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REFINING THE GOALS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES:
AN EXPLORATORY SINGLE-CASE EMBEDDED STUDY OF A STUDENT-CENTERED
PATH-GOALS SETTING

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Leadership and Professional Studies
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Educational Leadership

By
Tuan Minh Pham
May 2024

REFINING THE GOALS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES:
AN EXPLORATORY SINGLE-CASE EMBEDDED STUDY OF A STUDENT-
CENTERED PATH-GOALS SETTING

Tuan Pham

Date Recommended March 13, 2024

Aaron W. Hughey Digitally signed by Aaron W. Hughey
Date: 2024.03.28 16:48:53 -05'00'

Aaron Hughey, Dissertation Chair

Lester Archer Digitally signed by Lester Archer
Date: 2024.04.01 14:42:10 -05'00'

Lester Archer

Monica Galloway Burke Digitally signed by Monica Galloway
Burke
Date: 2024.04.02 12:35:13 -05'00'

Monica G. Burke

Jennifer Hammonds

Interim Director of the Graduate School

Abstract

The public higher education system in the United States has inherited a multitude of aims and missions in order to fulfill its social and educational objectives. As a result, many higher education institutions suffer from unclear goals. Nevertheless, the researcher identified the student's goal-oriented process as the fundamental aspect of this educational system from its inception until the present. The exploratory single-case embedded study conducted at a regional comprehensive institution highlighted the differences, difficulties, and issues faced by students, administrators, and the institution itself in its pursuit of specific goals in higher education. In-depth interviews were employed to investigate the data obtained from cohorts of undergraduate students ($n = 6$) and administrators ($n = 10$) at the chosen university. By combining an adjustment model of Path-Goal leadership theory with a psychological Goal-Setting theory, the study proposes a clear and data-driven approach to reorganizing student support programs and initiatives within the constraints of limited institutional resources and ambiguous policies. This study aims to advance research on educational leadership within complex systems. The study examines various strategies and programs employed by Institution X using the Student-Goal Setting approach to align these goals with the institution's leadership processes. The results emphasize the significance of transparent communication, encouraging inclusive initiatives, and efficient goal-setting methods in improving the development of students' path goals. Obstacles institutions face include a lack of coordination, imprecise strategic planning, and deficiencies in program implementation and communication strategies. Recommendations include implementing transparent, data-driven strategies that effectively balance student needs and institutional objectives, as well as a possible application of artificial intelligence in higher education system.

DEDICATION

For my parents, Gam Thi Minh Nguyen and Binh Tri Pham, who dedicated their whole lives and dreams to my success. I would not be here without their guidance. They are my true leaders, teachers and caregivers, forever!

For my wife, My Nguyen Yen Bui, who is always pretty and kind. Her questioning of my life and my work helped me wake up from being a daydreamer. She is an authentic philosopher who inspires me to think and to feel.

For all my friends and colleagues whom I have the pleasure to share my ideas and visions with. Our conversations changed our lives forever.

For my advisor and professors at Western Kentucky University who I have worked with over my seven years attending this institution. You are the remarkable part of my life that lives with me everywhere I go.

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I would like to express my appreciation to my lecturer and the committee chair, Dr. Aaron Hughey, for his exemplary leadership and unwavering commitment. Dr. Hughey has been instrumental in supporting me during the completion of my dissertation and the defense process. He consistently provides guidance and information on how to accomplish my research objectives, exemplifying the qualities of an educational leader.

I wanted to take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to Dr. Monica Burke for her invaluable assistance in supporting my research. Her extensive expertise and profound understanding of higher education and student affairs are key components of my overall composition.

Enrolling at WKU has been a transformative experience for me. It goes beyond the acquisition of credentials, titles, or skills. It has offered me the chance to shape my own path and cultivate a mindset that is independent and receptive to new ideas. My journey does not conclude upon graduating from WKU, but I will always value my time here. It began at this point, precisely when we commence contemplating our own lives and those of others, both consciously and emotionally. I desire to ensure that all individuals involved in the higher education system are well-informed

The authors would like to thank ChatGPT for providing thoughtful responses to our interview questions.

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PATH-GOALS SETTING

Your Name Tuan Minh Pham Date 4/1/24

Pages 196

Directed by: Aaron Hughey, Lester Archer, Monica G. Burke

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Western Kentucky University

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The traditional goal of higher education, as stated by the American Council on Education (1949), is to prepare students for public service, democratic participation, citizenship, and personal growth (Kezar, 2004; Lambert & Callan, 2014). Rising costs, shifting expectations of what colleges and universities should provide, and complex social changes that have made it difficult for college graduates to find employment are some of the most significant challenges facing higher education in the United States today. This study proposes an approach to student-centered research in which institutions of higher education recall their prioritized goals of serving students by encouraging students to modify and adapt their goals in ways that will affect how they learn and experience college. The literature review will demonstrate how the goals of American higher education have evolved from its inception to the beginning of the 21st century. Using a combination of Goal-Setting theory and Path-Goal theory, the study will also provide a systematic perspective on the gap between institutional and student Goal-Setting. By applying the triangle data collection method to students, administrators, and institutional resources of the case study, I investigated the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the goals of higher education, their institutional path goals, and how to promote student success.

Statement of the Problem

Significant financial issues influence the experience of attending a public college and the number of students who enroll. According to the College Board, the average advertised tuition and fees for a public two-year college increased from an average of \$2,340 in 1992–1993 to \$3,860 in 2022–23, while tuition increased from an average of \$4,870 to \$10,940 for a public four-year institution. In 2020–2021, 54% of bachelor's degree recipients from public and private

nonprofit four-year colleges and universities graduated with an average debt of \$29,100 (Ma & Matea, 2022). In addition, after reaching a peak in the fall of 2011, enrollment in public higher education has decreased by nearly 2 million (10%) and reached 18.9 million in the fall of 2020. As a result of state budget cuts and declining enrollment, faculty positions have been eliminated, course options have been cut, campuses have been closed, and student services have been reduced (Dynarski et al., 2013; Heller, 1997). In addition to economic pressure and the threat to the student experience in higher education, school leaders faced the challenge of adapting to shifting market-oriented values in order to remain competitive (Gumport, 2000; Kerr et al., 1993; Thompson, 2014). Due to this contentious adaptation process (Bylsma, 2015), universities are focusing more on transactional connections with students rather than student's transformative potential. The privatization, commercialization, and corporatization of higher education systems have altered these institutions' traditional goals and objectives (Kezar, 2004; Lambert & Callan, 2014). Universities must produce the new knowledge, skills, and ethical responsibilities required by the current market in order to meet the future needs of both domestic and international societies (Spellings Commission, 2006). Universities therefore feel compelled to prioritize private gain over the public good, while attempting to uphold their founding principles and purposes. These systemic issues are frequently intricate and multifaceted, and resolving them may necessitate the collaboration of multiple parties over an extended period of time.

According to Lattuca and Stark (2009), the complexity of higher education institutions results in many stakeholders, each with their own interests and goals, making it difficult to address systemic issues thoroughly. Even though students are the most vulnerable population affected by these issues, changes to higher education in recent decades have led to an absence of a student-focused and student-supportive change leadership approach. Kezar and Maxey (2014)

emphasize the significance of collaborative leadership in fostering change, as well as the central roles of university leaders and faculties. Bensimon et al. (2012) used the same groups of stakeholders to investigate the role of leadership in promoting equity and inclusion in higher education. De Wit and Deca (2020) investigated the effect of globalization on diversity, intercultural learning, and innovation. The absence of student leadership in change and student-centered solutions is the primary gap in this topic that requires further research.

Purpose of the Study

American higher education systems are dealing with more complicated social and economic effects that put institutions, and their stakeholders—students, teachers, administrators, and affiliated businesses— in a precarious and challenging position with limited options (Walcott et al, 2018). In light of this, a review of the literature on postsecondary education is necessary to gain a better understanding of the organizational and individual factors that contribute to positive educational outcomes. It is crucial to consider the economic and non-economic benefits of higher education, as well as the human capital theory, to convince students and administrators to change their perspective on education (Ford et al., 2021). Students may find it difficult to manage the chaotic and complex nature of the current learning environment, which frequently hinders their ability to attain the desired outcomes. Using the Path-Goal Theory with Goal-Setting Mix, a leadership approach that has been extensively studied in the literature, school administrators can assist students in revising their goals and constructing a logical path to success that meets their needs. With the use of this model, administrators may better grasp the difficulties that their students are having and create focused plans for resolving them and offering helpful support. The purpose of this study is to conduct an exploratory case study using a higher education institution with differing perspectives and expectations regarding its goals among

students and administrators. The study examines institutional support in goal-setting and pathway development processes. This study aims to highlight the importance of goal-setting in student development, explore the role of institutional leaders in developing the goal-achieving process, and evaluate how this process can contribute to student success.

Research Questions

Establishing research questions is crucial for gaining focus and direction for any empirical study. According to McLeod (2013) and Tilley et al. (2015), exploratory case study research can make use of four distinct types of research questions: outcome questions, theory-building questions, pragmatic questions, and experiential or narrative questions. These categories can be refined further through the formulation of research questions and the identification of the study's limitations.

RQ1: What are the goals of public post-secondary education in the United States from the standpoint of student at one regional comprehensive institution in the American Midwest?

RQ2: How do students and administrator's at this institution understand their student-centered educational goals and the path to achieve them?

RQ3: What obstacles do these students face in achieving their educational objectives?

RQ4: What initiatives can the institution, leaders, and students take to better align the goals toward student's standpoint?

General Methodology

Institution X, a pseudonym for a regional comprehensive institution in the midwestern United States, is the subject of this exploratory single-case embedded study (Yin, 2014). This exploratory study involved the collection of data relating to the perspectives, understandings, and

challenges students and administrators face when determining their institutional work objectives. Using information gathered from students and administrators, the present study employed a single-case embedded design to scout its specific environment. To ensure data accuracy and reduce research bias, the study also examines the institution's statistical report and publicly available information. In-depth interviews were conducted with university administrators and groups of undergraduate students as part of a qualitative approach to data collection. In chapter two, the study provides a comprehensive review of the relevant literature to investigate the history, evolution, and debate surrounding the mission, goals, and objectives of public higher education. Peričić and Tanveer (2019) emphasized the need for systematic review in the expansion of research in order to evaluate and compile all relevant empirical evidence for a comprehensive interpretation of study findings.

Significance of the Study

Numerous discussions in higher education focused on modifying the new agreements between education and society about innovative learning, teaching methods, and market-responsive curriculums. However, the current reality is that after four years and an average of \$30,000 in debt, many students leave college desiring a more beneficial educational experience. Why would they incur such a cost? With a complex system and environment that will require more time to alter, this author argues that students must assume responsibility for their own education and pursue their goals. Students must be taught how to acquire knowledge, seek out information, and identify resources necessary for their economic flourishing. Students must realize that postsecondary education is neither a guarantee of professional success nor a ticket to a higher social status. When students understand the missions and goals of higher education, they will recognize the necessity of becoming lifelong learners and dedicated public servants, a need

that cannot be eliminated due to labor market demands. Public colleges must place a high priority on the needs of students and their capacity to accomplish long-term goals.

Nevertheless, the ongoing discourse surrounding postsecondary education persists, encompassing inquiries into the optimal curriculum for students and strategies to effectively address the requirements of various stakeholders, including legislators, administrators, educators, and communities, which have been the subject of debate for decades (Bok, 2015). Complexity of the system makes it difficult for students to navigate public universities without assistance (Tinto, 2012). The study recalls the importance of student support services in fostering student achievement has been demonstrated by systematic research and literature (Kurtz & DiRamio, 2015). Students can prepare for life after college with the assistance of student success programs, career readiness classes, and networking services, but they may be unsure of which ones to utilize (Kuh & Schneider, 2008).

Leadership is more crucial than ever before. It is imperative for school administrators to provide assistance to students in establishing realistic objectives, addressing their apprehensions, and attaining success (Astin, 1999). Administrators are authorized to consult on both individual student goals and organizational objectives to ensure cohesion among collective efforts (Burton et al., 2023). These results demonstrate that through the administrators' intervention, public universities can prioritize the needs of students and provide leadership and support services to ensure student success. They may contribute to the success of their students, organizations, and communities by taking this action. The Path-Goal theory is an open-range model that can apply from institutional management to self-disciplinary. In addition, the emergence of high-performance individuals with well-defined goals and self-discipline is a coordinated instance of

the success model in human development. Through the application and comprehension of Path-Goal theory, one can successfully plan for a better future and navigate complexity. In addition, Latham and Locke (2006) emphasized the "high internal and external validity" of the goal-setting theory. Goal-setting effects have been had been discovered in over 88 distinct tasks involving over 40,000 male and female participants from Asia, Australia, Europe, and North America since 1990. Individual, group, and organizational unit effects have been observed over duration ranging from one minute to twenty-five years. Effective goals can originate from external sources, group decisions, or the individual. To solve its complex problems and protect students from chaos, the higher education system must implement these phenomenon theories.

Delimitations

This study concentrates on public universities in the United States that have suffered greatly as a result of state budget cuts and low enrollment. The system of public universities must also take time to alter its structure and continue to battle with adapting its program and procedures to fit the needs of target groups. The institution studied is a comprehensive regional university whose primary mission is to provide extensive education to the local populace. As a result of the fluctuating nature of research financing and the intricate dynamics between grant givers (whether corporate or noncorporate), this analysis does not encompass research universities. The study instead focuses on the undergraduate students with the highest proportions of student debt, dropout rate, and unemployment. Administrators of universities are another category of interest in this study. School policy decision-making and implementation would be influenced by the administrators' perspectives. The model of Path-Goal theory would emphasize the leader's action toward the goals, whereas goal-setting theory would emphasize the process of goal generation in students. This study also tracks additional environmental context

and organizational culture variables. The leaders of a school do not include policymakers and other administrators unrelated to student performance and experience. Faculty and staff of the institution are excluded in the study.

Limitations

The study investigates the concepts and theories underlying the goal and purpose of higher education, with an emphasis on the perspectives and case studies of public universities. The discussion does not include research-intensive institutions, community colleges, flagship institutions or private universities. Additionally, graduate students are excluded from the scope of this study. This study's theoretical foundation draws on Path-Goal Theory, which focuses on the dynamic interactions and strategies between leaders and followers and their pursuit of goals. The Goal-Setting theory is based on psychological methods. Other factors, such as political dynamics, economic pressures, and organizational culture, are not considered leadership elements. To prevent misrepresentation of the research findings, the model excludes policymakers, faculty, staff, and community leaders, and does not explore other leadership theories and techniques. The case study is restricted to a comprehensive regional institution in the Midwest, and the data collection will be based on published information from 2018 to 2023 as well as the experiences of undergraduate students enrolled in the institution in Fall 2023.

Definitions

Administrator / Postsecondary Education Administrator: The U.S. Bureau of Labor defines postsecondary education administrator as the position responsible for overseeing college and university student services, academics, and faculty research. This may involve managing departments, supervising employees, developing and implementing policies and procedures, and

servicing as a liaison between the institution and various stakeholders, such as students, faculty, and the community (Paulsen, 2016). An administrator in student success works to support and improve the educational experiences and outcomes of college students (Kuh et al., 2010). This can include developing and implementing programs, services, and initiatives aimed at boosting student retention, graduation rates, and overall academic success. An administrator in the area of student success may also be responsible for collaborating with faculty, staff, and other stakeholders to develop and implement effective student support strategies (Miller, 2023). This work seeks to ensure that students have the necessary resources and support to succeed in their academic endeavors and realize their full potential.

Goals: The definition of "Goal" provided by Merriam-Webster is the same as that of "Aim"; it refers to the end toward which efforts are directed. Its first recorded use was in 1531 (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), and its etymology is related to the Middle English word *gol* (boundary, limit). This term is defined in the study by the general understanding of social sciences as “the object or aim of an action to attain a specific standard of proficiency, usually within a specified time limit.” (Locke & Latham, 2002, p. 705).

Leadership: According to Northouse (2019), leadership is "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal". It is a process of motivation, influence, and guidance which is used to help the group to achieve its goals. Leadership term in this study will involve the practice of setting direction and providing the necessary resources, guidance, and support of the administrators to the students to achieve their goals.

Path-Goal Theory/path-goal concept: The leadership theory known as Path-Goal Theory was formulated by Robert J. House in 1971 (House, 1971). House (1996) proposed a theoretical framework that illustrates the relationship between leadership behaviors and followers' views of

the extent to which adhering to a specific behavior (path) will result in a given outcome (goal). In addition to the theoretical definition, I would like to employ an extensive understanding of path as a specific process inside a restricted timeframe, and goal as the objective or accomplishment to be attained within a specific timeframe.

Purposes of Organization: Sociology, psychology, economics, and leadership are just a few of the disciplines that study the idea of purpose in organizations. In sociology, Max Weber defined organizations as structured groups that have a planned and systematic approach to achieve specific goals (Weber et al., 1997). In leadership, Peter Northouse describes the purpose of an organization as its reason for existence, its aspirations, and the values it aims to uphold (Northouse, 2019). In this study, purpose is a long-term, broad concept that defines what an organization aims to achieve, while goals are specific and measurable targets that are set to achieve the purpose. Leaders play a crucial role in shaping the purpose of an organization by communicating the vision and mission, engaging subordinates, and aligning their efforts to achieve the goals.

Regional Comprehensive Institution: Regional comprehensive institutions are typically characterized as public, comprehensive four-year colleges and universities that serve the majority (nearly 70%) of undergraduate students enrolled in public institutions in the United States (Schneider & Deane, 2015). They differ from research-intensive institutions, community colleges, and flagship institutions (Fryar, 2015). Regional comprehensive institutions typically offer limited graduate programs and can range in size from less than one thousand to more than forty thousand students, according to studies (Schneider & Deane, 2015). Regional comprehensive education in the Midwest of the United States is used as a case study, Institution X, due to the availability of a public document that defines it.

Student Success: According to Nazerian (2018), student success in higher education institutions encompass multiple aspects of a student's journey, beginning with enrollment and extending beyond graduation. The author emphasizes that institutions have a duty to assist students in three crucial areas: education, finances, and career development. A student's major, course of study, and extracurricular activities should all be included in his or her educational plan. A financial plan is essential for ensuring that students can fully fund their education and avoid dropping out due to financial difficulties. A career plan should also provide students with resources for career counseling and post-graduation employment opportunities. This research defines student success as the accomplishment of educational, professional, and personal goals.

The Public University in the United States: The U.S. Department of Education does not have a specific definition of public universities. The Department considers a public university to be publicly funded and operated as a governmental entity, including institutions that are part of a state university system or independently governed and funded by the state. The mission, history, and student body of the institution may also be considered in defining what constitutes a public university (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) is used by the Department of Education to collect and analyze data on colleges and universities in the United States. IPEDS categorizes institutions based on a variety of factors, including degree level offered, control (public, private non-profit, private for-profit), and size (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022).

Summary

Public colleges and universities are currently confronting a staggering number of issues and challenges. A human capital approach that focuses on how to improve student collective outcomes may be an innovative solution to these issues. This study's objective is to determine

how administrators can better comprehend their student population and devise strategies to boost student achievement. The Path-Goal theory, a leadership strategy that emphasizes goal-setting and the process of achieving them, satisfies the requirements of a doctoral program that produces "scholarly practitioners." This strategy has the potential to address the complex issues currently confronting higher education. (Carnegie Project on the PhD in Education, n.d.). The following chapter will examine the influence of the socioeconomic environment and unclear leadership in higher education on student goal orientation. Additionally, it will investigate the perplexity of the institution and its administrators amidst this state of instability.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter provides a historical analysis of the founding principles and goals of public higher education in the United States since the 17th century. In order to provide a general understanding of institutional objectives, the chapter includes a review of scholarly articles and publications concerning the goals and purposes of higher education. The review also examines the history of goal-setting research in psychology, sociology and Path-Goals theories in leadership studies in order to construct a logical model of student-institution goals. This chapter begins by looking at the original reason for the establishment of public higher education in the United States, dating back to the 17th century. It then explores the evolution of educational practices, which transitioned from a focus on societal conformity and leadership-centered approaches to a more student-centric model of support. In the middle of these adjustments, the public university finds itself bound in a debate about its goals, which also presents an orientation problem to its students. This chapter also examines goal-setting applications in higher education, with a limited examination of empirical evidence focused solely on academic accomplishment. This study presents a conceptual framework that incorporates the psychology theory of Goal-Setting and the leadership theory of Path-Goal theory. The researcher intends to employ these theories to assist students in navigating public higher education today.

The Original Goals of Public Higher Education

The origins of higher education in the United States can be traced back to 1636, when Harvard College was founded (Geiger, 2016). The initial goal of Harvard was to educate Puritan clergy and municipal officials in the settlement of Massachusetts Bay colony. No other colleges

were formed in the colonies until the mid-18th century after Anglicans founded William and Mary in 1693 and Congregationalists founded Yale in 1701. In 1746, the College of New Jersey (later Princeton) was founded and by 1788, 18 degree-granting universities existed in the U.S. The primary purpose of these institutions, which adhered to denominational philosophies, was the education of pastors. In addition to religious goals, these schools promoted the education and literacy of Christian gentlemen. At the time, the primary purpose of the most universities in the United States was to instruct an elite group of young men in learned professions and societal leadership roles (Bok, 2015). John Witherspoon, who redesigned the curriculum at Princeton to include more Scottish philosophy and works by Hobbes, Locke, and Montesquieu in history and politics, was largely responsible for the development of higher education goals during the middle of the eighteenth century (Bow, 2012). Harvard University was the first institution to implement the enhanced model, which included a higher level of scientific education in the college and more study options for students (Castel, 1964). Until the late 18th century, American faculties and libraries were considerably smaller than their European counterparts. Many founders were concerned about the success of delivering civic education to future American leaders due to this lack of interest in the domestic system and the fear that American children would seek a better education abroad (Thomas, 2017).

Thomas Jefferson advocated for public funding and oversight of colleges in 1779 in order to equip future American guardians of rights and liberties with science and virtue (Peterson, 1984). Jefferson believed that more responsive management and a more stable financial foundation would enhance the institution's capacity to truly benefit society. In *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1784-1785), Thomas Jefferson stressed the significance of liberty in education as a means to achieve independence from oppressive rulers and irrational beliefs, the freedom to act

in accordance with one's own beliefs, and an unencumbered intellect. He intended for public universities to promote freedom of thought by offering instruction in as many subjects as possible at a high level, particularly in the rapidly evolving modern sciences. Last but not least, the public university would unite these public and private functions by emphasizing the knowledge in every field that was manifestly most advantageous for the conduct of daily business and the advancement of society. Jefferson's ideas about universities also included teachers and students being free to speak to the government and their religions, teaching staff with strong qualifications and generous salary, but the public university's budget problem (Jefferson, 1998). Colleges were formed in the United States during the colonial period (1636-1787) for two main purposes: the settlers' aspiration for independence and the Protestant and Anglicanism's desire to separate their educational institutions from Catholicism (Turpin, 2019).

Throughout the middle to late 19th century, numerous American colleges transitioned into universities by adding graduate programs and professional schools to their curriculums (Rudolph, 1990). This change was precipitated by expanding economic and social developments, which necessitated a shift toward a more practical and utilitarian education. However, the Yale Report of 1828 was a significant voice in highlighting two major aspects of intellectual culture in American higher education: mental discipline and the provision of information to the mind (Yale College, 1828). This paper argued that a combination of mathematics, physics, ancient and contemporary literature, logic, and mental philosophy is necessary to develop a well-rounded brain capable of approaching any challenge with discernment and judgment. When Harvard President Charles W. Eliot ascended to power in 1869, the top American colleges became universities of international renown (Rudolph, 1990). Students began to have unrestricted access to a rapidly expanding selection of specialized courses taught by an increasingly engaged faculty

in original research. Eliot eliminated Latin and Greek requirements for undergraduates and established a standard among American colleges for teaching the highest level of all sciences. During their college years, young men were expected to develop a strong moral character and hone their social skills (Delbanco, 2012). College was viewed as an opportunity for students to develop self-discipline, maturity, and independence, and to participate in activities such as sports, debate, and religious organizations (Kisker & Cohen, 2024; Rudolph, 1990).

According to Kisker and Cohen (2024), from the 19th to the 20th century, American colleges and universities adapted to new intellectual, cultural, and economic trends and became more complex and diverse. Colleges and universities responded to progressive movements and the emergence of new scientific fields in the early 20th century (Geiger, 2016; Rudolph, 1990). During the middle to late 20th century, the total number of colleges and universities, as well as enrollment, increased dramatically. In response to advancements in fields such as technology, the sciences, and the humanities, these institutions also became more specialized, with the establishment of new academic programs and departments (Kisker & Cohen, 2024). Through liberal arts education, critical thinking, and independent study, students were encouraged to pursue intellectual and personal development. Students were also encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities and community service to foster a sense of citizenship and social responsibility (Rudolph, 1990).

The Significant Socioeconomic Dilemma from the 20th century

Brennan et al. (2013) identified two responsibilities of American higher education: meeting market demand and providing non-economic benefit to society. Numerous studies (Avery & Turner, 2012; McArthur, 2011) have evaluated the major "economic benefits" of

obtaining a college degree from the standpoint of human capital theory (public and private/personal benefits): Bachelor's degree attainment is still advantageous for the nation's economy, and college attendance is advantageous for the economic competitiveness of society (Delbanco, 2012). People with a bachelor's degree are twice as likely to earn more money, live healthier lives, and contribute to the socioeconomic well-being of society as compared to those with a high school diploma (Hout, 2012). The completion of a bachelor's degree program grants access to these economic and social benefits (Zaback et al., 2012).

However, Liu et al. (2012) warned that many college students "drift through college without a strong sense of purpose" (p. 353). Many postsecondary institutions lack clear definitions of non-cognitive skills and which non-cognitive characteristics (e.g., socio-emotional and affective skills) are most important for career and workforce readiness (Savitz-Romer & Rowan-Kenyon, 2020). In addition, from many perspectives, higher education is not merely about obtaining discipline-specific competences or practical skills, which means that universities and employers may champion distinct and sometimes conflicting goals for higher education (Craig, 2015). Baker et al. (2012) hypothesized that the gap between higher education providers and undergraduate students is likely due to ongoing curriculum changes in the United States, where colleges and universities are diversifying curriculum and investing in new vocational and professional degree programs. The inclination of educational institutions to pursue diverse objectives has resulted in the emergence of conflicts among various parties involved in universities, characterized by a decreasing emphasis on intellectual and cultural aspects and a growing tendency to emulate business and commercial enterprises (Barber et al., 2013). However, this transformation may have negative consequences for the original societal and individual objectives of higher education (Edmundson, 2014).

Student Goals and their Obstacles in Higher Education

According to the Yale Report of 1828, the primary purpose of undergraduate education is to develop "the discipline and equipment of the intellect" and to "lay the foundation for a superior education" (p. 7). Recent research indicates, however, that student expectations and goals have shifted. Students are now more motivated to attend college by personal and social growth in addition to financial and instrumental goals (Blumenstyk, 2015). McMahon and Oketch (2013) argue that students view higher education as a path to employment and economic success. In addition to employment, money, and family, qualitative studies have examined various motivations for obtaining a bachelor's degree, such as self-improvement, achieving life goals, and contributing to society (Kennett et al., 2011). Barber et al. (2013) also found that the "college experience" is the primary reason for attending college.

