year, but that approval of the budget would not be known until September. This delay in approval of the budget can result in the inability to implement the marketing plan

as developed, as at times, the participants experienced a decrease in the amount allocated compared to the budget requested. When this has happened in the past, Janice discussed that she had to request more money after the budget was finalized because of the initial reduction in financial resources and the marketing objectives that her department was required to meet.

Monica's (Penske Community College) discussed that prior to her submitting her budget proposal in March that she begins to evaluate and "track" the marketing department's spending. By tracking spending, she is able to construct her budget for the next year. Monica and Janice (both at Penske Community College) explained that the final approved budget is mainly determined by historical data, with Janice commenting that the budget allocation is based on "how much we've spent over the years."

Similar to the other participants' experiences, Ursula (Petty Community College) has to submit her budget and then receives her "preliminary notification in June." She stated that the notification she receives in June usually does not change when she gets her official budget in August. This timeline is similar to Rachel's (Haas Stewart Community College) who submits her budget for approval in May and then has to wait until the board of trustees approves the budget in September. Compared to the other participants, Ross's (Hendricks Community College) budget process is more vague and limited. He explained that the budget proposal is due in the spring, and the marketing administrator has very little input into the budget proposal for his department.

All of the participants communicated that they do not have the final approval of their budget; the board of trustees has the final approval of the overall college budget. However, different individuals within the institution have final approval of the marketing budget. Chandler (Woods Community College) has an interesting perspective as he is

both the president of the college and oversees the marketing of the institution. He also has the ultimate decision on every aspect of the budget, after the board of trustees' approval. However, he mentioned that he includes other administrators in the budget process and asks them to associate strategies to the different aspects of the budget. Therefore, even at his institution, the administrative team has influence on the marketing budget.

Similar to Chandler's institution, Joey's (Roush Community College) institution has a similar approval process. Joey commented that the campus administration approves the marketing budget but also offers support once the budget is approved. As with most of the other study institutions and experiences of the participants, Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) stated that the "administration cabinet" at her institution also has final approval over the marketing budget.

However, the experiences of most of the participants has not been the same for Monica (Penske Community College), where it is not an administrative team that has final approval of budgets, but individuals. She mentioned that her president and vice president of business services are the individuals who have final approval of the marketing budget at her campus. Participants can allocate the resources they have been given after the budget has been submitted for review and approved by the leadership and the board of trustees.

All of the participants noted that their marketing budgets were only a small percentage of the overall institutional budget. Ross (Hendricks Community College), Chandler (Woods Community College), Phoebe (Gibbs Community College), and Janice (Penske Community College) said that the marketing budget made up less than 2% of their institution's overall budget. Ursula (Petty Community College) mentioned that her

budget makes up approximately 5% of the institution's overall budget. The participants were not at a consensus on whether their marketing budget had increased or decreased over the years. Ursula (Petty Community College) discussed that in the previous year she had been given an increase, but in 2016-2016, indicated she received a zero increase. Ross (Hendricks Community College) echoed the same sentiment as Ursula, reporting that his budget had seen zero increase, but that the administration had never reduced his budget. However, Phoebe (Gibbs Community College) discussed that she experienced minimal cuts over the past academic year.

**Allocating resources to support marketing strategies.** All of the participants discussed variables they had to take into consideration when allocating resources to marketing strategies. These variables include time of year the budget is allocated by the institution, current media trends among potential students, and the types of strategies and approaches for marketing that are supported by stakeholders.

The time of year that the marketing budget is approved and allocated by institution affects how the resources are allocated. Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) explained that she does most of her budget allocation to resources in the spring semester, and in the fall the marketing strategies are generally implemented.

Monica (Penske Community College) discussed that another variable that influences the allocation of sources is potential students' perceptions of certain types of media. She went on to explain that it is important for marketing administrators and departments to understand how potential students are viewing media; how they view specific types of media influences where she allocates resources.

Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) described that a difficulty she has experienced when deciding where to allocate resources is that she has had to deal with

stakeholders not understanding the strategies and the processes her department wanted to take. She explained that other individuals on campus “do not know what goes into development of those strategies and how you carry them out.” Therefore, other individuals on campus could be a hindrance during the allocation process. Rachel also mentioned that the allocation of resources for marketing is influenced by the history and tradition of the institution, which can cause the institution not to have “out-of-the-box ideas and concepts.”

Chandler (Woods Community College) mentioned that another variable in allocating resources that he has to consider is the influence external stakeholders can have on how resources are allocated to market the institution. He explained that one of his college’s service centers had local community support through money donated to the college. The donors informed Chandler that they wanted a percentage of the money spent on marketing and specified what type of marketing they wanted. This had a significant influence on how the money was allocated to resources to market the college to potential students. Chandler discussed that over the past five years, the institution simply had limited funds to market the institution, but were instead focused on their image. He and his administration perceive that if resources are allocated toward any external activity the institution is involved in, the activity must have a positive influence on the college’s image and branding.

**Use of advertising agencies.** Several of the participants noted that their marketing departments have some weaknesses due to a lack of sufficient staff. Examples of this were shared by Joey (Roush Community College) and Monica (Penske Community College), who discussed the need for staff with the necessary marketing and creative skills to implement the department’s marketing strategies. A way that some of

the participants have dealt with this issue, specifically Janice (district office, Penske Community College), Ursula (Petty Community College), and Phoebe (Gibbs Community College), was to allocate resources to hire an advertising agency to help market their institution to potential students.

Janice discussed that she enjoys working with an advertising agency because of the experience it offers. She described that the institution has “been working with agencies since the 90s so we have a lot of experience in what works and what doesn't, and what's the best buy for our money in this market.” Janice stated that she utilizes the advertising agency to help take some of the pressure off of her by assisting her in developing a marketing plan for the district and with media purchases. She also noted that she does not choose an agency based on what fits the financial budget, but instead, the agency is selected based on “the services and the creativity that they bring to the table, so it’s not based on dollars,” but on a proposal. Janice commented that that she has had good success with the advertising agency she has used and allocated resources to, acknowledging that the agency had won multiple TELLY Awards (awards for local commercials) for the advertisements they had created for her.

Advertising agencies were also mentioned by the participants at two other institutions. Ursula (Petty Community College) commented that she has found that advertising agencies are beneficial to use for helping to implement the institution’s marketing strategy. She did note, though, that she perceives it is important to conduct business with a local advertising agency because the firm will understand the community the institution operates within.

Phoebe (Gibbs Community College) also discussed the use of an advertising agency to help market the institution. Thought Gibbs is a small college, she stated that the

institution allocated resources towards an advertising agency because it could assist in focusing on where to influence the college choice process of prospective students.

**Following marketing trends and implementing marketing strategies.** Some of the participants discussed how they view marketing and advertising trends both corporately and within higher education to better understand where to allocate resources. Janice (district office, Penske Community College), Monica (Penske Community College), and Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) discussed how they observe other institutions and corporations to understand current trends in marketing. Janice mentioned that she observes large corporate trendsetters such as Apple, Microsoft, or Nike to find out what the upcoming marketing trends are to a specific age group or population. Monica discussed that she watches the marketing strategies used by the company Red Bull, because they are marketing to the same demographic as many community colleges. Rachel explained that her department observes what other community colleges are doing and they continually examine the trends in higher education marketing. She did note that when they look at the trends, they pay close attention to size of an institution to determine transferability of the strategies used. She perceives utilizing these methods provides her department a better understanding of what types of marketing peer institutions are using compared to Haas Stewart Community College. However, Rachel also warned against comparisons, noting that it is not fair to the institution to compare it to four-year colleges and universities, noting that Haas is not “a university. We aren’t ever going to have those kinds of resources and the availability to us they have. So let’s quit trying to compare ourselves to them.”

Through the analysis of data related to the participants’ discussions of marketing strategies they used, there were six specific marketing strategies identified. These

included: 1) traditional media, 2) digital media, 3) publications, 4) face-to-face interactions, 5) academic and vocational programs, and 6) college, community, and academic events. The participants identified traditional marketing as television, radio, newspapers, and billboards and digital media as digital billboards and social media.

***Traditional media.*** The participants discussed that they continue to allocate marketing resources to traditional media such as television, radio, newspapers, and billboards. Ursula (Petty Community College) mentioned that half of her advertising budget goes to television, because television is “the most expensive medium.” Janice also discussed the television advertising she does for the Penske Community College District. She mentioned that the district has been doing television advertising since 1990. In addition, she said that she perceives neighboring colleges also benefit from her television advertising. Monica (Penske Community College) is unable to use television advertisement because that form of advertising does not stay within her service area, which is why Janice utilizes it more at the district level. Monica did state that television advertisement may not be as effective as it used to be due to people not watching “television commercials like they used to.”

Another medium discussed by the participants to market the institution to prospective students is newspapers. Phoebe (Gibbs Community College) discussed that she buys print advertising in the newspaper, which represents 50% of her budget. She mentioned that at her institution they also use newspaper articles to highlight students from the local area who have been successful at the college.

Similar to Phoebe, Monica (Penske Community College) also advertises in the newspaper as a way to reach an older demographic – those readers who might have an influence on potential college students. She explained that through the newspaper she is

trying to reach the “demographics [of] parents or grandparents,” people who might not see advertising in digital media. Joey (Roush Community College) discussed that he spends approximately 20% of his budget on the local newspaper and that the focus of his marketing is to advertise the weekly events on campus. He also mentioned that the institution might place advertisements in travel magazines and other publication products. Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) stated that her institution also allocates money annually for advertising in the local newspaper.

Several other traditional marketing mediums were addressed by the participants. Radio continues to be used for marketing to potential students, but on a limited scale. Phoebe (Gibbs Community College), Chandler (Woods Community College), Janice (district office, Penske Community College) and Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) all mentioned using radio as a marketing strategy to market to potential students. In addition, Ursula (Petty Community College) and Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) mentioned that they continue to use billboards to create awareness for prospective students, as well as Ursula added that her institution also has bus signs and mall signs that they use for marketing purposes. Rachel explained that her institution continues to use billboards for traditional and historical reasons.

The participants whose institutions are located in more suburban and urban areas have more outlets for advertising. Chandler (Woods Community College) commented on a struggle in marketing for a small, rural college, which is distance. He stated:

We have a local radio station ...which [does not have a] lot of audience.

We're 60 miles away from a TV station, and quite frankly, they show up if we beg them to come or if there is some sort of event.

Chandler went on to highlight the fact that some marketing administrators want to market their college, but a rural location has its disadvantages, including, for example, limited marketing venues to allocate resources to advertise and market the rural institution.

***Digital media.*** The participants noted a shift in the media used to reach prospective students. Ross (Hendricks Community College) best summed up the ideological change when he explained the current situation at his institution. He stated that the institution has “moved away from broadcast media [and] more into online.” This movement was supported by most of the participants who discussed how they have shifted their marketing to a digital focus, and that they have seen positive results from this move. Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) provided an example to support these positive results:

This past year, we did a lot more of Facebook, Google, digital billboards...that kind of thing, and then some newspaper advertising, but we did not do... for [this past] fall, any TV or radio. So it's kind of shifting a little bit. We've had really good response with our Facebook advertising for especially like our continuing ed programs or our programs that are like our police academy, [and] firefighter academy.

Not only had participants shifted to digital media marketing to reach prospective and current students, but they perceive that digital marketing has enabled them to target their market better. Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) explained that her department has “been able to target those markets a little bit more, and I think it's been very beneficial for us.” Monica (Penske Community College) explained the reason for the shift to digital was that “Now social media is part of our target market's life.” Her

perceptions were supported by Janice (district office, Penske Community College) who acknowledged that since digital media is such a part of individuals' lives, her institution has put a major focus on allocating resources to digital media to reach their target market of individuals who have never considered higher education an option.

Even though many of the participants had seen positive results with digital marketing, Phoebe (Gibbs Community College) discussed some of the challenges with it. An example she shared was, though relative to marketing in general, that the older generation of individuals who work at her institution do not notice any marketing. She has received feedback from them stating that they perceive that there is no marketing occurring at the institution. However, Phoebe noted, marketing is occurring it is just through digital media.

Another challenge with digital media that was expressed by some of the participants was simply the number of venues available for marketing digitally. Monica (Penske Community College) explained that she has had to focus on Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and producing video content as well for YouTube. Several of the participants noted that it has been a challenge to keep up with the growing and fluctuating world of digital media, and determining where to allocate resources.

The use of social media for marketing purposes was also addressed by the participants, as well as was search engine optimization, video streaming, and other dynamic media that can have substantial influence on potential and future students. The participants discussed that one of their marketing strategies to influence the college choice process of prospective students is through social media. Phoebe (Gibbs Community College) discussed how she allocates resources to Facebook to advertise the institution's academic and vocational programs. She talked about receiving good

responses from marketing to potential students about the institution's medication aide and dental assistant programs with Facebook. An additional benefit she noted about Facebook was the fact that it is "not real costly to advertise on." The other participants also reported that their institutions also market through Facebook. A majority of the participants identified that they use Twitter to market to prospective students, although they are not using this marketing venue as regularly as Facebook. Rachel and several of the other participants acknowledged how difficult it is to keep up with all the social media that has to be managed every day.

Another marketing tool participants acknowledged allocating resources to was search engine optimization (SEO). SEO is an internet marketing strategy that allows advertisers to get their marketing products in front of internet users based on the keywords the users use for their searches (Lukito, Lukito, & Arifin, 2015). Phoebe (Gibbs Community College) discussed how she finds using SEO cost efficient and very user-friendly. Janice (district office, Penske Community College) also made note of the affordability of using SEO all year long compared to the expense of traditional media that she can only buy 10 weeks out of the year. Joey (Roush Community College) also stated that SEO is used by his institution. The participants who utilize SEO also identified that the tool has the ability to measure the influence SEO provides, which as Ross (Hendricks Community College) noted, has helped to "increase our presence."

