HOW DOES ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE INFLUENCE
COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AND INTEGRATED SERVICES IN THE NON-
ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN THREE
DIFFERENT TYPES OF UNIVERSITIES IN CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA: A
MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

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Workforce Education & Development

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore how organizational structure is perceived to influence collaborative learning and integrated services in the non-academic department of human resources in three different types of universities in central Pennsylvania. The study focused narrowly on nine respondents, three heads and six middle management employees. Using the theoretical framework of Galbraith’s star model (strategy, structure, processes, people, and rewards) to guide the research, offered a systemic framework. The study deployed a case study method to answer three research questions: (a) how was the department of human resources structured to deliver collaborative learning and integrated services, (b) what organizational features facilitated collaborative learning and integrated service and, (c) what was considered to be the most critical features to achieve collaborative learning and integrated services. The researcher performed a qualitative thematic analysis, a cross-case analysis, online document review, and kept observational field notes.

The findings of this study broadly comport with the published literature related to the topic. As others have noted, the complex, bureaucratic system continues to serve as the dominant model of academic administration. Consequently, the extent to which the responses of the participants suggest an entrenched system reflects a predictable state.

From the analysis, the researcher discovered that the three universities had diverse organizational structures, attributes, varying practices, and features they considered most important for collaborative learning and integrated services. There was an authentic interest in achieving horizontality but there are barriers built into the structure such that it cannot happen without fundamental change. The implications of the results on the future
of research related to collaborative learning and an integrative service in the department of human resources in higher education is substantial. In the academy, a lack of fluidity in the structure that supports the work of scholars can create a culture and a climate with unintended and unexpected attributes. Form and function are intimately related.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

An organization’s structure is much more than the framework or shell on which
the organization rests; it is actually more similar to a human organism. This organism has
a skeleton, but the real structure of the body consists of a number of interconnected
systems which function as a whole. The skeleton gives the body shape and support, and
the interconnected systems together give it functionality, identity, and life (Tull & Kuk,
2012).

Organization design is a measured process of constructing positions (roles and
responsibilities), work units, and systems that together give it structure, functionality, and
purpose. It is the entire organization’s configuration that empowers or restricts, the
organization’s capability to adjust and reply to difficulties and expectations (Ashkenas,
Ulrich, Jick, & Kerr, 2002; Daft, 2007; Galbraith, 2002). Moreover:

The organization is not an end in itself, but it is simply a vehicle for
accomplishing the strategic tasks of the business. It is an invisible construct used
to harness and direct the energy of the people who do the work. (Kates &
Galbraith, 2007, p. 20)

The organizational structure of colleges and universities, according to Bess and
Dee (2008), are highly specialized configurations where two structures of authority
coexist. One that deals with the production areas of scholarship, teaching, and learning,
and the other manages the functional supporting services. The last is additionally made
out of two interrelated managerial accomplices. One is in charge of the oversight and
organization of scholastic issues, while the other works with an institutional organization.
A chief financial officer (CFO) and different senior administrators lead the administrative accomplice of the institutional organization. The CFO gives initiative to a large group of authoritative capacities that incorporate understudy administrations, institutional help, upkeep, and operation of the physical plant, and assistant ventures (i.e., the workplace of HR). Thus, the individual units include smaller offices in charge of more specific administrations (Bess & Dee, 2008; Kuk, 2007).

This part, the functional support services in higher education usually has the largest number of employees, and it is the part that most closely resembles a for-profit business. The structure of many of its divisions is similar to those of comparably sized for-profit firms, but typically they are perceived not to be as efficient as their private counterparts due to the absence of a profit motive (Padilla, 2005). Many of the current features come from the first university—founded in Europe in the 11th and 12th century—and remain evident in today’s institutions (Bees & Dee, 2008). These features include bureaucratic structures, planning-programming, budget schemes, and administration that lead by objective, regulations, and meticulous management procedures.

As development was experienced after the Second World War, pioneers looked to include more managerial divisions that mirrored a developing need to facilitate staff and assets. New units (e.g., strategic arrangements, enlistment administration, research, and evaluation) appeared and added to the intricacy of the organization, while growing the layers of organization (Hoffmann & Summers, 2000). The heads of these departments (administration and student affairs) directly or indirectly oversee literally hundreds of employees, more if the university includes a medical complex. The issue also led to more
traditional leadership styles and organization relationships, where size, centralization, fragmentations, and span of control present serious coordination and control challenges for managers (Bess & Dee, 2008).

These conditions sparked the recurrent and progressively foreseeable indictment that establishments of advanced learning function in silos, focused primarily on upright, parallel operations promoting internal individual department goals, instead of accomplishing broader institutional objectives (Keeling, Underhill, & Wall, 2007). The phenomenon of silos has become so common that internal administrative support professionals will probably team up locally, provincially, and broadly with different establishments that do a similar work, as opposed to looking for interdisciplinary open doors on their home grounds (Bachman, 2001). Findings from various intraorganizational studies indicated that silos negatively affected organizational effectiveness and called for the need to investigate the structural arrangements of organizations (Bachman, 2001; Conway-Turner, 1998; Kezar, 2006; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Smith & McCann, 2001). It was within this context that I attempted to explore the influence of organizational structure on learning and services in the non-academic human resources department in three different types of universities in central Pennsylvania.

**Historical Perspective**

Every organized human activity—from the making of pots to the placing of a man on the moon—gives rise to two fundamental and opposing requirements: The division of labor into various tasks to be performed, and the coordination of these tasks to accomplish the activity. The structure of an organization can be defined
simply as the sum total of the ways it divides its labor into distinct tasks and then achieves coordination among them. (Mintzberg, 1979. p. 227)

The structure is viewed as an element (e.g., an association), made up of individual components or parts (e.g., individuals, assets, yearnings, advertise patterns, levels of abilities, compensate frameworks, departmental commands, etc.) that influence each other by the relationship they shape. A basic relationship is one in which the different parts follow up on each other, and subsequently produce specific sorts of conduct (Fritz, 1996). DeCanio, Dibble, and Amir-Atefi (2000) argued that behavior could affect the organizations in at least two ways. Foremost, behavior can have consequences on organization-wide procedures of presentation, including effectiveness or promptness. The execution qualities thus impact conduct either on the grounds that these markers enter the plans of administration, or on the grounds that aggressive determination weights act differentially on associations as per their execution. Second, conduct in the association can have results for the people or working units. Changes in outside financial and social situations can create dynamic alterations in the association's inward examples of correspondence and connectedness. Organizational structure may therefore be considered the composition of the association, placing a basis within which the association functions. Dalton et al. (1980) stated that structure has two basic functions: “One, to minimize or at least regulate the influence of individual variations on the organization, and second, structure is the setting in which power is exercised, decisions are made, and the organization’s activities are carried out” (p. 49).

Various researchers have studied which organizational structure best managed internal opportunism and sub goal pursuits. Since the 1980s, “several authors challenge
organizational structure, arguing that institutions of higher learning are structurally inefficient, they are segmented, fragmented, split into components of systems, layerd, and organized in machine-like ways” (Ibarra, 2001, p. 130). These structures may impair cooperation and diminish the possibility of synergies developing among stakeholders (Schrage, 1995; Senge, 1990). Rainey (2009) and Ashkenas et al. (2002) argued that when people worked in large, centralized, fragmented bureaucracies, they become accustomed to thinking in terms of departments and functions. For example, most colleges and universities identify and organize employees by function, such as human resources, financial aid, admissions, bursar’s office, registration, and others. The human resources department then divides their employees further into specialized functions such as recruitment and retention, benefit, compensation, labor relations, classification, training, development, and the like. Rainey (2009) cited that when jobs were functionally-oriented rather than process-oriented, the outcomes would be a very narrow understanding of roles, responsibilities, and ways in which it added value to an organization. Employees know what specific activities to perform, but they do not understand the outcomes for which fellow employees are responsible. Bryan and Joyce (2007), in their one company governance model, professed that “many organizations are hamstrung, focusing on functional units and make it very difficult to mobilize mind power, labor, and capital on an enterprise-wide basis” (p. 7). In colleges and universities, functional orientation also enables specialization and aggregates a vast array of skills and talent into functional work units by applying ad hoc cross-functional team activities sporadically within these organizations (Bess & Dee, 2008).
Stone (2004) noted that one of the biggest challenges was a rigidly design organizational structure around functional areas obstructing efforts to work interdepartmentally. “The more rigid the walls are between functions, the less likely that people will venture out of their boxes and try something new” (Kanter, 1994, p. 103). In many colleges and universities, functions are structured vertically, where the administrative units report up, down, and very seldom connect horizontally to collateral units (Benjamin & Carroll, 1999).

Organizational structure is the top organizational factor that can lead to conflict between functions and managers feeling compelled to protect their turf. Another motivation, according to Moore (2011), can be that an organization has been operating on the same business model for so long that it becomes the standard way of doing things. In this case, the organizational structure can affect the general conduct of the institution, as well as the behavior of persons and divisions within the institution. As a result, silos evolve in organizational units; this creates a breakdown in communication, cooperation, and coordination, which is often harmful to the pliability of organization and populations.

A team of American University Administrators at the Mid-Atlantic Educause Conference in March 2010 expressed the view that the prevailing organizational model, designed to strengthen individual departments on university campuses, might be standing in the way of necessary, innovative collaborations. At a session titled “Bridging the Silos,” the university administrators contested that silos are never a good thing because whatever happens in a silo is very hard to leverage across an enterprise. The strong college model can confuse collaboration, which makes it very difficult to coordinate activities (Kolowich, 2010). Most hierarchical units will have some storehouse attributes
at any given time, yet will develop issues when management create a point that great
replaced silos and used the word “‘politics’ to refer to groups in pursuit of narrow sub-
organizational goals” (p. 20).

Several scholars believed that the construction of an organization has a direct
influence on the degree of intraorganizational cooperation (Ashkenas et al., 2002;
Benison & Neumann, 1993; Daft, 2007; Galbraith, 2002; Kerosuo & Engeström, 2003;
Kezar, 2006; Kinzie & Kuh, 2004). The common view is that when departments or units
work in isolation from the rest of the organization, individuals find it difficult to learn
cross-functional behaviors. Cross-functional behavior depends on an integrated
workplace structure, where individuals and groups are empowered to act together (Freed,
Klugman, & Fife, 1997). Inward objective contrasts have appeared to influence numerous
sorts of choices inside associations. The test is to recognize storehouses that are
hazardous, as well as to distinguish and make healing strides (Fenwick, Seville, &
Brunsdon, 2009). Organizational structure scholars express the necessity for higher
education to adopt new approaches to collaboration and identify structural elements that
may foster learning and services across functional areas.

First, why should higher education administrators consider new organizational
structures since this is a very prominent part of the American university landscape where
administrators scarcely imagine any other way of operations? Secondly, how do some
organizations manage to keep up with the speed of change while others are bound into
“siloed” structures? Bess and Dee (2008) responded by referring to the current situation
in which colleges and universities found themselves and could no longer ignore the
diverse and ever-changing environment with shifting values and varying states of economic prosperity. The consistent ever-changing environment is one in which great organizations can be humbled quickly, while agile, creative, and courageous ones can thrive as never before (Christensen & Eyring, 2011). The need for a reconfiguration organization, according to Galbraith, Downey, and Kates (2002), comes from the weakening in sustainability of economic improvement. Hoffman and Summers (2000) and Diamond (2002) depicted that the changing circumstances would necessitate institutions approaching things somewhat differently due to contracting spending plans and enlistment challenges, moving socioeconomics, mechanical advances, and a more prominent interest for aptitudes based instructive organizations. These points show that the scene in advanced education is reliably evolving.

According to Ashkenas et al. (2002), Kerosuo and Toiviainen (2003), and Daft (2007), various organizations have recently been in the midst of changes, fluctuating from unbending to penetrable constructions and procedures, generating new boundaryless organizations. Boundaries are becoming more permeable, accelerated by the Internet and communication technologies. The changes signal a new relationship with customers, employees, network partners, spaces, and time (Ashkenas et al., 2002; Daft, 2007; Galbraith, 2002; Kerosuo & Toiviainen, 2003). Bolman and Deal (2003) wondered whether and how it is possible to hold an organization together without holding it back. The central question to keep in mind is whether certain types of organizational structure inhibit or accelerate communication, cooperation, and coordination among various subgroups within the administration of higher education.
Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to explore how organizational structure influence collaborative learning and integrated services in the non-academic department of human resources in three different types of universities in central Pennsylvania. In this study, I focused narrowly on nine employees, consisting of three heads and six senior staff members of a state owned master’s level, a private baccalaureate, and a commonwealth/state related university. The rational was to corroborate whether there was a common understanding among the three employees from the three departments of human resources.

A lack of empirical evidence prevailed on ways in which organizational structure affected learning and services in the non-academic administration of higher education. Although earlier researchers have attempted to explain what facilitated or impeded cross-functional behavior (Fiol & Lyles, 1985), the studies that have been conducted in higher education, ranging from restructuring and change, focused on academic divisions and governance to administrative issues emphasizing the nature of administrative work, career, and professional identities of administrators (Benison & Neumann, 1993; Carroll & Gmelch, 1994; Kile & Jackson, 2001; Lindsay, 1999). Concurrently, scholars have concurrently conducted studies investigating intraorganizational relationships, such as the factors influencing collaboration, cross-functional team intervention, interdisciplinary research/teaching, and student affairs collaboration (Kezar, 2001, 2004, 2006; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Kuk, 2007; Kuk & Banning, 2006).

The basis of this research comes from recommendations made by several of these current researchers (Kezar, 2001, 2004, 2006; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kinzie & Kuh,
2004; Kuk, 2007; Kuk & Banning, 2006). Kezar (2006) put forward that research was needed on the status of organizational structure in different types of higher educational institutions to inform policymaking and institutional leadership about the effects of structure on learning and services. Keeling et al. (2007) proposed to direct broadened examinations into the concealed universes of subgroups to explore how the distinctive on-screen characters comprehended their reality, prompting a superior comprehension of how whatever was left of the unpredictable association would react and adjust to changes. Kurtz (2003) contended that divisions who needed to cooperate frequently did not convey crosswise over auxiliary and expert lines, prompting lower levels of participation and underachievement of objectives. The division, along these lines, of executives, staff, offices, universities, and schools additionally served to advance the expert improvement of subgroups free of whatever remained of the association (Mintzberg, as cited in Day, 1999).

The aim of this study was threefold. One aim was to describe what type of structure currently exist and the reporting relationships, including why the department of human resources were structure the way it was and what design changes had been made and why they had been made. The next aim was to determine what organizational features seemed to facilitate and contribute to learning and services. The last aim was to determine what features were the most important for learning and services (i.e., methodology, structure, procedures and horizontal limit, remunerate frameworks, and individual methods).
Research Questions

The first purpose of this study was descriptive. In this study, I explored and described organizational structures and what determined the structure in the non-academic department of human resources in three different types of universities: a state owned master’s level, a private baccalaureate, and a commonwealth/state related in central Pennsylvania. The second purpose of the study was exploratory; I sought to determine what type of organizational structure facilitated and were crucial to learning and service in the three different types of departments of human resources.

I asked three key questions. The first question described the current organizational structure and how structure had been determined. The second question analyzed the structural features that supported and facilitated learning and services. The third and final question considered whether there were important organizational features that facilitated learning and services. The research questions revolved around the following three questions:

RQ1. How is the department of human resources structured to deliver collaborative learning and integrated services and what has determined the design?

RQ2. What are the organizational features (strategy, structure, processes and lateral capacity, reward systems and people practices) that seem to facilitate the process of collaborative learning and integrated service in the non-academic department of human resources?

RQ3. What organizational features were most important (strategy, structure, processes and lateral capacity, reward systems and people practices) for collaborative learning and integrated services?
The first question was fundamental to this study because it allowed me to explore and describe the current structural context and ways in which the structure was determined. Research Questions 2 and 3 allowed me to explore and draw conclusions. For this purpose, I applied Galbraith’s (2002) star theoretical framework of structure, processes, rewards, people, and strategy to frame the context. In the next section, I will look at the significance of this study.

**Significance of the Study**

“Organizations learn not only by generating innovative ideas but also by generating those ideas across boundaries” (Yeung, Ulrich, Nason, & Von Glinow, 1999, p. 17). As per McCaffrey, Faerman, and Hart (1995), numerous directors are attracted to the possibility of intraorganizational correspondence, collaboration, and coordination because it provides an answer for a portion of the difficulties that happen with unified control. Nevertheless, auxiliary obstructions implanted in authoritative frameworks are frequently more grounded compared to the powers favoring it, bringing about working in parallel storehouses (Guarasci, 2001; Kezar, 2006; Leonard & Leonard, 2001). This study had both practical and theoretical significance. The practical significance was that the study contributed by providing the department of human resource with a variety of findings to improve effective communication and problem solving, increased effectiveness, the aptitude to react swiftly to a fluctuating situation, the utilization of a broader range of skills and knowledge, and reduced work process duplications (Glaser, 2005; Johnson, 1998; Kanter, 1994; Kezar, 2006; Mohamed, Stankosky, & Murray, 2004). Mohamed et al. (2004) stated that in approaching years, the involvedness of labor would endure and the necessity for cooperative cross-functional work habits would
endure, thereby requiring structural changes. The department would benefit from a more flexible working environment for the management to play a more supportive, talent management role in higher education (Whitchurch, 2008).

Conversely, the theoretical benefits from this study contributed to existing literature on institutional structures, intraorganizational collaboration, coordination and cross-functional team operations, delegation of authority and decision making, and a continuation to develop multi-skilled professionals with cross departmental competencies. This study could also foster a shift from command to control and lay a foundation for a shared organizational mindset if efforts are recognized monetarily (Ashkenas et al., 2002). Finally, exploring what features supported interdependency and the measures employed to break down traditional organizational structural barriers to reduce expenditure should be beneficial within the current funding treats to higher education. In the next section, I will discuss the limitations of this study.

**Limitations**

The context of the campuses and the unit of analysis (departments/offices) were different and could lead to different theoretical propositions. The department, non-academic human resources included the directorate, recruitment, training, and development and performance management. The customers receiving services from the human resources department varied respectively and included faculty and staff from offices such as admissions, registrar, financial aid, and the office of the provost as examples.

The universities represented three different types of higher educational institutions in the United States. In addition, the functional units selected for the research
represented a narrow sample of the institutions. As a result, these units were not representative of the universities as a whole; therefore, the data were not comprehensive. In addition, it was also possible that the individuals chosen might not have objectively represented the views of their respective departments. The participating universities (a state-owned master’s level, a private baccalaureate, and a commonwealth/ state related) represented central Pennsylvania, only one area in one state of the United States. In addition, even though there was widespread concern about organizational structural on service and learning in the workplace, there were few research studies conducted in colleges and universities on this topic (Kezar, 2006) in general. In the following section, I will define the key terms used in this study.

**Definition of Terms**

*Intraorganizational collaboration.* Intraorganizational collaboration is defined as “a process and a product of interdependence that secure the engagement and co-production capacities of people in the same organization, many of whom must share responsibilities and accountability for results” (Lawson, 2003, p. 52).

*Organization design.* Galbraith et al. (2002) defined organization design “as the deliberate process of configuring structures, processes, reward systems, people practices, and policies to create an effective organization capable of achieving the business strategy” (p. 2). Cognizance is taken that organization design can occasionally employ synonymously and erroneously to signify organization “structure.”

*Organizational structure.* Borgatti (1996) defined organizational structure as “the degrees and types of horizontal and vertical differentiation, control and coordination
mechanisms, formalization and centralization of power as determinants of organizational structure” (p. 1).

**Silos and silo mentality.** Silos are quite commonly used in literature on organizational performance to describe inwardly focused organizational units where external relationships are given insufficient attention. Breakdowns in communication, cooperation, and co-ordination between unit participants and other stakeholders, and the development of fragmented behavior, are common features. The result is that the organization falls short of making its best contribution to the needs of immediate and wider groups with an interest in the unit’s continued good performance (Stone, 2004).

The term silo mentality “describe[s] individual and group mindsets which can be divisive within and between organizations and are most often manifested as communication barriers creating disjointed, disconnected, and detrimental ways of working” (Lencione, 2006, p. 20).

**Strategy.** Galbraith et al. (2002) defined strategy “by its vision, mission, and values as well as its short-and long-term goals. The strategy sets out the direction of the organization. It comes first in the Star Model because it establishes useful criteria to choose among alternative options and specify the source of competitive advantage and how the organization will differentiate itself in the marketplace” (p. 3).

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework applied to this study was Galbraith’s (1995) star model. I chose the model because it represented the most comprehensive model for how some organizations were structured, and offered a systemic framework that guided my investigation. The model consists of (a) “strategy,” or what the respective department /
functional unit are trying to accomplish (the department’s mission); (b) “structures” that support interdependency or permeability amongst staff, customers, and beneficiaries in the delivery of learning and services; (c) the “processes” employed to break down traditional vertical, horizontal, external, geographic structures and barriers; (d) the “people practices” of how learning and services are created, coordinated, and managed within the department; and (e) what “rewards/accountability” systems are in place to motivate cross-functional behaviors (Galbraith et al., 2002).

The star model in Figure 1.1 is an outline about one critically thinking holistically about the five major components of the organization design. The model shows a chief module of the design and direction of the organization. First, strategy set the direction of the organization. Management can use the direction of the organization in broad terms to incorporate their vision, short-and long-term goals. It sets out the basic direction of the organization, the products and amenities delivered, the markets examined, and the worth presented to the client. The direction of the organization also stipulates foundations of economic benefits.
Second, structure regulates where recognized control are found. It consists of specialization, shape, distribution of power and departmentalization (Galbraith et al., 2002). Specialization alludes to the sort and number of employment strengths utilized as a part of doing the work. Shape alludes to the quantity of individuals constituting the office (i.e., the traverse of control) at each level of the structure. Huge quantities of individuals in every office make hierarchical structures with few levels. Dissemination of power, in its vertical measurement, alludes to the exemplary issues of centralization or decentralization. In its parallel measurement, it alludes to the development of energy to the division managing specifically with the issues basic to its main goal.

Departmentalization is the reason for framing offices/functional units at each level of the structure. The standard measurements in which offices are shaped include capacities, items, work process forms, markets, clients, and geology (Galbraith et al., 2002).
Third, evidence and choice procedures intersect the structure of the organization. Thinking of structure as the composition of the association, one can see that the procedures represent the organization’s composition. Leadership procedures go vertically and horizontally. Vertical procedures are usually planning and budgeting processes that are central to effective functioning. Leadership designed horizontal (i.e., lateral procedures) according to labor by creating novel products and fulfilling customers’ orders. Procedure and lateral competency allows the business to combine the correct individuals to explain setbacks, generate prospects, and complete trials.

Fourth, management can use the reward scheme to support the employee objective with the objectives of the association. The reward scheme delivers inspiration and enticements for the achievement of strategy. Management can use the association’s reward scheme to outline procedures of the company that control employee incomes, advancements, advantages, and qualities.

Finally, people practices govern human resource policies, which can include employment, preparation, improvement, and performance management. Management can create policies for use with human resources and combine these to influence the appropriate aptitude necessary to strategize and construct the association, producing the abilities to apply any direction chosen for the company. The “strategy determines what types of skills, competencies, and other capabilities are required” (Galbraith et al., 2002, p. 20).

In conclusion, management must align procedures in order for their association to remain influential and successful. These procedures must combine in a harmonious way. By creating such alignment, management can use the procedures to converse strong,
reliable communication to all personnel. The star model further shows that management has the ability to regulate procedure, influence performance, and organizational effectiveness (Galbraith et al., 2002; Kates & Galbraith, 2007). In the next chapter, I will review literature in which the scholars examined published work that may apply within the university context on how organizational structure influence learning and services in the administration of higher education.
Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

According to Kates and Galbraith (2007), “leaders frequently lament the organizational silos that prevent people from working together” (p. 16). Kates and Galbraith (2007) further stated, “Silo evokes an image of an invisible but windowless tower surrounding [vertically staked] groups of people” (p. 16). Moreover, “These walls prevent the groups not just from interacting with one another but [also] from even being able to see another group’s perspective. Breaking the silos is a common theme in discussions of organizational change” (Kates & Galbraith, 2007, p. 16).

In this literature review, I sought to examine published work that may apply within the university context on how organizational structure affects learning and services in the administration of higher education. Various researchers have expressed concern that little research or literature regarding types of non-academic administrative assemblies is presently available, why and ways in which management designs these departments, and what part and determination structure has in management understanding the objectives of their foundations. Most of what is known is about student affairs organization pertains to the relationship between faculty and students or the administrative structure that is generally described as a “machine” bureaucracy (Gumport & Pusser, 1995; Kuk & Banning, 2006; Leslie & Rhoades, 1995).

This literature review was organized to catalogue studies related to the administration of higher education and included the following four sections:

1. An overview of organizational structure.
2. A historical perspective of organizational structure in the administration of higher education.

3. Six empirical studies depicted that inferred to organizational design and structure along three dimensions: The first three studies surveyed the design and structural arrangements of student affair departments in higher education. The second two represent the second dimension of studies and investigated the structural characteristics that contributes to effective collaboration and cross-functional work approaches between and among departments/unit in higher education. The third dimension of the empirical studies examined the lateral movement of professional staff across functional and organizational boundaries as boundaries are blurring in the administration of higher education.