According to The State of Higher Education 2022 Report (Gallup, 2023), the majority of currently enrolled students are pursuing their degrees to increase their knowledge, purpose, and pay: 65% say acquiring knowledge and skills is an important reason, 61% say it will allow them to pursue a more fulfilling career, and 60% say it will help them obtain a higher-paying job. However, the report was also concerned about the fact that roughly one-third (32%) of students currently enrolled in a bachelor's degree program reported having considered dropping out within the previous six months, a proportion similar to that of 2020 (32%). The majority (71%) of bachelor's and associate degree students who reported they have considered dropping out in the past six months said that emotional stress was among the most significant reasons. Just behind the cost of attendance, which received 31% of the mentions, the pandemic came in second place (Gallup, 2023) in terms of factors affecting students' ability to remain enrolled. Furthermore, compared to 2020, emotional stress was far more frequently mentioned as drop-out

reason in 2021. In 2020, 42% of bachelor's degree-seeking students cited emotional stress as a reason they were considering dropping out; in 2021, this percentage increased to 76%. In 2020, University of Michigan researchers discovered that 39% of college students suffered from depression and 34% suffered from anxiety (Healthy Minds Network, 2022). These statistics may indicate that students have educational goals but struggle to maintain them in the face of substantial mental challenges, or that they do not extend their goals to more holistic criteria.

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey 2019 at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) revealed changes in college-bound students' decisions and expectations. These findings are based on 95,505 first-year, full-time (FTFT) students enrolling in 148 baccalaureate institutions, which is representative of the more than 1.5 million FTFT undergraduate students who began college in the fall of 2019 at 1,427 four-year colleges and universities in the United States (CIRP Freshman Survey, 2020). In the 2019 survey, 66% of first-year college students indicated that the current economic climate had a significant impact on their decision to enroll in college. The survey revealed that while students still viewed their own learning (learning interesting things and gaining general education) and future career opportunities (to get a better job and to get training for a specific career) as the most important reasons to attend college, the percentage of students expecting to "get a better job" decreased to 82% (CIRP Freshman Survey, 2020). In 2021, CIRP surveyed 2,441 full-time, first-year students from nine US colleges and universities for its Your First College Year Survey (YFCY). In the past year, a large proportion of student respondents (81.8%) felt that their mental health was at least somewhat responsible for their stress (CIRP YFCY, 2022). Approximately three-quarters of students (74.8%) indicated that the health of loved ones was at least somewhat stressful. About one-third of students (33.4%) reported feeling at least occasionally stressed due to the

interference of their job responsibilities with their schoolwork. In addition, 74.4% of students reported that social isolation was at least somewhat stressful. In addition, the 2021 survey revealed that many students are unable to accurately self-evaluate their emotional health and rarely seek out psychological services at their schools (CIRP YFCY, 2022).

In addition to emotional health and mental issues, the YFCY 2021 survey uncovered a variety of institutional and social barriers that prevent students from thriving at college. Most survey respondents—64.1%—said they found it somewhat or very difficult to form close friendships with their peers. Nearly half of students (49.6%) still found it somewhat or very difficult to adjust to the academic demands of college, despite many students (72.3%) found it somewhat or very easy to understand what their professors expected of them academically. Furthermore, students have high expectations for their study and time management skills; 55.7% of them said it was somewhat or very difficult to develop effective study skills, and 61.1% said the same about effective time management skills (CIRP YFCY, 2022).

Students must also confront contextual challenges in addition to personal and institutional obstacles. According to Mettler (2014), traditional college students face enormous social and economic pressures upon entering higher education. The economic inequality and unemployment gap between those with and without a bachelor's degree have widened in recent years, prompting students to consider higher education as a source of future employment (Pew Charitable Trust, 2012). According to a survey conducted by Astin et al. (2011), 94% of first-year students expect their institutions to have a significant impact on their preparation for work, while 81% anticipate the same for graduate school or other advanced studies. Consequently, college students in the twenty-first century frequently view higher education as an opportunity to acquire economic and social benefits, such as increased employment and earning potential, in addition to knowledge

and competence in a discipline or professional area. Coates and Morrison (2016) cautioned that the 21st century has witnessed a shift in the motivations and expectations of college students, with a focus on deeper learning, labor-market-valued credentials, work experience, and civic engagement opportunities, as opposed to relying solely on a college degree for future success.

Goal-Setting Application in Higher Education

According to Miller and Weiss (2015), engaging in goal-setting activities may greatly enhance students' intuitive comprehension of their objectives in the education. Post-tests revealed considerable progress of enhancing goal-setting ability, and students reported finding the practice both challenging and helpful. In a different study, Cheng et al. (2019) discovered that the integration of digital badges successfully enhances the goal-setting process of students in a 16-week hybrid course, leading to improved self-regulated learning in higher education.

Yusuff (2018) investigated the influence of self-created academic objectives and study schedules on the academic achievement and sense of learning among pharmacy students in Saudi Arabia. The findings indicated that the implementation of individualized Goal-Setting and study planning led to enhanced engagement, increased emphasis on academic objectives, and better academic achievement within the research cohort. Clements and Kamau (2017) investigated the impact of motivational processes on a sample of undergraduate students in the United Kingdom. They discovered that students who have a higher inclination towards achieving their objectives are more likely to regard themselves as employable. This perception is influenced by their development of skills and networks, which in turn, encourages them to set ambitious career goals. Forsythe and Jellicoe (2018) examined a cohort of second-year psychology undergraduates from the United Kingdom. They proposed that self-regulatory behaviors, such as mastery approach

(pursue to high level of understanding in a given domain) and goal orientations (action toward given goal), play a crucial role in facilitating behavioral change. Additionally, they suggested that measures of productive learning could be implemented to operationalize these behaviors. In their study, Hematian et al. (2016) investigated the influence of Goal-Setting on self-directed learning, achievement motivation, and academic accomplishment among secondary school students in Iran. They discovered that training had a substantial positive effect on these characteristics; however, it did not lead to improvements in academic performance. Weber (2022) used a digital study assistant called Digital Study Assistants (DSA) at Bremen, Hannover, and Osnabrück universities in Germany. The research revealed that 70% of students favored using DSA for defining educational goals; however, only 3.4% successfully completed the whole intervention..

Conceptual Framework

According to Varpio et al. (2020), the conceptual framework serves as the rationale for doing a particular investigation. The conceptual framework serves three main purposes: (1) it provides an overview of existing knowledge, often via a survey of relevant literature; (2) it indicates areas where our understanding of a phenomena or issue is lacking; and (3) it establishes the methodological foundations of the research endeavor. The purpose of this research is twofold: to explain the significance of the study and to identify the potential additions that the results may make to existing knowledge (Maxwell, 2023).

Goal-Setting Theory

Throughout the history of social science, goals and purposes have been a recurring theme. Aristotle is widely regarded as the first true psychologist, as his writings make clear reference to the goal-directed aspect of human behavior (Elliot, 2005). Throughout the latter half of the 19th century and (very) early 20th century, goals remained on the periphery of psychological literature; when goal-relevant phrases did appear, some researchers introduced terms *end*, or occasionally *aim* or *object* (Pervin, 2015). In the 1930s, the goal concept matured in psychological literature. As a scientific term to describe or explain psychological processes, researchers employed *goal* as the preferred term. In the 1940s and early 1960s, systems of communication and control theories toward goal-directed behavior emerged.

In psychological research, there are three primary types of Goal-Setting (Elliot & McGregor, 2001; Locke, 1968; Locke & Latham, 1991): (1) Achievement goals: individuals frequently focus their attention on events that measure their level of expertise. Competence is defined in this context by a person's success criteria, which may include absolute, intrapersonal, and interpersonal criteria. (2) Social goals: Individuals may pursue social-approach goals, such as creating relationships, or social-avoidance goals, such as not interfering with others' private affairs. Lastly, there are (3) Personal goals: which include adopting targets with personal significance on purpose. They may involve personal endeavors, aspirations, future selves, and present concerns, and may be linked to approach or avoidance goals.

Goal-setting is a crucial strategy for enhancing motivation, organizational commitment, and performance in management, organization, and leadership theories. Locke and Latham (1984) argued that conscious goals have a direct impact on behavior and are an important predictor of a person's intentional actions. According to research on Goal-Setting, the degree of anticipated

success (goal) is related to the level of actual achievement (performance) (Locke & Latham, 1990). Moreover, Goal-Setting has been demonstrated to increase motivation and organizational commitment (Latham, 2012). The significance and difficulty of a goal may motivate us to work harder to attain it, resulting in greater achievement and more positive emotions. In addition, Goal-Setting encourages individuals to seek out inventive means of achieving their objectives (Schunk, 1985).

Locke and Latham (1990) proposed five guiding principles for effective goal achievement: (1) **Commitment** is the degree to which a person is attached to a goal and motivated to achieve it in spite of probable impediments. This dedication is enhanced when the objective becomes more challenging. Latham and Locke (2006) discovered that when a person realizes their performance is inadequate, they are more inclined to increase their effort or alter their strategy in order to reach their objective. According to Miner (2005), the perceived desirability and attainability of a goal might affect commitment levels. To be successful, one must have both a strong desire for the objective and a thorough understanding of what is necessary to achieve it. (2) In addition, Arvey et al. (1976) discovered that goal **clarity** is favorably associated with overall motivation and job satisfaction. Hence, goals should be established with implicit, obvious, and unambiguous parameters that can be measured (Latham & Locke, 2006). With a distinct objective in sight, a person has a greater comprehension of the work at hand, and the subsequent achievement provides further drive (Miner, 2005). (3) **Challenging** goals can enhance performance by promoting self-satisfaction and inspiring individuals to discover solutions to realize their maximum potential (Locke & Latham, 1990). On the other side, if we attempt to reach goals that are beyond our capabilities, we may experience disappointment and frustration. Zimmerman et al. (1996) discovered that individuals

are more likely to be motivated to accomplish tasks if they perceive the objective to be difficult yet achievable. (4) **Complexity**: According to Miner (2005), unnecessarily difficult tasks might neutralize the impacts of goal-setting and lead to decreased morale, productivity, and motivation. It is essential to ensure that the timeframe for the objective is reasonable so that there is ample time to work towards it and reevaluate the complexity of the activity. (5) Finally, goal planning is more effective when immediate **feedback** is included (Erez, 1977). This input, including internal feedback, is required to measure the degree to which a target is being accomplished and progress is being made (Zimmerman, 2008). If performance does not match the requisite standard to achieve a goal, feedback enables introspection and the establishment of more attainable objectives. Yet, when input is delayed, it can inhibit progress and slow the rate of learning (Zimmerman, 2008). When progress towards a goal is deemed good, it can lead to a rise in self-efficacy and the pursuit of more difficult objectives in the future. (Erez, 1977; Zimmerman, 2008).

The Goals of U.S. Public Education from a Student-Goals Perspective

Based on the Goal-Setting approach and the literature of public higher education in the United States from the middle of the 17th century to the beginning of the 21st century, Table 1.1 illustrates the evolution of institutional goals and Table 1.2 illustrates the current student’s perception of goals toward higher education program.

Table 1.1

The Transformation of Institutional Goals

Timeline	Achievement Goals	Social Goals	Personal Goals
Mid-17th to Early 18th	Christianity, Literature, and Education	Leadership in society Social mobility	Christian gentlemen

	Clergymen-readiness	Serve society and social demands.	
Mid-18th to Early 19th	Universal knowledge (Theology, Philosophy, Science, Classical Liberal Arts) rather than vocational training Classical profession (law, medicine, teaching)	Guardian of the rights and liberties For political rights, business life, social prosperity	Future American statesmen Free conscience, unshackled mind Intellectual power Emotional, interpersonal, and ethical abilities.
Mid-19th to Early 20th	Classical education and utilitarian education Career readiness for the classical and modern profession	Adapt social changes and the growing economy. Social skills Sense of citizenship and social responsibility	Discipline and furniture the mind and expand knowledge powers. Moral character Intellectual and personal growth
Mid-20th to Early 21st	Career and workforce readiness Multiple goals of vocational training and in-depth learning	Contribute to socioeconomic well-being. Social impact Prepare for twenty-first-century citizenship	Highly skilled workers Full-rounded, intellectually sophisticated, and caring individuals.

Table 1.2

The of Student's Perception of Goals in Higher Education

Timeline	Achievement Goals	Social Goals	Personal Goals
Present	Knowledge and skills Labor-market-valued credentials Better job/career advancement	Societal contribution, community impacts Political and civic engagement	Self-improvement (feel secure, grown-ups, seek intimacy) Fulfillment career Achieve life-goals

Goal Setting's Effects on Well-Being and Motivation

Goal-setting and planning have been linked to greater subjective well-being (MacLeod et al., 2008). Positively imagining the future enhances a person's capacity to set objectives and take the required steps to accomplish them. This, in turn, enhances the perception of control over desired outcomes (Vincent et al., 2004). In addition, goal setting and achievement can lead to the development of an internal locus of control (Moeller et al., 2012), which is the belief that an individual's success is the result of his or her own actions and abilities. The accomplishment and significance of goals are significant indicators of success and happiness. Research shows that a lack of goal accomplishment in one's personal life was associated with a higher level of general happiness when the individual saw goal advancement at work. In other words, success in one area can offset failure in another (Wiese & Freund, 2005).

Goals benefit from motivation, and vice versa. According to Kleinginna and Kleinginna (1981), motivation is the desire that propels and directs goal-directed behavior. Locke (1996) found that when goals are ambiguous, they are compatible with a variety of outcomes, including those that fall below an individual's capabilities. Individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to set and commit to ambitious goals, whereas those with low self-confidence tend to lower their objectives and minimize future efforts (Locke, 1996). The significance of social effects on goal selection decreases as task-specific knowledge increases (Klein et al., 2008). Moreover, Latham and Locke (1979) found that setting goals is a more effective motivator than monetary rewards alone. The acts that result from goal-directed behavior are correlated with three characteristics: self-generation, value significance, and goal causation (Latham & Locke, 1979).

Path-Goal Theory in Leadership

According to Northouse (2019), Path-Goal Theory is a leadership philosophy that seeks to enhance the performance and satisfaction of followers by focusing on their motivation. In contrast to the Situational Approach and the Contingency Theory, Path-Goal Theory focuses on the relationship between the leader's style and the characteristics of subordinates and the work environment (Evans, 1970; House, 1971). This hypothesis is based on Expectancy Theory, which states that subordinates will be motivated if they believe they are capable of performing their responsibilities, if they believe their efforts will result in a specific outcome, and if they believe the benefits of performing their task are worthwhile (Northouse, 2019). According to Indvik (1986), leaders can tailor their leadership style to the motivational needs of subordinates by choosing behaviors that complement or replace those that are lacking in the workplace. According to House and Mitchell (1997), leadership generates motivation when it increases the number and types of payoffs subordinates receive from their work and when it makes the path to the goal clear and easy to travel by providing coaching and direction, eliminating obstacles and roadblocks, and making the work itself more personally satisfying.

Leader Behaviors: House and Mitchell (1997) identified four leadership behaviors: directive, supportive, participative, and goal oriented. Directive leadership is characterized by leaders giving tasks with specific directions. A supportive leader demonstrates friendliness and concern for the welfare of subordinates. Participative leadership is characterized by the inclusion of subordinates in decision-making, whereas achievement-oriented leadership is characterized by demanding the highest level of performance from subordinates (House & Mitchell, 1997). It is hypothesized that leaders may exhibit any or all these four approaches with different subordinates and under different conditions.

Subordinate Characteristics: In accordance with the path-goal theory, subordinate characteristics such as needs for affiliation, preferences for structure, desires for control, and self-perceived levels of skill impact how subordinates interpret a leader's actions in every work situation (House & Mitchell, 1997). For example, subordinates with high affiliation needs prefer supportive leadership, while those with dogmatic and authoritarian tendencies and those who must operate in uncertain environments favor directive leadership (House & Mitchell, 1997). In addition, subordinates with an internal locus of control prefer participative leadership because it allows them to feel in charge of their work, whereas those with an external locus of control prefer directive leadership because it reflects their belief that external forces control their circumstances (House & Mitchell, 1997). When selecting performance-based leadership, subordinates are frequently high-achievers and goal-oriented individuals who place a premium on structure, accountability, and feedback (Ayman & Lauritsen, 2018).

Task Characteristics: The design of a subordinate's task, the formal authority structure of the organization, and the subordinate's primary work group may provide motivation (House & Mitchell, 1997). They examined the path-goal hypothesis using a sample of supervisors and subordinates from organizations. The results indicated that subordinates viewed their leaders as more effective when their leaders' behavior matched the situational task requirements. Klein et al. (1999) found that leaders whose behavior was directive were deemed most effective for structured activities, while leaders whose behavior was supportive were deemed most effective for unstructured tasks. According to the study, participation was most effective in tasks with high identity, whereas achievement-oriented behavior was most effective in tasks with high significance.

House & Mitchell (1997) identified four task factors that influence the path-goal theory methodology: The theory identifies four task characteristics that can influence the appropriate leader behavior: task structure (clarity), task difficulty (challenge), task identity (meaningful), and task significance (results). In situations characterized by a high level of task structure, directive behavior is more effective, whereas supportive behavior is recommended for difficult jobs. Participatory behavior can increase motivation for tasks with moderate significance, but for tasks with high significance, achievement-oriented behavior is recommended. These actions can aid in addressing subordinates' needs and boosting their motivation in a variety of work environments.

Obstacles Tackle: The path-goal philosophy prioritizes assisting subordinates in overcoming obstacles. It is the leader's obligation to assist subordinates in overcoming workplace difficulties, such as those that produce undue uncertainty, frustration, or threats (House & Mitchell, 1997). Litwin and Stringer (1968) emphasized that effective leaders adapt to the situation and use a style that helps followers overcome obstacles, such as providing clear direction (directive), offering support and recognition (supportive), involving followers in decision-making (participative), or setting ambitious goals (ambitious) (achievement-oriented). Path-goal theory emphasizes, from a pragmatic perspective, that an effective leader must pay attention to the needs of subordinates, assisting them in defining their objectives and the paths they wish to take to achieve those objectives, as well as assisting them in overcoming any potential obstacles (House & Mitchell, 1997). Garca-Morales et al. (2013) examined the Path-Goal theory's effectiveness in a more contemporary context. They found that when leaders used the participative and supporting styles, team members were more satisfied with their jobs and more engaged in the organizational culture.

Strengths and Weaknesses: Northouse (2019) detailed the benefits and drawbacks of this strategy: Path-goal theory is a situational leadership strategy designed to provide direction and enable leaders to effectively motivate subordinates. It was also one of the first situational contingency theories to explain how task and subordinate traits can affect the leadership effect on performance. The philosophy emphasizes motivation by integrating elements of expectancy theory into leadership. In addition, it acts as a model for leaders who wish to define approaches to goals and assist team members in overcoming barriers. According to the specifics of the path-goal theory, the clarity of paths and expectations is essential for efficient task completion. Therefore, leaders must be aware of their subordinates' goals, desires, and preferences, as well as the task's characteristics, in order to guide and coach individuals in the right direction.

Despite its virtues, the path-goal theory has some limitations. One complaint that might be leveled against the theory is that it is frequently overly complex, with several interconnected sets of assumptions that make it difficult to apply the theory in every organizational environment. In addition, neither the relationship between leadership behavior nor the potential for subordinates to become dependent due to the "helpful" nature of leadership are adequately accounted for. Path-goal theory is, in conclusion, an indispensable tool for leaders who wish to maximize their subordinates' performance and satisfaction. However, caution should be exercised when employing this theory due to its complexity, lack of motivational explanation, and propensity to promote subordinate dependency.

Summary

Since the inception of the American higher education, a matrix has existed to match students' needs with social demands. When students and their families view undergraduate

education as primarily about gaining access to economic and social benefits, instrumental motivations will likely continue to undermine the lofty goals of higher education. Consequently, it may continue to be challenging for some colleges and universities to make the non-instrumental components of undergraduate education transparent to contemporary students. Despite the apparent consensus among institutions regarding the goals and objectives of higher education, colleges and universities may view college students as clients or products for their degree programs.

In general, it appears that providers of higher education prioritize universal goals that aim to transform society over individual cognitive abilities and communicative agendas. In contrast, it appears that undergraduates place a greater emphasis on personal, economic, familial, and development goals upon completion of their college degree. According to the literature review, the aspirations of higher education institutions tend to be global, long-term, and aspirational, whereas the aspirations of students tend to be significantly more personal, short-term, and economically prudent. Therefore, this outcome is not unexpected. The goals and motivations of students tend to be extremely diverse, with some life ambitions and social contributions appearing compatible with the fundamental aims articulated by academics and organizations. While civic education and democratic engagement are emphasized as the most essential components for higher education providers to achieve a better end state, undergraduate students' perceptions of the non-economic or social benefits of higher education are not significantly different. Therefore, the misalignment gap between education providers and undergraduate students is a cause for concern in the field of higher education, but research has yet to address the policy implications of this gap in the literature.

I argue for the application of two related theories of Goal-Setting: the psychological method of defining objectives, and the path-goal theory to develop the leadership mindset in determining how to collectively achieve those objectives. Goal-Setting theory provides psychological assistance for students to clarify their academic, social, and personal objectives in the program, as well as for administrators to meet students' needs. Path-goal theory assists in describing how leaders can motivate students to be productive and satisfied throughout their higher education journey. It is a situational approach to leadership because its effectiveness depends on the congruence between the leader's actions and the characteristics and goals of the students.

Path-goal theory derives its core concepts from expectancy theory, which posits that students will be motivated if they feel competent, if they believe their efforts will be rewarded, and if they value the outcome of their efforts. A leader can help subordinates by selecting a leadership style (directive, supportive, participative, or achievement-oriented) that provides what is lacking for subordinates in a particular work environment. It is the leader's obligation to help subordinates achieve their objectives through directing, guiding, and coaching. Path-goal theory offers a plethora of hypotheses regarding how a leader's style interacts with subordinates' demands and the nature of the work. It predicts, among other things, that directive leadership is effective with ambiguous goals, supportive leadership with repetitive goals, participative leadership with ambiguous goals and autonomous subordinates, and achievement-oriented leadership with difficult goals. The path-goal theory offers significant benefits of providing a framework for leaders' behavior adjustment that can influence subordinates' productivity and satisfaction. On the negative side, path-goal theory is susceptible to several critiques of unclear demonstration of the relationship between leader behavior and subordinate motivation. This

disadvantage can be overcome by using a goal-setting strategy with clearly defined personal and social objectives. Due to the agreement between students and administrators, the standard method for determining path objectives may be modified. The principle of goal setting can assist students in overcoming motivational obstacles and achieving academic success.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

To investigate the goal-gap issue in public higher education in the United States, this study employed case study methodology to examine how goal-setting currently occurs in a midwestern American regional comprehensive institution, Institution X. The researcher conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews (Bryman, 2015) with university administrators and undergraduate students. The purpose of the research was to investigate students' and administrators' understanding of and their concerns about student-oriented goals in the university, as well as to identify how to overcome obstacles to achieve these goals.

Institution X was the site for an exploratory embedded single-case study with three data collection dimensions: 1) Organization (evaluating the vision and mission statement and the Strategic Plan for 2018-2028), 2) Leaders (in-depth interviews with university deans and directors), and 3) Students (in-depth interviews with undergraduate students). To investigate the research questions, I collected data primarily through in-depth interviews with 6 students and 10 administrators. A convenience sample of students and administrators followed two distinct interview protocols. This was done so that each group shared their respective perspectives. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which units are selected based on their accessibility to the researcher (Babbie, 2015). Convenience sampling may be due to geographical proximity, availability at a particular time, or willingness to participate in the research (Bryman, 2015). This strategy takes into account the limited contacts and availability of authors and participants, as well as the organization's transparency. However, this method could raise the concern of selection bias when the case studies were determined by personal history in the institutions and the contacts with participants. The personal relationship between researchers

and participants may result in erroneous data and erroneous responses, which may lead to response bias and researcher bias.

To reduce researcher and respondent bias, I collected secondary data sources to add validity to statements. The utilization of secondary data sources entailed the examination of documents to assure the cross-verification of data and enhance the overall accuracy of the study. These sources encompassed all documents made available by organizations or enterprises, as well as those accessible to the public, such as the institution's website, annual reports, and other relevant documents. It is well-known that these sources are also major public channels of information that students and school leaders can access to understand the university's circumstances.

Overview of the Research Problem

In Chapter I, the statement of the problem, and Chapter II, the literature review, I discussed some of the challenges faced by four-year undergraduate students in American public universities as well as the complex and competing goals that characterize post-secondary education. This stakes of these issues become more urgent in light of contemporary political-economic and student struggles. Universities continue to struggle with the classic ambivalent relationships between their goals of responding to and supporting society amidst internal and external challenges (Ashby, 1973). Social change has thrown higher education systems all over the world off balance, which has caused a realignment of forces (Bok, 2015). It is thus necessary for those involved in higher education to determine what purpose each part of the system serves and to protect it from outside influences (Bok, 2008). Unfortunately, however, there is no general agreement on what exactly higher education should represent. (Delbanco, 2012; Ginsberg, 2011).

Research Questions

- 1: What are the goals of public post-secondary education in the United States from the standpoint of student at one regional comprehensive institution in the American Midwest?
- 2: How do students and administrator's at this institution understand their student-centered educational goals and the path to achieve them?
- 3: What obstacles do these students face in achieving their educational objectives?
- 4: What initiatives can the institution, leaders, and students take to better align the goals toward student's standpoint?

Research Design

Utilizing case study designs, this research study investigated the topic in depth to gain valuable insight on goal-setting in contemporary public universities in the U.S. Since the mid to late 1960s, case studies have been used in social science research as a means of reflecting ideas with colleges, providing teaching examples, developing new theories, and understanding individuals' behaviors (McLeod, 2013). Case study research can be used to investigate a single case or multiple cases that pertain to a specific group, program, organization, or event (Yin, 2014). In addition, case studies investigate particular decisions, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods (Thomas, 2011). Yin (2014) also recommended that a case study include the following criteria: (1) answer the question of how or why a phenomenon exists, (2) the researcher intends to observe the participants rather than manipulate them or control the events, (3) the case is valuable to study due to the current phenomenon

relating to the participants in their current real-world context, (4) The study relies on multiple sources of data (e.g., observation of behaviors, interviews, documents, snitches, etc.).

The current research project deployed a single-case embedded design of a regional comprehensive institution in the Midwest of the United States to arrive at a singular set of circumstance-specific findings. By gathering information from a variety of sources, including institutional development strategies, student success programs, evaluations, and in-depth interviews with administrators involved in student support, and interviews with undergraduate students, the chosen case study satisfies those requirements. The data analysis process will focus on answering the questions of the phenomenon: How do students and administrators understand the goals of their institution? Can students commit to their vocational and non-vocational/economic and non-economic goals in the institution? The exploration of this phenomenon at a midwestern regional comprehensive institution will be valuable to enhance students' success in achieving their goals for higher education. Administrators will have a better understanding of their path-way creation for a student success program. The research will use a random sample selection of undergraduate students and administrators in the institutional student support program that will not manipulate their behaviors or control the events.

Yin (2014) posits that an exploratory case study has significance in its contribution towards enhancing comprehension in the realms of higher education and student success research. Case studies have contributed to the development and advancement of new psychology and leadership theories related to the concept of path-goal formation (McLeod, 2013). The objective of this exploratory case study design is to analyze the persistent concerns around the absence of goal-setting and the path-goals method in the student experience within the natural framework of public higher education (Yin, 2014).