Monica (Penske Community College) mentioned another aspect of SEO that the other participant did not discuss relative to digital media. She explained that she pays a regional newspaper to broker her advertising on Facebook, Twitter, and SEO advertising, but she also discussed this in the context of "remarketing" advertising. Monica described remarketing as "those ads that follow you around the Internet," which allow the

organization to reconnect with visitors who have previously visited their web or mobile site. She explained that remarketing is much more cost effective because:

When I buy remarketing through my ad rep, I'm not paying for impressions, I am paying for people who click. [A] million people may see my ad, but if only 10 people click, that is all I am paying for. And I can target who sees that. I can say I only want people who already have been to the Penske Community College websites or websites like Northlake College so if they have been to other college websites. Or I can say I want to target people looking . . . who are looking at logistics websites and I want to serve them our logistics ad. I can really target that. I'm only going to pay for people who click so it's really cost efficient and it's really targeted.

Monica perceives this allows her to be more efficient with marketing efforts, and allows her to allocate more resources, because it cuts her costs. She also perceives that this is a significant development in digital media.

Participants also discussed other forms of digital media marketing that they allocate resources to, including the use of online music streaming services, such as Pandora, which are popular with current college students, as well as email campaigns and the college's website. Janice (district office, Penske Community College) and Phoebe (Gibbs Community College) discussed marketing through Pandora. Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) stated that she uses email campaigns to influence the college choice process of future students. Ursula (Petty Community College) explained the importance of allocating funds toward her website as a tool to influence potential students' college choice process. She mentioned that websites have a five-year life cycle,

and she plans to start allocating resources toward the launch of a new website in the next year.

Only one of the eight participants did not mention using digital media to market the institution and that was Chandler at Woods Community College. He did discuss that he receives pressure to upgrade the college's website and to increase the institution's digital footprint. However, he explained that the lack of financial resources influences how digitally visible his institution can be. Chandler stated that he would rather make sure all potential student tools, such as the website, are functional than to have the newest technology. He went on to explain his philosophy about the use of digital media in marketing the institution:

We need to upgrade [the website]. But the functionality is there. It's just not the latest bells and whistles. And again, back to me, who determines what a good-looking website is or effective website? And you can spend a lot of money having a consultant tell you, "Here is what really looks good." So, do we believe in functionality? Absolutely. Do we believe in flash and technology, and quite frankly can we afford it? Probably not.

***Publications.*** The participants also mentioned allocating resources toward publications as part of their marketing strategy to influence the college choice process of potential students. Monica (Penske Community College) discussed that in some years she will spend more money on printing publication materials than on other forms of advertising. The printed materials that Monica referenced included materials for recruiters or faculty, and she also placed emphasis on direct mail pieces. Ross (Hendricks Community College) also mentioned publications as part of the marketing strategy utilized at his institution. He noted that the quality of the printed materials is a

way to market the institution as well as to gain support from individuals on campus as they can visually see the quality of marketing the institution is doing. Joey (Roush Community College) discussed that printed materials were such an important aspect of their marketing strategies that they invested in a quality printer so that they could do some of the printing in-house. He also mentioned that they outsource large-quantity printing jobs to third-party printers, but he is now able to do small quantities in-house for the institution.

***Face-to-face interaction.*** Another marketing strategy the participants are allocating resources towards is one of the oldest forms of marketing: word-of-mouth. Monica (Penske Community College) reported that she is launching a new program that focuses on word-of-mouth marketing and explained the marketing strategy:

We know that the people find out about us by word of mouth and that is a challenge and a benefit right now because you know social media is a form of word of mouth. One of the things that I am trying to do right now is leverage word of mouth. That's a marketing tool. Right brand ambassador campaigns are where you get people, employees, students to go out into the world, wherever they might be—at their church, at the grocery store, at the salon—and talk to people about the place they work. That is one of the things I'm about to embark on is a word-of-mouth campaign. These people are going to be people that never met a stranger, love talking, so there's that rush, "Hey, I'm doing something for my college that I like to do anyway."

As was noted previously, Chandler (Woods Community College) is somewhat skeptical of different types of marketing approaches; however, he allocates resources

towards and is very supportive of one-on-one conversations with students. He perceives one-on-one conversations and touch points with his institution are significant strategies to influence the college choice process of potential students. These conversations can be between potential students and recruiters, staff, or faculty, and they often occur during school visits. Chandler shared his institution's approach with this:

When we go to high schools, we don't say, "Let us talk to your seniors."

We say, "Give us the students you think might be interested in an instrumentation and electrical program, or hands on, or they want a welding program. Give us five students you think might be interested in cosmetology or nursing or give us the academic transfers," because we think our best advantage is one-on-one or one-on-ten. Not one in the masses.

*Academic and vocational programs.* Some of the participants mentioned the importance of other resources they are able to use to influence potential students to choose their institutions, including academic and vocational programs. The participants discussed the importance of having relevant and timely academic degrees to attract students and grow enrollment. Phoebe (Gibbs Community College) explained that one of the discussions on her campus concerning enrollment growth is increasing academic and vocational programs. In addition, Chandler (Woods Community College) expressed the necessity of growing programs, especially since the population to recruit from is decreasing in every town except one in the service area his institution serves. Chandler explained:

So it's almost a paradigm of how can you grow when your population is declining, and we get back to programs. We've got to figure out, and

what we've done in the last couple of years, and we'll continue to do in five years, is grow programs. So we added an instrumentation and electrical program, we added a pipefitting program to tap into industry who had needs for those jobs. Now, when you look at academic transfer, of course the medical profession is very good, but the entry point for some of those programs is astronomical.

Ross (Hendricks Community College) echoed the importance of vocational programs to increase enrollments. In addition, he discussed the importance of having instructors in front of potential students to help influence their college choice process. Ross explained that, "The real strategy we have to emphasize is individual instructors being where the students are and talking to them. Whether that's career day or personal visit to a high school campus or whatever it is."

Ursula (Petty Community College) explained that her institution was completely revising the institution's curriculum to help grow enrollment and increase students. The modification of the curriculum is focusing on having students commit to a broader academic path. Ursula explained the new academic path:

We're starting a whole new kind of curriculum process where we're targeting; we're trying to get students on what we call a pathway, one of eight different pathways. Instead of having "I'm going to major in computer graphics," or "I'm going to major in welding," we have what we call manufacturing and they start taking the same classes. It's kind of overwhelming when you look and you try to decide what program you're going into. So we have what we call embedded advisers, which means that rather than just have an advising office that advises everybody, now

advisers are assigned to a division so that one adviser is only responsible for our applied technology division.

Ursula explained that Petty Community College is attempting to make deciding on a degree easier and more appealing for potential students who are going through the college choice process.

***College, community, and academic events.*** Another way community colleges allocate their tangible resources to influence the college choice process is through their events. The participants identified three types of events that they organize: 1) campus events, 2) community events, and 3) academic events. Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) explained that at her institution they create activities and events on campus that will be beneficial for both current and potential students. The reason for combining events to benefit both types of students is because of budget cuts. Rachel noted that there is simply insufficient staff to provide separate activities, so events and activities are combined.

Ursula (Petty Community College) discussed a community-focused event her department holds on campus, which is a family event they do every spring. They invite the community out and “all of our programs have a table set up outside, we have games for kids, and people go around and find out about programs and financial aid and that kind of thing.” Ursula’s goal with these events is helping individuals feel comfortable with coming and interacting on campus.

Similar to Ursula, Janice (district office, Penske Community College) discussed that her college district has great success with influencing the college choice process by participating in community events. She described two avenues for community events. Her department has a street team that can either go to community events or who can

create a spontaneous event within the community. Janice also organizes community events and explained her philosophy on how to integrate the college district within the community events:

We'll go in as a small partner, and we'll have a booth at an event paying the least amount of money to get a table or whatever, and just see how it goes. And if it works and we see there's benefit and it's a thing we can invest in, then we go ahead and build on it year after year. Otherwise, we just move on, because there are a lot of things to be involved in here.

Participating in these events enables Penske Community College to be visible at community events, but as Janice noted, she understands that financial resources are scarce and there must be a benefit for her institution as well.

The participants also discussed marketing through academic events that the college either hosts or assists with. Chandler (Woods Community College) discussed that his campus hosts a regional academic event on the campus every year. He mentioned that the college does not charge anything to the participants or schools and provides volunteers for the event. Chandler explained how beneficial this is for the institution:

That's marketing to us. That's community relations to us, and it has a pretty hefty price tag when you think about the manpower it takes to do that, from having to assist with judging, to coordinating, to food service, to custodial and maintenance help. That's a pretty big price tag.

In addition, Chandler mentioned that the college hosts other events on the campus that also draws junior high and elementary students. He perceives that these events are "planting a seed" and are pivotal to marketing the institution.

A final example of an academic event that is hosted on the college campus was shared by Phoebe (Gibbs Community College). She discussed that her campus hosts a large Future Farmers of America event that has significant influence on potential students. She mentioned that students who attend these events have a chance to interact with institutional representatives and spend time in vocational and technical programs.

***Knowing the target audience.*** The participants addressed that an aspect of knowing where to allocate resources to influence potential students and their college choice decision is understanding the current potential college student. The first challenge for a community college when advertising to influence the college choice process is the differences in ages of potential students. Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) mentioned that when she is marketing to potential students, she has to consider the ages of the traditional student as well as non-traditional students. Ross (Hendricks Community College) also acknowledged that he has to take into consideration all of the various ages of potential community college students to whom his institution directs its marketing. He said that even though they know the importance of marketing to traditional-age college students, he perceives that marketing to the parents and grandparents of those students is pivotal for enrollment success, which takes a different style of marketing.

Based on the analysis of the data to address this research question, traditional college students present three challenges for marketing administrators at community colleges. According to the participants, the first challenge is that traditional college students' preferences evolve quickly, making it difficult for colleges to consistently know how to market to potential students in this age group. A second way traditional college students are difficult to advertise to was addressed by two of the participants. The

difficulties include their reliance on social media for a majority of their communications, which is different than previous generations of college students. An example that was shared by both Monica (Penske Community College) and Joey (Roush Community College) was that traditional-age college students today are not viewing television the way traditional students in the past viewed television. Monica went on to explain:

[Students] want to see what they want to watch when they want to watch it and many people don't even subscribe to cable. They are going to get their viewing from a streaming series or watch it on their computer for free. There is no reason to watch a television commercial anymore so that's really shifting the way people think about advertising.

The third challenge that was identified by the participants was how potential traditional-age college students view attending a community college. Phoebe (Gibbs Community College), Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College), Monica (Penske Community College), and Joey (Roush Community College) all perceive that students do not want to attend a local community college; students or the influencers in their life want them to attend a four-year institution instead. Monica (Penske Community College) shared that she does not try to convince a student who perceives a four-year institution is best to attend a community college:

Trying to get a student who is determined to go to a four-year school because they think a community college is second best, that would be a real challenge and I probably wouldn't even go for that. I wouldn't even try because that's just not our target market.

Many of the participants expressed that they have to allocate resources to help develop ways to transcend the stigma of attending a community college and do a better job of

promoting the benefits of attending a community college in order to capture their market share of potential traditional-aged college students.

### **Benefits and Challenges of Marketing a Community College**

Research question three sought to understand the benefits and challenges of marketing community colleges. The two themes that emerged through the data analysis process were: 1) benefits of marketing community colleges, and 2) challenges to marketing community colleges.

**Benefits of marketing community colleges.** Participants discussed several different benefits related to marketing of community colleges to potential students. The benefit most discussed by the participants was directly tied to the institution and it was increased enrollments. Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College), Chandler (Woods Community College), and Ross (Hendricks Community College) all conveyed that enrollment growth is the most important benefit from allocating resources to market to potential college students. Rachel said it best when describing the main benefit regarding marketing to influence potential students, “Well, students. First and foremost, students. Because you know we can’t continue to operate if we don’t have students. Continued decline in enrollment has a direct influence and reflect on the state allocation.”

Chandler also discussed the benefit in increased enrollments based on allocation of resources to marketing, and noted that increased enrollment is the public’s measuring stick for a community college. He noted that if there is enrollment growth, the public and community are satisfied; however, when there is an enrollment decline, local citizens begin to question the college. Chandler stated that most of the community questions focus upon whether the community college is working hard enough and marketing enough to potential students.

Ross (Hendricks Community College) acknowledged that enrollment increases are a benefit of marketing, but he also perceives that the reputation of the institution is an important aspect of the college's ability to influence prospective students. He perceives that his institution has grown because of the reputation that has been established by the marketing his institution does to potential new students. He supported his points by stating that "...the college enrollment is increasing because our reputation, which is emphasized by our marketing efforts, is reaching the right market, and we're seeing an increase in students where other schools are not."

Other participants discussed their perceptions that potential student awareness and public image are benefits that result from marketing their local community college.

Monica (Penske Community College) conveyed that for a marketing director there are many challenges and few benefits, but increased awareness of an institution is one of the benefits. She said she focuses on "... increased awareness. Those would be benefits. I mean the reason that we market is to get people to know about our college." Phoebe (Gibbs Community College) also agreed that an advantage of promoting a community college is the awareness that is created to potential students and the local community. She went on to share her thoughts on awareness and promoting the various locations of an institution:

I think it always helps people understand about us, what we are, and what we offer, what we do. Our campus was started here in Gibbs, but then, you know, a majority of our students are in [another town], and we will have people here [Gibbs] that don't know the kind of things that we offer there and vice versa, and just basically ...helping us brand our college's institution, and then making sure that everyone knows, ...the services we

provide, the opportunities we provide, ...because that is lacking sometimes.

