

**“A Little Bit Suspect...A Little Bit Hopeful”:
Institutional Status and The Elusive Pursuit of
Racial Equity in One Public Higher Education System**

By

derria byrd

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The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:
Michael Apple, Professor, Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Policy Studies
Lesley Bartlett, Professor, Educational Policy Studies
Sara Goldrick-Rab, Professor, Higher Education Policy and Sociology, Temple
University
Stacey J. Lee, Professor, Educational Policy Studies
Linn Posey-Maddox, Assistant Professor, Educational Policy Studies

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ABSTRACT

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A small but growing literature examines the contribution of colleges, universities, and the higher education system itself to ongoing inequities experienced by college students from marginalized backgrounds. In particular, although institutional culture is an essential factor in the success of institutional change efforts, few studies have examined its influence in higher education contexts. This qualitative study addresses this gap, making an important practical and theoretical contribution by exploring the ways in which institutional practice and culture influence implementation in three institutions of varying status (high-, medium-, and low-) of a system-wide diversity policy. This research is grounded in a Bourdieuan analysis of social power and draws on critical policy studies to investigate the documented link between institutional culture and institutional change, through the theoretical lens of *institutional habitus*.

As a multisite vertical case study, this analysis draws on archival records, institutional documents, observations and interviews with administrators, staff and faculty to examine the ways a stratified purposeful sample of three institutions interpreted, developed and implemented *Excellence for All*, as well as the factors that influenced institutional decision-making and action related to the policy. Findings indicate significant differences in policy implementation across the campuses with only the middle-status campus leveraging the policy to pursue racial equity for its students. Rather than individual accomplishments or failures, however, these outcomes reflect the extent to which the policy mapped onto existing campus pressures, priorities, and

habitual ways of being. Ultimately, this study reveals that the interaction of institutional identity, social status, and policy framings significantly structure policy implementation.

By challenging the notion that higher education institutions are disinterested entities and offering a methodology for studying the influence of institutional culture across institutional status, the present study has implications for research, practice and theory related to organizational studies, institutional culture, and critical practice and policy analysis in higher education spaces. The findings from this research underscore the importance of qualitative investigations of institutional change efforts, and the need to attend to the intersection of social status and power, institutional culture, and policy goals in the pursuit of transformational change toward racial equity in higher education.

This dissertation is dedicated to
my grandmother, Pauline Winifred Huff Byrd,
who did not live to see many of my achievements
but who has been an essential element in making them all possible.

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PART ONE

PROLOGUE

On the night of August 9, 2014, an unarmed Black teenager—18 year-old Michael Brown—was shot to death by a White police officer on a street in Ferguson, Missouri.¹ Ferguson Police Department Officer Darren Wilson fired 12 shots at Michael Brown, claiming self-defense after an alleged altercation with Brown in which Wilson said he feared for his safety. Beyond the shooting, and Brown's subsequent death, few other details from the night are clear. Brown and a friend were stopped by Wilson for walking in the middle of the street but moments before, a police dispatcher had reported that two men had robbed from a nearby convenient store. Wilson thought Brown and the friend matched the description. Wilson alleged that Brown wrestled with him and reached for his police revolver, punched him in the face before running away from Wilson's police car. Brown's friend and other witnesses said that after running, Brown turned back toward Wilson with his hands in surrender posture. These reports were later deemed false. All agree that Brown's body lay in the street for over four hours. Explanations for this ranged from incompetence to callousness.

Ferguson erupted into protests that seemed fueled by ongoing brutality and victimization Blacks had faced at the hands of the Ferguson police department—in a predominantly Black city run by a predominantly White government.² Some of the protests were peaceful; others seemed

¹ This reconstruction of events is based on details gathered from national and international media outlets (see Cobb, 2014; Davey & Bosman, 2014; Ellis, Todd, & Karimi, 2014; "Ferguson unrest: From shooting to nationwide protests," 2015; Healy, 2014; "Michael Brown: The workings of the grand jury explained," 2014; Ray Sanchez, 2014; Raf Sanchez & Lawler, 2015; and Toobin, 2014).

² Allegations of racial bias in the Ferguson Police Department and other city institutions were later corroborated in a federal investigation of the Ferguson Police Department, which was

fueled by an undeniable rage—overturned cars, fires, protestors on an interstate highway, vigils, a state of emergency. As protests spread across the nation, names of other unarmed Black men who'd been killed—often by police but not always—also floated in the air. Oscar Grant. Eric Garner. Trayvon Martin. Ezell Ford. Emmett Till. These names linked Michael Brown and Ferguson to a long American history of racialized bias, discrimination and oppression through violence.

Less than two weeks later, a grand jury tasked with determining if there was probable cause to charge Wilson with a crime began hearing evidence. After what could be called a lull, tensions began to rise again in early November as the public awaited the grand jury's decision. Around this time two of my research sites—Ashby University, the state's flagship, and Bradford University, a small liberal arts college in a rural part of the state—held events focused on diversity and Ferguson, respectively.

On the morning of November 10, 2014, with all of this turmoil on my mind, I was on the road before 8:00 a.m., preparing for a long day of observations at two of my research sites.³ The first event, at Ashby University, would run from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The second, at Bradford University—an almost two-hour drive away—began at 7:00 p.m. The diversity-related event at Ashby was a forward-looking event, meant to engage participants in “problem-solving and learning” about the new meanings of diversity and how these might shape diversity practice in the

conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice. Since the release of the report, at least 6 employees of city government, including Ferguson's police chief, have been fired or resigned ("Ferguson unrest: From shooting to nationwide protests," 2015). A parallel DOJ investigation into potential civil rights violations cleared Wilson of any wrongdoing in the shooting (Raf Sanchez & Lawler, 2015).

³ These events are reconstructed from my research field notes (AFN_11102014; BFN_11102014).

future. Bradford's event was explicitly framed as a response to the outrage and questions raised by Michael Brown's killing and the ensuing events in Ferguson.

That morning at Ashby, sitting among the 500 or so others gathered, I was reminded about the good work the campus had achieved under the diversity umbrella. The gap by racial group in first-year retention had been almost closed, and over the previous decade the racial gap in the six-year graduation rate had been cut in half, we were told, though there was still more than 10-percentage-point lag for students from racially marginalized backgrounds. Racial diversity among the faculty had also increased. The senior diversity officer transitioned the gathered participant's into the day's focus—the landscape for diversity in the city surrounding the campus, recognizing the anniversary of the Civil Rights Act, the shift inherent in moving from diversity to inclusion, and, finally, the relationship between the community and local law enforcement.

The speaker on local diversity offered a seasonal metaphor to mark important historical moments. The period following World War II had been a Spring filled as it was with “peace and prosperity,” cultural revolution and resistance to inequity. We're currently in a Winter, she reported, an era of survival, a time of energy conservation in which we prepare for the rejuvenation of the coming Spring. Springs were significant because “every time” the country emerged from them as a place that works better for more people. She was here to encourage us to engage in “futuring,” the process of making sacrifices today that lead to payoffs tomorrow. The city has potential, she continued, but White people there have a responsibility to help it reach this potential. Motioning to her heart, she said, “This is Where the work starts.” Nothing else matters without this work.

The next session, a panel on the anniversary of the Civil Rights Act was a repeat engagement of an event from the previous Spring. The group addressed three big questions—

whether there are different challenges today, the most pressing civil rights issues, and the most meaningful ways to engage. The panelist generally agreed that today's challenges compared to those of the Civil Rights era are "profoundly the same, and profoundly new." However, rather than just concerns about race, there were issues related to income inequality, climate change, immigration, mass incarceration, and voting rights that needed to be the center of collective action for justice. The moderator concluded by asking the panelists if, as Martin Luther King, Jr. asserted, the moral arc does bend toward justice. One panelist wondered how much it would have to bend before it would break. Another said, "We have to bend it. Justice requires us."

"Stand up if you think you're a majority." The keynote speaker launched into his after-break session, "The Business Case for Diversity." A good number of the audience—mostly White—stood. "Stand if you think you're a majority," he said as a group comprised generally of people from racially marginalized backgrounds and some women stood up. He beckoned us to notice that he'd been standing the whole time. He listed a few characteristics—human being, over 4-feet tall, younger than 70, citizen or permanent resident—that made most of us in the room a majority. With a satisfied, gotcha look on his face, he told us that no one is inherently a minority or a majority, it depends on the question. It depends on the context. The problem wasn't with majority-minority differences because we were all both. The challenge, he said, was diversity—moving beyond it to inclusion, which means taking advantage of the opportunities that diversity presents. Heightened global competition, demographic shifts and an impending leadership void should make us fearful enough to move toward change. Paraphrasing Mark Twain who'd asserted that finding one's self on the side of the majority meant it was time to pause and reflect, the speaker asked us each—all members of the majority—to please, pause and reflect.

The senior diversity officer, the moderator for the final session, introduced the topic: community relations and law enforcement especially considering the last three to four months, which—he noted—were not just about Ferguson. Panelists highlighted income inequity and educational deficits as chief issues facing the community, whose incarceration rates dramatically exceed those of neighboring states with similar demographics. Despite the city’s reputation for being liberal-minded and activist-oriented, this wasn’t evident in the community. They discussed potential solutions—community education about activism for policy change, cultural competency for police officers—before the moderator concluded by suggesting that this was a good conversation to continue with others in the community, including the local school district.

I emerged in the late afternoon from the Ashby sessions with the weight of the day on me—weariness with the competitive diversity argument—I began to reconsider my drive to Bradford. Nearly two hours there, and another two hours after the event only to return in the morning for another interview started to seem like the worst plan I’d ever concocted. But curiosity and the desire for parity got the best of me. I stopped at a campus coffee shop for a pick-me-up-Americano, and drove to Bradford to observe a community gathering that focused on linking the events in Ferguson to what was happening in the communities that include and surround the campus. The event was advertised as “a panel discussion on the summer, Ferguson, Mo. incident that has sparked big questions and outrage across the nation and the world” (B_ID018).

According to respondents, there were seats for 270 people in the room and almost each was taken. BQFA03 told me that they’d relocated the event to facilitate roundtable conversations and to have free parking for the event. Having interviewed folks around campus for the previous several weeks, a good handful of faces in the room were familiar to me and most greeted me

when we caught eyes. One respondent, who I'd recently interviewed, invited me to join her table, saying, "we're" sitting by the podium, referring to the EFA committee. Once I was seated at the table, and was introduced around, another respondent from a recent interview hugged me and said she'd help introduce me to others I might want to interview, including the EFA administrator who I'd been trying to catch for weeks.

A staff member from one of the programs under EFA welcomed the audience on behalf of the EFA committee. In addition to reviewing the ground rules for the evening, he said that it was important to understand EFA itself, saying that an institution's success depends on "how much it values all of its members." Then a professor from the EFA committee offered historical background for the conversation—the "context of racial bias, a racial justice system," which led into the next speaker, a student and veteran who had served in Iraq. He told the gathered audience that "we are the enemy" under an increased militarization of the police, which he said encouraged police to engage in "warrior tactics" and was concurrent with racial disparities in arrests as well as deaths during arrest. Another professor brought the discussion from Ferguson to the city surrounding the university, saying that issues related to police, racism and prejudice aren't just "about 'they' or 'them'" but that police racism and racialized differences in incarceration, unemployment and poverty are local realities as well. The EFA administrator and a visiting speaker talked about student activism and the need for White allies, respectively. The speaker stated that although multicultural coalitions were important, he was "here to talk to White folks" because "shit happens when they step to the forefront of justice" but he lamented that "the idea of this sacrifice is dead" in the 21st century.

A final speaker talked to White students, it seemed, about personal responsibility—that while it is an "almost cliché" notion, there were real barriers to it, including apathy, guilt, and

the fear of making mistakes. He shared some of his own mistakes, primarily times when he had remained silent and/or didn't act in incidents related to race, that were still on his mind today. He left the stage to Michael Jackson's "Man in the Mirror" before BQFA03 transitioned the group into roundtable discussions guided by the following questions:

- Problems: Why does Ferguson matter to us? Why do race-based social problems matter here?*
- Solutions: How do we address racism as individuals? As a group?*

During the transition, I stepped out to use the restroom and saw the equivalent of a busload of White students leaving. I returned and joined a table with a couple of people whose faces I recognized from my time on campus. After 10 minutes of table-based discussion, designated "eavesdroppers" shared themes they'd overheard and then facilitated full-group discussion. The audience voiced a range of reactions including the discomfort of being a minoritized person in Bradford's communities; times they'd faced or challenged prejudice on an individual level; feelings of fear, confusion and discomfort; and the pressure of change depending on the young. Attending to the dialogue aspect of the gathering, one community member who'd brought his teenaged daughter said that college was "too late for a diversity awakening." Another rejected the idea of being colorblind, saying instead that "color brave" conversations were how change happened.

Before I knew it, the event had come to an end. I mingled with a few respondents afterward. BP01 who was clearly surprised to see me there thanked me for coming. BQFA03 repeated how lucky they were that I had come, how excited she was. The energy among the loiterers, many of the members of the EFA committee, was palpable as other audience members exited the event. I was:

Struck by how much fun the [EFA committee] seems to be having with each other. There was a sense of high energy in the room, at the end of a successful event. A lot of high-fives, laughs, hugs. Students reaching out to the committee members. It was clear that they were proud of a job well done, that there was a good turnout. And that included the community and not just people on campus.

I was happy to see BQFA02, a respondent I'd interviewed a couple of weeks prior, but was also surprised to see her given that she was on leave that semester. I said to her, "You all seem to be having too much fun." She acknowledged that "we have a lot of fun when we're together" but she hoped that "we're not preaching to the choir...tonight." I replied that I was "impressed that the choir is this large at [Bradford]. It's not what I would have expected." She beamed, looking around the room, nodding and saying, "This is us at our best."

CHAPTER 1

Introduction⁴

To achieve **Excellence**, we must be **Inclusive**.

To be inclusive, we must be **Equitable**.

(HESA_ID001, emphasis in original)⁵

Americans want both excellence and equity in their higher education system. But while they feel good about the former...there is much debate about the latter (Bowen, Kurzweil, Tobin, & Pichler, 2005, p. 1).

Roughly between 1960 and 1980, access to higher education in the United States expanded dramatically with significant implications for educational opportunity among students from marginalized⁶ backgrounds, specifically racial/ethnic minority and low-income students (Gelber, 2007; Kerr, 1991). Each year more than 20 million students enroll in colleges and universities in the U.S., representing an increase of more than 7 million students between 1990 and 2010 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Students from racially or

⁴ The quote used in the title, “a little bit suspect...a little bit hopeful” is taken from an interview with informant BQFA02.

⁵ All potentially identifying information has been changed or withheld—including policy, state, system, institutional and individual names—to protect the anonymity of participating institutions and institutional agents. To further protect the identity of the institutions and policies included in this study, I have anonymized all documents to which I make reference in this dissertation with a reference to the institution’s pseudonym and a unique code. As an example, “HESA_ID001” refers to the first document I coded that was produced by state public higher education administration, which I have refer to as the Higher Education System Administration.

⁶ I employ the term “marginalized” here to signal concern about the social subordination of specific groups of students, i.e., racial/ethnic minority students and those from low-income backgrounds, who are subject to “ideological and institutional processes and forms that reproduce oppressive conditions” in their pursuit of higher education (Apple, Au, & Gandin, 2009, p. 3). The use of the term “marginalized” also aims to draw attention to the outcomes of students who happen to be members of socially subordinated groups as well as to the reality that students experience these outcomes, in part, *because* they are members of these groups. This is not to suggest that individuals and groups are completely socially dominated but instead to highlight the intersecting effects of power relations and social inequities that present challenges for agentic action of individuals and groups (Apple, 1995).

socioeconomically marginalized backgrounds account for a significant proportion of this enrollment growth. For example, between 1980 and 2000 college enrollment of Black and Hispanic students increased by approximately 60% and 300%, respectively (Harvey, 2003).⁷ As a result, the representation of these students among the college-going population, which surged by more than 120% with gains in both two-year and four-year institutions, outstripped that of White students (Harvey, 2003).⁸

Despite the success the U.S. has had in expanding access for these students, however, the current system is characterized by persistent inequity with intensifying gaps in access and attainment by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status (Ellwood & Kane, 2000; Gamoran, 2001; Haveman & Smeeding, 2006; Kane, 2004; Karen, 2002; National Center for Education Statistics, 2012; Ryu, 2009; Walpole, 2003). These lingering gaps in access as well as the broken link between matriculation and graduation for marginalized students give rise to concerns for students' higher education outcomes not only because of the accumulation of unrealized aspirations but also because of the psychological, financial, occupational, and health benefits associated with higher education (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010; Dougherty, 1994; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Grodsky &

⁷ I present data on Black and Hispanic students, the largest groups of underrepresented racial/ethnic minority students in higher education, in part, because their aggregate collegiate experiences mirror those of other racial/ethnic minorities, such as American Indian/Alaskan Native and Asian/Pacific Islander students (Fry, 2004, Harvey, 2003). However, racial/ethnic groups are not monolithic; subpopulations experience varied educational outcomes and levels of attainment based on their sociocultural position relative to a range of social conditions, including immigration status, language, and class background (Norman, Ault, Bentz, & Meskimen, 2001, Posselt, Jaquette, Bielby, & Bastedo, 2012, Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005, Taylor, 2000, Teranishi, 2002).

⁸ Although dramatic increases in the number of racial/ethnic minority students enrolling in college helped narrow the racial gap in college participation, waning enrollments among white students was also influential (Harvey, 2003). Harvey and Anderson (2005) report that between 1991 and 2001, the enrollment of racial/ethnic minority students increased by almost 1.5 million students compared to a decrease of 500,000 white students. (This decrease applies only to public institutions; the representation of white students at private institutions increased during this decade (Harvey & Anderson, 2005).)

Jackson, 2009; Roksa, Grodsky, Arum, & Gamoran, 2007). More compelling still are arguments that center on democracy, and the notion that inequitable education outcomes for racially marginalized students reflect the presence of “structural racialized inequities” that trouble full realization of education opportunity and the achievement of democratic ideas like freedom, equality and inclusion (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Kezar, Chambers, & Burkhardt, 2015).

Higher Education and Educational Inequity

While there are many plausible explanations for these outcomes, the effects of student-level characteristics predominate in the literature on college success (Gerald & Haycock, 2006; Grodsky, 2007; Martinez, Sher, Krull, & Wood, 2009; Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Conversely, few questions are asked about the role that higher education institutions play in perpetuation of systemic inequities (Rendón et al., 2000). When institutions do become visible, their impact is often framed as indirect as if their campuses, cultures and climates just *happen* to be contexts that support or hinder for some students the development of key experiences, identities, and success factors typically associated with success (Allen, 1992; Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 1992; Kim, 2002; Tinto, 1993).

Increasingly, however, scholars peer inside higher education institutions to explore the ways in which colleges, universities, and the higher education system itself contribute to inequitable outcomes, particularly for college students from marginalized backgrounds. The small subset of scholarship that examines institutional contributions to social inequity in higher education demonstrates the fruitfulness of such analysis, revealing how institutional agents, priorities and norms help to structure (marginalized) students’ college opportunities and experiences (e.g. Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Brint & Karabel, 1989b; Ramos, 2012). Usefully,

contemporary iterations of this literature investigate organizational factors and the ways in which they shape college students' experiences, and, ultimately, their outcomes. For example, A. J. Binder and Wood (2013) conduct a comparative case study of a public flagship in the West and an elite private university in the East. Their findings suggest not only that both colleges helped structure students' paths toward conservatism but also that the different institutional contexts further influenced the ways in which students acted on their burgeoning conservative beliefs. What's more, Armstrong and Hamilton (2013) argue in their ethnographic case study of a public flagship in the Midwest that the academic and social features of the university that set the women they studied on varied paths through the institution weren't happenstance. Instead, these academic and social elements formed distinct pathways that helped the university balance three "competing imperatives": solvency, equity, and prestige maximization. Thus, we see increased attention to the influence of organizational factors on college students' experiences and outcomes as well as the institutional motivations behind developing and promoting institutional features that might otherwise be taken for granted.

Beyond this developing, primarily qualitative, literature, higher education institutions are rarely taken as social actors in their own right, as entities that not only serve as a backdrop for students' college-going experiences but that also shape the opportunities and success available to them during and after their time in college. Therefore, there is much to be learned about how the higher education system and its institutions operate—the ways in which its ideologies, organizational forms, and practices help to generate the inequitable outcomes about which students, the public, researchers and policymakers are increasingly concerned (Alon, 2009; Brainard & Fuller, 2010; Brint & Karabel, 1989a; DeParle, 2012; Gerald & Haycock, 2006; Naidoo, 2004; Sewell, 1971). Gerald and Haycock (2006) assert this more strongly: "the

universities [sic] themselves are important actors in this drama of shrinking opportunity. Not victims, not sideline spectators, but independent actors” (p. 4).