In the framework of an exploratory study, a researcher investigates a particular subject inside a real-world setting. This particular kind of inquiry often lacks predetermined results and is used to amass fresh empirical data pertaining to a certain subject. The purpose of this exploratory research is to obtain further information on undergraduate students' objectives in higher education at a regional comprehensive university. Additionally, the study aims to examine the strategies used by administrators to provide students' assistance to facilitate the achievement of these goals. The case study satisfies the criteria of accessibility and suitability when the institution can provide relevant data on students' support programs and student success methods, as well as facilitate the process of getting the data for conducting the interviews. By using various sources of data, the case study researcher can conduct observational analysis within a real-life situation in order to address the research inquiries. A regional comprehensive university is a prevalent institution within the public university system in the United States, which serves as a typical example for the study at hand. This research utilizes single-case embedded designs to examine the environment of a chosen institution, focusing on two distinct units of study, namely students and administrators. The aim is to get a more comprehensive understanding of the single case.

Boundaries of the Case

The time bounds of this case study were dependent on the current population of undergraduate student (from Fall 2019 to Fall 2023) and their current school leaders under the 2018-2028 strategic plan of the Institution X. The focus of this research is to assess how the institutional ideology of goals has been used by the school leaders to enhance the overall student experience and provide support for student achievement. Figure 1 illustrates the Institution X

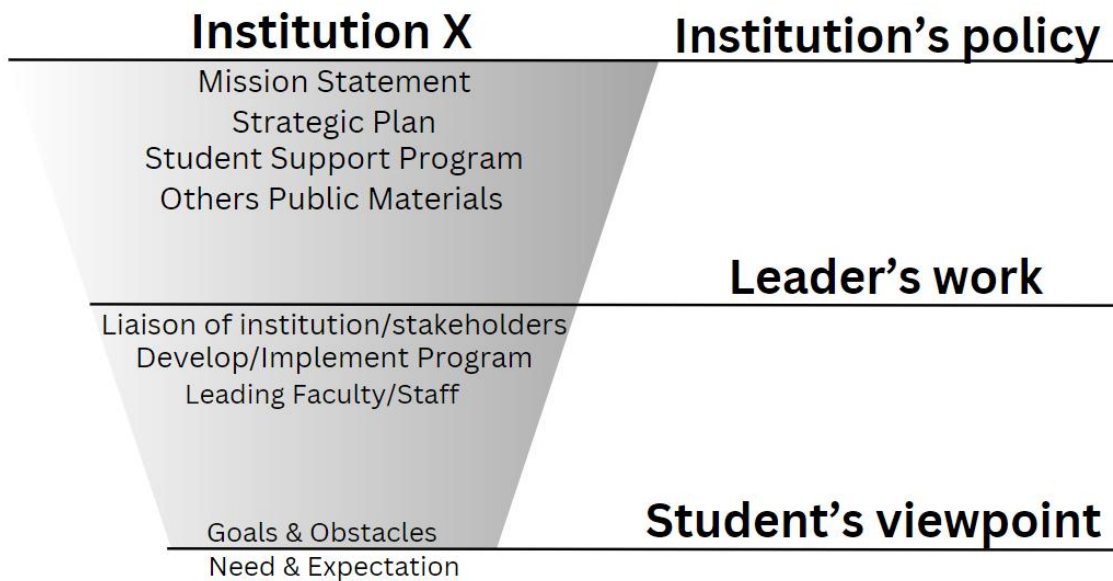
case study with the three layers of goal approach among students, administrators, and the organization.

The scope of information in this situation will extend to every aspect of data collection from institutional policy and representation, leader's work and behavior, and student's viewpoint.

Institutional policy and representation: In its mission statement, Institution X articulates its perspective and comprehension of its objectives. The university's strategic plan serves as a definitive directive and policy framework for the organization to achieve its objectives. The Student Support Program aims to develop explicit action plans for effectively helping students achieve their objectives related to academic performance. Additional public resources such as marketing programs, email marketing, and event organization may serve as valuable means of effectively conveying the institution's intended objectives.

Figure 1

Case study design: Three Dimensions of Goals Approach from the Institution, the Leader and the Student



Leader's work and behavior: Individuals in a leadership position at the university, such as the dean, director, or department head, have the responsibility to articulate their understanding of student needs inside the institution and align it with the relevant institutional policies and available resources. Administrators possess the capacity to actively engage in the process of designing, creating, and modifying programs that align with the specific requirements of students and the available resources within the institution. In addition, individuals can propose their hypotheses to their team, which comprises staff and faculty members who are directly involved in student affairs.

Student's viewpoint: Interviews with present undergraduate student from the semester of Fall 2019 to Fall 2023, draw upon their circumstances and experiences at institution X, to

identify their expectations for attaining their academic objectives within their program at this university. Additionally, they may be able to identify the current challenges they face and explore potential avenues through which the university and its administrators can assist them in realizing their aspirations.

Participants

For the aim of this study, two distinct groups of participants were chosen. The initial group consisted of six undergraduates, comprising four females and two males. These students were enrolled in different academic years, ranging from freshmen to juniors. Importantly, they did not possess any significant interpersonal relationships either among themselves or with the researcher. The second group comprised ten administrators, consisting of seven females and three males, with varying lengths of employment at Institution X, ranging from one to 30 years. These administrators were associated with student success programs and student support services, encompassing academic, psychological, and job preparedness areas. All individuals who took part in the research were in a state of current employment or enrollment at the specified public institution at the time of data collection. Each participant had a 45-minute interview session. The purpose of this measure was to provide sufficient time for each participant to comprehensively articulate their experiences, ideas, and emotions pertaining to the subject matter under investigation. The interviews were carried out under a controlled and secluded environment, guaranteeing the provision of a secure atmosphere for participants to freely express their perspectives.

Data Collection

The primary objective of collecting interview data was to elucidate the participants' encounters, perspectives, and comprehension pertaining to the subject matter under investigation.

To assure the accuracy of the findings, the researcher used a semi-structured interview approach. The method included the utilization of open-ended inquiries, which facilitated participants in expanding upon their responses, while also fostering an environment that encouraged participants to provide comprehensive depictions of their respective experiences. The researcher also endeavored to establish a conducive atmosphere of trust, whereby participants were encouraged to freely articulate their views and opinions without apprehension of being evaluated. In order to cultivate an environment where participants felt at ease in articulating their genuine emotions and convictions, the researcher used active and reflective listening strategies. These tactics included the utilization of clarifying inquiries, restating pivotal aspects, and encapsulating significant elements.

The methods used in this research include the utilization of the semi-structured interviewing technique, found in Appendix B (Kallio et al., 2016). Although the interviews adhered to a well-defined set of topics, the interviewing methodology exhibited flexibility, since open-ended questions were used to encourage respondents to express their thoughts and opinions without constraint. The study methodology was established with the intention of addressing the concerns of trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, transferability, and authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 2006).

Other Data Sources

To mitigate the potential influence of researcher and responder bias, this study used a multi-methods strategy that integrated primary and secondary data sources (Cokley & Awad, 2013). The use of documentary analysis was included in order to triangulate the data and augment the construct validity, as suggested by Miller et al. (1984). The papers examined were publicly accessible sources, including the institution's website, strategy plans, and other relevant

materials. Furthermore, the study's results were substantiated, and the conclusions were supported by citing literature from peer-reviewed publications, thereby lending scientific credibility to the research.

Procedures

IRB approval was sought and approved (see Appendix A). An email invitation was sent to all students of the university via the official email platform of the school, requesting their participation in the interview. The researcher sent an email to all students, which is included in Appendix A, with greetings and a conclusion. The purpose of the email was to invite interested students to contact the researcher. For the sake of maintaining anonymity, the identifying details such as the name of the institution, contact numbers, and office address have been omitted.

Appendix B provides a comprehensive outline of the interview protocol used to guide the participants during the interview process. The questions were specifically designed to address the research objectives of this investigation. The email invitation was also sent to a targeted list of the institution administration, using their official email addresses shown on the school's website. These persons are actively engaged in providing support to the students of the institution and contributing to the formulation of the strategic plan for the period of 2018-2028 at Institution X. A total of 27 invitations were dispatched to administrators, out of whom 10 consented to participate in the interview.

The interviews were conducted at various dates and times inside the institution, spanning from March 2023 to September 2023. The participants included a total of six students and ten administrators. Ten open-ended questions pertaining to the individual's comprehension of the institution's objectives, their own aspirations in the realm of higher education, and the manner in

which they align these aims with their own life, were asked. The interview also focused on the process of developing personal objectives in order to get desired outcomes, as well as the individual's preparedness to address institutional obstacles. The use of interviews as a research method may be supported by considering the inherent worth of the interviewing process. In the context of semi-structured interviews, the interviewer maintains a predetermined set of topics and questions that are intended to be explored and addressed. Nevertheless, the semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to exhibit adaptability about the sequence in which subjects are addressed. Moreover, it gives the interviewee the opportunity to expand on ideas and discuss the concerns mentioned by the researcher in a broader context.

The 16 interviews were carried out over a span of 16 distinct days, with one interview occurring on a single day, throughout a duration of six months. Interviews took place on the virtual meeting platform Zoom. The length of the interviews varied from 50 minutes to one hour and 28 minutes. To acknowledge the probable hesitancy of participants to fully disclose their thoughts and opinions, all individuals interviewed were given the chance to provide information confidentially after the official interview concluded. The opportunity yielded a rather limited amount of further information. The interview tapes were transcribed in order to assist the study of the data. The use of a three-theme approach in the analysis of the data, as outlined in Chapter 5, proved to be important in effectively managing the intricacies of this analytical endeavor. The data gathering process included conducting interviews with respondents, whereby they were asked comprehensive questions and probed extensively on significant subjects. The majority of the questions posed were of an open-ended nature, affording participants the opportunity to freely and spontaneously express their thoughts, viewpoints, and personal experiences.

Data Management and Analysis

The datasets comprise information pertaining to the enrolment status of undergraduate students at the school, spanning from the autumn semester of 2019 through the autumn semester of 2023. A summary was provided for each interview. The interviews were conducted using the internet communication tool, Zoom, and were recorded in audio format before being transcribed. The study used interviews and analyzed replies to provide a precise depiction of the conceptual framework presented in the paper. The semi-structured interview questions aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives of students and administrators on their thoughts. The interviews yielded valuable insights into individuals' inner emotions, perspectives, and viewpoints. Common themes of academic achievement, personal development, and societal impact were evident among both students and administrators. However, there were also conflicting elements that emerged, indicating obstacles that could potentially disrupt these endeavors.

In order to methodically explore the interviews, I used a rigorous coding technique. By employing thematic analysis, I categorized repetitive portions of the data and discerned patterns within and between interviews. These codes merged together to form overarching themes, which acted as guiding principles for addressing the study topics. Regarding the initial inquiry on "goals and paths," I examined the students' envisioned outcomes for graduation and their aspirations for their future careers, in conjunction with the viewpoints of administrators on how to promote student achievement. The act of coding revealed a common aspiration for intellectual development, purposeful professions, and engaged participation in society. The second question, "challenges," unveiled hindrances, encompassing both internal and external factors, that obstructed these endeavors. Students faced the challenges of academic demands, financial

obstacles, and negotiating intricate campus structures. Administrators, on the other hand, recognized that limitations in resources, structural obstacles, and the constantly changing environment of higher education are hindrances. The final question, "recommendations for action," prompted both groups to emphasize the need for enhanced communication, teamwork, and student assistance. Students advocated for individualized counseling, increased availability of financial assistance, and improved mental health support, while administrators prioritized comprehensive development initiatives, career-focused programs, and adaptable academic options.

By engaging in an iterative process of reading, listening, coding, and interpreting, I discovered the concealed patterns within the voices of our respondents. Their accounts not only revealed their personal experiences but also gave a comprehensive portrayal of the intricate landscape of higher education. As I proceed with examining this complex tapestry, my goal is to convert their experiences into practical ideas, to aid in creating a more helpful and rewarding educational environment for both students and administrators.

Trustworthiness

Noble and Smith (2015) define validity in qualitative research as the adherence and appropriateness of the methodologies adopted, as well as the accuracy with which the conclusions represent the collected data. Positivist scholars often raise concerns about the trustworthiness of qualitative research, asserting that the notions of validity and reliability cannot be adequately addressed within a naturalistic setting (Shenton, 2004). The establishment of trustworthiness in a research study is heavily reliant on assuring the credibility of the study. According to Merriam (1998), the foundation of internal validity in research is in the concept of

reality. One of the fundamental principles of qualitative research is the belief that reality is comprehensive, multifaceted, and always evolving. Scholarly literature suggests that reality is not a singular, immutable, objective fact that can be uncovered, witnessed, and quantitatively quantified as in the context of quantitative research. Furthermore, Anney (2014) posited that reality may be seen as a complex array of cognitive constructs generated by individuals. Given that qualitative research relies heavily on human participation for data collection, the interpretation of reality is directly accessible via their observations and interviews. Therefore, qualitative research exhibits a greater proximity to reality in contrast to quantitative research, since the latter involves the insertion of a data gathering tool between the researcher and the participants. Merriam (1998) posited that adopting such a perspective enables qualitative research to have a distinct advantage in terms of internal validity. Scholars have provided guidance on how qualitative researchers might address concerns related to validity and reliability. They have suggested many tactics that qualitative researchers can use to order to ensure the credibility of their studies (Shenton, 2004).

I employed the triangulation data analysis method with continual comparative approach (Fram, 2013). I started my adventure by meticulously reviewing the interview transcripts, scrutinizing every word that composed an intricate tale of wishes, frustrations, and ambitions. I examined the recording while focusing on non-verbal cues and other aspects that improved the oral tale. As I examined these individual testimonies, consistent patterns began to emerge. I consistently analyze and contrast perspectives, viewpoints, and facts from many sources, including interviews within the same group, interviews from different groups, and public materials available on Institution X's website. The validity and trustworthiness of information

depend not just on an individual's worldview at a specific time but also on comparisons with other perspectives and knowledge, as well as objective information from institutions.

Summary

The current study will employ a methodology focused on examining the practical knowledge and understanding of student goals inside a regional comprehensive university situated in the midwestern region of the United States. To improve the reliability and reduce the impact of response bias, this study employed comprehensive interviews with two separate groups, specifically students and administrators. Furthermore, the study will incorporate secondary data sources obtained from the institution being examined. Moreover, to improve reliability of the collected data, surveys will be distributed to participants in both the experimental and control groups.

The purpose of this data collection approach is to investigate hypotheses regarding students' and administrators' understanding of institutional goals connected to student accomplishment, as well as the accessibility of the path-goal support process for students. The partially created inquiries will evaluate the students' and administrators' understanding of the goal-setting process and their proficiency in creating successful objectives that meet the necessary requirements. This study aims to investigate the relationship between student academic performance and the goals and objectives of the university. The findings of this study will be utilized to develop recommendations with the goal of augmenting student performance and enhancing the university's assistance in fulfilling student goals.

The main focus of the student-centered design of the path-goal model is to ensure that students achieve success in three major objectives in the context of higher education. The aims

include acquiring professional experience, developing strong socializing skills (which contribute to both career success and positive relationships), and expanding intellectual horizons. The current study will not consider an analysis of the social, political, and economic aspects related to the specific university system and its execution of a structured approach to tackle the issue. This analysis will exclude an assessment of the accessibility of financial aid, housing choices, curricular revisions, or the quality of faculty members. Utilizing the existing data collection, the research will offer recommendations to improve the university's assistance for students and promote their success by prioritizing objectives that focus on the needs and goals of the students.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of semi-structured interviews carried out with the administrators and undergraduate students at Institution X. Chapter 3 provided a detailed account of the technique employed for data collection, as well as the subsequent analysis and synthesis of study findings. The initial phase of the process was data preparation, which included tasks such as transcribing interviews, conducting preliminary labeling, and fully engaging with the data. After doing a more detailed examination of the data, the findings were classified into separate themes that aligned with each of the three main research questions.

The subsequent parts will present the outcomes pertaining to the four study inquiries. This part presents a study of the student's goals during the orientation to the institution and the work of the administration. It also explores the challenges they face in achieving their goals and the impact of goal-setting on college success. The participants' voices are effectively portrayed through the emotions they express and the exact remarks collected from the interviews. The fifth chapter solidifies and establishes connections between the core findings and the preexisting knowledge in the realm of higher education leadership. The first three categories, which align with the three study themes, have been redefined.

This chapter extensively employs verbatim excerpts from participants to effectively convey the perspectives of the administrators and students. To safeguard privacy and account for the small sample size, this study refrains from associating quotations with specific individuals or organizations. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, any mention of specific departments or centers has been omitted. As a result of the previously indicated reasoning, certain instances and detailed information provided by participants must be excluded. Whenever

many quotes are used to illustrate a specific perspective, the quotations are obtained from different individuals, unless otherwise specified.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the goals of public post-secondary education in the United States from the standpoint of student at one regional comprehensive institution in the American Midwest?

RQ2: How do students and administrator’s at this institution understand their student-centered educational goals and the path to achieve them?

RQ3: What obstacles do these students face in achieving their educational objectives?

RQ4: What initiatives can the institution, leaders, and students take to better align the goals toward student’s standpoint?

Table 2.1 shows a collection of administrators in the institution, showcasing their diverse demographics, jobs, and expertise. Meanwhile, Table 2.2 illustrates the group of students.

Table 2.1

Group of Administrators with Gender, Working experience, Field of practice, and Position at Institution X Identified

Administrator	Gender	Working experience	Field of practice	Position
A	Male	30 years	Psychology	Assistant Director of Student Service
B	Female	21 years	Counseling	Director of Special Student Program
C	Female	3 years	Student Affairs	Assistant Director of Retention Program
D	Female	23 years	Educational Leadership	Director of Talent Search Program
E	Male	3 years	Counseling	Director of Special Student Program

F	Female	3 years	Teaching Development	Associate Director, of Innovative Center
G	Female	20 years	Resident Life	Interim Director of Residence Life
H	Male	2 years	Career Development	Associate Director in Career Development
I	Female	4 years	Deanship	Dean of Health College
J	Female	13 years	Academic Advisor	Associate Director of Academic Advising

Table 2.2

Group of Undergraduates with Gender, Age, Years at the College, and Major at Institution X Identified

Student	Gender	Age	Year in the Institution X	Major
1	Female	50+	1 year	Sociology
2	Male	20+	3 years	Civil Engineering
3	Female	20+	3 years	Criminology
4	Female	30+	1.5 years	Psychology
5	Male	30+	3 years	Social work
6	Female	20+	2 years	Psychology

Moreover, Table 3 provides a mapping of interview themes and how it connects to the literature, as well as the further themes that were found throughout in-depth interviews.

Table 3

Mapping of Interview Themes to Selected Literature

Interview Theme	Literature
Institutional goals	Avery & Turner (2012), McArthur (2011), Zaback et al. (2012), Liu et al. (2012), Savitz-Romer & Rowan-Kenyon (2020)
Students' goals	Blumenstyk (2015), McMahon & Oketch (2013), Kennett et al. (2011), Barber et al. (2013), Gallup (2023), Healthy

Institutional orientation & support	Minds Network (2022), CIRP Freshman Survey (2020), CIRP YFCY (2022), Coates & Morrison (2016)
Challenges and obstacles	Baker et al. (2012) Matkin (2013), Carey (2015), Pew Charitable Trust (2012)
Available support	
Priority the obstacles	
Applying goal-setting	Miller & Weiss (2015), Yusuff (2018), Clements & Kamau (2017), Forsythe & Jellicoe (2018)
Suggested support	
Motivation to achieve goals	Clements & Kamau (2017), Forsythe & Jellicoe (2018), Hematian et al. (2016)
Effective goal-setting components	Cheng et al. (2019), Weber (2022), Hematian et al. (2016)
Ambiguous policy	Savitz-Romer & Rowan-Kenyon (2020)
Missing information	Baker et al. (2012)
Possible solutions	Cheng et al. (2019), Weber (2022)

Research question 1: What are the goals of public post-secondary education in the United States from the standpoint of student at one regional comprehensive institution in the American Midwest?

The researcher examined the mission statement, statement of purpose, and fundamental values of the university. A mission statement is a strategic tool that has been widely utilized by academics, managers, and consultants since the early 1980s. It serves to highlight an organization's distinctiveness and identity (Algre, et al., 2018). The concept of organizational purpose is closely linked to purpose-driven leadership, personal purpose (which refers to an individual's purpose based on their beliefs, life goals, and the significance they attach to life), role purpose, and societal purpose (Haski-Leventhal, 2022). The organizational purpose is determined by a professional and practical definition, or by elements derived from interconnected but separate constructions, such as mission, vision, and shared values (van Tuin et al., 2020). In order to analyze the connection between mission statement, vision, purpose, and strategic plans, Olusola et al. (2022) assert that mission and vision statements serve as the

fundamental basis for any strategic plan. They provide guidance for the institution's strategy, define its operational approach, establish a shared purpose, foster a culture of mutual expectations, and facilitate leadership styles. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that each institution will construct its own set of objectives and principles, which can be clearly defined and identifiable with vision and mission statements. Consequently, an institution's purpose and vision statements delineate its objectives and serve as a compass for all individuals employed by said university (Olusola, et al., 2022).

The source of Institution X's mission statement is...no need to cite to preserve anonymity.

Institution X Mission Statement

Institution X prepares students of all backgrounds to be productive, engaged, and socially responsible citizen-leaders of a global society. The University provides research, service and lifelong learning opportunities for its students, faculty, and other constituents. Institution X enriches the quality of life for those within its reach.

Institution X's public documents explicitly and implicitly reference all three categories of goal theory: personal, social, and achievement goals. The institution's Mission Statement outlines its expectation to provide students with the necessary skills and knowledge to be highly efficient and effective in their future endeavors. The Institution offers research possibilities and attempts to enhance quality of living. The institution aims for students to attain a level of productivity that is synonymous with both academic and professional achievement. At Institution X, the primary objective for students is not simply to pass their courses, obtain a degree, and secure employment. Instead, the focus is on developing practical knowledge and abilities that can be effectively utilized to provide significant benefits for society. Their social goals are also incorporated into

the success goals, which require students to actively participate and become socially responsible members of a global society. The establishment of these social objectives does not necessarily need to be initiated by the students themselves, but rather should be an inherent function of the education system as a means of socializing individuals within a civilized society (Terziev & Vasileva, 2022; Rashkova, 2017).

To become productive, engaged, and socially responsible citizens in a global society, students must acquire internationally standardized knowledge and a skill set that enables them to achieve excellent results while also integrating the social values, norms, regulations, patterns of behavior, and world culture that exist in multiple societies and the global community. Becoming a leader in the global society necessitates a greater emphasis on relationship-building, goal-oriented thinking, and cultural-contextual awareness. Furthermore, Institution X establishes its objective as enhancing the quality of life for its stakeholders and community. The World Health Organization (WHO) conducted a cross-cultural project to determine the universal definition of quality of life. They found that it is an individual's perception of their position in life, accounting for their culture and value systems. It also includes their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns. Quality of life encompasses various aspects such as physical health, psychological well-being, level of independence, social relationships, and their relationship to important features of their environment (WHOQPL, 1998). To attain the objective of enhancing quality of life, Institution X must assist students in their personal growth, the realization of their aspirations, and the cultivation of positive social connections within their community.

For students to perceive life's pleasures, it is important for the achievement and social goals of Institution X to align with their personal life goals. Table 4 illustrates the objectives of Institution X using the goal-setting methodology.

Table 4

Institution X Missions with Goal-Setting Approach

Mission	Achievement Goal	Social Goal	Personal Goal
<p>“...prepares students of all backgrounds to be productive, engaged, and socially responsible citizen-leaders of a global society.”</p> <p>“ The University provides research, service and lifelong learning opportunities for its students, faculty, and other constituents.”</p> <p>“Institution X enriches the quality of life for those within its reach.”</p>	<p>Productive ability in global society</p> <p>Personal perception of fulfill the 3 goals in one’s life stage.</p>	<p>Engaged and responsible citizen - leader</p>	<p>Lifelong learner</p>

To accomplish these missions, Institution X provides a Statement of Purpose, Vision, Core Values, and a Strategic Plan for 2018-2028 which also emphasize the multiple student goals that the Institute wants to support students to achieve.

Statement of Purpose

Institution X is engaged in internationally acclaimed, student-and-learning-centered academic programs. ... experience occurs on several unique campus environments and through an overarching spirit which attracts an intellectually exciting and diverse family of the nation's best students. ... provides students of all backgrounds with rigorous academic programs The University places a premium on student learning; it is committed to ensuring value in a holistic learning experience through high standards for student achievement and conduct, a strong faculty, technological innovation, personalized attention, broad access, and public accountability for actions and outcomes.

Out-of-the-classroom and study abroad experiences enhance learning, promote diversity, and contribute to the success of students. The University encourages engaged research and public service in support of economic development, quality of life, and improvement of education at all levels...Institution X recognizes that its mission continues to evolve in response to regional, national, and global changes, and the need for lifelong learning.

Vision

to be a live school and to impart to its students a burning zeal to do and be something...

to be progressive, to use modern methods and equipment, but reject all worthless educational fads...

to 'ring the rising bell in the human soul' by inspiring all students who come in touch with the work of the institution...

Core Values

Emphasis on cooperation, teamwork, and mutual respect for individual differences in scholarship, diversity, and culture.

Commitment to assuring quality of programs, competence of graduates, and opportunities for lifelong learning.

A view of scholarly endeavors that includes teaching, research, and creative activities as mutually supportive.

Encouragement of meaningful and active partnerships among students, faculty, staff, and constituents to strengthen the learning environment.

Nurturing of innovative and creative activities of faculty, staff, and students that advance University mission and goals.

Dedication to the importance of achieving excellence in all programs and for adding value to the degrees and credentials of our students.

Commitment to providing a collegiate experience that prepares students to be informed, engaged, and dedicated citizens.

Commitment to contributing to improved quality of life and economic well-being of [State], especially those in our primary service area, as well as other constituents and stakeholders.

Commitment to developing empowered, informed, and responsible learners who recognize both the personal and shared responsibility to actively participate in university life by upholding the principles of the University Creed.

Extract from the 2018-2028 Strategic Plan

Our Students: (1) Affordability & Accessibility: Incorporate student need and other factors into financial aid decision-making, and shift to a net tuition revenue posture.

Create the Institution X Opportunity Fund through private philanthropy and giving.(2) A

Diverse Body of Students: ... recruit undergraduate students who are college-ready and who want to be members of the X family; and prepare Personal and Professional

Development Plans for each student. Ensure access to the University for under-

represented student populations through a targeted attraction and recruitment plan. Set

honest and realistic costs of college on which entrants can rely when planning their

University's career. Engage deans and department chairs in a comprehensive academic

program review to ensure the University has an appropriate mix of study options and efficiently deploys scarce resources. (3) Completion & Success: Create a Comprehensive Advising Program (CAP) involving generalist and specialist advisors, trained faculty, and other support staff to assist each student with creation of an individualized Personal and Professional Development Plan that will serve as a guide for the pursuit and completion of a four-year degree that leads to a successful career or entrance into graduate school; Develop a peer mentoring system. (4) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Institute the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan for years 1-5 of the strategic plan (period 2017 - 2022); review, assess, reconfigure as needed and re-institute for years 6-10 of the strategic plan. Work with the associate provost for global learning and with faculty and staff to continue to expand off-campus and on-campus educational opportunities. (5) Preparation for the Global Stage: Through the Colonnade Program, a student's degree program, and the Personal and Professional Development Plan, provide common intellectual experiences and high-impact practices to develop hard and soft skills as well as to cultivate good, productive citizens. Create and maintain the physical and virtual structures that contribute to completion and success for all X's students.