Even though Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) mentioned enrollment growth as the primary benefit from marketing to potential students, she also expressed public image as a secondary benefit. She communicated that because her college allocates resources for marketing and marketing events, their image throughout the community is influenced positively. She continued that with some events, it is difficult to gather data and measure the influence of the activity, but the community takes notice of the institution's efforts and goodwill is created throughout the local population. She also added that when her institution allocates resources to marketing to potential college students to influence the college choice process, a resulting benefit is educating the community about the benefits of the college.

From a different perspective, Janice (district office, Penske Community College) discussed marketing in a large metropolitan area where there are multiple community college districts. She stated that it can be difficult to separate one institution from another. A benefit that Janice mentioned from a marketing perspective is the ability to educate the public so that it can differentiate between large community college districts in the area. She also noted that since large community college districts have multiple campuses, the public can sometimes associate specific campuses with the wrong district, which places more importance on marketing so that the Penske Community College District can distinguish its campuses from those of other community college districts in the area.

**Challenges to marketing community colleges.** All eight of the participants discussed the difficulties of marketing a community college and the challenges they face,

which include: 1) the limited financial resources allocated to marketing, 2) developing an effective marketing mix for all potential students, 3) institutional bureaucracy, and 4) resisting aggressive intrusion into the community college's service area by competitors.

All of the participants identified that the reduction in state appropriations and the lack of state support for public community colleges in Texas are the primary challenges to marketing their institutions. The participants consistently commented that the reduction of state appropriations is a very difficult challenge to overcome when attempting to influence prospective students through marketing, because community colleges no longer have the funds they had in the past to be able to compete with their competitors through marketing. Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) discussed how funding cutbacks have had a deep and lasting effect on the marketing at her institution:

Mainly due to the extreme reduction in funds we have seen from the state of Texas. It has placed much more responsibility on the local community and we have done everything we know to do to absorb the cut without making cuts in programs and services directly with students. . [For example], faculty, staff, program[s]. We are doing everything we can to keep all of that intact. So if you are not spending less money there [on faculty, staff, and programs], you have to be spending less money elsewhere. That is where we have seen the huge cuts come through the [marketing] department.

Rachel also described that cutting the marketing budget is effortless compared to other areas on campus. Removing funds from a miscellaneous item in a marketing budget is a lot easier than removing funds that influence a class or program directly. She mentioned

that the marketing department is an easy place “to start cutting and over the years we see the cuts ...and they are pretty deep.”

Janice (district office, Penske Community College) also addressed the current state funding challenges. She added that the reduction in funding from the state is never conveniently timed and she went on to comment that:

[The state] cut our budgets in the middle of the year and we’ve had to return portions of our budget to the state. The year (2010) that we had to return 7% of our budget, that’s a lot of money for us, and so I mean it was ...slashing budgets.

In addition to limited financial resources that are available for marketing because of state funding cuts, participants described having additional job responsibilities assigned to them that limit the time they have available for marketing. Ursula (Petty Community College) addressed that she had been affected by having multiple roles added to her job responsibilities. Even though Ursula is Dean of Community Relations and Special Events, she says that 60% of her time is devoted to “non-marketing activities.” Her responsibilities include serving as the public information officer of her institution, coordinating special events such as commencement exercises and holiday events, negotiating contracts, and managing other obligations. Ursula has so many non-marketing tasks that she said, “Probably 10% of my time is devoted to marketing.”

Phoebe (Gibbs Community College) also has multiple job responsibilities that limit her time as the chief marketing administrator. Phoebe said that 75% of her time is spent on marketing, but the rest of her time is devoted to alumni relations, which is a new addition to her job responsibilities. Chandler (Woods Community College), in addition to being the college president, conveyed that he is overloaded with other job responsibilities and spends very little time on marketing for his institution. Similar to the

others, Ross (Hendricks Community College) commented that he spends only about 15% of his time on marketing because of other job assignments.

Similarly, Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) is another participant whose primary job when she was hired was to be the marketing administrator, but because of budget cuts, has had to take on other job responsibilities. She said that “When I started, I was director of information and was over information, marketing, outreach kind of things. I am also the public information officer.” However, because of budget cuts, “I have taken over [the] director of institutional effectiveness role,” which takes up a large portion of her time.

In addition to the participants having to take on additional job roles due to funding issues, Joey (Roush Community College) expressed departmental modifications were occurring at his institution as well. He discussed that he had assisted in transitioning marketing from two different departments into one department, which made reaching and influencing potential students more efficient. He went on to explain:

So we’re officially now the office of marketing and recruitment. Before that we were basically the office of college relations, and then we brought recruiting back under us about four years ago and that was the office of new student relations. We operated kind of like that for the past four years, two offices but two office names. We started meshing the two together, and basically just this past month we announced the integration and changed to where we are marketing and recruitment.

In addition to reductions in state funding, many of the local communities supporting the study institutions also have experienced economic downturns.

Community colleges in Texas are funded by state appropriations, local taxes, tuition, and

other revenues. Therefore, if there is a downturn in the local economy in addition to reduction of state appropriations, this can lead to great adversities for community colleges. Ross (Hendricks Community College) explained that the reduction of state funds has had an effect, but the recession in the local economy has had a great impact as well. He stated that, “At the same time, we face decreasing mineral values, which you know also impacts our budget. So it becomes a challenge to keep all of the budget areas fully funded, not just marketing.” Community colleges whose local economies are deeply dependent on one specific industry face great hardship when that industry is in an economic downturn.

Decreases in state funding and the shrinking of the local tax base create many challenges for community colleges, but Chandler (Woods Community College) highlighted that there is a lack of overall state government support, especially for rural community colleges. A major challenge in the community and region that Woods Community College is located in is the decrease in population. Chandler’s main point is that the decrease in local population, which has a negative impact on enrollment and on the local tax base, receives no empathy from the state government. As the college’s president, he has tried to educate and update local politicians about the decrease in the local population and its effect on the funding of the college. However, he says, “They say, ‘Who cares?’ I mean honestly, they don’t care. You can’t even argue any other point. They don’t care.” Chandler emphasized that enrollment growth alone is what is important to state politicians, even though the local population in the service area is shrinking.

Participants discussed how state funding cuts create a challenge for marketing a community college, but they also commented that the cost of marketing is very

burdensome. Marketing costs are based on the local population. Therefore, if a community college is located in a larger market, it can be very expensive to competitively market the institution. Monica (Penske Community College) explained that, “Money is always a challenge. If money were endless ...[we] would do all sorts of things.” Janice, Monica’s counterpart in the district office, further commented on the challenge of marketing in a massive media market, saying that she was “concerned, it’s never enough money...that I think it is just an uphill battle to fight for all the time. I don’t think people realize how much money it costs to buy media in a market like this.” The media market in which Monica and Janice have to market their campus and district is the fifth largest media market in the U.S..

Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) agreed with the other participants that advertising in any media market is difficult. She discussed these difficulties:

We don’t have the money to really saturate it and make it viable. One little commercial. It’s not going to really have a good effect, so we don’t do any television advertising because we don’t have the money to do it.

Participants might have expenses, shrinking budgets, and large media markets to make promoting their institution difficult, but that does not mean they have lowered their expectations. Phoebe (Gibbs Community College) and Janice (Penske Community College) both addressed the costs of marketing, but they have still continued to envision what they would do if they did not have budget limitations. Phoebe stated that reduced enrollment has a negative effect on the institution’s budget, but she still examines where the campus could market itself, especially if they had money. Janice wishes she could be more specific in targeting her message when marketing to influence the college choice

process, but she does not have the budget to accomplish this strategy. She went on to explain:

...if we had all the money in the world, then we would be doing specific target marketing for every little bracket. I mean, it's not that we don't think about that and that we're not cognizant of the need to do it, we just simply don't have the money. We try not to just completely shotgun the effort and just shoot it out there. We try to target as best we can with the dollars that we have.

The participants identified another challenge they face when marketing their institution, which is how to reach the targeted population. Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) and Ursula (Petty Community College) both commented about the lack of confidence they have in creating a marketing mix that will influence a potential student's college choice process. Ursula mentioned that she is trying to craft the largest influence on potential students and shared her approach:

A big challenge is finding a good marketing mix for all ages. Especially right now with the downturn in the economy, we see a lot of older students coming back to Petty Community College to retrain. You can't reach them the same way you reach the 20 year old. So, you have to have a good mix of all sorts of different types [of marketing strategies], which is more expensive. You have to have a good mix of all kinds of advertising.

Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) agreed with Ursula that finding the appropriate marketing mix is difficult, and she stated that she often wonders if she is missing the institution's target audience at times.

Monica (Penske Community College) suggested that there are internal challenges as well when allocating resources to marketing an institution to influence the college choice process. She identified that she has faced the challenge of bureaucracy from the accounting department when implementing her marketing strategies. Her difficulties arise when trying to purchase creative works that are necessary to implement the institution's marketing plan:

When you buy creative, you shouldn't have to give bids and we're not supposed to have to, I don't think, but it's just this sort of, you know, I don't know it's our accounting office and it's probably the district accounting office telling us what we can buy and what we can't. But creative is really different from buying paper for a printer because when you buy pictures or words, you want those exact pictures or words. Nobody else can provide that, it's that one picture. That's a struggle that we have.

In addition to the internal challenges noted by Monica above, some of the participants addressed the external challenges they are facing in marketing their institution. Ross (Hendricks Community College) conveyed that public community colleges in Texas have service areas comprising specified counties that they have to stay within when marketing. He also expressed that four-year institutions do not have service areas that they must stay within, which creates difficulties for community colleges. From Ross's perspective, a current struggle for community colleges is having four-year institutions enter their service area and compete for their dual credit students. Dual credit is where high school students in Texas are able to enroll in a college course before they graduate high school and earn both college credit and high school credit for the course

(Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2016). Ross expressed that marketing administrators are dealing with additional challenges of four-year institutions trying to capture more high school dual credit students from community colleges, as well as for-profit online institutions that have no service area boundaries.

### **Measuring Effects of Marketing Efforts**

The fourth research question sought to understand how marketing administrators measure the effects of their marketing efforts for their institution. There were three main themes that emerged through the analysis of the data collected to address this research question: 1) importance of assessment of marketing efforts, 2) limited funding for assessment of marketing effectiveness, and 3) tools for assessing marketing efforts.

**Importance of assessment of marketing efforts.** A majority of the participants addressed the importance of assessing their marketing efforts, but all also indicated they were unsure how to do this. Ursula (Petty Community College) discussed that she has wanted to measure the effectiveness of specific marketing strategies that have been used at her institution but was at a loss of how to do so. She went on to discuss this:

We don't [measure]. I wish I knew how to do that. I don't know how to measure how our marketing is doing. Like I said, my goal is that people see Petty Community College twice a week but I don't know how to measure [and]... determines [if we are reaching our goals].

**Limited funding for assessment of marketing effectiveness.** Most of the participants addressed that there were simply no funds to invest in tools to assess the effectiveness of their marketing strategies. Janice (district office, Penske Community Colleges) was the only participant who confirmed that she budgets for marketing analytics. Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College)

commented that she understands the value of marketing analytics but just does not have the funds. She stated, “Zero. I couldn’t afford. It would be great to know the information, but hey when you are talking about pulling it from somewhere to pay for that.”

**Tools for assessing marketing efforts.** The majority of the participants noted that they did not have access to assessment tools to assess the effectiveness of their marketing efforts. They all did recognize, though, the importance of measuring the influence of the institution’s marketing efforts on potential college students; college choice decisions is critical for campus growth. The participants agreed that analytics are necessary to develop a successful marketing plan, but as noted previously, only one of them was currently using any type of analytics software to capture statistics on their marketing efforts. Most of the participants acknowledged that they either did not know how to capture the data they needed to measure the marketing to prospective students, could not afford to gather the data, or did very little.

Monica (Penske Community College) discussed her difficulty in measuring the influence of marketing on the college choice process. She discussed the frustrations of not being able to measure what she wishes she could regarding her marketing efforts, stating that:

We [the marketing department] haven’t been...that to me sounds broad.

Like of all the students here, how do you know, how did they choose you, how did they find out about you? So we haven’t done much with that.

That involves actually asking people and that’s hard to do. I have found a way to do it and we’re going to do it this semester. ...I mean that’s a hard thing to do. It sounds like it would be easy but it’s not.

Monica went on to explain that gaining the specific desired measurements is more challenging than she expected.

Other participants reported that they did not have any money allocated for advertising analytics, but they do use certain products that have assessment software built into the marketing tools. The two marketing tools with built-in analytics software that trended among the participants were Google Adwords and Facebook. Monica (Penske Community College) shared her experiences with using Google Adwords and Facebook:

I don't have a budget for analytics per se. When we track analytics on our website through Google and that's free, and with any of my digital advertising, analytics are just a part of that, because they give you a report on how many click through. That's another great thing about digital advertising is that you get all sorts of reports. When I purchased SEO [search engine optimization] and SEM [search engine marketing], one of the services that came along with that, they give you a vanity phone number so on your SEM, and it's not the North Lake number.

Joey (Roush Community College) echoed that he had the same budget challenge as Monica, which is that the only analytics he had available to him were built into his marketing tools. He further explained:

Probably [no money towards analytics] is budgeted especially because one of our tools that we have [is] built-in towards what we have the...well analytics. So we [marketing department] really don't have anything allocated per se. We just have some tools that enable us to look at certain things. We really haven't spent money specifically for that.

A challenge shared by the participants relative to trying to assess the effectiveness of their marketing efforts was the inability to gather student information. Janice (district office, Penske Community College) expressed the difficulty of gathering the data she needs on students because of the Family Education Right and Privacy Act (FERPA). The difficulty for Janice is being able to gather the analytics she deems sufficient about Penske's marketing efforts.