Tools from the field of institutional and organizational analysis and critical policy studies can enhance the study of institutional action—its motivations, meanings, and effects—by bringing attention to the fact that institutional policy and practice do not exist within an “organizational vacuum” (A. J. Binder, 2009, p. 19). Specifically, institutional culture has been demonstrated to have a significant effect on institutional change efforts although the concept has rarely been used in examinations of institutional change within higher education (Kezar, 2014). In addition, a focus on institutional culture is essential for equity in higher education because institutional culture and structures influence the parameters and possibilities for improving the outcomes of marginalized students (Bensimon, 2005). Although studies of institutional culture rarely link institutional action to broader relations of power, a critical approach is required to help surface the role that higher education plays in the recreation and disruption of social inequities (Bensimon & Malcolm, 2012). Institutions are influential but as Apple (1999) reminds “institutions and resources, and the people who must cope with them, are themselves situated in a larger set of structural relationships that involve economic, political, and cultural power” (p. 105). Thus any critical investigation of the role of higher education institutions in the reproduction of inequities for marginalized college students must attend to the interconnections between these institutions and the larger structure of power relations in which they are situated.

Work that aims to take seriously the relationship between institutional action and social power would investigate the various motivations and effects of institutional action to unearth the role these play in the oft-bemoaned college outcomes of marginalized students. This unearthing

would address at least three critical challenges—identifying the role that higher education institutions play in helping to shape marginalized students’ outcomes, determining methods through which to investigate institutional action, and offering direction for future activity toward equitable practice. This dissertation is one attempt to engage and respond to these challenges.

Purpose of the Study: Toward a Deeper Understanding of Institutional Action

In this section, I introduce my dissertation study, which aims to address some of the shortcomings noted above—in particular, the relative inattention to colleges and universities as social actors and definitions of institutional culture that overlook the powerful influence of social power and status on institutional decision-making and action. The primary goal of this study is to understand how institutional culture and the power relations embedded therein affect the possibility for change toward equity in higher education spaces. I pursued this line of inquiry by examining a particular policy case—the development and implementation of *Excellence for All*, a diversity policy, and its implementation in one public higher system. Specifically, I examined policy development and implementation within three institutions of varying status. As such, this inquiry is grounded in the following research questions:

- How have three campuses of varying status interpreted, developed and implemented *Excellence for All*, a statewide equity focused change effort?
- What influenced decision-making and activity related to *Excellence for All* on each campus?

The Policy: *Excellence for All*

Excellence for All (EFA) is an institutional change effort currently being enacted across the public higher education System I studied. In March 2009, the state Higher Education System Administration developed EFA as the latest iteration of its diversity strategic plan. According to

the System Administration website, this “change oriented planning process” relies on “systematic action” that will “[foster] greater diversity, equity, inclusion, and accountability at every level of university life,” in part, through the adoption of diversity and excellence as “interconnected and interdependent goals” (HESA_ID002). EFA has as its objective “individual and System-wide transformation” that recognizes diversity management not as an unwanted challenge but as an integral asset inherent to the contemporary college experience (HESA_ID002). EFA is framed by several key words: diversity, inclusion, equity and excellence,⁹ and is presented as an advancement of and upon previous System diversity efforts given its focus on “driving diversity deep into our everyday cultures, daily practices, and organizational patterns where it can take root and eventually blossom” (HESA_ID003). Though no official mandate accompanied its rollout, EFA was expected to surface at all campuses in the System, and to be customized according to each institution’s “mission, culture, identity, and demographics” (HESA_ID003). As a planning process, EFA does not represent a discrete project, and requires no additional resources but should influence distribution and use of currently allocated financial and human assets (HESA_ID003).

The EFA effort in the state is rooted in an initiative launched in 2002 by the National Education Consortium (NEC), *Expanding Excellence to All* (NEC_ID016). Grounded in four

⁹ Relevant definitions of these key words are offered: 1) *Diversity*: individual and social differences that can be used to enhance learning; concerned both with compositional diversity (i.e., numerical representation) and critical mass (i.e., meaningful representation); 2) *Inclusion*: consistent and meaningful engagement with diversity that increases awareness and knowledge of how difference influences individual, system, and institutional interactions; 3) *Equity*: includes equity-mindedness, through which individuals recognize and take responsibility for inequity, and color consciousness, the ability to notice and be willing to discuss race and ethnicity as elements of equity; representational equity exists when racial and ethnic minority groups that have historically been underrepresented participate in all aspects of institutional life; and 4) *Excellence*: “exalted merit” or the “state of possessing good qualities in an eminent degree” (HESA_ID003).

core principles—diversity, inclusion, equity, and equity-mindedness—this broader work aims to “bring the benefits of liberal education to all students” to support the development of a “diverse, informed, and civically active society” (NEC_ID017). NEC’s website indicates that this initiative, too, is a *process* through which higher education institutions can achieve excellence:

A high-quality, practical liberal education should be the standard of excellence for all students. The action of making excellence inclusive requires that we uncover inequities in student success, identify effective educational practices, and build such practices organically for sustained institutional change. (NEC_ID017)

As such, *Expanding Excellence to All* is framed as an organizational change process that will enable institutions to achieve equitable outcomes for all students. Pilot efforts have been initiated in several public higher education systems across the country with the intention of helping institutions integrate educational quality, diversity and equity into their missions and ongoing operations, including student social and intellectual development, teaching and learning, institutional practices, and local and global community engagement (NEC_ID017). The initiative is motivated, in part, by the search for answers to several key questions, including, “How can state [higher education] systems become generative catalysts for change that is also supported at the campus level?” (NEC_ID018). Almost a decade later, with *Expanding Excellence to All* activities ongoing across the nation, NEC argues that the intentionally flexible definition of EFA has supported that initiative’s “chameleon-like ability to adjust to the social and cultural environment of an institution or a system of institutions” (NEC_ID016).

Significance of the Study

Exploration of the EFA change process within the state System and its implementation at the three focal campuses can help to clarify the context in which diversity-related efforts within

higher education take place. Rather than merely generating yet another validation of Bourdieu's framework, I hope to leverage his theoretical framework, particularly the notion of institutional habitus, to examine an under-discussed reality of contemporary higher education—the invisible operation of social power with institutions that shape responses to the needs of marginalized students and that maps onto power relations in the broader society. In this way, the present study offers an integrated framework for studying the situated action of higher education institutions, including the affordances and constraints that accompany institutional status.

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it expands upon our awareness of the institutional opportunities and hurdles along the path to increased equity for college students from marginalized backgrounds. In particular, this critical case study supplements the higher education literature by examining the ways in which institutional contexts influence the extent to which organizational change efforts as well as institutional policy and practices challenge existing power arrangements. This study, thus, contributes to the paucity of empirical investigations of actual institutional change efforts within higher education.

Second, this concrete, yet theoretically engaged, project augments organizational and institutional analysis scholarship, offering a rare empirical investigation of an organizational change effort that employs the concept of institutional culture to understand the relationship between larger power relations and organizational behavior. The study intentionally revives and remakes the concept of institutional culture as a tool with which to understand institutional decision-making and action as augmented with an understanding of the ways in which social power and hierarchy influence these processes.

Third, this study offers a contribution within the field of Bourdieuan studies with a particular emphasis on the application of his theory of action to inequities in higher education

through engagement with the notion of institutional habitus. Specifically, this study employs Bourdieu's theory to sharpen refocus empirical attention on the structural forces that influence institutional culture and behavior. Understanding the situated action of higher education institutions can help scholars and practitioners to better understand the institutional opportunities to challenge inequities and spur truly transformative institutional change. Finally, this research adds to the critical policy studies scholarship by offering a close examination of the ways in which policy and practice, contextualized by institutional culture and behavior, are influenced by local factors that shape and that may inhibit meaningful organizational change.

Definition of Key Terms

While many concepts relevant to this study can be defined in a variety of ways, the definition of one word—equity—is particularly critical as it represents an essential metric with which to assess institutional action. *Equity* reflects an ideal state (Bensimon, Hao, & Bustillos, 2006) that is characterized by the absence of systematic differences in opportunity and experience linked to race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Most productively, inequity is viewed as a “problem of practice” that is created through everyday beliefs and actions (Bensimon & Malcolm, 2012, p. 5). Thus, institutional action toward equity—or *equitable practice*—is the awareness and remediation of the institutional factors, beliefs and actions that help create and perpetuate systematically disparate outcomes. Applying an institutional equity frame—which reflects consciousness of the cultural, historical and educational experiences of marginalized groups and acceptance of the responsibility to positively influence contemporary outcomes—can support institutional actors in attending to the educational experiences and outcomes of students who are historically underrepresented in higher education (Bensimon, 2005).

Equitable institutional practice has several dimensions. First, it acknowledges the continuing significance of race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status by identifying these as fundamental and socially constructed categories that are made meaningful through institutional and social practices and beliefs (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997). Second, equitable practice creates increased institutional awareness, responsibility and accountability for marginalized students' experiences and outcomes (Chase, Dowd, Pazich, & Bensimon, 2012). Enhancing institutional capacity, in this regard, requires the creation of tools and structures that allow institutional agents to see their practices and impact through an equity lens (Bensimon & Malcolm, 2012). This aspect also necessitates an institutional emphasis on effects and outcomes rather than merely on intent given that a lack of intention to discriminate does not preclude the creation of discriminatory consequences (Gillborn, 2005). Third, movement toward equity challenges the perceived normalness and existence of inequities through explicit attention and response to the outcomes and experiences of marginalized students as the intended beneficiaries of equity-focused institutional policy and practice (Chase et al., 2012; Gillborn, 2005). Within this, college success must be defined as a qualitative experience not fully grasped by academic outcomes alone.

Finally, equitable practice counters exclusionary beliefs and practices that draw their power and effect from historical and ongoing forms of racialized and classed privilege (Gillborn, 2005). These efforts help to unearth the ideological, social, political, and economic factors that help to perpetuate raced and classed inequities and power relations (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). This is achieved, in part, through rejection of diversity as difference discourse in favor of diversity as transformation engaged through intentional actions and communication across multiple levels of an institution (Bensimon, 1994; Bensimon & Marshall, 1997; Chang, 2002; Cooper, 2004). It is

worth noting that while the challenge of movement toward equity may appear to be insurmountable, it must nevertheless be addressed head-on. Gillborn (2005) offers that “recognizing how far we must yet travel, is not to deny that we have already moved. This perspective, however, insists on recognizing the scale and difficulty of the task ahead” (Gillborn, 2005, p. 497).

Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into three parts. In the remainder of Part One, I present the scholarly, theoretical and methodological contexts in which this research is situated. In Chapter Two, literature review and theoretical framework, I offer a critical literature review of the scholarship on the relationship between institutional culture and change, focusing primarily on the challenges of dominant framings of institutional culture within organization studies. I argue for attention to the relationship between social power and position and institutional culture, and introduce Bourdieu’s theory of practice—and its notion of institutional habitus—as a viable theoretical lens through which to explore the situated action of higher education institutions. In Chapter Three, I detail this dissertation’s research design, a qualitative, multisite vertical case study of policy and implementation within three campuses in the same public higher education system. In Part Two, comprised of chapters four through six, I present within-case findings that respond to my first research question regarding EFA’s implementation on the three focal campuses. Part Three begins with the final data chapter, Chapter 7, which responds to the second question, the factors that influence similarities and difference in EFA implementation, namely institutional habitus as made visible through institutional identity, context and pressures. The dissertation concludes with Chapter 8, in which I revisit major findings from the study and offer concluding remarks.

As a range of political, social and even institutional forces push us to consider the individual and his or her personal access to “equal” educational opportunity, the collegiate educational experiences of marginalized students stagnate or worsen. Thus, this inquiry is important because it can help uncover the mechanisms through which a society purportedly based on equal opportunity for all continues to produce such unequal outcomes while dismantling or weakening the few social systems that work against this process. This examination can help us make sense of the ways this “problem” is understood, discussed, and responded to—as well as to what end—within the context of higher education, while centering the actions of the colleges and universities themselves and pushing toward possibilities for vitally necessary institutional change.

Beyond its potential use to practitioners and policymakers in and for higher educational contexts and education researchers, this study could be of interest to the general public. Almost every week, newspaper articles and reports bring home the devastating reality that thousands of students from marginalized backgrounds leave college with their goals unrealized, their degrees unattained. Effective action to change this reality is of practical importance to a public that is increasingly concerned about educational equity at the higher education level. Compelling responses require new approaches to understanding and addressing inequities in college-level education. Understanding the situated action of higher education institutions will help researchers and practitioners to better understand institutional opportunities to challenge these inequities and to spur truly transformative institutional change.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Tools from the field of institutional and organizational analysis can enhance the study of institutional change—its motivations, meanings, and effects—in higher education spaces. For example, research indicates that institutional culture has a powerful influence on institutional change efforts because culture and change have a mutually influential relationship; however, the notion is rarely engaged theoretically and empirically in studies of higher education (Kezar, 2014). The few studies of institutional culture in higher education typically enumerate and apply definitions and typologies of culture or offer descriptive analyses of the cultures of particular institutions (Bergquist, 1992; Tierney, 1988). While limited attention is given to the link between institutional culture and college student experiences (Kuh, 2001), recent challenges to the status quo in higher education have renewed interest in the role of institutional culture in change efforts (Tierney, 2008). Specifically, a focus on institutional culture is essential for equity in higher education because institutional culture and structures influence the parameters and possibilities for improving the outcomes of marginalized students (Bensimon, 2005).

While Kezar (2014) is right to note the absence of institutional culture in the higher education literature, this gap reflects the dearth of attention to the concept in the wider field of organizational and institutional analysis. A review of relevant literature reveals a shocking datedness in key scholarship from the field. The 1980s and 1990s were the heyday of attention to institutional culture as the concept was presumed to have important links to institutional performance and competitiveness (Meek, 1988; M. F. Peterson, 2011; Pettigrew, 1985). Essential debates about the nature of institutional culture and the cultural analysis of

organizations as well as issues of power and control were vibrant during these decades (Martin, 2014). Both the rise of rationalist orientations toward studying organizations and the faltering performance of organizations that had been held as models during this time shifted attention away from institutional culture (Alvesson, 2013). Paradoxically, even as the much unresolved debate about institutional culture itself has waned, a significant remnant of these debates is continued investigation of efforts to change organizational culture (Alvesson, 2011). This lingering concern is supported by scholarship that demonstrated a critical link between institutional culture and organizational activity. Still, what exactly is being targeted in these organizational culture change efforts—that is, what is institutional culture—has received less and less attention in recent decades.

As the “faddishness of organizational culture” receded from organizational theory and scholarly debates, critiques and analysis along with it, many issues related to institutional culture have been left under-explored and under-theorized (Alvesson, 2011, p. 11). Chief among these is the relationship between local (or institutional) cultures and the broader social structures that reflect recurring and remade patterns of social inequity, and how this relationship might facilitate or hinder equity focused change efforts. As scholars call for future research on the relationship between culture and change (Alvesson, 2011), there is an important role for cultural analysis of the symbolism and deeper meanings embedded in institutional culture.

This has particular import for higher education where increased access may disrupt dominated¹⁰ students’ “agoraphobia”—“a sense of one’s place which leads one to exclude oneself from places from which one is excluded”—also increase opportunities for failure because

¹⁰ Bourdieu (1974, 1993c; & Passeron, 1990) discusses relative social positions in terms of individuals and groups with more or less social power—that is, that occupy dominant or dominated social positions, respectively.

expansion has been accompanied by relatively few ideological and structural changes to the context in which students are expected to succeed (Bourdieu, 1984/1988, p. 471; Crozier, Reay, Clayton, Colliander, & Grinstead, 2008; Reay, Crozier, & Clayton, 2010). If predictable, these outcomes are not inevitable; the changing composition of student bodies and the concomitant change in student demands is one of the ways in which the social world has an impact on the academic world. New students require different pedagogies, curricula and orientations—all of which weaken the hold of tradition in the space of higher education and, thus, create the potential for new social and power relations (Bourdieu, 1984/1988). Such changes inevitably will have important implications for work toward equity for marginalized student populations.

To inform this study of institutional change in higher education, particularly from an equity perspective, this chapter first introduces institutional theory, the umbrella scholarship under which investigations of institutional action take place. It then explores the link between institutional culture and change, including the ways in which it has been addressed in higher education scholarship. After acknowledging the essential link between institutional culture and change, this chapter reviews common elements of contemporary framings of institutional culture, and addresses the relative absence of attention to social power relations in these framings. Following this, attention is given to the concept of *organizational ideology*, one approach to framing the relationship between institutional culture and social power relations—though one that still has shortcomings.

As an alternative, this chapter offers *institutional habitus*—which is grounded in Pierre Bourdieu’s cultural and social reproduction framework—as a conceptualization of institutional culture that can advance analysis of social power and its reproduction in higher education spaces, and that acknowledges institutions’ social context and the factors that support and inhibit

transformational change toward equity. The overview concludes by outlining how this augmented framing of institutional culture might be fruitfully applied in analyses of institutional change efforts in higher education contexts, and previewing how it informs the current study. Finally, I include a note regarding how and why this is relevant to investigations of racial (in)equity in higher education contexts.

(New) Institutional Theory

It is important to note that investigations of and theorization about the relationship between organizational culture and change take place within a larger conversation within organization studies. Institutional theory¹¹ is a sub-field of organization studies concerned largely with understanding the factors that spur—and inhibit—institutional action. Early organization studies employed a structural-functional analysis that attributed organizational behavior to each organization's response to its “presumptively stable” needs and maintenance processes, which provide for its own self-defense and continuity of the larger system of which it is a part (Selznick, 1948, p. 29). Organizations were framed as largely preoccupied with efficiency and survival, which they hoped to ensure by successfully managing external forces (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; H. D. Meyer & Rowan, 2006a). Organizational behavior was understood as the result of managers who took appropriate action based on their assessments of environmental circumstances (Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin, et al., 2008).

Rather than an individual rational actor model that presumes that organizational action is meant to fulfill market or technical requirements, institutionalism—what some have come to call

¹¹ This is a necessarily truncated overview of (new) institutional theory—a task made all the more daunting by the “definitional thicket” that exists around institutional theory where clear lines are uncommon and ambiguities and overlap plentiful (Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin, & Suddaby, 2008; Zucker, 1987, p. 457). For more thorough reviews of this history and overviews of the state of the field as well as seminal texts in institutional theory, see Greenwood, Oliver, Suddaby, and Sahlin (2008), H. D. Meyer and Rowan (2006b), and DiMaggio and Powell (1991).

“old” institutionalism—introduced non-functional drivers of organizational behavior, a shift in attention that began in the 1970s (H. D. Meyer & Rowan, 2006a; Selznick, 1996). Specifically, institutionalists were interested in the impact of coalitions whose competing interests vied for influence on organizational practice, and in the ways in which these group interests drew attention and effort from the central or rational organizational mission (Clark, 1960, 1972; Selznick, 1949/1966, 1957/2010). Inherently political in their orientation toward organizations, institutionalists assert that organizational action most reflects the behaviors and preferences of those actors who have the power to define organizational interests and actions (Brint & Karabel, 1991; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). In this scholarship, the organization itself was taken as the primary unit of analysis (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996), and collective movement was said to be merely the result of individual organizational actions taken in the aggregate (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

Rather than taking individual organizations as institutions, institutionalists focus on institutions-as-sectors (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996), attempting to account for the tendency toward similarity among organizations independently responding to environmental context and managing uncertainty (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). They also offer a cultural analysis of the motivations and effects of organizational action in pursuit of this similarity (Mohr, 2000). According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), as a set of once diverse institutions engaged in a “common enterprise” reach a state of increased interaction, shared awareness, information exchange and defined behavior patterns and structures, structuration of the sector’s organizational field takes place (p. 147). Values, beliefs and ideas drawn from this field constitute a common “template for organizing,” which contributes to isomorphism—or similarity across organizations that results from homogenization processes through which organizations

conform to contextual expectations and become more like their peers (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; 1991, p. 27; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996).