Our Campus: (1) Policies & Practices:...Embrace and promote the rich history,... of the University... among students, faculty,... and community... (3) A Culture of Innovation: Support and enhance the Colonnade Program, working to tailor enrollments to students' Personal and Professional Development Plans....Schedule course offerings to maximize student progression and completion. (4) Research & Creative Activities: Create an Office of Undergraduate Research...Include scholarly activities coupled with student mentorship in hiring, annual review, the tenure and promotion process, merit pay

allocations, and faculty workload decision. Fiscal resources, expand physical space, and enhance virtual support for student and faculty scholarly activities.

Our Community & Beyond: (1) A Regional Lighthouse:... Ensure that students graduate with skills to think critically, solve problems, and engage effectively with others... (2) Global Learning: Continue to recruit, retain, and graduate a student population from around the world, and integrate them completely into the X's community. Ensure that a world view and international issues are intentionally incorporated across the curriculum, preparing X's graduates to enter a competitive global workforce. (3) Continuing Education: Create multiple pathways for individuals to complete unfinished degrees... (4) Quality of Life: Provide opportunities for people of the region to be educated, entertained, assisted, and inspired outside the classroom... (6) Alumni Ambassadors: Incorporate alumni into our comprehensive advising program and into the development of post-graduation professional development plans.... Align a new comprehensive Campus Master Plan to guide strategic campus growth and facility upgrades during the next decade.

Table 5 illustrates the connections among Institution X's mission statement, purposes, vision, core values, and 2018-2028 Strategic Plan toward the student's goal-setting approach.

Table 5

Illustration of Institution X's Mission Statement, Purposes, Visions, Core Values, and 2018-2028 Strategic Plan based on Student's Goal-Setting Model.

	Achievement Goal	Social Goal	Personal Goal
Mission: Prepare	Productive ability in	Engaged and	Personal

student to have/become...	global society	responsible citizen - leader	development (Achievement and Social goals oriented) Lifelong learner High standards for personalized attention (holistic learning experience) Support of quality of life, improvement of education at all levels, lifelong learning.
Purpose: Place to provide... for students	International acclaimed student-and-learning centred academic programs, high standards for student achievement and conduct (holistic learning experience), Enhance learning experience (Our-of-the-classroom and study abroad)	High standard of public accountability for action and outcomes (holistic learning experience) Diversity experience (Our-of-the-classroom and study abroad)	
Vision: To be...for student	Inspiration of productivity and achievement spirit Provider of practical and progressive education programs	Inspiring of humanistic development	Inspiring of humanistic development
Core Values: Provide to students ...	Quality of programs, competence of graduates Degree and credentials,	Meaningful and active partnership with peer, faculty and staffs Collegiate experience (for citizens-preparedness)	Values of cooperation, mutual respect for individual differences Lifelong learning opportunities
2018-2028 Strategic Plan: Supportive students in...	Academic Success and Program Completion, achieve qualified degree/credentials (financial support, curriculum support, study options, student support service,...) Comprehensive Advising Program (CAP) to help student build the Personal and Professional Development Plan	“members of the Institution’s family” relationship Diversity, Equity and Inclusion value (DEI Plan 2017-2022) Cultivate good, productive citizens (Colonnade Program, degree’s program, PPDP)	CAP helps building PPDP Student mentorship program (CEBS Peer Mentor Program)

(PPDP), Colonnade
Program, Post-
graduation Professional
Development Plan.
Academic Coaching
(CEBS Student Success
Center)

During the systematic analysis of Institution X, various public sources of information were examined, including its Mission Statement, Statement of Purpose, Vision, Core Values, and the 2018-2028 Strategic Plan. In the materials, I discovered all three components of the goal-setting approach, namely personal, social, and achievement. It conveyed the concept present in the literature of the public higher education system. The present institutional program approach from the strategic plan aims to encompass all goals that may potentially give rise to dilemmas and uncertainty, as indicated by the literature.

Research question 2: How do students and administrator's at this institution understand their student- centered educational goals and the path to achieve them?

In the interviews with students and administrators, I examined whether Institution X clarified their vocational goals (professional development, degree completion) and non-vocational goals (good and productive citizens and lifelong learners) through any published materials (website, strategic plans, and other documents). A majority of administrators (7 of 10) mentioned not only academic success but also the other sides of collegiate life, including student engagement, institutional spirits, and social impact through the university website, email, and posters around campus. Two administrators appraised the work of the Student Affairs Division and the Dean of Students to provide “the belonging experience” with many publications related

to “a true student life.” However, they pointed out the lack of collaboration and unification among departments to utilize the strategic plan and comprehensive approach of student success:

Interview Question 5: Does your institution clarify (in any published materials, website, strategic plans, and other documents) its vocational and non-vocational goals in educating students?

Administrator A: ...They [X] did clarify about their messages but it [is] not effective... every department giving a lot of autonomy but lack of collaboration... They [departments and service centers] have their own strategic plan which [was claimed] can fit to the institutional strategic plans... However, student[s] got many information but it is so differences, lack of unify in the message....

Even when agreeing with the resourceful information and marketing about the academic life and student life, few administrators ($n = 3$) seemed concerned about the over-loaded information provided in the first few weeks of the freshmen orientation with the approach of “say it and done.” The first administrator concerned about the message is “lack of inspiring stories.” The information is not relevant to what students need – a real pathway to their personal and career development. The other two leaders think Institution X needs to clarify their message, and one administrator is not clear on whether even he knows the institution’s message, which is, in his words, “somewhere out there.”

Interview Question 5: Does your institution clarify (in any published materials, website, strategic plans, and other documents) its vocational and non-vocational goals in educating students?

Administrator B:... X needs to talk more about the diverse goals [of students attending college]... The messages are confused and lack of big picture approach... We can do better job on that, especially marketing. We needs to paint a better picture, not with classes...

From the perspective of the students, all six of them concurred that Institution X acknowledges their diligent efforts and assists in promoting student achievement. Student 3 discovered a wealth of information through emails and newsletters from various departments, student services, student clubs, and research opportunities, which allow her to participate in extracurricular activities on campus. Information regarding fraternity membership, social involvement, and job fairs can be easily obtained through email correspondence and posters displayed in prominent campus buildings. Interviewed students comprehended the need to maintain a harmonious equilibrium between academic accomplishments and student life in order to enhance their college experience and provide opportunities for professional advancement. Despite their limited knowledge of Institution X's mission statement and strategic plan, they identified email as their primary source of information, followed by other marketing channels such as social media, flyers, and posters.

Interview Question 5: Does your institution clarify (in any published materials, website, strategic plans, and other documents) its vocational and non-vocational goals in educating students?

Student 3: ...The university reach[ed] out student with [lots of] information about professional and nonprofessional development... Career fairs, emails, student service's assistance... A lot of social events and students can find

the group they are belong... They [X] leave the door open for many opportunities...

From an organizational perspective, the institution recognizes and articulates the many objectives of their work with a focus on a student-centered approach: offering academic support through curriculum and in-classroom programs, while also promoting out-of-class activities that facilitate student socialization, community engagement, and a well-rounded college experience. Nevertheless, there remains significant ambiguity and discord over the methods of delivering this personalized attention and its alignment with the specific needs of students, as asserted by Institution X in their proposal.

The researcher conducted interviews with both school administrators and students to ascertain their perceptions of the reasons for students' enrollment in their institution's program. The interview questionnaires were made to classify the goal ideology into three categories: achievement goals (which involve measurable accomplishments such as obtaining a degree and preparing for graduate school), social goals (which focus on socialization and creating relationships, as well as making a social impact), and personal goals (which encompass personalized values related to personal development, life fulfillment, having a successful career, and family pride). However, it is not restricted to any other objectives such as financial goals (increasing wealth, attaining financial independence, ensuring financial stability).

From an administrative perspective, four administrators concur that prioritizing the balance between personal and social objectives is crucial for attaining goals. Administrator A, who has accumulated 30 years of expertise in psychology and student counseling, emphasizes the importance of prioritizing the social objective of seeking out a community to be a part of and gaining knowledge from diverse persons. Attaining a degree in order to qualify for employment

marks the initial stage of discovering a professional path that aligns with your interests. Furthermore, it is essential to choose a community of individuals with whom you wish to associate, a process that can be facilitated through socialization during higher education. Personal objectives include acquiring additional knowledge, developing strong values, and effectively communicating them to the world through thoughts, actions, and results.

Interview Question 4: What do you think are the student's achievement/social/personal goals to attend the program at your institution?

Administrator A: ... Knowledge is knowledge, you can learn everywhere... When you want to achieve a career, you want to think about being in a group of people that you are belong to for your life....Social goals of exposing to people you like, or people who think like you [peer] is to prepare for your career from the college time... knowledge-learning is happening anyway... A successful university that can make social connection, stakeholders, alumni, supporter...

Administrator H, who works at the Academic Advising and Career Center, analyzed the shift among personal, social and achievement goals in the current era and pointed out the lack of preparation of the student for the "industry goal"

Interview Question 4: What do you think are the student's achievement/social/personal goals to attend the program at your institution?

Administrator H: Student[s] may start from the personal goal of getting a good career that secure[s] their lives. During... college life, they learn that they also need to get along someone else [social goals] and acquire

knowledge [achievement goals] at a certain level to be success. Now the employers require you to have certain soft skills and internship experience... And student[s] do not know that.

Three other school administrators emphasized the need to prioritize the financial objective of increasing earnings, in conjunction with the goal of securing employment. Administrator C justified her perspective by drawing on her firsthand encounters with students who come from unique familial backgrounds, which constitute a substantial portion of the population at Institution X. Additionally, she emphasized that the student's family background and culture play a crucial role in influencing their lifestyle and perspective toward aspirations. Administrator G, who actively interacts with students, similarly mentioned financial goals as popular in "the student conversation." She highlighted the significant impact that achieving financial goals can have on students, potentially leading them to drop out before completing their credentials. The decision to pursue a financial direction is a pragmatic one influenced by the student's familial circumstances and prevailing American cultural norms.

Interview Question 4: What do you think are the student's achievement/social/personal goals to attend the program at your institution?

Administrator C : Finance is a major object in the conversations with students...

Student is comfortable to take course that meet their degree's requirement than general study/humanity education...Some of students understand that they need to learn how to grow as a person [personal goals], and the explicit goal on professional development. They tend to think about the future throughout in-depth conversation... but they are not sure how it looks like, what that mean, what is their journeys?...

The last three administrators have emphasized that students are primarily focused on achieving their degree as a means to secure the employment they are interested in. Administrator D expressed the issue of students prioritizing grades over education due to their ingrained mindset shaped by the P-12 school system and the association of scholarships with grades. "The focus in our institution, Institution X, is often heavily on grades," she said. Administrator C further highlighted that the primary purpose of pursuing a college degree is to serve as a stepping stone towards achieving one's career goals, which involves obtaining the degree, securing employment, and striving for success. She also elucidated the correlation between the significant decrease in enrollment and the increasing availability of non-degree-required employment opportunities. These administrators held the belief that the culture of high accomplishment is nurtured in students through their family and the American culture of striving for exceptional performance. From the student viewpoint, there was a strong agreement among all six students regarding their prioritization of personal life fulfillment and preferred career. The development of social objectives, such as forming friendships and engaging in leisure activities with peers, or achievement goals, such as obtaining a degree and securing a job that meets their financial needs, were be influenced by personal preferences and expectations.

Interview Question 4: What do you think are the student's achievement/social/personal goals to attend the program at your institution?

Student 1: I took the psychology major so I can help others, especially woman with domestic abuse. I am a full-time student that took grants and loans and live barely with what I have. But my career will pay me well.

Student 2: My goals are to having fun in doing what I love. I always want to design something so my career must be related to it. I took a civil

engineering major and my goal is to get the degree and be successful in my field. It is the basis for a success life.... Fun is more important than money. That why I involve in many groups and leisure activities to make friends and have fun. I planned to reduce my course load so I can balance my learning and leisure time, which may take me five year to graduate.

Student 3: My goals ... changed when I came in the university: I think I want to become a detective or working in FBI but the courses in my major [criminal psychology] are teaching different things. But college is a period of finding yourself, your why and how... I found my calling after a field trip/case class. Now I feel connected in helping people, support students, mentoring and advocacy... I feel satisf[ied]...

Student 4: I always love to learn things and know things. And I want to have a better professional that fulfill my interest of learning. I also have a personal story of making up for my younger year of dropping the college. I do concern about the debt in college and the down-turn market after graduation. But with a long-term career [Psychologist], I will pay out my debt, secure my life in the old year and do what I love for long.

Student 5: It starts with my personal goal of helping myself [with social work major] and helping others. I always believe in a holistic approach of human development and expect contribute on it... I find hard to be on fraternity or organization involvement due to my full-time employment. However, I still connect with my peers and classmates through digital group [group chat, Group Me]....

Student 6: My goal is to graduate next semester so I can follow up with my Master program after this. It helps me to chase my dream of becoming an athletic trainer. I know my career will not bring in a great fortune but I can make enough for taking care myself and my family.

The in-depth interview explored the alignment of administrators and students on the importance of achieving a degree and securing employment (achievement goals). In addition, they recognized the importance of social interaction and individual satisfaction (social and personal objectives). The study revealed inconsistencies in the way these objectives are expressed and ranked at different levels of the organization, using in-depth interviews.

Administrators were unable to reach a consensus on how to balance and prioritize academic achievement, social development, and personal growth. However, student responses indicate a wide range of individual priorities, which suggests a possible disconnect between the messages from the institution, the perspectives of administrators, and the needs of students.

Research question 3: What obstacles do these students face in achieving their educational objectives?

Responses from three questions were used to explore research question three: Q7. What do you think are the student's challenges to achieving their goals in higher education? Q8. Does your institution support students to deal with those challenges?, and Q9. What do you think are the top three challenges of undergraduate students in the public education system? These questions explored what the administrators observe and analyze about the obstacles that the undergraduate students meet in Institution X and how they deal with them within the context of the system. Then the group of students provided their critical and practical perspectives.

The in-depth interview also sought to uncover other challenges through the use of other questions: Q5. Does your institution clarify (in any published materials, website, strategic plans, and other documents) its vocational and non-vocational goals in educating students? How students understand access to institutional support was explored in Q6. Does the student know/reach out to any institutional support for achieving their goals?).

The answers from both administrators and students can be categorized into themes: (1) Personal obstacles: students' issues from their individual approaches toward the goals (mentality, family and financial status, lack of knowledge, fear and others); (2) Institutional obstacles: the systematic challenges from the institution X and the related stakeholders (curriculum, accessibility, staff and faculty, marketing misrepresentation...), (3) Path-way obstacles: The misunderstanding or lack of navigation during the process toward goals (lack of guidance, unclear pathway, the unpredictable change of the process). To clarify the obstacles students encounter, the study provides a connection toward the final research question regarding the solutions of goal-setting strategy and further recommendations in the chapter five.

Administrators' Perspectives

Half of the administrators interviewed (5 out of 10) heavily emphasized personal challenges faced by students, including lack of preparedness in terms of skills and the mindset required for their college journey. The adoption of novel methods for acquiring knowledge and engaging in social interactions has the potential to revolutionize individuals' way of life and their cognitive approach to personal and professional growth. Furthermore, due to the intricate nature of the university system, students may easily become disoriented and experience a sense of alienation, giving rise to personal challenges in terms of their mental well-being. Additional personal concerns encompass familial, financial, and cultural matters. If students face significant

financial challenges due to their struggling families, consumerism culture, and alternative opportunities for earning money without a degree, they may prioritize financial success over pursuing a career they are passionate about or acquiring the knowledge they deserve to gain in college. Furthermore, when individuals observe peers achieving success without a formal education or financial investments, they may become disoriented in their pursuit of goals and question their decision to pursue a college education. Another significant concern is the deficiency of self-support abilities among students, including the ability to assert oneself, pose appropriate inquiries, seek assistance, and recognize their own difficulties. They also give up too easily in their search for answers. Multiple administrators have expressed concern about the absence of structure and a proactive approach among students with respect to their personal growth and progress.

Interview question 6: Do students know/reach out to any institutional support for achieving their goals?

Administrator F: ... Student now is lost of ability to seek information. You need to provide for them the answer immediately or they will not get it even after a few click[s] throughout the website...

Administrator F highlighted the institutional barrier that hinders the student's progress. The university should put a greater emphasis on providing student-centered information through a personalized marketing strategy. This approach should prioritize promoting individualized and social support for students throughout their academic journey. Furthermore, to address the issue of students' mindset, universities should encourage their students to embrace the unpredictability of their professional and personal growth, particularly during their socialization experiences outside of the classroom. Institution X offered various information and resources, but its teaching

activities followed a superficial "say it and done" style. There is an abundance of information that can be confusing for both students and staff on the university's combined efforts to serve students.

Interviewer: What do you think about the student orientation program ?

Administrator A: ...The wealth of information provided during the student orientation weeks and throughout the first semester of undergraduate studies tends to fade from students' memory after a few semesters.

Two administrators (B & D) in this group also mentioned that the higher education system in the United States is characterized by a culture of high success and intense competition. Students are expected to independently grasp the material or risk falling behind. Amidst this environment, the university fails to give students proper guidance, a supportive approach, and role models to assist students in shaping their career objectives.

Another institutional resource issue is the significant shortage of important positions that directly support students, such as academic advisors or career coaches, who play a crucial role in meeting student demands. Administrator B pointed out the absence of professional conduct and exemplary behavior among certain university leaders, as well as the lack of active collaboration and collective knowledge sharing among departments and centers in finding helpful solutions for their students. Additionally, some university administrators highlighted the erroneous presumption held by numerous academic and staff members regarding their roles and the students. It is believed that students should independently acclimate to the university environment and proactively seek assistance from the appropriate department. The job descriptions for each position will determine their priorities, and based on their specific job

function, the responsibilities related to student support and personal/professional development will fall under either the division of student affairs and student achievement or the career development center. This ideology also resulted in inefficient collaboration and communication across different departments in a comprehensive manner.

Within the realm of obstacles faced by students, there are specific barriers that administrators are particularly concerned about. These include a lack of clarity regarding the personal and professional growth of students, inaccuracies in grading and academic accomplishments, and a lack of advice and assistance. Due to the constraints of student abilities and the institutional model, students often face challenges in their academic journey. One major challenge is the lack of a comprehensive understanding of their personal and professional growth within their programs. Additionally, administrators share that students often lack access to guidance and support from someone who can assist them in navigating their educational path. The challenges faced by individuals in their personal and professional development as global citizens and leaders arises from the lack of preparation and guidance provided by educational institutions during the initial stages of their academic journey. Subsequently, students encounter hindrances such as confusion, inability to comprehend the programs, and challenges in adapting to student life, which divert them from their intended route. In order to regain their focus, individuals require assistance from academic advisors and faculty members who themselves lack the necessary resources to offer a comprehensive support system for mental, personal, career, and academic growth. Additionally, there is a lack of teamwork towards finding a collective solution.

Three additional administrators identified institutional obstacles as the primary factor contributing to other problems: the institution lacks a cohesive ideology that can unite and guide

its staff and faculty in supporting its pupils. It is based on the incorrect notion that "college students" will inherently take the initiative to ask inquiries and seek assistance. Furthermore, students encounter difficulty in establishing reliable relationships within the university, as the college's staff members prefer to maintain relationships based on transactional exchanges. During a crisis, the student lacks the capacity to effectively handle it, identify and address trauma, and find solutions. The administrator also highlighted the presence of institutional barriers, which arise from the divergent perspectives and objectives of many departments and organizations as well as the shortage of capable staff to conduct a comprehensive approach to education. An administrator from the academic affairs department noted that although Liberal Arts Colleges, including the one she graduated from, consistently talk about providing complete support, they have not yet been successful in doing so. The pathway challenge is dependent on the navigator who possesses complete knowledge of personal and professional development assistance. The institutional barriers include insufficient availability of resources to support student development, a lack of collaboration to gain a comprehensive understanding of student success, and a misunderstanding of student requirements.

The second aspect is students who are inadequately prepared for the transition to college, who often lack the necessary skills and understanding of the entire college experience that they gradually acquire over time. The experience of unfamiliarity, ambiguity, and a sense of not fitting within the institution can exacerbate existing mental health problems. The previous leader of this organization highlighted the institutional problem that X fails to provide assistance to students dealing with family matters, while also struggling with inadequate resources to address financial issues. The students themselves lack drive and a mindset of achievement. In addition to this method, the institution must also assume the responsibility of offering a practical road for

students' personal and professional growth, as well as training the staff and faculty to adhere to a single guideline.

Two administrators aimed to address the dual issues of ensuring institutional accessibility to resources and fostering positive transactional relationships between students and the university. Additionally, they wanted to support students who may not be fully prepared for the transition to college life and integration into new social groups. In order to facilitate the personal and professional growth of students within this complicated setting, the institution should adopt a supportive approach to address their lack of knowledge and experience. Nevertheless, the institution is facing difficulties in providing a comprehensive strategy that is specifically designed to meet the individual needs of the students, due to the constraints of the current budget and job function. The student can personally perceive the university's own perplexity in failing to offer the necessary assistance to navigate the intricate process of personal growth. An administrator of this organization highlighted the institutional challenges stemming from the program's inflexibility, curricular limitations, and the bureaucratic hurdles that hinder student access. The financial concern of students is also addressed, and the university's response, such as scholarships, is intertwined with the bureaucratic nature of the system, which is focused on grades, tight progression, and limited choices. The school leader emphasizes the importance of recognizing the distinctiveness of various regions and groups. Institution X is urged to devise tailored strategies to cater to their specific target populations. The impediments that students encounter throughout their academic journeys are: going from a grade-based learning and socializing strategy in P-12 education and a family-oriented society to a university environment with a professional growth pathway, significant financial pressure, and a complex system. This administrator emphasized the need to establish reliable connections inside the system,

particularly with academic advisors and faculty members that they frequently meet with, as a vital strategy for navigating their path. These navigators will assist individuals in their respective domains and also offer guidance or referrals to the appropriate services that meet their need. Nevertheless, due to their restricted capacity, each academic advisor is responsible for an average of 200 students, which prevents them from offering additional assistance beyond guidance on course selection for their degree. Faculty and professors prioritize supporting their students in class-related matters over other responsibilities that are not part of their job description.

Students' Perspectives

From the perspective of students, the majority (83%) mentioned their own personal obstacles as their primary concerns. These challenges encompass a range of factors, including mental health conditions such as bipolar disorder and introversion, personal challenges such as familial and financial difficulties, and difficulties in adapting to new transitions, such as struggling to focus, lacking time management skills, and grappling with the use of new technologies. Regarding mental health and personal traits, it has been observed that the student support center, which offers services that include counseling and career development, is not effectively promoting itself to capture the attention of students and provide assistance when it could aid struggling students.

Interview question 6: Do you know/reach out to any institutional support
for achieving your goals?

Student 3:... I tried the counseling center service before, but I felt like they didn't
listen to me. Then I had to look for other service out of campus...Until my

third years in the Institution, I just knew that I should reach out the career development center to help developing my professional plan...

Student 4:... I don't know that should I try to attend a wellness program because I don't know how much it gonna be. And I just forgot to ask for information due to classes and work.

In addition to the personal challenges that affect their academic performance, students anticipated receiving additional assistance and guidance from the institution in developing essential life skills such as time management, financial management, and life coaching. There are several challenges in the curriculum, including limited flexibility in course offerings and the integration of technology in the classroom. None of the six students can remember the impact of the orientation session they attended in their first year, nor any goal-setting training that could have aided them in independently achieving success in college. The other student was primarily focused on the institutional challenge of the curriculum and wishes to delay completing their degree by five years in order to achieve a balance between their academic and college life.

Both administrators and students recognized significant obstacles stemming from personal, institutional, and pathway factors. Nevertheless, they held contrasting views on the origins of these roadblocks. Administrators mostly attributed student unpreparedness and lack of institutional support, calling for more resource awareness and goal-setting training. Students, on the other hand, highlighted deficiencies inside the institution, pointing out the inaccessibility of support services and the absence of personalized guidance. Although the two groups had different perspectives, they both acknowledged the importance of enhancing institutional support. Students expressed a desire for better access to resources and career assistance, while administrators aimed to enhance communication and collaboration within the organization. This

study emphasizes the intricate interaction between individual obstacles and institutional deficiencies that impede student achievement, emphasizing the need for a collective effort to cultivate a more nurturing and empowering educational setting at Institution X.

Summary

This chapter presents a thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews carried out with the administrators and undergraduate students at Institution X. The comprehensive interview was conducted with ten university administrators from various departments (including student affairs, academic affairs, dean of college, student service counseling, and resident) who have extensive experience working at Institution X, ranging from their first semester to over 30 years. These administrators have direct and indirect involvement with students. Additionally, six students from different school years, majors, ages, and genders volunteered to participate. The study also utilized the publicly available resources of Institution X, including its website, strategy plan, marketing materials, emails, and newspaper articles, to gather the essential data needed for the study. The interview protocol consisted of three introductory questions, followed by ten research interview questions. Additionally, there are a few more in-depth questions designed to address the three main research objectives of the study. Data preparation involved tasks such as transcribing interviews, conducting initial tagging, and fully engaging with the data. After conducting a thorough examination of the data, the findings were classified into several themes that aligned with each of the three main research questions. The findings pertained to the three research inquiries about student objectives, institutional orientation, administrator work, challenges and the impact of goal-setting on college performance.

The study presents a theoretical framework of leadership, highlighting the importance of its contribution to the field of leadership research. This chapter extensively employs actual

quotations from respondents to convey the perspectives of the administrators and students. In order to safeguard privacy and account for the small sample size, this study does not attribute quotations to specific individuals or organizations.

Research question 4: What initiatives can the institution, leaders, and students take to better align the goals toward student's standpoint?

After defining the set of goals of students toward their college lives as well as the institutional, personal and pathway challenges toward their process, I explored solutions that apply the path-goal theory of changing leaders behavior toward students, motivating students based on leader's behaviors, setting tasks and goals with students, and tackling the obstacles mentioned above. The answers are decoded and categorized based on the interviewee's perspective toward four interview questions: Q10. Do students have any goal-setting strategies to achieve their goals? Q11. How does your institution support students to clarify their path-goal approach? Q12. What is motivating students to achieve their goals? Q13. Do students embrace commitment, clarity, challenges, complexity, and feedback in their goal-setting process?

Throughout the in-depth interviews, I also provided some thoughts about the holistic approach of education, a shared knowledge database among departments and applying technology in collaboration that also related to the topic of the study. My actions were not meant to be leading. My intent was to ensure there was a dialogue and to prompt the participants. Possible solutions mentioned were categorized into four different categories: (1) Directive (giving specific tasks, directions, and requirements); (2) Supportive (providing guidance, mentoring, and counseling); (3) Participative (joining the decision-making process), and (4) Achievement-oriented (demanding an achievement goal from others).

Administrators' Perspectives

The directive solution to guide students towards achieving their academic goals involves implementing a requirement for them to complete university discovery and student orientation courses during their first year of study. The course must include a substantial array of goal-setting tools, time management techniques, and other essential skills and knowledge to assist students in effectively navigating their college experience. The outcome of these courses should be a self-designed personal and professional growth trajectory, facilitated by advisors and institutional resources. The Goal-Setting approach can be taught to students, but its effectiveness may be hindered if they are unable to implement it within their specific practical circumstances. Universities offer a wide range of courses and ways to teach students, but some students struggle to apply the knowledge they acquire. Students are obligated to meet with their advisor on a semester basis to review and update their plan. This ensures that they stay on track with their goals, align their degree path with their personal and professional development, and address any mental or financial challenges they may have along the way. The present Advising Center possesses sufficient resources to offer degree guidance and provide students with access to career coaches and mentors for additional support, if required. The school should proactively assist students in creating a comprehensive plan for their personal and professional growth, while also providing instruction on how to interpret and navigate this plan. The institution has the option to offer a comprehensive approach and assist students in creating their professional development plan during the last semester, specifically in the Capstone course. This administrator strongly supports the implementation of goal-setting teaching methods but does not believe that involving professors or offering more courses will be beneficial.