4. Applying Galbraith’s (2002) star model of planning, construction, procedures, compensation schemes and persons to illuminate findings from the studies and knowledge about organizational design and structure to found a set of inferential conceptions to be explored within this study. Concepts such as hybrid, matrix, and boundaryless structural approaches to enable non-academic intraorganizational collaborative learning and services to retain past strengths, and at the same time become more adaptive to the changing demands and challenges will be explored.
In the following section, I will provide an overview and historical perspective on organizational structure pertaining to this study on how organizational structure influence learning and services in the administration of higher education.

**Overview of Organizational Structure**

Organization design, according to Galbraith et al. (2002), “is often used synonymously and incorrectly to mean organization structure” (p. 2). The design of the group and its process become wider and has been articulated by many researchers through a variety of organizational models. Galbraith’s star model, as one of many examples (see Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1), has been applied as the theoretical framework to this study, and it includes the following five components: structure, processes, reward system, people practices, and strategy. Banner (1995) described these components “as macro structural variables, key elements that existed in all organizations, but might vary in the degree to which each was employed from one organization to another” (p. 20).

Many scholars have cited the prominence of structure in the organization regarding organizational theory and behaviorisms. Mintzberg (1979; 1989) emphasized “the significant links between an organization’s age, size, strategy, technology, environment, and culture and its structure” (p. 20). Similarly, Miller (1989) outlined that “the relationship that must exist between structure and strategy” (p. 20), while Burns and Stalker (1961) described “the critical interrelationships between structure, environmental change, and organizational performance” (p. 20). In summation, McMillan (2002) reckoned that “if the structure of an organization and the underlying design principles which construct it are not in tune with the core purposes of the organization and its many environments, then it is unlikely to successfully survive” (p. 123).
McMillan (2002) conceded with “the view that too often structure is given little consideration in strategy and organizational development, that many managers have a shortcoming in this area” (p. 124), which confirmed other researchers’ opinions, including Senge (1994) and Peters (1993). Peters (1993) stated, “the point of understanding organization structure is to create an ability to make structure better suited to strategy” (p. 61). Given the stated importance and for the study’s purpose, organizational structure denoted and included the following elements (Daft, 1983; Kates & Galbraith, 2007):

1. The location of tasks and responsibilities to individuals and the department within the organization;

2. The design of official broadcasting relations, comprising amount of stages in the pecking order, and the duration of supervisors’ control;

3. The aligning of persons into subdivisions and departments into the entire association; and

4. The scheme of arrangements to safeguard actual announcements, organization, and incorporation of exertion in both vertical and horizontal directions. (p. 20)

The structure of organizations, according to Galbraith et al. (2002), entails the position of prescribed control within an organization as well as the core modules, such as organizational departments, their chain of command, and interactivity. Distinction between internal modules are situated around their purposes and then subsequently organized constructed upon supervisory proficiencies (Galbraith et al., 2002). Therefore, it is imperative to appreciate the interdependencies that are uncovered amongst subunits
within departments to enable the application of operative cross-functional teams (Galbraith et al., 2002).

Galbraith et al. (2002) stated that the impression of arrangement remained important in the star model. All components within the foundation should work to support the strategy. Kates and Galbraith (2007) suggested that “the more the structure, processes, rewards, and people practices reinforce the desired actions and behaviors, the better able the organization should be to achieve its goals” (p. 20). Thus, there are multiple structural variations that organizations can adopt. The literature review turns next to a historical perspective and reflects specifically on organizational design and structure in the administration of higher education.

**Historical Perspective of Organizational Structure in Administrative Departments in Higher Education**

In university configuration, one must acknowledge the difference among the educational and managerial association to analyze the assembly due to these following various coordinating mechanisms. One may see the customary educational organization as connected to Mintzberg’s (1979) *professional bureaucracy*:

Where, in the absence of precise or widely acceptable work or output standards, tasks are less directly coordinated through the internalized skills and knowledge of highly trained employees. While the administrative system is closer to the ‘Machine Bureaucracy’ where tasks are tightly pre-specified in work rules and procedures and/mechanized production processes. (Goffee & Scase 1995, p. xiv)
As an aside, universities also embraced scientific management, where increasingly specialists are hired to systematically and professionally solve problems (Reynolds, Lusch, Cross, & Donovan, 2009).

Fielden and Lockwood (1973) documented the administrative structure of higher education as follows an approach that was mechanistic and had characteristics similar to a “monocratic type” of bureaucratic management, which one might consider “superior to any other form in precision, in stability, in stringency of its discipline, and in its reliability” (Morphet, Johns, & Reller, 1982, p. 74). Carchidi and Peterson (2000) referred to these types of universities as “insular institutions” possessing more central organizational structures in which expertise remains within a single department structure and organizational resources reside internally (p. 5). Morphet et al. (1982) defined this concept of organizations and administration as a “pyramidal, hierarchical organization structure, in which all power for making decisions flows from the super ordinates to subordinates” (p. 74).

Yet another set of universities, according to Hoffman and Summers (2000), are structured as organizations, in where departments and programs report directly to directors and deans who control the resources and are expected to manage them in a fashion consistent with the mission of the institution. Each of the departments pursues its distinctive specialty and is given the freedom to service its customers. This example described what Galbraith (1994) labeled the “distributed organization” (p. 7). The center of the organization, the headquarters or senior management, distributes strategic initiatives and operations to the individual units. The units of people then assume accountability for the organization’s mission and their own objectives and
responsibilities. Distributed organizations form when local expertise is superior to central expertise. Thus aspects of both centralization and decentralization characterize them. The organization centrally controls long term strategies and policies. On a decentralized basis, however, the units have the autonomy to make operating decisions that satisfy the organizational goals. The distributed organization gains a competitive advantage through the empowerment of units. Each unit wraps itself around a particular product or market, thereby enabling the organization to adjust quickly to changes. There is no confusion in roles played as each unit directly meets the needs of its customers while pursuing the goals of the organizational needs (Hoffman & Summers, 2000).

In addition, Owens (1998) argued that organizations, primarily educational establishments, were so pervasive that scholars habitually viewed and differentiated among “the assumptions that underlie two major competing views of what organizations are all about: classical (or bureaucratic) view on the one hand and the newer perspectives, often called human resource development, on the other hand” (p. 20). Bush (2003) conceded that most institutional types are bureaucratic in relation to the administration of higher education and lists the following qualifying characteristics:

1. There is a hierarchical authority, as seen in an organizational chart in higher education.
2. Institutions are goal orientated; higher education institutions have objectives in place to aid in accomplishing their respective missions.
3. Division of labor exists and there are staff specializations; employment is based on technical competencies and constitutes careers within universities.
4. Decisions and behaviors are governed by rules and regulations; higher education institutions are replete with rules and regulations.

5. Decisions are made through a rational process; it would be difficult to find an organization that had more committees, tasks forces, or communions than higher education.

6. Leaders are accountable to external bodies; all not-for-profit and the vast majority of the for-profit institutions have governing bodies. (p. 27)

In contribution to these structural arrangements according to Gumport and Pusser (1995) were the postwar decades booming years that further shaped organizational structure in higher education. “A generation of presidents, deans and, top-level managers welcomed the development of organizational structures and management processes designed to help them deal with the rapid pace of growth” (Tull & Kuk, 2012, p. 20).

Bureaucratic structures conveyed control and accuracy to administration at both division and school level. Pioneers tried to oversee development included authoritative divisions, which mirrored a developing need to arrange staff and assets. Gumport and Pusser (1995) also referred to this process as bureaucratic accretion, where “adaptation to environmental complexity demanded an increase and differentiation of university functions” (p. 20). Therefore, new units “came into being and added to the complexity of the administration while expanding the layers of bureaucracy” (Hoffmann & Summers, 2000, p. 20).

At the same time, these organization’s expansions and complexities are propelled by tremendous growth in student numbers, diversity, and needs for access into higher education (Kuk, 2007; Kuk, Banning, & Amey, 2010; Manning, Kinzie, & Schuh, 2006).
Student affair organizations, like other administrative units at that time, are arranged to correspond to prevailing organizational theory and knowledge that reinforced a systematic and efficient arrangement of units to provide the increasing array of specialized programs and services that students required and expected (Ambler, 2000).

The most effective type of structure is where work processes were subdivided into repetitive, routine tasks with specified job descriptions, hierarchies, guidelines, and processes. Additionally, the condition of the situation is characterized by a reasonable mark of steadiness. Lam and Lundvall (2006) referred to this mechanistic and functional form of alignment as rational entities. Rational entities are collectivities that display large amounts of reinforcement, and where the collaborations between contributors are cognizant and cautious and the structure of relationships is found to be unambiguous (Scott & Davis, 2007).

Functional organizational structures also originally evolved out of the need for student and administrative services in the collegiate setting and the specialization of faculty toward a greater academic focus (Hirt, 2006; Komives, Woodard, & Associates, 2003). The functional structure therefore came about to transmute efforts into finished results in colleges and universities design departments that focus on human resources, student admissions, purchasing among others. For each of these functions, a distinctive set of activities and tasks exist that Bess and Dee (2008) referred to as the division of labor. This structural set-up allows for the most common means of dealing with the flow of inputs across different departments in a sequence and demonstrates various advantages and disadvantages, particularly in the management of human resources (Hellriegel,
Slocum, & Woodman, 1995). The advantages (Duncan, 1979) of these functional structures is that they:

1. Promote skill specialization
2. Reduce duplication of scarce resources
3. Enhance career advancement of specialist within large departments
4. Facilitate communication of knowledge and procedures
5. Aid supervisors in sharing proficiency with attendants
6. Expose consultants to others within the same field
7. Provide economies of scale (Child, 1984)

There are disadvantages, however. Functional forms:

1. Emphasize a narrow range of routine tasks, which encourages short time horizons
2. Foster parochial, sub optimizing managers’ viewpoints that bound their capacities for upper positions in leadership
3. Reduce knowledge of other departments, as well as announcements and collaboration among these
4. Multiply interdepartmental dependencies, which can create difficulties with coordination and planning slow responses and delays
5. Elevate decision making to senior managers
6. Obscure accountability for overall outcomes (Child, 1984)

Mid-level functional managers were concurrently added to the organizations to supervise an increasing array of programs and services. New units or services were added to the mix and aligned as separate operations providing a special program or service
Administrators were the key specialists in charge of building up authoritative chains of importance and making formalized gatherings of guidelines, conventions, and formal systems, which shroud data moves through useful and various leveled structures. All occupation parts were sorted out as indicated by specialists. Subsequently, all representatives were relied on to have specific codes of conduct. The exact meaning of rights, commitments, and specialized strategies joined to each practical part in this way by strengthening the above practices and lessening joint efforts. A large concentration blocked the consideration of mastering or new learning, and ratification diminished the limit regarding acting with spontaneity and producing new abilities (Tull & Kuk, 2012).

Functional units within the non-academic administration of higher education continue to expand as separate, independent, and specialized units with a focus on vertical communication and interaction between units initiated through senior level administrator’s action and requests. Organizational leaders pride themselves on the number of layers, and the complexity of their organizations is seen as a mark of quality (Clark, 1983; Gumport, 2000). Tull and Kuk (2012) remarked, “more became better, and the extent of the portfolio and the number of functional areas supervised were more highly rewarded and praised” (p. 16). Accordingly, “bureaucratic structure was designed to deal with routine problems and is unable to cope with novelty or change” (Tull & Kuk, 2012, p. 16). Instead, it reinforces past behavior, constraining a speedy reaction within an aggressive setting (Lam & Lundvall, 2006).

Roles and responsibilities move from being generalist to more specialists with very little crossover in either hiring or training. Each unit and the staff within it was
expected to have and rewarded for its specific knowledge and ability to execute its specialization efficiently. According to Tull and Kuk (2012), smaller institutions are unable to attain a high level of specialization because of fewer resources and often felt less sophisticated or even less able because they had to wear many heads. Bigger institutional units became increasingly insular and prided themselves on being independent both academically and administratively. Throughout the administrative services in colleges and universities, the professional personnel tend to identify first and foremost with their specialization.

Communication therefore was essentially vertical in nature and often top down in process. This resulted in hierarchical student service organizations that are functional in purpose and able to deal with very specialized issues and concerns brought on by increasing number of students.

In this section, I attempted to discuss three common types of administrative structures found in the administration of higher education. The mechanistic structure with characteristics of bureaucratic management and seen as superior in precision and stability. Followed by the distributed structure where each department followed their own distinctive specialty and given the autonomy to service its customers and finally the functional structure characterized by division of labor. Noticeably embedded in all three types of structures were some form of centralization and decentralization. The next section turns to studies conducted in the field of organizational design and structure divided along three dimensions.
Empirical Studies on Organizational Structure in Higher Education

The following studies provided the groundwork for my research in an attempt to examine how organizational structure affects learning and services in the non-academic administration of higher education and also validate the knowledge gap that this study hopes to satisfy. The chronology of the studies was illustrated along three dimensions: The first dimension of three empirical studies conducted by Ambler (1992); Kuk and Banning (2006), and Kuk (2007) displayed the past and present structural characteristic and arrangement within the administration of higher education. Followed by two of Kezar’s (2001; 2006) groundbreaking works on investigating intraorganizational collaboration that illuminated the importance of organizational structure for effective collaborative interactions. The third dimension concluded with one study conducted by Whitchurch (2008) that examined the evolving roles and responsibilities of human resource professionals who are moving laterally across functional and organizational boundaries. The following section analyzes the empirical studies representing the first dimension.

The First Dimension of Empirical Studies: Organizational Structure

Ambler (1992) surveyed more than one 113 student affair divisions from public, private 4-year, and community colleges in 47 states regarding various aspects of their structures such as internal organizational structures, services offered, span of control, nomenclature and titles, and location in the university or college hierarchy. Ambler observed the following:
1. “The programs and services found within the organizational units of student affairs within all collegiate types and sizes had become large, comprehensive, and very diverse;”

2. “Many student affairs programs had been assigned full responsibility for programmatic and financial operations of traditional student service auxiliaries;”

3. “The elevation of Senior Student Affairs Offices (SSAOs) to the vice president and executive management level was virtually universal at all classification types of higher education institutions;” and

4. “A growing trend for the SSAO to report to a chief administrative officer, (a) the structure of student affairs divisions had become highly complex and specialized in all types of colleges and universities, (b) the span of control varied widely among all types of institutions, (c) and the title given to both student affairs officers and staff varied widely across types of institutions.” (p. 20)

“As the demands on higher education increase and change, gaining a more comprehensive and thorough understanding of these issues can be helpful in” designing successful organizational designs and structure for higher education administration (Ambler, 2000, p. 20). The strength of this study indicated that a sample of all types of higher institutions across the United States was surveyed. The findings recommended that further studies into the structural dynamics of these departments are required. This was also one of the first attempts to decipher the structural make-up of the administrative services in higher education.
Building on Ambler’s (2000) findings, Kuk and Banning (2006) researched collegiate student affairs organizational configurations within the United States. The investigators examined how student affairs organizations are arranged and planned, but also where the SSAO fit within the structure (Kuk & Banning, 2006). The participants were asked about the existing student affairs organizational structure and how the SSAO communicates within the institutional design. The questions asked in what way and why SSAOs were planned and the reason as to why any changes were made (Kuk & Banning, 2006). SSAO were also probed to potential changes they would like to see within student affairs organization (Kuk & Banning, 2006). The final questions concerned any observed restrictions as a catalyst to change within their administration (Kuk & Banning, 2006).

In Kuk and Banning’s (2006) study, the researchers measured SSAOs throughout four categories of higher education within the United States: research universities, 4-year universities, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges. Two hundred and forty secondary schools were chosen, split evenly across all four groups (Kuk & Banning, 2006). Purposive sampling was used to represent each type of school and allow for a fair geographic representation within the United States. These schools were then sorted into each of the four categories, with 60 schools each (Kuk & Banning, 2006). Questionnaires were distributed through an online survey instrument (Kuk & Banning, 2006). Despite the convenience of employing an electronic survey tool, many participants replied through handwritten correspondence (Kuk & Banning, 2006). Of the 240 schools, only 90 SSAOs participated (Kuk & Banning, 2006).

The results of Kuk and Banning’s (2006) research indicated that student affairs organizational structures are constructed and function upon a hierarchical model. This
model is consistent across all four types of secondary education as each student affairs organization was structured by type and purpose (Kuk & Banning, 2006). The authors also indicated that sources of income and accessibility of resources are the dominant controls of operation within student affairs organizations (Kuk & Banning, 2006). Alternative models, however, did not arrange student affair organizations some components of other structural designs were found in a minority of organizations (Kuk & Banning, 2006). For instance, the student affairs organizations occasionally overlapped with a geographical functional organizational model or a hybrid matrix structure in order to support larger schools (Kuk & Banning, 2006).

Despite these variances within the model being seemingly contingent upon outside variables, any designs or changes to those designs were found to be independent of those variables (Kuk & Banning, 2006). Geographical structures are attached to an institution’s location (Kuk & Banning, 2006). A satellite campus may have an independent student affairs organization that does not report to the main campus’s student affairs organization. These campuses, however, may coordinate activities and determine policy with the main campus (Kuk & Banning, 2006). These interactions describe a geographical structure within a student affairs organization (Kuk & Banning, 2006).

Another type of model, the hybrid matrix or lateral structure, can be placed within an existing organization (Kuk & Banning, 2006). This model can shape and synchronize shared services or agendas (Kuk & Banning, 2006). Organizations with a greater amount of attendees, such as research universities, relied on a practical cluster organizational model that associated well-designed units with separate but related units that organize similar agendas and amenities (Kuk & Banning, 2006). SSAOs of cluster organizational
units often report to an executive director or an assistant/associate vice president (Kuk & Banning, 2006). This is opposed to organizations found within smaller schools, which have staff accept broad responsibility roles to increase communication and efficiency (Kuk & Banning, 2006). Smaller organizations also have a smoother and more linear general structure (Kuk & Banning, 2006). Separate functional units within student affairs organizations differentiated the organizational structures by diverse dimensions and complexity across all four types of schools (Kuk & Banning, 2006).

Despite the large deviations between functional units within student affairs organizations, the largest structural variances throughout all four categories of secondary schools occurred in terms of span of control and hierarchical levels (Kuk & Banning, 2006). The amount of units and direct reports to the SSAO fluctuated between four and 17 (Kuk & Banning, 2006). This variation was also reflective of the hierarchy within student affair organizations (Kuk & Banning, 2006). Each organization had a minimum of three levels of hierarchy, although many were arranged with four or more (Kuk & Banning, 2006). Hierarchy levels and span of control, however, did not always correspond to the scope or type of the organization (Kuk & Banning, 2006). Kuk and Banning also pointed out that research universities have a more intricacy within their structures when opposed to the other types of institutions.

Of the SSAO participants, 69 (76.6%) stated they restricted at least some aspects of their existing organizational structure during their tenure as an SSAO (Kuk & Banning, 2006). For many of these SSAOs, these changes were implemented when they first assumed their role within the organization (Kuk & Banning, 2006). Despite these initial changes, however, many were restrained (Kuk & Banning, 2006). These
incremental changes were alterations in how things were reported or streamlining existing units (Kuk & Banning, 2006). The study brought forth various variables that illuminate the significance of structure in student affair. Variables such as hierarchical, functional units of operation, smaller institutions displayed decentralized and flatter systems, and a small number of hybrid structures were reported on (Kuk & Banning, 2006). Span of control and number of hierarchical levels produced the greatest structural difference across the institutions (Kuk & Banning, 2006). In addition, a significant number of student affairs staff have acknowledged that their divisions has experience some manner of redesign (Kuk & Banning, 2006). These findings highlighted the importance of the size sample of the four categories of secondary education (Kuk & Banning, 2006). This study produced important findings that applied to my research focus.

Kuk’s (2007) study was very applicable to my research and the expansion on the outcomes of her previous study with Banning (2006). Kuk (2007) surveyed organizational models utilized by student affairs divisions across a variety of institutional types. The models selected were essentially functional in nature, with distinct functional units reporting through a varied number of hierarchical levels (Kuk, 2007). While the individual functional units within a given student affairs division fluctuated, the organizational structure looked comparable as all the structures were hierarchical and pyramid shaped in design and no other variation was reported (Kuk, 2007).

Some of the larger organizations appeared to have a form of matrix or lateral structure integrated across their primary functional structure, but these structures were not a prominent part of the organization’s design and the existence of the structural model
was not consciously noted by any respondent (Kuk, 2007). It was likely that these structures were included to permit increasingly multifaceted and specific organizations to converse throughout the original unit (Kuk, 2007). These structures also produced increased proficiency in regularly utilized resources and services (Kuk, 2007). Mirroring Kuk and Banning’s (2006) study, Kuk (2007) professed that student affair organizations with less staff overcame concerns of interaction and efficiency issues by having staff accept multiple roles with ever changing responsibilities and creating a leaner organizational structure (Kuk, 2007).

The smaller student affairs organizations appeared to have more general analysts engaged in a variety of responsibilities, while the larger and more complex organizations have more specialists (Kuk, 2007). As a result, the larger organizations appeared more complex, with more hierarchical layers resulting in more overall units in the organization (Kuk, 2007). The organizations differ in which units reported to which higher level within the structure and how many hierarchical levels were represented in the organizational structure (Kuk, 2007).

The results of Kuk’s (2007) echoed Kuk and Banning’s (2006) study by indicating that the biggest differences of structural design appeared in the area of control and hierarchical levels, the amount of staff underneath the SSAOs, and the levels of hierarchy (Kuk, 2007). Organizations have a minimum of three and a maximum of five levels within a student affairs division, with each level having four to 17 people (Kuk, 2007). The differences between types of units, span of control, and degree of hierarchical levels did not correlate to the organizational type (Kuk, 2007). There was no pattern of what constituted student affairs by institutional type or size. The accessibility of
resources can also change how student affair organizations are constructed, especially when considering levels of hierarchy and area of influence (Kuk, 2007).

Kuk (2007) found that the SSAOs’ perceptions about the amount and quality of existing human resources within their organization in relation to their perceived level of need might have influenced both their organizational area of supervision and the number of ranks pertaining to the organization’s hierarchies. Where the SSAO indicated apprehension about limited staffing, the organizations mirrored those concerns and resulted in a more linear structure and lines of communication (Kuk, 2007).

Another issue for some SSAOs was difficulties involving overwhelming direct reports and limited resources to properly staff the association (Kuk, 2007). In most of these cases, the directors of the organization reported directly to the SSAO without a level of management in between. There was a substantial connection between structure and perception of resources, regardless of the nature or scope of the institution (Kuk, 2007).

In this study, only a limited amount of participants specified that they had restructured their organizational structures (Kuk, 2007). The majority of SSAOs revealed that they were content with their organizations and stated no need for future changes in structure or design (Kuk, 2007). Only two respondents reported conducting major organizational audits and implementing major organizational change when they first took over as the SSAOs. Some SSAOs indicated reluctance to make changes to their organizations due to office politics or anticipating staff departure (Kuk, 2007). When asked about the reasons they had for deciding to redesign the student affairs division, the responding SSAOs identified five reasons, which were to: attend to fiscal matters, reach
planned priorities, enhance aptitudes, stimulate teamwork and collaboration, and streamline decision-making (Kuk, 2007).

None of the SSAOs, however, indicated that they would redesign the division to work or to collaborate differently (Kuk, 2007). In addition, they were thinking about an organizational model that was different than the hierarchical, functional structure they were presently utilizing (Kuk, 2007). This study produced significant findings for the current research focus. The strengths include a broad representation of institutions. It provided findings for comparison among institutions based on size. The finding that most of the respondents were happy with their structural arrangement and would not affect any changes in the near future should be considered alongside the fact that the existence of the structural model was not consciously observed and noted on. The respondents also indicated that they were not thinking about an organizational model that was different from the hierarchical, functional structure presently in operation. Knowledge about different and or changing organizational structure was limited among the respondents. The majority of the results formed within this investigation indicated a need for further exploration in the topic of organizational design and structure.

Summarizing the first dimension of empirical studies conducted by Ambler (1992), Kuk and Banning (2006), and Kuk (2007), I concluded that the structural arrangement in the administration of higher education remains mechanistic, hierarchical, functional, decentralized, and loosely connected across all four types of institutions in the United States. These institutions have become complex with financial responsibilities assigned to individual departments and the span of control varied between the smaller versus the larger institutions between three to seven levels of management. Modest
changes in the structural set up of institutions have been reported while institutional leadership does not consider organizational structure consciously. In fact, Kuk (2007) reported that institutional leadership seems to be familiar just with the current organizational structure. Where hybrid matrix organizational structures were in operation, these were managed and controlled as an additional part to the existing structure or were placed over the existing hierarchical structure to coordinate campus activities.