Thus, new institutionalists—whose scholarship came to the fore in education research in the 1990s—center legitimacy within a particular “cultural meaning system” as the driving force for organizations (A. Binder, 2007, p. 550; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; H. D. Meyer & Rowan, 2006a). According to new institutionalists, pursuit of an at least “ceremonial conformity” takes the shape of connections between internal and external cultural myths and institutional structures that reflect external assumptions about the design and purpose of organizational work (J. W. Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 341) Over time, organizations’ formal structures come to reflect institutionalized myths, scripts, rules and routinized procedures that help organizations manage uncertainty and gain legitimacy by responding to and resembling the institutional environment (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; J. W. Meyer & Rowan, 1977). For new institutionalists, organizational change is relatively unlikely, taking as they do the “striking homogeneity of practices and arrangements” as their point of departure (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p. 9).

New institutional scholars argue that organizational change is less about efficiency than about response to a particular, shared organizational context, conceptualized as a field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Drawing on insights from cultural studies, anthropology, history, sociology and other fields, new institutionalism addresses the social construction of meaning and the symbolic nature of social life to reveal the ways in which organizational beliefs and actions are institutionally shaped (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Thus, cognition is central to new institutionalists who are interested in how institutions are made meaningful through individuals’ cognitive acts and “how people actively construct meaning within institutionalized settings through language and other symbolic representations” (H. D. Meyer & Rowan, 2006a, p. 6).

Through this influence on cognition, institutions structure organizational change by ordaining a set of actions as plausible—and setting aside or devaluing others—because of their accordance with current institutional arrangements and understandings (H. D. Meyer & Rowan, 2006a)

Although the “new” and “old” institutionalisms are often thought of as quite different scholarly camps (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), some argue that the distinctions between the two have been overstated, overemphasizing a dichotomy when the “underlying continuities are strong” (Selznick, 1996, p. 273). However, whether one imagines a neat progression from institutional theory to new institutional theory or a leap over a large chasm, the perspectives share a common critique—their inability, due in part to their emphasis on stability, to account for and investigate change in institutional settings and fields (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011). As agents in their own right, critics argue, organizations are not only reactive entities that assimilate and respond to cultural scripts but are actually creative forces whose internal dynamics shape responses to external pressures—perhaps even different responses within the same organization—creating the potential for even radical change (A. Binder, 2007; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). In other areas for productive development, contemporary institutional theory scholarship has yet to fully engage with notions of social power, and to leverage empirical analyses of individual organizations to understand behavior within organizations (Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin, et al., 2008). As I shall elaborate below, Bourdieu’s (1977b) theory of practice offers one fruitful approach to such analysis of organizations, culture and organization action.

Institutional Culture and Change

Attention to the relationship between institutional culture and institutional change efforts comes primarily from the disciplines of leadership and management studies within the larger

field of institutional and organizational analysis.¹² While many authors relate institutional culture to change (Bate, Khan, & Pye, 2000; Heracleous, 2001; Wilkins, 1988), others draw an essential link between the two, noting the limited potential for success in change efforts when institutional culture is ignored (Johnson, 1990; Pascale, 1997). Institutional culture is foundational, in this sense, because change efforts inevitably sustain, strengthen or challenge existing cultural assumptions in an organization (Gagliardi, 1986). In addition, early interest in institutional culture linked the concept to desired institutional outcomes in part because culture was believed to be a uniting factor that focused internal constituents on institutional goals (Heracleous, 2001).

In more contemporary framings, institutional culture is not understood causally—i.e., in relation to its ability to advance organizational goals and to create a competitive advantage—but instead in terms of its influence on individuals’ meaning-making and therefore behaviors (Feldman, 1986; Heracleous, 2001). This meaning-making structures individuals’ dispositions toward action in relation to change and makes one set of actions more likely than others (Feldman, 1986; Hatch, 2006). As an example, G. F. Latta (2009) demonstrates the differential impact of institutional culture on eight stages of an institutional change effort. The author finds that institutional culture influences change through its “subtle but nevertheless pervasive effects” on individuals’ values, beliefs, interpretations and actions (Heracleous, 2001, p. 439). In addition, the assumptions embedded in institutional culture as well as its ties to institutional arrangements

¹² This scholarship emphasizes both the role of institutional culture in change efforts as well as the difficulty of changing institutional culture itself. While the nature and challenges of changing institutional culture in higher education are certainly relevant to the current inquiry, this chapter will focus on the role of culture in change efforts given the interest in efforts to address the needs and experiences of marginalized college students. In addition, a focus on change is relevant more broadly because, as Kezar (2014) compellingly argues, important contextual changes (e.g., student diversity, globalization, accountability concerns), have gone largely unattended to by higher education institutions and contemporary challenges require a positive, thoughtful and informed orientation toward change.

help link history to contemporary practices and structures. Given his findings, G. F. Latta (2009) argues that leaders' increased cultural awareness and responsive refinement at each stage will improve effectiveness of the overall change effort.

Institutional Culture and Change in Higher Education

Much of the literature on institutional culture and change in higher education draws on institutional and organizational scholarship and learning theories to advocate for emphasis on institutional culture in institutional transformation efforts in higher education. Although empirical models do exist, the bulk of higher education scholarship on institutional culture are primers¹³ that offer institutional leaders guidance in pursuing change efforts (Astin, 2001; Curry, 1992; Ramaley, 2002), some of which is based on analysis of specific institutional change efforts. For example, Kezar and Eckel advocate for use of social cognition theories, which emphasize sense-making and learning, and for integrative change theories that combine conceptual models (Eckel & Kezar, 2003; Kezar, 2001, 2014; Kezar & Eckel, 2002b).

Beyond this, Kezar and Eckel (2002a, 2002b) demonstrate the usefulness of cultural frameworks for examining attempts at transformational institutional change. The authors suggest that institutional change agents should become “cultural outsiders” within their own institutions both to facilitate change processes and to document the link between culture and actual change efforts in higher education (Kezar & Eckel, 2002a, p. 457). They find that institutional culture influences adoption of particular change strategies and that its impact varies with the culture of

¹³ Another set of instructive publications—largely descriptive in nature—is based on the American Council on Education Project on Leadership and Institutional Transformation, a multi-year study of a diverse set of change efforts conducted by 26 participating institutions (Eckel, Green, & Hill, 2001; Eckel, Green, Hill, & Mallon, 1999; Eckel, Hill, & Green, 1998; Eckel, Hill, Green, & Mallon, 1999; Hill, Green, & Eckel, 2001). Recognizing trends as well as institutional differences, these works identify practices and habits of mind common among leaders in institutions that were struggling and/or successful in making institutional changes. Culture is relevant to the discussions in these texts but is not central in their formulation.

the institution. In addition, while they find success in the application of culturally appropriate change strategies, they charge future researchers to investigate whether successful change strategies can also challenge or violate an institution's cultural norms. These findings are expanded in later scholarship that employs case studies to emphasize the centrality of attending both to individual sense-making and organizational learning in an approach to institutional transformation that draws on theories from multiple fields (Kezar, 2014).

Still, for more than 20 years, scholars, institutional researchers and practitioners have called for greater attention to actual change efforts in higher education. This orientation is reflected in the organizational analysis literature but has yet to be fully embraced in higher education scholarship.

Defining Institutional Culture

While the literature is univocal in its assertion that institutional culture plays a critical role in institutional change, its definitions of the term are less so. There is no one shared definition but contemporary framings of institutional culture in the organizational and institutional analysis literature shared some commonalities (Alvesson, 2011). Institutional culture is often defined as a system, process or interpretation that guides reality-construction and meaning-making in public and collective ways through individual interaction with context, symbols, artifacts, rituals, and processes that embody cultural assumptions (Alvesson, 1987; Crotty, 1998; Martin & Siehl, 1983; Trice & Beyer, 1984). Framings of institutional culture present several characteristics that are shared to varying degrees. Unlike early framings of institutional culture as a variable— that is, as a thing that an organization possesses—culture is now more likely to be seen not as something an organization has but as something it is (Meek, 1988; Smircich, 1983a).

Institutional culture is taken as a generally shared network of meanings and the cultural forms¹⁴ (e.g., practices, artifacts, stories) through which these meanings are expressed (Trice & Beyer, 1984). Together, these act as a kind of collective institutional grammar—the shared rules of institutional membership (Kunda, 1992)—that does not reside “primarily inside people’s heads but somewhere between the heads of a group of people” (Alvesson, 2011, p. 14). Most scholars no longer assume that institutions have one culture but institutional agents must share some underlying principles or a sense of commonality to engage in collective action; otherwise, the processes of interpretation and re-interpretation would become distracting, focal activities (Smircich, 1983b). Organizations thus can be seen as cultures whose realness relies on the continuous meaning-making processes of institutional agents (Alvesson, 2013; Wright, 1994). Still, subcultures can co-exist within a dominant, shared culture (Sackmann, 1992), and can reflect different points of identification for institutional agents, the necessity for differentiation, or conflict that could challenge the institution’s core values (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Rodrigues, 2006).

Earlier concepts of institutional culture linked a strong, unified culture with a healthy high-performing organization, making an explicit link between a normative culture and institutional effectiveness (Meek, 1988; M. F. Peterson, 2011). Over time, scholars who embrace institutional ambiguity, pluralism in perspective and experience within an organization, and the influence of broader contexts on institutional meanings and practices found less value in the presumption of “unitary and unique” cultures (Alvesson, 2011, p. 15; Parker, 2000). This shift was formalized by Martin (2002) who articulated the existence of a set of cultural perspectives—integration, differentiation, fragmentation—that captures the coexistence of consonant, varied,

¹⁴ Smircich (1983a) offers that cultural forms are “products of a particular sociohistorical context ...[that embody] particular value commitments” (p. 355).

and conflicting intra-organizational meanings and cultures.¹⁵

The literature identifies other central and interrelated attributes of institutional culture; it is interactional, historical, implicit and productive. The interactional nature of institutional culture is a reflection of its emergence from interaction and collective activity within the institution, and its link to organizational learning processes. Schein (2010) defines institutional culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems" (p. 18). Thus, institutional culture is a "negotiated reality" that can be conceived of as a noun and a verb because it both is produced locally and has effects on those who encounter it (G. F. Latta, 2009, p. 22; Parker, 2000). Scholars center culture's interactional nature to underscore that it is neither incidental or nor imported wholesale from broader society even as elements of it may be unintentional or borrowed. Given its local development, culture is also historical in that it reflects interpretations of the organization's history that are deemed central or important enough to guide future behavior (Alvesson, 2013; Martin & Siehl, 1983). In this way, institutional culture represents a kind of constrained agency in which past activities and experiences structure institutional understandings of what is currently possible (Parker, 2000).

Despite its effectiveness, institutional culture does not exist on the surface and most often is not conscious. Instead, it reflects "deeply embedded patterns of organizational behavior and the shared values, assumptions, beliefs, or ideologies that members have about their organization

¹⁵ Early work reflected an integration orientation but more recent scholarship has emphasized variation within organizations, including a trend toward institutional ambiguity (Alvesson, 2011). Still, while Martin (2014) acknowledges that a cultural researcher's choice among these orientations reflects his/her subjectivity, she clarifies that integration, differentiation and fragmentation are not descriptions to be applied to organizations but empirically informed perspectives that should be used together in the study of institutional culture.

or its work” (M. W. Peterson & Spencer, 1990, p. 142). Therefore, institutional culture cannot be directly observed; it must be interpreted from the symbols, structures, and processes through which it is communicated and reproduced (Alvesson, 2013; Smircich, 1983a). Schein (2010) identifies three interrelated levels of cultural forms that reflect institutional culture: artifacts that can be seen, heard or felt though not necessarily consciously comprehended; espoused beliefs and values that govern the sense of what ought to be; and basic underlying assumptions that are difficult to change, in part, because they are “nonconfrontable and nondebatable” (p. 28). Others advocate for attention to the relationships among these cultural forms, particularly as demonstrated through institutional rites and rituals, and to an organization’s formal and informal practices (Martin, 2002; Trice & Beyer, 1984).

In addition, this use of history to inform future action reveals, in part, the productive nature of institutional culture:

Over time and in the course of joint action or practice, a group of people creates a set of intersubjective meanings that are expressed in and through their artifacts (objects, language, and acts). Such artifacts include the symbols, metaphors, ceremonies, myths, and so forth with which organizations and groups transmit their values, beliefs, and feelings to new and existing members, as well as in part to strangers. As new members join the group, each acquires a sense of these meanings through the everyday practices in which the organization’s artifacts are engaged. Through such “artifactual interactions,” shared meanings are continually maintained or modified; these are acts that create, sustain, or modify the organization’s culture. (Cook & Yanow, 1993, p. 378)

McDermott and Varenne (1995) dub this process "hammering a world"—which individuals achieve through and with each other, resulting in an uneven and impermanent conglomeration of

similarity, difference, and contradiction (p. 326). Thus, institutional culture is not merely an institutional attribute but is an institutional tool for generating local understandings and a form of internal consistency. The system of shared meanings suggested by institutional culture is used to interpret events, make sense, assign meaning and create new common understandings (G. F. Latta, 2009). For example, Hatch's (1993) cultural dynamics model attends to the symbols and processes that help create the social and emotional bonds that hold an organization together (Pettigrew, 1979; Rodrigues, 2006). These bonds undergird cognitive defense mechanisms that protect an organization's internal coherence by deflecting challenging information and helping to reduce conflict and anxiety (Schein, 1992). In this way, institutional culture is "a process of reality construction that allows people to see and understand particular events, actions, objects, utterances, or situations in distinctive ways" (Alvesson, 1987, p. 5). This process not only constructs reality but also the institution itself by reifying what is necessary for its collective work and institutional identity (Cook & Yanow, 1993). Still, this does not mean that full reconstitution is inevitable. The interactional nature of institutional culture means that institutional agents not only produce culture but also reproduce it, leaving room for change and transformation (Meek, 1988).

Considering Institutional Culture and Power

The aspects of institutional culture related here reveal that institutions are ripe for cultural analysis to comprehend underlying systems of meaning and affective, symbolic, and intersubjective elements of culture (Alvesson, 2013; Smircich, 1983a). Authors also suggest that the concept of institutional culture is in need of further theoretical development (Martin, 2002; Rodrigues, 2006), including through the exploration of institutional power relations and the connection between institutional culture and larger social structures (Alvesson, 2013; Clement,

1994; Meek, 1988). Specifying this process requires a more robust approach to understanding culture—one that would detail relationships and interactions among cultural elements within the ideological context of the organization and its social position (Hatch, 1993; Pettigrew, 1979; Trice & Beyer, 1984). Such an approach would challenge notions of organizational culture in which the organization is abstracted from the relations of power in which it is situated. It would also help to make visible the relations of power and domination that contribute to, and emanate from, organizational cultures and that deemphasize the struggle inherent in the maintenance and negotiation of organizational cultures (Knights & Willmott, 1987). By rehabilitating the concept of institutional culture, organizational researchers attend both to the ways in which culture is a multiple, dynamic and negotiated process concept—rather than a static and unitary fact—and to the issues of power embedded within (Street, 1993).

Drawing this critical attention to the study of institutional culture is productive for several reasons. First, it helps to resituate institutions within their larger social context. The meanings that circulate inside institutions are not purely local, and take place within a larger system of inequity and asymmetrical power relations (Giddens, 1976; Knights & Willmott, 1987)—a reality often overlooked in the literature on cultural analysis of institutions (Alvesson, 1987). Instead, critical organizational analysis can help deconstruct the common sense that informs institutional meaning-making, and reveal the ways in which organizational action is structured by social, historical and political contexts (Alvesson, 1985). Second, a critical orientation can shed light on cultural difference and conflict in and outside of the organization. Rather than assuming that an organization and the individuals therein have one primary naturally occurring cultural identity, critical cultural analysis offers a way to de-naturalize institutions and their cultures by showing how they are (re)produced—sometimes through conflict (Alvesson, 1987).

Wright (1994) notes, “Culture is double faceted. Culture is an analytical concept for problematizing the field of organizations; in that field, culture is an ideological claim, rooted in historical conditions and subject to challenge” (p. 27). By centering negotiation, conflict and contestation, critical analysis demonstrates that organizations are neither static entities nor do they exist in a state of equilibrium or agreement (Gray, 1985; Wright, 1994). Instead, organizations are “precarious”—actions of institutional agents reinforce or challenge existing meanings, resulting in contradictions that create spaces for institutional transformation (Gray, 1985, p. 83).

Third, organizations are political entities within which institutional culture is a “negotiated order that emerges through interactions between participants, an order influenced by those with the symbolic power to define the situation” (Alvesson, 1987; Hallett, 2003, p. 129). Thus, there is the issue of politics and the relative ability of members of institutional subcultures to elevate their meanings or to remake other institutional meanings (Sackmann, 1992). Fairclough (1985) attends to “ideological-discursive formations” (p. 751), which in the context of institutional analysis, compete to achieve the taken-for-granted status that situates organizational activity. Rather than merely attempting to identify an institution’s culture, critical cultural analysis seeks to investigate how specific meanings gain legitimacy at particular times in particular contexts (Wright, 1994).

Finally, beyond the orientation to analysis itself, critical cultural analysis paves the way for emancipatory change through research and practice. Such analyses can uncover the institutional constraints and structures that inhere in institutional culture and reproduce institutional and social inequity (Habermas, 1972; Knights & Willmott, 1987). This has implications not only for the subjects of research but also for researchers themselves. Rationalist

research models that attend primarily to outcomes miss the ideological content of institutional interactions and inhibit analysis of and response to the ways in which these interactions contribute to educational inequities (Apple & Weis, 1983). Not only can relatively invisible aspects of institutional culture be exposed to investigation and potential transformation but the critical turn can also guide researchers toward perspectives, questions and subjects that might otherwise be overlooked and that have emancipatory potential.

Organizational Ideology

Some institutional scholars have sought to apply these insights from critical cultural analysis to the study of organizations by considering *organizational ideology*. Unlike institutional culture, organizational ideology attends to internal and external power relations and situates organizational activity within its larger social context. Ideology has a multiplicity of definitions, most of which identify it as not only the source of understandings but also the motivation for action. For example, ideology is a “set of beliefs about the social world and how it operates, containing statements about the rightness of certain social arrangements and what action would be undertaken in light of those statements” (Wilson, 1973, p. 91). Beyond structuring understanding, ideology also intends to instigate and guide action by “nam[ing] the structures of situations in a way that the attitude contained toward them is one of commitment...Ideology is the justifactory [dimension of culture that]...refers ‘to that part of culture which is actively concerned with the establishment and defense of patterns of belief and value’” (Fallers, 1961, as quoted in Geertz, 1973, p. 231). Finally, ideology draws on material realities and discursive schemes to naturalize current arrangements, which relegates alternative actions and orientations to think the unthinkable and leaves them vulnerable to challenge (Wright, 1994).

Within an institutional context, an organizational ideology communicates affective and ideational norms, and acts as a mechanism through which new information is filtered and assimilated. Specifically:

ideologies are used to interpret, evaluate and understand all ongoing social activities...Ideologies are assumed to define all possible behaviours by an organization within its environments. New stimuli and data are consistently interpreted as if they were similar and related to previously encountered events, and, hence, are understood.

Unexpected behaviours must somehow be interpreted as fitting into previously recognized categories, or else they cannot be accepted. (Dunbar, Dutton, & Torbert, 1982, pp. 91-92)

Thus, organizational ideology reflects both a proposed way of doing business (i.e., systems and processes) and received notions of the way things are and should be (i.e., social realities, meanings and values). Further, ideology performs several functions that influence organizational action, including reification of the present, influencing the behavior of institutional agents, universalizing local concerns and interests, and transforming the dissonant into the consonant (Giddens, 1979; Mumby, 1987).¹⁶

Essentially, organizational ideologies are systems through which truth is established and reified at both the social and organizational levels. Thus, organizational ideology is bound and influenced both by the beliefs and values of those who share it, and by the broader social context in which the organization operates. Geertz (1973) and Dunbar et al. (1982) underscore the enduring nature of ideological systems and notions. Rather than existing as free agents that can

¹⁶ It is worth noting that some of these functions can also be served by Ashforth and Fried's (1988) scripts or Starbuck's (1983) performance programs, which suggests that elements of mindless organizational behavior are surely informed by organizational ideology.

autonomously generate their own meanings, organizations take publicly available meanings and understandings and translate them into the organizational context. These ideas require and generate commitment, which in turn guides action, and provides a blueprint for the ways in which new information and experiences must be processed, understood, assimilated, and—as Dunbar et al. (1982) highlight—accepted. These authors also argue that ideologies themselves must be disrupted in order for organizational change to occur. Without this, dissonant experiences are either rejected or converted into accepted understandings.