When taking a supportive approach, the institution should engage in dialogue with individuals and guide them through their personal and career development plan. A dialogue including various groups of faculty and staff, followed by the inclusion of students to gain a deeper understanding of the student body and the present circumstances. During these dialogues, it is essential to elucidate our standpoint regarding student objectives and ascertain the true nature of student aims. Next, the institution can proceed to the subsequent stages of teaching goal-setting and implementing it for each student's individual circumstances with the assistance of institutional support. The institution must establish a collaborative effort among advisors, counselors, coaches, and mentors to assist students in formulating their initial personal and professional development plan. An explicit framework encompassing personal, professional, and educational trajectories could assist other advisors, mentors, and coaches in identifying and providing assistance for issues. Furthermore, an encouraging approach should take into account the mindset of the students. The university should allocate additional time to support first-year students in navigating the transition with a confident and humanistic approach.

Administrators have seen that students shared ideas regarding their goals, but they struggle to overcome their fear and worry without a well-defined plan. Students attend college not only for career advancement but also for personal growth as social individuals. Individuals must be mindful of their own objectives, societal principles, and career advancement, all of which require structured direction in goal-setting. Institution must assist students in overcoming their self-disappointment with their failure and their confusion regarding the personal and professional development trajectory in college. Students require increased individualized attention, psychological assistance in navigating feelings of confusion, and a greater presence of staff members in the residence hall to proactively address potential difficulties. Additionally, this

implies require a greater number of advisors and career counselors. Another administrator also stressed that contemporary culture is leading students astray from critical thinking and professional growth. We must not leave them to handle this on their own, but rather assist them. In one college affiliated with Institution X, a prototype of a supportive intervention was implemented. This intervention involved the appointment of two full-time faculty members as student navigators. The primary role of these navigators was to actively engage with students in the college, providing them with support and advice throughout their program and college experience. This approach has garnered numerous good reviews and is currently awaiting the collection of additional qualitative data to assess its performance.

Within the framework of participative solution, administrators mentioned the involvement of advisors in assisting students in formulating their personal and professional development trajectory. Additionally, advisors serve as evaluators and mentors for students on a semester basis, ensuring that the trajectory remains on course and allows for appropriate adjustments.

Interview question 11: How does your institution support students to clarify their path-goal approach?

Administrator A: We should prepare our advisors/counselors to discuss...career training, life coaching, academic development... We cannot just tell students all of those in six weeks and walk away, we need to provide them the feedback...participate with them...

Administrator B: We should have better advising program to get and understand the map [personal and professional development plan].... We need more advisor, career counselor who really care about student...

Administrator I: About human capital, advisors and faculty definitely need to help student. But it is not their prioritized responsibility. Freshmen has academic advisor for the first two years until they have faculty advisors that provide more guidance at career development.

Similar to the degree track, the personal and professional pathway also requires the involvement of an advisor and career mentor to ensure that any changes or adjustments are made correctly and to prevent students from making incorrect decisions due to minor setbacks or mental challenges. Prior to implementing directive and supportive interventions for student pathways, it is essential for the institution, administrators, faculty, and staff to engage in collective knowledge sharing. This will enable them to create a comprehensive overview of the student's personal and professional development plan and how it can be connected to the real world. The map must also be integrated with the existing industry and market system to ensure that it accurately represents the real landscape and structure. Administrators recognize that certain key centers, such as the Career Development or Advising Center, lack the necessary resources and capabilities to effectively lead the collaboration plan. However, there are still similar activities taking place, such as the Council of Advisory or quarterly meetings involving representatives from Institution X, workforce leaders, and community leaders. These activities aim to provide students with realistic information and requirements to develop skills that align with their career expectations. The institution itself must provide greater empowerment to justify and systematize those resources into a formal guideline or assistance program.

In the context of achievement-oriented solutions, there is limited discussion of the establishment of personal, achievement, and social goals for students, which can serve to enhance their motivation to actively participate in college.

Extended question: What should you advise students to do to be successful?

Administrator B: My advice is to keep a good grade (not excellence), get involve in one student organization, make friends in there (so they feel hard to leave the group) and get hand-on learning. The most successful student I saw will have a good grade, making friends and taking leadership position in student organization, take multiple internship and co-work in the summer.... and college could be the best time of your life.

Another option to solving the problem is implementing a transformation strategy for professors and staff, which will in turn lead to transforming the institution and improving the interaction with students. An administrator believes that to motivate students, instructors, and staff, it is necessary to establish stronger relationships with them in order to identify their own sources of inspiration.

Interview question 11: How does your institution support students to clarify their path-goal approach?

Administrator G: We need to start from training staff with a transformational approach toward students, which is the key solution to transform the relationship between university and student. Then we can provide resources for them to transform students to be better and also transform the institution.

Another administrator also believes that it is necessary to prioritize further staff training on supporting students during their transition into college. The program not only offers valuable resources to assist students, including ways for setting goals, but also brings about a fundamental shift in their approach to their work and the students they serve. She acknowledges that a more collaborative and easily available approach could enhance student professional growth. However, she believes that the student experience and personal development should be fostered through deliberate relationships rather than relying just on structural assistance. She recognizes the difficulty of budgeting and the frequent turnover of the educational personnel. To address this, the proposed answer is to enhance the training team by offering additional incentives such as opportunities for continuing education, promotions, and compensation benefits like housing. From the perspective of the student, the achievement-oriented approach would be closely connected to ways for creating goals. They also emphasize the necessity of support and active involvement from the institution and school leader. Several students expressed the need for the university to offer further instruction on goal-setting and navigating college life. The majority of students are unable to remember the significance or value of student orientation courses or the relevance of comprehending university courses during their first year, and how these courses align with their personal and professional objectives.

Student's Perspectives

The majority of students reported receiving helpful involvement from their advisors, faculty members, and the financial department when they sought assistance. Nevertheless, students want further assistance in formulating their individualized and career-oriented development plan, complete with clear instructions, helpful suggestions, and up-to-date

information. Additional clarification is required regarding their degree trajectory, the significance of courses, and their contribution to both personal and professional growth.

Interview question 11: How does your institution support students to clarify their path-goal approach?

Student 4:...I wish the university could teach more about it at school...My college friends do not know what they are missing. They may hear about it [goals and development path] without understanding the meaning of it. Student is lack of deep thinking... Parents do not know how to help them too... The university should in charge of it...

In the participative solution, students will require the involvement of an advisor and mentor to assess, provide feedback, and make necessary adjustments to their developmental and degree paths. Certain students anticipate further assistance from the university in comprehending their academic trajectory and the relevance of their courses to their professional advancement. She is perplexed by the fact that each time she arrives at a new school, the system becomes increasingly difficult to comprehend. The advisor is unable to facilitate their comprehension of it. The institution should implement a participatory intervention that serves as a navigator, providing guidance and handouts to assist students in comprehending the pathway. A student recounted her personal experience of leaving school as a result of feeling separated from the university and experiencing a loss of self-esteem owing to academic setbacks.

During the achievement-oriented solution, it is remarkable that all students are able to discover their own methods for learning goal-setting strategies and share commonalities in their approaches. Specifically, they all aim to attain a degree within a given timeframe, while ensuring

a comfortable experience. Subsequently, students utilized this initial reference point to chart their plan for achieving goals on a semester basis. The majority of individuals compile a list of objectives encompassing academic accomplishments (such as GPA and course selection), engagement in social activities (such as spending time with peers and participating in social work), personal and professional growth (including part-time employment, internships, and hobbies), and ensuring a high standard of living (via relaxation and preserving financial stability). To maintain their final goals, students shared that they engage in a gradual self-evaluation of the plan, making adjustments such as dropping out of classes, reducing course loads, or dropping a minor. Two students are willing to extend their academic program by an additional semester to achieve a balance between their school load and comfortable lifestyle, even if it results in accruing more student loans. Prior to compiling the list of goals, it is imperative for them to comprehend all the courses, prerequisites (for scholarships or graduation), and the timetable to make an informed option. Four individuals utilize timecards to effectively manage their tasks within specified timeframes, while also allocating time for varied activities during the semester. They prioritize their goals and time allocation based on their expectations for the semester. The degree path is typically given the highest importance, followed by social goals and other personal/professional development objectives such as hobbies, internships, and mental development training. They proceed to break down the list of goals into an action plan and smaller, manageable stages that are both attainable and motivating, encouraging them to continue achieving more.

Throughout the in-depth interviews, five out of six students acknowledged that goal-setting plans help them to keep track of their work and progress. Goal-setting is essential for a student to maintain concentration on learning without excessive effort. It contributes to his/her

life equilibrium by allowing him/her to enjoy the learning process without it being overly demanding or time-consuming. Other students engage in various methods of goal-setting, such as Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), Organizational focus, or Franklin Covey's model, to actively learn and apply techniques for planning, creating lists, addressing tasks, and taking notes. The personal experience of finding guidance in life through goals particularly connected with Student 4.

12. What is motivating students to achieve their goals?

Student 4:... I have a family tragedy that pressure myself to find the way out of helplessness and hopelessness. I need goal-setting to guide myself, develop self-actualizing and it became my coping mechanism...My ultimate goal is to have a meaningful job and self-fulfilment my life with financial security and professional development.

She expressed concerns over the challenge of sustaining commitment. In order to accomplish this, she must establish enjoyable objectives, such as engaging in conversations with friends and participating in outdoor activities, alongside a demanding and difficult task, such as completing challenging school assignments or writing essays. An enjoyable and interactive objective could be a prize for a demanding target. She acknowledges that setting excessively high goals might lead to burnout, therefore, establishing tough and complex goals requires a certain technique. Another strategy is to adjust the objective if she did not achieve it in order to reinvigorate her determination. She acknowledges that her fear of failure outweighs her desire for accomplishment. Some students may attempt to communicate their path goal to advisors and family members to solicit evaluation and objective input to enhance their work.

When considering the motivation of students to attain their goals, many students begin with their personal narratives and objectives, which then extend to encompass other accomplishments and social aspirations along their journey. The overarching objectives of the large picture are to extricate individuals from failure and guide them through problems.

Interview question 12: What is motivating students to achieve their goals?

Student 1:... I saw that men have better chance than women without a degree. In my previous job, they rather select a no experience employee with an associate degree to be the team leader than an employee with five years experience in that team....

Student 2:... To get a degree that serve for my good job. This career can support myself and my family.... I know because it is the nature of the job that you need a degree to be an engineer, but we also should never stop learning...

Student 3:... I am an over-achiever that my motivation is to making different for others ... and also make my mom proud....

Student 4:... My intrinsic motivation is to learn a new thing and to develop a better self... I think student should pick one goal that they passion and stick with it until you find a better one.... Struggle is not bad, it teach you some thing...

Student 5: Try to develop the best of myself... try to involve in anyway you can...It could be challenge, it could be fail, but the result could be great...

Student 6: My fear of living in lack of security as my mom... Fear of poor, failure and missing a life goal....

While both students and administrators concur on the need to define goals for achieving success, their perspectives often diverge. Students desire personalized assistance, comprehension, and adaptability to pursue a wide range of goals such as social development and emotional wellness. Administrators support the implementation of organized interventions and resources to prioritize academic success and professional goals. Although there are variations between the two groups, they both recognize the necessity for enhanced institutional assistance, individualized mentoring, and a cooperative strategy to surmount obstacles and promote student goal attainment.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter will address the three primary research inquiries of the study by examining relevant literature and analyzing empirical qualitative data obtained from two key stakeholders of the institution: students and administrators. A discussion of the constraints of qualitative research, such as the utilization of random sampling in the data gathering process, as well as other research difficulties, are also presented. This chapter also establishes additional connections between the topics of the study and proposes a leadership paradigm that may effectively address the challenges of students' personal and professional growth. This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of the research data and discusses the overarching themes and novel challenges that have arisen from this study. The analysis starts by extrapolating significant themes about the impact of presidents' professional traits, with a specific emphasis on discipline, scholarship, and gender. This study focuses on the leadership practices, leadership dispositions, and leadership approaches that were identified. This study examines the impact of contextual elements on mediation. Ultimately, the many components are consolidated into a framework for leadership in higher education, based on the significant discoveries made in the preceding sections.

Discussion of Findings

The Intended Goals of Public Higher Education Case-study May be in Tension with Supporting Students Goals

The literature review demonstrated the range of objectives that institutions anticipate their students will accomplish during their time in college. The Goal-Setting approach allows us to understand how the complexity of goals in the public higher education system can be

perceived by students. In the exploratory case study of Institution X, I reiterate the systematic goals of public higher education institutions, which must prioritize the needs of students and also fulfill the socioeconomic requirements of the public school system as stated by Avery and Turner (2012); Brenman et al. (2013); and McArthur (2011). Based on the analysis of Institution X's Mission Statement, Purpose, Vision, Core Values, and Strategic Plan (see Table 5), I found an integration among the personal, social and achievement goals that Institution X champions for its students. The Strategic Plan 2018 - 2028 provided further supportive programs to develop hard skills, as well as developing soft skills through holistic learning experiences, out-of-class activities, study abroad opportunities, and other collegiate life support programs. This is different from the concerns of Savitz-Romer and Rowan-Kenyon (2020) about lack of workforce readiness skills development.

Through in-depth interviews, the data gathered revealed that administrators and students comprehend and acknowledge the diverse objectives that Institution X strives to offer its students. During the interviews, the researcher investigated whether Institution X clearly communicates its vocational goals (such as professional development and degree completion) and non-vocational goals (such as fostering good citizenship and lifelong learning) through published materials such as the website, strategic plans, and other documents. Most administrators (7 out of 10) agreed that the institution emphasizes not only academic success, but also other aspects of college life, such as student engagement, institutional spirit, and social impact. This is done through various means, including the website, email, and posters displayed around campus. From the perspective of the students, all six of them concurred that Institution X produced diligent efforts and assistance in promoting student achievement. They discovered abundant information through emails and newsletters from various departments, student services, student clubs, and research

chances to participate in extracurricular activities on campus. Information regarding fraternity membership, social activities, and career fairs can be easily obtained through email correspondence and posters displayed in prominent campus buildings. They embraced the need to maintain a harmonious equilibrium between academic accomplishments and student life to enhance their college experience and to find opportunities for professional advancement. Despite their limited familiarity with X's mission statement and strategic plan, they identified email as their primary source of information, followed by other marketing channels such as social media, flyers, and posters. This finding is different from the warnings of Liu et al. (2012) because students have their sense of purpose to attend college and expect to achieve some goals after graduation. Moreover, the expectation to pursue the diverse goals of Institution X does not directly raise conflicts among stakeholders, education providers, and employers as with the concerns voiced in Barber et al. (2013).

Students Achieve Degrees for Bigger Goals, while the College and Administrators Think Differently

The interview revealed that administrators are more perplexed by the students' objectives in the university than the students themselves. Neither of those stakeholders can recollect any information from the university's Strategic Plan or any other referenced public publications. During a more extensive inquiry, the administrators have been unable to ascertain a consensus regarding the ranking of academic accomplishment goals, job development goals, or other financial goals related to increasing income. The administrators adopted a pragmatic approach, relying on their experience and actionable knowledge but lack a systematic understanding of their students. Locke (2009) noted that professionals in higher education often disregard educational research and mostly rely on personal experiences and subjective judgments when

making decisions. Based on their interview responses, I divided administrators into three groups, reflecting their different perspectives on students' goals in college. The first group, the Personal-Social group, consisted of four administrators. The second group, the Achievement-Personal finance group, included three administrators. Lastly, the Achievement-Personal success group also had three leaders. Nevertheless, all six students prioritized their personal and professional growth, which ultimately contributes to their social and financial objectives. Table 6 shows the disparities in viewpoints and methodologies about student objectives at Institution X among the organization, the administrators, and the students.

Table 6

Different Perspectives on Student Goals

Perspectives	Achievement Goal	Social Goal	Personal Goal	Approach
Institution X	Productive ability in global society by academic success and program completion/ Hard skill	Engaged and responsible citizen - leader by on-campus, out-campus, out-of-class activities, holistic learning experience/ Soft skills	(indirectly) Personal development by achieving Achievement and Social goals; enriched quality of life. Lifelong learner	Achievement and Social goals are priority that lead to personal goal of enriched quality of life and becoming lifelong learners.
Personal-Social group (4)	Degree/Hard skills	Find the group to belong, socialize new groups (institution, community,...)/ Soft skills	Personal and Professional development: career, life fulfillment.	Personal goals are the priority. Achievement and social goals are served to that priority.
Achievement - Personal	Degree (Money making skills)	Making friends	Professional development:	Personal goal is professional

success group (3)			Make more money, get a good career.	development/financial success. Achievement and Social goals are served to that priority.
Achievement - Personal career group (3)	Degree (to get a better career)	Making friends	Professional development that meets personal development	Achievement goal can lead to personal goal of professional development. Social goal is served to that priority.
Student (6)	Degree (to get a better career)	Making friends, socializing with others.	Personal and professional development: career, life fulfillment.	Personal goals are priority. Achievement and Social goals are served to that priority.

Within the Personal-Social group of administrators, there exist two distinct perspectives about personal growth and social aims, which are shaped by their pragmatic approach.

Administrator A, who has accumulated 30 years of experience at Institution X and possesses psychological expertise, emphasizes the importance of prioritizing the social objective of seeking a community to be a part of and gain knowledge from diverse persons, in addition to achieving a degree. During higher education, students discover a community with similar interests through socialization. Engaging in genuine interactions, forming friendships, and receiving guidance from faculty contributes to overall fulfillment in college life. On the other hand, three other administrators of the group are of the opinion that achieving the social objectives could improve students' soft skills, which are becoming increasingly crucial for future personal and professional growth. Administrator H explained the transition in personal, social, and achievement goals in the present day and identified a deficiency in students' readiness for industry-specific objectives. He emphasized that students may begin with the personal objective of attaining a successful career that ensures their livelihood. During their college years, students come to realize that in addition to acquiring knowledge at a specific level to achieve success, they also need to develop

social skills and establish interpersonal relationships. Employers now demand certain soft skills and internship experience. Consequently, students must find a way to strike a balance between their social objectives and their success goals, which align with their own aspirations. Two additional administrators (F & I), who do not have direct involvement with students, concurred with Administrator H regarding the skill-based techniques that contribute to professional development.

Within the Achievement-Personal success group, three school leaders advocated for a strong emphasis on the financial objectives of increasing income, which aligns with the accomplishment goal of securing a lucrative career. Two administrators (B & D), who were directly involved in student recruitment and advising, expressed this perspective based on their extensive experience with students from unique family backgrounds, which constitute a substantial portion of Institution X's population. Additionally, they emphasized that the student's family history and culture play a crucial role in influencing their lifestyle and approach towards goals. The administrators stressed the crucial significance of financial objectives, which may compel certain students to withdraw from their studies upon achieving them prior to completing their credentials. The selection of a financial orientation is a pragmatic decision influenced by the student's familial circumstances and prevailing American cultural norms. Students prefer to enroll in courses that fulfill the requirements of their degree program rather than pursuing general studies or humanities education. Several students recognize the need for personal and social growth, but they are uncertain about what it entails and what their own journeys may look like. The third leader in this group (E) held the same perspective without providing additional clarification.

The last three administrators of the Achievement-Personal career group pointed out the student's key focus is the achievement goal of acquiring a degree that is a gateway to attain the job they are interested in. They expressed concern over students prioritizing grades over education due to their ingrained worldview of the grading system from primary to twelfth grade, as well as the association of scholarships with grades. Administrator C emphasized that the primary purpose of obtaining a college degree is to serve as a steppingstone towards achieving career success, where the degree acts as a means to an end: obtaining employment and striving for advancement. Additionally, she elucidated the correlation between the significant decrease in enrollment and the proliferation of non-degree-required employment opportunities. The administrators (J, G, & C) held the belief that the student's highly achievement-oriented culture is nurtured by both their family and American society, which emphasizes surpassing expectations.

From the perspective of the student, there appeared to be a relationship among all six students in terms of their prioritizing of personal life fulfillment and intended career. This finding reaffirmed the focus on personal growth, career development and social contribution of the literature studies (Blumenstyk, 2015; McMahon & Oketch, 2013; Kennett et al., 2011). The development of social goals, such as forming friendships and engaging in leisure activities with peers, or success goals, such as obtaining a degree and securing a job that meets their financial needs, will be influenced by personal choices and expectations. The majority of students aspire to find life fulfillment and pursue a lifelong job that allows them to serve others while engaging in activities they are passionate about. The focus goals on personal and professional development is different from the Gallup 2022 report in which sixty five percent of surveyed students prioritize acquiring knowledge/skills (Gallup, 2023). The knowledge achievement and academic

credentials are only mentioned among two students who are seeking to become an engineer or academic scholar. Moreover, the knowledge and skills need to be related to the students' interests and desired career, which is what most surveyed students looked for in CIRP FTFT 2020 (CIRP Freshman Survey, 2020). In addition, I found that students acknowledged the study program may face challenging, tuition can result in indebtedness, and their socialization skills may be lacking, but they were prepared to assume the risk and confront obstacles in order to attain their objectives. Financial ambitions surprisingly were not a priority for any of the interviewed students, which is different with the Achievement-Personal success group of administrators (B,D, & E). Moreover, the interviewed students also acknowledged that the social objectives of establishing friendships and learning interpersonal skills are crucial in achieving personal and professional growth. This phenomenon led two administrators' groups of Personal-Social development (A, H, F, & I) and Achievement-Personal career (J, G, & C) to have some degree of integration with the goal expectations of their students. According to the in-depth interviews of the student group, the students' goals at Institution X is Professional Achievement-Personal development focus with social development support. This articulate of students' goals helps the study formalize the suggestion approach later as well as provides the initiatives to improve institutional programs.

Institution X Provide Supportive and Participative Programs to Support Student's Path-Goal

Institution X employs a supportive and participative approach and provides guidance throughout its programs and services. This is outlined in the Strategic Plan, which includes objectives such as recruiting college-ready undergraduate students, preparing personalized plans for each student (PPDP), and working to align enrollments with students' PPDPs. Institution X has used a supportive approach to create an atmosphere that fosters the development and

participation of students in constructing a system that is adapted to their needs. Table 7 presents the programs and initiatives of Institution X, which can be classified into two primary approaches of the path-goal theory (supporting and participative).

Table 7

Supportive and Participative Programs for Accomplishing Student Goals

Supportive Approach	Participative Approach	Goal to accomplish
Orientation Program (one day) Information and service (finance, curriculum, student support) Mix of study options, on-campus and off-campus educational opportunities Post-graduation Professional Development Plan Advising and Career Development Center (ACDC) service Holistic learning experience	PPDP Colonnade Program Peer mentoring system	Achievement: Productive ability
DEI Plan 2017-2022 Holistic learning experience Collegiate experience Colonnade Program	PPDP MASTER Transition Program Peer mentoring system	Social: Cultivate good, productive citizens
Holistic learning experience Continuing & Professional Developments services ACDC service Colonnade Program MASTER Transition Program Peer mentoring system	PPDP	Personal: Lifelong learner, enriched quality of life

There are two compulsory programs that freshman must attend at Institution X. The Orientation Program is a single-day event held at the main campus to help students become acquainted with the institution's system, program, and activities. This program offers vital information regarding policies, processes, academic departments, and student services. These students must complete this program to register for classes and ensure that new students have the

required resources and knowledge to begin their academic journey successfully. The general education requirement has been mandatory for all incoming freshmen since the fall semester of 2014. It also applies to readmitted students with a catalog term older than seven years, and transfer students who entered in fall 2014 and after. However, there are some exceptions for students who have already fulfilled the [State] General Education requirements or have joint admission/enrollment status prior to fall 2014. The program offers a comprehensive 39-hour credit curriculum that covers a wide range of subjects including human cultures, the physical and ecological environment, intellectual and practical skills, personal and social responsibility, and integrative learning. The program's first objective is to assist participants in becoming effective college students by equipping them with essential skills such as note-taking, writing, time management, research, group participation, and leadership. The program's second objective is to expand academic and intellectual prospects by equipping students with the fundamental skills necessary for excelling in subsequent academic endeavors. Third, the program acts as a supplementary addition to the student's major. Finally, the program aids students in acquiring vital job skills. To facilitate adjustment to a perpetually evolving world, it is crucial to possess a fundamental skill set and a comprehensive range of knowledge that can be applied in both personal and professional contexts. The Advising and Career Development Center oversees this program.

The MASTER Transition Program is an elective program that requires a fee. It offers sessions and small group activities to first-year students, providing them with crucial information and resources to guarantee their success at Institution X. The small group component of the program aims to introduce students to their peers, who will serve as their support system throughout their journey. The sessions cover additional subjects that are not typically addressed

in regular lectures, such as determining personal objectives, establishing social connections and forming friendships in college, engaging in campus activities, and effectively utilizing university resources such as Financial Aid, Blackboard, and bus routes. Additionally, it offers social events, Traditions Night, and the most extensive community service event at Institute X. The registration price ranges from \$135 for early registration to \$160 for late registration.

The ACDC offers academic guidance to undergraduate students. Advisors possess expertise in undergraduate programs and oversee the coordination of advising operations across academic departments. Their role includes aiding students in choosing courses, connecting them with their employment goals, and ensuring they fulfill all degree requirements within the designated timeframe. The center provides retention assistance and learning materials to facilitate student progress and ensure their perseverance through graduation. This encompasses tailored services for transfer students, students in the process of considering majors, and individuals during other transitional phases. ACDC assists students and alumni in identifying and achieving their career and job objectives. Their services encompass the evaluation of resumes and cover letters, provision of interview strategies and techniques, guidance on job and internship searches, as well as delivery of seminars on career advancement. Students can utilize Handshake, an online employment management program, to have access to work prospects. The Best Expectation Program (BEP) aims to enhance students' academic performance to facilitate graduation. The process is working together with team members to establish attainable academic objectives and resolve any difficulties. The program encompasses workshops, one-on-one sessions, and virtual elements to cater to both online and regional campus students. In addition to its main activities, ACDC also offers tutoring, workshops, and outreach programs. The facility provides a designated area for studying, access to computers specifically for academic purposes,

assistance with complex academic topics, and Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) for particularly demanding courses.

Ambiguous Policies and Miscommunication at Institution X

During the in-depth interviews, a majority of administrators (70%) expressed agreement with the inclusion of not only academic achievements, but also other aspects of college life such as student participation, institutional spirit, and social effect, as important objectives for the institution to communicate to students. This information would be disseminated through various channels such as the website, email, and posters on campus. Nevertheless, they also highlighted the absence of cooperation and integration among departments to effectively employ the strategic plan and a holistic approach to student success. The majority of administrators in the study, ranging from deans to directors, lacked a comprehensive understanding of the 2018-2028 Strategic Plan and its relevance to their work or the aims of the students. Table 5 indicates that the Strategic Plan is the primary directive for implementing supportive programs that assist both students and Institution X in achieving their goals. A clearly articulated strategic plan is in accordance with the institution's mission, vision, and core values, guaranteeing that all decisions and actions are directed by a distinct sense of purpose and contribute to the institution's long-term objectives (Fumasoli, 2018).

Three administrators (B, E, & G) identified a lack of clear communication and direction from the Strategic Plan, while seven other leaders are unable to establish a connection between the Strategic Plan and their departmental activities. Each department must formulate its own strategy plan to align with the Institutional Strategic Plan, even if they lack a comprehensive understanding of the program, guidelines, and objectives outlined in this significant document.