I mean, if we were any other kind of company, we would be heavily into tracking conversions and following people all the way through the cycle. But with FERPA, we still haven't figured out a way exactly to overcome that. It's a system thing. And it's an issue that we just have to deal with. Because, I mean, it's a known inefficiency in marketing and tracking our efforts, but it's kind of like we can't – we're not on the technology side of the house and they're not letting go of their privacy issues. It's a constant clash between us and IT saying, "Well, you know, major companies do this. Why can't we?" We haven't won. But we've had several turnovers in our IT department in retirements and things in the recent past, and so we are looking for a new IT guru, so hopefully things will change.

Even though the participants have challenges with gathering analytical information to help them assess their marketing efforts, this does not mean that marketing assessment and evaluation is not still a priority for them. The participants all discussed their efforts to find ways to implement analytics tools into different aspects of their marketing efforts to be able to assess the effectiveness of the strategies being used on capturing potential college students. A way that Phoebe (Gibbs Community College) suggested to do this is by placing evaluation questions in their application for admission

in order to capture some marketing data. These questions are designed to investigate how prospective students learned about the institution.

Chandler (Woods Community College) and Joey (Roush Community College) stated that analytics and gathering more data about their marketing efforts is a focus of theirs. Chandler discussed looking at different events and determining if the events were beneficial for the institution. With the new mindset of gathering information from activities, he discussed discontinuing certain events because either they were not reaching potential students or were not positive for Woods Community College. Joey also discussed that there is a new focus at Roush Community College to gather data on the marketing the institution is doing so that the college is able to make more data-driven decisions about future marketing strategies. He stated:

We [marketing department] are trying to be more data driven and using real numbers to affect decisions that we make about continuing those activities and events and methods or not. Of course we look at enrollment, are we affecting that student choice process and getting them here?

An additional tool discussed by the participants that they use to help measure their marketing efforts is Google AdWords. Janice (Penske Community College), Ursula (Petty Community College), Ross (Hendricks Community College), and Joey (Roush Community College) all identified that they use Google Analytics or Google AdWords to help gather data on the marketing the institution is doing. Ross went on to explain that his department uses Google Analytics because of how cost effective it is:

Google Analytics, which is what gives us our website, is not costing us anything to use, and so we don't have a separate application or software package or anything like that that we use for any of the other marketing that we might do.

In addition, Janice (district office, Penske Community College) discussed that the only true measurement of all her marketing is through Google AdWords. She stated:

Really, the only thing that we [marketing department] can really track well is the Google AdWords program, the search engine marketing. The general marketing that we do on television and radio and outdoor, we just see spikes in our web visits and telephone calls to the colleges. But we can't track conversions.

Another technology that the participants identified they use at their community college to evaluate their marketing is the institution's website. Software for websites has the ability to gather and report information based on the visitors to the site. Ross (Hendricks Community College), Monica (Penske Community College), and Janice (direct office, Penske Community College) use their website to measure advertising influence. The information Ross gathers from the website is about the visitors to the site and where on the site they visit. He stated:

For things like the website, we [marketing department] use an analytics program that tells us how many individuals access the site, how many of those were new individuals that had not accessed the site before, where they went on the site, how long they stayed on a particular page, how long it took them to click through the page to get to where they wanted to be and whether they stayed and read that whole page or whether they clicked out of it before they read it. I mean, we have a pretty good idea of what happens when somebody visits our website.

Monica discussed how she can retrieve in-depth information from her website based on the digital advertising she does. The measurement she is assessing is the reaction to her digital marketing to potential students compared to industry benchmarks. Also, she assesses per campaign to potential students. She discussed this further:

...I do it [assess] by individual campaign. If it's digital, there's usually an industry standard so with click-through rates in an email, if the industry standard is 8% and we get a 13% click-through rate, I would consider that successful. If we get a 4% click-through rate, we're going to look at that email. Was our subject line bad, did we send it on the wrong day of the week? I mean there are all sorts of things you can look at. That's going to be the way I look at that.

In addition, Janice (district office, Penske Community College) uses additional software, Siteimprove, to measure the analytics for the district website.

The final tool that was discussed by some of the participants that they use for measuring their marketing efforts is social media tools. Phoebe (Gibbs Community College) expressed that at her institution they are able to measure their marketing by the social media tools they use to reach prospective students. She went on to say that "We've gotten good, I think, good data kind of from our social media advertising this fall semester... certain ads that have been running have had 2,500 clicks in a month." Phoebe added that another benefit from social media advertising is the ability to market specific academic programs and then gather the data on how individuals react to different degree programs.

### **Summary**

Chapter IV presented the findings of the study to address the four research questions. Research question one sought to understand how marketing administrators,

based on their perceptions and experiences, disseminate information of their marketing plans to develop support for the marketing mission related to influencing the student college choice process. There were three main themes that emerged through the analysis of the data collected to address this research question: 1) dissemination of marketing information to address the institutional mission, 2) negative and positive feedback regarding the marketing mission of the institution, and 3) non-support of the marketing mission for the institution.

The purpose of Research Question Two was to understand how marketing administrators allocate resources. The eight themes developed from the data analysis that related to this question were: 1) marketing plan development, objectives, strategies, and budget; 2) allocating resources to support marketing strategies, 3) use of advertising agencies, and 4) following marketing trends and implementing marketing strategies.

The purpose of Research Question Three was to understand the benefits and challenges of marketing community colleges. The two themes developed from the data analysis that related to this question were: 1) benefits of marketing community colleges, and 2) challenges to marketing community colleges.

The purpose of Research Question Four was to understand how marketing administrators measure the effects of marketing for their institution. The six themes developed from the data analysis that related to this question were: 1) importance of assessment of marketing efforts, 2) limited funding for assessment of marketing effectiveness, and 3) tools for assessing marketing efforts.

Chapter V will present a discussion of the findings and include implications from the results of the study for higher education practice. In addition to recommendations for

higher education practice, recommendations for future research will be presented in  
Chapter V.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION**

Chapter V presents the discussion of the study's findings. In addition, implications and recommendations for higher education practice are presented, as well as recommendations for future research.

#### **Overview of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore how community college marketing administrators allocate institutional resources to market the institution to affect the student college choice process. The specific foci of this study were the perceptions and experiences of marketing administrators of how they disseminate information of their marketing plans to develop support for the marketing mission, the benefits and challenges of marketing community colleges, the perception of marketing administrators of how their institution supports marketing efforts, and how these administrators measure their institution's marketing effects on the student college choice process.

Community colleges utilize different strategies to accomplish their marketing mission. These strategies are supported through institutional resources provided by higher education institutions (Clagett, 2012; Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011; Tucciarone, 2008). The conceptual framework that framed this study was based on institutional capacity, which is "how well a college performs" (Alfred, Shults, & Strickland, 2009, p. 77). According to Alfred et al., institutional capacity is determined by the tangible and intangible resources of a higher education institution. Tangible resources include financial resources, facilities and properties, human resources, and technology. Intangible resources include people, culture, organizational architecture, time, systems, and reputation.

This qualitative collective case study, conducted through the lens of the constructivist view, addressed four research questions:

1. How do community college marketing administrators disseminate information about their marketing plans throughout their institution?
2. How do community college marketing administrators determine how to allocate institutional resources for marketing their institution?
3. Based on the perceptions and experiences of community college marketing administrators, what are the benefits and challenges of marketing community colleges?
4. How do community college marketing administrators measure the effect of institutional marketing on student college choice?

The study settings were seven community colleges located in Texas. The participants were eight marketing administrators from the seven study institutions, who all met the inclusion criteria for the study. The inclusion criteria was that they were full-time administrators who were directly involved with marketing of their community college; they had three years of experience in higher education marketing at the time of the study; and they had a role in the decision-making process of how marketing funds are allocated at their institution. Chandler is the president at Woods Community College, which is a small, rural-serving community college. Janice is the director of marketing at the district level for the Penske Community College District, which is a large, urban-serving district. Joey is the director of marketing and recruiting at Roush Community College, which is a medium-size, rural-serving institution. Monica is the director of marketing at the campus-level of the Penske Community College District. Phoebe is the coordinator of marketing and alumni relations at Gibbs Community College, which is a

small-size, rural-serving institution. Rachel is the director of information and effectiveness at Haas Stewart Community College, which is a medium-size, rural-serving institution. Ross is the chief technology officer at Hendricks Community College, which is a small-size, rural-serving institution. Ursula is the dean of community relations and special events at Petty Community College, as well as the public information officer for the college. Petty Community College is a small-size, four-year institution that awards primarily associate degrees. It is classified as a four year institution due to it offering several technical baccalaureate degrees.

The data collection tools used in this study were the lens of the researcher, semi-structured interviews, field notes, reflexive journaling, and institutional documents. The analysis of the data was conducted through the constant comparative method of analysis, as well as open and axial coding. The analysis methods were used to arrive at the themes that emerged to address the four research questions.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

#### **Developing Support for the Marketing Mission through Informing the Campus**

The first research question sought to understand how community college marketing administrators disseminate information about their marketing plans throughout their institution. The three themes that emerged from analysis of the data were: 1) dissemination of marketing information to address institutional mission, 2) negative or positive feedback regarding the marketing mission of the institution, and 3) non-support of the marketing mission created by the marketing department.

All of the participants in this study discussed the importance of communicating and disseminating information about their marketing mission across the institution in order to ensure that all employees within the institution are informed about their

marketing efforts. As noted by Cohen, Brawer, and Kisker (2014) and Coomes (2000), as the organizational structures of community colleges have evolved over the years, communication with stakeholders is imperative to the success of marketing departments. This is supported by the participants in this study who not only addressed the importance of the communications and dissemination of information, but who also perceived that the more effective they are at informing the campus community of their marketing plan, the more buy-in and support they receive throughout the institution for what they are trying to accomplish through their marketing efforts. This finding also aligns with the research of Lewison and Hawes (2007) and Clagett (2012), who found that marketing administrators have to communicate with and receive the support from a vast array of stakeholders from across the campus to be effective and successful with their efforts.

Those participants in the study who minimally kept their campus updated on their institutional advertising and publication strategies did not perceive they received the same levels of campus support as the participants who fully communicated with the stakeholders across their campus. The results of the experiences of the participants is parallel to the research conducted by Cann and George (2003), who found that organizational communication is necessary for receiving institutional support when developing marketing strategies.

There were several tools identified by the participants in this study of how they communicated and disseminated information about the marketing efforts at their college. Some of the tools mentioned were large campus meetings, smaller department meetings, as well as technological tools. The participants identified they used these various tools to communicate the marketing mission, marketing plan, strategies and objectives for marketing efforts, as well as the policies and procedures for marketing within the

institution. Those tools were also identified as mechanisms through which the marketing administrators also received feedback from employees at the campus, as well as from the external community. This is similar to the findings of Lewison and Hawes (2007), who found that marketing administrators receive feedback from individuals and stakeholders at the institution, but because marketing is a public aspect of the college, there are also individuals from the community that contribute feedback as well. The participants shared both positive and negative experiences with feedback about the marketing efforts at their institution, but mainly stated that they hear more negative than positive. An example was shared by Janice (district office, Penske Community College) who commented that, “I would say in general I get the negative and not the positive [feedback]. I kind of operate on the assumption that no news is good news because when they're unhappy they complain. When they're happy I don't hear from them.” Though the participants’ experiences with receiving feedback about marketing efforts at their institutions tends to be negative, Potter (2012) found that community colleges use feedback from individuals across campus to develop their marketing strategies

The participants in this study who were able to take unfavorable feedback and allow it to constructively shape their marketing strategies found support on their campus (Tokuhama, 2011). Though not all feedback is positive and at times there is a lack of support from the community college (Lewison & Hawes, 2007), it appears that the participants in this study are able to take the adverse feedback they receive and utilize it to create more avenues of communications to more positively influence their marketing efforts at their institution (Alfred et al., 2009).

A final finding related to how marketing administrators communicate to the institution about the marketing mission is that there are many challenges in doing this,

and one is that they get no support from some of their stakeholders and co-workers (Lewison & Hawes, 2007). The conceptual framework that framed this study, institutional capacity, supports that non-tangible resources can affect institutional performance (Alfred et al., 2009). A non-tangible resource of community colleges is the culture it creates to work within, and participants in this study explained that they have to work within a culture that at times is unsupportive. Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) mentioned “participatory management” to describe how other employees on campus provide no support regarding the marketing that is being done, but have suggestions to offer about how to improve the marketing for the institution.

The findings of this study suggest the importance of creating a culture of support for the marketing department. Marketing administrators need to work alongside other administrators and departments on campus to create a culture of support. This can be accomplished by communicating and disseminating information about the marketing plans through formal and informal meetings with others on campus, as well as utilizing technological tools such as email to provide continuous communications about what the marketing department is doing for the institution.

### **Allocation of Institutional Resources for Marketing**

The second research question sought to comprehend how marketing administrators determine how to allocate institutional resources for marketing their institution. After the data was gathered and analyzed, four themes were identified: 1) marketing plan development, objectives, strategies, and budget, 2) allocating resources to support marketing strategy, 3) use of advertising agencies, and 4) following marketing trends and implementing marketing strategies.

The conceptual framework that framed this study, institutional capacity, addresses how tangible and intangible resources play a role in the performance of an institution (Alfred et al., 2009). This specific research question assessed the tangible resources. Marketing administrators have to evaluate their objectives and advertising avenues they want to use to market their institution (Peruta, Ryan, & Engelsman, 2013) to determine how they can be used to affect the college choice process of potential students (Tucciarone, 2008). The participants in this study make determinations of how to allocate their resources by creating and examining marketing strategies to position themselves in the marketplace. Ross (Hendricks Community College) noticed that there has been a shift in how institutions reach prospective students, and he says colleges have “moved away from broadcast media [and] more into online.” This strategy is supported by the work of Clagett (2012), who states that community colleges have to determine how they are going to position themselves to compete against other institutions. As noted by Janice and Monica (both at Penske Community College), this is imperative as they are located in an urban area where there are multiple four-year colleges and universities that they compete with for students.