Still, much is lost in translation from ideology to organizational ideology, the use of which is plagued by similar absences as those that affect investigations of institutional culture. Authors' interpretations of organizational ideology are typically internally focused, ignoring the ways in which the social structure influences institutional ideology and practice and processes through which these are re-made (Weiss & Miller, 1987). Instead they attend to the ways in which organizational ideology reproduces power relations within the organization but not the ways in which this might be linked to larger relations of power. In addition, highlighting the totalizing effect of organizational ideology, scholars tend to emphasize unity over conflict and contradiction, which is inherent to foundational definitions of ideology (Weiss & Miller, 1987). Conversely, institutional habitus—an understanding of institutional culture that is drawn from a social reproduction framework—offers an approach to understanding organizational ideology and practice as situated within larger social ideologies and relations of power.¹⁷

¹⁷ Acker (2000, 2006) offers “inequality regimes” as a framework with which to analyze the patterns of inequity that are (re)created within organizations. Although Acker does not employ the phrase, “institutional ideology” shares several commonalities with the informal, taken-for-granted, invisible dimensions of inequality regimes—not the least of which is their ability to support or hinder institutional change efforts. While compelling, Acker’s framework is less process oriented than institutional habitus within Bourdieu’s framework. This lack of process makes it more challenging to investigate the ways in which these regimes, for example, are

Institutional Culture as Institutional Habitus

Bourdieu's Social and Cultural Reproduction Framework

Concerned with the ways in which class status and unequal social relations are maintained across generations, Bourdieu holds that a stratified social order requires a competition among dominant and non-dominant groups for social standing and access to valued social resources (Bourdieu, 1977b; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Bourdieu (1985b) seeks to uncover the central role of culture in groups' collective efforts to (re)produce¹⁸ their social world, including the social hierarchy in which they are positioned.

Key concepts. Bourdieu's (1985b) theory of social and cultural reproduction is grounded in several key concepts—field, capital and habitus—that integrate culture, power and structure in an analysis of the production of social action or practice. *Field* is the context in which struggles for advantage take place; it embodies the social hierarchy that informs resource (i.e., capital) valuations as well as the activation of symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1986).¹⁹ Power relations among agents and institutions structure this social space according to the relative accumulation and possession of resources of interest among these actors. As Bourdieu (1993d) describes, the positions in a field “can be analysed independently of the characteristics of their occupants” (p.

(re)created through individual and institutional practice in local and social contexts over time.

¹⁸ The term “(re)produce” is meant to capture the sense in Bourdieu's (1985b) work that individual actions both respond to (i.e., reproduce) and generate (i.e., produce) particular social and power relations. It helps to represent the dialectical relationship that Bourdieu (1984/1988; & Passeron, 1990) argues exists between individuals and the social structure and, more specifically, between individuals and education institutions.

¹⁹ Symbolic power is the capacity and authority to enact symbolic violence, which imposes meanings and the legitimacy of those meanings by facilitating the misapprehension of the relations of power that are the basis of the force of symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Through symbolic power dominant groups disguise the economic and political roots of their social power. Bourdieu conceives of the acceptance of these definitions as “violence” because it is also the process through which the dominated come to accept and naturalize their lower social position (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

72). That is, the social meaning of roles is not attributed to the people who perform their duties but rather to positions relative to other roles within a domain subject to the same principles of valuation. Struggles in a field are essentially struggles over the “legitimate principle of legitimation” through which agents and institutions protect or challenge the existence of different forms of capital and their relative value (Bourdieu, 1989/1996, p. 265)

Bourdieu’s framework assumes that power is embodied in a range of resources, from the material to the symbolic. These resources become *capital* when they act as the basis of struggles to maintain or enhance positions in a field (Bourdieu, 1989/1996). The variety of resources that function as capital is critical; Bourdieu (1986) argues that by only taking into account economic resources one is unable to fully comprehend the operations of the social world. Instead, his “general science of the economy of practices” reveals the processes through which “priceless things have their price”—that is, the ways in which different forms of capital can be converted from one type into another (pp. 242-243). Capital, in its multiple forms, establishes the potential for accumulation and exchange based on the possession of valued social, cultural, economic and symbolic resources (Bourdieu, 1986; Swartz, 1997).²⁰ In a social world that tends toward reproduction, struggles over the capital recognized in a particular field consist of conversion and subversion strategies, engaged in by dominant and dominated groups, respectively (Bourdieu,

²⁰ Specifically, *economic capital* is or can be converted directly into money (e.g. stock, property rights); social capital entails resources—bound up in networks—that take the form of social connections or obligations (Bourdieu, 1986). *Cultural capital*, the most significant for the education system, takes three forms: embodied (i.e., ways of thought and of carrying the body), objectified (i.e. cultural goods such as art work, writing, music) and institutionalized (e.g. academic credentials)—a form of capital capable of generating its own original value (Bourdieu, 1986). Finally, *symbolic capital* is a “capital of ‘credit’” through which dominant groups garner legitimation and respect that is perceived to be distinct from their social position (Bourdieu, 1977d, p. 197). Economic capital can generate other types of capital, which then become “disguised forms of economic capital;” however, the monetary exchange value of these capitals underrepresents their power by underestimating their social value (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 252).

1993d). According to Bourdieu (1993d), conversion strategies help dominant groups enhance the value of the capital they already possess based on the valuation criteria in a relevant field; conversely, groups in dominated positions engage in bounded subversion strategies through which they attempt to re-structure or question the valuation system rather than to accumulate the already valued capital.²¹

Habitus has three critical aspects: 1) internalization of a cultural arbitrary²² that continues to produce effects long after initial inculcation; 2) a system of dispositions that reflect appropriate preferences and other attitudinal responses to the social world; and 3) a system of practices, including perception and action (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). *Habitus* is acquired through implicit and explicit socialization early in life as a foundational principle that undergirds the rationale for thought and action within a particular set of social conditions (Bourdieu, 1977c). This durable set of transposable and unconscious dispositions and behaviors (re)produce original

²¹ Bourdieu (1993d) reveals that subversion strategies are a delicate dance through which players question the rules, strategies or content of the game rather than the existence of the game itself. He argues that if agents want to continue to be engaged in the field, their critique of the way of the game must occur within certain limits. These “*partial revolutions* which constantly occur in fields do not call into question the very foundation of the game, its fundamental axioms, the bedrock of ultimate beliefs on which the whole game is based” (p. 74, emphasis in original). Agents—even critical agents—are invested enough in the game to have a stake in field valuations, and, therefore, are dependent upon the continued existence of the game and of the field itself. This manifests an “objective complicity” through which agents recognize and co-create the value of play in the field and tacitly accept the principles of the game “by the mere fact of playing” (pp. 73-74).

²² According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), a cultural arbitrary results from the non-necessary selection of an objectively extant class or group as the source of imposed and inculcated meanings or symbolic system. The selection is arbitrary in that the selection itself and the resultant dominance of that group “cannot be deduced from any universal principle...not being linked by any sort of internal relation to the ‘nature of things’” (p. 8). A cultural arbitrary is also “socio-logically necessary” because it owes its dominance to the social conditions that gave rise to it and its comprehensibility to the social relations that imbue it with meaning and power (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 8). Ultimately, cultural arbitraries are those that implicitly, although completely, reflect the material and symbolic interests of the dominant group in a particular social structure (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

objective conditions because it structures perception of new experiences in accordance with past experiences, “which are modified by the new experiences within the limits defined by their power of selection” (Bourdieu, 1977c, p. 60).²³ Habitus establishes commonsense practices and offers a repertoire of responses for social encounters, and influences the way individuals engage with, make sense of and respond to their immediate environments, which, in turn, influences future experiences (Bourdieu, 1980/1990; Reay, David, & Ball, 2001; Thomas, 2002).

Despite its tendency toward replication, however, habitus is not fully predictive of future behavior; instead, it offers “potentials and possibilities...[that] are not categorically fixed” even as they make reproductive actions more likely (Barber, 2002, p. 385; Bourdieu, 1993c; Horvat, 2001). As an embodied history that is based on the interaction of the subjective and the objective (i.e. personal history and social structures), habitus generates action at both the collective and individual levels, contributing to the production of new history and meanings “in accordance with the schemes engendered by history” (Bourdieu, 1977c, p. 82). Still, any secondary or subsequent habitus is firmly rooted in the durability of the habitus of origin (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).²⁴

²³ Bourdieu (1990) clarifies the link and distinctions between individual and class habitus, revealing that an agent’s individual habitus is a group’s class habitus “in so far as it expresses or reflects the class (or group), could be regarded as a subjective but non-individual system of internalized structures, common schemes of perception, conception and action, which are the precondition of all objectification and apperception” (p. 60). Given this, what Bourdieu refers to as coordinated practices and shared worldviews are actually singular in that through their “perfect impersonality and interchangeability,” they could be associated with anyone and everyone who belongs to a particular social group (p. 60). This does not mean that all individual manifestations of an individual habitus are identical. Instead, individual habitus are “united in a relationship of homology, that is, of diversity within homogeneity” that reflects both the homogeneity and diversity in the social conditions that produce the habitus (p. 60).

²⁴ Nevertheless, Bourdieu (1977c) proposes this with tempered optimism, noting simultaneously the potential for heretical discourse to emerge—bringing the “undiscussed into discussion”—and the possibility that this discourse will not result in critical action (p. 169). Bourdieu’s hesitance to throw open the doors of possibility in terms of alteration of the habitus fuels critics who

Bourdieu argues that sociology and education research should focus on “the production of the habitus, that system of dispositions which acts as a mediation between structures and practice; more specifically, it becomes necessary to study the laws that determine the tendency of the structures to reproduce themselves by producing agents endowed with the system of predispositions which is capable of engendering practices adapted to the structures and thereby contributing to the reproduction of the structures” (Bourdieu, 1977a, p. 487).²⁵ In other words, empirical explorations should uncover the workings of the education system, how it inculcates identities and socializes students into commonsense meanings, and the way in which its workings and meanings help to (re)create the power relations of the broader society.²⁶

challenge the theorist’s over-emphasis on reproduction rather than transformation, including social scientists concerned with empirical validation and practical responses to inequality (Grotsky & Jackson, 2009). Nevertheless, while the “conditional freedom” of habitus allows that it contains the conditions of its origination and no other, the interaction between habitus and each objective events expands upon the conditions of origination and, thus, potential for innovative action (Bourdieu, 1977c, p. 95). While this potentially clarifies the potential for action, it does not—as others have argued—clearly document the processes and mechanisms through which improvisation is actually possible given the enduring power of the subconscious motivation of habitus (de Certeau, 1984; Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002).

²⁵ Workings of the social structure and habitus generate *doxa*—“the social foundation of thought” (Bourdieu, 1984/1988, p. xxv)—which, enacted, is a form of orthodoxy, accepted discourse that facilitates and produces the commonsense world (Bourdieu, 1977d). *Doxa* and orthodoxy are relevant concepts in the examination of educational policy. Modes of thinking and discourse structure action and narrow the field of the possible, which renders some options unthinkable and, therefore, undoable (Bourdieu, 1977d). Bourdieu, Passeron, and de Saint Martin (1994) help clarify the ineffectiveness of piecemeal efforts to reform the education system and continued dissatisfaction with a system that never appears to achieve its aims (Bourdieu, 1974; Harker, 1990; Tyack & Cuban, 1995): “It is the logic of the system which dominates the ways in which the actors represent the system and its failings, and which also establishes the limits of this representation. Thus, even in their most utopian images, students and academics remain imprisoned by the logic of the institution in its present form...because the objective deficiencies of a system cannot appear in their true guise to the human subjects who are trapped in it and subject to it. Because the academic system is never seen as the system of interdependence that it really is, the diagnoses put forward by its partners remain caught in dichotomies that permit them to pass praise and blame back and forth to one another indefinitely” (Bourdieu et al., 1994, p. 23)

²⁶ In addition, Bourdieu (1977d) charges that any sociological inquiry that does not investigate the reproductive link between institutional and objective mechanisms of social reward and

Reproduction and education. Along with other theorists in the social and cultural reproduction tradition (e.g., Apple, 1996; Berger, 2000; Nash, 1990), Bourdieu (1974) identifies the educational system as a central agent in the transmission of power, privilege, and inequity. By helping to reproduce the structures through which cultural capital is distributed among different classes, schools reproduce the structure of the economic, social and power relations that undergird that distribution system (Bourdieu, 1977a). Bourdieu (1974; & Passeron, 1990) explains that schools are fundamentally conservative; they must reproduce themselves by (re)producing the institutional conditions that allow them to serve their social function—reproduction of the larger power structure.²⁷ Thus, by attending to their concerns for continuation, schools and agents within them facilitate the continuation of the structure in which they are embedded. As Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) state, “every transformation of the educational system takes place in accordance with a logic in which the structure and function proper to the system continue to be expressed” (p. 95). The logics of practice built into institutional operations help guarantee that social patterns and extant relations of power are maintained even without the conscious action of institutional agents (Bourdieu, 1977b). Bourdieu’s framework, thus, facilitates investigation of institutional action by attending to how and why institutions take up specific practices and to what effect.

Bourdieu’s (1984/1988, 1989/1996; Bourdieu et al., 1994) own explorations of higher

“legitimizing discourses” has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of those discourses, a conviction that has been echoed elsewhere (see Apple, 1980; Bourdieu, 1977d, p. 188).

²⁷ Bourdieu and Passeron (1990, p. 198) contend that the inherent inertia or conservatism of the education system allows it to “escape history” because “it is, paradoxically, by ignoring all demands other than that of its own reproduction that it most effectively contributes to the reproduction of the social order.” The education system’s relative autonomy allows the system to exist in a state of “functional duplicity” in which its attendance to its own requirements for reproduction is also attending to the requirements of the social order (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 199).

education reveal how social structure influences institutions' functional interest in the preservation of legitimacy and status. In particular, Bourdieu's notion of habitus—a generative system of internalized dispositional schema that constructs, and is constructed by, interaction between objective structures and subjective experiences—helps to make action sensible within a particular social context (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Given the education system's role in the (re)production of “appropriate” dispositions in the process of disseminating credentials, the notion of habitus is of particular importance because it helps to link the broader context of power relations to individual decisions, experiences and practices within the education system. Therefore, investigations of educational inequity that engage habitus attend to a critical—yet underutilized—element of Bourdieu's reproduction framework. Together, these assertions help to clarify the ways in which attempts at institutional change can reinforce rather than challenge the existing power relations.

Bourdieu (1977a) asserts that the analytic task is to reveal the education system's contribution to reproduction, which preserves the relations of power between dominant and dominated groups. His framework offers a way to make this work visible and challenge the perpetuation of stratification and intergenerational inequity that schools facilitate (Bourdieu, 1986, 1993b; Swartz, 1997). Therefore, the theorist's social and cultural reproduction framework is a useful tool with which to analyze the limited college success of students from what the theorist terms dominated social classes.²⁸ His “science of reproductive structures” unearths the processes through which social power relations are reproduced in the production of agents who are dispossessed to recognize the power of these structures and to reproduce them, even if

²⁸ Bourdieu (1990) defines a social class as “a class of identical or similar conditions of existence;” he also notes that a social class can also denote a “class of biological individuals” who share a habitus (p. 59).

subconsciously, through their own practices (Bourdieu, 1977a, p. 487). By attending to social hierarchies and the ways in which their meanings, practices and effects are reified in structures and in everyday practices within education systems, Bourdieu pushes analysts to see beyond the functional aspects of the education system—i.e., its role in disseminating credentials (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Similarly, Apple (1980) cautions, “we miss a good deal of the latent effects of these institutions [schools] if we conceive of them in technical, rather than ethical and political, terms” (p. 55).

In addition to its wide use in educational research, several scholars have explored the applicability of Bourdieu’s concepts to organization studies (Everett, 2002; Özbilgin & Tatli, 2005), including through direct empirical engagement outside of Bourdieu’s France (Kloot, 2009; Naidoo, 2004). For example, a relatively recent issue of *Theory and Society* (Bringing Bourdieu into the organizational field: A symposium, 2008) explores the usefulness of Bourdieu’s scholarship to analysis of domestic institutions. The handful of articles concurs that the theoretician’s work offers much promise for organizational studies even if most attempts at this translation have not embraced Bourdieu’s full framework. One article therein reframes extant literature that addresses Bourdieu’s key concepts but does not label them as such (Dobbin, 2008); another reframes an extant study by more explicitly applying Bourdieu’s concepts and explaining the contribution of such an analysis (Vaughan, 2008). Despite this assumed and demonstrated potential, Bourdieu’s scholarship “has had virtually no impact on organizational analysis” (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008, p. 2). Nevertheless, the reproduction theorist’s framework can be applied effectively to understand the highly contextualized notion of institutional culture in higher education contexts.

As a theory of practice—that is, of the factors and processes that influence agents' social action—Bourdieu's (1977b) scholarship helps to elucidate the processes through which social power relations are reproduced. As such, it offers a framework through which to understand higher education institutions as social actors whose behavior influences institutional agents. In addition to linking education systems and institutions to the (re)generation of social power, Bourdieu's framework can help us think through how and why institutions take up particular actions and to what effect; that is, a way of investigating institutional action.

Institutional Habitus

When applied to organizations, with habitus conceptualized as institutional habitus, Bourdieu's framework can help researchers understand some of the structurally and more deeply rooted motivations behind institutional action, as well as reveal some potential points of interruption or transformation (Mills, 2008) within a social structure that tends to marginalize many and valorize few. Bourdieu has been critiqued for his assertion that all of human action can be interpreted through a quasi-economistic lens in which individuals consistently engage in conversion and accumulation strategies aimed at the collection of the most socially valued resources (see Calhoun, 1993; Grodsky & Jackson, 2009; Nash, 1999). There are likely ways in which these critiques stand when accounting for human behavior; however, when applied to institutions—particularly those like colleges and universities that are heavily influenced by relative status and the actions of peer institutions—Bourdieu's framework may be particularly useful for interpreting action that is much more likely to be calculated despite its roots in the habitual.

As noted above, much of the education research that has engaged the notion of habitus has done so through a focus on habitus as embodied by individuals; yet, the theoretical concept

has much to offer to the study of collectives in the form of organizations or institutions.

Bourdieu's (1984/1988, 1989/1996; 1994) own explorations of higher education reveal the effect of the social structure on higher education institutions through functional interests that preserve legitimacy and status; the orientation of faculty and staff who are drawn or socialized to work at particular institutions; and the construction of their student bodies, who through their habitus are led to, and likely to be successful in, particular institutions. In this way, institutional habitus, operationalized as the effect of social position as mediated through organizations, affects institutions, their agents, and students.

Although the theorist does not appear to have used the term himself, a limited, though growing, number of educational scholars, most of whose work focuses on systems outside of the U.S.—in the UK in particular—have expanded on Bourdieu's (1990) framing of habitus through empirical and theoretical explorations that engage the notion of habitus held at the institutional level.²⁹ Two primary definitions of organizational or institutional habitus emerge from a review of this literature that explores student experiences and outcomes in higher education —

- 1) Interconnected, common sense beliefs, practices or attributes of an institution—e.g., institutional status, curriculum, pedagogy, assumptions, expectations, and “what children bring to school” (Reay, 1998, p. 67)—that are influenced by socioeconomic structures and that socialize students as well as institutional agents; and

²⁹ Most of the empirical engagements of institutional habitus in education apply the concept to higher education; however, it has been applied to pre-collegiate education (Barber, 2002; Darmody, Smyth, & McCoy, 2008; Firkins & Wong, 2005). For example, Barber (2002) employs institutional habitus in an ethnographic exploration of the relationships teachers took up with working class students at a high school in Australia. Barber found that shared values and beliefs—apparently the author's working definition of institutional habitus—undergird teachers' caring behavior. These values and beliefs are influenced not only by a shared understanding of the students' socioeconomic status and what that implies about their needs but also by broader gender-specific norms.

- 2) The effect of social class on individual beliefs and behaviors *as mediated through* an institution (McDonough, 1997).

An exhaustive review of scholarship that employs institutional habitus is not possible here (see Byrd, 2013, for such an analysis); however, it is important to note that much of the subsequent scholarship on the relationship between institutional habitus and students' experiences and outcomes on the road to and through higher education does little more than cite the early definitions noted above to discuss what might be better framed as a shared set of institutional beliefs, enacted either by institutional agents or students in the context of a particular institution, or an institutional effect that is divorced from its socioeconomic imperatives. In fact, this scholarship typically quotes the same section of McDonough (1997) and Reay (1998) in an introduction to the concept of institutional habitus, before applying it, as is, to their current empirical circumstance. As a result, they do not engage in a critical evaluation of the way in which this antecedent scholarship applies Bourdieu's theory to explorations of educational institutions or what is required of operationalizations of institutional habitus.