The following two studies of Kezar (2004; 2006), a joint survey and a case study, represent the second dimension of studies. The relevance for identifying these two studies stems from findings and recommendations made by various researchers that the success of intraorganizational collaboration maybe dependent on the structural arrangements of higher education institutions and begs for more research. Extensive researchers have examined intraorganizational collaboration from an assortment of theoretical viewpoints. A majority of theories presented a perspective providing insight into important features of the collaborative method and providing knowledge as to the “why” of considering intraorganizational collaboration as part of this study. This theoretical consideration for including intraorganizational collaboration for this study is based on environmental changes necessitated by the speed and consistency for change, technological enhancement, and financial constraints. Coupled with the static nature of complex organizational structure, scholars within these institutions had to find ways to overcome these structural barriers and challenges (Ashkenas et al., 2002).
The Second Dimension of Empirical Studies: Intraorganizational Collaboration and Structure

Recent investigators have examined the advantages of organizational collaboration; however, scholars in higher education are seeking for models of prosperous practices and regulations because there is a lack of pragmatic studies documenting this phenomenon. Kezar (2001; 2004; 2006) provided comprehensive contributions to the literature, which form the groundwork for why organizational design and structure should be considered. Kezar’s multiple studies focused on the magnitude of internal cooperation within higher education, thereby specifying a framework for that collaboration. Kezar’s argument was that for higher education to be totally immersed in collaboration, structural changes are required.

Kezar (2001) researched the relationship of academic and student affairs departments. The Educational Resources Information Center Clearinghouse on Higher Education (ERIC), the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA; Kezar, 2001) performed this shared research project. Kezar distributed a questionnaire to principal SAOOs to gather data on the relationship between academic and student services departments. There were multiple themes within this survey, which included: student affairs’ input in the university’s decision making, causes and types of collaboration, how positive collaborations are achieved, organizational designs that assist collaboration and were prosperous, challenges of collaboration, evaluation of results of collaboration, and institutional features (Kezar, 2001). Chief SSAOs were sampled because they have firsthand familiarity of collaboration (Kezar, 2001).
The findings of the study revealed that all institutions participated in collaboration between academic and student affairs and had positive results with first-year programs such as student counseling, orientation for incoming students, and recruitment (Kezar, 2001). The results also uncovered four causes of collaboration in universities: urgency of education (35 percent), educational environment (22 percent), supervisory culpability (16 percent), and management viewpoints (27 percent) (Kezar, 2001). Student retention and the act of preserving student education were cited as a frequent cause of collaboration between educational entities (Kezar, 2001). Of the secondary schools which participated, results indicated that, public and four-year institutions excelled at establishing cross-functional collaborations (Kezar, 2001). Fifty-four percent of 4-year institutions were found to have greater than six positive collaborations, while 18 percent were attributed to community colleges (Kezar, 2001).

Participants’ observations of fruitful teamwork and approaches were then compared to the amount of actual successful collaborations (Kezar, 2001). The contributors stated that characteristics such as cooperation, organizational outlooks, shared objectives, and personal dispositions had the strongest significant relationship with collaboration (Kezar, 2001). The actual collaborations cited senior administrative support and structural changes were attributed accomplishments in collaboration (Kezar, 2001). Further breakdown of the data demonstrated a statistically significant affiliation between structural strategies and the amount of positive cooperation (Kezar, 2001). There was a direct correlation between the amount of strategies employed during collaboration and the success of those collaborations (Kezar, 2001).
Structural strategies can incorporate a wide variety of plans and options (Kezar, 2001). These include, but are not limited to, allocation of finances, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, systemic orientation, and establishing culpability (Kezar, 2001). Structural changes to rewards may include alteration to promotion and tenure requirements (Kezar, 2001). Not all strategies involve organizational changes; cultural strategies can also be employed (Kezar, 2001). Cultural strategies may consist of cross-institutional communication, shared language development, establishing an organizational vision, stimulating enthusiasm for growth, marketing change, and staff improvement (Kezar, 2001). However, SAOOs responded that cultural approaches were utilized more when compared to structural strategies (Kezar, 2001). The results indicated that 64 percent applied three or more structural strategies, compared to the 98 percent that employed more than three cultural strategies (Kezar, 2001). The authors noted that it is crucial to not discount structural strategies; both types are significant in establishing efficient collaboration (Kezar, 2001).

This researcher excelled at incorporating an extensive depiction of colleges that paralleled the assortment of higher education features within the United States (Kezar, 2001). This created an opening to contrast institutions of varying size, type, purpose, and structure (Kezar, 2001). The investigation did suffer from limitations. There was a 49 percent response rate, leading to only 128 replies out of a sample of 260 participants (Kezar, 2001). Kezar stated that although the amount of replies did not influence the investigation’s validity of analysis, the degree to which it was statistical significance was stifled. Finally, as collaboration was generally defined, detailed categories were not
accounted for leaving, the researchers incapable of inquiry into the individual types of collaborations (Kezar, 2001).

Kezar’s (2001) findings affirmed that collaboration in higher education had fluctuating degrees of success. This investigation provided grounding for the current study by affirming that structural features are an important variable (Kezar, 2001). This finding reinforced the need for continued focused investigation into educational institutional structures and the ability to identify the type of structure that facilitates successful learning and services for human resources professionals within institutions.

Kezar (2006) concentrated on the organizational framework in which joint effort was able to occur. The study employed a multiple case study methodology across four diverse universities (Kezar, 2006). The author sought to investigate the phenomena of instituting a context for collaboration and to cultivate a structural design related to the organizational environment that fosters teamwork (Kezar, 2006). Kezar applied a design from corporate theory developed by Mohrman, Cohen, and Mohrman (1995) to advance the subject of collaboration expansion within higher education. Kezar (2006) presupposed that it was necessary for it to be reformed in order to facilitate group and cross-divisional work for prosperous collaboration. The research questions of Kezar’s study were: what are the organizational qualities that aid in internal collaboration and which ones are the most important. These features can include model design, procedures, relationships between coworkers, knowledge, rewards, and culture/values (Kezar, 2006).

The study indicated that institutional qualities should be reformatted to empower collaboration (Kezar, 2006). These qualities include structure, procedures, job expectations, and rewards (Kezar, 2006). Additional results uncovered that fruitful
enactment required staff to learn collaboration skills, eliminate individual skills, and back any restructuring from organizational leadership (Kezar, 2006). Significant organizational traits for collaborative environment include: mission/philosophy, campus networks, integrating structures, leadership support, peripheral burdens, values, learning, and restructuring joint work instead of merely being a cooperative organization (Kezar, 2006).

Another conclusion from the investigation was that there must be equilibrium between top-down and bottom-up initiatives (Kezar, 2006). An approach with a heavy emphasis on top-down programs led to apprehensions of a mandated collaboration (Kezar, 2006). Furthermore, centralized organizational structures saddled with independent budgets were more than likely to fail, causing a need for further research on collaboration to advise policymaking and institutional management (Kezar, 2006). Kezar suggested that future researchers should focus on varying types of secondary schools, as smaller schools may not be affected by intentional networking and restructuring.

Most of the features from this study offered prospective topics for my research. An asset of Kezar’s (2006) research was how colleges with exceptional collaboration structures were recognized and chosen as case study locations. Case analysis employed triangulation, and member checking to ensure reliability and validity of uncovered themes (Kezar, 2006). A limitation of the study was the use of an individual’s opinion when choosing study locations that featured superior collaboration (Kezar, 2006). The determination of an adequate location was based upon an individual’s perception instead of empirical evidence (Kezar, 2006).
Kezar (2006) recognized the demand for additional research to recognize how organizational structures influence learning and services of human resource professionals. The theoretical framework utilized by Kezar within the study presented inferential premises that were vital throughout the data collection phase. The case study approach provided the research an opportunity to investigate structure, philosophy, procedures, and a range of concurrent circumstances that would not be applicable through the use of differing methodologies (Kezar, 2006).

The next section, the third and final dimension of cases selected to support my study, is based upon the changing nature of the roles and responsibilities of human resource professionals in the administration of higher education. In this section, I will illustrate the cross-boundary movement of employees to perform essential services while overcoming structural barriers and challenges.

**The Third Dimension of Empirical Studies: Staff Moving Lateral across Functional and Organizational Boundaries**

Whitchurch (2008) examined the accounts of 24 individuals in order to demonstrate that alterations to one’s identity can be understood only through a swing from leadership to supervision or a cooperative progression of professionalization. Existing concepts about the mutability of character posited empirical data and established a conceptual framework to describe evolving identities through three facets (Whitchurch, 2008). The conceptual framework validated that a skilled workforce can not only actively understand their assignments within the organization, but are also able to shift laterally across practical and established boarders (Whitchurch, 2008). This has formed innovative professional spaces, awareness, and associations. Whitchurch recommended that the
purpose and characteristics of employees are more multifaceted and vigorous than organization models or job descriptions might suggest.

Whitchurch (2008) interviewed 24 participants across three separate categories of United Kingdom universities. These types were multi-faculty, green field, and post-1992 (Whitchurch, 2008). The sample was chosen on the grounds of their varying purposes, sizes, and academic alignments (Whitchurch, 2008). The participants were either senior or middle grade managers. Whitchurch examined subjects’ departmental administration, funding, human resources, student backing, external affairs, planning, and originality.

The gathered data indicated that a partial number of participants could be characterized by their attitudes to the fundamental “rules and resources” that they faced, while others exhibited increased mobility when compared to others (Whitchurch, 2008, p. 3). From this data, three categories were developed: bounded professionals, cross-boundary professionals, and unbounded professionals (Whitchurch, 2008). Bounded professionals functioned within the boundaries of an organization that were created by them or had been impressed upon them (Whitchurch, 2008). Bounded professionals adhered to the “rules and resources” within those boundaries and were differentiated by the preservation of procedures, constructs, and their ability to function in the positions that they were assigned to (Whitchurch, 2008).

Cross-boundary professionals acknowledged and adhered to the imposed boundaries to construct tactical improvements while establishing capability (Whitchurch, 2008). Cross-boundary professionals capitalized on their familiarity of spaces between both sides of the boarders. They used their insight of the “rules and resources” of multiple
territories to establish their character, demonstrate their negotiating and political talents, and interact with peripheral settings.

Unbounded professionals ignored boundaries and the “rules and resources” that they embody (Whitchurch, 2008). Instead, unbounded professionals have a flexible and investigative methodology when confronting projects without boundaries (Whitchurch, 2008). These people focused on projects that aided institutional development and drawing on peripheral practices and associates (Whitchurch, 2008).

Of the 24 participants, 50 percent (12) were characterized as bounded, 33 percent (8) identified as cross-boundary, and 17 percent (4) were found to be unbounded (Whitchurch, 2008); however, individuals may fluctuate between these categories depending on circumstances. The typology was an experiential stratagem to exemplify a disposition toward one category instead of another, permitting uncomplicated assessment (Whitchurch, 2008). While more senior managers were found within the bounded category, middle managers were the majority in the other two categories (Whitchurch, 2008). The categories of specialist and generalist professionals were comparable, however (Whitchurch, 2008).

A conceptual framework was established to integrate a second dimension (Whitchurch, 2008). This dimension had four facets of professional activity: spaces, understanding, associations, and legitimacies (Whitchurch, 2008). The three types of professionals were then positioned within the above-mentioned characteristics as well as twelve classifications of identity features (Whitchurch, 2008).

For bounded professionals, configurations and borders defined the constraints of their character (Whitchurch, 2008). This may be reflective of an individual’s decisions or
limitations levied by the established organizations. Bounded professionals represented a model type of employees as they presented calculated decisions based upon their experience and training as a professional (Whitchurch, 2008). Although detailed identity boundaries may create a secure framework, this framework is not immutable (Whitchurch, 2008). The secure framework can be negated if an employee has more responsibilities and multiple capacities (Whitchurch, 2008). As an example, personnel found in departments that differ from the central administration often compete with two sets of rules and resources, thereby causing inconsistent responsibilities (Whitchurch, 2008).

Cross-boundary professionals are aware of the importance of their boundaries, often being reliant on them to establish their identities (Whitchurch, 2008). Although cross-boundary professionals understand the importance of boundaries, they also recognize that boundaries are not mutually exclusive (Whitchurch, 2008). Instead, the professionals can operate within varying boundaries to achieve their objectives (Whitchurch, 2008). They can balance manifold identities by perceiving their borders as prospects instead of limitations (Whitchurch, 2008). Cross-boundary professionals are logical about surrendering facets of these modules when needed in order to capitalize on openings that present themselves within alternate spaces, knowledge, and associations (Whitchurch, 2008). Finally, their ability to see multiple aspects of their organization can provide insight that is politically beneficial, on which they can construct the capability of their institution (Whitchurch, 2008).

Staff characterized as unbounded professionals, according to Whitchurch (2008), are characterized by their indifference for organizational structures, boundaries, and
standing within (Whitchurch, 2008). Less attentive to boundaries, these staff have a malleable and unrestricted attitude to their position (Whitchurch, 2008). Unbounded professionals solve problems and act as nodal points in extended networks (Whitchurch, 2008). This prepares unbounded professionals to work within chaotic and precarious areas and allows them to thrive in ambiguous conditions rather than be challenged by them (Whitchurch, 2008). This unrestricted methodology to affiliations is permitted by an absence of status consciousness (Whitchurch, 2008). Instead of adhering to status or position in the organizational structure, they tend to classify themselves across comprehensive zones of occupation, such as working in student support.

The findings of this study added to the understanding of what type of structure facilitates lateral movement across functional and organizational boundaries and how professional staff interprets and performs their position within the organizational structures and job descriptions (Whitchurch, 2008). The strength of the study created a conceptual framework to offer a comprehensive explanation of professional identities in higher education (Whitchurch, 2008). Previous researchers have concentrated on an outward shift, noticed by the workforce from administrative to management activities (Whitchurch, 2008).

Prior research has also focused on a communal progression of professionalization that permits instantaneous bodies of knowledge and standards of professional practices that have been previously recognized (Whitchurch, 2008). These explanations, however, have failed to explain the development of a twofold dynamic composed of amplified specialization and a muddling of happenings across professional settings (Whitchurch, 2008). A small sample hindered the study, just as a larger sample would increase the
magnitude of the study (Whitchurch, 2008). A longitudinal study could conclude whether less bounded forms of professionals are growing (Whitchurch, 2008).

Whitchurch (2008) noted that extended tasks have been established throughout higher education, infringing upon existing institutional boundaries. Extended tasks are composed of student upkeep and welfare, organizational collaboration and professional development (Whitchurch, 2008). These tasks can unite or crack established practices to create new fields (Whitchurch, 2008). Extended responsibilities can differentiate between active and response modes, activity that depends upon on the provided structures, and evolving activities that may aid in offering a further detailed perspective of organizational design and structure (Whitchurch, 2008).

This component of the literature provided context to the study by isolating what was previously understood about the influence of organizational structure within the administration of post-secondary schools and identified current gaps in existing knowledge. Concluding this section, Kezar (2006) argued that most people are unaware that the present organizational structure and processes go back a hundred years and that leaders will not be effective in creating partnerships unless they understand what undergird most postsecondary institutions. Theorists have also proposed new paradigms for the process of organizational design and what constitutes structural design in organizations (Galbraith, 2002; Love & Estanek, 2004; Wheatley, 2006). Within higher education, structural redesign has seldom been thought of outside the realm of changing reporting relationships. Finding solutions to the demands placed on modern organizations, including the administration of higher education, are going to required more than moving relational reporting lines (Kuk, 2007).
Reflecting on the current structural make-up of the administration of higher education describe above the question of “why” should departments seek to formulate partnerships and or relationships with others? Various researchers have offered a variety of theories in response to this question. Knoke (1988) remarked that collective action theories reiterate the need for a common strategy or purpose among actors at both the organizational and individual level, and assert the importance of incentives in the decision of actors to collaborate. Pfeffer and Salancik’s (1978) Resource Dependence Theory emerges which emphasized how the need for resources motivates organizations toward collaboration, highlighting the role of purpose and incentives in producing collaboration. Transactional cost economies demonstrate how structure and the individuals representing an organization can influence collaborative identities. Gulati (1998) postulated that the theory of embeddedness show that both boundary spanners and intraorganizational interactions influence an organization’s aptitude to access information and its capacity for collaboration. In addition, the resource based view uncovers the dynamics of how collaborative capacity might be developed by examining the structure, people, and lateral mechanisms involved in the collaborative process (Kale, Dyer, & Singh, 2002).

In the following section, I will provide an overview of how existing theory supports the components in the Star Model and speaks to a need for a reconfigured structural arrangement for the administration of higher education. It signals an overwhelming shift away from functional, hierarchical, organizational structure with job specialization to newer forms of organizing for the 21st century. Tull and Kuk (2012)
also suggested and supported Galbraith’s (2002) star model as a possible process for organization redesign (see Figure 1.1).

The Star Model for Organizational Structure Capacity

In an effort to address the “what” type of organizational structure provides suitable circumstances for intraorganizational collaborative learning and services, this study proposed Galbraith’s (2002) star model (see Figure 1.1). The star model includes five subdomains, each representing one point of the star: strategy, structure, people, rewards, and processes. In Galbraith’s model, strategy refers to the mission or overall goals of the organization, while structure pertains to placement of people, authority and functions within the organization. Processes or lateral mechanisms address the way in which information flows across the organization and the formal and informal means of decision-making and interaction. Rewards or incentives deal with reward structures, and people include the policies and cultural aspects of the organization that stimulates the way in which people within the organization perform. Galbraith asserted that depending on the specific goals of an organization, the five points of the star could be manipulated to minimize the shortcomings and maximize the strengths of any one organizational design.

The star model incorporates a range of factors that have been found to be important for organizational design and structure. In the following section, I will detail the components of the star model in relation to structure that provides appropriate conditions for intraorganizational collaborative learning and integrated services.
**Strategy**

In the framework of capacity, each of the five modules of the star model addresses the issues relating to structure that provides appropriate conditions for collaborative learning and integrated services. First, strategy includes the ways in which the organization’s mission and objectives require the involvement of other departments. For instance, the human resources department could state their mission is “to effectively facilitate and support the organization’s human resources needs. This strategy can easily be met by dealing with the human resource issues within respective departments, potentially resulting in broadening the participation base and also transferring best practices across the organization. A mission statement that broadens the goals of an organization ensures that services are actively integrated as it draws from other resources. This mission statement demonstrates that intraorganizational collaboration is required to most effectively accomplish its goals.

The need for a common strategy has been asserted in a wide range of research. Fearman, McCaffrey, and Van Slyke (2001) found in a review of existing literature that initial dispositions toward cooperation influenced the success of interorganizational cooperation. In several cases, analysis of the literature of intraorganizational collaboration emphasized the need for common organizational goals and realistic expectations (Kezar, 2001, 2006; Kuk & Banning, 2006) and an articulation of an overarching strategic objective. Tsjovold and Tso (1989) also found that shared visions and values increased the perceived effectiveness of collaboration.

Another way to think of strategy or purpose is as a felt need or motivation to collaborate. This need can be manifested through investment of resources in collaboration
(Kezar, 2006). As mentioned above, Tull and Kuk (2012) found that investment in resources in a dedicated relationship improved the success of their alliance. Barney (1991) referred to the resource-based view and the Resource Dependence Theory of Pfeiffer and Salancik (1978), which emphasizes the need that when there is recognition that an organization/department needs additional resources to accomplish its goal, those representing the organization will be more motivated toward collaboration. In this way, common strategy and adequate need for collaboration has been empirically validated. The subsequent segment outlines the importance of structural attributes as well as the role of structural flexibility in collaboration.

**Structure**

“In the face of dramatically changing conditions, holding onto one’s equipment—be it axes or assumptions, tool packs or favorite practices—can threaten survival” (Kuh, 1989, p. 2). Structure, the second component in the star model, deals with the location of authority and placement of people and decision-making within the organization (Galbraith, 2002). Collaboration research has demonstrated the importance of an extensive assortment of structural features to the success of collaboration. In addition, the ability to alter these structures to accommodate new collaborative ventures is critical to an organization’s collaborative capacity (Bess & Dee, 2008; Kezar & Lester, 2009).

In recent years, there has been a paradigm shift away from specialization sparked by changing demands from the environment and limited resources. The shift is also due to changes in organizational design from mechanistic to organic structures. For example, there is a demand for consumer-oriented student services, increasing competition amongst institutions, individualized programs, and more diverse populations (Kuk, 2002;
Kuk et al., 2010; Manning et al., 2006). Additionally, a need for greater legislative accountability and attention to cost has placed considerable pressure on institutions (Burke & Associates, 2005; Malloy & Clement, 2009). These expectations and demand have gradually shifted the focus of once isolated, specialized units to an awareness that more cross-unit collaboration is now required to meet these expectations and to achieve an institutional mission and goal (Tull & Kuk, 2012).

According to Kezar and Lester (2009), attempts to collaborate with other units within student services and across division boundaries have increased but they have not been sustained by current organizational structures. Various researchers have therefore posited that the country is in the midst of a major paradigm shift in the understanding and perceptions of organizations and their designs (Galbraith, 2002; Goold & Campbell, 2002; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Wheatley, 2006). These new understandings of organizational structure and how they can assist in designing more effective organizations will probably have a noteworthy impression on cultivating organizational functioning (Kuk, 2007).

What has changed with regard to the general knowledge and understanding of organizational structure? The basic tenant of organizational structure theory is that an organization should divide the work of an organization and then differentiate, coordinate and integrate the work at all levels within the organization to best meet the mission and goals of the organization (Kuk et al., 2010). What has been changing in modern-day organizations, including student affairs, is the way that differentiation and integration might be accomplished within organizations as a response to how interaction with the environment occurs. In today’s organization, the boundaries between the
organization/departments and the external environment are beginning to blur—and in some cases, merge (Ashkenas et al., 2002). Dynamic and rapid changes in the external environment require organizations to respond more quickly and differently from how they have in the past. These required responses to the environment have begun to shift the paradigm of how organizations and departments are being viewed, what roles they play, and how they need to be structured to function successful.

The relatively new paradigm has shifted away from controlling, hierarchical structures that rely on high levels of specialization and differentiation. Organizations are beginning to see the value of and need for shared decision-making, more transparent and lateral communication, and more flexible and collaborative operational processes. As a result, the organizational structural paradigm is shifting. Organizations are starting to be viewed as open systems, organic systems that are in a perpetual position of transformation and require the ability to transform continuously (Wheatley, 2006).

Organic structures broadly delineate procedures, continually redefine tasks, and have subordinates with a sizable amount of self-sufficiency and sideways communication. Organic structures are also seen as regionalized structures that observe organizations as multifaceted and shared entities, where distinct social forces can contend with each other and cooperate. According to Mintzberg (1979), Daft (1992), and Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), the main characteristics of organic structures are flat structures, departmental barriers, low vertical differentiation, minimal formalization of behavior, and decentralization of power and control.

Organizational leaders and tactical groups can create flat structures (Daft, 1992; Mintzberg, 1979; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). In flat structures, vertical decision-making
is substituted with a limited horizontal differentiation that is based on proficiency and familiarity specialization instead of operative specialization (Daft, 1992; Mintzberg, 1979; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Organizational barriers are deconstructed, while multidisciplinary teams are created (Daft, 1992; Mintzberg, 1979; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). These teams are composed of experts from diverse backgrounds who can incorporate their expert familiarity into the creation of multifaceted products (Daft, 1992; Mintzberg, 1979; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Low vertical differentiation is developed through the results of workers contributing to their supervision and command (Daft, 1992; Mintzberg, 1979; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Minimal formalization of behavior safeguards data distribution and effective management that enables familiar and bi-directional discourse for generating innovative knowledge (Daft, 1992; Mintzberg, 1979; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Lastly, decentralization of power and control ensures positive worker contribution, structural supervision, and an accessible and trust-based ethos (Daft, 1992; Mintzberg, 1979; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

These organizational forms have three levels of supervision between the top and front line. The employees produce data, which function as autonomous actors, and middle management acting as collaborating communicators (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Organic structures identify variations in theories and exploits (Fiol & Lyles, 1985), because they lay value on familiarity and understanding. These structures are perfect for completing difficult jobs that are subject to regular adjustments, as their concentration is based on knowledge that is malleable (Daft, 1992). This is essential in a setting categorized by difficulty, opposition, and indecision, where organizations have to be directed to constant variation and innovation. Organic structures diminish cerebral work
because they diminish the burdens of data and expedite the integration of innovative
designs (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Organic structures enable the intersection of organizational
levels, boundaries, and communication; therefore, the germane knowledge and expertise
are dispersed broadly across groups within organizations. This form of organizational
structure is therefore a means to attain specified goals (Jordan, 1994).

Various theorists have envisioned new ways of viewing organizational structure
(Ashkenas et al., 2002; Bess & Dee, 2008; Galbraith, 2002; Goold & Campbell, 2002;
Wheatley, 2006). These researchers have discovered that factors important to
organizational success have changed in recent decades. These factors include demands
for increased response time, adaptability, and flexibility in cooperating with the external
environment, integration of work throughout and across the organization, and the ability
to innovate. Scholars have also found four main factors that influence how organizations
are structured: the dynamics and nature of the external environment in which the
organization operates, the organization’s size, the nature of the work it performs, and how
it strategizes its work to accomplish its goals and objectives, all influence how
organizations should be structured (Bess & Dee, 2008; Galbraith, 2002; Goold &
Campbell, 2002).

Others have suggested that changes in the organizational boundaries are needed to
make the organization more cross functional and lateral in focus, and more engaged with
the external environment (Ashkenas et al., 2002). Theorists also hold that organizations
should be designed to be less hierarchical and more networked in the way they make
decisions and the way workflows within the organization (Wheatley, 2006). In particular,
higher education organizations need to be designed to be more collaborative (Kezar &
According to Galbraith (2002), “Organizational design that facilitates variety, change, speed and integration are sources of competitive advantage” (p. 6). Such changes would make organizations more adaptive to the requests of a rapidly fluctuating situation, and as a result they would become more effective.