The researcher is unable to get comprehensive information regarding all the activities and initiatives of Institution X on its official webpages or Strategic Plan website.

Furthermore, there are other programs in Table 5 that provide support and encourage participation, which require further clarification.

Institution X does not have a centralized peer mentorship structure in place as outlined in the Strategic Plan. Two colleges within the university offer a peer mentorship system, however it has several limitations. The College of Education (CE) has established the Student Success Center, which offers two mentorship programs. Peer Mentors are upperclassmen who are enthusiastic about helping their peers in navigating the university and exploring campus engagement opportunities. These individuals are student leaders who provide monthly meetings and interactions to offer support and encouragement to first year and first-generation CE students. Peer Mentors directly connect with students to offer emotional support and validation, aid mentees in navigating university processes and resources, and facilitate increased involvement of their peers in the campus community. CE offers an Academic Coaching program where an academic coach collaborates with students to develop strategies for success, such as improving study habits, time management, goal setting, and organizing academic responsibilities. During an academic coaching session, a CE Peer Mentor would initially familiarize themselves with the mentee's present academic circumstances by employing concise tests and questionnaires. Subsequently, they will collaborate with the student to formulate a comprehensive study plan, establish academic objectives, create a structured study timetable, and employ evidence-based techniques to attain academic excellence. Both programs are exclusively for first-year students in the CE program or for first-generation students.

The College of Arts implemented an Academic Journey Mentor Program starting in 2021, which is aimed at cultivating closer connections between faculty members and underrepresented minority students. Faculty members and student mentors in every department provide guidance and support to scholars as they traverse their academic paths. The student mentor must undergo counseling and best practices training to effectively supervise three or fewer freshman or sophomore students who may have various concerns. The mentor and mentee engage in weekly check-ins using various communication channels such as phone calls, text messages, or emails. Additionally, they meet in person once a month, or alternatively, utilize video conferencing platforms like FaceTime or Zoom. The student mentor is supposed to have monthly meetings with both the faculty mentor and the mentees, totaling 4 to 6 hours per month. On the other hand, the faculty mentor is simply obligated to arrange a meeting with the mentees once every semester.

Furthermore, PPDP is not a customized or individualized plan, but rather a collection of online courses that may be accessed at one's convenience, either through self-paced learning or with the guidance of an instructor. However, these courses may require an additional charge. The program offers four courses focused on goal setting, with a range of pricing options from \$95 to \$330, and the choice between self-paced or instructor-led formats. The web-based educational program is offered by the Continuing and Professional Development division of Institution X. Furthermore, there is now no established Post-graduation Professional Development Plan accessible for students to adhere to or utilize. The Continuing & Professional Development program offers a range of training, learning opportunities, events, and conference services for students to engage in, both with and without a cost.

Regarding the communication methods pertaining to the goals and activities of Institution X, three administrators (B, E, & G) expressed worry about the absence of compelling narratives. Administrator B argued that the material provided is not pertinent to the specific needs of students, which is to have a concrete plan for their personal and professional growth. The administrator's distinct viewpoint may be connected to disparities in her personal encounters with students, their attempt to build professional skills, and her understanding of the students' objectives at Institution X. The other two leaders believed that Institution X should provide further clarification regarding their message, but one administrator remained uncertain of the institution's message, despite having some knowledge of it "somewhere out there." It could be associated with the suggestion of enhancing training and information dissemination to administrators from the institutional perspective.

While many administrators appreciated the valuable information and marketing efforts regarding academic and student life, some expressed concerns about the excessive amount of information delivered in a classroom-style format during the Orientation Program, which follows a "say it and done" strategy. An administrator from ACDC remarked that she cannot recollect the quality and evaluation of the one-day orientation program organized by the Admissions Department. Nevertheless, many students flock to ACDC in search of assistance in navigating various aspects of college life. This includes not only academic guidance, but also support in personal development (such as mental health issues or career changes) and opportunities to engage in meaningful social events that contribute to their personal and professional growth. During the comprehensive interview, none of the six students were able to remember the impact of the orientation program in their first year or any goal-setting instruction that could assist them in independently achieving success in college. There is a lack of publicly available assessment of

the orientation program or data that can offer a comprehensive understanding of this program for students or administrators. The majority of interviewed administrators were aware of the existence of an orientation for freshmen, but they were unable to establish a connection between the program and the challenges that students face in achieving success in college. The interviewed student groups likewise did not mention the Colonnade Program. Additionally, two administrators (C & G) were aware of the existence of an orientation program for students, but they cannot confirm its effectiveness. The researcher was unable to locate any publicly available assessments or resources pertaining to this program for additional scrutiny. The dissemination of this program's material is restricted to the Strategic Plan Committee and relevant departments for internal audit purposes. The presence of confusing and false information has the potential to greatly impede stakeholder interactions and disrupt the functioning of the university (Jongbloed et al., 2018). It is not the variety of goals, but the ambiguous nature of policies and miscommunications that are challenging students and administrators to understand the objectives and supportive programs at Institution X.

Administrators and Students on Obstacles

The answers from both administrators and students can be categorized into three groups of (1) Personal obstacles of students; (2) Institutional obstacles, the program and staff and (3) Path-way obstacles that arise from finishing their path-goals of personal and professional development. Table 8 displays the difference in perspective on student's obstacles among students and administrators.

Table 8*Different Perspectives on Obstacles amongst Student and Administrators*

Perspectives	Personal (student) obstacles	Institutional obstacles	Pathway obstacles	Approach
Five Administrators	Underprepared	Lack of student-focus information, lack of effective support.	Unclear professional development pathway No navigation	The personal obstacles are the first issue making student need more support and navigation from the institution.
Three Administrators	Underprepared Generational characteristic (lack of responsibility, advocacy)	Lack of effective support, disconnected with student.	Unclear professional development pathway No navigation	The institutional obstacles are the first issue making unprepared students hard to navigate from the journey.
Two Administrators	Underprepared	Lack of effective support, disconnected with student.	Unclear professional development pathway No navigation	Both personal obstacles and institutional obstacles are challenging the student.
Six Students	Underprepared Personal and family issues	Lack of student-focus information, lack of effective support.	Unclear professional development pathway No navigation	The personal obstacles are the first issue making student need more support and navigation from the institution.

From the administrators' perspective, the majority (five out of ten) identified personal obstacles as the main reasons for students' lack of preparedness in terms of their skill set, mindset, and financial situation when transitioning to college. The second challenge arose from institutional hurdles, specifically the lack of assistance from the university in meeting student requirements. This includes issues such as unclear program structures and faculty assumptions

about students. The third difficulty, the lack of a comprehensive institutional vision and the absence of guidance for struggling students, was also identified. The students' mental issues of feeling a lack of belonging to the organization, a lack of connection, and self-disappointment arise from a lack of guidance and understanding of their chosen pathway. It may resemble the notion of "uncertainty of belonging," which influences how students perceive and understand daily challenges, often viewing bad experiences as proof of their lack of belonging (Gopalan & Brady, 2020).

The other three administrators see the institutional obstacles as the primary explanation for student challenges. This group of administrators identified the prevailing generational trait among contemporary students: a deficiency in assuming responsibility for their work and advocating for themselves when seeking assistance. The institution was compelled to take proactive measures to give them increased support and direction. The term "disconnected with students" refers not just to the absence of actively engaging activities from the institution, but also to the absence of relationships between students and staff, faculty, and administrators. The officials cautioned that the transactional nature of the students' interaction with the institution's workers may hinder their ability to seek assistance. This cohort of administrators held the belief that the school bears a significant obligation to enhance student support and establish a robust rapport with students, as it has pledged to do. The final pair of administrators discussed both individual and organizational challenges. They assert that both academically unprepared students and educational institutions must collaborate to address the present challenge and discover a mutually advantageous resolution. The pathway challenges are universally recognized as the absence of navigators, a comprehensive overview, and guidance and support from the university.

From the perspective of students, five out of six students identified personal obstacles such as being underprepared, facing family issues, and experiencing financial struggles as the primary challenge. These drawbacks lead students to anticipate greater assistance from the university. However, they encounter institutional obstacles such as insufficiently explained information regarding student support services, inadequate support in skills training, and the absence of a clear personal and professional development pathway. Obstacles in the pathway arise from the absence of necessary resources such as information, tools, and direction, as well as a lack of clear mapping of their development. They lack the skills to navigate their path to success in college, while the university fails to give a clear roadmap as promised in its public declarations.

Administrators Seek Diverse Solutions while Student Seek Institutional Support

By applying the path-goal theory of leadership, this study will decode the administrators' and students' solutions to help students achieve their goals into four different types: (1) Directive guidance from the institution and administrators; (2) Supportive approach toward student needs; (3) Participative actions in student's pathway and activities, and (4) Achievement-oriented strategies and setting goals for students to motivate them action. These solutions will address the barriers mentioned above and offer enhanced support for students. Nevertheless, the measures provided by the administrators still fail to match the students' expectations. Table 9 depicts the proposed solutions by administrators and students using the path-goal technique.

Table 9

Suggested Solutions from Administrators and Students from Path-Goal Approach

	Directive	Supportive	Participative	Achievement-oriented
Administrators	Effective Orientation Program with student's PPDPPath Mandatory checking with ACDC (first 2 years)	Student-goal-focus information Effective student service Trustworthy/Transformational relationship	ACDC help complete/adjust/update student's PPDPPath Evaluation and feedback Navigator of transition and change	Setting academic goals, social goals, professional goals.
Students	Effective Orientation Program	Student-goal-focus information (Guideline) Creating student's PPDPPath	Complete/adjust/update student's PPDPPath Evaluation and feedback Navigator of transition and change	Setting academic goals, social goals, professional goals.

The university can enhance its directive actions by implementing a more efficient compulsory orientation program for first-year college students. This course should also offer students a range of informational resources, tools, and techniques to facilitate their personal and professional development within the college. The outputs of these preparation courses result in a customized student pathway for PPDP, which differs from the PPDP outlined in the 2018-2028 Strategic Plan. This is because the students and advisors actively participate and make revisions on a semester basis. As the current role of academic advisor of ACDC is to assist students in planning their four-year degree pathway. It is recommended that students review and revise their PPDPPath during the first two years. Furthermore, the PPDPPath must establish a tight

collaboration with the degree path to assist students in comprehending the purpose of their course selection and effectively monitoring their progress.

The institution, staff, and faculty offer support by providing information, direction, and coaching to students. The process commences with a dialogue including all parties involved in the university to ascertain and establish a shared comprehension of the students' requirements, expectations, and the university's capacity to assist them. Subsequently, the university will provide students with orientation courses, educational resources, and student services to facilitate their effective development of a personalized pathway and its pursuit towards their ultimate objectives. The institution and professionals should offer comprehensive guidance with a student-centric and data-oriented approach to assist ACDC and students in obtaining the most current information about their PPDPath. An explicit framework encompassing personal, professional, and academic trajectories could assist other advisors, mentors, and coaches in identifying and providing assistance for issues. Furthermore, an accommodating strategy should take into consideration the mindset of the students. The university should allocate additional time to support first-year students in navigating the transition with a confident and humanistic approach. Administrators have seen that students had ideas regarding their goals, but they struggle to overcome their fear and anxiety without a well-defined plan. The institution should assist the students in overcoming their self-disappointment with their failure and their confusion regarding the personal and professional growth pathway in college. Students require increased individualized attention, psychological assistance when experiencing confusion, and a greater presence of staff members in the residence hall to identify and address concerns before they become apparent to the students themselves. Additionally, this implies that Institution X requires additional advisors and career counselors to engage in direct communication with students. The

concept of fostering reliable and transformative relationships between students and the institution's staff can generate a supportive dynamic for intervention, guidance, communication, and mental well-being.

All administrators emphasized the involvement of advisors in the participatory solution, wherein advisors assist students in developing their PPDP. Additionally, advisors serve as evaluators and mentors for students on a semester basis, ensuring that their pathway remains on track and allowing for any adjustments. This process adheres to the fundamental principles of the goal-setting theory proposed by Locke and Latham (1990; 2006), which ensures commitment from both students and the institution. These principles include clear goal-setting, clear expectations and support, and the establishment of challenging yet attainable goals that are not overly complex for students. The inclusion of feedback is crucial, encompassing both internal feedback from students and external feedback from the institution to assess the progress being achieved. Similar to the degree road, the PPDP path also requires the involvement of an advisor and career mentor to facilitate any necessary modifications and ensure that students do not make erroneous decisions as a result of minor setbacks or mental challenges. ACDC will actively engage in this process. Prior to implementing directive and supportive interventions for student pathways, it is essential for the institution, administrators, faculty, and staff to engage in collaborative knowledge sharing. This will enable them to create a comprehensive overview of the student's personal and professional development plan and how it can be effectively connected to the real world. The map must also be integrated with the existing industry and market system to ensure that it accurately represents the real landscape and structure. Administrators (H, J & I) recognize that certain leading centers, such as ACDC, lack the necessary resources and capabilities to effectively lead the collaboration plan. However, there are still similar activities,

such as the Council of Advisory and quarterly meetings involving representatives from Institution X, workforce leaders, and community leaders. These activities aim to provide realistic information and requirements for students to develop skills that align with their career expectations. The institution itself must provide greater empowerment to justify and systematize these resources into a formal guideline or assistance program. Administrator F also stressed that contemporary culture is leading students astray from critical thinking and professional growth. It is imperative that we intervene and help to ensure they stay on the right path. Administrator I discussed a prototype of a supportive intervention that was implemented in a college affiliated with Institution X. As part of this intervention, two full-time faculty members were appointed as student navigators. Their role was to actively engage with students in the college, offering support and guidance to enhance their program and overall college experience. This approach has garnered numerous good reviews and is currently awaiting the collection of additional qualitative data to assess its performance.

Regarding achievement-oriented solutions, there is limited discussion on the importance of establishing personal, achievement, and social goals for students in order to enhance their motivation to participate in college activities. Administrator B advised students to prioritize intellectual goals by maintaining good grades and actively participating in a student club to achieve social goals by making friends. This relationship also makes it difficult for them to leave the group and engage in hands-on learning, which is a goal of their professional development. She recounted the remarkable tale of the highly accomplished student she observed, who achieved excellent grades, formed friendships, assumed leadership roles in student organizations, and participated in various internships and collaborative projects throughout the summer. Another official in student services advised a student to actively participate in at least one

student activity per semester, preferably joining groups that share the same major, age range, and interests. Administrator H advised students in his advising session to consider participating in summer semesters for internships or shadowing experiences in their desired field. He highlighted the findings of the World Economic Forum report titled "The Future of Jobs Report 2023," which states that companies are placing greater importance on internship experience as well as on human talents, rather than focusing solely on degrees and certificates (WEF, 2023).

From the perspective of students, there is a widespread consensus regarding the necessity for an improved orientation program. They also want advice, guidelines, and navigation to navigate their PPDP path, enabling them to effectively manage uncertainty, nervousness, transitional changes, and the sense of adventure that comes with discovering oneself in a new process, career, and social circle. The students require improved goal-setting abilities and guidance from their advisor on how to effectively monitor and manage their progress. A significant impediment was the lack of a clear personal and professional development plan, the incongruity between the degree path and the PPDP, the academic advisor's inability to assist with professional, emotional, and reasoning aspects of the curriculum, the absence of accessible information for self-education within the institution, and the occasional unhelpfulness or disconnection of student services. Psychological issues are of the utmost importance from the perspective of students. The majority of students desire to actively engage in supportive and participatory initiatives offered by the school as a means of fostering group connections, alleviating their uncertainties, and receiving mental support while they are experiencing academic setbacks.

The achievement-oriented solution is highly correlated with student success. Every student can discover their own approach to learning about goal-setting strategies and discuss the

common aspects of their process. These include clearly defining their objective of obtaining a degree within a specific timeframe in a manageable manner, creating a goal plan based on semesters, compiling a list of academic achievements, engaging in social activities, pursuing personal and professional growth, and ensuring a high quality of life. The various personality traits and psychological conditions (such as introversion, bipolar disorder, extroversion, sociability, etc.) result in distinct combinations of several objectives in their plans. They engage in a process of self-assessment of the plan throughout time, using a change-oriented approach to ensure they stay focused on their ultimate objectives. Certain students are willing to extend their academic program by an additional semester in order to achieve a balance between their course workload and their desired lifestyle, even if it results in accruing higher student loans. Prior to compiling the list of goals, it is necessary for them to undertake the preparatory steps of comprehending all the courses, requirements, and schedule in order to make an informed decision. Four individuals utilize time cards to effectively schedule their goals within particular time-frames, while also allocating time for varied activities during the semester. They prioritize their goals and time allocation depending on their semester expectations, with the degree path being the primary focus, followed by social aims and other personal/professional development objectives. They simplify the intricacy of the goal list by dividing it into an action plan and manageable milestones that are attainable and motivating, encouraging individuals to continue achieving more. The majority of students (n=5) recognized that implementing a goal-setting plan aids in monitoring their work and progress, hence enhancing their dedication. Student 4 also noted the challenge of sustaining commitment. To address this, she set enjoyable objectives that provide her with a sense of ease in staying on course. Student 2 required goal-setting to enhance his concentration on studying without excessive exertion. It contributed to his life equilibrium by

allowing him to enjoy the learning process without it being overly demanding or time-consuming. The students did not discuss the beneficial aspects of incorporating difficult goals and feedback principles into the recommendations section of this study.

Advisors, Favorite Professors and Email Communications are Key Student Supports

The in-depth interviews revealed a consensus among students and administrators that there are two primary sources that students will turn to first for assistance. The primary point of contact for students during their academic journey and advisory process is the advisor, who may be a faculty member. However, students can only seek assistance in their academic pursuits from the academic advisors. At times, the focus is mostly on arranging course schedules rather than comprehending the purpose of taking courses and how they influence one's career trajectory. Academic counselors may not be able to offer students the necessary insight in this regard. In relation to this matter, the faculty advisors exhibited superior performance owing to their extensive experience and expertise in the corresponding areas of study. For instance, a criminology major student can seek guidance from their faculty advisor, who is an experienced practitioner in psychology, regarding career prospects, preparation for certification or license examinations, and selection of courses that enhance practical skills.

The second individual that students will seek assistance from is a beloved professor with whom they have a class and have developed a more profound bond. This form of trustworthy relationship arises from the student's admiration for the professor, the professor's warm and helpful demeanor, and the professor's willingness to assist and respond to the student's emails regarding non-academic matters. This department can offer enhanced career counseling for students and facilitate connections to the specific resources or assistance that a student requires.

However, there are not many faculty members in Institution X who possess a supporting philosophy towards students' out-of-class requests.

The final means of connecting students to support services or information is through email correspondence from the university administration. Institution X excels in providing a diverse range of information and support to students through email, effectively capturing their attention. Another factor is the students' necessity to regularly monitor their email in order to keep up with their coursework, which enables them to get additional important communications from the institution. Gains (1999) and Davidson (2010) observed that email communication has emerged as the primary mode of contact in academic institutions, gradually supplanting both letters and telephone conversations. Email serves as the designated medium for communication and distribution of information among educators, students, and administrators inside the higher education institution. It is unsurprising to assert that the majority of students have a tendency to favor communicating with teachers through email rather than in-person interaction (Kelly et al., 2004).

Solutions Generate Sub-Obstacles

During the discussion of solutions and proposals to address barriers, the researcher also received numerous additional concerns from administrators over the sub-obstacles or "extra-curriculum" aspects of the solutions, given the institution's limited resources. Table 10 depicts the additional concerns of administrators and researchers regarding the proposed remedy mentioned earlier.

Table 10*New Sub-Obstacles from Suggested Solutions from Administrators and Researcher*

Solution	People obstacles	Institutional obstacles
Effective Orientation Program with student's PPDPPath	Collaboration	Program design Data-driven evaluation
Mandatory checking with ACDC (first 2 years) Student-goal-focus information	Short of staff New training requirement Collaboration	Hiring and training Live-tracking system Focus communication Data-driven evaluation
Effective student service	Short of staff New training requirement	Hiring and training Focus communication Data-driven evaluation
Trustworthy/Transformational relationship	Collaboration New training requirement Philosophy of education	Hiring and training Focus communication
Student's PPDPPath LIVE	Short of staffs New training requirement Philosophy of education	Hiring and training Live-tracking system
Navigator of PPDPPath	Short of staffs New training requirement	Hiring and training Live-tracking system
Active goal-setting intervention	New training requirement Philosophy of education	Data-driven evaluation Live-tracking system
Comprehensive faculty advisory	Collaboration New training requirement Mental issue	Hiring and training Program design Incentive
Shared knowledge database	Collaboration New training requirement	Hiring and training Program design

Remarkably, administrators and researchers are primarily concerned with the collaboration among departments, offices, and workers. The separation originates from the existing Strategic Plan and extends to each department and college's strategy and action plans. The results of the meeting, discussion, and hearing regarding the needs and expectations of the students do not yield a comprehensive set of facts that accurately represents the institutional approach to addressing these challenges. Multiple officials have requested a thorough conference

and hearing to assess Institution X's understanding of its students and determine whether they are willing to develop a strategic action plan to address the situation. Multiple leaders and ACDC have discussed the importance of cross-training, information sharing, and partnerships with other departments and external advisory councils. However, these initiatives have not been established due to the absence of an empowered authority to establish a student-need-based system as the central hub. The primary obstacle in the suggested solution to improve the Orientation Program with the essential outcome of a draft of PPDPath is determining how to collaborate with the Admissions Department to create a program that effectively fulfills the expectations of the ACDC.

Another crucial requirement for extensive collaboration is the establishment of a shared knowledge live database. This database would enable departments and offices to contribute their resources, guidelines, and opportunities to support the PPDPath in a real-time system that is easily updatable and accessible. This database would serve as a comprehensive information system that can improve the institution's communication and marketing strategies, specifically targeting student objectives and regularly updated with valuable information. Although few administrators supported this suggestion, they remain concerned about the level of commitment each department has in maintaining these programs. The issue of collaboration among individuals was also encountered in the last two proposals, which involved the implementation of an Active Faculty Advisory program and the establishment of a reliable and transformative relationship-building process.

The Faculty Advisory program aims to equip faculty members with a broader understanding and a range of resources derived from the Strategic Action Plan and Shared database. This will enable them to effectively assist students in their Personal and Professional

Development Path (PPDPath). The successful implementation of the action plan and database necessitated comprehensive information and practical expertise, as well as the active endorsement and disposition of the faculty towards supporting the students. During the in-depth interview, three administrators highlighted concerns regarding the prioritization of faculty members' professional responsibilities over out-of-class activities, as well as their mental health issues related to burnout and excessive workload. In order to maintain a trustworthy image in front of students, the institution must establish a complete partnership to assess and improve the behavior, work ethics, and attitude of its staff, instructors, and administrators towards student assistance. Guidelines and action plans should be implemented with a serious and dedicated approach, requiring the attention and commitment of many individuals.

Additional academic advisors are needed to accommodate the rising workload and new training requirements for students' mandatory check-ins with ACDC during the first two years of their PPDPath. This initiative will scrutinize the hiring and training process of the institution, which has a direct impact on the university's budget and retention program. The leaders of ACDC are advocating for an improved employment design that offers advisors greater incentives, promotions, and scholarships in order to retain the workforce despite the unappealing compensation. Furthermore, the ACDC participative program, serving as the major hub of the PPDPath, requires a live-tracking system that can offer real-time feedback and data-driven evaluation on the progress of achieving PPDPath. This system should also assess the effectiveness of ACDC on students and the institution, in order to facilitate further development. The existing tracking system for the four-year degree path is efficiently structured with courses and a timeline. However, it requires integration with the PPDPath of the student using similar tracking methods and enhanced user-friendliness for students, families, and faculty.

The communication and marketing strategy at Institution X requires a resourceful and complete database that includes information on student goals and focuses. This database should be sourced from both the departments and the students themselves. In order to establish an efficient communication system that prioritizes data analysis, the institution must have a deeper understanding of students' needs, concerns, motivations, and expectations. This understanding will then be used to inform the development of email marketing campaigns, flyers, and program designs that are tailored to the specific circumstances. This technique necessitates a more comprehensive analysis of the present target audience based on data and determining the appropriate adjustments to communication instruments that align with the demography.

Capriotti and Zeler (2023) conducted an analysis of the communication strategies employed by 70 higher education institutions across the United States, Europe, and Latin America. They observed that the current higher education system tends to have a passive and inward-focused approach. To address this, they recommended implementing more active engagement activities on these platforms, focusing on key dimensions such as regular posting, interactivity, and relevant content. Capriotti and Zeler (2023) also emphasized the importance of dialogic communication and providing content management that aligns with the university's identity and stakeholders. Enhancing email communication can be achieved by taking into account student interpretation, fostering interdepartmental cooperation, and recognizing the emotional impact of administrative emails on students (Wu, 2022). In order to modify the content, scope, and target audience, it is necessary to implement a new training program for the personnel.

To enhance the quality of student services, the institution must address the difficulties in training and recruiting new staff members caused by the shortage of personnel. Furthermore,

during the in-depth interviews with students, the study discovered that many of them are apprehensive about not utilizing student services because of insufficient information on fees or procedures, as well as the ineffectiveness of counseling sessions. To address this issue, the student services could enhance its communication strategies by offering more comprehensive training to their personnel and implementing a data-driven assessment to make appropriate adjustments that align with the needs of the target demographic. An efficient student services system not only meets the needs of students but also offers additional resources to other departments, enabling them to better serve students in their Personal and Professional Development Path (PPDPath).

One administrator and researcher recommended establishing reliable and transformative relationships among students, staff, faculty, and administrators as the fundamental means to improving Institution X's structure and promoting a student-oriented approach, ultimately enhancing the holistic learning experience. Ghosh and Whipple (2001) introduced the concept of student-university trust as the extent to which a student is prepared to depend on the institution to take necessary actions that will be advantageous to them and assist them in attaining their academic and career objectives (p. 325). Lewica (2022) proposed that establishing trust between students and universities is essential for achieving excellence in teaching and research, enhancing the perceived quality of services, and fostering student happiness and loyalty towards the institution. Trust is influenced by a combination of institutional and interpersonal elements. These aspects include the reputation and accomplishments of the institution, its organizational procedures, as well as the activities of university authorities and personnel in fostering this good relationship (Lewica, 2022; Snijders et al., 2021). However, there is a lack of substantial research pertaining to the establishment of a transformative relationship between students and universities.

Tanuwijaya (2021) established a direct correlation between transformational leadership exhibited by professors and its good influence on student happiness and enthusiasm to learn. Developing a transformative relationship between students and universities requires additional research and an empirical approach.

The Student's PPDPath LIVE (the LIVE Path) is a proposed solution that offers students, navigators, and advisors a digital, data-driven, and easily accessible version of PPDPath. This version allows all relevant stakeholders to access, update, and modify it at any time to accurately track the progress of development and address students' uncertainty regarding their pathway. The duties and responsibilities of each stakeholder will be clearly defined and formalized to enhance the student's experience in their current degree program. (1) Students can visit the LIVE Path at any time in order to monitor their progress, make requests for changes, schedule meetings with advisors (academic and career), and provide feedback directly within the system. (2) Advisors can access the LIVE Path platform, where they can address inquiries on degree paths and refer students to appropriate resources such as student services, career coaches, or relevant activities that fulfill the necessary criteria. They also provide active feedback and make suggestions for additional help based on evaluations of the student's progress and performance. The Navigator will respond to inquiries on the overall procedure, assess performance, and work together with the advisor and student to make any necessary adjustments to the LIVE Path. The advisor and student must come to a consensus to modify the academic trajectory. Any modification or alteration to the process, goals, or performance requires consensus among the student, advisor, and navigator. All meetings, adjustments, and agreements must be updated on the LIVE route for external evaluation. The LIVE route can be seamlessly integrated into students' web services and mobile application, including a user-friendly design. This requirement presents a series of

challenges in terms of recruiting and training new navigators, providing additional training for advisors and students, implementing a tracking system, and establishing a data-driven evaluation system. Another worry is the development of a new system that integrates the degree pathway, PPDPath, the tracking system, and a data-driven evaluation program that accurately reflects the desired outcomes and allows for tweaks or changes.