In order to situate their institutions favorably, the participants discussed that they allocate resources to multiple marketing strategies as they serve a diverse student population that includes first-year students, non-traditional students, and non-consumer students. This multiple strategies approach is not supported by some researchers such as Lewison and Hawes (2007), who suggest that marketing administrators should only choose between the strategies of mass marketing and target marketing. It appears from the findings of this study that the approach supported by Lewison and Hawes does not work for community colleges located in areas with multiple competitors.

All of the participants discussed the challenges they are having with marketing their institutions due to the budgeting processes at their institutions, decreases in state funding over the years, and a depressed local economy in their service areas. The participants discussed that most were part of a formal budget process, but that they did not have final decision-making authority about the budget. They also addressed that their budgets had remained relatively flat over the past several years. These findings are supported in the literature and are not specific just to these institutions in Texas. Budgeting for a community college has become more difficult with the decrease in state appropriations (Dembicki, 2011; Katsinas, Tollefson, & Reamey, 2008). In 2013, appropriations from the state of Texas for community colleges had decreased to account for only 21% of revenues (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 2013). These funding challenges affect institutional budgets and specifically, the marketing budget. As was noted in the study setting profiles, the marketing budgets for all of the institutions were a minimal percentage of the overall institutional budget. Several of the participants discussed that if budget cuts had to be made, it was easier to take away from a service-related area such as marketing than an academic program budget. Allocating financial resources to marketing can be difficult for marketing administrators (Alfred et al., 2009).

The findings of the study related to allocation of marketing resources is supported by the research conducted by Edwards (2011) and Zeidenberg (2008), who found that higher education institutions are having a difficult time deciding on how to market to potential students because of the decrease in the budgets they have to work with. Based on the perceptions and experiences of the participants in this study, the findings demonstrate that the budget is pivotal to how effective a marketing department can be. A

decrease in marketing budgets affects how and what marketing administrators can allocate to the marketing of their institution.

As supported by the conceptual framework of this study, institutional capacity, marketing administrators have many decisions to make when it comes to allocating both the tangible and intangible resources available to them (Alfred et al., 2009). When the participants decide on what resources to allocate to meet their marketing mission, the findings indicate that they make those decisions based on what resources may have the largest influence on the college choice decisions of potential students. Unfortunately, the participants claimed that they did not always have the tools available to them to quantifiably assess the strategies used and their impact. At times, the strategies the participants use are influenced by external factors such as donations from an external constituent. An example of this was shared by Chandler (Woods Community College) whose institution had received a donation of money and the individuals who gave the gift dictated how the resources could be allocated.

**Following marketing trends and implementing marketing strategies.** A tool that all of the participants used to guide their allocation of marketing resources is their marketing plan, which is developed to achieve the marketing department's objectives, achieve institution goals, and accomplish marketing tasks (Clagett, 2012; Tokuhama, 2011). The participants in this study varied on the duration of the marketing plan they developed for the institution. Some of the participants had developed a five-year plan, and other participants did not have any particular duration regarding the length of their marketing plan for their institution (Clagett, 2012). The findings of this study demonstrate that developing a marketing plan with particular durations aid the marketing department in achieving its objectives, goals, and tasks (Clagett, 2012; Lowrie, 2007;

Tokuhamma, 2011). When a marketing plan is developed with specific goals and time duration, then the department is able to understand the vision the marketing administrator is trying to communicate.

Alfred et al. (2009), within the context of institutional capacity, discuss both intangible and tangible resources that are available for allocation to marketing the institution. A tangible resource for community colleges is the human resources that are hired by the institution (Alfred et al., 2009). A community college needs to be able to hire employees that have the ability to understand the current marketing trends within their marketing departments (Alfred et al., 2009). Of the eight participants, three understood the importance of staying current with marketing trends. Monica (Penske Community College) and Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) explained how they observe other companies and higher education institutions to determine what marketing strategies are impactful and where they need to allocate their resources for maximum marketing success. Some of them observe large corporations, while others look at businesses who work within similar demographics to see what marketing strategies they have successfully implemented. Based on the perceptions of the participants in this study, marketing administrators who keep up with new marketing trends have a competitive advantage over other institutional marketing administrators, as these individuals can maneuver their institution in the marketplace to be successful. These findings are supported by the conceptual framework of this study, which states that a college's success is impacted by the qualified individuals that they are able to retain and hire (Alfred et al., 2009).

For marketing administrators, one of the most important aspects of their job is implementing marketing strategies and deciding what advertising is important for the

institution (Clagett, 2012; Tucciarone, 2008). They take their objectives, budget, and available resources and attempt to create a unique advertising campaign (Clagett, 2012; Tucciarone, 2008). Not only are marketing administrators creating campaigns but also developing marketing brands to have a consistent impression on potential students (Hayes, 2007). The participants in this study implemented many different advertising strategies using traditional media, digital media, publications, face-to-face interactions, academic and vocational programs, and events. The findings of this study are not fully supported by the extant literature that suggests marketing administrators are focused only on old media advertising (e.g., Tucciarone, 2008). The findings of this study support that community college marketing administrators are utilizing multiple strategies and tools to gain knowledge regarding all types of advertising strategies that are available.

All of the participants discussed the challenges they have in marketing to their specific target audience (Tucciarone, 2008). Community college students are diverse. They develop advertising campaigns around demographics, geographic regions, and behavioral characteristics to influence the type of student they want at their community college (Lewison & Hawes, 2007; Stanton, 2013). The participants in this study develop their marketing plan around types of individuals who they are trying to influence to choose their institution. The work of Tucciarone (2008) supports the practices of the participants in this study. He found that marketing administrators develop marketing plans to influence a particular type of student regarding certain demographics, which leads to marketing administrators successfully achieving their marketing objectives and strategies.

### **Benefits and Challenges of Marketing a Community College**

The third research question sought to comprehend the benefits and challenges of marketing community colleges. From the data that was gathered and analyzed, themes for both benefits of marketing community colleges and challenges of marketing community colleges emerged. Benefits of marketing community colleges included 1) enrollment growth, 2) community awareness, and 3) institution awareness. Challenges to marketing community colleges included 1) the limited financial resources allocated to marketing, 2) developing a good marketing mix for all potential students, 3) institutional bureaucracy, and 4) resisting aggressive intrusion into the community college's service area by outside institutions.

A benefit participants received from marketing their community college was enrollment growth, which is imperative for the continued operation of every college. According to Coomes (2000), during the 1970s, because of an increase of students attending community colleges, colleges were forced to change their organizational structure to manage the growth of enrollment, and the restructuring of the community college organizational structure led to the development of enrollment management. (Haas Stewart Community College), Chandler (Woods Community College), and Ross (Hendricks Community College) all conveyed that enrollment growth is the most important benefit of marketing. Rachel said it best when describing the main benefit regarding marketing to influence potential students, "Well, students. First and foremost, students. Because you know we can't continue to operate if we don't have students." This finding aligns with the research done by Clagett (2012) that found community colleges use marketing to increase enrollment growth, and based on the views of the participants, marketing administrators must understand that a key to enrollment growth for community colleges comes from effectively marketing their institutions.

Additionally, enrollment growth is often linked to the public perception of a college. Due to the nature of community colleges, and the close involvement within the local community (Clagett, 2012), community awareness is a critical element of success for community colleges (Anctil, 2008). Community awareness and creating a positive public image were highlighted by participants as a benefit of community college marketing. Monica (Penske Community College) and Phoebe (Gibbs Community College) agreed that an advantage of promoting a community college is the awareness that is created to potential students and the local community. Chandler (Woods Community College) noted that increased enrollment tends to be the public's measuring stick for the college. When the college experiences enrollment growth, the community is often satisfied; however, when enrollment suffers decline, local citizens' question the college. The importance of having a positive public image within the community to influence the college choice process as found by Anctil (2008), Clagett (2012), and Ma and Baum (2012), reveal that marketing administrators can integrate marketing into the local general public and improved community relations result from marketing. By marketing locally, marketing administrators receive increased support for the institution by the surrounding community while the community receives effective communication from the institution, and a type of marketing reciprocity is established.

Within the importance of local marketing, it is necessary for the success of community colleges to market to the neighborhood and community around the college location, as the location of the college is one tangible resource of the institution (Alfred et al., 2009). Participants understood a benefit of marketing their community college was increasing the awareness in the community of the location of the college and the district with which it is associated, and this parallels with the conceptual framework which

highlights the importance of tangible location of an institution. Although marketing administrators can communicate where their campuses are located and increase public image and public awareness, overall, there is a lack of research done regarding the amount of institutional awareness created by the marketing done by the institution. However, community colleges see many benefits from marketing their institution such as increased enrollment, community relations, and increased public awareness.

In addition to the benefits of marketing to influence the college choice process, there are challenges as well. Participants discussed the challenges they have in marketing their community college and highlighted four in particular, which are 1) the limited financial resources allocated to marketing, 2) developing a good marketing mix for all potential students, 3) institutional bureaucracy, and 4) resisting aggressive intrusion into the community college's service area by outside institutions.

A primary challenge for many marketing administrators is limited financial resources (Noel-Levitz, 2011), as there has been a continuous decrease in state appropriations. Holda (2011) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2013) concluded that there has been a decrease in the financial funding for community colleges, and these declines have had a negative impact on community colleges and how they allocate financial resources for marketing (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 2013). The participants in this study explained how they had been impacted by the lack of financial resources for the marketing of the institution. The participants consistently commented that the reduction of state appropriations was a very difficult challenge to overcome when attempting to influence prospective students through marketing because community colleges no longer have the funds they had in the past to be able to compete with other colleges through marketing. Rachel (Haas Stewart

Community College) described that cutting the marketing budget is effortless compared to other areas on campus. Removing funds from a miscellaneous item in a marketing budget is much easier than removing funds that influence a class or program directly. Even though there has been research done regarding the reduction of state appropriations, there is limited research available regarding the impact that financial resource reduction has solely on marketing departments.

Amid the challenge of operating within a tight budget, marketing administrators have the responsibility to choose the best advertising strategies that will be used to market the institution (Tucciarone, 2008). Marketing departments have many different marketing options as it relates to advertising their institution, and determining the best marketing mix is a challenge for many community colleges. Participants found the current marketing environment very diverse, which created a challenge for them when deciding on an appropriate marketing mix for the institution. Ursula (Petty Community College) said, “A big challenge is finding a good marketing mix for all ages. Especially right now with the downturn in the economy, we see a lot of older students coming back to Petty Community College to train. You can’t reach them the same way you reach the 20 year old. So, you have to have a good mix of all sorts of different types [of marketing strategies], which is more expensive.” Costantinides and Zinck Stagno (2011) discussed the importance of understanding and knowing where to implement the institution’s marketing mix, and the worry for marketing administrators is the possibility that they could be missing potential students they are trying to target if the proper marketing strategies are not used.

Challenges for marketing administrators can also come from internal sources within the institution. The culture of an institution is important to the efficiency of the

organizational structure, however, when there are internal challenges and bureaucracy, the culture of an institution is impacted (Alfred et al., 2009). Trying to overcome institutional bureaucracy and maintain an efficient marketing department were challenges for the participants of this study. Monica (Penske Community College) identified the challenge of bureaucracy from the accounting department at Penske Community College when implementing her marketing strategies. Her difficulties arise when trying to purchase creative works that are necessary to execute the institution's marketing plan. The findings suggest the importance of campus leadership to minimize the effects of institutional bureaucracy so that there can be a culture of efficiency for the campus (Alfred et al., 2009). Institutional bureaucracy was a challenge for participants, yet very little research has been done regarding internal conflict and the influence it has on the marketing department.

Along with internal institutional challenges, many marketing administrators feel external challenges such as the increase in competition for students between community colleges and universities which causes an overall decrease in community college enrollment (Juszkiewicz, 2014). With the increase in competition for prospective students, community colleges have new four-year institution competitors trying to lure away their students (Clagett, 2012). Ross (Hendricks Community College) conveyed that public community colleges in Texas have service areas comprised of specified counties within which they have to stay when marketing. He also expressed that four-year institutions do not have service areas they must stay within, which creates difficulties for community colleges. From Ross's perspective, a current struggle for community colleges is having four-year institutions enter the college's service area and compete for their dual credit students. Ross' perspective agrees with Clagett (2012) that competition among

higher education institutions has increased. However, regarding four-year institutions competing for dual-credit students, there is limited research. According to the perceptions of the participants, in order to offset the encroachment of four-year institutions, community colleges must market the value they offer to industries within their service area. Chandler (Woods Community College) expressed the necessity of growing programs. Chandler says, “We’ve got to figure out what we’ve done in the last couple of years, and we’ll continue to do in five years, is grow programs. So we added an instrumentation and electrical program. We added a pipefitting program to tap into industry who had needs for those jobs. Now, when you look at academic transfer, of course the medical profession is very good, but the entry point for some of those programs is astronomical.” Additionally, community colleges can curb the loss of enrollment to four-year institutions by showing the value of a smaller setting with more personalized instruction. Ross (Hendricks Community College) echoed the importance of vocational programs to increase enrollment. He discussed the importance of having instructors in front of potential students to help influence their college choice process and explained that “The real strategy we have to emphasize is individual instructors being where the students are and talking to them. Whether that’s career day or a personal visit to a high school campus or whatever it is.”