As noted above, higher education scholars who employ institutional habitus often define it as either the effect of a system of institutionalized privilege that provides "structurally preferential treatment" or as that system itself (Robbins, 1993, as quoted in Ingram, 2009, p. 431). However, these conceptualizations, while reflective of the education system's role in social and cultural reproduction, may mistake the result of social sorting processes for institutional habitus, whether conceived of as an attribute or an effect. Framing institutional habitus merely as a glimpse of individual habitus as it interacts with the environment within a particular institution—and is, thus, re-entrenched or transformed—is little more than an empirical exploration of the ways in which individual habitus operates. It does not sufficiently engage institutional-level

habitus as an entity of its own.

These approaches underuse Bourdieu's framework. Given some critical gaps in the early conceptualizations of institutional habitus, these scholarly efforts represent the repeated application of potentially faulty tools. More importantly, they are a series of missed opportunities to advance theoretical and empirical understandings of institutional habitus in ways that acknowledge the conceptual underpinnings of Bourdieu's original notion of habitus, the central role of educational institutions and their social positions, and the theorist's insistence on dialectical engagement between theory and practice. An exploration of institutional habitus that does not engage issues related to struggles over social power does a theoretical disservice to Bourdieu's framework, stopping at identifying a shared set of beliefs and practices without analysis of *why* these beliefs and practices are shared in *this* place and inculcated in *these* students. Simply noting commonalities does not link the research to Bourdieu's conceptual understandings of the educational system's—or an individual school's—role in social and cultural reproduction.

Finally, these works on higher education are plagued by common absences in the application of Bourdieu's theoretical framework—specifically, the lack of interrelated analysis of capital, field and habitus (Postone, LiPuma, & Calhoun, 1993). These partial theorizations, most critically, do not attend to field, resulting in isolated use of habitus (and, rarely, capital), and under-theorization of institutional habitus. Bourdieu's original conceptualization of habitus indicates that it is a generative system of taken-for-granted dispositional schema that both construct and are constructed by interaction between objective structures and subjective experiences and that is common among a group of people who share a particular social position (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Thus, this notion—as applied to institutions—should investigate

not only shared dispositions and actions within an organization but also the way in which an organization's objective and historical positioning in the field of higher education informs its subjective understandings, which in turn influence its practices and assumptions. Such an investigation would reveal the interested roots of institutional action as situated in a hierarchical social world. Without this, critical questions go unanswered, including why institutional habitus manifests different practices and preferences in different institutions.

Other scholarship, including Bourdieu's (1979/1984, 1984/1988, 1989/1996) own explorations of higher education, reveals the effect of the social structure on higher education institutions (or on the education system itself) through functional interests aimed at the preservation of legitimacy and status.³⁰ Given this interest, institutional habitus is better conceived of as an institution's values, "common sense" assumptions, beliefs, behaviors, and taken-for-granted positions, which are situated in historical and contemporary social relations that differentially affect students and institutions based on their social locations (Green, 2003, p. 83; Pearce, Down, & Moore, 2008; Rapoport & Lomsky-Feder, 2002; Thomas, 2002). The institutional characteristics that coincide with institutional habitus (e.g., pedagogy, curriculum, organizational systems, or expressive and cultural characteristics) are the products of institutional habitus not institutional habitus itself. As such, institutional habitus generates institutional practice in much the same way as individual habitus engenders individual social action. This interpretation of institutional habitus emphasizes that the "organizational cultures of schools and colleges are embedded in broader socio-economic cultures, through processes in which schools

³⁰ Still, empirical work that incorporates institutional habitus into studies of higher education is relatively rare. In a recent review, Byrd (2013) identified only 186 such pieces, only 40 of which significantly engage institutional or organizational habitus to explore students' postsecondary choice, matriculation, transition, participation, success and graduation experiences. Further, of this 40, only 2 apply the concept to highlight the ways in which Bourdieu's framework can elucidate the action and practice of higher education institutions themselves.

and [students] mutually shape and re-shape each other” and “subconsciously [inform] practice” (Barber, 2002, p. 384; Thomas, 2002, p. 431).

This interactional framing most closely parallels the ways in which Bourdieu described and theorized the workings of individual habitus as simultaneously action and reaction (Bourdieu, 1980/1990). As Bourdieu (1977c) argues—

Analysis of the relationship between the objectified schemes and the schemes incorporated...presupposes a structural analysis of the social organization of the internal space...and the relation of this internal space to external space, an analysis which...is the only means of fully grasping structuring structures which, remaining obscure to themselves, are revealed only in the objects they structure. (p. 90)

In contrast to static notions of colleges and universities as disinterested institutions in which students merely experience success or failure, institutional habitus conceptualized in this manner offers a way to investigate educational institutions as socially situated and context-driven rather than as ahistorical entities without their own values, interests, preferences and inclinations toward action that are influenced by their histories, constituents, social positions, and struggles for advantage in fields of their own (Berger, 2000; McDonough, 1997; Reay et al., 2001). Thus, a further conceptualization of the notion of institutional habitus may make (the factors behind) institutional action more salient, help reveal colleges and universities’ contribution to the context in which students’ outcomes are created, and identify the barriers to truly transformative institutional action, and.

Finally, critiques of Bourdieu’s framework also imply avenues for productive future elaboration of his theory. Critics suggest that Bourdieu’s scholarship leaves little room for agency (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Brubaker, 1993; Calhoun, 1993). Bourdieu (1984/1988,

1989/1996) counters this by arguing that the relative, though not absolute, stability of the larger social order over time gives credence to his assertions. While there is room within Bourdieu's framework for agentic action toward transformation, the theorist rarely documented these processes. Beyond the operationalization of institutional habitus itself, this study will offer the opportunity to observe institutional negotiation and transformation such that the dynamic nature of institutional habitus may be revealed. As a representation of common sense meanings and practices, institutional habitus is not fully dominant; thus, practical application of the theory can reveal the impact of non-dominant forces that challenge—if not completely disrupt—taken-for-granted practices (Naidoo, 2004). As Glaser and Strauss (2009) assert, “the bases of social order must be reconstituted continually, must be ‘worked at,’ both according to established values and with the purpose of establishing values to preserve order” (p. 14). Attention to these processes can uncover the practices behind institutions' tendency toward reproduction as well as the moments of contradiction and resistance that are fundamental to institutional change (Apple, 1995). As such, the interrelated use of institutional habitus, field, and capital facilitates a “relational sociology of organizations” that helps to situate institutional action within a larger set of social relations rather than taking the institution itself as the ultimate unit of analysis (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008, p. 4).

Bourdieu's framework, particularly the concept of institutional habitus, can augment organizational studies higher education in several ways. First, Bourdieu (1979/1984) draws attention to contestations for power through a theory of praxis—or situated action—through which to understand the micro, meso, and macro factors that influence behavior and action in institutions (i.e., the links between local action and social structures beyond the organization that influence interaction, negotiation and the enactment of symbolic power within the organization)

(Giddens, 1979; Hallett, 2003). Such multilevel research on organizations can help inform both methodologies (i.e., how we study organizations and groups) as well as epistemologies (i.e., how we come to understand what we can know and learn about organizations) (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2005). Not only are organizations positioned within particular fields of power relations but they are also sites of contestations in which habitus helps to organize action (Everett, 2002).

Second, unlike other conceptions of culture that might be interpreted as unchanging, Bourdieu's (1977d) habitus offers a dynamic concept of culture that positions the present along a structured, yet unpredictable trajectory from past to future (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2005). Taking habitus as a fundamentally historical concept—a form of embodied history—facilitates the understanding of organizations as entities that exist in and of time (Bourdieu, 1977c), and allows for a multi-dimensional organizational analysis that can reveal shifts in organizational culture over time, including production and reproduction of organizational power relations (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2005). Finally, in guiding researchers toward observation of situated action rather than theory proliferation, Bourdieu's (1993a) habitus, capital, and field offer ways to make power negotiations empirically visible at both the individual and institutional levels, each of which contribute to the achievement of institutional action (Hallett, 2003; Özbilgin & Tatli, 2005).

Institutional Habitus in Higher Education

Applications of Bourdieu's scholarship have helped to identify the ways in which schools recognize, reward and inculcate particular systems of thought and behavior that Bourdieu (1974) terms habitus, a “system of implicit and deeply interiorized values which...helps to define attitudes towards the cultural capital and educational institutions,” which results in a “cultural heritage” that is the root of unequal educational achievement (p. 32). This chapter attends to Bourdieu's notion of habitus, which offers much room for elaboration—particularly in the form

of institutional habitus—the socially and historically constructed dispositions, norms and practices inculcated within particular educational organizations.³¹ Informed by Bourdieu’s scholarship, the author defines *institutional habitus* as an institution’s values, common sense, beliefs, behaviors, and taken-for-granted positions as situated within historical and contemporary social relations that differentially affect students and institutions based on their social status (Byrd, 2013).

Habitus—as applied to institutions—can be employed to investigate not only shared dispositions and actions within an institution but also how an institution’s objective and historical position informs local subjective understandings and preferences that, in turn, guide institutional practice. Such an investigation would reveal how the hierarchically organized social world influences the interests that guide institutional action. Moving beyond individual institutions and their actions, exploration of institutional habitus as a theoretical and analytical concept—along with Bourdieu’s notion of field—can enhance the study of institutional practice by revealing the ways in which institutions’ relationships with each other and with the larger social structure influence institutional action. Finally, incorporating capital enhances institutional analysis by making explicit the resources upon which institutional attempts at status maintenance rely. Such an integrated and theoretically sound approach to organizational analysis helps to position organizations as sites of ongoing struggle rather than as finished, enduring entities.

A limited, but growing, number of educational researchers have applied Bourdieu’s concepts to demonstrate that higher education institutions’ histories, constituents, social positions,

³¹ The title of Reay’s (2004) article, “*It’s All Becoming a Habitus*,” seems to suggest that investigations of habitus in educational inequity, inspired by Bourdieu’s framework, have been overdone. In fact, the author’s argument is quite the opposite—that applications of habitus in educational research have been underdone, resulting in its application as an empirical crutch rather than as a faithfully integrated theoretical and analytic tool.

and status struggles help structure institutional action. While Kloot (2009, 2011, 2014) does not use the term institutional habitus, the author does integrate Bourdieu's key concepts to investigate a system-wide institutional change effort meant to support the academic development of "disadvantaged" students in South African universities. Kloot finds that capital, field and habitus help to explain the limited success of a policy whose goals required that faculty engage in practices that were in conflict with those they were socialized to cultivate—based on the capital valued in higher education as well as in the departments in which they worked.

Similarly, Naidoo (2004)—whose work also focuses on post-Apartheid South Africa—finds that institutional status and autonomy and field influenced the extent to which and the strategies through which two institutions re-translated sociopolitical pressure to develop new admissions policies. Although the more elite institution successfully evaded this pressure, Naidoo finds that both institutions ultimately reinforced exclusive admissions criteria—in part because the less elite institution inadvertently continued to rely on restrictive institutional logics even as it attempted to implement a more inclusive admissions policy. Both researchers emphasize the relationship among (individual) habitus, institutional strategies and logics, and the correspondence between institutions and their larger social contexts. Additionally relevant here, both scholars demonstrate the ways in which these elements interact and, ultimately, hinder institutional change efforts on behalf of marginalized students.

Higher education scholars,³² particularly those in the United Kingdom, have employed institutional habitus to examine the role of higher education and its institutions in the reproduction of social inequity. Most of this work centers on the college choices and transitions

³² Bourdieu's work has been widely used in education to explore the ways in which educational and social forces collude to generate inequitable educational outcomes for marginalized students (e.g., Jæger, 2009; Lareau, 2003; Nora, 2004).

of working class students—most of whom are White—and largely addresses “fit”—the match between individuals and their educational aspirations and environments (Byrom & Lightfoot, 2012; Ingram, 2009; McDonough, 1997; Reay et al., 2001). Institutional habitus, as defined in these studies, is a “complex amalgam of agency and structure” that generates its specific effects through several key elements—institutional status (by far the most important, according to the authors); curriculum and pedagogical practices and attitudes; organizational practices and networks; and the cultural and expressive order, which—drawing on Bernstein (1975)—includes manners, expectations and behavior (Forbes, 2008; Reay et al., 2001, para 1.3; Smyth & Banks, 2012).

This amalgam “subconsciously inform[s] practice...[and] determine[s] what values, language and knowledge are regarded as legitimate, and therefore ascribe success and award qualifications on this basis” (Thomas, 2002, p. 431), which generates “structurally preferential treatment” (Robbins, 1993, p. 153) and differential outcomes for students based on their race, gender and class backgrounds (Ingram, 2009; Smyth & Banks, 2012). For example, explicitly capturing the link between social structure, institutional practices and outcomes in higher education, Reay et al. (2010) assert that institutional habitus “acts as an intervening variable, providing a semi-autonomous means by which class processes are played out in the higher education experiences of students, and provides the parameter of possibilities in terms of identity work and the range of learner identities” (p. 111).

Despite findings that highlight the processes and effects of reproduction, much of the scholarship on the relationship between institutional habitus and students’ experiences and outcomes on the road to and through higher education underuses Bourdieu’s framework in several ways. First, the framework, as the theorist and others have argued, should be infused into

a study's methodology—that is, not as an answer in and of itself but as a tool with which one can pursue questions and, in the process, refine the tools themselves (Bourdieu, 1993a; Harker, 1990). In addition, and most central to this chapter, investigations rarely explore the habitus of higher education institutions. They note a potential mismatch between individual and institutional habitus, based largely on students' class position, but fail to articulate how institutional habitus operates, is (re)constructed and in response to what. That is, they do not make visible the ways in which institutional habitus actively contributes to the behaviors, experiences and outcomes observed.

Finally, as Reay et al's (2010) use of "variable" implies, institutional habitus is presumed to be something that institutions have rather than something that they use. Institutional habitus is, thus, taken for granted itself, undocumented and unexplored, a seemingly static background upon which students' educational experiences are created. Together, these studies reflect a series of missed opportunities to advance theoretical and empirical understandings of institutional habitus in ways that acknowledge the conceptual underpinnings of Bourdieu's original notion of habitus, the central role of educational institutions and their social positions, and the theorist's insistence on dialectical engagement between theory and practice. As a result, the concept of institutional habitus is under-theorized in higher education literature, and does not live up to its potential as a tool for the critical cultural analysis of institutions.

Putting Institutional Habitus into Practice

Beyond inspiring institutional habitus as a theoretical concept, Bourdieu's framework—as one that links micro-action and macro-forces—offers a methodology through which to situate institutional practice within its larger sociopolitical context, and to reveal the ways in which external pressures are absorbed, repulsed or transformed within an institution—based, in part, on

that institution's structural position (Naidoo, 2004). As a theory of practice—that is, a theory of the factors and processes that influence agents' social action—Bourdieu's (1977a) scholarship helps to elucidate the processes and behaviors through which social power relations are reproduced. As such, it offers a framework through which to understand higher education institutions as social actors whose behavior influences institutional agents. In addition to linking education systems and institutions to the (re)generation of social power, Bourdieu's framework can help scholars think through how and why institutions take up particular actions and to what effect; that is, a way of investigating institutional action within the context of organizational change.

A methodological framework inspired by Bourdieu's scholarship should be grounded in the theorist's "*thinking tools*" as well as in his orientation toward empirical work (Wacquant, 1989, p. 50, emphasis in original). Bourdieu (& Wacquant, 1992) wrote of the need for social praxeology, in which empirical research and analysis are designed "to uncover the most profoundly buried structures of the various social worlds which constitute the social universe, as well as the 'mechanisms' which tend to ensure their reproduction or their transformation" (Bourdieu, 1989/1996, p. 1). Research inspired by such a praxeology would incorporate several essential elements. First, it would deeply fuse the theoretical and practical realms (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008; Kloot, 2011), causing them to "*interpenetrate each other entirely*" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 35, emphasis in original). Despite his prodigious theoretical undertakings, Bourdieu did not grant theory ultimate primacy. Instead, he asserted that because research is concurrently theoretical and empirical, a decision and consideration in one area inevitably influences the other (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Second, and relatedly, research inspired by Bourdieu's scholarship must be relational. He

eschewed “a substantialist manner” that assumes that social reality is comprised of interactions among things rather than of the relations among these things (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 28). In terms of organizational research, this is realized through a relational sociology of organizations that takes as the focus of research the fields in which organizations are situated and/or organizations themselves as fields (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008). (For clarifying, although partial examples, see Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008; Kloot, 2014 2014; Naidoo, 2004; Poromaa, 2015) A relational analysis that studies organizations in fields attends to the organizations’ relational contexts—or the web of relations in which they are situated, constituted and engaged, particularly in ways that are not visible (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008). This relational context adds texture and clarity to an analysis because it outlines the “space of possibles” or the circumstances and constraints that structure organizational action (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008, p. 16). Taking organizations as fields, a relational analysis considers organizations themselves as a web of power relations, within which strictures and conditions structure the action of institutional agents (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008). By definition, then, relational analyses are multilevel, and focus on relations that exist within organizations, among organizations, and between organizations and the larger social field in which they exist (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008).³³

Third, within this relational configuration, the analysis is oriented toward both structural

³³ Others not engaging Bourdieu’s framework directly echo similar sentiments regarding the need to study across multiple vectors when conducting cultural analysis of institutions. Pettigrew (1985) captures this in what he refers to as a “radical approach to organisation theory” (p. 35). He writes:

The multilevel will be described as the vertical form of analysis and the processual the horizontal form of analysis. The vertical level refers to the interdependencies between higher or lower levels of analysis upon phenomena to be explained at some further level... while the horizontal level refers to the sequential interconnectedness between phenomena in historical, present and future time. (Pettigrew, 1985, pp. 35-36)

Bartlett and Vavrus’s (2014) vertical case study methodology, which also includes vertical and horizontal elements, accounts for this movement across time and space in the third element of their methodology, transversal analysis.

positions and practices of those who are structurally positioned. The relational analyst attempts to investigate not only differentially situated individuals and institutions—that is, positions—but also position-takings or the “symbolically meaningful” strategies and practices with which individuals, groups and institutions attempt to garner capital within particular fields (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008, p. 14). These position-takings are made possible by possession, exchange and conversion of the capitals that are valued in a particular social space (Bourdieu, 1986).

Finally, relational analysis is also reflexive in terms of the ways in which the study and the subjects of study are constructed (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Everett (2002) reminds that researchers must be aware of three potential biases—social, field and intellectualist—in examining their relationship to a study and its participants. The social reflects what is more commonly thought of as reflexivity, considering the ways in which one’s (perceived) membership in a range of social groups—as fundamental perspectives of perception—and beliefs about the subject at hand may influence what is attended to by researchers and by participants (Milner, 2007). A field bias extends from one’s position within the academic field, which includes the field of study, discipline, department, institution, etc. in which the researcher is situated. Finally, an intellectualist bias relates to the “scholarly gaze” that “arises from the collapsing of practical logic” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 69; Everett, 2002, p. 72). This suggests that, in the process of observation, researchers abstract themselves from the social circumstances they observe, seeing the world as a distant spectacle separate and apart (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). These biases facilitate a contemplative distance that must be addressed through a “two-step process of epistemological rupture” (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2005, p. 859). The first aspect of this rupture is the researcher’s self-focused reflexivity. The second rupture results from attention to the subject of research—the first-hand knowledge of participants’ experience

that is consequent to the research process (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2005). Relying, in part on deep case study, ethnographic and historical knowledge—whether collected through qualitative or quantitative methods (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008)—researchers may become able to comprehend both the generalized realities of institutions of a particular status as well as the unique realities generated by the trajectory of the particular institution(s) being studied (Bourdieu, 1984/1988; Bourdieu et al., 1999).

As I describe more fully in the next chapter, my dissertation study is one attempt to take seriously and to address the theoretical and methodological implications of Bourdieu's scholarship. First, in terms of the interpenetration of the theoretical and empirical, I conducted a study in which Bourdieu's theory fully informed my research design, and in which my methodology creates potential to contribute to the further elaboration of institutional habitus as a theoretical concept. Second, relational analysis in my study is facilitated by its multisite design, which relies heavily on historical and cultural contextualization. The primary data for this study were collected from a purposeful sample of three campuses in one state public higher education system that is implementing a system-wide equity-focused diversity policy (Creswell, 2007). In addition to the three campuses, data collection centered on two state and national organizations that helped develop, implement, and disseminate the policy across the state and country. Rather than merely asking questions of individual cases, I ask what the cases, when taken together, can tell us about the working of higher education institutions as social actors with emphasis on the ways in which their positions and position-taking affect their interests and behaviors (Bourdieu, 1979/1984; Bourdieu et al., 1999).