Ultimately, a crucial underlying matter pertains to the disagreement among administrators over the philosophy of education. There is a fear that deliberately defining a roadmap for students could infringe upon their freedom to develop their thinking, actions, and identity. Another worry pertains to the idea of education, wherein students are expected to actively pursue information and determine their life goals. Institutions and teachers serve as providers of knowledge, rather than directors of students' choices. Both concerns pertain to the misinterpretation of student autonomy and the self-directed learning (SDL) method, as well as the use of instructionism in education. The philosophy of SDL places emphasis on the active involvement of students in their own learning process, which includes defining goals. The university is responsible for providing students with the necessary tools and knowledge to support their learning (Knowles, 1975; Candy, 1990). Instructionism, also known as instructivism, is a traditional approach to education where the primary purpose of the institution and teacher is to impart information and address important topics (Davis & Francis, 2021). The current ideology of certain administrators at Institution X is a contradiction between implementing certain ways that require active student involvement and the university's lack of intervention. We require a more comprehensive examination of this barrier and its effects on the cooperation and active engagement of administrators, academics, and staff in the collective effort to promote and participate in student growth.

Several possible alternatives are available for addressing the existing circumstances of Institution X's LIVE Path. (1) The Navigator of PPDPath offers a potential solution for students and advisors to have a comprehensive understanding of the student's progress. During the interview, the researcher discovered that Institution X has a college that employs two full-time Student Navigators to assist students in navigating their curriculum and personal growth. This initiative has been in place since 2021. This novel endeavor has garnered numerous favorable responses from students, although it still needs additional statistical data in order to furnish a reliable assessment. Both researchers and administrators recognize that there are numerous obstacles to implementing these activities at the university-wide level, such as securing funding for hiring and training staff, as well as implementing a data-driven tracking system to improve evaluation on a larger scale. (2) Implementing an Active Goal-Setting Intervention might enhance the effectiveness of current advising activities by empowering academic and faculty advisors to actively engage in the process of helping students determine their goals. A comprehensive training program on goal-setting and path-goal leadership is necessary for advisors to effectively assist students in defining appropriate objectives, monitoring progress, enhancing knowledge, facilitating change, and delivering constructive criticism. To ensure the quality of this intervention, the institution must offer a comprehensive training program, an effective tracking system, and a data-driven evaluation system. Furthermore, the active involvement of advisors in the student's progress may elicit worries amongst the traditionalist factions inside the school. (3) An extensive Faculty Advisory program that provides increased guidance, support, and intervention from faculty advisors. The current faculty advisor model at Institution X has garnered significant praise from both students and administrators. This is mostly due to the faculty's extensive practical knowledge in their respective professions, as well

as the strong relationships they have built with students in the classroom and department. Nevertheless, faculty advisors encounter the constraints of advisory techniques and time allocation as they need to maintain a balance with their teaching responsibilities. In addition, numerous officials at Institution X are concerned that the faculty is already burdened with excessive workload related to their teaching responsibilities, leaving them with limited time to dedicate to extracurricular activities. In order to assist faculty advisors, the institution must furnish a comprehensive array of practical tools and models, as well as up-to-date information on contemporary solutions to address the ongoing requirements of students and offer references to suitable services or information sources. Offering incentives such as promotions, research grants, or reduced workloads could entice more academics and advisors to participate in the new program. However, it may also impose financial pressure on the institution's budget.

Another recommendation proposed by the administrators, which researchers concur with, is the establishment of a Shared Knowledge Database that encompasses colleges, departments, and student services centers. This database would serve as a comprehensive resource for student achievement in their PPDPath. In addition to the necessity for extensive collaboration among university staff, this program also requires a thorough design and organization of data that is easily accessible, user-friendly, and regularly updated with information from both students and administrators. The database also requires a data-driven evaluation that provides objective feedback and adjustments tailored to the circumstances. It is crucial for both university officials and student representatives to recognize the significance of this database. It contains comprehensive information contributed by all parties involved in the institution, which supports student-centered program designs such as the PPDPath, focused communication, and other advising programs.

Not Money, but Expectations for a Better Life Motivates Students

During the conversation, multiple administrators presumed that their students are primarily motivated by money and a successful job. However, all six students promptly refuted this assumption. Among the six students participating in the in-depth interview, four of them expressed their aspirations to attain their life objectives, which include aiding others, leading a fulfilling life, and bringing pride to their family members. These aspirations serve as strong motivators for their pursuit of higher education. Oyserman & Destin (2010) and Oyserman (2015) developed the identity-based motivation theory, which suggests that individuals utilize their expectations about identities to guide their behavior, including how they respond to challenges and maintain effort across time. The development of future identities can serve as a potent and authentic catalyst for maintaining determination in the face of challenges encountered while striving to achieve significant objectives, especially in the context of students pursuing a college degree (Oyserman et al., 2015). Destin et al. (2022) discovered that by activating future identities, university students' motivation and subsequent academic achievements were positively influenced. The focus was on the students' future identities and their aspirations for their future lives. The study proposed that institutions and advisors should actively involve themselves in understanding students' future aspirations to effectively facilitate student achievement (Destin et al., 2022).

This idea emphasizes the need of having a goal-setting plan for a student's academic journey, with the help of the university. This journey will not only align with the personal and professional aspirations of students but also assist them in shaping their envisioned future identity. In the in-depth interview, two administrators also emphasized the need to include inspiring tales of successful individuals and alumni to share with students. The research

conducted by Obeng-Ofori and Kwarteng (2021) highlighted the significant contribution of alumni in serving as role models and sources of inspiration, as well as career mentors for students. Additionally, alumni play a crucial role in providing financial support and fostering involvement.

The other two students (1 & 4) have set a goal to avoid experiencing financial hardship like their parents and to avoid facing discrimination like their colleagues in the workplace. Boo et al. (2021) conducted a study indicating that students' apprehension regarding future employment prospects can serve as a driving force for enhanced academic performance. The presence of "anticipatory anxiety" might motivate individuals to gain pertinent skills and knowledge, engage in career-related activities, and actively seek career guidance, ultimately resulting in enhanced academic achievements. The apprehension of a career failure can also motivate students to establish ambitious and precise objectives for their future. A study conducted by Bostan et al. (2022) revealed that students experiencing elevated levels of career anxiety were inclined to establish more ambitious and well defined academic objectives, resulting in enhanced academic achievement. Excessive fear of a career failure might result in elevated levels of stress and anxiety, which can impede academic achievement.

To address this worry and anxiety, a student proactively seeks out a goal-setting technique to effectively monitor her positive advancements. Kumar (2022) suggest that the institution should offer students access to career counseling, mentorship programs, and internship opportunities. This will enable them to acquire the essential resources and guidance needed to effectively handle their career anxiety and transform it into a beneficial factor for academic success. Many administrators at Institution X also advocate helping students overcome their fear and anxiety to gain a realistic understanding and prosper in the institution.

How Family Impacts Student's Plans at the Regional Comprehensive Institution

Multiple administrators highlighted family difficulties, such as financial hardship and parental rejection of pursuing higher education, as distinct challenges faced by students at Institution X. Students consider withdrawing from their programs owing to familial disapproval or the demands of family struggles that are consuming their time and attention. In the in-depth interview, student A found herself in a predicament when her learning time decreased due to her new responsibility of supporting her daughter at home. This finding resonates with the literature of CIRP YFCY (2022) report that the health of loved ones could stressfully affect approximately three-quarters of surveyed students (74.8%).

Moreover, Jeynes (2005) identified that elevated levels of family conflict, inadequate communication, and stressful home situations can have adverse effects on students' emotional well-being, study habits, and academic achievement. In a study conducted by Jeynes (2010) on a regional comprehensive university similar to Institution X, it was discovered that family participation, specifically through communication and academic assistance, had a favorable correlation with student GPA and perseverance. The study also highlighted that regional comprehensive universities in the United States frequently cater to students from diverse backgrounds, such as first-generation college students and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, who face unique challenges. It was noted that the level of family involvement may vary in these cases (Jeynes., 2010), although there is a scarcity of research on the influence of family factors on students' personal and professional development plans.

Mental Issues and Emotional Stress

Both administrators and student groups identified mental health difficulties and emotional stress as important personal obstacles. The findings from the Gallup (2023) and Healthy Minds

Network (2022) studies align with the observation that a significant number of students pursuing bachelor's and associate degrees experience sadness, anxiety, and contemplate leaving college as a result of emotional strain. According to the CIRP YFCY (2022) study, the observation made by administrator A and the case of student 3 highlighted that emotional stress might originate from personal mental health issues. The emotional strain experienced by the questioned students towards Institution X is evident in the institutional barriers they face. These barriers include social isolation from teachers, difficulty in adapting to academic obligations, and anxiety related to their effective study abilities, as reported by CIRP YFCY (2022). Furthermore, administrators and students who were questioned expressed concern about the issue of students lacking the ability to appropriately assess their emotional well-being, and seldom seeking psychological assistance inside their educational institutions, as shown by the CIRP YFCY study (2022).

Furthermore, the comprehensive interview examined the contextual obstacles that contribute to emotional stress among students, even without explicitly asking about it. The administrators identified the social and economic pressures in contemporary American culture that motivate students to pursue higher education, as discussed by Mettler (2014). The economic disparity experienced by Student 1 aligns with the findings of the Pew Charitable Trust Study (2012), which also highlights the challenges she faces in her educational path. The case study implicitly refers to the difficulties in the route as a result of the absence of effective leadership in the Path-way method. However, Student 4 was compelled to withdraw from school due to a sense of detachment from the institution and a decline in self-confidence resulting from academic failures, which exacerbated the emotional strain caused by this impediment.

Interviewed administrators identified the absence of direction, support, and connection from the

institution towards their students as a contributing factor to the stress of the "uncertainty of belonging" problem (Gopalan & Brady, 2020).

Limitations

Although single case studies provide essential insights and a comprehensive understanding of unique circumstances, they also possess inherent limits. The primary limitation is the narrow focus of the individual case study, which may hinder its applicability to other public higher education institutions or larger populations. The outcomes may be influenced by contextual factors that are unique to the selected institution, making it challenging to generalize the findings to other universities (Yin, 2014). The limited sample size, consisting of ten administrators and six students restricts the representativeness of the findings. The interpretation of interview data and overall analysis of the targeted institution may be influenced by subjectivity and bias (Lincoln & Guba, 2006). The reproducibility of the study and the verification of its conclusions by other researchers may be hindered by the reliance on particular research methodologies and interview procedures (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In order to address these constraints, the study incorporates other data sources, which in turn introduce their own set of restrictions. Mission statements, vision statements, and strategic plans are frequently expressed in vague and ambitious language, which poses challenges in converting them into specific and quantifiable objectives. This phenomenon can result in a lack of clarity and reliance on personal judgment when interpreting information (Mintzberg, 2000). Alegre et al. (2018) also concluded that mission statements are extensively employed in practical applications but receive less theoretical research. The majority of papers take on a managerial approach that focuses on specific phenomena, although they often lack a strong theoretical basis. In addition, Institution X's core values, statement of purposes, and Strategic Plan also address faculty development,

budgeting, and institutional structuring, which can be explored further from an organizational development perspective.

Recommendations

Data emerging from this exploratory case suggest seven recommendations for higher education public institutions:

- 1) Clarify goals to Help Public Institutions Address Complexity and Ambiguity
- 2) Apply practical and Theoretical Goals for Development and Leadership
- 3) Develop an Effective Strategic Action Plan for Collaboration
- 4) Build a Shared Knowledge Database
- 5) Use An Ideal Personal and Professional Development Path for Students
- 6) Develop Pathway Leadership as the Solution to Tackle Obstacles
- 7) Apply Artificial Intelligence of Education (AIEd) in Effective PPDPath

Clarifying Goals Can Help Public Institutions Address Complexity and Ambiguity

The study performed a systematic analysis of existing literature on the objectives of public higher education systems and recognizes the system's responsiveness to contextual changes and its ability to adapt accordingly. The current objectives of the public education system prioritize a student-centered approach to navigate the intricacies of the present situation. Upon analyzing the primary materials that guide the institutional objectives of Institution X and examining the administrators' comprehension of these materials, the researcher discovered that the administrators hold a distinct perspective on the student goals and the institution's intended

support for them. This occurred because of the divergent conflicting priorities, values, and pragmatic perspectives stemming from the distinct experiences and knowledge associated with each job. Furthermore, the study identified multiple conflicts in the philosophy of education among the administrators that could potentially influence their outlook and conduct regarding the university curriculum, team leadership, and student support. Within the leadership scheme, if leaders misconstrue or have a lack of lucidity regarding the goals of the organization, they provide imprecise or contradictory goals for their subordinates. Pizzolitto et al. (2022) asserted that leaders who lack a clear understanding of their objectives are prone to employing inappropriate leadership styles, resulting in diminished effectiveness in their performance. Chun and Rainey (2005) noted ambiguity as a hallmark of public organizations, which can result in subpar performance for both the organization and its employees.

In the middle of this internal turbulence, the study suggests that the institution should prioritize enhancing its internal training and offering explicit elucidations of its mission, objectives, and conduct in relation to student goals. Raziq et al. (2018) discovered that when leaders clearly define their goals, it enhances the commitment of their followers to those goals and increases their extrinsic motivation, ultimately resulting in improved performance. I propose that Institution X should give priority to fostering student goals and assume a behind-the-scenes leadership role in promoting organizational distinctions. Gurley et al. (2014) propose that school leaders can promote substantial enhancements in schools and bring about organizational transformation by fostering a collective mission and vision for development. Beginning with comprehending the process of aligning objectives, Institution X and its administrators can utilize the efficiency of the path-goal leadership approach and the goal setting strategies provided in this study.

Applying Practical and Theoretical Goals for Development and Leadership

I want to recall the definition of goal as “object” and “aim” of an action within a specified time limit (Locke & Latham, 2002, p. 705). The literature of goal setting as a practical object performs with high success in academic achievement, motivation of learning and encouragement of career development (Cheng et al., 2019; Clements & Kamau, 2017; Miller & Weiss, 2015; Yusuff, 2018). This study would support this literature in applying goal setting in five guiding principles of commitment, clarity, challenging, complexity, and feedback from Latham and Locke (2006; 1990). Miller and Weiss (2015) conducted goal setting activities with students' intuitive join in the progress with semester-based and post-test evaluation. Cheng et al. (2019) discovered that the goal setting process can apply to students in a hybrid course, leading to their improved self-regulated learning. In research conducted by Yusuff (2018), the implementation of individualized goal setting and study planning led to enhanced continuous engagement, increased emphasis on academic goals, and better academic achievement. Clements and Kamau (2017) discovered that students who have a higher inclination towards achieving their goals are more likely to regard themselves as employable, as well as proactively developing their skills and networks for career goals. Regarding behavior changes, Forsythe and Jellicoe (2018) proposed that self-regulatory behaviors, such as mastery approach goal orientations, measures of productive learning and motivational intentions, play a crucial role in facilitating behavioral change. Hematian et al. (2016) also discovered that training goal setting to high school students can improve their self-directed learning, achievement motivation, and academic accomplishment. Teaching and applying goal setting strategies is the critical intervention this study recommends.

In leadership approach, I would utilize the theoretical and metaphysical approach of goals as an aim for the leaders, followers, and organization toward success (Northouse, 2019). If the leaders and followers cannot share their goal, the leadership process will be disrupted (Northouse, 2019). In major theories and approaches of leadership, goal setting and goal attainment play a significant role. Duckworth et al. (2007) studied the trait theory of leaders with the concept of “grit” as the measurement of degree perseverance toward a goal. In the set of personal reflection questions that a highly emotional intelligent leader, the question about changing behavior to achieve goals is critical (Goleman, 2023). Within three-skill approaches of leadership, leadership skills are defined as the ability to use one’s knowledge and competences to accomplish a set of goals (Northouse, 2019). In Leader-Member Exchange theory, leaders create and align relationship with followers to benefit organizational goals (Tse & Troth, 2013). In transformational leadership, transformational and charismatic leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. articulated ideological goals that have moral overtones to his followers (Northouse, 2019). Bass (1985) also argued that transformational leadership motivates followers to do more than expected by raising their levels of consciousness about the importance and value of specified and idealized goals (p.20).

Moreover, shared goals are an overlap competence in leadership and organizational development (Simonet & Tett, 2013). Organizational development practitioners are concerned with change that integrates individual needs with organizational goals more fully (Burke & Noumair, 2015). Gagné (2018) also utilized self-determination theory and goal approach to explain the development of organizational approaches. I recommend utilizing goal approach as an integration viewpoint for further study of the complexity of organizations such as higher education institutions with leadership and organizational components.

Developing an Effective Strategic Action Plan for Collaboration

In the case of Institution X, the 2018-2028 Strategic Plan is only partially implemented, lacking a clear vision and guidance for the university's stakeholders. The absence of leadership and guidance creates a burden on each department and administrator, forcing them to independently form their own views and actions in relation to the collective endeavors. Horák et al. (2022) illustrated the detrimental impact of communication breakdowns and a lack of shared knowledge among various administrative divisions in public organizations like universities. In the case study of Institution X, there is an urgent need to draft a Strategic Action Plan that would provide explicit and transparent directions for the entire university's operations throughout a specific time period. This practice should involve stakeholders in the process of drafting and amending standards to ensure inclusion and accommodate varied perspectives. These stakeholders include teachers, staff, students, and administrators. The Strategic Action Plan Committee shall establish and consistently assess, appraise, and revise guidelines that accommodate the changing circumstances and requirements, while also assuring their continued relevance and efficacy. The design approach of this Action Plan also aims to promote open and transparent communication, facilitate collaborative decision-making processes, and provide effective and practical materials for training and development.

Furthermore, the Strategic Action Plan should provide clear elucidation on many programs and activities that are causing confusion among administrators and students: (1) Holistic learning experience from the perspective and implementation of the institution. The administrator has expressed one dispute regarding the feasibility of offering a comprehensive learning experience at Institution X, along with many reservations regarding the lack of a well-defined action plan for this concept. Furthermore, the comprehensive educational experience

plays a crucial part in assisting students in attaining their academic, social, and personal objectives, thanks to the supportive resources provided by Institution X. (2) The Personal and Professional Development Plan requires clear elucidation through mentoring and collaborative endeavors. This program is a significant initiative of the institution aimed at actively engaging in the growth and achievement of students. Nevertheless, the situation remains ambiguous due to a lack of formalization and supervision from the university. The ACDC was designated as the focal point of this initiative according to the Strategic Plan, but has encountered difficulties in collaborating with other departments and providing complete assistance for student achievement. (3) The implementation of a defined system from the university to the college is required for the peer mentoring system. The existing mentorship system is fragmented and lacks the exchange of knowledge or collaboration among colleagues. The Strategic Action Plan will serve as the paramount directive to assist them in developing this program with utmost effectiveness. (4) The Colonnade Program and the partnership between PPDP and degree path require further clarification. There is presently insufficient evidence regarding the effectiveness of the Colonnade Program and how the university may transfer its value to the PPDP of students, in conjunction with their chosen degree program. The survey additionally revealed that both students and administrators express a desire to modify their plan on a semester basis. The Strategic Action Plan Committee should establish a scheduled meeting each semester to formally assess their guidelines to adapt to the current situation. The Committee's chairmanship should be held by either the President or Provost, as they possess sufficient authority to approve the strategy and ensure that collaboration is aligned.

Building a Shared Knowledge Database

Institution X must address the internal difficulties of imprecise policies and confusion among administrators before proceeding with any student support programs or involvement in their creation process. Many administrators anticipated having a centralized platform that would furnish them with full information regarding the university program, its progress, and its impact on student performance. This study proposes the development of a collaborative knowledge repository where administrators, instructors, and students can access valuable material that caters to their specific requirements. The common database also facilitates the decision-making process of the administrators. McLaughlin and Austin (2015) emphasized the advantages of using data analytics to enhance decision-making and enhance student support services, specifically emphasizing the possibilities of centralized data platforms. This study emphasized the importance of data analytics in identifying early warning signs for students who are at risk of academic failure or other difficulties. Additionally, it highlighted the role of data infrastructure in developing targeted intervention programs and providing data-driven insights that improve student outcomes (Yanosky & Arroway, 2015). Parnell et al. (2018) proposed the implementation of a centralized platform that would serve to address student needs and foster collaboration among stakeholders, even in the presence of disagreements. In addition to endorsing the proposal for a centralized data framework, Jim and Chang (2018) proposed a responsible data governance framework for higher education that facilitates collaboration while safeguarding the privacy of student data.

This study proposes that Institution X should convene an inaugural conference within the scope of a Strategic Action Plan to deliberate on the concept of a centralized platform, involving all relevant stakeholders. The shared knowledge databases will be funded as part of the 2018-

2028 Strategic Plan and its Action Plan. The main objective is to provide an accurate overview of how Institution X executes its strategic plan, departmental plans, and addresses current challenges. This database serves as the fundamental resource for developing the Action Plan and its associated activities, which provide benefits to both students and the university. Once the database is set up, the university will ensure that all stakeholders have continuous access to the platform while maintaining the privacy of the institution and people. Institution X is responsible for ensuring accessibility, security, and scientific evaluation of this platform using a data-driven approach. Each department must post assessments of their programs and activities to this platform for cross-examination and contributing to the collective understanding of the process. The assessment of the Orientation Program, Colonnade Program, Student Support Service, and other initiatives should be readily available on this platform at all times to ensure that administrators comprehend the resources they need to deliver to students or support their team. This platform would additionally monitor the meeting minutes, ideas and initiatives, and the advancement of the Action Plan application. This platform is also overseen by the Strategic Action Plan Committee and serves as a primary resource for the development of additional relevant programs or initiatives.

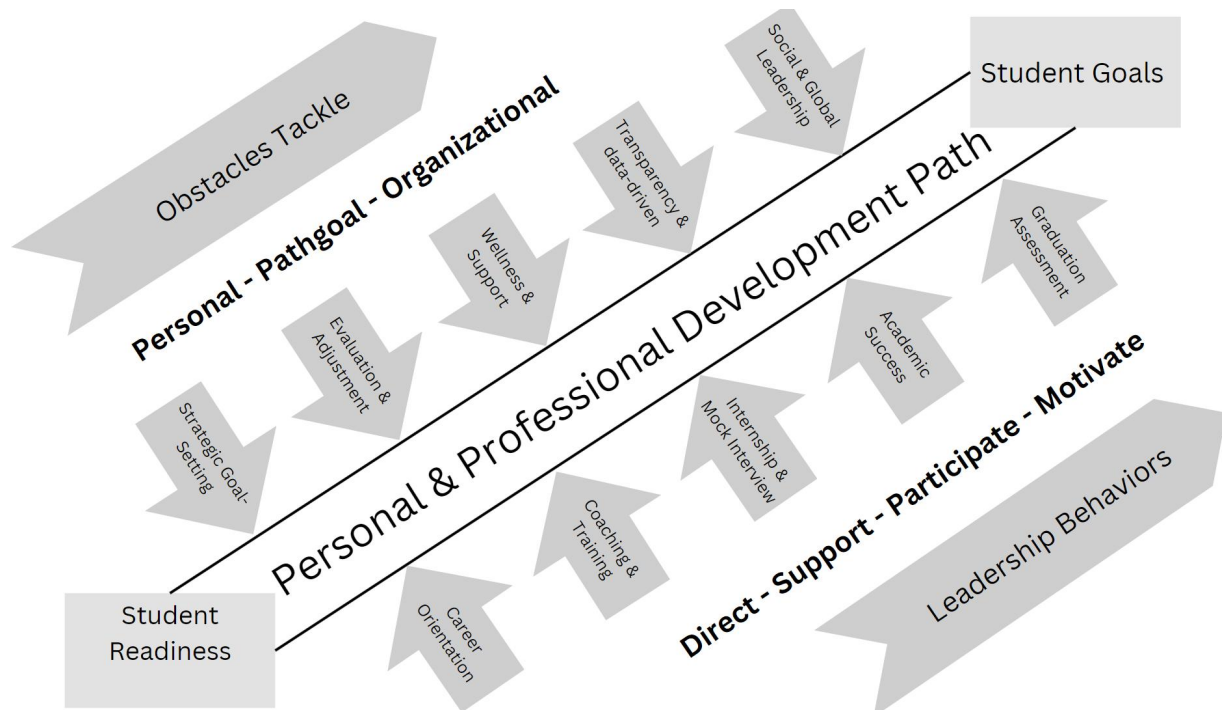
An Ideal Personal and Professional Development Path for Students

The current study aims to establish a holistic model focusing on the professional and personal development of students.- a Personal and Professional Development Path (PPDPath). It will utilize the resources and programs offered by Institution X and align with their expectations to provide support to the students. The PPDPath utilizes the goal setting and path-goal model. This will be done by gathering a diverse group of students with different ages, genders, and academic stages. The development of the PPDPath will be guided by the Strategic Action Plan

Committee and will rely on a shared knowledge database. The PPDPPath will serve as an alternative to the incomplete PPDP of Institution X, with the ACDC serving as the information center. Figure 2 depicts the constituent elements of the PPDPPath.

Figure 2

Personal and Professional Development Path



The process commences with the Student Readiness Program, which encompasses the Orientation Program, Student Readiness Evaluation, and Colonnade Program (after evaluation and modification). Freshmen who participate in these introductory programs are required to create their own PPDPPath that includes both individual and collective goals in the areas of personal growth, social development, and academic accomplishment. This process is overseen by an advisor from ACDC. This draft pathway will elucidate the future aspirations and desired outcomes that students aim to attain upon graduation. The literature review and data analysis conducted in this study revealed that students might initiate their journey towards obtaining their

desired life by aligning their personal goals with their aspirations for future identity and career accomplishments. While social goals can contribute to personal and professional goals, the study emphasizes the need to engage in peer and student activities and building relationships with teachers in order to achieve success in one's chosen route. Creating relationships with peers and others also contributes to the development of openness, disclosure and emotional wellness among students (Brooks, 2007). The social goals will work along with the Social & Global Leadership and Wellness & Support components in the PPDPath. The primary objectives of the evaluation are to ascertain the students' comprehension of their trajectory, assess the rationale behind various goals, and evaluate the ultimate objective of this trajectory for them.

The fundamental skill of the PPDPath is the Strategic Goal-Setting component, which requires students and advisors to adhere to the five effective principles of commitment, clarity, challenging, complexity, and feedback (Locke & Latham, 1990). These five principles are also interrelated. Duckworth (2020) said that in order to foster students' dedication to their objectives, it is advisable to establish moderately difficult and less intricate goals that may be easily accomplished, and to provide encouragement for their attainment. Hollenbeck and Klein (1987) also proposed that emphasizing the significance of the objective to the individual could enhance their level of commitment. Miller (2023) advised advisors to engage in active listening, empathize with students' emotions, and assist them in avoiding external pressures to cultivate their intrinsic motivation towards reaching their goals. Both goal-setting strategies derived from the in-depth interview are also useful inside the realm of scientific understanding. Incorporating gamification ideas, Yu-kai Chou (2019) proposed the use of "funny goals" as a means of motivation in progress tracking and engaging challenges.