Rules and agreement, sources of authority and power, and processes for feedback are therefore important parts for successful collaboration due to the increased need for coordination between departments (Kezar, 2006; Kuk & Banning, 2006). Coordination processes and structure such as training and plans are essential (Kezar, 2006). Argote and Ingram (2000) found that organizations that had structures in place such as rules and regulations, as well as those that provided autonomy to staff was better able to collaborate across functions to increase promptness of care. Collaboration is more successful when management clearly articulates coordination procedures (Park & Ungson, 2001); this leads to more interorganizational referrals when management regularly communicates across organizational boundaries (Provan, 1984). Phillips, Lawrence, and Hardy (2000) asserted that structure for collaboration can also arise from institutional mimetism where collaborative norms and rules come from observation of other organizations in the same field (Ambler, 2000; Kuk, 2007). Maintaining collaborative capacity also necessitates a process of learning and change manifest in the flexibility of organizational structure (Bess & Dee, 2008; Kerosuo & Engeström, 2003).

Lane and Lubatkin (1998); Ashkenas et al. (2000), and Hazy, Tivnan, and Schwandt (2003) showed that absorptive capacity or learning that takes place between department/units is also dependent on the extent to which the structures within each department align with one another. In this way, organizational structures may need to
change depending on characteristics of partner organizations, or the relationship itself. In the next section, I will outline the importance of lateral mechanism and creating communication among individuals or across groups that typically do not work together.

**Lateral Mechanism**

Lateral mechanism, the third component, refers to ways in which information and processes flow across the organization. In this way, organizations with high collaborative capacity are those with lateral mechanism in place, such as cross-functional, boundary-spanning teams, or learning systems that are encouraged and given authorization to integrate processes and share information. These types of mechanisms can also be informal mechanisms, such as informal social networks that rely on the social capital of the members on the organization for effectiveness (Galbraith, 2002; Kerosuo & Engeström, 2003; Kezar & Lester, 2009).

A well-known integrating structure is a cross-functional team (Denison, Hart, & Kahn, 1996). There are also a variety of other integrating structures, including matrix management, project management, matrix organizations, and project units or organizations (Holland, Gaston, & Gomes, 2000). These structures bring people together and help create communication among individuals or across groups that typically do not work together. Integrating structure is considered more important in complex and large environments prone to develop isolated bureaucratic silos or become overloaded by multiple processes and can no longer process the information necessary to adjust to the changing environment. Thus, smaller organizations may need fewer and less complex integrating structures (Kezar & Lester, 2009).
Holland et al. (2000) argued that integrating structures have been found to solve information-processing problems. When people are brought together in cross-functional teams or projects they have the opportunity to share information and services that have been trapped in siloed structures many problems resolve. Several researchers have demonstrated that integrating structures can increase individual motivation, job satisfaction, commitment, and personal development by providing employees with greater influence in their work, which makes them feel greater self-efficacy (Denison et al. 1996; Holland et al., 2000). A key challenge regarding integrating structures is the multiple lines of how to ensure accountability (Holland et al., 2000); Jassawalla and Sashittal (1999) opined that miscommunication can occur when employees obtain input from multiple sources of authority and influences. Input from multiple sources can also create ambiguity over resources both financial and human. Integrating structure can also create conflict and stress by bringing people together who do not have experience working together and who have very different backgrounds and goals (Holland et al., 2000).

Bess and Dee (2008) also found tactics that are categorized into three types of targets: job-focused, self-focused, and supervisor-focused. All of these categories could influence lateral mechanisms (Bess & Dee, 2008). Within this realm, Kumar and Ghadially (as cited in Bess & Dee, 2008) examined four categories of control strategies: integration, structure change, co-optation, and danger, whilst Vredenburgh and Maurer (as cited in Bess & Dee, 2008) listed 11 influence tactics: “accumulate and control of resources, bargain, form coalitions/informal teams, orchestrate events, maintain personal flexibility, reduce dependence on others and instill dependence within others, engage in
conflict, anticipate and prepare for others - actions and reactions, cultivate good interpersonal relations, exploit others, and manage career.” Technology can also function as a lateral mechanism, in that it can facilitate information exchange (Provan, 1984). Lateral mechanisms can therefore take on many forms, and although they often facilitate interorganizational collaboration, they can also be sources of complexity, which require additional coordination and resources. The next component of the star model, rewards or incentives, speaks to the role that motivation plays in aligning actors toward unified goals within the organization.

**Reward Systems/Incentives**

Highly motivated employees are said to be more satisfied and therefore more productive. In the last few decades many reward plans and programs have cropped up to systematically rewards and motivate employees, including value pay systems, salary bonus options, 360-degree comment plans, and yearly performance evaluations (Stickler, 2006). Each of these programs seeks to create internal or external motivation to employees to increase productivity and job satisfaction. An enabler to collaboration, rewards provide similar forms of motivation but also assist in the establishment or continuation of collaboration by providing intrinsic benefits for participation. Thus, rewards for collaboration can be either extrinsic (monetary incentive) or intrinsic (working well with others and get praise for contributions) motivators (Kezar & Lester, 2009).

Intrinsic motivation can be describe as motivation to engage in activities that enhance or maintain a person’s self-concept and positive self-image (Wiersma, 1992). Individuals are found to be intrinsically motivated in organizations that maximize feeling
of competence and self-determination (Wiersma, 1992). In organizations, intrinsic motivators include respecting coworkers, working well without supervision and rigid rules, and delivering results for the organization (Stickler, 2006). In collaboration, intrinsic motivation is felt when individuals are able to contribute to a collaborative team and earn respect and when the collaboration produces a beneficial product or service for the organization (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Kezar and Lester found that many people with whom they spoke on the four campuses mentioned intrinsic rewards as a motivating factor. For example, a staff member mentioned learning more about campus decision-making, a junior member described the value of gaining leadership skills, and an administrator in student affairs perfected his assessment skills.

In contrast, extrinsic motivation is created by external factors such as monetary rewards for services or work completed, or praise for a job well done. Rewards to enable collaboration create external incentives to participate in collaboration and remove structural barriers that prevent collaboration from taking place. Rewards enable collaboration by linking institutional, departmental, or collaborative missions to those rewards. Connecting collaborative effort to the institutional mission provides direct value to the work of the collaboration and establishes the significance of the work. Rewards become not just monetary gifts or nonmonetary benefits but intrinsic motivators that provide a “value added” to the organization (Kezar & Lester, 2009, p 151). In addition, connecting rewards to mission provides justification for granting rewards and ensures accountability for specific outcomes. This is achieved by establishing a system in which rewards are granted based on measuring, reviewing, and evaluating performance.
Kezar and Lester (2009) also found in the four highly collaborative campuses study that incentives were substantial for enabling collaboration. Rewards like promotion and tenure, enticements, and intrinsic motivation for teamwork are especially observable through the formation of positive joint experiences (Kezar & Lester, 2009). At one campus, where promotion and tenure prerequisites had been entrenched, the researchers observed changes in work behavior that have attracted employees who want to work collaboratively (Kezar & Lester, 2009). This process actually served as a recruitment tool.

Despite the potential of using rewards to motivate and support collaboration, the literature also describes several significant challenges to the development and effectiveness of rewards to increase motivation. Some researchers have argued that rewards are significant motivators, while others are of the opinion that rewards have a short-term effect (Stickler, 2006). Another challenge in the literature is the internal competition that may develop as a result of a limited number of rewards, which can lead to an environment of distrust and opposition. Organizational leaders, therefore, need to assess the degree to which incentives are aligned with a collaboration strategy and structure. For instance, one incentive might include rewarding individuals for work that is done in conjunction with other departments or units. Another example might be providing funding only to those projects proposals that utilized collaborative elements to meet project goals. Mohrman et al. (1995) suggested that institutions establish clear rewards that are granted when specific outcomes are achieved. In this way, reward and incentive structures can contribute to the success, failure, and learning of organizational collaboration (Lei, Slocum, & Pitts, 1997). The fifth and final area of the star model deals
with people. The people construct addresses the individual attributes of those representing the organization.

**People**

These attributes include attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and skills. According to Kezar and Lester (2009) and Whitchurch (2008), it is in this way that organizational leaders can work to improve the ways in which people view collaboration by instituting policies that encourage lateral coordination and information sharing as well as by recruiting people with the familiarity, abilities, and capability to thrive in a cooperative environment. Kezar (2006) found that although many campuses could build collaborative work with existing staff, some felt it necessary to make strategic hires around a particular interdisciplinary initiative, learning community, or other cross-campus efforts. One of the barriers to collaborative efforts is having the right people on board who believe in and have experience in collaborative work.

On campuses that are transitioning from a more individualized to a collaborative approach, senior executives may need to hire some individuals who can model this behavior. This strategy is used very sparingly, however, because creating new positions is usually difficult. Strategic hiring has therefore created more energy around collaboration, as these new individuals often have great enthusiasm for collaborative work. Kates and Galbraith (2007) suggested competencies that the institution needed to select and develop, including the ability to do the following:

- View issues holistically and from cross-functional and cross-cultural perspectives; negotiate and influence without authority or positional power; build relationships and networks and skillfully work through informal channels; advocate and
collaborate without bullying or compromising; share decision rights and resources and make joint decision; exhibit flexibility and resolve conflict; manage projects with discipline and make decisions in situations of ambiguity and change. Management must also model these abilities and behaviors. (p. 22)

In addition, collaboration also requires individuals and organizations to learn about the process of teamwork and the issues that may arise in attempting to foster collaborative work. For example, in the Learning Model for Intraorganizational Collaboration (Mohrman et al., 1995), an organization must lay the foundation by reading resources, amassing data, visiting other organizations to learn about their views on collaboration, and identifying organizational issues affecting collaboration. Analyzing other organizations and having conversations about the barriers and challenges to learn about collaboration avoids the common challenges that prevent collaboration from moving forward (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Collaboration is continuous learning, and it requires the solicitation of feedback in order to evaluate their effectiveness (Mohrman et al., 1995). Second, learning must also occur within the collaboration; learning about other types of people and their perspectives. Individuals should therefore be open to learning, willing to acquire new knowledge, and develop an understanding of different ways of viewing the world. Third, collaboration is more successful when employees learn about and become knowledgeable about the larger organizational processes and structures in which they conduct their collaborations.

Essential to Galbraith’s (2002) star model is the focus of alignment of all five components but also flexibility of the institution to keep up with changing conditions. Senge (1994), Peters (1993), Galbraith (2002), and Kates and Galbraith (2007) posited
that the importance of alignment was to have the capability to readjust as conditions are altered. These changes include the formation of resources, the procedures employed, and the mental paradigms that will influence future plans (Galbraith, 2002; Kates & Galbraith, 2007; Peters, 1993; Senge, 1994). In a stable environment efficiency is formed as opposed to an unstable environment where an inert configuration can be a limitation. The organization should incorporate a configuration that promotes the flexibility to reconfigure and react to opportunities and dangers (Senge, 1994).

**Chapter Summary**

Higher education institutions across the United States have endeavored to advance proposals that expand learning and services without the task of restructuring, only to find their innovative energies disenchanted by traditional structure and processes. By examining the history and development, one can understand how the design and structures have emerged, supported, and reinforced individualized rather than collaborative work. According to Kezar and Lester (2009), aspects of hierarchical administrative structures—including specialization, professionalization, departmentalization and socialization, loose coupling, reward systems, bureaucratic and, staff subculture, differentiation and functionality, and responsibility-centered budgeting—are all structures that have historical roots as supporting individual behaviors.

In this literature review, I discussed three dimensions of empirical work to establish the groundwork and need for this study and focused on the current organizational structure in operation, collaborative team approaches, and shifting roles and responsibilities of professional staff working across boundaries in higher education.
The first dimension of empirical studies distinctively found that much of the administration remained compartmentalized as traditional silos with hierarchical and decentralized models that dominate the higher education landscape. Over recent years, these structures have become complex and have learned how to function with fewer and often decreasing resources, but not always with success. Tull and Kuk (2012) recommended further research into the structural dynamics of the administration of higher education.

Modern organizations are faced with new challenges that require new levels of structural arrangement to work effectively across organizational boundaries. Kezar and Lester (2009) made a strong case in the second dimension of studies for the need for more collaborative structures within higher education. They argued that higher education needs to reorganize to form more collaborative organizational forms. The third dimension of studies—coupled with the continuous increase in technological advances—led to a further evolution of the roles and responsibilities of human resource professionals within institutions of higher learning while organizational structure remained at most, unchanged.

In the meantime, organizational theorists have started to envision new ways of viewing organizational structure. They have discovered that factors and reasons important to organizational success have changed in recent decades. The factors included demands for increased response time, adaptability and flexibility in cooperating with the peripheral surroundings, integration of work throughout and across the organization, and the ability to innovate (Ashkenas et al. 2002; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Tull & Kuk, 2012). As a manager moves toward inventive organizations, they are
presented with the fact that prevailing structural proportions have to be amended to fit new organizational goals. These goals represent a semblance of agreement that within the knowledge era, new structural arrangements will arise in response to scientific and global change (Senge, 1994).

Galbraith’s (2002) star model acted as the theoretical framework for this study; this theory supports the need for a reconfigured structural arrangement of the administration of higher education. This model consists of five components: strategy, structure, lateral mechanism, rewards, and people and facilitates change, speed, flexibility, integration, and alignment of all the components. It is therefore imperative to comprehend the interactive nature that exists amongst departments. Thus, the notion of configuration is essential to the star model. Each module of the organization should work to back the design. This type of structure would make the organization more adaptive to the mandates of a rapidly fluctuating situation, and as a result, would also become more effective.
Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

In the previous chapter, I introduced and reviewed literature relating to organizational structure in the administration of higher education. In this chapter, I will discuss the research methodology, including details of the overall research preparation, data collection, and data analysis. The research study was completed following three main phases: introduction, research preparation, and data collection and analysis.

The first phase, which was the introduction, consisted of the development of the purpose of the research, the research question, and the case selection. In this phase, I explored and described organizational structures and determined the structure in the non-academic department of human resources in three different types of universities: a state-owned master’s level; a private baccalaureate; and a commonwealth/state related in central Pennsylvania. Another purpose of the study was exploratory; I sought to determine what type of organizational structure facilitated and were key to learning and service in the three different types of departments of human resources. I developed three research questions to guide the study:

**RQ1:** How is the department of human resources structured to deliver collaborative learning and integrated services and what has determined the design?

**RQ2:** What are the organizational features (strategy, structure, processes and lateral capacity, reward systems and people practices) that seem to facilitate the process of collaborative learning and integrated service in the non-academic department of human resources?
**RQ3:** What organizational features were most important (strategy, structure, processes and lateral capacity, reward systems and people practices) in creating collaborative learning and integrated service?

Upon determining the introduction, research preparation commenced. The research preparation focused on the methodology of the study, which was a qualitative research, using multiple case study design as the main method of inquiry. In addition, the research strategy was descriptive in nature: employing the research techniques of interviewing and reviewing of documents.

Finally, data collection and analysis were performed. To ensure the effectiveness of the study, a pre-test of the instruments or a pilot study was conducted. The pilot study allowed for the examination of the content of the interview questionnaire on a smaller population. The interviews and documents were then analyzed using a qualitative thematic analysis with the aim of generating the most meaningful data content gathered. Universities X, Y, and Z had the same coding processes, which will be detailed accordingly in this chapter. Each university also has their respective individual case report, which should be used to draw case conclusions, revealing the similarities and differences as well as the evidences from different sources. The overall purpose of the final analysis or triangulation was to verify the trustworthiness and quality of the study. Figure 3.1 illustrates the procedures on the next page for this chapter.
Figure 3.1. The research procedure for this study.
Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine how organizational structure influence collaborative learning and integrated services in the non-academic department of human resources in three different types of universities in central Pennsylvania. A lack of empirical evidence prevails generally on how organizational structure affects learning and services in the non-academic department of human resources in higher education.

For this purpose, I addressed the concerns raised by scholars in an attempt to fill the gap identified and provides literature that would add to the frontiers of knowledge (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Barritt (as cited in Creswell, 2007) suggested that the basis of the research is not the unearthing of original fundamentals like in the field of natural science, but instead, raising consciousness for that understanding, which often times have been disregarded and ignored. Through amplifying cognizance and establishing discourse, the exploration can provide an improved perception of the viewpoints of individuals engaged in the phenomena and through that awareness new advancements in performance can be established (Creswell, 2007).

Sample Case Selection

The sample for this investigation was founded on a nonprobability, predetermined criterion to the point where the subjects could contribute to the research questions (Mertens, 1998). The first criterion was wide-ranging or diverse cases (Mertens, 1998). These cases purposely pursue various establishments or categories of programs (Mertens, 1998). Purposive or purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to understand, discover, and gain insight and therefore selects a sample from which the most can be learned (Patton, 1990). This criterion was beneficial in discovering
collective and distinctive configurations across different environments. In these cases, common patterns indicated dominant impressions of broader consequence, because these occurred among varied assemblages (Mertens, 1998). The second criterion was convenience sampling, where case studies were chosen because access was effortless, the sites were in the state I resided. Third, I utilized snowballing, chain, or networking sampling to identify information-rich cases. I started with the head of the department of human resources as the gatekeeper, who recommended other information-rich cases of interest for this study (Patton, 1990). Purposeful sampling was thus applied; in other words, I predetermined the three different types of universities in central Pennsylvania as the sites for the case studies (Creswell, 2007).

To predetermine the three different cases, I used the Carnegie mapping of institutions of higher learning to establish the criteria for selection. The Carnegie foundation is a framework for classifying colleges and universities in the United States. The framework primarily serves educational and research purposes, where it is often important to identify groups of roughly comparable institutions (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2005). Nation-wide institutions under the Carnegie mapping are ordered around three central inquiries: what is being taught at what level, student demographics based on enrollment and undergraduate profile, and the scope and environment of the institutions.

In order to identify a population of different types of universities, my first step was to examine Carnegie's basic classification. The basic classification used broad categories to delineate the fundamental missions of higher education institutions. The classifications included associate colleges, doctorate-granting universities, master's
colleges and universities, baccalaureate colleges, special focus institutions (e.g., religious
seminaries, schools of art and design, stand-alone medical schools), and tribal colleges. I
decided to choose three different types of universities as the second step: a state-owned
master’s level, private baccalaureate, and commonwealth/state related institutions of
higher learning. My third step was to verify by conducting a quick research if these three
types of universities were available in central Pennsylvania for convenience; finally, on
the basis of my knowledge and experience in higher education, I decided on the unit of
analysis for this study.

The unit of analysis, according to Yin (2003), defined the case researched and
described at the level at which the entity was studied. For this study, the unit of analysis
was the department of human resources, while the source of data collection was staff
employed in specific positions in all three types of institutions. The respondents
identified received an email invitation requesting their permission to participate and
followed up with a Consent form. The interviews were conducted and recorded in nine
individual face-to-face settings in locations of their choice and document reviews took
place away from the campus. My positionality for selection of the unit of analysis for this
study follows in the next section.

The Research Process Through my Positionality

Understanding how adults learn—and subsequently implementing that learning
into training and development programs using multidisciplinary theories and strategies—
has formed the basis of my 20 years of experience in the nonprofit and higher education
sectors. I have directed various nonprofit projects that were funded by local and
international donors, which have ranged from 1- to 3-year interventions in partnership
with different institutions of higher learning. Cross-functional teams were fundamental to the operation of all of the interventions, and the outcomes significantly increased the performance of the schools, institutions of learning, local communities, and project teams. I managed Teacher Opportunity Programs (TOPS) and directed the project development unit at the Management of Schools Training Program. I also had the opportunity to participate in two international scholarships, one in the Netherlands at Fonty’s University and the other at the University of Connecticut, Hartford, in the United States during my honors and master’s degree studies, respectively. As project lead, I participated in cross-functional team development and design, implemented a quality assurance framework, and benchmarked the operations with international standards at the Center for Course Design and Development at the University of South Africa.

I was employed as a coordinator for training and development at Kutztown University, Pennsylvania in the Department of Human Resources in 2007. My current employment is as the director for the Faculty and Staff Development Institute with HACC, Central Pennsylvania’s Community College. I am also the founder and owner of the Center for Human and Organization Development.

As an Organization and Development practitioner over the years, I noticed that some organizations faced challenges that were difficult to overcome through training and development and appeared to be related to organizational structure where best practices in one functional unit simple could not translate to other parts of the organization. In some cases, teams and individual employees from one unit were not aware that a similar problem existed in another unit of the same organization and was solved in a particular way. Some functional units also tended to protect their turf, making the learning and
sharing of information and resources difficult. Also, not understanding how one unit’s work impact another unit and the organization as a whole draws me to the conclusion of structural incompetence.

Organizational structures also negatively affected me personally and professionally. Personally, I have been an adult learner for the past 20 years; in this time, I have experienced a lot of frustration with higher education’s time-consuming siloed Student Affairs and Enrollment Management services. In this system, one is expected to move from one functional unit to another over a period of time, and worse if these offices are not situated within the same building to get registered as a student. Here, organizational structures do not take into consideration the demographical changes in the current student population where more full-time workers then traditional student study on a part-time basis. The non-traditional part-time student is return back to school in greater numbers and at some institution outweighs the traditional students. With virtual learning becoming more and more popular, several schools have made some changes to provide customer services that are more accessible and operate within extended time periods through one-stop shops or seamless online services.

Professionally, I have seen silos at work in individual departments, regional offices, provincial and national organizations, and even at different management levels within an organization. In addition, silos appear to be prevalent in the many of the OD diagnoses I have conducted, which is not necessarily always a bad thing. Silos could be beneficial when used correctly; they could provide an organization with a permeable structure, allowing information to flow in and out of the unit and enabling other groups to
leverage the expertise and knowledge across the team as a whole, while also allowing departments to better understand their effects on the organization.

This does not seem to be the case, however, according to a recent survey from the American Management Association showing that 83% of executives said silos existed in their companies, and 97% thought they had adverse effects (Johnson, 1998). These executives stated that the presence of silos restricts the clarity of vision across an organization and breeds mini-fiefdoms, resulting in people being less likely to collaborate, share information, or work together as a cohesive team. This leads to poor decision-making, morale, efficiency, and profitability within a company. Thus, working knowledge of organizational structure appears to be an essential component for any successful organizational leader today. It is within this context that I have applied my knowledge and experience to make the selection of the unit of analysis for this study. The rationale for the selection of cases follows in the next section.
Sites (Institutions)

Three different types of universities in central Pennsylvania:

• State-owned master’s level

• Private baccalaureate, and

• Commonwealth/state related university of higher learning in central Pennsylvania.

Nine Individual face-to-face Interviews

• Three Heads of the HR departments

• Two unit managers/supervisors from each university = 6

Document Review away from campuses

• Vision/Mission/Strategic plan

• Management plans/reporting lines/organizational charts

• General policies and procedures

• Performance management system

Figure 3.2. Selected samples for the study.
The Rationale for the Selection of Cases

Firstly, the rationale for the selection of the three types of institutions (i.e., state owned master’s level, private baccalaureate, and commonwealth/state related university) was twofold: to show alternative viewpoints of the research problem and processes across the different types of institutions (Creswell, 2003) and to develop information rich, in-depth cases of the phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In addition, the selection was also convenient, not too costly in terms of travel and accommodation, and easily accessible because I resided in central Pennsylvania.

Secondly, the rationale for the selection of the department was that the office of human resources played an important part in the employment of staff; in other words, the functions of recruitment and selection included staff training, development, and the administration of performance management. Hoffmann (as cited in Kretovics, 2011) pointed out that there is a “clear link between employee turnover and student satisfaction, making the recruitment and training of frontline personnel imperative” (p. 131). Concerns for an increase in staff, outsourcing, and cross-functional activities at universities therefore assisted as the stimulus to progress operational units that would grow the assimilation and effectiveness of crucial procedures, and advance strategies. This new direction formed the catalyst for innovative deliberation and structural organizational change.

Thirdly, the rationale for the selection of the respondents for one-on-one interviews was based on the following criteria. The head of departments or senior staffer was in the best position to respond to questions concerning the structural make-up and decision-making processes and procedures of their respective units. They were
knowledgeable about the unit’s past, current, and future structural successes, as well as challenges. Their contribution was significant in discovering essential meanings regarding knowledge and firsthand experiences.

The second staff member, identified by the head of department, had personal experience in working across boundaries. Relevant and information rich knowledge came from these individuals as I delved deeper into their personal experiences of staff working across functional areas with other departments. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) referred to this form of sampling as “revelatory” where individuals are approached because they have higher levels of insight (p. 157).

Fourthly and finally, the sample of units in the human resources department also demonstrated notably similar and exhibited different features across a range of relevant issues, such as number of employees, location of the institutions, and other factors noted in the individual case studies (Yin, 2003). The purpose of noting the differences was not to evaluate any particular unit, but rather to introduce the empirically based theoretical model to verify the aspects or areas on which the units function (Day, 1999; Galbraith, 2002). In this case, Borg and Gall (as cited in Verma & Mallick, 1999) posited that case study research usually inflicts the personal life of the respondents because it intends to study in-depth the relationship between colleagues and also amongst departments. I used pseudonyms for the universities and employees in order to guarantee the privacy of the research participants in this study.