Finally, attending to the focal policy as an institutional change effort allows me an opportunity explore institutional position-taking as it relates both to the policy and to similar

issues the institutions have faced over time. In addition to analysis of the data collected through semi-structured interviews, critical discourse analysis of institutional documents, archival records, on-campus observations and other institutional artifacts present the opportunity to unravel what each institution's interpretation, development, and implementation of the policy can reveal about the ways in which institutional habitus informs institutional change and, in the process, structures educational opportunity for college students from marginalized backgrounds.

Note: A Concern with Racial Equity

By using Bourdieu's scholarship to inform my examination of contemporary higher education in the U.S., I attempt to transport his framework into a different ideological context³⁴—one in which racialized subjects, subjectivities and meanings are relevant. Horvat (2003) posits that while Bourdieu did not explicitly consider race in his work,³⁵ his concepts—particularly habitus—offer a way to make race salient, in part through its articulation as part of lived experience that is infused throughout one's social condition. Further, given the historical and contemporary social context of the U.S., race, ethnicity and social class, among other social

³⁴ As noted above, there are many working theories and definitions of ideology. I am most drawn to those that emphasize ideology as relational social processes that help to normalize the dominant system of social relations (Apple & Weis, 1983). Rather than the false consciousness of Marxian approaches in which distortion plays a significant role (Williams, 1985), this dialectical conception of ideology does not distort comprehension of social relations but rather facilitates misrecognition, which applies different meanings and origins to these relations, thereby making them appear natural rather than constructed (Harvey, 1990). In this way, social cognition is linked to larger social structures, which influence social action by “allow[ing] people, as group members, to organize the multitude of social beliefs about what is the case, good or bad, right or wrong, *for them*, and to act accordingly” (van Dijk, 1998, p. 8, emphasis in original). Bourdieu's (1977b) own notion of *doxa*—“schemes of thought and perception [that] can produce the objectivity that they do only by producing misrecognition of the limits of the cognition that they make possible, thereby founding immediate adherence...to the world of tradition experienced as a ‘natural world’ and taken for granted” (p. 104)—is also useful here; however, rather than ideology itself, *doxa* may represent the result of ideology in action.

³⁵ While it may be true that Bourdieu's immediate context in France was relatively racially homogeneous, Hanchard's (2003) attention to imperialism and colonialism makes clear that race and racialization are not a required invisibility in Bourdieu's work (LiPuma, 1993).

divisions, help structure the system of power relations that govern social life (Feagin, 2000, 2006)—or as Goldberg and Solomos (2002) frame it, the interrelationship between racial definition and the modern state. From this starting point, researchers have applied the Bourdieu's tools in contexts that may require a more complex cultural arbitrary; that is, one that is influenced by power relations beyond those forged solely by social class.³⁶

Authors who have applied Bourdieu's critical framework to explore the operation of both raced and classed privilege have done so in several major—and, often overlapping—thematic areas, including Whiteness, White privilege, and racial domination (e.g., the examination the re-inscription of the invisibility and/or privileges of Whiteness) (K. M. Brown, 1985; Hancock, 2008); forms of capital (Anderson, 2012; Castelli, Hillman, Buck, & Erwin, 2007; Devine-Eller, 2005; Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 1996; Lareau, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999; Stanton-Salazar, 1997); habitus, including racial, racist, ethnic and White habitus (Bodovski, 2010; Cross & Naidoo, 2012; Deil-Amen & Tevis, 2007; Horvat & Antonio, 1999; Lurvey, 2011; Makoe, 2006; Perry, 2012); race/ethnicity and social and cultural reproduction (Grant & Wong, 2008; Yosso, 2005); the simultaneous operation of race, gender, and/or social class (Byrne, 2009; New & Petronicolos, 2001; Reay, 1995a, 1995b, 2004; Watt, 2006); and to a more limited extent, the intersections of such social categories (Fowler, 2003; Horvat, 2003; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). Taken together, these works reveal that Bourdieu's scholarship has much to offer the study of social inequalities beyond those related to class. They also indicate the untapped potential of applying Bourdieu's full framework to understand the persistence of racial inequity as facilitated by the operation of ideology and misrecognition

³⁶ These reflect the operation of other significant vectors of social (dis)advantage, including race/ethnicity, citizenship status, gender, and disability (for examples, see Edwards & Imrie, 2003; Kraus, 1993; Laberge, 1995; MacLeod, 1995; McKeever & Miller, 2004; Milani, 2008).

within a racialized social structure.

Although skeptics argue that application of Bourdieu's framework beyond its "original intellectual contexts" leaves it vulnerable to distortion³⁷ related to the social and disciplinary context in which it is being "imported" (LiPuma, 1993; Postone et al., 1993, p. 7; Wacquant, 1993, p. 247), exploration of the interests of the importers and the historical specificities of the context into which Bourdieu's work is being imported can support more robust application (LiPuma, 1993). In addition, treatment of the framework as a heuristic or empirical method with specific requirements is equally important (Bourdieu, 1993a; Horvat, 2003; Postone et al., 1993). Given that Bourdieu's framework should be an integral part of an empirical study's methodology, this study reflects Bourdieu's framework throughout design, data collection, analysis, and reporting, aiming to identify the operation of marginalizing interests within the context of institutional action in higher education spaces, and to clarify the ways in which considerations of race and racial (in)equity can augment Bourdieu's theory of reproduction.

³⁷ The fault, Bourdieu (1993a) clarifies, lies in misunderstanding of his work and its social context of origin, imprecise reproduction of his theory and partial engagement with his concepts. Most egregious, Bourdieu concludes, is overemphasis on the theoretical dimensions of his work based on a fundamental misconstrual of its primary purpose—not merely theoretical elaboration, but the marriage of theory and practice in the investigation of a "particular case of the possible" (p. 265).

Chapter 3

Methodology

My dissertation is a vertical case study that examines the development of *Excellence for All* and related diversity efforts at three campuses in one public higher education system. I was specifically interested in investigating institutional practice and how this may have varied across campus contexts. The previous chapters situated my study's goals within the larger field of organizational studies and approaches to understanding institutional culture, its role in organization change, and its connections to broader social inequities. Further, my research interest is motivated by a broader interest in the ways in which higher education institutions—driven, in part, by their own interests and status concerns—respond to the needs of marginalized college students, thereby (re)producing the conditions for racial (in)equity for those students. In this chapter, I detail the research questions and frameworks that guided my research—critical policy studies and case study methodology—and provide an account of the data collection and analytic strategies and techniques involved in executing my research design. The chapter concludes with reflections on my potential influence as a research instrument and limitations that structure the study's findings (Stake, 2010).

Guiding Frameworks

This dissertation study was guided by two primary research questions:

- How have three campuses of varying status interpreted, developed and implemented *Excellence for All*, a statewide equity focused change effort?
- What influenced decision-making and activity related to *Excellence for All* on each campus?

In addition to vertical case study methodology, my search for answers to these questions was informed by critical scholarship focused on social power and policy and their potential to interrupt and to reinforce patterns of inequitable social relations within higher education.

Conceptual Framework: Critical Policy Studies

Although this dissertation is not formally a critical policy study in its final presentation, critical policy studies is an essential element of its conceptual framework. Unlike what is commonly known as rational policy analysis, which draws on market principles and relies on the search for objective truths (O'Connor & Netting, 2011), critical policy studies is premised on the belief that policy and policy meanings are value-laden, subjective, contested and contextualized (Ball, 1990; Stone, 2011; Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997). In addition, critical policy studies differs from interpretive and anthropological models of policy analysis—which are also concerned with local meanings and relationships (see C. Shore & S. Wright, 1997; Yanow, 1996)—in its examination of the ways in which policy creation and effects may reinforce and recreate broader relations of power (Ball, 1994; Gillborn, 2005; Howarth, 2010). As Ball (1990) argues, “policies cannot be divorced from interests, from conflict, from domination or from justice” (p. 3).

Within a critical policy framework, policy is viewed as a production not merely as a product—as an evolving social process of “normative cultural production constituted by diverse actors across diverse social and institutional contexts” (Levinson & Sutton, 2001, p. 1). Policy is further conceptualized as “ideologically constructed productions” that are rooted in “contested relations of power within institutional and social settings, and is therefore the product of negotiation, struggle and compromise” (Naidoo, 2004, p. 468). As productions infused with ideology, policy and its artifacts frame how a particular policy concern is understood (Naidoo,

2004; Taylor et al., 1997), and, thus, constitute and naturalize—rather than simply respond to—the problems they aim to solve (Ball, 1990; Howarth, 2010). Taylor et al. (1997) also accentuate policy's role in managing change through its ability to “articulate, re-articulate, or institutionalize” how a policy concern is understood (p. 5), which can initiate or prevent change by excluding certain meanings and issues from focus.

Nevertheless, all is not reproduction. Policy is also a site of contestation and negotiation as contradiction and resistance create spaces in which agents can challenge dominant meanings and structures (Apple, 1995; Ball, 1994; Roe, 1994). Further, although policy as a sociocultural process through which “regimes of meaning” are mobilized, generally in support of the interests of dominant groups (Levinson & Sutton, 2001, p. 9), local agents, through policy appropriation can assimilate policy elements to garner resources—material and discursive—for their own interests, which may conflict with those of the larger policy agenda (Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009)—opening the door for changes not initially anticipated.

Beyond expanding understandings of what policy does, critical policy scholars also broaden the notion of what can be treated as policy. Within the field, policy effects, policy documents, the production of policy documents, the discourse(s) within which policies and products exist and on which they draw, and policy interpretations are considered essential texts that—when analyzed—offer critical insights into what policy is and how it works (Ball, 1994; Gillborn, 2005; Taylor et al., 1997; Yanow, 1996). Given its aims, critical policy studies offers an analytic context in which to explore policy as a potential mechanism through which social systems and institutions contribute to the reproduction of patterns of social inequity (Ball, 1990, 1994; Taylor et al. 1997).

Critical policy studies in education interrogates the role of policy and institutional

practice in the reproduction of social and educational inequities—particularly for marginalized populations—by attending to norms, absences, assumptions, and consequences embedded therein (Allan et al., 2010; Levinson et al., 2009). For example, critical policy studies in higher education demonstrates that both inattention *and* attention to marginalized populations can reinforce the inequities some policies mean to redress. For example, Chase et al. (2012) find the absence of explicit focus on marginalized populations in transfer policies helps to hide stark disparities by race and ethnicity in transfer from two-year to four-year-colleges while Iverson (2012) contends that diversity policies—by normalizing deficit perceptions of marginalized college students—help to position these students as perpetual outsiders whose shortcomings position them for failure.

Critical policy studies grounds this study by emphasizing the link between how “we” talk and think and how “we” act in regard to racial justice for marginalized populations in higher education. As Taylor et al. (1997) and Gillborn (2005) assert, critical policy studies centers key questions related to policy and practice: *In whose interests?, Who wins?, Who loses?* This study contributes to critical policy studies within higher education by revealing how institutional culture and social context influence policy responses to the needs of marginalized college students.

Methodological Framework: Vertical Case Study

Case study is an appropriate methodology for this qualitative study of organizational change, institutional culture, and equity in higher education for several reasons. First, like many approaches to qualitative research and analysis, case study can be used to answer the questions “How?” and “Why?” rather than simply “Who?” and “How Many?,” which allows for exploration of the texture of a particular case or set of cases (Gerring, 2004; Yin, 1994). Second,

case study requires that the unit of interest—the case(s)—be well-defined, bounded and specific (Gerring, 2004; Orum, Feagin, & Sjoberg, 1991). As a result, case study is particularly useful when seeking to understand context as a critical element in what defines, describes, and influences a case. Third, in part because of its emphasis on context, case study is useful when dealing with complex issues. As Stake (1995) writes, “The case is a specific, a complex, functioning thing” (p. 2). Rather than narrowing down and simplifying, case study facilitates a focus on complexity by intentionally allowing in elements—alternate explanations, relationships, conflicts, etc.—that complicate one’s understanding of the case at hand (Corcoran, Walker, & Wals, 2004; Yin, 1981). Finally, case study is flexible. It can be a method used within other methodologies (e.g., within the context of grounded theory) as well as a methodology that incorporates other methods (e.g., observation, interviews, surveys) (Yin, 1981, 1994).

Vertical case study. The vertical case study, which was developed within the field of comparative and international education, emphasizes both the value of local knowledge and processes as well as how these are interrelated with processes and knowledge at other local levels as well as at national and global levels (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006). Its emergence signaled an effort to “situate local action and interpretation within a broader cultural, historical, and political investigation” that demonstrate how these trends, forces, and structures influence—and may be influenced by—local practice (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006, p. 96). In particular, vertical case study emphasizes comparison across two axes—the vertical (i.e., the movement of influence, ideas, actors, and action across levels with attention to friction and contradiction) and the horizontal (i.e., across sites that “follow the same logic to address topics of common concern”) (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2009, p. 14).

In this study, the vertical emerges in examination of the relationship among national,

state, and institutional discourses and practices regarding diversity and inclusion in higher education while the horizontal emphasizes the interrelationship of practices and beliefs across several campuses. As I describe below, this approach allowed me to investigate the roots and development of EFA, the focal policy, within the state higher education system and within individual campuses. In addition, it offered insight into the ways in which development and implementation in the focal campuses may have been connected to or influenced by national shifts in discourse and practice related to diversity (in education) as well as by the larger field of higher education—as conceptualized through institutional habitus.

Requiring inquiry across levels and sites, vertical case study is inherently multi-sited, meaning that several cases are studied to understand a larger phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2000; Yin, 2003). While each campus could be conceived of as its own case of the implementation of EFA, the individual cases—taken as a collective—function as the primary focus of my research effort. That is, this is an *instrumental* vertical case study to the extent that the purposeful sample of campuses together inform my exploration of policy practice and institutional habitus (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Therefore, rather than merely asking questions of individual cases, I intend to ask what the cases, when taken together, can tell us about the working of institutions as social actors with emphasis on the ways in which their positions and position-taking affect their interests and behaviors (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008). Theory building, then, is made possible by the contributions of the set of cases in a way that no individual case could facilitate on its own (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

My dissertation draws on vertical case methodology to emphasize the insights gained from the collective study of several institutions as well as from the historical and cultural contextualized movements of ideas and influence across participating local, state, and national

institutions. Below I review the strategies and techniques I employed in this study of EFA at three campuses in one public system—a study that also emphasizes the influence of the state higher administration and the national organization that developed and disseminated EFA and its policy antecedent.

Research Design

Research Sites

The Bourdieuan framework of this dissertation asserts that interests related to social position shape social action; therefore, the primary data for this study were collected from a theoretically necessary stratified purposeful sample of three campuses in one public higher education system (Creswell, 2007; Wengraf, 2001). The three focal campuses, which I named Ashby University, Bradford University, and Clearfield College, were selected because they occupy low-, medium-, and high-status social positions as indicated by a number of criteria, including institutional classification and rankings, reputation, resources, and student body composition. Given their status differences, these campuses represent a range of positions and position-taking in the field of public higher education in the state and nationally (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008; Naidoo, 2004).³⁸ Specifically, these campuses together facilitate representation of two primary, intersecting fields related to the implementation of EFA in the state—the national field of (public) higher education and the state field of public higher education—as well as the investigation of institutional action in campuses that occupy what Bourdieu (1977d) might call

³⁸ Emirbayer and Johnson (2008) argue that the structure of the relevant field should inform site selection in relational organizational analyses: “The general organization of fields of all kinds into dominant and dominated forms of capital—with intermediate positions in between—provides some important guidance here: it orients the ethnographic researcher toward selecting, for observation and dialogue, precisely those actors who occupy positions within these three distinct sectors of the field...sounded out on the basis of hunches about the principles organizing those relations and subsequently tested” (p. 34).

dominant, dominated and intermediate positions in these fields (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008). Thus, the campuses were selected as ““instance[s] drawn from a class”” of campuses of particular and relative status positions (Adelman, Jenkins, & Kemmis as quoted in Merriam, 1998, p. 28). Together, the campuses form the horizontal aspect of this vertical case study.³⁹

The contemporary context of each campus is described below, and summarized in Table 1, *Summary Campus Data*, an overview of each institution along relevant metrics. (See Table A1 for a more detailed overview of comparison data by campus.)

[Table 1 about here]

Ashby University. As the flagship institution in the state public higher education system, Ashby University is the oldest campus in the state—founded in the mid-1800s—and is located in the one of the largest cities in the state. The campus’s mission emphasizes the importance of learning environments that allow for critical examination and knowledge transmission related to the complexity of the physical and cultural worlds that its students inhabit (A_ID040), and suggests an inherent connection between the campus and the wider community. Ashby University’s motto translates to “By God’s light” (A_ID041), and—according to its website—the campus prides itself on its Ashby University Firsts—recognition of early work and achievements related to particular fields or social issues. Ashby University, which is a globally and nationally ranked undergraduate institution, has been recognized by several national publications, including *U.S. News & World Report*, *Princeton Review*, *Forbes*, and *Washington Monthly*, as one of the top campuses in the country.

Ashby University has the largest budget and enrollment in the System. Nearly 30,000

³⁹ All potentially identifying information has been changed—including state, campus, institutional, and policy names—to protect the anonymity of participating institutions. In addition, all institutional agents are identified by generalized institutional positions (e.g. dean or student affairs director) rather than by specific position or individual names.

Table 1		
<i>Summary Campus Data</i>		
<u>Ashby University</u>	<u>Bradford University</u>	<u>Clearfield College</u>
Research University	Master's University	Baccalaureate College
Budget: \$2-3B	Budget: ~\$250M	Budget: ~\$100M
30,000 undergraduates	12,000 undergraduates	5,000 undergraduates
SRM*: ~<10%	SRM*: ~10%	SRM*: ~25%
Selectivity: 50%	Selectivity: 85%	Selectivity: 80%
Tuition & fees [^] : \$10K/\$30K	Tuition & fees [^] : \$7K/\$15K	Tuition & fees [^] : \$7K/\$15K
6-yr grad.: 80%, 65% SRM*	6-yr grad.: 50%, 40% SRM*	6-yr grad.: 30%, <30% SRM ^o
<i>Note: Data in this table were drawn from national college and university information sites, institutional and System reports, and other institutional documents and websites.</i>		
* SRM = Students from racially marginalized groups. The includes students who identify as Native American, Latin@/Hispanic, Black or Southeast Asian.		
[^] Tuition and fees data presented: in-state/out-of-state.		
^o Some sub-group numbers are so small, that Clearfield does not represent them as percentages. As a result, the final grad rate cannot be reported for some groups. The range is 15% for Black students and 36% for Latin@/Hispanic students.		

undergraduates are enrolled in the campus, less than 10% of who identify as students from racially marginalized backgrounds (SRMs) (i.e. Black, Latin@/Hispanic, Native American, and Southeast Asian). Its student body has relatively high average ACT/SAT scores—more than 28 and more than 1,200, respectively—and average high school rank (90% of Ashby's students were in the top 25% of their graduating class). The average six-year graduation rate at Ashby University is approximately 80% with a more than 15-percentage point gap between this average and the average graduation rate of SRMs.⁴⁰ Admitting just about half of applicants for Fall 2012, Ashby University is the most selective of the public institutions in the state. It is also the most well resourced with a 2013-2014 budget of more than \$2.5-billion, which translates to more than \$90,000 per student (undergraduate only) or almost \$70,000 per student including graduate and

⁴⁰ This number varies by race/ethnic subgroups. For example, the average graduation rate for Black students at Ashby University is almost 20 percentage-points below the overall undergraduate average while there is an 8 percentage-point gap between Latin@/Hispanic students and the overall average.

undergraduate students. In-state tuition and fees total nearly \$10,000 compared to more than \$25,000 for out-of-state tuition and fees. Ashby University, which has a student-faculty ratio of ~18:1, conferred more than 6,500 Bachelor's degrees in 2012-2013. Designated as a research institution by the Carnegie Foundation, this primarily residential undergraduate campus hosts a comprehensive range of graduate programs—approximately 250 graduate programs that enroll less than 15,000 students—including more than 100 doctoral-level programs.