Subsequently, the academic advisor of ACDC will regularly monitor the progress of this PPDPATH each semester by providing guidance, feedback, evaluation, and necessary modifications. This will be facilitated through the utilization of a shared knowledge platform and other collaborative initiatives involving many departments, the alumni center, and student support services. The four-year degree program must align with the PPDPATH, and the advisor will ensure that students comprehend the relevance of the courses to their PPDPATH. This will assist students in comprehending their courses, programs, and activities, as well as understanding how this process contributes to their future achievements and identities. If the chosen degree program does not align with the PPDPATH, the advisor will suggest modifying the program, courses, and major to better suit the student's needs. The advisor should provide accurate information regarding how altering the degree path would affect the student's financial situation and time frame. Ultimately, the decision will rest in the hands of the student, who must fully comprehend their abilities and obligations.

ACDC not only provides academic guidance to students, but also offers recommendations and advice on the various wellness programs and student support services available at Institution X. To determine the suitable curriculum for a student's needs, advisors must consistently update the semester evaluation report, engage with students through email, and possess extensive knowledge of the resources available in the shared database. The primary objective of the wellness program is to offer students suitable emotional assistance and tackle sentiments of isolation or a deficiency of affiliation, which can adversely impact motivation and achievement (Gopalan & Brandy, 2020). Furthermore, the study revealed that students who had a heightened sense of belonging reported enhanced academic achievement, decreased probability of early college dropout, and heightened overall satisfaction with their college experience

(Gopalan & Brady, 2020). Throughout the wellness program, students also expect to engage their social goals of increasing peer attachment, a significant predictor of university adjustment, followed by attachment to the university (Maunder, 2017). The advisors will document a referral note in the collaborative database, enabling both the student and the Committee to track the outcomes of the mentoring and support service. Each party will furnish an evaluation of the referral, mentorship, and support service to enable the Committee to undertake a systematic, evidence-based assessment of the activity's efficacy.

The implementation of transparency and data-driven criteria has the potential to directly enhance the efficiency of the PPDPath. The pathway must establish and deliver transparency in the provision of information, feedback, and evaluation to students, advisors, and the Committee. All relevant stakeholders have equal access to the data of the path and can seek support to gain a clear understanding of the data. In a study conducted by Hazelkorn and Gibson (2018), it was discovered that colleges that efficiently gather and employ data about student outcomes, resource allocation, and program performance exhibited superior decision-making, increased resource allocation, and improved student success rates. Researchers proposed that institutions should consider investing in reliable data collection and analysis technologies, providing training to administrators in making decisions based on data, and utilizing data to guide strategic planning and allocation of resources. In addition, Kim et al. (2012) noted that universities that had greater transparency in their financial aid rules and provided easily accessible information on fees, scholarships, and grants had an increase in student enrollment and enhanced satisfaction with their financial aid programs. Institution X utilizes the transparency and data-driven approach of PPDPath to accurately determine the cost of education, extracurricular activities, and supplemental resources that students may need to prepare for.

The programs of Social and Global Leadership can be conducted through partnership with ACDC, student affairs, the Global study department, and other community participation initiatives. The objective of this program is to establish a connection between the PPDPPath and the practice of productivity, as well as fostering engaged and responsible citizen-leaders in global society. This curriculum will be tailored according to the student's present stage of their PPDPPath and their future aspirations to make meaningful contributions to the community and society. There are no restrictions for studying abroad, engaging in social work, volunteering, or participating in community events. The student will not only ascertain the rationale behind their societal objectives and the institutional demands placed upon them, but also broaden their scope of personal growth and expand their professional network in the future. Each activity must clearly demonstrate how it contributes to their PPDPPath to entice student participation. The Committee also needs to assess the impact of this program on student success.

Regarding professional development, it is necessary to promptly perform the career orientation session immediately after students complete the preparedness program using PPDPPath. Shukla (2021) emphasized the significance of engaging in early career exploration as a means of cultivating crucial aptitudes such as decision-making, problem-solving, and goal setting. The student must comprehend that their choice of degree path and major will directly contribute to their professional growth in their desired field. Terzaroli and Oyekunle (2019) emphasized the significance of career guidance and counseling services in enhancing students' employability skills and effectiveness in job search, albeit in a distinct environment. The ACDC will collaborate with a career mentor and utilize data-driven reports on the current workforce and employer requirements to assist students in determining their degree path and developing realistic professional development goals. The committee will actively monitor this vocational

program for additional assistance. Lore (2012) asserted that engaging in early career exploration enables individuals to chart their own career trajectories, make well-informed decisions, and negotiate career changes with greater efficacy over the course of their lifetimes.

The Coaching and Training program will prioritize career development and equip students with the necessary professional skills to achieve their career objectives. Career development intervention programs, such as the ones mentioned by Campion and Ferris (2011) and Van van Heijden et al. (2020), have been shown to have a considerable positive impact on employment outcomes. Specifically, they improve job search success and re-employment rates. The coaching and training program must align with present job market needs and cater to the requirements of students. To determine the requirements, career advisors also propose conducting a professional assessment for students. This assessment is based on their professional development plan and the industry-recommended professional assessment tests that they are aiming for. Career development skills encompass not only professional skills, but also job search skills, career decision-making, and networking. These skills greatly enhance trainees' chances of securing employment (Cullen, 2022). The Committee will collaborate closely with a career coach and other members of the Professional Advisory board in the community to offer practical training and assistance for the advancement of students' careers.

Once the student has thoroughly prepared themselves with the necessary professional skills and information required for their chosen vocation, they will need to gain practical experience through internships. In their study, Baert et al (2021) discovered a strong correlation between the duration and quality of internships and the employment outcomes of graduates. Specifically, graduates who engaged in longer and more enriching internships, characterized by well-defined learning objectives, mentorship, and difficult work, saw considerably higher rates

of employment and starting earnings compared to their counterparts who had shorter or less fulfilling internships. The study emphasizes the significance of pursuing internships that provide substantial learning experiences and exposure to practical issues to optimize their influence on employability (Baert et al., 2021). The 2023 study by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) reveals that more than seventy percent of employers consider internship experience as a top priority when hiring candidates for entry-level positions. Additionally, graduates who have completed internships tend to receive starting salaries that are, on average, ten percent higher than those who have not. The report affirms the considerable importance that companies attach to internship experience and its beneficial influence on career opportunities (NACE, 2023).

In preparation for the internship, the institution will offer students a simulated interview. Tanriverdi and Senol (2022) discovered that engaging in simulated interviews substantially enhanced students' self-assurance in their interview skills and resulted in enhancements in their communication, self-representation, and the quality of their responses. Wurdinger and Qureshi (2014) demonstrated that students who engaged in simulated interviews exhibited elevated self-assurance and enhanced aptitude in interviewing, in contrast to their counterparts who did not partake. Furthermore, they obtained superior scores on interviewer evaluations of their communication abilities and overall appropriateness for the position.

Academic success is a crucial component that must be achieved in order to complete the PPDPPath. The academic success of PPDPPath can be defined as the completion of the program with a satisfactory level of knowledge and abilities that contribute to personal and achievement goals. The amount of academic achievement varies among students and careers, but Institution X's overarching objective is centered on program completion and attaining credentials. The U.S.

Department of Labor offers an internet-based database called O*NET. Comprehensive online resources providing in-depth information about various occupations, encompassing educational prerequisites, essential talents, and salary brackets. According to O*NET, vocations like as surgeons, attorneys, engineers, and research scientists require the greatest level of education, usually a doctoral degree, and training. This indicates that these occupations have more rigorous academic requirements compared to other jobs (National Center for ONET Development, 2023). The objective of this component is to assist students in comprehending the significance of academic achievement in relation to their personal and professional aspirations. Campion and Ferris (2011) suggest that individuals should prioritize the cultivation of talents and abilities that are directly applicable to their intended profession, rather than relying solely on academic accomplishments. The PPDPPath emphasizes the need of maintaining a harmonious equilibrium between personal, professional, and academic objectives.

Ultimately, students will undergo a Graduation Assessment as the ultimate evaluation of their preparedness to enter the labor market and embark on the subsequent phase of their lives. The primary objectives of this assessment are as follows: (1) To assess the students' preparedness in achieving their personal and professional goals, including the acquisition of desired skills and knowledge, understanding of career paths, and development of career skills; (2) To evaluate the effectiveness of PPDPPath, including its components, actions, and overall efficacy; and (3) To gauge student satisfaction with both PPDPPath and their overall college experience. According to Wiggins and McTighe (2005), assessments should provide students with several opportunities to showcase their comprehension using different methods, catering to a range of learning styles and skills. This can be achieved through quizzes or self-reflection. The assessment also encompasses more than just open-ended questions regarding each component of the path that could contribute

to a future comprehensive study on the effectiveness of the intervention. The assessment can also perform a meta-analysis of each semester's evaluation of students and advisors to demonstrate the developmental progress of students in their academic journey. The Committee will utilize this final assessment as the foundation for delivering a data-driven review on the efficacy of the PPDPPath and the level of engagement within the university.

Pathway Leadership as the Solution to Tackle Obstacles

The advantage of the path-goal theory is in its ability to comprehend, foresee, and make provisions for potential barriers. Additionally, Hughes (2018) discovered that executives who actively confront challenges during change projects encounter more seamless transitions and achieve superior results. Howard and Irving (2012) advocated for the identification and resolution of hurdles in the leadership process, viewing them as chances for personal development and acquiring knowledge. The study proposes that the identification and resolution of barriers be included as a crucial component of effectively implementing PPDPPath. The data obtained indicates that Institution X and its students face many challenges that can be addressed by the implementation of PPDPPath and the adoption of suitable leadership behaviors by the institution and administrators. Table 11 demonstrates the recommendation to employ PPDPPath and leadership behaviors to address potential barriers to the attainment of students' development goals at Institution X.

Table 11*Utilizing PPDPath and Leadership Behaviors to Tackle Possible Obstacles*

Obstacles	PPDPath	Leadership Behaviors
Underprepared student	Student Readiness Program Evaluation & Adjustment Transparency & Data-driven Information Wellness & Support	Direct the program participation (mandatory), evaluation process, transparency. Support by information, data-driven system, available resource. Participate in communication, maintenance, adjustment Motivate to participate, commitment, provide and access data
Lack of student-focus information	Evaluation & Adjustment Transparency & Data-driven Information Wellness & Support Social & Global Leadership Career Orientation Student Success Graduation Assessment	Direct the Evaluation process, transparency and security principles Support by information, data-driven system, available resource. Participate in communication, maintenance, adjustment Motivate to participate, commitment, provide and access data
Lack of effective support program	Evaluation & Adjustment Wellness & Support Transparency & Data-driven Information Social & Global Leadership Career Orientation Coaching & Training Internship & Mock Interview	Direct the Evaluation process, transparency and security principles Support by information, data-driven system, available resource. Participate in communication, maintenance, adjustment Motivate to participate, commitment, provide and access data
Lack of effective support behavior	Strategic Goal-Setting Evaluation & Adjustment Wellness & Support Transparency & data-driven Information	Direct the Evaluation process, transparency and security principles Support by programs, mentoring and resources Participate in communication, maintenance, adjustment Motivate to participate, commitment, provide and access data
Unclear professional development pathway	Strategic Goal-Setting Evaluation & Adjustment Transparency & data-driven Information Career Orientation Coaching & Training	Direct the Evaluation process, transparency and security principles Support by programs, mentoring and resources Participate in communication, maintenance, adjustment

No navigation in the development path.	Internship & Mock Interview Academic Success Graduation Assessment Strategic Goal-Setting Evaluation & Adjustment Transparency & data-driven Information Career Orientation Coaching & Training	Motivate to participate, commitment, provide and access data Direct the Evaluation process, transparency and security principles Support by programs, mentoring and resources Participate in communication, maintenance, adjustment Motivate to participate, commitment, provide and access data
Student's lack of responsibility and advocacy for themselves	Student Readiness Program Strategic Goal-Setting Wellness & Support Transparency & data-driven Information Social & Global Leadership	Direct the Evaluation process, transparency and security principles Support by programs, mentoring and resources Participate in communication, maintenance, adjustment Motivate to participate, commitment, provide and access data
Student's personal and family issues	Student Readiness Program Strategic Goal-Setting Wellness & Support Transparency & data-driven Information Social & Global Leadership	Direct the Evaluation process, transparency and security principles Support by programs, mentoring and resources Participate in communication, maintenance, adjustment Motivate to participate, commitment, provide and access data
Disconnect with student	All 10 components	Direct the Evaluation process, transparency and security principles Support by programs, mentoring and resources Participate in communication, maintenance, adjustment Motivate to participate, commitment, provide and access data

The actions of leaders play a crucial role in effectively implementing the PPDPath, providing assistance to students and other stakeholders in accomplishing their tasks, and highlighting the goal of Institution X as a regional comprehensive university. The leadership behaviors aim to uphold stakeholder autonomy and resource flexibility to enhance the efficiency of the proactive plan in supporting students' aspirations. Nevertheless, Hazelkorn and Gibson

(2018) discovered a conflict between optimizing resource allocation and safeguarding academic autonomy. Based on an analysis of resource distribution procedures in different universities, this report recommends the use of data-driven approaches to enhance resource allocation. However, it also cautions against excessive dependence on metrics, since this might hinder innovation and limit faculty autonomy. In order to enhance autonomy and ownership within public universities, Smith and DeAngelo (2017) proposed several recommendations. Firstly, policy makers should enforce explicit guidelines for resource allocation criteria. Secondly, they should establish oversight mechanisms to guarantee transparency and fairness. Lastly, training programs should be provided to stakeholders to promote responsible practices. Yang and Li (2020) discovered that implementing open data projects in universities can effectively boost openness in resource allocation decisions, foster stakeholder involvement, and allow teachers, students, and administrators to actively participate in well-informed discussions.

This study recommends implementing leadership behaviors that promote an open data-driven, transparent, and accessible system for PPDPATH, a shared database. This should be done under the objective evaluation of the Action Plan Committee. *Directive behavior* involves leaders ensuring that both students and stakeholders comprehend the PPDPATH and its pooled resources, which are crucial for student achievement. During the compulsory Student Readiness program, students will independently create their own development plan with guidance from advisors and support from a data-driven system to ensure responsibility. During other programs and initiatives, the leaders will ensure that students and advisors have the freedom to practice autonomously. However, the leaders will still be responsible for evaluating the program's transparency, security, and accountability. During the process, the institution and administration will engage in *support behavior* by offering and directing students to suitable programs, creating

mentoring opportunities, and giving other resources that assist students in their PPDPPath and aid advisors in their work. The shared knowledge database serves as a comprehensive repository of supportive programs and resources that can be accessed and evaluated by other stakeholders to facilitate development. This support behavior aligns with the standard program design and behavior of modern universities. Moreover, the leaders and institution can *actively participate* in the PPDPPath by guiding the program, performing focused communication, maintaining the mechanism, and making required adjustments.

This study suggests a replacement of classical path-goal theory in that leaders should adopt *motivating behaviors* instead of solely focusing on goal formulation and achievement-oriented actions. This alteration is justified due to the goal-oriented character of PPDPPath and the practical obstacles in motivating students to adhere to guidelines and exercise autonomy in their growth. According to the data gathered from Institution X, students are motivated when the institution actively engages in their progress, assists them in maintaining their commitment through the PPDPPath process, offers helpful training and tools, and provides access to comprehensive shared data. Utilizing the social goals of building peer relationships and creating a sense of belonging could increase student's motivation, academic self-confidence, higher academic engagement, and higher achievement (Pedler et al., 2021).

Applying Artificial Intelligence of Education (AIEd) in Effective PPDPPath

I recommend utilizing the high data-driven technology in an information system like Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Education (AIEd). Zawacki-Richter et al. (2019) identified four areas of AIEd applications in academic support, institutional, and administrative services: 1) Profiling/prediction, 2) Assessment/evaluation, 3) Adaptive systems and personalization, and 4) Tutoring. George and Wooden (2023) developed the framework of "AI centered Smart

Universities” that utilize AI to reshape academic and administrative processes, personalized learning trajectories, enhanced accessibility, economic efficiency, and a boost in overall operational performance. The PPDPath can utilize AIEd in data accessibility, personalized profiles and experience, as well as the mentoring/advising support for advisors. Moreover, Institution X can develop a digital assistant with AIEd and PPDPath data based on a goal setting approach and methodology such as DSA (Weber, 2022). The personalized experience of students can apply the gamification approach and digital badges to improve self-regulated learning and commitment to goals (Cheng et al., 2019; Chou, 2019). In January 2014, Arizona State University (ASU) became the first higher education institution to work with OpenAI to explore the potential of generative AI to enhance teaching and learning with the goal “to leverage ASU” (Kelly, 2024). Beginning in February, ASU will invite all stakeholders to submit ideas to the hybrid team of Office of the University Provost to facilitate the collaboration. This is a variant of the Provost-lead Strategic Action Plan Committee described in this study that is leading this innovation. The goal of this partnership will focus in three areas of enhancing student success, forging new research, and streamlining organizational processes (Kelly, 2024).

Furthermore, as technology and AI continue to advance rapidly, there are certain limitations and issues regarding the implementation of AI in education that must be addressed prior to any intervention. According to Mhlanga (2023), the integration of ChatGPT in educational settings necessitates adherence to principles of privacy, fairness, non-discrimination, and transparency. This report recommends the implementation of the following measures in order to uphold ethics and accountability within the global education sector. Zhuo et al. (2023) have raised numerous ethical and privacy concerns pertaining to ChatGPT, including issues

related to racism and gender bias, as well as potential instances of research and educational misconduct.

Question: *what are your limitation as a AI and LLMs (Large Language Models)?*

ChatGPT: *As an AI language model, I have several limitations:*

Knowledge Cut-off: My training only includes data up until April 2023. Therefore, I don't have information on events or developments that occurred after this date.

No Personal Experiences or Emotions: I don't have personal experiences or emotions. My responses are generated based on patterns in the data I was trained on, not from personal understanding or feelings.

No Internet Access: I can't browse the internet or access real-time data. This means I can't provide updates on current events or look up information not contained in my training data.

Dependence on Input Quality: The accuracy and relevance of my responses heavily depend on the clarity and specificity of the questions asked. Vague or ambiguous questions may lead to less precise answers.

Ethical and Policy Constraints: I adhere to strict ethical guidelines, which include not generating harmful or unsafe content, and respecting privacy and copyright laws. I don't create or endorse content that is violent, illegal, or against OpenAI's use policies.

Lack of Contextual Understanding: While I can process and respond to a wide range of topics, my understanding of context and nuances, especially in complex or sensitive situations, is limited compared to a human.

No Creative Originality: Although I can generate creative content, it's based on existing patterns and information in my training data. I don't have original thoughts or ideas.

Limitations in Understanding and Generating Language: While I'm proficient in many languages, my ability to understand and generate natural language can sometimes be imperfect, especially in languages or dialects with limited representation in my training data.

No Physical Presence or Sensory Perception: I don't have a physical form or sensory perceptions, so I can't interact with the physical world or have firsthand experiences.

Generalization and Bias: My responses can sometimes be too general or inadvertently biased. I strive to be neutral and factual, but my outputs can reflect biases present in the data I was trained on.

According to the findings of this study, it is recommended that the AI model be restricted to serve as a supplementary system for the Action Plan Committee to access their Shared

Knowledge Database in order to facilitate the PPDPPath. Additionally, it is suggested that the AI model should aid the student and adviser in navigating their PPDPPath together. The present study does not provide evidence in favor of utilizing artificial intelligence as a substitute for intrapersonal communication among students, advisors, and administrators.

Implications for Further Study

Through a single case study conducted at a regional comprehensive university, this researcher identified certain trends that can contribute to a deeper comprehension of the public higher education system in the United States. From the inception of the educational system, the institution has sought to identify recurring patterns in preparing students for specific societal and professional tasks, while also providing support for their personal growth. The objectives of colleges may be subject to modification as a result of varying societal influences and circumstances, as well as the internal efforts of leadership. Currently, public higher education in the U.S. is facing increasing difficulties amid a period of decreased funding and social backing for higher education. This study examines students' goal orientation in relation to the aims and objectives of the public university program at Institution X. The study examines the three main categories of goal-setting theory to emphasize the institution's role in supporting students' personal development and helping them achieve successful careers through the influence of socialization. However, the study also highlights the problem of stakeholders having misunderstandings, confusion, and disagreements on the objectives of the university. This is a result of the detrimental effects of unclear leadership and lack of supervision in university operations, which can contribute to a challenging scenario. The complex policy context in public higher education necessitates a comprehensive examination of the conflicting philosophical beliefs regarding the purpose of higher education. This issue requires additional investigation to

be effectively addressed. There is a lack of understanding of the self-determination learning theory and pragmatic education philosophy among stakeholders. This lack of understanding is hindering the current progress of the student success program. Further research is needed to address this issue in the future. This study on goal-setting also identified potential correlations between completing numerous educational goals and overall life goals, which may contribute to enhancing quality of life and fostering a philosophy of lifelong learning.

For a regional comprehensive institution like Institution X, it is necessary to undertake further research on the demographic characteristics of undergraduate students and how their family and culture influence their perspectives on goals and motivation. The researcher aims to comprehensively address the overarching question about the systematic objectives of the public higher education system in the United States within the context of current complexities. In order to achieve this objective, the researcher proposes a comprehensive and systematic meta-study that investigates all the institutions inside the system, such as community colleges, research universities, and other publicly funded entities that provide post-secondary education. Given the limited sample size of students and administrators, future studies with more extensive sample sizes and/or with a wider range of stakeholders who have a direct or indirect influence on the development and strategic planning of the institution are recommended. This researcher also seeks to conduct additional qualitative and mixed-method studies to examine the association between variables such as student preparation, characteristics, and family background, and their impact on student satisfaction, happiness, and overall well-being during their college experience. Furthermore, the study can also encompass other student populations like transfer students, nontraditional students, online students, and other groups within the school. The intervention initiatives (PPDPath, shared database, Action Plan Committee) should also engage in further

empirical research to assess the results. The researcher seeks a longitudinal study examining the impact of intervention programs on the growth of students and institutions. These intervention programs have the potential to define the logical objectives of higher education, which can serve as a basis for future growth and collaboration in areas like as recruitment, curriculum development, extracurricular activities, post-graduation programs, and partnerships across different sectors. Building upon the proven effectiveness of goal setting theory in the professional realm, this researcher proposes further investigation into how this goal setting intervention can be applied in universities to enhance goal achievement in professional practices. This study aims to explore the potential correlation between the implementation of goal setting strategies in universities and the employment rate of graduates. A transparent and data-driven system that prioritizes the student's benefit could serve as the basis for further research on how the institution allocates resources, evaluates the system, and hires and retains workers aligned with the student's goal orientation.

Conclusion

The 2022 report of the American Council on Education (Ambrose & Wankel, 2020) highlighted the intrinsic complexity of the higher education system, which is characterized by fragmentation, multiple mandates, and a changing environment. The many stakeholders, goals, dynamic environments, and fragmented structures all contribute to the highly complex landscape of contemporary higher education (Kauko, 2013). To achieve an effective system, this study proposes a framework that prioritizes the needs of students. This framework involves collective actions that bring together all available resources, programs, and expectations of students, administrators, and institutions. It is not a completely new approach, but rather a way to navigate the complexity of the system. This dissertation conducted a case study on a regional

comprehensive university in the United States. Through this study, it uncovered the innovative ideas and actions taken by administrators and students to navigate the complicated nature of the institution, despite its unclear planning and programming. Additionally, it identified numerous concerns and obstacles among the stakeholders and institutions in their efforts to promote student achievement. The key observation is that individuals within the public university are independently adjusting to the intricacies, although they lack awareness of alternative approaches within their institution. A proposed transparent and communal intervention structure, aimed at benefiting students and achieving institutional goals, functions as the guiding force behind the scenes. This is the pathway for the institution and its stakeholders to refine the goals accomplishment process. Moreover, this process serves as an extra framework to reinforce the modern path-goal leadership theory. It involves leaders using updated behaviors to motivate followers to participate in the process autonomously and responsibly.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT



Project Title: REFINING THE GOALS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES: A STUDENT-CENTERED PATH-GOALS SETTING

Investigator: Tuan Minh Pham, Educational and Leadership,
tuanminh.pham115@topper.wku.edu

You are being asked to participate in a project conducted through Western Kentucky University. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project.

You must be 18 years old or older to participate in this research study.

The investigator will explain to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may ask any questions you have to help you understand the project. A basic explanation of the project is written below. Please read this explanation and discuss with the researcher any questions you may have.

If you then decide to participate in the project, please sign this form in the presence of the person who explained the project to you. You should be given a copy of this form to keep.

- 1. Nature and Purpose of the Project:** The study will explore the perceptions and understanding of 4 – year undergraduate students and administrators in student affairs about the goals of public higher education in the United States and what they need to do to achieve the student success goals.
- 2. Explanation of Procedures:** The in-depth interview will be conducted through the institutional Zoom account. It will last approximately 40-50 minutes. There will be three demographic questions (ages, field of study/work, years in the institution) and 10 questions related to the research.
- 3. Discomfort and Risks:** This study ensures that there are no risks and discomfort for the interviewer and interviewee. The first 10 minutes of the interview will be spent explaining and confirming that.
- 4. Benefits:** There are no financial benefits or compensation. However, the interviewer and interviewees can expand their knowledge of the student's success field and how to develop the pathway to achieve it.
- 5. Confidentiality:** The responses will be kept strictly confidential. Interview recordings stored in the cloud will be removed and downloaded to the researcher's password-protected personal computer within 24 hours of the interview. Upon completion of the research study, all documents, and data, including transcripts and audio/video files, will be stored in a filing cabinet in a locked office accessible only by the researcher and faculty sponsor for three years following the study, after which time they will be destroyed. All participants will be assigned pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality, and any other subject identifiers will be altered or reported only in a comprehensive form.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I. Interview questionnaires for students

A. How does the student understand their goals and the path to achieving those?

1. What are your achievement/social/personal goals to attend the program at your institution?
2. Does your institution clarify (in any published materials, website, strategic plans, and other documents) its vocational and non-vocational goals in educating students?
3. Do you know/reach out to any institutional support for achieving your goals?

B. What are the challenges they face to achieve their goals in the institution?

4. What are your challenges to achieving your goals in higher education?
5. Does your institution support you to deal with those challenges?
6. What do you think are the top three challenges of undergraduate students in the public education system?

C. What should students and administrators do to achieve their goals?

7. Do you have any goal-setting strategy to achieve your goals?
8. How your institution can support you to clarify your path-goal approach?
9. What is motivating you to achieve your goals?
10. Do you embrace commitment, clarity, challenging, complexity, and feedback in your goal-setting process?

II. Interview questionnaires for administrators

A. How does the student understand their goals and the path to achieving those?

1. What do you think are the student's achievement/social/personal goals to attend the program at your institution?
2. Does your institution clarify (in any published materials, website, strategic plans, and other documents) its vocational and non-vocational goals in educating students?
3. Do the student know/reach out to any institutional support for achieving their goals?

B. What are the challenges they face to achieve their goals in the institution?

4. What do you think are the student's challenges to achieving their goals in higher education?
5. Does your institution support students to deal with those challenges?
6. What do you think are the top three challenges of undergraduate students in the public education system?

C. What should students and administrators do to achieve their goals?

7. Do students have any goal-setting strategy to achieve their goals?
8. How your institution can support students to clarify their path-goal approach?
9. What is motivating students to achieve their goals?
10. Do students embrace commitment, clarity, challenging, complexity, and feedback in their goal-setting process?

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Email (to receive future readership statistics): pminhtuan111@gmail.com

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