Miles and Huberman (1994) emphasized that sampling is crucial for later analysis because no matter how much the researcher desires to include everyone who fulfil the criteria, it is impossible. A limited number of institutions and departments was required
in order to manage the scope and content of data accordingly. Sampling in qualitative research also does not only involve decisions about who to include, what to observe, or who to interview, it entails much more. It involves the setting or context, events, participants, and social processes (Merriam, 1998). Some of these are discussed later, as these determinants provided the parameters for the sample.

**Access and Rapport**

Acquiring access to the locations and participants involved several steps. Consent was sought from the human subjects review board (IRB). The process involved submitting an IRB proposal that detailed the procedures in the project and conformed to the board’s standards (Creswell, 2007). Access to the sites was gained through special arrangements and assistance from colleagues employed at the different universities. Various invitations were emailed to more than 12 sites to identify their interest in participation. The contact person was the executive assistant of the head of the department for human resources and coordinated the process internally. In the case where the head of the department accepted the invitation, he/she acted as the informant/gatekeeper encouraging the recruitment and training and development functional unit heads to participate. The head of the department therefore built rapport for the need of the study (Yin, 2009) to take place. Creswell (2007) also suggested furnishing the sites with leaders who agreed to participate with the information below. It must be noted that the order of presentation does not reflect the importance of information over the other:

**Why was the site chosen for the study?** The rationale for choosing the site was twofold: First, central Pennsylvania is where I reside, making the study geographically
appropriate and cost effective. Secondly, I aimed to make a comparison between the
different types of universities.

**What will be done at the site?** The data collection management plan consisted of: (a) interviews with nine respondents, consisting of three department directors, and six sectional managers members who have knowledge and experience of working across departmental boundaries. The duration of each interview was approximately 45 to 60 minutes; and (b) a request for permission to review selected documentation.

**How will I ensure that my presence will not be disruptive?** I followed the mutually agreed upon schedule and plan to complete the data collection within 5 days, per university (see Appendix E).

**How will the findings be reported?** The findings and recommendation will form part of the final dissertation and a copy will be made available to the directors of the three departments.

**What will be in it for the respective universities?** The informants/gatekeepers, participants, and the site will gain awareness and information on the design and structural features of their respective units and those of the other universities involved, and will also make a contribution to the literature on organizational structures (Creswell, 2007).

Concluding Phase 1, the criteria that I applied to maximize what this study could learn was based on the selection of cases. Given the purpose of this study, the question was what type of cases would lead to understanding, asserting, and perhaps even generalize the findings (Stake, 1995). For this purpose, different types of universities were selected that were easy to get to, hospitable to my inquiry, and where I could find access to a gatekeeper to assist me with the coordination of data collection. Phase 2
showed the methodology, method of inquiry, the research strategy and techniques, which included interviews, observations, document review and a survey.

**Selected Methodology: Qualitative Research**

A qualitative research design was selected to perform an in-depth investigation into the research problem stated above. The objective was to utilize themes previously established deriving from the theoretical framework of Galbraith’s (2002) star model rather than ascertaining common themes grounded on the information gathered from the various instruments selected for this study. My goal, therefore, was to deduce theoretical concepts and thematic patterns from perceived data.

Within this context, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) offered a definition of qualitative research that conveys an ever-changing nature of qualitative inquiry from social construction, to interpretive, and on to social justice. These authors defined qualitative research as:

…a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. (p. 3)

Strauss and Corbin (1990), Merriam (1998), Guba and Lincoln (1994), and Creswell (2007) referred to a qualitative research design as any kind of research that produces
findings not arrived at by means of quantification and could be associated with in-depth open-ended interviews, direct observation, and written documents (Best & Kahn, 1993; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Creswell (2007) determined that qualitative research has several common characteristics: natural setting, researchers as key instruments, multiple sources of data, inductive data analysis, participants’ meaning, emergent design, theoretical lens, interpretive inquiry, and holistic account.

Natural setting is where investigators gather information from in the environment wherever contributors encounter the phenomena under question (Creswell, 2007). A researcher as key instruments is when the researcher gathers data themselves via pertinent documents, observations, and interviews (Creswell, 2007). Multiple sources of data require qualitative researchers to collect manifold types of data instead of depending upon a lone source (Creswell, 2007). Inductive data analysis asks qualitative researchers to construct thematic categories as a base to be built upon by consolidating the gathered information into progressively more intellectual units of data (Creswell, 2007). Participants’ meaning maintains attention on understanding the significance that the contributors comprehend about the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Emergent design is the investigative method for qualitative research. This means that the initial plan is fluid and should not be static (Creswell, 2007). Theoretical lens is how the researcher interprets the investigation studies. This could be in the concept of culture, central to ethnography, or gendered, racial, or class differences from the theoretical orientations (Creswell, 2007). Interpretive inquiry is a form of review in which academics make an explanation of what they see, hear, and understand. The researchers’ interpretation cannot be separated from their own experiences, context, and prior knowledge (Creswell, 2007). Lastly, a holistic
account attempts to advance a multifaceted depiction of the chosen phenomenon to be studied. The qualitative research design also proved suitable for this study because it was exploratory, contextual, descriptive, and addressed the questions posed adequately.

The objective that I pursued in this research was what type of organizational structure provided appropriate conditions for learning and services in the administration of higher education. This objective did not negate or dispute the fact that the impact of organizational structure on learning and services was researched elsewhere. With this in mind, my aim was to gain insight into what type of organizational structure provided appropriate conditions for human resources learning and services within particular departments in three different types of universities rather than just simply collecting data. I complied with Creswell’s (2007) list of common characteristics; furthermore, the study also allowed me to explore any other development and possibilities related to the phenomenon, instead of being led by predetermined ideas and hypotheses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The basis of this research was also to present, as accurately as possible, descriptions of what was researched.

Besides noting the major characteristics that addressed the research problem, Patton (as cited in Mertens, 1998) also referred to three additional reasons why researchers would favour a qualitative research design above all. These are (a) the researcher’s view of the world, (b) the nature of the research question(s), and (c) practical reasons associated with the nature of the method. All three of these reasons were fundamental to the selection of this research method.

Fundamental to qualitative research, according to Tesch (as cited in Mertens, 1998), are the associations that qualitative research has with various types of research
such as ethnographic, phenomenological and clinical research, grounded theory, participative inquiry, focus groups, case study, and many others. From this list, I selected a descriptive case study method for this study.

**Research Strategy: Descriptive**

A research strategy, according to Yin (2003), is a strategy for getting from here to there, where “here” is expressed as the preliminary set of inquiries to be answered, and the “there” are the inferences to those questions. Between “here and there” lies a series of phases, such as the collection and analysis of relevant data. Nachmias and Nachmias (as cited in Yin, 2003) described a research strategy as a plan that guided the investigator in the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting observations.

Depending on the purpose of the research, academic investigations can be grouped into three types: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory (Bhattacherjee, 2012). Exploratory research is operated in new stages of inquiry. The aim of this research is to examine the scope of a specific phenomenon, problem, or behavior, produce initial concepts of that phenomenon, or to assess the viability of undertaking of future research of that phenomenon (Bhattacherjee, 2012). Descriptive researchers aim to create watchful explanations and detailed documentation of the phenomenon being studied (Bhattacherjee, 2012). These observations must be based on a scientific method; therefore, these are more consistent when contrasted against unplanned observations by inexperienced individuals (Bhattacherjee, 2012). Explanatory researchers seek descriptions of observed phenomena (Bhattacherjee, 2012). While descriptive researchers examine the *what, where, and when* of a phenomenon, explanatory researchers answer questions of *why* and *how*. The process endeavors to associate the data in research by
isolating causal variables and consequences of the target phenomenon. The research strategy that informed this study was descriptive.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) proposed descriptive research “to document and describe the phenomenon of interest” by inquiring about “the salient actions, events, beliefs, attitudes, and social structures and processes occurring in this phenomenon” (p. 35). Leary (2008) defined descriptive research as “describing the behavior, thoughts, or feelings of a particular group of individuals in a systematic accurate fashion” (p. 22). The main goal of this type of research was to describe the data and characteristics about what was studied. Descriptive research is appropriate when a researcher wants to gain a better understanding of a topic.

For this study, I determined descriptive research strategy to be most appropriate because “it examines a situation as it is” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, p. 191), as well as addresses the noticeable actions, events, beliefs, attitudes, and social structures occurring in the phenomenon. The descriptive methodology has previously been used in educational research programs (Runeson & Host, 2008). An examination of many dissertations and thesis submitted also confirmed that this method has been widely applied in various contexts (Verma & Mallick, 1999). With this descriptive design, I described the departments of human resources in three different types of universities and the phenomenon of interest was what type of organizational structure provided appropriate conditions for human resources learning and services in institutions of higher learning. With the research strategy being described as descriptive, I selected a case study as a strategy for inquiry.
Strategy of Inquiry: Case Study

Creswell (1998) defined a case study as “an exploration of a bounded system or a
case over time through details, in-depth data collection, involving multiple sources of
information rich in context” (p. 61). Stake (2005) explained that case studies are
investigated because of the following:

We are interested in them [case studies] for both their uniqueness and
commonality. We would like to hear their stories. We may have reservations
about some things the people tell us, just as they will question some of the things
we will tell about them. But we enter the scene with a sincere interest in learning
how they function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus and with a willingness to
put aside many presumptions while we learn. (p. 1)

Schramm (as cited in Yin, 2009) defined a case study “as the central tendency of all types
of cases studied that tries to illuminate a decision or sets of decision; why they were
taken, how they were implemented, and with what results” (p. 17). This definition cited
cases of decisions as the major focus of the case studies.

Creswell (2007) posited that a case study design would go far beyond the
capturing of statistics; it allows for descriptive accounts of persons, institutions, and areas
to happen, and allow for the interrelationships of factors and processes. Bassey (1999)
described the “case study” as an essential research method that enquired into a
contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, as opposed to the contrived context of
experiments or surveys (p. 26). This method, according to Yin (2003), is especially
applicable when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are unclear. In
other words, the context is hypothesized and contains important explanatory variables
about the phenomenon. The advantages of case study research are that it endeavors to understand the whole individual in relation to his or her environment; the individuality of every case, if more than one is used, is retained, according to Platt (as cited in Verma & Mallick, 1999).

Three advantages that Stake (as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) listed as applicable to this study include the following: (a) data, paradoxically, is strong in reality but difficult to organise; (b) allows limited generalisation; and (c) considered as a product, that forms an archive of descriptive material sufficiently rich to admit subsequent reinterpretation. Creswell (2007) also referred to four broad styles of case study research, namely: ethnographic, evaluative, educational, and action research. This study utilized the characteristics associated with an educational case study, where the emphasis was on university employees’ perceptions of what type of organizational structure provides appropriate conditions for human resources learning and services, in three departments of human resources. A single case (university) at a time was studied that led to multiple (three institutions) qualitative case studies.

Case study research consists of both single and multiple-cases. With multiple case studies, some fields distinguished between two types and use terms, such as comparative or collective case study forms. For the purpose of this study, I employed a multiple case design or collective case study. A multiple case study examines several cases to gain awareness into a fundamental phenomenon (Creswell, 2003; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2003). Stake (1995) also distinguished an intrinsic case study that focused on a specific case that was of importance from an instrumental case study, where the study was selected in to comprehend another entity entirely. In this study, an instrumental case study was
employed for the pilot study, and the selected cases were based on the data these locations and participants could provide about the phenomenon. Instrumental case research offered a concentration on an external reality (different types of institutions), which could be studied through the perceptions of individuals.

The selection of the cases was done purposefully, where the research approximated broad representivity, having chosen the cases in such a way that it displayed relevant variations amongst the different types of institutions. This strategy of inquiry also permitted reasonably confident analytical generalization about the processes at work in these institutions. The evidence from multiple cases was often also deemed to be more captivating, and the whole study was considered to be more vigorous (Yin, 2009).

In this study, I applied the use of a case study method because I wanted to understand a real life phenomenon in depth within its real-life context. The case study methodology also relied on manifold sources of data, which united in a triangulation fashion (Yin 2009). Merriam (1998) noted that case studies are suitable for progressing an understanding of individual viewpoints and multifaceted establishments that are organic, such as an organization. The case study process offered the prospective for providing discernments that could magnify an appreciation of the phenomenon of the type of organizational structure in the non-academic department of human resources in higher education, with the ultimate goal of igniting awareness for improvement. Huws and Dahlmann (2007) remarked the significance of triangulating the results of case study research against previous research findings; it is also imperative to highlight that a case study methodology was essentially qualitative, separated from quantitative research
by four distinct features: holistic, based on recognition of multiple realities, heuristic, interpretative, inductive and iterative, and lastly, it requires in-depth field work.

Holistic research refers to a unified procedure with many diverse proportions (Huws & Dahlmann, 2007). A crucial emphasis of research should not be the different, sequestered measurements but a perception of the connections and pressures amongst them (Huws & Dahlmann, 2007). Based on recognition of multiple realities is when authenticity is fundamentally subjective (Huws & Dahlmann, 2007). The focus is on interpreting multiple viewpoints, objectives, and attractions and how these alter accounts of experiences and evidence instead of decreasing them to a single description of actuality (Huws & Dahlmann, 2007). Different stakeholders may have different perceptions of power relations within organizations. Heuristic, interpretative, inductive, and iterative qualitative research progresses, rather than confining itself to preordained questions or hypotheses (Huws & Dahlmann, 2007). An assessment starts with a rigorous accommodation with the framework, establishments, and strategies to be evaluated (Huws & Dahlmann, 2007). Assessment also gradually constructs an inclusive understanding of the required procedures (Huws & Dahlmann, 2007). Because of the importance on appreciating intricacy, the scope and focus of the investigation are repeatedly redefined as the researcher increases their understanding of varying portions of the development surges and new complications present themselves (Huws & Dahlmann, 2007). Finally, qualitative research requires in-depth face-to-face fieldwork because of the need to interrelate all these diverse proportions to accrue an understanding of a precise perspective (Huws & Dahlmann, 2007).
On the other side, one of the challenges of a case study is that it can be time consuming to collect and process data at the level of detail desired for the case (Merriam, 1998). As the researcher, I had control over this problem through the site choices that I made prior to beginning the research, as well as through the development of the study. Merriam noted that case studies could also over-simplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the reader to have a false impression of the situation. There is also the hazard that case studies can imitate the partiality of the researcher (Merriam, 1998). I considered these potential weaknesses and took steps throughout the research process to check for errors in interpretation and clarity of conclusions. In the next section, I will discuss the research techniques for the collection of data.

**Data Collection**

My data collection goal was to explore the knowledge, experiences, relevant behavior, policies, and procedures of organizational structure on human resources learning and services in order to inform an inductive process of data analysis and ultimately answer the research questions described in Chapter 1. In this study, I utilized a multi-methods approach in data collecting through (a) one-on-one interviews and (b) t reviewed identified documentation in the selected sites. These collection methods were at the heart of the case study method. The notion of convergence (i.e., different kinds of evidence gathered in different ways, but bearing on the same phenomenon) was of essence here (Gillman, 2000). In the next section, I will discuss the individual data collection techniques and what I attempted to accomplish in the application of this two-pronged data collection approach.
**Interviews**

Data for this study came from individual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews. In Fontana and Frey’s (1998) detailed discussion of the interview methods in qualitative research, the authors described the differences between structured and unstructured interviews. While structured interviews ask the same, ordered questions of all participants and allow only a limited set of responses, unstructured interviews are more free-flowing and involve a conversational give-and-take between the researcher and participant. This kind of interview allows the respondent’s personal feelings to influence his/her answer. Interviews conducted for this study fell somewhere between these two styles and are referred to as semi-structured interviews. Gillham (2000) opined that semi-structured interviewing is the most important for case studies’ research and can be the richest single source of data. Semi-structured interviews also acknowledge and refer to the department directors interviews as “elite,” meaning interviewing someone in a position of authority or people who are capable of giving answers with insight and have a comprehensive grasp of the research topic; therefore, they may also recommend or suggest additional areas for research.

The interviews consisted of open-ended questions, in which the respondents were asked for the facts of a matter as well as their own opinions (Yin, 2003). Field notes were kept in cases where the respondents did not want to be recorded. The motivation for this was to avoid what Yin (2009) referred to as creating uncomfortability on the side of the interviewee. Short written notes were also kept for conformability purposes, so that I could check and re-check the document procedures easily when needed. The interviews
formed an essential source for the comparative table of analysis because it recorded employees’ knowledge of organizational structure.

Specifically, the research questions aimed at discerning (a) how is the non-academic department of human resources was structured and what has determined the design, (b) what are the organizational features (strategy, structure, processes and lateral capacity, reward systems and people practices) that seemed to facilitated the processes of learning and service in the non-academic department of human resources, and (d) what organizational features were most important (strategy, structure, processes and lateral capacity, reward systems and people practices).

The protocol involved the development of specific areas to be covered in the interview and some broad questions to be explored. Galbraith’s (2002) star model components of strategy, structure, processes, lateral capacity, reward system, and people practices were applied to frame the questions. See Appendix A for the Interview Guide adapted from two research projects (Hocevar, Thomas, & Jansen, 2006) to provide a means to qualitatively assess and analyze organizational structure within the study’s theoretical framework.

To accomplish this, I arrived in advance of the scheduled time at the sites mutually agreed upon. After introducing myself, I explained the purpose of the research once more. I used the general interview guide approach to interviewing (Patton, 1990). The guide helped to ensure that the same areas of interest were covered with each participant; however, it was also designed to be flexible and fluid enough to allow the interviewer to explore the subjects at hand in an open and conversational atmosphere.
The interview guide included three areas: (a) opening questions, (b) organizational design and structure, and (c) closing questions.

Under opening questions, the respondents were asked to describe their experiences working in unit context. Next, participants described their understanding of the units/department’s design and structural elements. Under closing questions, the participants suggested any other form of organizational design or structure they were aware of and if it could be ideal or workable within the respective departments. Participants were also asked if there were other staff that should be interviewed to better informs this study.

The average length of the nine interviews was between 45 to 60 minutes. After the completion of every interview, the recordings were downloaded onto my personal computer and preparations were made for transcriptions. The information was stored and protected in a safe place.

**Document Review**

A phenomenon of all organizations is that they all leave trails composed of documents and records that trace their history and current status (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I turned to documents and records as a second technique in order to obtain necessary background information of the situation and insight into the dynamics of the everyday functioning of the respective departments (Mertens, 1998). Document search and analysis, according to Yin (2009), epitomizes the case study research strategy.

To accomplish this goal, formal permission was requested and obtained. The documents that were reviewed were internal to some of the departments and also from the university as a whole. These included the vision, mission, strategic plan, management
plans or organizational charts, reporting lines general policies and procedures, and the framework for performance management. The rational for reviewing documents, according to Yin (2009), is that these are useful and could produce invaluable information.

The documents were not used to draw conclusions to answer the research questions, but instead form part of all the evidence gathered for the study. The content was also not be taken as representative of what was happening in the unit, but instead assisted in discovering how the unit was structured and how daily processes and procedures were coordinated and controlled. I applied a three-phase approach to the document analysis—overall, across, and within—in order to obtain an overall impression of the unit and organizational structure. I looked at different parts of the unit and organization to see if it was speaking to each other; in other word, did the documents convey a certain narrative with regard to organizational structure or work procedures? Lastly within, did the individual offices or departments seem to focus on similarities?

The approaches focused on the research questions within the five components of Galbraith’s (2002) theoretical framework to review and describe the current organizational structure as it appear in the unit’s documentation. I also took cognizance of the fact that some smaller units did not have all the documents required because in some cases these units work informally with other support departments. I also recognized that getting these documents was somewhat of a problem (Cohen et al., 2011) because it was within a secured computerized system, but the administrative staff was of great assistance and made printed copies of the documents listed available and one of the
universities gave me online access to their sites. All the identifiable information was also removed for confidentiality (see Appendix B for the Document Review).

In summary, with this two-prong data collecting approach, I attempted to discern meaning through the following:

1. One-on-one interviewing: Information about the employees’ knowledge and skills and what type of organizational structure exists in the respective departments (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) what change has been made and perceptions.

2. Review documentation: Documented information, policies and procedures that illustrate and support the unit/departments structural arrangement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) and act as a blue print of formal standards.

To this point of data collection, the diagrammatic representation (see Figure 3.3) is an adaptation of Yin’s (2009, p. 98) case study process and summarized the approach this study has followed. Yin also referred to it as a linear but iterative process. The next section presents the pilot study and data analysis for this study.
Figure 3.3. Case study research is a linear but iterative process (Yin, 2009).

**Conduct a Pilot Study**

A pilot study (i.e., a pre-examination of the professed research method) was conducted. The objective of the pilot study was to provide me with a practice session regarding data collection and duration of the interviews, as well as to refine the data collection plans with respect to the content and procedure (Yin, 2009). The pilot study was undertaken within another institution of higher learning where the head of the department and two management level staff members were interviewed. The initial semi-structured questionnaire was pilot-tested on the three participants to determine if the wording and structure or format could successfully allow for the participants to address the study questions. Upon interviewing the three participants, alterations were made to the instruments and procedures following the initial results of the pilot study.
Modifications on the questionnaire were made to guarantee that the questions asked would yield the first-hand perceptions and experiences of the participants on collaborative learning and integrated services within their organizations. The changes on the questionnaire focused on the editing of the questions to avoid misinterpretations, the removal of a few numbers to avoid repetitiveness, and additional questions for clarification purposes.

**Data Analysis**

Since this study utilizes contrasting cases, data analysis occurs at two levels: within the case and across cases (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) described the “within-case analysis as each case is first treated as a comprehensive case in and of itself” (pp. 194-195). The data analysis phase consisted of a three-tier process and included data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appears in notes, documents, and transcriptions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The process of data reduction began once the interviews were transcribed, and it continued to some degree throughout the data analysis phase. This process enabled me to identify key points and decrease the amount of data I focused on to a more manageable size.

Data display was the second activity in the process of analysis. I presented the data in a visual manner using matrices and charts. For each of the major points, I have included a graphical presentation of the data to provide the reader with a visual overview of the section and make it easier to see connections. During the data analysis phase,
putting the data in a graphic form enabled me to visualize what was occurring and to draw connections and assertions.

The third process of analysis was conclusion drawing and verification. This process involved deciding what the data meant. The patterns, regularities, and connections that were observed throughout the study were confirmed and the underlying mechanisms and structures were identified. Miles and Huberman (1994) stressed that conclusion drawing should be accompanied by a verification process of testing the validity and reliability of findings.

The following steps showed the procedures that were implemented in the data analysis process; each step was repeated for all the three cases or universities:

1. Transcribed interviews, verbatim.
2. Data were cleaned, removing all interviewee identities and confidential information and making the data ready for coding.
3. Read through text of interviews multiple times, highlighting important points, and making periodic notes. Read through other source of case data.
4. A coding scheme was developed as per the theoretical model, with each code clearly defined.
5. Open coding was performed, coding all data into a number of themes based on the coding scheme. Two coders, including myself, coded the data independently.
6. NVivo11 by QSR software was employed to aid in the systematic coding.
7. Data were placed in themes according to patterns that corresponded to each research question.
8. Data were displayed, within case. I created a matrix of descriptive information for each case site organized by themes within each research question.

9. Developed a description (individual case report) of each individual case and identified key factors that emerged from analysis of the data.

10. Data display cross-cases. I assembled descriptive data from each of the three cases into a meta-matrix, placing similar data together.

11. Conclusion drawing and verification. I clustered the data on the meta-matrix according to themes and key factors that emerged across the multiple cases for each research question.

   a. Test findings.

   b. Interpretation of findings.

   c. Returned to key research literature to examine its correlation with my findings. (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 20)

In summary, the case study research methods used in this study involved an analysis of interviews, document review, and researcher field notes, in order to develop an understanding of what type of organizational structure provide appropriate conditions for human resources learning and services. A data analysis process that implements data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification was used to guide this phase of the study. I treated the uniqueness of individual cases and contexts as important to understanding. Particularization was an important aim. The identification of the propositions for this study (i.e., the basic unit of analysis in each of the cases) was employed. Embedded in the basic unit were further sub units of analysis. These subunits were compared across the different departments and institutions (Yin, 2003). Therefore,
each case was treated as a comprehensive case, in and of itself, to learn as much about the structural factors as possible before comparing findings of the three cases to one another.