### **Measuring Effects of Marketing Efforts**

The fourth and final research question sought to comprehend how marketing administrators measure the effects of institutional marketing on student college choice. After the data was gathered and analyzed, three themes surfaced about measuring the effects of marketing to potential students. Those themes were 1) importance of

assessment of marketing efforts 2) limited funding for assessment of marketing effectiveness, and 3) tools for assessing marketing efforts.

A way community colleges create a competitive advantage over other institutions is through gathering data and then deciding on where to market their institution (Clagett, 2012). Marketing administrators use many different tools to gather and analyze their institution, such as surveys, focus groups, and other alternative ways in which to glean data (Clagett, 2012; Nickels & Marriott, 2006). Participants are implementing analytics in admission paperwork, events, and face-to-face interactions. These findings contradict the findings of Clagett (2012) and Nickels and Marriot (2006), because participants are getting away from direct ways to gather data, and trying to find ways to subtly integrate data collection tools. While gathering information and data for a higher education institution is important to the effectiveness of the institution (Nickels & Marriott, 2006), community colleges understand the importance of gathering data to help improve the overall institution (Clagett, 2012). Participants of this study understood the importance of assessment and how it could be an integral part of the marketing department, and they supported using analytics to improve their department. The participants all discussed their efforts to find ways to implement analytics tools into different aspects of their marketing efforts to be able to assess the effectiveness of the strategies being used on capturing potential students. This finding parallels the conceptual framework that emphasizes the importance of an effective organizational structure (Alfred et al., 2009). The contradiction with the findings of this study is that even though participants knew analytics were important for the marketing department, they did not know where to start. Ursula (Petty Community College) discussed that she has wanted to measure the effectiveness of specific marketing strategies that have been used at her institution but

was at a loss of how to do so. Marketing administrators will not be able to assist and aid their department until they learn how to integrate analytics into the improvement of their marketing. The participants of this study are not utilizing analytics to gather data to improve the marketing that is done for the institution, which contradicts the research done by Clagett (2012) and Tucciarone (2008) that explains that higher education institutions gather data to shape the marketing done for the institution.

As previously stated, funding is a critical attribute regarding how effective a marketing department can be as it relates to marketing the institution (Holda, 2011). Participants were not able to integrate analytics into their marketing plan because of that lack of financial funding, which echoes the research done by Zeidenberg (2008) that marketing departments are limited in what they can do because of the lack of financial resources (Hrabowski, Suess, Dillon, & Grajek, 2012). Most of the participants addressed that there were simply no funds to invest in tools to assess the effectiveness of their marketing strategies. Janice (district office, Penske Community College) was the only participant who budgets for analytics, while Rachel (Haas Stewart Community College) understands the value of analytics but does not have the funds in which implement them.

While participants did not have the funding to pay for analytical data, they do utilize social media to connect with potential students, which provides complimentary analytics for marketing departments. Social media has had a large impact on the marketing of higher education institutions because of the connectivity and advertisement opportunities it creates (Peruta, Ryan, & Engelsman, 2013). The two marketing tools with built-in analytics software, Google Adwords and Facebook, were the most popular among the participants, and because of their use of social media, participants did not have

to invest into analytics because they were ultimately satisfied with the data they receive from third-party software.

However, participants encountered challenges integrating some of these analytics because the use of marketing analytics with student information, without impeding on FERPA, proved difficult. A challenge shared by the participants related to attempting to assess the effectiveness of their marketing efforts was the inability to gather student information at all. Janice (district office, Penske Community College) expressed the difficulty of gathering data she needs on students because of FERPA and the technology department at Penske Community College not relinquishing their privacy issues so student data could be acquired. Janice says, “I mean, if we were any other kind of company, we would be heavily into tracking conversions and following people all the way through the cycle. But with FERPA, we still haven’t figured out a way exactly to overcome that.” This finding parallels the research done by Luzer (2014) and Maslowsky (2013) regarding the lack of technology used and invested in by higher education institutions to allow marketing administrators to gather needed information on prospective students. Marketing administrators have to create solutions and work alongside of other departments to be able to implement analytics into their marketing plan.

### **Implications for Higher Education Practice**

The findings of this study have resulted in several implication for higher education practice. The first implication is that if marketing administrators do not communicate with their departments and campus personnel and receive feedback from them, they will not efficiently influence the college choice process of as many potential students as possible. To be efficient, marketing administrators need to have

communication with their department regarding departmental vision, allocation of financial resources toward marketing strategies, and implementing marketing strategies (Kirp, 2003). Based on this study, marketing administrators need to involve stakeholders from across the campus (Lewison & Hawes, 2007), create avenues to keep co-workers up to date about different marketing activities, and hold campus-wide meetings (Alfred et al., 2009). In addition, receiving positive and negative feedback needs to be a necessity so that marketing administrators can improve how the institution influences the college choice process. Also, marketing administrators need to learn how not to take the negative feedback personally, but allow it to improve the strategies of the department.

The second implication for higher education practice that is based on the findings of this study is that if marketing departments do not shift their marketing strategies to digital marketing, their ability to influence the college choice process of potential students will be diminished. Marketing departments have to recognize and allocate resources to digital media such as social media, video, websites, mobile devices, and other digital media (Martinez, 2010). The reason for the shift to digital marketing is that current college students are changing how they use marketing and other information obtained through digital media (Lawlor, 2014). Significant shifts that community colleges should consider making in order to insure their marketing has optimal reach for potential students include social networking websites and mobile devices (Lawlor, 2014). Higher education institutions will not have the largest influence if they are not committed to digital marketing.

The third implication for higher education practice that is based on the findings of this study is the obstacles that marketing administrators have to endure when marketing a community college. Community college marketing administrators face the challenge of

limited financial resources for their institution, which greatly impacts the marketing a community college can do (Alfred et al., 2009). Another obstacle that marketing administrators need to address is having the right marketing mix for potential students (Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011). Marketing administrators have the difficulty of trying to purchase a range of marketing that will influence potential college students. Finally, marketing administrators at community colleges have the difficulty of other higher education institutions intruding into their service area and impacting prospective students (Bergerson, 2009). Community colleges have to market within specific service areas, but four-year institutions are not limited to specific service areas for their marketing to influence the college choice process of students. Therefore, if marketing administrators do not confront these intrusions, then community colleges risk losing potential students to four-year institutions and therefore will have to find different avenues to identify and influence other prospective students.

The final implication for higher education practice is that community colleges must find ways to use analytics, or their enrollment might suffer. Participants in this study recognized the importance of analytics but struggled to find ways to implement measurements and analytics into their marketing. If community colleges administrators do not find ways to assess the marketing they are doing to influence the college choice process, they will struggle with enrollment growth (Clagett, 2012). In addition, community colleges also have to find ways to use analytics, or the marketing department will not have an efficient and effective marketing plan (Tucciarone, 2008). Finally, marketing administrators from community colleges need to determine which data-gathering instruments, such as surveys, evaluations, or other tools, they want to use to

gather data. The failure not choose any instruments could result in not effectively using analytics to measure the marketing done by the institution (Clagett, 2012).

### **Recommendations for Higher Education Practice**

The results of this study have created several recommendations for higher education practice. There are many different factors that influence the college choice process, such as cost, perceived benefits, parents, siblings, and marketing (Anctil; 2008; Burdet, 2013; Farnsworth, 2005; Schultz & Lucido, 2011). Therefore, community colleges have different marketing tactics they can allocate their resources towards to influence the college choice process (Clagett, 2012; Lewison & Hawes, 2007; Lowrie, 2007; Tokuhama, 2011; Tucciarone, 2008).

The first recommendation for higher education practice is that marketing administrators need to implement ways to increase the support for the marketing department on campus. A way to increase support on campus is to have frequent formal and informal meetings with individuals inside the marketing department. Through frequent meetings the marketing department will be updated on what strategies need to be accomplished and have the knowledge to communicate that information to the campus. In addition, to increase support on campus, marketing administrators need to update other key departments that are connected to the marketing department, which could include the recruiting and student affairs departments (Clagett, 2012; Kirp, 2003; Lewison & Hawes, 2007). Marketing administrators need to find ways to increase communication and set the vision within the institution, because the campus provides support when they are aware of what the marketing department is trying to accomplish (Kirp, 2003). This can be accomplished through task forces, digital instruments (email and electronic media), and campus meetings. Finally, marketing administrators need to be able to keep

feedback and criticism in perspective to be able to improve the marketing department they supervise.

Another recommendation for higher education practice is to shift their marketing to new media and make an effort to understand the ever-changing digital marketing opportunities. Marketing administrators need to familiarize themselves with social media, search engine optimization, video streaming, and other dynamic media opportunities (Martinez, 2010). Social media has great influence on potential students, and marketing administrators need to lead their institutions to social media so their marketing has an influence on prospective students (Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011). Another strategy that marketing administrators need to implement is search engine optimization, which allows institutions to place their institution in front of specific potential students who are interested in specific programs. Shifting the marketing department strategy to new media is accomplished through understanding the type of potential students marketing departments are trying to reach (Clagett, 2012). Marketing administrators must understand that college students' preferences evolve quickly, that they are using media completely differently than the previous generation, and that it is difficult to convince a potential student to enroll at a local community college (Lucas, 2006). Marketing administrators must find ways to engage and provide the needed information to persuade students to attend a community college.

Finding alternative ways to influence the college choice process without needing additional financial resources is the third recommendation for community college marketing administrators. With the challenge of limited financial resources for their institution and the marketing department as well, marketing administrators must look for new ways to increase the awareness of the institution without a financial strain (Edwards,

2011). Community colleges will find success at influencing the college choice process through more cost effective ways of marketing (Zeidenberg, 2008). These cost effective avenues could be social media, remarketing, and other economical marketing options. Marketing administrators at community colleges must be creative in how they allocate their financial resources so that the institution can influence the college choice process of as many potential students as possible (Edwards, 2011; Zeidenberg, 2008).

The final recommendation for higher education practice is that community college marketing administrators must implement analytics within their program. If community college marketing administrators are not assessing and measuring their marketing, they are doing a disservice to their institution (Clagett, 2012). Marketing administrators need to determine what aspects of marketing to measure in order to understand their efficiencies (Tucciarone, 2008). In addition, marketing administrators and other senior leadership within the institution need to find ways to allocate financial resources to develop different analytics for the marketing department. Marketing administrators also need to further develop ways to implement analytics into different areas on campus (Clagett, 2012; Nickels & Marriott, 2006). Some of these areas can be admission applications, community and campus events, the institution's website, and third-party events.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings of this research on allocating resources to influence the college choice process have led to the detection of needs for future research. One study that could be organized is to further expand on the knowledge of allocation of resources by doing a qualitative study comparing rural and urban community colleges. This study would illustrate the difference in students and strategies that are being used between rural

and urban institutions. These findings would be valuable to community colleges because they would be able to learn different strategies from different-sized community colleges.

A quantitative study should be conducted on community colleges that compares the percentage of the overall budget that is allocated to marketing with the enrollment growth or decrease. Once the quantitative data is analyzed, the data will allow researchers and administrators to see if the financial resources allocated to marketing have a direct impact on enrollment growth.

Analytics is essential for community colleges' marketing efforts and should be further studied. This can be accomplished through a qualitative study comparing how higher education institutions gather data and implement analytics to how impact corporate business uses analytics for their company. This would allow higher education to learn how other businesses implement analytics to grow and become a more efficient organization.

From the study conducted, there were multiple challenges the participants discussed in relation to their marketing department. A qualitative study could be conducted to find out more information as it relates to the challenges that marketing administrators have to endure on a daily basis. This would allow higher education to learn how to remove obstacles and implement new procedures to aid rather than inhibit their marketing departments.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to explore how community college marketing administrators allocate institutional resources to market the institution to affect the student college choice process. Community colleges utilize marketing to influence

college choice process. Participating in this study were eight marketing administrators from seven community colleges across Texas who gave their experiences and perceptions on how they allocate institutional resources to affect the college choice process. Before this study, these eight participants had not expressed their experiences through an avenue such as this study. The participants in this study gave great insight about how marketing administrators, based on their perceptions and experiences, disseminate information of their marketing plans to develop support for the marketing mission related to influencing the student college choice process, how they allocate resources to market the institution, how they measure the marketing that the institution implements, and the benefits and challenges of marketing to influence the college choice process.

A qualitative methodology and collective case study research design were used to address the four research questions that guided this study. Data was collected through various methods, which included the researcher, semi-structured interviews, documents, and reflexive journaling. After the data was triangulated for credibility and validity, open and axial coding were used to uncover themes and analyze the collected data.

The overall findings of this study revealed that the participants in this study perceived that allocating resources to market the institution to influence the college choice program is impacted by communication, allocation process, benefits and challenges, and measuring the effects of marketing efforts. The participants' perceptions were shaped by their experiences and how they have been involved with the allocation and marketing process on their campus.

The results of this study also showed that communication within the marketing department and throughout the campus are necessary to receive support from the whole of the campus. Marketing administrators are more effective when the campus

community is informed of their marketing plan, as the buy-in and support they receive throughout the institution for what they are trying to accomplish through their marketing efforts increases. Additionally, marketing administrators found that organizational communication is necessary for receiving institutional support when developing marketing strategies. Marketing administrators who are able to take unfavorable feedback and allow it to constructively shape their marketing strategies found support on their campus. The finding of this study suggests the importance of creating a culture of support for the marketing department.

The participants in this study make determinations of how to allocate their resources by creating and examining marketing strategies to position themselves in the marketplace. Marketing Administrators allocate resources through multiple marketing strategies as they serve a diverse student population which includes first-year students, non-traditional students, and non-consumer students, all while facing the challenges of marketing their institutions within the framework of set or constrained budgeting processes at their institutions, decreases in state funding over the years, and a depressed local economy in their service areas.