Excellence for All is housed within Student Affairs at Ashby University. However, there is no clear home of institutional responsibility for EFA on campus. Related efforts are largely driven by individual values and activities. It is safe to say that the average person on campus has never heard of EFA. In terms of other aspects of diversity on campus, the Ashby has been developing a strategic plan for diversity, the Ashby Diversity Plan, based on input from individuals on campus and from the surrounding communities. The effort is coordinated, in part, by the campus's Office of Diversity and by a campus-wide committee. In addition, one of its college access programs was recently recognized with a diversity award from the state higher education administration “in recognition of institutional change agents that foster access and success for historically underrepresented populations” (HESA_ID005).⁴¹ Starting in the early 2000, the state public higher education system introduced its campuses to a data- and inquiry-focused institutional change process aimed at enhancing educational equity in System schools (HESA_ID007). Participation in the multi-year project was voluntary, and Ashby University was not engaged in this statewide effort (HESA_ID008). As a flagship institution, Ashby University has received attention in recent years regarding its use of race/ethnicity in higher education

⁴¹ Several diversity awards are given annually to individuals, teams and units that have made exemplary efforts in this area. System administration offers only two other awards—for excellence in teaching and for academic staff (HESA_ID004).

admission practices, and some students have participated in a national campaign to relate and challenge the assumptions and questions they have encountered as “multicultural” students on campus.

Bradford University. Bradford University was founded in the later 1800s. Its mission communicates a commitment to an inclusive learning environment that helps students from the region and beyond to navigate a global society. The campus has a motto of “Mingling excellence and access” and prides itself on the teaching skill and recognition of the institution, its faculty and graduates as well as on its achievements as an institution that values sustainability and civic engagement. Bradford University is recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* as a top regional campus.

Primarily a residential institution, Bradford University is classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a master’s university, and offers postbaccalaureate and graduate programs for less than 1,500 students. With a 22:1 student-faculty ratio, the campus enrolls ~12,000 undergraduates, approximately 10% of whom are SRMs. The average six-year graduation rate of students who matriculated at Bradford University in the fall of 2013 is approximately 50%, with a gap of 10 percentage-points for the average graduation rate of SRMs. The average ACT score for the Fall 2012 cohort was ~23, and about 40% of students were in the top 25% of their graduating class. During that admission season, Bradford University extended an invitation to enroll to almost 85% of applicants. Its 2013-2014 budget exceeded \$250-million, which is approximately \$20,000 per undergraduate or \$18,000 per student considering graduate and undergraduate students. Out-of-state tuition and fees (~\$15,000) at Bradford University are more than double the in-state rate (\$7,000). In 2012-2014, the campus conferred approximately 2,000 degrees. The campus offers 14 graduate programs including one doctoral program in nursing.

EFA is most visibly housed within Academic Affairs at Bradford University; yet, it has a strong presence in at least one other campus unit. The policy is represented on the campus's website through strategic planning documents and campus-wide activities. A voluntary committee and a recently hired senior administrator provide primary leadership for the campus-wide effort with the senior administrator within Student Affairs guiding EFA within that division. In addition, with EFA-related committees in many divisions and departments, the average person on campus is likely aware of EFA on campus, might be able to relate key efforts, and provide a rudimentary definition. Beyond EFA, Bradford University was part of the first group of campuses in the state to engage in the statewide equity-focused inquiry process, and the campus has been recognized for its diversity related efforts over the last several years, including team and individual diversity awards from the System.

Clearfield College. Clearfield College, the youngest campus in System, was founded in the mid-1900s. The campus's motto is "Here we are. Genuinely. Extraordinary." The diversity of its learning environment is a Clearfield College point-of-pride. Its mission emphasizes high quality creative and academic programs for its diverse student body and all of the communities in which it is situated (i.e., local, national, global). In particular, the campus celebrates its attention to a diverse range of perspectives and knowledge—achieved, in part, through community partnerships—that helps both what they describe as traditional and nontraditional students contribute to a multicultural society. Clearfield College does not appear to be ranked regionally or nationally, though it does appear on at least one list as a national liberal arts college with no ranking provided.

Clearfield College enrolls approximately 5,000 undergraduates, and has an operating budget of approximately \$100-million, spending close to \$22,000 per undergraduate or \$21,500

per student counting graduate and undergraduate students. Nearly 25% of its undergraduate enrollment is SRMs, and it educates less than 200 postbaccalaureate students. In 2013-2014, the campus admitted almost 80% of applicants.⁴² Its six-year average graduation rate is nearly 30% compared to 14% for Black students, 27% for Latin@/Hispanic students, and less than 30% for SRMs as a group. Clearfield College has a student-faculty ratio of 18:1, and its in-state tuition and fees are approximately \$7,000 compared to nearly \$15,000 for out-of-state students. The Carnegie Foundation classifies Bradford University as an arts and sciences, primarily non-residential, baccalaureate college but the campus does offer several master's-level graduate programs.

Clearfield College's EFA work is housed in the campus's Office of Diversity, and is visible online including through the operation of a mini-grants program and the work of EFA (sub)committees. This presence does not necessarily accurately reflect the amount of EFA-related activity on campus. Closer inspection reveals that EFA efforts at the campus largely lapsed over nearly two years due in part to the departure of a senior diversity administrator who had chaired the campus's EFA committee. Clearfield College was also among the first state institutions to participate in statewide equity-focused inquiry process, and one campus staff person has received a System diversity award.

Contextual institutions. Beyond the campuses, my research focuses on state and national bodies that helped develop, implement, and disseminate EFA across the state and country. According to vertical case study procedures, the participating institutions directly involved in implementing EFA (and discussed above) were the primary focus of this study;

⁴² I was unable to locate ACT and class rank information from Clearfield College itself, even using its Institutional Research website; however, one source, drawing on National Center for Educational Statistics data, suggests that the campus's average ACT scores vary between 17 and 18 depending on the subject area (C_ID008).

however, the efforts of these institutions are situated within larger national and state contexts.

National Education Consortium. As noted in the Introduction, EFA emerged from a previous policy-philosophy, *Expanding Excellence to All*, which was initiated by the National Education Consortium (NEC). The NEC is a more than hundred-year-old national membership organization whose work emphasizes education reforms aimed to ensure that all students have access to a quality education. NEC's programmatic work with partner schools and school systems is complemented by membership meetings; limited but growing advocacy work; and publications that both advance its key philosophies and programs and highlight promising work of member institutions. *Expanding Excellence to All* and its grounding philosophies of excellence, education, and equity have become such a guiding force for the organization that *Excellence for All* officially became part of NEC's mission within the last five years. This not only signaled the importance of EFA to the organization's growing work but also raised the profile of EFA and related activities among its member institutions. Although NEC traditionally works one-on-one with member institutions, it does have several state-level partnerships, including the System of which my focus campuses are a part. As the primary entity behind the creation of EFA, NEC and its institutional agents were able to provide important historical and contextual information about the larger understandings and goals that guided this effort as well as offer insight into the progress of EFA efforts in my research state.

Higher Education System Administration. The state Higher Education System Administration (HESA) is the coordinating body for higher education in the state. HESA's current contours began to take shape in the mid-to-late 1900s when a reorganization of the state higher education system and a merger brought existing four-year campuses, two-year campuses, and community education and outreach programs under the umbrella of a burgeoning state-wide

system of governance (Misc_ID001; Misc_ID002).⁴³ In the decades since the merger, the System has nearly doubled the number of campuses it oversees, and increased its student population by more than 250% (HESA_ID005). Primary decision-making around policies, practices, budgets and regulations in the System is the responsibility of a governing board, which also appoints the presidents of the System and of the individual campuses. Following these appointments, the System and campus presidents are responsible for policy implementation on behalf of the governance board and for the daily guidance and strategic planning for the individual campuses. Following the end of the previous System diversity plan—System Diversity Plan II—HESA adapted *Expanding Excellence to All* to form the skeleton of the EFA initiative, which was then rolled out to each state campus. My data collection at the System-level focused on the role, influence and historical context of this intermediary institution to help situate the development of EFA in the state as well as its ultimate dissemination to and (re)interpretation within participating campuses.

Study Respondents

Study respondents were those who are diversity policymakers, practitioners and administrators at individual institutions, within the state System, and the National Education Consortium.⁴⁴

⁴³ Within this system, Bradford University began as one of the state's Normal Schools while Clearfield College resulted from the merger, several years later, of two two-year campuses. Ashby University, too, had been a Normal School; however, prior, it had been a preparation school for young men before it opened a training institute for female, which later became a college for women. By the time of the merger, Ashby was well on its way to being a well-respected research institution both nationally and internationally (Misc_ID001).

⁴⁴ After considering both "participants" and "informants," I decided to call those who provided interview data for my study "respondents," following Weis and Fine (2000). I chose this because rather than participating in the development of my study, interviewees were more responding to an interview context that I'd designed primarily to suit my research needs. In addition, "informants" conjures insiders who help the researcher pull back layers and develop a deeper

Focal campuses. Participants within each research site were purposefully selected to include institutional agents involved directly with EFA and other campus diversity efforts as well as presidents, administrators, and staff working in recruitment and admissions, student and academic affairs, advising, campus equity and diversity positions, and multicultural student services. Specifically, Table 2, *Study Respondents by Generalized Campus Function and Position*, provides the functions and positions of the institutional agents I recruited and interviewed at each of the focal campuses.

[Table 2 about here]

Starting from a preliminary set of potential respondents collected through EFA-related web searches, I employed criterion-based (Morrow, 2005) and network-based or snowball sampling (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Yoshikawa, Weisner, Kalil, & Way, 2008) that enabled recruited respondents to suggest other potential respondents. This referral method assumes that respondents have sufficient understanding of the larger project to connect me to other potential respondents who can inform the study and productively contribute to the projects' goals and focus (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). In addition, while snowball sampling allowed me to expand the participant sample in ways that may reflect policy implementation or “natural interactional units” (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981, p. 141)—e.g. people connect me to others with whom they work—I suspect that this approach to respondent recruitment also resulted in conversations with like-minded respondents. That is, it is likely respondents connected me to people with whom they share common perspectives, values, approaches, goals and/or social networks (Penrod, Preston, Cain, & Starks, 2003).

understanding of the research context, which did happen during my interviews, but rather than cultural reporters who filled in the picture for me, respondents offered pieces that I used to develop that picture myself.

<u>Function</u>	<u>Position(s)*</u>
Institutional leadership	President
Academic affairs	Provost, other senior administrators, deans, director(s)
Institutional research	Senior administrator, director
Recruitment and admissions	Senior administrator, director
Student affairs	Senior administrators, deans
Multicultural student services	Senior administrators, deans, directors
Office of Diversity	Senior administrator(s), director(s), manager/coordinator
Undergraduate advising	Director
Campus diversity activities	EFA and/or other diversity committee(s), range of respondents

Note: While I did not explicitly seek out faculty based on their primary role as educators, I recruited and interviewed several faculty members who also held other institutional positions (e.g. administrative roles) or who were involved in EFA and other diversity-related efforts on campus (e.g. based on their membership on a diversity committee).

Relatedly, this approach may have introduced bias because potential respondents' willingness to speak with me could have reflected the extent to which they agree or disagree with the importance of my study topic, lending itself to contact with outliers who represent extreme positions in agreement or disagreement. My criterion-based sampling helped to mitigate this limitation by drawing on a broad set of potential respondents from across levels and functions on each campus, which generated multiple referral chains rather than one chain united by shared values (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).⁴⁵ In addition, I sought referrals—not contacts—such that I remained the primary contact and recruiter for the study, allowing me to better control recruitment messaging. In addition, as noted above, my study employed both purposeful and snowball sampling, which together help reduce the amount of bias snowball sampling can introduce if used on its own (Penrod et al., 2003). Finally, I worked to define the focus of my study broadly during recruitment. For example, although this varied to some extent by campus

⁴⁵ Penrod et al. (2003) refer to this as chain referral sampling in which multiple networks are simultaneously tapped to diversify the research sample.

and potential respondent, I most often framed my study in terms of student success rather than explicitly about diversity or EFA, as I discuss more below.

Many of the individuals that respondents recommended were on my preliminary recruitment list; however, I did become aware of and interviewed several additional respondents as a result of snowball sampling. I continued to seek recommendations even as I approached the end of data collection to continue to identify patterns related to which institutional agents were recommended most frequently, an insight that I anticipated could prove useful during analysis.

Contextual institutions. Respondents at contextual institutions were also purposefully sampled based on their role within the institutional. In the National Education Consortium, I recruited and interviewed a senior institutional leader as well as current and former equity and diversity staff involved directly with development and dissemination of *Excellence for All* and its parent effort, *Expanding Excellence to All*. My sample within the Higher Education System Administration was comprised of respondents who represented relevant institutional functions: senior leadership, student affairs, and equity and diversity. Unfortunately, I was not able to interview anyone from the System institutional research office because leadership of that department was vacant during my data collection.

Data Collection and Methods

Primary data collection for my study was conducted during the 2014-2015 academic year, including targeted follow-up in Summer 2015. Table 3, *Data Collection Waves*, outlines the focus of my data collection efforts during each collection phase. Formal respondent recruitment began in September 2014 and continued on a rolling basis into May 2015. Based on confirmed interviews and plans for observational visits and archival research, I proceeded with formal data collection in October 2014, and continued in several waves, typically through month-long visits

to my research state. (See Appendix A for a complete overview of the timing of key study elements.)

[Table 3 about here]

While I began formal respondent recruitment in September 2014, I had the opportunity to interact informally with several potential campus respondents during events in Spring 2014. In addition, I conducted observational visits in Summer 2014 to make initial contact with potential respondents of primary interest—that is, those most directly involved in EFA and/or other institutional efforts to meet the needs of marginalized students on campus. These interactions offered me opportunities for preliminary rapport and relationship development with potential respondents. In addition to learning the lay of the land at each institution, these visits were the most reliable way to learn who currently occupied positions of interest and to access up-to-date contact information. No potential respondents were recruited during this time.

Negotiating access and recruitment. Formal efforts to achieve institutional access and to recruit potential respondents began after the University of Wisconsin-Madison Institutional Review Board (IRB) provided final study approval in September 2014. This final approval was based, in part, on an affirmative institutional response to my request for permission to interview National Education Consortium staff (July 2014) and approvals from the IRBs of focal campuses (August 2014). After securing final IRB approval from my home institution, I initiated formal recruitment contact with potential respondents, starting with those with whom I sought to conduct face-to-face interviews.⁴⁶ My first contact with most potential respondents took place

⁴⁶ I assumed that meeting in-person would facilitate rapport building and my ability to connect more authentically with respondents. Beyond this, I wanted to observe respondents' body language and other non-verbal responses during our conversation and to be better positioned to interpret silences. Given the potentially charged nature of interview content, I assumed the intimacy of meeting face-to-face could ease the potentially socially awkward interaction that is a

<i>Data Collection Waves</i>		
<u>Phase</u>	<u>Timing</u>	<u>Data Collection</u>
Pre-Recruitment	Spring and Summer 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal interaction with potential respondents • Preliminary archival research • Observational visits
Recruitment	Began September 2014, continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential respondent identification • Respondent recruitment Ashby University and Bradford University
Wave 1	October 2014–January 2015 <i>In research state mid-October through mid-November</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews (primary), institutional observations and preliminary archival research at Ashby University and Bradford University • Interviews with National Education Consortium • Respondent recruitment Ashby University, Bradford University and Clearfield College
Wave 2	January 2015–April 2015 <i>In research state mid-January through mid-February</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews (primary), archival research, and institutional observations at Ashby University, Bradford University and Clearfield College • Interviews with National Education Consortium • Respondent recruitment Clearfield College
Wave 3	April 2015–May 2015 <i>In research state mid-April through late-May</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archival research (primary) and interviews at Ashby University, Bradford University and Clearfield College

formal, recorded interview and enrich my data with cues and information I could not collect over the phone. That said, it might also be true that speaking over the phone could make it easier for respondents to share with me. As I discuss later in this chapter, the way I was “read”—physically, interpersonally, structurally—by respondents surely affected our interactions. Given this reading, having less information on which to make assumptions about me might actually have increased respondents’ comfort. In addition, I can imagine that it might be easier for respondents to share more challenging content when my recorder and I weren’t directly in their line of vision, perhaps heightening concern about and sensitivity to what is being shared.

Although I would have preferred to meet with each respondent in-person, but telephone conversations were a logistical necessity because of the way in which I organized my data collection schedule around condensed visits to my research state. Thus, I made an educated guess about whether I should attempt to interview each potential respondent face-to-face or by telephone. Ultimately, I decided to interview respondents face-to-face if they were (senior) campus leadership, directly involved in EFA and other diversity efforts on campus, or likely to be a rich source of data given what I knew about the respondent from my time on campus and from other respondents. I was not able to interview all such respondents in-person due to my data collection plan and their schedules but most were interviewed face-to-face.

Wave 4	July 2015 <i>In research state for ~10 days in mid-July</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with Higher Education State Administration respondent(s) • Archival research at Clearfield College • Interview with Higher Education State Administration respondent(s)
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over email.⁴⁷ I was aware that the frame I applied to the work and the approach I used when negotiating access would have a significant effect on my recruitment and data collection—perhaps most significantly among those in senior leadership positions (Yeager & Kram, 1995). While institutional response to the needs of students who are perceived to represent diversity, to be “diverse” learners, or who come from marginalized racial/ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds is a primary concern of this study, I thought that leading with such a frame could cause red flags for some participants and structure their assumptions about the interview in undesirable ways. To mitigate this, in introductory emails and conversations, I briefly introduced my project and myself and focused on my interest in organizational change in higher education, particularly in those changes enacted “on behalf of students who may struggle to be successful on campus.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ The first emails I sent highlighted my interest in organizational change in higher education, arriving with the now clearly bland subject line “Interview for Dissertation Research.” Based on an early exchange with a respondent I’d first met years prior, I decided that a more engaging subject line was required. I decided that “Student Success at [Campus Name]” was more compelling, and might encourage people to open an email they might otherwise not. Specifically, she said, “How great to hear from you! Congrats on moving forward with your dissertation! It's funny because, when I was looking at the subject line, I thought to myself ‘no.’ But, then I realized it was you, and, so, the answer is YES!” (email communication, 09/29/2014). Although I did not have the sense that the bland subject line kept others from responding to me, it became clear that a more engaging approach could only aid recruitment. This was a useful and well-timed lesson on the marketing aspect of respondent recruitment.

⁴⁸ I veered from this somewhat with Bradford University, which had a relatively robust EFA effort. My recruitment emails at this school tended to note that my focus on organizational change efforts included an interest in EFA as an example of one such effort. I waffled in my comfort with this approach, needing to balance my need to secure interviews with my desire to

I escalated my outreach if and when I did not hear back from potential respondents after the initial email. Although, most people responded after the first or second email, the succession of outreach included follow up email(s), informal visits during campus visits, introductions at events, and in one case, a telephone follow-up. The informal visits and event introductions were particularly important for upper level administrators who I anticipated would not—and in one case, did not—respond affirmatively to initial cold inquiries. That said, I was pleasantly surprised and encouraged by how responsive potential respondents were to my interview invitations—although the ease of recruitment and scheduling did vary by campus.

Data collection methods. This study employed several data collection and generation methods, which are summarized in Table 4, *Data Collection and Generation Matrix*. While the data sources are presented below in a linear fashion, I engaged in different methods simultaneously and cycled through the various forms of data collection several times until I reached saturation. Saturation has been described as the point at which the findings appear to be

[Table 4 about here]

sufficiently complex and complete—a potentially arbitrary but necessary designation (Eisenhardt, 1989; Morrow, 2005). For me, saturation was also about the completeness of the pursuit—the extent to which I had accessed the bulk of relevant data (e.g. potential respondents, archival records) and—though relying on a data set that was nevertheless undoubtedly incomplete—was ready to analyze and to discover what story I would tell. In addition, the notion of affective saturation became salient. That is, my having reached the point of saturation became clear to me as I *felt* ready to complete one stage of data collection and analysis or to immerse myself in another. For example, toward the end of Wave 2, I began to feel that I was coming to the end of

not pre-structure the interviews by centering the policy when respondents may not have been inclined to do so themselves.