**Strategies to Ensure Soundness of Data**

As the area of qualitative research increases, social and behavioral scientists critiqued the validity of studies that use such methodology. Thus, qualitative researchers utilize various validation strategies to make their studies credible and rigorous (Creswell, 2007). Credibility for this study was achieved using the validation strategies of conducting a pilot study, triangulation of data, researcher reflexivity, thick rich description, and peer debriefing. Triangulation was performed using the various forms of data that were collected in this study (i.e., interviews, document reviews, reflective journal entries, and field notes). Upon the analysis of the main source of data, which was the interviews, the content of the document reviews and other observation notes were analyzed as well. Data from the additional sources were then compared to determine the similarities and differences from the interview findings. Results from the triangulation confirm and disconfirm the shared responses of the participants during the interviews. Thick rich description was also achieved by presenting the participants’ voices under each theme and by providing detailed description of each of the cases. Finally, I required the assistance of two peer briefers. Both of these individuals were familiar with qualitative data analysis. The two individuals agreed to serve this role for the time this study took place. Using Stake’s (1995) “critique checklist,” I relied on it to assess the quality of the report (p. 131). This 20-point criteria checklist was used upon completion of the research study to assess the quality of case study reports:

1. Is the report easy to read?
2. Does it fit together, each sentence contributing to the whole?

3. Does the report have a conceptual structure (for example, themes or issues)?

4. Are its issues developed in a serious and scholarly way?

5. Is the case adequately defined?

6. Is there a sense of story to the presentation?

7. Is the reader provided with some vicarious experience?

8. Have quotations been used effectively?

9. Are headings, figures, artifacts, appendixes, and indexes used effectively?

10. Was it edited well, then again with a last minute polish?

11. Has the writer made sound assertions, neither over-nor under-interpreting?

12. Has adequate attention being paid to various contexts?

13. Were sufficient raw data presented?

14. Were the data resources well chosen and in sufficient number?

15. Does the document review appear to have been triangulated?

16. Are the role and point of view of the researcher nicely apparent?

17. Is the nature of the intended audience apparent?

18. Is empathy shown for all sides?

19. Are personal intentions examined?

20. Does it appear that individuals were put at risk?

**Ethical Guidelines**

Stake (2005) stated that almost always, data gathering is done on somebody’s home grounds. Most educational case data gathering involved at least a small invasion of personal privacy. The procedure for gaining access was based on the enduring
expectation that permission is needed. This and various other ethical considerations had to be accounted for when conducting this qualitative case study research. In this research, the following ethical considerations were applied:

1. I indicated why the institution and department was selected;
2. I received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB);
3. I clearly informed the participating institutions, departments and individuals as to what the study involved;
4. I obtained consent from the individuals who were interviewed;
5. Each respondent was treated with courtesy and respect at all times; and
6. I ensured confidentiality of the information gathered and all respondents that their rights to privacy and to remain anonymous would be guaranteed and maintained.

Bassey (1999) also combined the above with (a) respect for democracy, (b) respect for truth, and (c) respect for persons. Cohen et al. (2011) also stated that the worth of any research endeavour, regardless the approach taken, was evaluated by peers, grant reviews and readers. Each technique had its own value.

To further assert the value, comprehensive notes of the actual interviews, document review, and my field notes were kept in four separate databases. The databases consisted of hand-written notes and computerised information of the research process. By doing so, I achieved conformability with the complete documentation of procedures enforced or also known as the data-audit process, which allowed for a transparent recording and reporting of the data gathering and analysis processes for future references.
Summary of Chapter

In this chapter, I provided the rationale for the use of a qualitative, multi-site, case study method. The research process was explained, as well as the data collection method and the trustworthiness of the study. A comparative analysis followed re-expressed as empirical findings and concluded the research with recommendations (Bassey, 1999). In each of these, sufficient analytical statements were included, with an account that the methodology gave confidence to the final research study. The consideration outlined was kept in mind during the planning, conducting and reporting of the research study. Chapter 4 will contain the analysis and interpretation of the recorded findings.
Chapter 4

Findings

Chapter 4 of the study contains the findings from the qualitative thematic analysis of the three sets of participant interviews, online document reviews, and field notes of three institutions of higher learning. The study had two main purposes, where the first purpose was explanatory. I explored and described organizational structures and determined the structure in the non-academic department of human resources in three distinct types of universities: a state-owned master’s level, a private baccalaureate, and a commonwealth/state related in central Pennsylvania. The second purpose of the study was exploratory, in which I sought to determine what type of organizational structure facilitated and was key to learning and service in the three diverse types of departments of human resources. I then performed a qualitative thematic analysis on the interviews with the participants to determine the most meaningful perceptions shared regarding the subject of the research study. I employed NVivo11 by QSR software to aid in the systematic coding and tabulation of the study themes. Furthermore, I conducted a cross-case analysis to analyze the themes discovered across the three institutions. I aimed to address three research questions:

RQ1. How is the department of human resources structured to deliver collaborative learning and integrated services and what has determined the design?

RQ2. What are the organizational features (strategy, structure, processes and lateral capacity, reward systems and people practices) that seem to facilitate the process of collaborative learning and integrated service in the non-academic department of human resources?
**RQ3.** What organizational features were most important (strategy, structure, processes, and lateral capacity, reward systems and people practices)?

This chapter also contains the following sections: demographics, data analysis, presentation of findings with the themes, tables, and verbatim responses of the participants, and a summary of the chapter.

**Demographics**

I investigated three distinct types of universities in central Pennsylvania: (a) state-owned master’s level, (b) private baccalaureate, and (c) commonwealth/state related university of higher learning in central Pennsylvania. The institutions are referred to as University X, University Y, and University Z in the findings of the study. The interview participants also consisted of three representatives from each department of human resources. The head of the HR department or director and two-unit managers or supervisors represented each university. Table 4.1 contains the breakdown of the background or demographics of the participants.
### Table 4.1  
_Breakdown of the Demographics of the Participants_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Participant Number</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number of Years in the University/Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University X</td>
<td>PA1X</td>
<td>Director Recruitment</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PA2X</td>
<td>Senior Manager for Human Resources &amp; Employee Relations</td>
<td>12 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PA3X</td>
<td>Director Learning and Development</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Y</td>
<td>PA1Y</td>
<td>Director handles employment of non-faculty positions</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PA2Y</td>
<td>Co-director</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PA3Y</td>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>25 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Z</td>
<td>PA1Z</td>
<td>VP Human Resources</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PA2Z</td>
<td>Assistant VP Human Resources</td>
<td>25 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PA3Z</td>
<td>Executive Director Talent Management</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Analysis**

I performed a qualitative thematic analysis to analyze the interviews with the nine study participants. A thematic analysis was deemed appropriate as the unit of analysis for the interviews, as meaningful themes from the patterns of the participant responses should be generated. Firsthand perceptions and experiences, as shared by the participants, were identified. Each department of human resources was treated as a separate case, and the generated themes are specific only to the individual university cases. Meanwhile, a cross-case analysis was also conducted after completion of the three universities’ thematic analyses to compare the themes, as well as to create new knowledge based on the findings. The themes that received the most number of occurrences were considered
the major themes, and those that received fewer occurrences were tagged minor themes of the study. Themes that received just one occurrence were not reported in-depth, as these might need further research for validation.

Presentation of Findings

Group 1: University X

The first setting of the study was “University X,” which had three participants. Three research questions were established to determine the collaborative learning and integrated services in the non-academic department of human resources. From the analysis, major and minor themes were generated to address the purpose and research questions of the study.

RQ1: How is the department of human resources structured to deliver collaborative learning and integrated services and what has determined the design?

The first research question of the study asked how the department of human resources was structured to deliver collaborative learning and integrated services. The analysis led to the emergence of two underlying themes or meaningful perceptions. The majority of the participants from University X reported that they practiced a functional organizational model that focused on the effectiveness of the different departments under them. Table 4.2 contains the breakdown of the themes addressing the first research question from the interviews of the participants of University X.
Table 4.2

*Breakdown of the Themes Addressing RQ1 Based on the Participants of University X*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Number of Occurrences</th>
<th>Percentage of Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practicing a functional organizational model</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creating redundancy of position to ensure functionality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting close interaction between departments</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* **Sub themes.

**Major Theme 1: Practicing a functional organizational model.** The first major theme, discovered from the interviews of the participants from University X, was the presence and practice of a functional organizational model. All three participants reported this major theme. Participant 1X stated that they formed different departments assigned with specific roles and functions. The participant indicated that these departments have their own strategies recognized to address and meet the needs of the university based on allocated responsibilities. Participant 1X shared the following:

You know we [are] always trying to progress and move forward. Um, you know we’re broken out in a number of smaller departments, so we have Benefits, we have training and Organizational Development, we have Employment, and Labor Relations. We have Environmental Health and Safety that falls under this Department, and Payroll. So, I would say maybe within each unit they have their own strategies and how can we better serve the University? You know, what needs are out there, and how can we meet those needs – a service based department.

Participant 2X highlighted that within the departments, they have started to cross-train their employees in order to create redundancies and be more effective in their
processes. The participant provided an example wherein they train at least two employees under one position and build their knowledge and capabilities. This process is completed to ensure that their service is not affected despite the absences or retirement of the assigned employees:

Although these are departments, I tend to look at them more as functional areas. And what I’ve tried to do is create redundancy within them; where we’ve got at least two managers with common core competencies in each of these functional areas. And, and so when we have absences or when someone’s on vacation, our service delivery doesn’t go down.

Finally, Participant 3X indicated that they have different departments assigned to address the various needs of the university. The participant added that these departments worked closely to produce better and more effective results:

I would say that the head of the department strategy is one of, um, empowering it subject matter experts to support the needs of the various departments. We’ve had the generalist model that was very complex… I would say that the human resource department is generally pretty flat and functional. They’ve got to work hand-in-hand. OD also works very closely with Labor Relations because we’re responsible for Performance Management, often Labor Relations – that Performance Management feeds issues that require Labor Relations. If they’re dealing with a Labor Relations issue, I might be brought in to help improve performance.

**Major Theme 2: Promoting close interaction between departments.** In connection to the first major theme, the second major theme generated was the
experience of promoting close interaction among the different departments and the members. As reported, these departments have various tasks, but are expected to work in collaboration with one another to achieve better results and accomplish their goals. All three participants shared that they practiced close interactions and working relationships with the other departments. Participant 1X expressed that they interacted a lot within their own department, as well as the other departments within the university. The participant furthered that although they have their specific responsibilities, they believed that working closely with one another streamlined the system and decision-making processes:

We interact a lot within the department. So, I certainly wouldn’t say that we each have our own silos. I mean we all have our independent responsibilities, but they all overlap, um, in a way. You know, like for example a new hire, you know our office would deal with that, but we also have Training and Organizational Development and new employee welcome, we have Benefits offering them the benefits, Payroll’s naturally getting them set up for their paycheck. So that’s just I guess one of the many examples of – of how, um, a lot of things that come up kind of spill into each other’s areas. Or even like a Labor Relations issue might flow into Payroll or Benefits. Um, Workers’ Comp will flow into Benefits.

Participant 2X shared an example wherein the different heads and members of their departments would take specific roles under one project. The leaders and members worked closely with one another to ensure that the employment services and the required training, policies, and benefits were guaranteed. The participant stated the following:

An HR manager was the project lead in that. I wanted, uh – I wanted her to – uh, to have a leadership role in that. And, uh, and the members of that project team
were A and I, uh, B, C, uh, and one of our IT people. So the manager was, uh, leading a project where members under her were the Chief Human Resource Officer, the Director of Training and Development and the Assistant Director of HR.

Finally, Participant 3X emphasized the importance of working “hand-in-hand” with the different departments in order to ensure the effective work environment and experience of their employees. The participant shared the different departments, as well as heads and members involved in the process:

They’ve got to work hand-in-hand. OD also works very closely with Labor Relations because we’re responsible for Performance Management, often Labor Relations – that Performance Management feeds issues that require Labor Relations. If they’re dealing with a Labor Relations issue, I might be brought in to help improve performance.

**RQ2: What are the organizational features (strategy, structure, processes and lateral capacity, reward systems and people practices) that seem to facilitate the process of collaborative learning and integrated service in the nonacademic department of human resources?** The second research question focused on the organizational features (strategy, structure, processes and lateral capacity, reward systems and people practices) that seemed to facilitate the process of collaborative learning and integrated service in the nonacademic department of human resources. From the thematic analysis, I determined that University X had two major themes or emerging features. In addition, the research question had nine other minor themes or other significant practices
shared. Table 4.3 contains the breakdown of the themes addressing the second research question from the interviews of the participants of University X.

Table 4.3

*Breakdown of the Themes Addressing RQ2 Based on the Participants of University X*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Number of Occurrences</th>
<th>Percentage of Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investing in technology for succession planning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing on strategic planning for long-term goals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investing in the skills and competencies of people</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducting performance evaluations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Major Theme 3: Investing in technology for succession planning.** The third major theme from the participants of University X was the organizational practice of investing in technology for succession planning. All three of the participants stated that their goal was to maximize technology as they pursued succession planning. Participant 1X stated that they have started to invest in technology to ensure succession management within the departments. The participant indicated that strategic planning was one of the main goals of the university and their department at the moment:

> Actually, the University itself – we’re looking into succession planning software right now. Part of, for any workforce, we have a number of people that could retire over the next so many years. So, we are looking at actually – we’ve done manual succession planning, and actually looking at automotive systems right now.

So, we started looking at passive candidates and how to attract those candidates. We’ve looked at different recruitment areas, different recruitment methods. We
have just started using social media more. I guess as a long-term goal – of getting a diverse pool and the right candidate in here.

So that’s definitely driving – like the succession planning is part of the – University’s strategic plan. So that’s sort of where we are coming from.

Participant 2X added that they have also started to focus their efforts on succession planning along with the other assignments that they have:

Uh, you know what I try to do as well when we have projects going, a procurement for a new, uh, performance management system, uh, I’ll make stretch assignments. Uh, like I did with the succession planning.

Finally, Participant 3X shared the different strategies that they employed to ensure their succession planning goals. In addition, the participant indicated the importance of technology in light of their goal to duplicate the roles and positions within the university departments:

The Talent Management Suite will assist us with succession planning. We’ve added and restructured some of the positions, so we’re using Facebook and LinkedIn within the Department and across. Because we have so many programs that have already been developed, I went with somebody who had more of blogging experience and the technology to be able to market and – and find other ways of putting learning in people’s hands.

**Minor Theme 1: Focusing on strategic planning for long-term goals.** The first minor theme that followed was the practice of focusing on strategic planning to ensure the accomplishment of their long-term goals. Two of the three participants shared their aim of a strong and strategic plan for their future goals. Participant 1X explained that they
periodically generated their goals and evaluated these after. In this way, they could determine their successes and failures:

I think it’s determined by – part of it would be the University’s strategic plan… So, some of our plans would sort of follow or lead into how do we meet the University’s strategic plan depending on, you know what falls into our areas. For example, as a department we made our goals for the year. So, we, um, created our goals for this coming year, and then at the end of the year, you know we’ll evaluate and assess the goals and kind of check in throughout the way. So, I would say that’s probably how our strategies are formed. And then as things come up we certainly change them and – and re-prioritize depending on, you know as needs arise.

Participant 3X added that their planning document was submitted on an annual basis. The planning document was composed of various methods and strategies for implementation. The participant explained that the planning document became the source of conversation and collaboration for the members of the departments:

I would say that from the way I see it is that we have a strategic plan – particularly for our managers because most of the people in this department are managers – um, have to come up with a planning document on an annual basis. That planning document is tied in some way to the strategic plan. If it’s not tied in, it shouldn’t be done. Even though there are aspects of HR those needs to go, we’ve got to find a way to see how that fits in with the strategic plan. So, um, that’s a process that we do individually in collaboration with our supervisors.
And that document, um, then becomes the – the source of conversations and the planning and everything related to how we are going to accomplish – what’s necessary in that regard. It also becomes the way upon which we become held accountable – at the end of the cycle for our own performance.

**Minor Theme 2: Investing on the skills and competencies of people.** The second minor theme of the study was the practice of investing on the skills and competencies of the people. Again, 2 of the 3 participants shared the same theme. For Participant 2X, it was vital to provide their people with learning experiences to ensure that they could develop as professionals. Participant 2X added that skills and competencies should be honed and polished over time:

And they build skills and competencies. Uh, and in creating project teams, uh, there’s that built-in dialogue of having to work with people you may not have had a whole lot of time to spend with on other things. And frankly, I find that, uh, project teams are probably the best place to network and create those connections. Uh, and so the thought of taking people off line delivering services so that they can, uh, have learning experiences, I think on a practical level sometimes, uh, many Human Resource Departments will say, you know we’ll defer that and – and we’ll wait until there’s a slack time and maybe do it.

Finally, Participant 3X stated that they had training and development opportunities offered to their staff members. In addition, they have also created learning opportunities outside the department to ensure the growth and transition of their people:

We have training and development opportunities for the staff… And then one of the other benefits that many managers have is also internal and external learning
opportunities. We offer SkillSoft, so people can constantly continue to grow. And with this new talent management, as we start to identify where the gaps are – opportunities like these are created to and say we want you to stay in this organization.

RQ3: What organizational features were most important (strategy, structure, processes, and lateral capacity, reward systems and people practices)? The third research question focused on the most important organizational features based on the earlier themes formed from the interviews. The analysis allowed for the discovery of themes, with the majority of the participants reporting that the willingness to interact and collaborate was the most significant. Table 4.4 contains the breakdown of the themes addressing the final research question based on the interviews of the participants from University X.

Table 4.4

Breakdown of the Themes Addressing RQ3 Based on the Participants of University X

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Number of Occurrences</th>
<th>Percentage of Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having the willingness to interact and collaborate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering of professional development opportunities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing the hard work and effort of employees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having strong capabilities from the redundancies built</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investing on technology for effective communication and other processes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Major Theme 4: Having the willingness to interact and collaborate. The fourth major theme from University X indicated the important feature of having the willingness to interact and collaborate between members and departments. All three of the
participants shared this theme. Participant 1X stated that the willingness to interact and collaborate between all members was beneficial as they could update themselves with the progress of their projects and contribute to these as needed:

   I would say just sort of the defined areas – the defined roles and responsibilities.
   So, it’s and I guess just the willingness for the interaction.
   I guess I was looking at it more from the other side where – And it’s easy to know – since we have such a good idea of what everybody else does, um, it’s really easy to kind of have this smooth interaction and the – the smooth success of whatever needs to get done - it’s structured, but it’s not rigid, if that makes sense.
   Um, so I would say that helps to contribute to the success, and just knowing what the others do, and – and how, you know best to maybe solve a problem or an issue that comes up. And then there’s just the willingness from everybody in the Department to kind of have that collaboration, which is nice.

Participant 2X echoed, “And the best learning is shared learning – group learning – I’ve found, so – uh, I think all those things contribute to a – a highly collaborative environment.” Finally, Participant 3X substantiated ways in which collaboration was encouraged within their university:

   In all three different forms of performance management, uh, and as you said earlier, collaboration is encouraged – by all management at all levels. If the goal is to bring about change – and move the organization along, then it helps to support this process.

**Minor Theme 1: Offering of professional development opportunities.** The first minor theme that followed was the organizational practice of offering professional
development opportunities. Two of the three participants indicated the significance of this feature. Participant 1X stated that their school started to provide and offer development opportunities. The training also included technology, which allowed them to improve their employee training and knowledge building over the years:

I mean I would say inside and outside of HR there’s – we’re offered a lot of professional development opportunities. I don’t know if that, um – I have seen letters come in on behalf of employees that we’ll put in their personnel file. Um, and then like I said, we have the professional development, we have software training that’s available to us for free.

Meanwhile, Participant 3X added, “You know, if employees are happy with their boss and they’re happy with the environment, they’re more likely to stay and there’ll be opportunities down the pike.”

**Group 2: University Y**

The second setting was named “University Y,” which also had three participants. Again, I performed a qualitative thematic analysis in order to analyze the interviews with the participants of University Y and to determine the themes shared from their responses. The same three research questions were employed.

**RQ1: How is the department of human resources structured to deliver collaborative learning and integrated services and what has determined the design?**

The first research question allowed me to identify the structure of the organization, as well as the delivery of collaborative learning and integrated services. From the analysis, four underlying themes were generated where majority of the participants reported the presence of a flat organizational structure. Table 4.5 contains the breakdown of the
themes addressing the first research question from the interviews of the participants of University Y.

Table 4.5

Breakdown of the Themes Addressing RQ1 Based on the Participants of University Y

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Number of Occurrences</th>
<th>Percentage of Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practicing a flat organizational structure</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicing a supportive and collaborative role for all employees</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicing shared leadership and management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Needing an improved communication and management</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving importance to decentralization</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* **Sub theme.

**Major Theme 1: Practicing a flat organizational structure.** The first major theme from University Y was the experience of practicing a flat organizational structure.

Two of the three participants perceived that their organization followed a simple but stern process managed and guided by the levels of management. Participant 1Y shared the process that they followed within their university. In addition, the participants explained that they have a flat system in the human resources department with two associate’s directors that report directly to the cabinet-level management:

Um, I should say we report to an executive vice-president who reports up to the president. So, um, you know, we’re happy that we have that direct sort of point of contact with her um, and you know, she’s an amazing vice president and provides great leadership for us, she’s an alum of College Y.
Participant 3Y simply expressed that regarding the decision-making processes, their system was considered a flat organization, thereby strictly following the position levels within their departments and university:

Yes, absolutely, because she has all the student worker on the one side with your clients, and also the staff on the other side, who is also supposed to be kept happy. So, I will say the system is fairly flat in terms of decision-making.

Major Theme 2: Practicing a supportive and collaborative role for all employees. Another major theme that emerged was practicing a supportive and collaborative role for employees. Again, two of the three participants stated the importance of support and collaboration. Participant 2Y shared their department’s structure of having shared management and position. The participant added that they promoted the significance of playing an advocate for employees to show their genuine support and concern for all members of the organization. This support was also another evidence of the value that they offered their employees:

We are in a supportive role for all our employees; you know faculty, administration, and staff. We are here to provide guidance on decisions that they make. We are here to provide education with regard to things and compliance. I would say that’s our mission.

She was the Director at one point and then she actually was in a shared director’s position with another local College and for a while, and so then we were in a supportive role there. The other director really works with the recruitment and I’m responsible for benefits. But then we also both do employee relations, um, management training, um and so one of the things the other director has always
been someone who stretches you, and also provides um, professional development and has been very supportive that way.

Participant 3Y stated that they followed a culture that promoted collaboration and teamwork. The participant explained ways in which members, especially of the smaller departments, worked closely with one another to produce more effective and efficient outputs. The participant then shared the following:

Yes, but they’re very collaborative. Any work we do, I mean part of College culture is working not in what I call silos or stove-pipes, but we work cross-collaboratively almost in everything, and I think HR really does that well. Yeah, and I think within their little organization, they should work collaboratively, because there’s so few of them. And they try to develop some of the similarities they have with the co-director model that if someone is out then someone else can pitch it. Employee D is probably the most technical of the folks below Employee B and Employee C only because of the nature of her work. She does a lot of the – She does all the benefits kinds of coding on the system, counseling of employees, she’s a perfect example of, in some organizations her position might be exempt. I think she’s getting really close, but she does so much hand on data entry. But she can also meet with the faculty and go through our benefits as if a benefits counselor at a larger university would do.
RQ2: What are the organizational features (strategy, structure, processes and lateral capacity, reward systems and people practices) that seem to facilitate the process of collaborative learning and integrated service in the nonacademic department of human resources? The second research question was also addressed through the interviews with the participants from University Y, which centered on the organizational features that seemed to facilitate the process of collaborative learning and integrated service in the nonacademic department of human resources. The analysis allowed for the discovery of the practices from the interviews. Table 4.6 contains the breakdown of the themes addressing the second research question from the interviews of the participants of University Y.

Table 4.6

Breakdown of the Themes Addressing RQ2 Based on the Participants of University Y

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Number of Occurrences</th>
<th>Percentage of Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investing on the skills and competencies of people</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing on strategic planning for long-term goals</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducting performance evaluations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>For employees, departmental recognition</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting rewards and compensation for employees</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring smooth and effective collaboration</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing close support and guidance to employees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: **Sub theme.

Major Theme 3: Investing on the skills and competencies of people. The third major theme under University Y was the practice of investing in the skills and
competencies of the people. All three of the participants shared that their university gave
great importance to the development of their people or their employees. Participant 1Y
cited that they hired professionals to help them conduct a SWOT analysis. For Participant
1Y, this analysis was an opportunity to understand the context of higher education better
and use this knowledge to develop the employees’ capabilities in their respective roles:

You know we did a really great – we had a really great retreat, um, a couple of
months ago, where we brought someone in from a company to help us think
about, we did a SWOT analysis for the office, and um, not just – well actually not
just us, but sort of college-wide and higher education – – and sort of where
College Y is because we want each of us in the office to really understand the
higher education landscape and where HR fits in to that. And um, kind of thinking
about creating – well we do have sort of a five year strategic plan for our office…. And then we read articles and um, so everybody in the office had an opportunity
to learn.

Participant 2Y stated that they valued the professional development of their
employees. For this participant, the opportunity of professional development served as a
manner of recognizing the efforts of the employees. The participant also highlighted that
professional development entailed the acquisition knowledge and capacities in various
occasions sponsored by the university and its leaders:

Um, so, you know, that’s one way, you know, I think professional development is
certainly a way to recognize someone and appreciate them for you know, their
good work, so we try to give people access to professional development.
My boss yes and she make sure I have opportunities for professional
development. I gained knowledge, educated me wherever she could, took me to
meetings, took me to different things and kind of transferred knowledge to me so
I tried to do the same thing with my staff. It’s informal and I feel pretty confident
that I will pass on knowledge to my my assistant, enough knowledge that she
could step in.