In addition, the participants expressed the benefits of marketing a community college, which include enrollment growth, community awareness, and institutional awareness. With the benefits, there are also challenges of limited financial resources allocated to marketing, developing a good marketing mix for all potential students, institutional bureaucracy, and resisting aggressive intrusion into the community college's service area by outside institutions.

The final finding was the importance of assessment of marketing efforts, limited funding for assessment of marketing effectiveness, and tools for assessing marketing

efforts. Participants of this study understood the importance of assessment and how it could be an integral part of the marketing department, and they supported using analytics to improve their department. Most of the participants addressed that there were simply no funds to invest in tools to assess the effectiveness of their marketing strategies. However, while participants did not have the funding to pay for analytical data, they do utilize social media to connect with potential students, which in turn provides complimentary analytics for marketing departments with satisfactory results.

## References

- Absher, K., and Crawford, G. "Marketing the Community College Starts with Understanding Students' Perspectives." *Community College Review*, 1996, 23(4), 59–68.
- Adelman, C. (2003). A growing plurality: The "traditional age community college dominant" student. *Community College Journal*, 73(5), 27-30.
- Alfred, R. L., Shults, C., Jaquette, O., and Strickland, S. (2009). *Community colleges on the horizon: challenge, choice or abundance*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield.
- American Association of Community Colleges. (2014). *2014 fact sheet*. Retrieved from <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Pages/fastfactsfactsheet.aspx>
- American Association of Community Colleges. (2015). *2015 fact sheet*. Retrieved from <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Pages/fastfactsfactsheet.aspx>
- American Marketing Association. (2014). *About AMA*. Retrieved from <https://www.ama.org/AboutAMA/Pages/Definition-of-Marketing.aspx>
- Anctil, E. J. (2008). Selling higher education: Marketing and advertising America's colleges and universities. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 34(2). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ashburn, E. (2007). To increase enrollment, community colleges add more sports. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 53(44).
- Avery, C., & Turner, S. (2012). Student Loans: Do College Students Borrow Too Much—Or Not Enough?. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 165-192.

- Bateman, M., & Hossler, D. (1996, summer). Exploring the development of postsecondary education plans among African-American and white students. *College and University*, 72(1), 2-9.
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544-559.
- Bergerson, A. A. (2009). College choice and access to college: Moving policy, research and practice to the 21st century. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 35(4). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Beltramini, E. (2009, March). Beyond parent orientation: Cultivating relationships with the entire family. Retrieved from <http://www.acui.org/publications/bulletin/article.aspx?issue=14869&id=9198>
- Booth, E., & Hayes, D. (2006). Authoring the brand: literary licensing. *Young Consumers*, 7(1), 43-53.
- Brannick, M. K. (1987). Increasing enrollments: A marketing perspective. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, (60), 41-50.
- Briggs, S. (2006). An exploratory study of the factors influencing undergraduate student choice: The case of higher education in Scotland. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(6), 705-722.
- Broekemier G. & Seshadri. S. (1999). Differences in college choice criteria between deciding students and their parents. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 9(3), 1-14.
- Broekemier, G. M. (2002). A comparison of two-year and four-year adult students: Motivations to attend college and the importance of choice criteria. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 12(1), 31-48. doi:10.1300/J050v12n01\_03

- Burdet, K., (2013). *How students choose a college: Understanding the role of internet based resources in the college choice process*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Digital Commons.
- Cabrera, A. F., & La Nasa, S. M. (2000). *Using national databases to study the college choice of low-SES students*. Paper presented at the annual forum of the Association for Institutional Research, Cincinnati.
- Cagampang, F., (1992). *What parents know about preparing for college and how it affects their children's academic performance: Parent's information in the college choice decision*. (Doctoral dissertation.) Retrieved from ProQuest. (UMI: 9330483).
- Cann, C. W., & George, M. A. (2004). Key elements of a successful drive toward marketing strategy making. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 13(1-2), 1-15.
- Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (2014). *Institution Lookup*. Retrieved from [http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/lookup\\_listings/institution.php](http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/lookup_listings/institution.php).
- Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (2014). *Institution Lookup*. Retrieved from [http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/lookup\\_listings/institution.php](http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/lookup_listings/institution.php).
- Ceja, M. (2006). Understanding the role of parents and siblings as information sources in the college choice process of Chicana students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 47(1), 87-104.

- Cejda, B. D., & Leist, J. (2006). Challenges facing community colleges: Perceptions of chief academic officers in nine states. *Community college journal of research and practice*, 30(3), 253-274.
- Cejda, B. D., & Stick, S. L. (2008). Paths to the baccalaureate. A study of transfer and native students at a Hispanic-Serving Institution.
- Chapman, D. W. (1981). A model of student college choice. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 52(5), 490-505.
- Clagett, C. A. (2012). Using data to optimize community college marketing. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2012(153), 49-62.
- Cohen, A. M., Brawer, F. B., & Kisker, C.B. (2014). *The American community college* (5th ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cohen, A. M., & Kisker, C. (2010). *The shaping of American higher education: Emergence and growth of the contemporary system*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Coleman, J. S., & Hoffer, T. (1987) *Public and private high schools: The impact of communities*. New York: Basic Books.
- Coley, R. J. (2000). *The American community college turns 100: A look at its students, programs, and prospects*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.
- College Board. (2014). Retrieved from [http://www.collegeboard.com/research/html/2000\\_psat.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/research/html/2000_psat.html).
- Comfort, W.W. (1925). *The choice of a college*. New York: The MacMillan Company.
- Community College Survey of Student Engagement (2008). High expectation and high support. Austin, TX. University of Texas at Austin Community College Leadership Program.

- Constantinides, E., & Zinck Stagno, M. C. (2011). Potential of the social media as instruments of higher education marketing: a segmentation study. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, 21*(1), 7-24.
- Coomes, M. D. (2000). The historical roots of enrollment management. *New Directions for Student Services, 89*, 5-18.
- Cooper, M. (2010). Student support services at community colleges: A strategy for increasing student persistence and attainment. Institute for Higher Education Policy. 22-29.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Crocker, S., (2014). *An examination of students' technology apprehension, communication competence, and achievement emotions in community college developmental education courses*. (Unpublished master's thesis). Clemson University, Clemson, SC.
- Davis III, C. F., Deil-Amen, R., Rios-Aguilar, C., & González Canché, M. S. (2015). Social media, higher education, and community colleges: A research synthesis and implications for the study of two-year institutions. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice, 39*(5), 409-422.  
doi:10.1080/10668926.2013.828665
- de Dios Jiménez, J., & Salas-Velasco, M. (2000). Modeling educational choices. A binomial logit model applied to the demand for higher education. *Higher Education, 40*(3), 293-311.
- Dembicki, M. (2011, October 26). Tuition, fees edge up as state funds decrease. *Community College Daily*. Retrieved from

<http://www.ccdaily.com/Pages/Funding/Tuition-fees-edge-up-as-state-funding-decreases.aspx>

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Dolence, M. G. (1993). *Strategic enrollment management: A primer for campus administrators*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers.

Durkin, M., McKenna, S., & Cummins, D. (2012). Emotional connections in higher education marketing. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 26(2), 153-161.

Edelman, L. (2013). The effects of parental involvement on the college student transition: A qualitative study at a large Midwestern university. (Master's thesis). University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE.

Edwards, J. (2011). Survey of community / 2 year college counseling services. Retrieved from <http://www.collegecounseling.org/docs/ACCA-CCTF-2011SurveyBooklet.pdf>

Eklund, J. A. (2009). *Exploring dual credit data alignment, student populations, and coursework patterns in Texas using a P-16 framework*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from [repositories.lib.utexas.edu](http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu).

Fain, P. (2014). *Nearing the Bottom*. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/05/15/new-data-show-slowing-national-enrollment-decline>

Farnsworth, K. (2005). A new model for recruiting international students: The 2+2. *International Education*, 35(1), 5-14.

- Franklin, C. (2012). *Something for Everyone: The Marketing and Promotion of Alabama Community Colleges* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Alabama TUSCALOOSA).
- Freeman, K. (1999). The race factor in African Americans' college choice. *Urban Education, 34*(1), 4-25.
- Ginder, S. A., & Kelly-Reid, J. E. (2013). 2012-13 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Methodology Report. NCES 2013-293. *National Center for Education Statistics*.
- Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (3rd ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Goodman, J., Hurwitz, M., & Smith, J. (2014). Sibling (non) rivalry: The relationship between siblings' college choices. Working paper RWP14-028. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government.
- Grossman, D. *Marketing Higher Education: A historical Perspective*. Retrieved from <http://evollution.com/opinions/marketing-higher-education-historical-perspective/>
- Han, P. (2014). A Literature Review on College Choice and Marketing Strategies for Recruitment. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal, 43*(2), 120-130.
- Hanover Research. (2014). *Trends in Higher Education Marketing, Recruitment, and Technology*. Retrieved from <http://www.hanoverresearch.com/media/Trends-in-Higher-Education-Marketing-Recruitment-and-Technology-2.pdf>
- Hansen, K., (2014). *A narrative inquiry of community college faculty perceptions of the role of intrusive advising in student success*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas.

- Hawkins, C. (2009). Leadership theories-managing practices, challenges, suggestions. *Community College Enterprise*, 15(2), 39-62.
- Hayden, M. L. (2000). *Factors that influence the college choice process for African American students* (Doctoral dissertation). Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA.
- Hayes, T. (2007). Delphi study of the future of marketing of higher education. *Journal of Business Research*, 60(9), 927-931.
- Hemsley-Brown, J., & Oplatka, I. (2016). Conclusion: Modelling Higher Education Consumer Choice. In *Higher Education Consumer Choice* (pp. 118-132). Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Henderson, S.E. (2001). On the brink of a profession. In J. Black (Ed.), *Strategic enrollment management revolution* (pp. 3–36). Washington, DC: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers.
- History of Student Financial Aid. (2015). History of student financial aid. Retrieved from <http://www.finaid.org/educators/history.phtml>
- Hoachlander, G., Sikora, A. C., Horn, L., & Carroll, C. D. (2003). Community college students. *Education Statistics Quarterly*, 5(2), 121-128.
- Holda, W. M. (2011). *State of the state presentation to TACCTA*. Austin, TX: Texas Association of Community Colleges. Retrieved from <http://www.tacc.org/documents/2012StateofState.pdf>
- Hopkins, K. (2012, December 11). Some colleges discount tuition for siblings. *U.S. News*. Retrieved from <http://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/paying-for-college/articles/2012/12/11/some-colleges-discount-tuition-for-siblings>

- Hossler, D. and Bean, J. (1990). *Tailoring Enrollment Management to Institutional Needs: Advice to College Leaders*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Hossler, D., Braxton, J., & Coopersmith, G. (1989). Understanding student college choice. *Higher education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, 5, 231-288.
- Hossler, D., and Gallagher, K. (1987). Studying college choice: The three-phase model and implications for policymakers. *College and University*, 2(20), 7–21.
- Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. (2014). *College navigator*. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>
- Jaggars, S., & Fletcher, J. (2014). Redesigning the student intake and information provision processes at a large comprehensive community college.
- Jencks, C., & Riesman, D. (1977). *The academic revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jimenez, J., & Salas-Velasco, M. (2000). Modeling educational choices. A binomial logit model applied to the demand for higher education. *Higher Education*, 40, 293–311.
- Johnson, J. (2011, April 9). Colleges catering to curious parents as well as prospective students. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/colleges-catering-to-curious-parents-as-well-as-prospective-students/2011/03/31/AFdIFe9C\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/colleges-catering-to-curious-parents-as-well-as-prospective-students/2011/03/31/AFdIFe9C_story.html)
- Jones, J., Das, N., Huggins, D., & McNeely III, S. (2008). Enrollment management issue analysis: Operating in a post-Katrina higher education environment. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 32(3), 167-183.
- Juskiewicz, J. (2014). *Recent national community college enrollment and award completion data*. Washington, DC: American Association of Community

Colleges.

- Karcher, B. X. (2011). *Recruiting for higher education: The roles that print, web, and social media play in the decision process for prospective students*. Retrieved from [http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1008&context=cgthses&sei-redir=1&referer=http%3A%2F%2Fscholar.google.com%2Fscholar%3Fq%3DKarcher%252C%2BB.%2BX.%2B%25282011%2529%26btnG%3D%26hl%3Den%26as\\_sdt%3D0%252C44#search=%22Karcher%2C%20B.%20X.%20%282011%29%22](http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1008&context=cgthses&sei-redir=1&referer=http%3A%2F%2Fscholar.google.com%2Fscholar%3Fq%3DKarcher%252C%2BB.%2BX.%2B%25282011%2529%26btnG%3D%26hl%3Den%26as_sdt%3D0%252C44#search=%22Karcher%2C%20B.%20X.%20%282011%29%22)
- Kasper, H. T. (2003). The changing role of community college. *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, 46(4), 14-21.
- Katsinas, S. G., Tollefson, T. A., & Reamey, B. A. (2008). *Funding issues in US community colleges*. Washington DC: American Association of Community Colleges.
- Kinzie, J., Palmer, M., Hayek, J., Hossler, D., Jacob, S.A., & Cummings, H. (2004). Fifty years of college choice: Social, political and institutional influences on the decision-making process. *Lumina Foundation for Education New Agenda Series*, 5(3), 1-66.
- Kirp, D. L. (2003). *Shakespeare, Einstein, and the bottom line: The marketing of higher education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kraft, P. (2007). *Faculty engagement in the campus-wide enrollment management activities: A grounded theory*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Montana State University, Bozeman, MT.