Finally, Participant 3Y explained that technology could help them in developing
the skills of the members of the organization, especially within their department.
Participant 3Y admitted that they were currently performing their tasks manually, but
should transition and maximize technology in the coming years:

I think, over the next few years, maybe before I retire, I think Employee C might
retire before me, and Employee E is another clerical position in that office, and if
she retires within the next couple of years, how we might reorganize that office a
little differently, and use technology differently. HR continues to be a paper
driven, transactional driven department. And some of that you can’t, you just, it’s
the nature of the work, but I think we could do more self-service and online kinds
of things.

**Major Theme 4: Focusing on strategic planning for long-term goals.** The fourth
major theme from University Y was the practice of focusing on strategic planning for the
attainment of their long-term goals. Again, all three of the participants shared this major
theme. Participant 1Y stated that they established general and specific goals within their
departments and university. In addition, the performance evaluations were in place to
assess the effectiveness of their planning and guarantee the achievement of their goals over time:

Well, again, you know, we sort of set our goals at – from a departmental level and that sort of again, we have retreats a couple of times a year, um, working with our Executive Vice-President, just where we want to be, what is our plan, um, and then of course we all have individual goals, you know – – we have annual performance evaluations. An assignment we’re creating a whole new sort of a redesign of our performance management structure at the college.

Participant 2Y described that they regularly created goals and planned specific timelines for the said objectives. Participant 2Y indicated that the timelines helped in setting their priorities and determining the progress of their plan:

So, we um, we look at our goals, pretty regularly. We establish a set of goals and then we put a timeline for when we have to have that done and so that helps you prioritize.

We identify, if we have a certain particular thing we need to accomplish, we identify how that fits in with the strategic plan. Sometimes that goes up from us and sometimes it comes from down from the top. I think a lot of the practical um, day-to-day kinds of things could come up but then the overall strategy, like today, we had a health insurance renewal meeting and so we talked about what our long term strategy will be, what is our goal over the next five to seven years, how do we manage the costs of a $10 million dollar budget. We can’t keep increasing like that, so we talk about the options and we do have a benefit consultant that we work with.
Finally, Participant 3Y shared that it was important for them to have a long-term plan to ensure the development and wellbeing of their employee population. The participant highlighted that they must always be ahead of their current plans and goals in order to combat any unforeseen incidences and events:

I think we may not necessarily – We do have a long-term plan, and we’re constantly thinking, at least five to seven years out as best we can. Our strategy right now is trying to be a little ahead of where we think our employee population is headed. Sometimes we do that; sometimes we’re still just barely ahead.

**Major Theme 5: Conducting performance evaluations.** The fifth major theme that emerged was the practice of conducting performance evaluations to determine the progress of their plans and attainment of their goals, as reported in the previous major theme. Again, all three participants shared the said perception. Participant 2Y stated that they conducted regular staff meetings to inform each department of their goals, needs, and accomplishments:

Yes, and we identify them also as a group we have weekly HR staff meetings so we will talk about what’s going on in everybody’s area but – and that will help us decide too. We work closely with our Executive Vice President from the strategic standpoint, you know what – which way should the institution be going, we identify things that we think are our goals and discuss whether that goes this year, next year.

Participant 3Y added that she personally met with the employees to conduct performance evaluation and assessment. The practice allowed for the encouragement of
employees, as well as the measurement of their achievements from their previous plans and goals:

So, we have an annual appraisal process and I sit once a year with Employee B and Employee C and they will do a self-evaluation, and then I give them some feedback on that. We sit together, and they typically, before we come together for the performance appraisal, do a reflection on, “What did we accomplish last year? What were the goals we had set last year? How did we do? What needs to carry over for this year, and what are new ones that we need to?” And so, we sit together and talk about those. Sometimes I push back a little bit and say, “Can you really do all of that?” Most of the time they have way too much stuff and we have to sort of cut back, and then we do it again about six months later. We just do this little temperature taking to say, “How are we doing?” But every year we have a reflective report on what we’ve accomplished for the past year and what we hope to accomplish for the next year. Also in conjunction with what’s happening at the institution.

**Sub theme 1: For employees and departmental recognition.** In particular, Participant 1Y believed that evaluations were important in order to determine the effectiveness of planned actions. Furthermore, the participant stated that evaluations also allowed them to recognize the efforts and hard work of their employees:

But in HR we’re pretty good about annually doing evaluations on all of our folks, looking at our goals. I always think that praise is the best, you know, way to recognize someone. Um, we have a nice program here at the college called a Pillar’s Program and that’s not just for the HR office but anyone can participate in
that and it’s kind of – it gives someone just a little note that’s copied to their supervisor to say thank you for going above and beyond.

Participant 2Y added that they also conducted regular meetings and feedback sessions with their employees to communicate the goals of the university for them. In turn, employees were made aware of the expectations from them:

So, the goals for each individual based on their positions and also and sometimes we have to revise that, depending on the needs and the technology in all of this. Things that happen, you know. So, we would meet one on one with each individual member, and – ask him or her to look at his or her position description. We would let them determine, based on their day-to-day knowledge, what they would like to set as goals and then we say, “These are our goals for you,” so we collaborative work to set those goals.

**Minor Theme 1: Promoting rewards and compensation for employees.** The first minor theme that followed was the practice of promoting rewards and compensation for employees. Two of the three participants shared this organizational feature from University Y. Participant 2Y explained the different compensations available for their employees:

Yeah, Workers’ Compensation, is all part of this office, um, trying to think, you know, General Liability, um in fact we have United Educators, have you heard of them – as our insurance and they provide us with lots of educational materials that we use for our Title IX for me personally, I’m in charge of benefits, workers’ comp, leaves of absences, budget for all of our benefits, and participate with Employee B in the management training program.
Participant 3Y added that she tried to give as much flexibility to the employees. The participant explained that the management should be understanding of the conditions of their employees, especially regarding work schedules:

Well I give them a little flexibility with if they want to work at home a day, because I know sometimes there’s so many, we don’t call them interruptions because they’re really part of the job, but I think they can get so much more done if they have a quiet period. So, they’ve got a lot of flexibility with their work schedules. I’ve even said to them the summer can be not a down period, a little slower, and I said, “You know, you work so many hours over the academic year even though you’re an exempt position. Take a couple of extra days off.

So, I would say the most common are related to benefits and payroll kinds of things. They work very hard, and of course on employment issues. I have to put that hat on for a little bit, because Employee B works probably, well, that’s probably not true. I bet they work almost equally, because Employee C with the risk side of the house works very closely with most directors on campus. She also gets involved in employee relations kinds of issues, so her first primary contact for Employee C is probably on the director level around risk, and Employee B’s would probably be with employment kinds of things.

**Minor Theme 2: Ensuring smooth and effective collaboration.** The second minor theme that followed was the practice of ensuring smooth and effective collaboration between departments, as well as their members. Two of the three participants shared this minor theme. Participant 2Y stated that they worked closely with other departments to ensure a smooth process of their programs and activities:
So, she works very collaboratively with any department across campus in setting up and providing guidelines for interview process, putting the advertisements on our website and supports them any way she can and our assistant. The senior HR assistant, she is very integral in that part, making sure things are put on in a timely manner, um, the process – we have a people admin is the system that we use for recruitment so there are steps that have to occur and we have to pay attention to those steps that have to occur. This co-director is really the educator on how to use the system to the best advantage of those doing searches.

**RQ3: What organizational features were most important (strategy, structure, processes, and lateral capacity, reward systems and people practices)?** The third research question allowed for the detection of the key organizational feature as reported by the participants of University Y. From the analysis, four underlying themes were discovered where majority of the participants reported the importance of interaction and collaboration. Table 4.7 contains the breakdown of the themes addressing the final research question based on the interviews of the participants from University Y.
Table 4.7

Breakdown of the Themes Addressing RQ2 Based on the Participants of University Y

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Number of Occurrences</th>
<th>Percentage of Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having the willingness to interact and collaborate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building of staff members’ skills and capabilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a conducive environment for employees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investing on technology for effective communication and other processes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Sub-Theme.

**Major Theme 6: Having the willingness to interact and collaborate.** The sixth major theme of University Y was the important feature of the willingness to interact and collaborate between the different departments and their members. The theme received two occurrences from the analysis. Participant 2Y stated that work collaboration and relationships were important for better information sharing and successful results:

I think the advantages that we could specialize in our particular areas um and we can lean on each other. So, um, you know, if I’m not here Employee B can make the decision – if she isn’t here, I could – people can lean on me for that. Um and I think the other thing we can do is we can brainstorm together. So, I have a particular – a lot of times employee relations issues can be difficult and you want to make sure you’re thinking correctly, am I over reacting or am I hearing this correctly, so to be able to bounce those ideas off of each other, I think has been a really terrific positive for us.

Participant 3Y shared an example of the relationships between the employees and the effect to their work performances and projects:
I think the relationships here. I think having a direct connect through the president’s office certainly doesn’t hurt, but I really think at the end of the day it’s about the relationships that Employee B and Employee C have across campus as well as myself, and I think people, while they may not always agree with decisions that are made, we try to have a transparent process, and they’ll understand it. They don’t necessarily agree, but at the end of the day they’ll go, “Okay.”

**Group 3: University Z**

**RQ1: How is the department of human resources structured to deliver collaborative learning and integrated services and what has determined the design?**

The first research question had three underlying themes, as determined through the thematic analysis of the interviews. The majority of the participants believed that University Z gave importance to a decentralized organization one, which distributed power to the different levels of management within the institution. Table 4.8 contains the breakdown of the themes addressing the first research question from the interviews of the participants of University Z.
Table 4.8

Breakdown of the Themes Addressing RQ1 Based on the Participants of University Z

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Number of Occurrences</th>
<th>Percentage of Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giving importance to decentralization</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lacking communication and implementation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicing a matrix management or structure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking support from strategic partners and specialists</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Sub-Theme.

**Major Theme 1: Giving importance to decentralization.** The first major theme under University Z was the experience of giving importance to decentralization within their university. The theme received two occurrences, wherein participants reported that decentralization was followed; however, both stated the need to develop a more effective communication and implementation of policies with the presence of such a structure. Participant 2Z described their structure as “decentralized to the extreme,” where the top management distributed their power to the different departments:

So right now, I would describe us as decentralized to the extreme. At least that was the case when I came arrived. It has been evolving, however, and I feel evolving in a very positive way. A specific event obviously created a significant burning platform and helped us make a very compelling case – for change. And particularly, there were a number of recommendations around how the Human Resources Department functioned, particularly as it related – in this problematic situation. It actually was not the case HR in general operated in that way across every business unit and every academic college as well. So, at that time, there was a move to have the entire HR unit actually report directly to me, and to their unit
head. So, it’s a dual reporting situation. However, currently – and that, I think, was a very, positive move in the right direction. What didn’t happen at that time since the budgets still resided with the unit.

**Sub theme 1: Lacking communication and implementation.** Participant 2Z admitted that they still lacked effectiveness and efficiency within their university. The participant shared the following:

We don’t do a very good job, and I’m the first to admit it, but I don’t have a communications person. Which I have asked for incidentally, in this budget cycle, and got… we have three generations of employees that work here, and we have to figure out how to communicate with each and every one.

Finally, Participant 3Z added that their system was inconsistent at the moment. The participant pointed out that the budget and lack of resources hindered them from fully maximizing the system:

To, um, I think the organization that there are not consistent answers and there’s not consistent application. I think the cost to do HR, to provide HR services – we have a lot of people touching HR, um, right now because it’s been so distributed and decentralized. So, you have, you know, not only HR professionals touching HR work, you have other people where HR is not their expertise.

**RQ2: What are the organizational features (strategy, structure, processes and lateral capacity, reward systems and people practices) that seem to facilitate the process of collaborative learning and integrated service in the nonacademic department of human resources?** To answer the second research question, I again identified the organizational features and practices of the universities. After analysis,
University Z had nine underlying themes or practices reported. Table 4.9 contains the breakdown of the themes addressing the second research question from the interviews of the participants of University Z.

**Table 4.9**

*Breakdown of the Themes Addressing RQ2 Based on the Participants of University Z*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Number of Occurrences</th>
<th>Percentage of Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focusing on strategic planning for long-term goals</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducting performance evaluations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating with employees to determine their needs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investing on the skills and competencies of people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting for shared services for redundancy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing ineffectiveness in implementing employee policies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investing on technology for succession planning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working closely as a team</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting rewards and recognition for employees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Major Theme 2: Focusing on strategic planning for long-term goals.** The second major theme of the study was the practice of focusing on strategic planning for long-term goals. All three participants indicated that their university focused on strategic planning for their long-term goals. Participant 1Z stated that their planning involved the top-level management to ensure that their goals and objectives were aligned. The participant shared the following:
When we look at the strategic plan, we see working with the provost to make sure – and the senior VP of finance and business – to make sure that we’re doing the right things in the future to align everybody at some level.

So, it’s an exciting time. We have a strategic plan that now is being finalized for the university. We are a part of the finance of business organization. So, it is a cascade from the president, the university, F&B, and ours. From a departmental – from my departments, right now, I still have one foot in my old job, which is I’m responsible for the recruitment and compensation groups. Our departmental priorities then are what feed to our strategic plan. And also, we get feedback on what we should be doing from a strategic plan.

Participant 2Z added that they have workforce planning that included strategies on ways in which to attain their goals and initiatives. The participant echoed that the top-level management and other specialists were always present in order to address the concerns of the employees on their plans and goals:

So, she’ll be really working on strategy, workforce planning, diversity, succession planning. You know, more of the high-level strategic HR-related initiatives. There might be a couple of high-level generalists that would be known as HR consultants that would be there to deal with all day-to-day kinds of employee-related questions and concerns that come up. And then the transactional work would be removed. And that’s the kind of work that – it’s really the engine of HR, and it’s what a lot of HR people do. But it’s all that kind of intensive transactional work, doing I-9s for employees, onboarding employees, doing offer letters. You know, more of the routine work.
Finally, Participant 3Z stated that they did have a strategic planning process. The plans were followed, along with a goal-setting process, to ensure the success of their talent acquisition, management, and development:

Well, we have a strategic planning process – which we go through. Um, so we, um, you know, in our group, we do a needs assessment. In a workplace learning group, we do a comprehensive needs assessment – about every two years to make sure that, um, you know, the directions and the learning that we’re focusing on is aligned.

Um, well we do, we have a goal-setting process. We try to base it off the, you know, obviously the strategic plan priorities. Um, so for instance, we have four strategic plan priorities - talent management, talent acquisition, compensation, and HR transformation.

Major Theme 3: Conducting performance evaluations. The third major theme under University Z was the practice of conducting performance evaluations. All three participants from University Z identified the same theme. Participant 1Z stated that they partnered with a consulting firm to assess their current condition as a university. The participant indicated that the company allowed them to determine their needs, strengths, and weaknesses:

We did partner with a human capital consulting firm, which is a global firm that specializes in this space. They helped us do a current state assessment, which told a pretty compelling story about how much money we’re spending in the current model, and how much we could be spending if we actually transform the model.
Participant 2Z added that to determine the effectiveness of their performance, they conducted evaluations and assessments. The participant shared that with direct reports and also reviewed the recommendations for feedback and improvement:

So, we again, now our strategic plan are going to have very clearly articulate goals. But what we’ve done up until now is each year at performance management time, I sit down with my direct reports. I have five, my kind of senior leadership team, and for each functional area, we set the goals and strategy for the year. And then they in turn do the same with their direct reports, and so on and so on. And then our performance, everyone’s performance, and then subsequent salary increase, is dictated by how well we do.

Finally, Participant 3Z described that they conducted a needs assessment within their department and a comprehensive evaluation for their long-term goals:

Well, we have a strategic planning process – which we go through. Um, so we, um, you know, in our group, we do a needs assessment. In a workplace learning group, we do a comprehensive needs assessment – about every two years to make sure that, um, you know, the directions and the learning that we’re focusing on is aligned.

*Minor Theme 1: Communicating with employees to determine their needs.* The first minor theme that followed was the practice of communicating with their employees to determine and address their needs. The theme received two occurrences from the three participants. Participant 2Z shared ways in which their organization valued the needs and development of their employees. The participant added ways in which they encouraged supervisors to communicate and interact with their employees:
But it’s really now a document about forcing supervisors to have the conversation with employees, and then once that conversation happens, it’s talking to employees about their goals, what they see as their path forward, how can we help them develop to reach their career goals? And so those are the kinds of things that I’m really trying to model because I think HR has to be a modeler of these concepts if we’re going to ever be able to successfully sell them.

Meanwhile, Participant 3Z stated that University Z did highly value employees’ wellbeing. In particular, the university leadership established a support center for the benefit of their employees:

And then we’ll also have a huge support center for the, the employees here – – which is, you know, whether it’s through a portal using technology or whether it’s through, um, you know, people that are designated to do, um, the transitional work and answering questions and doing that kind of day-to-day operational kinds of things.

**RQ3: What organizational features were most important (strategy, structure, processes, and lateral capacity, reward systems and people practices)?** The third and final research question allowed for the discovery of the most vital organizational feature reported by the participants of University Z. From the analysis, four underlying themes were discovered, where the majority of the participants reported the need and significance of building the staff members’ skills and capabilities. Table 4.10 contains the breakdown of the themes addressing the final research question based on the interviews of the participants from University Z.
Table 4.10

*Breakdown of the Themes Addressing RQ3 Based on the Participants of University Z*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Number of Occurrences</th>
<th>Percentage of Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building of staff members’ skills and capabilities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-training of employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a conducive environment for employees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To engage and encourage the employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investing on technology for effective communication</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and other processes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering of professional development opportunities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Sub-Theme.

**Major Theme 4: Building of staff members’ skills and capabilities.** The final major theme from the analysis of the data under University Z was their chief organizational feature or characteristic of successfully building their staff members’ skills and capabilities. In particular, participants identified their cross-training of employees for position redundancy, effectiveness of system performance, and professional development of their staff members. Participant 1Z believed in the need to listen to the needs of the employees in order to ensure their organizational loyalty and effectiveness. In addition, cross-training should also allow for the realization of the performance effectiveness and other areas of improvement:

The most important features for me are ability to cross-train employees so that people have experiences and can reflect on how different things are done. I think it’s just having two-way communication opportunities for central organizations and decentralized organizations too. I think people are very willing to do things
the right way if they know that’s what they need to do or they have great suggestions of ways we can do it better, if we just listen.

Participant 3Z added that they also offered career developmental opportunities for their organizational members to ensure that they could improve over time and receive functional roles in their organization:

Um, and get into some different areas and stretch themselves a little as we transform. So, I think those are always career developmental opportunities. I think once we’re transformed and we’re one community – I think that’s where, uh, you know, we do move people around functional roles. We’ve been doing that recently to give people an opportunity in another area.

**Cross-case Analysis**

From the analysis, I discovered that the three universities had varying organizational structures and features. University X had four major themes; University Y had six major themes; and University Z had four major themes (see Table 4.11). After further exploration, I established that University X was practicing a functional organizational model that promoted close interaction between departments. Meanwhile, University Y was practicing a flat organizational feature. Similarly, University Y embodied a supportive and collaborative system with and for their employees. Finally, University Z was keen on giving importance to decentralization as the main organizational structure.

For the second research question, I found that University X attributed a great value on technology for their succession planning. Meanwhile, University Y again showed a commitment to the welfare of the employees by investing in the skills and
competencies of their people. In addition, I determined that they also conducted strategic planning for their long-term goals and performance evaluations helped identify their progress and needs. Finally, University Z reported the organizational features of giving importance to strategic planning for the achievement of the goals combined with regular performance evaluations.

The final research question centered on what the participants of these organizations deemed the most important organizational practices and features. For the participants of University X, having the willingness to interact and collaborate with the other departments and employees was the most substantial feature of their organization. Meanwhile, University Y valued their strategic planning and performance evaluations over the other practices that they employ. Finally, University Z found the building of their staff members’ skills and capabilities to be the most important.
Table 4.11

Breakdown of the Major Themes from All Three Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Research Question 1</th>
<th>Research Question 2</th>
<th>Research Question 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University X</td>
<td>Practicing a functional organizational model</td>
<td>Investing on technology for succession planning</td>
<td>Having the willingness to interact and collaborate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promoting close interaction between departments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Y</td>
<td>Practicing a flat organizational structure</td>
<td>Investing on the skills and competencies of people</td>
<td>Having the willingness to interact and collaborate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practicing a supportive and collaborative role for all employees</td>
<td>Focusing on strategic planning for long-term goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conducting performance evaluations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Z</td>
<td>Giving importance to decentralization</td>
<td>Focusing on strategic planning for long-term goals</td>
<td>Building of staff members’ skills and capabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conducting performance evaluations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Document Reviews**

The documentation review acted as proof to confirm what the participants mentioned during the interviews, and a predesigned checklist (see Appendix C) was applied. I applied a general inductive approach to the document review by reviewing, organizing the documentation against the interviews major and minor themes, to give structure to the conclusions based on the findings (Mertler, 2006). The purpose of
applying this approach was to condense the data into a summary to establish links between the research questions, the findings, and connect the document review to the theoretical framework, which supported this study. By triangulating the data in this way, I attempted to provide a convergence of evidence that produced credibility and examining the information collected (Merriam, 1998). I thus corroborated the findings across data sets and reduced the impact of potential biases that can exist in a single analytical technique. Triangulation was done this way to help me guard against the accusation that the study’s findings were simply an artifact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator’s bias. The more data the researcher collects, the more likely they are able to draw valuable conclusions (Merriam, 1998).

The review indicated that Universities X and Z had written proof of institutional strategic plans, while University Y fell significantly short of any such plans. The documentation also captured University X’s transformation from a generalist approach to a functional system and University Z’s intention to establish a decentralized service approach. Institution Y’s organizational chart showed the co-director approach within a specialist system. I designed the document review to support the responses made by the respondents to the research questions. Table 4.12 below reflects available departmental documentation that supports and addresses the purpose of study and research questions.
Table 4.12

Departmental Documentation Available to Support the Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Research Question 1</th>
<th>Research Question 2</th>
<th>Research Question 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>Restructured and documented Change/Mission Statement</td>
<td>Strategic plan, succession and performance management systems</td>
<td>Organizational chart with changing HR positions forecasted. Organization Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University X</td>
<td>Flat Organizational chart</td>
<td>Performance management systems</td>
<td>No documentation available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Y</td>
<td>No documentation available</td>
<td>Restructuring and Strategic Plan</td>
<td>Performance evaluation and staff development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Z</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Themes

- Documentation was available on the restructuring process from a generalist to a specialist system in University X. While University Y had a clearly defined organizational chart. University Z had no structure available as it was undergoing changes.
- All three universities had processes and procedure available online and in print form of strategic plans, performances management systems which the respondents described as features that facilitated collaborative learning and integrated service in the HR departments.
- Important features for University X was proactively forecasting changes in the environment of higher education with a strong focus on Organization Development. While University Z features focused on performance evaluation as well as staff development.

Theoretical Framework

- Strategy, customer service. Structure, shape and distribution of power
- Processes and lateral capacity. Peoples practices.
- Reward System/People Practices
Researcher’s Observation Field Notes

The interviewees advocated a traditional paradigm of human resources, where policy and practice influenced employee behavior, attitudes, and performance. Thus, a more transactional or administrative approach was applied with a focus on compensation, training and development, performance management, recruitment, selection, and employee relations. The participants viewed human resources typically as providing administrative support and functioning as the gatekeepers of policies and procedures.

Most notable was that only three of the nine participants interviewed could clearly distinguish between the concepts structure and strategy. The knowledge about different and or changing organizational structure was therefore limited among the respondents. The majority of respondents indicated a need for further exploration in the topic of organizational design, strategy, and structure.

I noted that all the functional units within the departments of human resources had director level titles with no or very few reporting staff. The directors also performed at an operational level and had very little or no decision-making powers. This observation also correlate with the knowledge level of directors noted earlier with regards to understanding the concepts strategy versus structure.

Chapter 4 Summary

The fourth chapter contained the findings from the analysis of the interviews with the participants, document review, and field notes from the three institutions. In this study, I explored and described organizational structures and what had determined the structure in the non-academic department of human resources in three different types of universities: a state-owned master’s level, a private baccalaureate, and a
commonwealth/state related in central Pennsylvania. The second purpose of the study was exploratory; I aimed to determine what type of organizational structure facilitated and were key to learning and service in the three different types of departments of human resources. The thematic analysis of the interviews allowed for the discovery of four major themes under University X, six major themes for University Y, and four major themes under University Z. Very little documented evidence was available to indicate any attempt to address structural changes. The field notes described the functions of the office of human resources as transactional or administrative, as well as unable to understand and learn organizational strategy as a precursor for structure. The final chapter contains the in-depth analysis of the findings, recommendations, implications, and conclusions of the study.
Chapter 5

Analysis

Introduction

In this dissertation, I focused on the state of contemporary academic administrative structure and a phenomenon commonly known as the silo effect (Fenwick et al., 2009), in which administrative departments at universities do not cooperate with one another or share knowledge. In contrast to this isolating trend is a countertrend to “break” the silos (Kates & Galbraith, 2007), or introduce practices that encourages sharing and openness between administrative departments and horizontal management structures within. These innovations should better prepare the university system for an increasingly complex world (Mohamed et al., 2004).

In order to engage this challenging terrain, I sought to address how organization design influenced collaborative learning and integrative services in the human resources department of three universities in central Pennsylvania. To assay this topic, three questions were developed. The questions served two purposes. The first was an explanatory function to understand the landscape of this category of administrative departments in these particular institutions. The second purpose was exploratory in nature to examine the elements of the structure of these departments that support these areas.

The interviews were based on three questions. The first asked how the department of human resources was structured to deliver collaborative learning and integrated services and what determined the design. The second inquired as to what the organizational features were that facilitated the collaborative learning and integrative
service components of the department. The third asked what features were the most important to this topic.

Through this qualitative study, I found major themes among the responses of the interview participants from the universities. In every case, the importance of these aspects of the work of the human resources department was affirmed and features were enumerated that supported these. Close interaction between departments, practicing collaborative roles for employees, and giving importance to centralization were among the major themes of the responses to Research Question 1. In answering Research Question 2, I identified succession planning, strategic planning, and performance evaluations as organizational features that supported these components. Having the willingness to interact and collaborate and capacity building were major themes in response to Research Question 3.

As I will discuss in more detail below, these themes connect importantly to the principle problem of the research when considered within the context of the extant literature. Put simply, a dilemma emerged from the perspectives of the administrators, in that the tools they perceived as available to them to influence the policies and practices of their departments were not transformational by design, which focused on the nature of institutional structure and change.

The findings of this study broadly comported with those of the published literature related to the topic. As others have noted, the complex, bureaucratic system of administration that sprung up decades ago has continued to serve as the dominant model of academic administration (Ambler, 2000). The ability of the extant structure to simply absorb innovation and remain substantially unchanged should be seen as the most likely
result of reform efforts (Ambler, 2000; Manning et al., 2006). Consequently, the extent to which the responses of the participants showed an entrenched system reflected a predictable state. Nevertheless, as described below, the results of this research provided important and relative insight into the academy.

In the interpretation section of the paper, I will describe the areas which the study participants identified as useful in order to advance these goals. In the implications section, I will address some of the potential impacts of these findings. The limitations of the study and implications for future research will follow these sections.

**Interpretation**

The findings in this research study broadly confirmed the extant research, with one important exception. While the institutional structures, documented by previous research of academic institutions and the concomitant patterns of behavior, were reflected in the reports of the participants from all three surveyed universities, predictions of changing forms, substantially augmenting cross-functional behavior out of necessity, seemed to exaggerate the capacity of these institutions to respond to evolving needs. Instead, it appeared that the tools that have been used by the academy to confront problems for the past half century that were prevalent among the solution strategies employed by contemporary academic administrators.

This finding should not be interpreted as a finding of no proactive response to changing times. All participants acknowledged the need for greater collaborative learning and integrative services, and all offered examples of what they saw as steps being taken by their departments in that direction. Without question, the need for awareness—which was a precondition to meaningful change—was being met in these institutions. It was
when one began to examine the particulars of the proof and the specific elements of the
ostensible when the evidence seemed limited.

One participant offered proof of a changing approach to management regarding
the accessibility of the university president—who, it turned out, was only available
through proxy to the departments. This might not be an excessively layered buffer to the
ultimate decider at the school, but it remained a buffer. Further, the hierarchy embedded
in the system was in no way challenged here. It was simply a less complex bureaucracy
and made no impact on the structure beneath those department heads, which could remain
as byzantine as ever.

The point here was not to find fault with every effort to make change, but to
explore whether the change was on the design level. Earlier, researchers observed that
structure must align with design principles in order to create a viable system (Galbraith et
al., 2002). This structure was not a permeable design; it retained vertical systems of
authority and layers.

Similarly, the use of performance evaluations as a tool for change—which was
cited by members of two schools as a method by which a more collaborative system with
service integration was being achieved—did not guarantee any meaningful change
relative to the design of the organization. Performance evaluations were used by these
departments in the past, to different effect. Further, these were presented as traditional
performance evaluations, meaning that these were likely reinforcing a hierarchy of
authority in which staff was judged not by some peer system but through a department in
which this assessment was ultimately vested. This assessment was not a certain
characterization, simply a likely one which represented the basic function of a
performance evaluation—to compare one’s skill set with the traditional parameters of one’s job (Mayhew, n.d.). The overarching point remained that it signaled no departure from the extant system, and so ought to be thought of as reinforcing elements of that system, unless there was evidence that one ought to think otherwise.

Without a doubt, the interview participants acknowledged a need to change the way their systems were designed, to a person. They also appeared confident that the tools already available to them were sufficient to achieve the results they sought. Even their possible innovations were drawn from a broader system that often reinforced the practices they were trying to re-vision. One university paid outside consultants to conduct a SWOT analysis, a method of business analysis that many have considered to be past its prime and in need of supplementary analysis in order to serve a useful purpose (Garthson, 2014; Popescu & Scarlat, 2015).

This observation regarding SWOT was not made to second-guess the strategies of a particular university, but to point out that there was evidence that the approach being taken was less than innovative, and that sort of evidence redounded across the three universities. Old approaches were consistently employed in order to achieve new ends.

Relative to the philosophy behind the star model, this was not indicative of the best approaches. As one analyst observed in the literature review, holding onto one’s literal or metaphorical tools could spell disaster (Kuh, 1989). In one sense, this limitation was in conflict with the extant literature. From an historical point of view, however, this behavior was unsurprising.

The researchers in the body of scholarly literature charted the genesis of the modern academy and revealed that the bureaucratic aspect of the scholarly institution of
higher learning was a matter of necessity (Tull & Kuk, 2012). As the university bloomed and grew at a rapid pace, academic leaders needed a way to manage the growth and change that was taking place effectively. Bureaucratic structure, which had come into its own in the service of corporations and government, was a needed solution to the problem of effectively managing a large organization through a small leadership team (Gumport & Pusser, 1995). Departments sprung up to account for every aspect of this new iteration of higher education. With those departments, areas of specialization became necessary. A system took hold within which certain positions were held by people, with not only a mastery of a certain general skill set, but also the inner workings of some aspect of the bureaucracy (Hoffmann & Summers, 2000).

The findings of this qualitative research showed that the same sort of specificity that gave rise to the bureaucratic expert was in evidence, as the contemporary administrator struggled with making change. Interview participants from all three universities agreed that there was a need for greater collaboration and integration, and all three referenced techniques they used to achieve that end. In this respect, there was a plan of action behind the recognition. Nevertheless, the techniques that were detailed would be just as likely—or perhaps more likely—to serve a number of other functions in order to promote innovate forms of engagement.

The performance evaluation, which was a major theme in two university interview sets, could certainly work to promote thinking outside of the silo, but that was not its inherent purpose. In the simplest terms, the purpose of a performance evaluation was to determine whether one’s skill set matches one’s position. This, similar to the strategic plan and skills development (i.e., two other examples given by participants of
their commitment to collaborative learning and integrative services), could be used to advance this cause or its opposite. How these tools were used depended on the vision of the person.

There appeared a tautological dimension to these responses. The administrators wished to make change in their departments, but they relied on tools that could influence that change or not, depending on how these were used by them, their peers, and their employees. This became problematic when one considered that the subject matter tacitly engaged the question of training. This was not one group of people with an agreed-on agenda using tools that would bring others into the fold. This was a culture attempting to remake itself. As such, a whole new design within which newly trained administrators executed a new vision was likely needed.

Researchers have reflected this lack of radical reconstruction in the academy (Hoffman & Summers, 2000). Organizational elements, such as departments, were assessed as hierarchical in nature in recent analyses (Bush, 2003). Where there was innovation, it was often seen as individualistic in nature; as they took on collaborative engagement and pursued integrative service strategies, the roles played by professional staff extended beyond their defined roles or the articulated structure of their department (Whitchurch, 2008).

As I did not have an anticipated finding but simply sought to understand the degree to which design supported or obstructed collaborative learning and integrative services, the findings were neither expected nor unexpected. To the extent that there was an internal tension in the interview results, it seemed to reflect the deeply held habits of the bureaucrat. Navigating a system of administration was half of the skill set of anyone
in a bureaucracy, and those skills were often intermingled with the tasks that comprised the mission of the department.

**Implications**

In reviewing the interpreted findings, several major points became clear. Generally speaking, while there was some recognition of the need to shift away from the isolating effects of bureaucratic silos, it was not the highest priority for any of the research participants regarding specific approaches delineated in the interviews. This tension between interest and intent and practice was apparent in the distinction among responses to the first question in those of the second and third question. While respondents rejected the notion that their organizational structure was isolating, the responses from one, which recounted instances in which people from different departments worked together, for example, were typically anecdotal and not fully reflected in the structure or priorities described in the answers to Research Questions 2 and 3. It was true that there were priorities described that could be seen as influencing collaborative learning and integrated services but not in the sort of straightforward fashion that would be most likely to result from overt prioritization.

What this amounted to was a distinction between theoretical priorities and practice. In order to understand where theory began to fall apart in practice, as represented in these responses, I considered these priorities within the matrix of Galbraith’s (2002) star model. This analysis of implications would therefore culminate in a comparison between the characteristics found in the interviews and the requirements for change, as set out in the star model. The interest in reform of the bureaucratic system
common to universities, as described by the research participants, consistently demonstrated three characteristics, as enumerated below.

All of this was not to say that the findings showed a lack of actual reform. Overall, the comments by the search participants suggested deep interest in moving toward a structural paradigm that reflected some of the most progressive thinking about academic administration. The purpose of this exploration of implications was to sound out places where the central thesis of this research was more and less resonant. What this analysis identified was places to grow and places where greater change might take place. This gaze would also be turned to investigate the theoretical framework, where its capacity to further the central questions of this project was similarly interrogated.

The central implication that came out of the interviews conducted for this project was that, while there was real interest in permeable models of organization, the actual construction of such designs fell significantly short of the professed desire. A consistent and noteworthy quality of the practices that were considered by administrators to fulfill these goals was that these seemed to perform other functions, as well. In other words, policies were placed that served several purposes, ostensibly including moving forward in development of a more progressive organizational system. The extent to which these were only partially dedicated to this goal seemed to also be related to the efficacy of these priorities.

For example, interviewees from University Y articulated an interest in the collaborative approach that was central to this research and even gave examples of where they believed it was currently implemented. When seeking to explain the methods used by the university promote this approach, however, these participants referenced standard
procedures that had no inherent capacity for moving these priorities forward. For example, the hiring of consultants to perform a SWOT analysis was referenced as an instance of ways in which the organization moved toward a more collaborative model. SWOT analysis, a standard business-oriented rubric, was in no way considered inherently progressive. In fact, one could use a SWOT analysis to conclude that a department was not isolated enough, depending on the values that comprised the assumptions of that analysis. This was not to say that one could not also advance collaborative learning and integrated services through SWOT analysis, but rather that it did not reflect a prioritization of that outcome. This was reinforced in an interview with the participant from University Y, who stated that the SWOT analysis was related to development of a 5-year strategic plan for the university. Again, this was an essential step in long-term planning, but it did not inherently guarantee increased collaboration or integration of services.

Similar results derived from interview subjects from the other two universities. Tools that could assist in improving cross-functional behavior and advancing the transition of structure to a more permeable design but that could also move the institution in the opposite direction were pointed to as evidence of commitment to this approach. It was as if one were to cite the use of a pen as evidence of one's commitment to high-quality writing.

This finding must be understood not as an absence of commitment to collaborative learning in integrated services but as a manifestation of alloyed reform. Alloyed reform was not just a commitment to a solution to a problem, but one that could
also address other issues. Alloyed reform could be entirely authentic but compromised, and therefore less effective or even ineffective.

The challenge with alloyed reform in the context of making structural changes to institutions was that many of the traditional tools used in bureaucratic contexts were designed in part to reinforce the bureaucracy. As result, when the success of the use of a tool to achieve an objective—such as advancing cross-functional behavior—depended on the values embedded into the effort being in sync with the objective, multiple goals could lead to contradictory efforts that essentially negated one another. In the example provided by University Y participants described above, the SWOT analysis must explicitly advance collaborative learning and integrated services as the priorities for which the analysis had been conducted to prevent a result that was muddled or even contradictory regarding this objective.

These complexities were partly explained through a second observation based on the interviews, as enumerated in the interpretation section. Each of the administrators interviewed demonstrated a bifurcated mind regarding the priorities of this research project. In other words, there was a split in the attitude of the participants regarding administrative development strategies. When discussing ideas, such as collaborative learning and integrated services, these administrators expressed great enthusiasm. Once actual practices were the subject of conversation, more traditional ideas dominated the narrative.

Interview subjects from University Z explained in their responses to Research Question 1 that decentralization was an important priority to them. When talking about policies that could further the goals of more collaborative learning and integrative
services, performance evaluations and strategic planning were listed as central themes in the responses to Research Questions 2 and 3, respectively; in other words, innovation and progressive change mattered to these participants, but the approach they imagined taking was a fairly predictable one. The participants’ thoughts were split between a vision of the future and toolbox designed to fortify the policies of the present and the past.

In order to make sense out of this tension between the vision that administrators have for a way of doing business that was more collaborative and the processes that were available to them, which could fall short of achieving that goal, it was worthwhile to consider the nature of their limitations. In other words, what was it that prevented these administrators from making more progress toward a permeable administrative structure? Was it personal limitation or something external to them?

One way to think about this dilemma was to refer back to some of the fundamental observations made by researchers regarding the elements that made up organizational structure. One important principle that I established early in the review of literature was that structure must align with design principles for the structure to survive (McMillan, 2002). In this case, it was not a question of survival so much as a question of implementation. The desired structure must be in sync with the design principles of the intended recipient of the changes imagined by administrators to achieve those changes. This meant that administrative departments have to be structurally capable of the permeable practices that were at the center of the proposed reforms.

Authentic horizontal administrative practice must be thought of as not just a strategic decision but also an element of the structure of the department in such a way that existing elements should be compared to the goal and changed or eliminated when
necessary. As observed in other sections of this search, understanding ways in which these elements related to each other was a precondition to making change to structure in such a way as to further strategy that the organization department sought to advance. In this case, the question was whether the differences manifested in interview questions were evidence of crisis for advancing cross-functional behavior and collaborative learning or whether these could be accommodated.

Put differently, one must compare the motivations and consequent design fundamentals of academic institutions because these were conceived to the design elements embedded in the idea of collaborative learning and integrated services, as well as sought understanding of whether changes were made to accommodate these relatively new ideas. What became clear when one reviewed responses to the three research questions in this project was that there was a functional fissure in contemporary academic structure. There was an authentic interest in achieving horizontality, but there were barriers built into the structure such that it could not happen without fundamental change.

There was some interest, intention, and action in academic administration relative to achieving the new model of interaction among departments, but there were also some barriers. In order to explore the extent of the challenge represented by these barriers, a comparative model would be helpful. Fortunately, the theoretical framework, enumerated at the beginning of this paper, served as such a model.

**Limitations**

While the original observed limitations regarding heterogeneity of departments did not seem to have led to ungovernable variances in responses, the extremely small sample size concerning universities was a significant limitation. With just three
universities represented, all three of which were from the same state, it was difficult to know the extent to which these experiences could be generalized. Further, as each university represented a significant type, the question of representative results became even more pressing. While the use of a qualitative methodology ensured a depth of response that had value in understanding the perspective of these participants, the research must be seen as an indicator of possible trends and not a statistically significant set of findings.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The implications of these results on the future of research, related to academic institutional development, collaborative learning, and integrative services, was substantial. As I began to explore this range of possible topics, I discovered a threshold that ought to be crossed with intention. This intention was related to the matter of structural change.

The scholarship, related to the structural design of institutions, was replete with warnings against rigidity; those warnings have grown in number in recent years. Generally speaking, the obstacle to the sort of reform needed was caused by rigidity in structure; interdepartmental efforts were stymied by this quality (Stone, 2004). Further, the existence of rigid structures created a psychology, which discouraged people from trying to operate across departments (Kanter, 1994). Universities were notorious for housing administrative organization that fosters the qualities that created this rigidity (Benjamin & Carroll, 1999).

In the interviews produced for this research, this rigidity was manifested in the approaches taken by the participants in attempting to address the need for greater
interaction across departments and the tools they identified as effective in reducing rigidity and increasing collaboration and service integration. Methods such as the strategic plan and the performance evaluation were described as tools for transformation. These traditional operations could be put to innovative use, but these were not presented as a part of a redesigned system but as a method of effecting change. Overall, the approach taken by participants was to rely on the existing structure to transcend its limitations.

The first question to be answered by future researchers is whether change can be influenced from within the walls of the system that must be transformed. It is certainly argued that the system itself is responsible for the rigidity that must be overcome (Kolowich, 2010). How, then, can it also be used as a tool for liberation?

The answer to this question is beyond the scope of this paper; however, it does serve as the guiding light for the first area of future research. There is no clear answer to this question of whether the change needed within the academy can be achieved through reform or requires revolution, but it is one that must be tackled. Future researchers can explore this question in a number of ways. These scholars ought to engage in both qualitative and quantitative investigation because it is essential to understand what substantial numbers of administrators see as the way forward, while maintaining a sufficient depth of knowledge.

The study itself, narrowly focused as it was on three universities in one state, ought to be reproduced across a much larger number of universities and a much larger geographic area. Introducing a mixed-methods approach that collects data from the participants that will allow further categorization of responses will also improve its value.
The separation of universities into categories, with intentional recruitment of a range of departments within each category, can be expanded and other sets and subsets of universities can be pursued.

In conducting research of this type, it is important to recognize the diverse level of knowledge and expertise of the people who agree to participate. There is no question that the mechanisms enumerated by the participants in this project are typical of the toolkit of administrators in any university, and that these are not designed specifically to achieve radical change. Nevertheless, these are the choices made by experts in this area to improve collaborative learning and integrative services. Future researchers ought to include vigorous assessment of the ways in which these tools, in current and in other contexts, may accomplish what these experts believe they are capable of achieving.

A related research project, but not one that is derived directly from the results of this study, could include an up-to-date assessment of the extent of rigidity in the administrative departments of academies that is aligned with Galbraith’s (2002) star model. Researchers who examine rigidity as a measure of the extent to which the star model indicated porosity between departments and design intended to create collaboration and integrated services would bolster the efforts of this research and create a dynamic relationship among the two vital bodies of findings. Future researchers could also focus on how organizational structure shapes the emergence of specialization, manipulate who interacts with whom and support learning dynamics that could illuminate biases, illusionary correlations in beliefs, and other comportments. Concluding this section, future researchers could also explore the competencies required for leaders to
deal effectively with organizational structure as an essential capability for successful leaders that are currently leading organizations.

**Summary and Conclusion**

The structure of where one does what one does influences the work that happens within. In the academy, a lack of fluidity in the structure that supports the work of scholars can create a culture and a climate with unintended and unexpected attributes. Form and function are intimately related (Ashkenas et al., 2002; Galbraith, 2002).

Based on the research findings described herein, I grappled with the question of whether the contemporary university could adapt to the complex world in which it lives (Christensen & Eyring, 2011). Mobilizing the energies of the academy to achieve the tasks set before it was increasingly difficult when structure prevented flexibility in engagement (Bryan & Joyce, 2007). The questions put to the participants sought to gauge the process of adapting to contemporary conditions in the university structure.

It was a promising sign that there was general agreement regarding the need for such a change. This finding was the precondition to change. Without buy-in from administrative heads and other members of university leadership, it was unlikely that change could or would take place. Still, there were potential roadblocks. The methods described by participants to effect change were not inherently designed to do so; meaning, there was not a design at hand in these universities that was intended to remake the structure. This finding was essential, according to the architect of the theoretical framework of this study and other scholars, who observed that design was the broader, encompassing incorporation of the entirety of an organization that included structure and other essential aspects (Galbraith et al., 2002).
This finding presented the question of whether the bureaucratic experts were correct or if it is the scholars who explored systems, structures, and institutional design and who understood the situation under consideration were correct. Regardless of which side seemed more compelling, a wide range of research questions was prompted by these findings. Knowing where and how people thought about creating more horizontal, creative university administrative systems and exploring the efficacy of those efforts is a critical component of any forward-looking plan for the university system.
References


Appendix A

Interview Guide

**Opening Script:** Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study on how organizational structure affects learning and services in the non-academic department of human resources in your university. My name is Cavil Anderson, and you can reach me at csa140@psu.edu or 717 877 0144 at any time after this interview if you have questions or would like to add anything to your response. Again, this research is for my Ph.D. dissertation and I will be asking you a number of questions and will appreciate your responses. The interview should take between 45 to 60 minutes.

| Name of the University: ________________________________ |
| Interviewee Contact Information: |
| Name: ________________________________ |
| Title: ________________________________ |
| Email: ________________________________ |
| Phone #: ________________________________ |

<p>| Interview Information: |
| Date: ________________________________ |
| Time: ________________________________ |
| Venue: ________________________________ |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>REMARKS/NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How would you describe the strategy of the HR department?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How will you describe the structure (shape &amp; distribution of power) of the HR department and how was it determined?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. What type of collaboration occurs within and across the HR department and what type needs to occur that is not happening?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. How does the HR department’s structure support the coordination of staff sharing knowledge and best practices up and down and across the department?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. What are the most common points of interface and friction between learning and delivering of services and how do you ensure that structural boundaries do not restrict or destroy needed collaboration?</td>
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<td>6. How are business plans made, managed, and priorities identified in the HR department?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. How are decisions made and if there is a need for change during the year, how is it done, in the HR department?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. How are goals set for you and your team/group and what type of performance management occur in the HR department?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. What nonmonetary rewards and recognition are given in addition to compensation in the HR department?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. What advantages and disadvantages result from the current structure in the HR department?</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. What changes have you thought about, if any, that might improve the functioning of the HR department?</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. What will you say are important structural features that contribute to collaborative learning and integrated service delivery in the HR department?</td>
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Field Observation:

______________________________________________________________________________

Follow-up Issues:

______________________________________________________________________________

Closing Script: That concludes my prepared questions. Do you have additional comments you would like to add or any questions for me?

______________________________________________________________________________

I would like to thank you for your time and cooperation.
Appendix B

Document Review Guide

Name of Department/ Unit: __________________________________________________

Document Name: __________________________________________________________

Date of Observation: ______________________________________________________

Times: ________________________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Across</th>
<th>Within</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. How is the non-academic department of human resources structured and what has determine the design</td>
<td>2. What are the organizational features that seems to facilitate</td>
<td>3. What organizational features were most important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy</strong></td>
<td>(e.g. vision, mission, direction),</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td>(e.g. power &amp; authority, reporting relationships)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Lateral Processes  
| (e.g. networks, processes, team, integrative roles) |
| Rewards & Incentives  
| (e.g. goals, values, scorecards) |
| People & Practices  
| (e.g. staffing and selection, performance feedback, learning and development). |
Appendix C
Case Study Protocol

The following protocol was adapted from Yin 2003, p.69.

I. Overview of the case study
   a. The purpose of this study is to examine how organizational structure affects earning and services in the department of human resources in three different types of universities in Central Pennsylvania.

II. Field procedures
   a. Call potential participants from each university.
   b. Introduce and present credentials, explain the purpose and goals of the study, discuss research questions, and advise as to why the participants has been invited to join the study.
   c. The researcher will identify herself as a Penn State Ph.D. student and that the study is being conducted as part of her dissertation.
   d. Explain human subject requirement and attain necessary consent, in writing.
   e. Begin interviewing and document review, using appropriate interview guide.
   f. Answer any question that may arise from participants during interview.
   g. Thank participant for his/her participation in the research.
   h. Ask for permission for further follow-up if necessary.

III. Case Study Questions
   a. For full interview guide, see Appendix A
   b. What should be answered from each regarding the research questions:
Research Questions:

**RQ1**: How is the department of human resources structured to deliver collaborative learning and integrated services and what has determined the design?

**RQ2**: What are the organizational features (strategy, structure, processes and lateral capacity, reward systems and people practices) that seem to facilitate the process of collaborative learning and integrated service in the non-academic department of human resources?

**RQ3**: What organizational features were most important (strategy, structure, processes and lateral capacity, reward systems and people practices)?

IV. Guide for the case study report

a. Context
   1. Background
   2. Description of the current organizational structure

b. Within-case analysis

c. Cross-case analysis
VITA

Cavil S Anderson

Ms. Cavil Anderson earned a master’s degree in Education Management, a four-year diploma in teaching, and two international scholarships in Education Management. Mrs. Anderson is currently enrolled as a fourth-year Workforce Education and Development Ph.D. student at Penn State University. Her most recent research interest is the influence of organizational structure on learning in the workplace. Cavil Anderson is currently the Director of Faculty and Staff Development Institute at Central Pennsylvania’s Community College (HACC) and owner of the Center for Organization and Human Development (COHD). She has directed various school-based, community-funded (USAID and other donors) organization development and change interventions, administered by both departments of education and higher education. Mrs. Anderson directed the program development unit at the Management of Schools Training Program, where she contributed to the development of a national school governance/ethics framework. She was awarded an international scholarship to the Netherlands for outstanding performance. Another career highlight was the acknowledgment of the Kathorus Projects that earned Cavil Anderson a second scholarship to the University of Connecticut. As Project Manager, Mrs. Anderson led a collaborative intervention and developed a quality assurance framework and benchmarked operations in the Center for Course Design and Development at University of South Africa. Mrs. Anderson also served as Training and Development Coordinator at Kutztown University, Kutztown, Pa.