- Lawlor. (2014). *Trends for 2014: Five factors facing private higher education*. Eden Prairie, MN: The Lawlor Group.
- Levine, A., & Nidiffer, J. (1996). *Beating the odds: How the poor get to college* (1st ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Lewison, D. M., & Hawes, J. M. (2007). Student target marketing strategies for universities. *Journal of College Admission*, 196, 14-19.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Lowrie, A. (2007). Branding higher education: Equivalence and difference in developing identity. *Journal of Business Research*, 60(9), 990-999.
- Lucas, C.J. (1994). *American higher education: A history*. New York, NY: Yale University Press.
- Lucas, C.J. (2006). *American higher education: A history* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: St. Martin's Griffin.
- Lukito, R. B., Lukito, C., & Arifin, D. (2015). Implementation techniques of search engine optimization in marketing strategies through the internet. *Journal of Computer Science*, 11(1), 1.
- Ma, J. and Baum, S. (2012). Trends in Tuition and Fees, Enrollment, and State Appropriations for Higher Education by State. *College Board Advocacy & Policy Center*.
- Mahaney, M. (2012). *The Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing in Higher Education*: State University of New York, the College at Brockport.
- Martinez, H. (2010). *Higher education and the Latina student: Examining the college choice process among Latina students attending four-year baccalaureate granting*

*higher education institutions*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas.

- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Miller, R.I. (1999). *Major American higher education issues and challenges in the 21st century*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Moody's Investors Service. (2013). More U.S. Colleges Face Stagnating Enrollment and Tuition Revenue, According to Moody's Survey. Report number 148363.
- Mortenson, T. G. (2012). *State funding: A race to the bottom*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.
- Murphy, D. S., & Katsinas, S. G. (2014). Community College Budgeting and Financing Demystified. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2014(168), 17-27.
- Nickels, J., & Marriott, J. (2006, May). *Picture This: Understanding Student Perceptions Through Photography*. Paper presented at the 46th Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research, Chicago, Illinois.
- Noel-Levitz. (2009). *Institutional brand and parental influence on college choice*. Coralville, IA: Noel-Levitz, Inc.
- Noel-Levitz. (2011). *2011 Cost of Recruiting an Undergraduate Student*. Coralville, IA: Noel-Levitz, Inc.
- Nickels, J., & Marriott, J. "Picture this: Understanding student perceptions through photography." Paper presented at the 46th Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research, Chicago, Illinois, May 17, 2006.

- Nurnberg, P., Schapiro, M., & Zimmerman, D. (2012). Students choosing colleges: Understanding the matriculation decision at a highly selective private institution. *Economics of Education Review, 31*(1), 1-8.
- Peruta, A., Ryan, W., & Engelsman, R. (2013). Social Media Branding Strategies for Higher Education: Comparing Facebook Pages and Web Sites. *International Journal of Technology, Knowledge & Society, 9*(1).
- Potter, S. J. (2012). Using a multimedia social marketing campaign to increase active bystanders on the college campus. *Journal of American College Health, 60*(4), 282-295.
- Prescott, B. T., & Bransberger, P. (2012). Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates. *Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education*.
- Reay, D., David, M.E., & Ball, S. (2005). *Degrees of choice: Social class, race and gender in higher education*. Sterling, VA: Trentham Books Limited.
- Responsible Conduct of Research. (2005). *Data Collection*. Retrieved from <http://www.niu.edu/rcrportal/datamanagement/dctopic.html>
- Rossman, G. B. & Rallis, S. F. (2003). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Rowe, K. (2002). *The college choice process of high school seniors: An investigation of significant influences*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest (UMI: 3159664).
- Rudolph, F. (1990). *The American college & university: A history*. Athens: GA: University of Georgia Press.

- Russell, C., Gregory, D., Ploeg, J., DiCenso, A., & Guyatt, G. (2005). Qualitative research. In A. DiCenso, G. Guyatt, & D. Ciliska (Eds.), *Evidence-based nursing: A guide to clinical practice* (pp.120-135). St. Louis, MO: Elsevier Mosby.
- Sarkar, S. (2012). The role of information and communication technology (ICT) in higher education for the 21st century. *Science, I*(1), 30-41.
- Schulz, S. A., & Lucido, J. A. (2011). *Enrollment management, Inc.: External influences on our practice*. Los Angeles: USC Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice.
- Sirotnik, K. A. (1989). The school as the center of change. In T. J. Sergiovanni & J. H. Moore (Eds.), *Schooling for tomorrow: Directing reforms to issues that count* (pp. 89-113). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Soedijati, E. K., & Pratminingsih, S. A. (2011). The impacts of marketing mix on students' choice of university study case of private university in Bandung, Indonesia. Proceeding of the 2nd International Conference on Business and Economic Research (2nd ICBER 2011).
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication Inc.
- Stevenson, S. G., (2011). *College choice process and perspective of students who chose to attend a military junior college: Voice from students and parents*. (Doctoral dissertation.) Retrieved from ProQuest. (3438844)
- Taylor, M. (2006, November). *Helicopters, snowplows, and bulldozers: Managing students' parents*. Retrieved from <https://www.acui.org/publications/bulletin/article.aspx?issue=304&id=1842>

- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2013). *Community college annual reporting & analysis tool: Financial profile report, 2012*. Retrieved from [http://reports.thecb.state.tx.us/approot/carat/fin\\_profile.htm](http://reports.thecb.state.tx.us/approot/carat/fin_profile.htm)
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2014). *Texas Higher Education Accountability System*. Retrieved from <http://www.txhighereddata.org/Interactive/Accountability/>
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2016). *Dual Credit – Frequently Asked Questions*. Retrieved from <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=E9397432-F85E-83E1-471DFAB9F59301B8>
- Thelin, J.R. (2004). *A history of American higher education*. Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Tokuhama, C. (2011). Consumption, a modern affliction: Branding culture, youth identity and college admission. *Journal of College Admission*, 210, 32-38.
- Tucciarone, K. (2008). Advertising's effect on community college search and choice. *Community College Enterprise*, 14(2), 73-91.
- Tyson, C. (2014). For community colleges, post-recession blues. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/07/17/enrollment-low-stakes-are-high-community-college-learns>.
- University Research Partners. (2013). *Financial Planning and College Costs: The Parent Perspective*. Richmond, VA: Royall & Company.
- Voorhees, R. A., & Zhou, D. (2000). Intentions and goals at the community college: Associating student perceptions and demographics. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 24, 219–233. doi:10.1080/106689200264178

- Wertheimer, L. (2007, July 24). College orientation gets family friendly. *The Boston Globe*. Retrieved from [http://www.boston.com/news/education/higher/articles/2007/07/24/college\\_orientation\\_gets\\_family\\_friendly/?page=full](http://www.boston.com/news/education/higher/articles/2007/07/24/college_orientation_gets_family_friendly/?page=full).
- Yin, R. K. (2013). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication Inc.
- Zarate, M. E., & Pachon, H. P. (2006). *Perceptions of college financial aid among California Latino youth*. (Policy brief.) Los Angeles, CA: Tomas Rivera Policy Institute.
- Zeidenberg, M. (2008). Community colleges under stress. *Issues in Science and Technology*, 24(4), 53-58.

APPENDIX A

**Texas Tech University Protection of Human Subjects Committee Approval  
letter**



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

Vice President for Research

July 13, 2015

Dr. Stephanie Jones Ed Psychology & Leadership Mail Stop: 1071

Regarding: 505279 A Collective Case Study Analysis of Community College  
Marketing Administrators

Dr. Stephanie Jones:

The Texas Tech University Protection of Human Subjects Committee approved  
your claim for an exemption for the protocol referenced above on July 13, 2015.

Exempt research is not subject to continuing review. However, any modifications  
that (a) change the research in a substantial way, (b) might change the basis for  
exemption, or (c) might introduce any additional risk to subjects must be reported  
to the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) before they are  
implemented.

To report such changes, you must send a new claim for exemption or a proposal  
for expedited or full board review to the HRPP. Extension of exempt status for  
exempt protocols that have not changed is automatic.

The HRPP staff will send annual reminders that ask you to update the status of  
your research protocol. Once you have completed your research, you must  
inform the HRPP office by responding to the annual reminder so that the protocol  
file can be closed.

Sincerely,

Kelly C. Cukrowicz, Ph.D. Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of  
Human Subjects Associate Professor, Dept. of Psychological Sciences

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelly C. Cukrowicz".

Box 41075 | Lubbock, Texas 79409-1075 | T 806.742.3905 | F 806.742.3947 |  
www.vpr.ttu.edu

## APPENDIX B

### Semi-structured Interview Questions

#### Interview Guide

*Interview Protocol Project: Community College Marketing Administrator Allocating Financial Resources for Marketing*

Date of Interview:

Time of Interview:

Place of Interview:

Interviewer: Ben Martin

Interviewee:

I appreciate your agreeing to meet with me today. I know your time is valuable; therefore I appreciate your time to participate in the research study. The purpose of this study is to explore how community college administrators allocate institutional resources to market the institution. Your identity will be protected during this research; there will be a replacement for your name. This research will be conducted with eight marketing administrators and staff from four community colleges in Texas.

The final approval of this data will come from my dissertation chair and committee. Before we investigate how financial resources are allocated for marketing, let's start with a few starter questions about your demographics and learn about your responsibilities with this institution.

1. To begin, if you would elaborate on your experience, and how long you have worked at Community College A?

2. How long have you been in this role on campus where you have the responsibility of allocating financial resources for the marketing of the Community College A?
3. How is the allocation of financial resources decided on campus?
4. What is Community College A's protocol for allocating resources for marketing?
5. What percentage of your college's overall budget does your marketing currently account for?
6. What are the current benefits the college receives from marketing?
7. What are the current challenges your campus is facing as it relates to marketing?
8. What is Community College A's strategy on growing the campus in the next academic year?
9. What percent of your marketing budget do you currently spend on marketing analytics?
10. How is your college measuring the impact of the marketing the college is doing?
11. Does your college use any metrics on measuring the return on investment from the college's marketing?
12. In what department is marketing located at Community College A?
13. How do you perceive the support you receive from the majority of employees at Community College A about the financial resources used for marketing?
14. Do the majority of individuals at Community College A know the objectives of the marketing for your college?

**APPENDIX C**  
**Email Script to Potential Marketing Administrator Participants**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

My name is Benjamin Martin, and I am currently a doctoral candidate in Higher Education Administration at Texas Tech University with an emphasis on Community College Administration. My dissertation research focuses on how community college marketing administrators allocate institutional resources to market the institution to affect the student college choice process. To be more specific, this research will focus on how marketing administrators allocate resources to market the institution, the benefits and challenges of marketing community colleges, the perception of marketing administrators of how their institution supports marketing efforts, and how these administrators measure their institution's marketing effects on the student college choice process. For the purposes of this study, college choice is defined as the decision-making process by which a student selects a higher education institution to attend.

I am requesting your participation in this study. Your participation would include an interview on-site at your community college lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded. If you are willing to participate in this study, please let me know that you are willing and provide me your preferred method of contact by responding to this email. Once you have agreed to participate, I will contact you through your preferred communication method to schedule the interview. My email address is benjamin.martin@ttu.edu, or you may call me at (806) 577-7789.

This study is being supervised by Dr. Stephanie J. Jones who will be glad to answer any questions you may have. She can be reached at (806) 834-1280 or via email at stephanie.j.jones@ttu.edu.

I appreciate your time and consideration of participation in this study. Your participation will provide useful insight into this study's topic of how community colleges allocate institutional resources to market the institution to affect the student college choice process. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Ben Martin  
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education Administration  
Texas Tech University

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Description of the Research Study**

#### **What is this project studying?**

This study is called “A Collective Case Study Analysis of Community College Marketing Administrators: Resource Allocation and Marketing Strategies to Affect the College Choice Process.” This study will explore how marketing administration allocate institutional resources to influence the college choice process.

#### **What would you do if you participate?**

You will be asked to participate in an interview on-site at your community college. You will be asked a series of questions about your perceptions and experiences. Your interview will be audio recorded with your permission.

#### **Can I quit I become uncomfortable?**

Yes, absolutely. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. The researchers and the Texas Tech University Institutional Review Board have reviewed the survey questions and perceive the questions can be answered comfortably. You may skip questions you do not feel comfortable answering, and you may discontinue the interview at any time.

#### **How long will participation take?**

We are asking for approximately 60 to 90 minutes of your time.

#### **How is my privacy protected?**

Throughout the study, pseudonyms will be used to identify participants and the study institutions. None of your personal identifying information will be associated with any data collected or reported.

#### **How will I benefit from participating?**

There is no compensation for your participation in this study. However, you will benefit by contributing knowledge to a study that aims to provide insight on how community colleges allocate resources to influence the college choice process.

#### **How can I participate in the study?**

Please send an email stating your willingness to participate in the study and your preferred communication method to Ben Martin at [benjamin.martin@ttu.edu](mailto:benjamin.martin@ttu.edu). You may also call him at (806) 577-7789.

#### **I have some questions about this study? Who can I ask?**

1. If you have questions about this study, contact Ben Martin through email at [benjamin.martin@ttu.edu](mailto:benjamin.martin@ttu.edu) or by phone at (806) 577-7789.
2. You may also contact Dr. Stephanie J. Jones, who is supervising this study, by email at [stephanie.j.jones@ttu.edu](mailto:stephanie.j.jones@ttu.edu) or by phone at (806) 834-1380.
3. Texas Tech University also has an Institutional Review Board which protects the rights of people who participate in research. You may contact them with

questions at (806) 742-2064, [hrpp@ttu.edu](mailto:hrpp@ttu.edu), or by mail at Human Research Protection Program, Office of the Vice President for Research, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas 79409.