Table 4

Data Collection and Generation Matrix

<u>Data Source</u>	<u>Description</u>
Semi-structured interviews	With respondents who are/were directly involved with EFA and other diversity activities as well as presidents, administrators, and staff working in recruitment and admissions, student and academic affairs, advising, campus equity and diversity positions, and multicultural student services at focal and contextual institutions (See Appendix B for sample semi-structured interview protocols.)
Institutional documents and artifacts	Includes archival and contemporary institutional documents (e.g. strategic plans, policy statements, promotional materials)—particularly those that relate to relevant diversity efforts and concerns—in addition to artifacts like websites, meeting notes, newspapers and newsletters (i.e. student, campus, community), emails, and photos that add context to each case and offer insight into local policy development and adaptation in focal and contextual institutions
Direct observation	Time on campus and observation of meetings and events that will help contextualize and expand upon other data
Institutional and administrative data	Publically and institutionally available reports on demographics and outcomes of students in the focal state and institutions, disaggregated by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status (to the extent this is possible)
Researcher artifacts	Ethnographic fieldnotes and research journal: detailed reflections on research events (e.g., interviews, observations) and research and analytic processes

interviewing. Although, I did interview another handful of respondents during Wave 3, I had begun to have a sense of satisfactory completion during the previous wave. Similarly, as I moved toward my third wave of data collection, which focused on collecting archival records, I was immersed primarily in interview transcription. At the same time, however, I began to feel ready (and even excited) to shift more fully into analysis. This sensation may be what others have referred to when discussing “saturation” but I was surprised to learn that this designation had both material (grounded in the data) and intuitive (grounded in me) aspects.

Semi-structured interviews. I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 60 respondents from focal and contextual institutions between October 2014 and July 2015.

Appendix B provides sample interview protocols that served as the foundation of this study's semi-structured interviews with respondents, both guiding the interviews and reflecting my primary interests.⁴⁹ However, the range of questions asked during each interview varied based on respondents' institutional context and responses. The duration of interviews ranged from 30 minutes to more than 6 hours but most lasted between 75 and 90 minutes. Most respondents were interviewed once but on five occasions completion of the interview required a follow-up session. I audio-recorded each interview (except for one case in which the respondent did not consent to the recording), and I typically took few written notes until after the interview. After each interview, I sent my respondents a thank you email that included requests for documents and, on occasion, asked clarifying questions and/or for assistance connecting to other potential respondents. Table 5, *Study Respondents by Function and Position, by Campus*, offers an overview of the functions and positions of the 53 campus respondents interviewed for my study.

[Table 5 about here]

In addition to the campus respondents, I interviewed four current and former NEC staff members and two HESA institutional leaders. Finally, I interviewed one national expert on equity and organizational change in higher education.

Archival documents and artifacts. Archival records were the first subset of institutional documents I analyzed. Emirbayer and Johnson (2008) remind that historical knowledge is central in a Bourdieuan study because it helps researchers to map the history of the field as well as the history of relations therein. The authors further argue that, while deep historical analysis may not be possible outside out of a purely historical inquiry, the effort to situate institutions

⁴⁹ The two sample protocols for focal campuses demonstrate the ways in which my interview approach varied based on whether the central focus of discussion was student success or EFA at the institution.

<u>Function</u>	<u>Ashby</u>	<u>Bradford</u>	<u>Clearfield</u>
President	x	x	x
Academic affairs, Provost	-- ^	x	x
Academic affairs, other	x	x	x
Institutional research	x	x	x
Multicultural student services	x	x	x
Office of Diversity ~	x	-- ^	x
EFA/diversity committee members*	x	x	x
Recruitment and admissions	-- ^	x	x
Student affairs, Dean of students	x	x	x
Students affairs, Other	x	x	x
Undergraduate advising	x	x	x
Total number of campus respondents interviewed (53)	17	19	17

Notes: An “x” indicates that I was able to interview at least one respondent in the specified position. ^ indicates missed interviews. Potential respondents in these positions declined my interview request at Ashby University. There was no one in this area at Bradford University during my primary period of interview-based data collection.

* At a minimum, I interviewed the chairs of these committees but sought out additional members of EFA and diversity committees.

~ While each institution had an office that could be anonymized to Office of Diversity, all of the offices do not all perform the same function. One office focuses on affirmative action and related compliance, another provides institutional leadership related to campus diversity efforts, and the third combines these functions.

historically—just as they are socially, economically, and politically situated—is an important aspect of the analytic process: “[b]eing ever-mindful of history remains, nevertheless, fundamental to the development of a truly relational organizational analysis” (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008, p. 35). In addition to structuring institutional habitus, institution’s historical actions and positions demonstrate the ways in which their historical development within particular fields informs or structures response to, or deflection of, external concerns (Naidoo, 2004). Understanding and detailing the relevant historical contexts of each campus is, therefore,

critical to exploring institutional habitus in this study. For example, a better grasp of historical institutional struggles related to the inclusion and response to the needs of marginalized populations and changing definitions of diversity add important context to local understandings of the goals, purposes and development of EFA on each campus.

In addition to interview data, which provide some historical context, institutional archival documents were the primary source through which I investigated the orientation of each campus toward the inclusion and support of marginalized college students as well as how this might have changed over time. During the early stages of my study, I created a list of key words and concepts to pursue in the archives. I anticipated that this might not be the final list or approach but it offered a relatively structured approach to use in each campus's archives. My fieldnotes (FN) from an early archive trip reflect this concern, "I identify a list of key words that I think searching for might be productive. I'm not sure if this is the right approach but **the need to focus and be systematic in the archives is already clear to me**" (B_ARC_FN 07092014, emphasis in original). Based on the policy, its anticipated beneficiaries, and naming conventions identified in the archive finding aids, my initial set of key words included diversity, multicultural, affirmative action, opportunity, equity, excellence, inclusion/ive, rac(ial), black, disadvantage(d), ethnic(ity), and minority. I also employed key words that might reflect the larger institutional context, including academic plan(ning), strategic plan(ning), and mission.

At Ashby University and Clearfield College, I began my search in the president's files through which I could see where, when and how these issues reached the top levels of the institution. In addition, I anticipated this approach would reveal threads that I could follow into other archival records and other parts of the campus. At Bradford University, I started with the files of the primary campus diversity committee, which provided key leadership for EFA as well

as for the policies that preceded it. Based on preliminary work in Summer 2014, I prepared a tentative list of documents to review in each archive that I augmented during my Wave 1 research trip. More concerted focus on the archives began toward the end of Wave 2 and continued through the majority of Wave 3. Continuing to identify ways to bound my archival research, I decided during Wave 2 to center my efforts on diversity plans and reports and related documentation to better contextualize contemporary work with EFA. Given this narrowed frame, I entered Wave 3 with a tailored list that included official documents related to diversity plans and related efforts in each institution and the System.

In preparation for each trip to the archives, I emailed the archivist with my wish list for the day and s/he would have those files or boxes waiting for me when I arrived. Depending on the archive, I could either print or scan the documents I was most interested in. In some cases, a document might have information I was interested in but I did not retain the full document but captured relevant information and excerpts in field notes. During my archive reviews, I wrote in my research journal, recorded which documents I kept copies of and took notes on others, including direct quotations. I re-named soft and hard copies of the archival documents to reflect its institution, and catalogued each in a spreadsheet called, "EFA Document Database," which included a document code, institution, data and location of collection, and any relevant notes. In addition to the documents I was most interested in (e.g. official diversity plans), I also reviewed material surrounding these documents like correspondence, newspaper clippings, marketing materials, and meeting notes. As a final stage of organization, I sorted the collected documents into basic categories (e.g. EFA, strategic plans) at the end of each research trip.

Institutional documents and artifacts. EFA and diversity-related artifacts (e.g., policy documents, marketing materials, websites, newspapers and -letters) were a second subset of

institutional documents I analyzed for this study. These documents, reflecting contemporary concerns and practices, provided additional background material and offered greater insight into the context in which campus diversity efforts are taking place (Creswell, 2007). In particular, these documents reveal how each campus represents itself, the issues with which each is concerned, the ways each is responding, and the ways in which these are being understood, framed and responded to within the campus community. The documents that focus on marginalized students at each campus offer further insight into key definitions, problem framings, solutions, responses and discussions of these on campus. Together these documents represent the most explicit articulation of a campus's orientation and goals, and enabled me to examine the conceptualizations and understandings that undergird EFA.

I collected these documents in-person or remotely via web searches. During each campus trip, I spent time walking through campus and collected documents during my travels, noting the date and location of where each was collected. Whenever I met someone for an interview, I would arrive early and/or stay after to see which documents were available in and around their offices and to collect them as relevant. In addition, I took photos of documents and artifacts that could not be taken away (e.g. flyers on a bulletin board). Remote institutional document collection was facilitated primarily through institutional websites, and centered on both focal and contextual institutions. Here, I found descriptions of and documents related to contemporary diversity and other planning efforts, statements from institutional leaders (e.g. a president's commencement speech), institutional news and department/division features, information about happenings on campus, and electronic access to campus papers. These documents not only taught me about the campuses (e.g. the existence of various diversity frames) but also provided information about events that I was not able to attend (Stake, 1995).

In addition to documents that I collected on my own, I looked to respondents to share important or new documents with me (Stake, 1995). During interviews and as a part of follow up, I inquired about key documents respondents thought would help me better understand student success and EFA efforts on campus. This approach was particularly useful, even if it yielded documents that I had already collected, because I learned about which documents were active in different institutional spaces as well as how these may relate to key institutional meanings, assumptions and understandings (Ahmed, 2012). The documents that were given or shown to me unsolicited were telling because they provided the information that respondents thought was most important for me to know about their student success work and institutional context. This collection strategy also gave me access to documents I might not otherwise have encountered, including an NEC document outlining a new strategic priority, a letter about an upcoming external diversity assessment at one of the institutions, a speech that a former NEC made about EFA at a conference, and several data reports. As with the archival records, all other institutional documents and artifacts were coded and catalogued in my “EFA Document Database.”

Campus observations. I conducted campus observation at each campus over the course of 39 days, during which I spent time on campus and attended select events. Information gained from observations provided context for interviews and helped me contextualize what I learned from the interviews. Observation at meetings or other EFA-related or campus diversity events provided a critical view into the ongoing development and implementation of EFA. These allowed me to record the ways in which institutional agents related to these efforts interacted, planned, and acted within their own spaces; how they communicated goals, plans, success and challenges; and the ways in which these were received. In addition to this event observation, I spent time in key institutional spaces, including the campus grounds, social areas, student and/or

multicultural students service offices, and dining areas. This helped me develop a sense of each campus, to gain familiarity with people and places that are important to EFA, and to document the ways in which the beliefs and practices related to these efforts were manifest in physical spaces.

I employed an observation protocol to document my observations of relevant events. In addition to identifying information about the event (e.g. date, location, campus), I used the protocol to record observations of the event proceedings and its context (descriptive notes). Here, I aimed to provide “a relatively *incontestable description*” of the event I observed to the extent this is possible (Stake, 1995, pp. 62, emphasis in original); that is, one that contains as little explicit analysis as possible and that focuses, conversely, on documenting the scene—or as Stake (1995) offers that “lets the occasion tell its story” (p. 62). Beyond this, I included analysis (reflective notes) to capture notations, reflections, reactions and in-the-moment meaning-making (Creswell, 2007), which might have been lost by the time I completed fieldnotes at the end of the day after each event. Subsequent to each event, I produced fieldnotes based on the notes gathered during observations. General institutional observations proceeded in the same way but with more emphasis on contextual description rather than event proceedings.

Institutional and administrative data. Part of my investigation of equity on the focal campuses relied on an understanding of the “official” data on student outcomes and experiences. Institutional and administrative data were collected through data reports—from national sources such as the National Center for Education Statistics and its Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) as well as from System and institutional research centers. These institutional and administrative data provided critical information in and of themselves—e.g., the changing demographics and outcomes (e.g. enrollments, retention, persistence) of marginalized

students over time on the participating campuses. Nevertheless, I did not use these data to make causal claims or assertions about the realities of students' outcomes on the campuses and in the System. Rather, I used them descriptively to generate summary and comparative data for each campus, as noted above. Most significantly, these data helped contextualize other study findings regarding development and implementation of EFA and attention to the outcomes of marginalized student populations. They also allowed for a type of triangulation (Eisenhardt, 1989). By comparing them with data from interviews, I examined the (mis)match between individual and shared assumptions about institutional reality and institutional versions of this same reality. This examination provided key insights—whether the individuals and institutions agree on current student outcomes, which students are more/least likely to succeed on campus, which programs are making significant progress, how diverse the campus is. This triangulation was valuable as well in comparing institutional and System versions of current realities.

Researcher artifacts. As noted above, immediately following each interview, observation or document/artifact review, I wrote expanded fieldnotes in which I captured key takeaways from the data collection event, expanded on reflections and captured details that are not necessarily audible (*e.g.*, body language, emotions, hesitations, false starts, and packaged responses), personal reactions, particularly interesting elements/insights, and potential follow-up questions or issues (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). For example, in one fieldnote, I developed an interview question that I added to the protocol for subsequent respondent across campuses:

I thought of a question that could be an interesting one regarding what keeps people at the campus—**What's kept you at [campus]?** The assumption isn't that they should want to leave but [that] it's a difficult time for HE [higher education], for [the state], for HE in [the state], and ppl [people] feel downtrodden and underappreciated plus are losing pay.

Why do they stick around? I think this can reveal some interesting and personal understandings of what the institution is and offers to students but also to staff and faculty themselves. (FN, 1/27/2016, emphasis in original)

Acting as real-time artifacts, fieldnotes offer data that is essential to the analytic process. This was the first place that within-case themes begin to emerge (Charmaz, 2006), and offered a medium through which to reflect on the relevance and implications of each data collection moment to the larger research goals. This included documentation of any stalling, conflict and avoidance I experienced in the context of the research relationship, moments of were analytically significant. When possible, I collected fieldnotes electronic to ease both the process of collection and transcription. Nevertheless, circumstances occasionally required that I record these reflections on audio-files or through hand-written notes, both of which were transcribed as soon as possible in preparation for coding along with the rest of the study data.

Finally, I also kept a research journal as a medium through which to reflect on my experience during the research process. This helped me think of issues, ideas or questions to bring to participants, to process ideas and emotions that arose during the process, and/or to record details that may be jogged by offline conversations or during general reflection. This sometimes emotional process is evident in the following excerpt, which is taken from a note I wrote following a follow-up interview with a HESA administrator:

As before, I really enjoyed talking with her, enjoyed listening to her. It feels less like an interview than a conversation in which I try not to inject too much. She's been through a lot of this, has a good memory of it and has spent a lot of time thinking about this work. It's difficult to hear her energy and spirit so low, probably lower than when we last talked given the recent bombs from the legislature. The pinch of politics, making certain

conversations impossible and therefore certain work unimaginable doesn't bode well in the face of the real disparities being experienced by students of color in [the state]...I get torn, stuck in the back and forth of the idiocy of pursuing my dissertation, asking these questions as if they are things people just haven't considered versus don't want to consider. How can work this abstract make a difference when practical matters can't move ahead? Overall, I feel heartened that someone like her has worked in administration...someone who gets it, is committed to [the work] and wants to support large-scale change. (RJ, 06/11/2015)

This research journal served long-term purposes because I used it capture ideas about writing, timelines, and data collection approaches that helped direct subsequent data collection, analysis and writing. In addition, this journal included synthetic and analytical notes and memos about the larger project—unlike ethnographic fieldnotes that focused more narrowly on discrete elements of the data collection and generation process (Glaser & Strauss, 2009; Spradley, 1979). Analytical memos, in particular, provided an opportunity for extended reflection and analysis through which to follow emergent leads and insights, some of which were so fleeting and short that without memoing they would have been lost (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; Glaser, 1978). These in-process documents helped guide ongoing fieldwork as well as acted as the repository for ongoing observation and deconstruction of the research experience itself (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008; Emerson et al., 2011)—both of which were invaluable for theoretical exploration and elaboration as well as for critical reflection on the research endeavor and its ongoing development. In addition, the research journal was immeasurably important to the documentation and pursuit of key themes, ideas, and questions in the research and analysis processes. In particular, it was useful to document the moments in which I encountered disconfirming or

surprising information and/or patterns.

Data Analysis

Data preparation. All research artifacts—interviews, fieldnotes, memos, institutional documents, and archival documents and research journal entries as relevant—were prepared for more formal analysis through verbatim transcription. Particularly for interview and observation transcription, close documentation of respondents’ actual words, missteps, corrections, pauses, emotional displays, etc. contributed to the creation of a more faithful document of the data collection moment, even if these were edited out later for clarity and simplicity based on their (ir)relevance to the analysis at hand (Poland, 1995). Further, as I reviewed interview transcripts, in particular, I made annotations regarding non-verbal elements of the interview (based on my fieldnotes), moments in which I wished I had said more or less or unintentionally redirected respondents’ commentary, and any misunderstandings—mine or respondents’—that arose during the conversation. All transcribed documents were then loaded into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software program, and coded along the procedures outlined below. After coding all of the data using NVivo, I exported reports for each major category and conducted thematic analysis within these categories either by hand (round one) or using the comment feature in Microsoft Word (round two).

Analytic approach. True to Saldaña’s (2009) axiom that “[d]ata are not coded—they’re *recoded*,” the findings presented in this dissertation were arrived at through two rounds of a two-cycle analytic process (p. 45, emphasis in original). In both cycles, raw data were first coded using a set of predetermined codes, and then subjected to more focused coding and thematic analysis based on emergent patterns (Bensimon, Harris III, & Rueda, 2007; Charmaz, 2014). In the First Cycle, I constructed a set of structural codes that reflected the study’s first research

question regarding how the campuses interpreted, developed and implemented *Excellence for All* (Saldaña, 2009). During the Second Cycle, I conducted focused coding on all of the previously coded data to identify the most significant themes and categories—identified in part based on frequency across respondents and in some cases, uniqueness, which might reflect information that was not widely reiterated by that one or that only a few respondents were positioned to report on (Charmaz, 2014; Saldaña, 2009).

In the first round—drawing on the study’s critical policy studies conceptual framework—I developed First Cycle structural codes based on a set of simplified critical analysis guidelines that I drew from my review of analytic approaches employed in (critical) policy studies⁵⁰ in and beyond education (see Ahmed, 2012; Ball, 1993, 1994; Bensimon & Marshall, 1997; Bowe, Ball, & Gold, 1992; Chase, 2013; Chase et al., 2012; Dumas, 2006; Edelman, 1977; Gillborn, 2005; Honig, 2006; Howarth, 2010; Jennings, 1983; Levinson et al., 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Malen & Knapp, 1997; Marshall, 1999; Reinhold, 1994; Roe, 1994; C. Shore & S Wright, 1997; Stein, 2001, 2004; Sullivan, 2007; Sutton & Levinson, 2001; Yanow, 1996; M. D. Young, 1999).⁵¹ The final policy coding structure I used focused on definitions and interpretations of

⁵⁰ In addition, it is worth noting that while my conceptual framework centers critical policy studies, critical policy work is being done within a wide range of disciplinary areas, including—most relevant to this study—within the anthropology of policy. As such, I using “(critical) policy studies” to indicate that I draw on critical policy work, regardless of the disciplinary context, including from scholars who do not identify their work as such.

⁵¹ Such an approach was time-consuming though fruitful, and ultimately necessary. Although critical policy studies offers a compelling conceptual approach through which to analyze policy implementation and practice, scholarship in this area—even when it purports to do so—does not offer a methodological approach for this critical work. As Gale (2001) asserts, methodology within critical policy studies scholarship typically garners a brief reference and usually with no explicit attention to the ways in which the policy stories presented a connected to particular data or research procedures. After a wide review of this scholarship—seeking a methodological grounding and finding none—I followed Chase (2013) who developed analysis guidelines based on common concerns, findings and questions within a set of critical policy studies. Although our

EFA; influences on design; actors formally and informally involved; policy activities, effects, and (un)intended beneficiaries; assessments of success and challenges facing the policy work; and resources marshaled and distributed through the policy. The findings from these analyses are presented in Part Two, the chapters of which focus on EFA policy implementation at each of the campuses.

The First Cycle structural codes I used in the second round were developed based on my theoretical framework, Bourdieu's theory of practice. Rather than explicit tracking of each of Bourdieu's central concepts—habitus, capital and field—the codes were theoretical generalizations of essential aspects of Bourdieu's framework that allowed the ways in which social position structures interpretation, decision-making and behavior to become visible in concrete practical moments. This coding scheme was comprised of four overarching categories: Self and Other, Possible v. Actual, Strengths and Weaknesses, and Behaviors & Actions. Shifting emphasis from the policy and drawing close to institutional identity and decision-making, these categories illuminated the ways in which each campus saw itself, its peers, its future and potential, strengths and struggles, decision-making context(s) as well as the ways these varied across the campuses. Findings from these analyses are presented in Part Three, which functions to contextualize the findings presented in Part Two.

Study Limitations

Several aspects of this study's design and implementation structure the findings reported herein. The first is the scope, scale and ambitions of this project. My goal was to advance understanding of the ways in which institutional habitus—an augmented understanding of institutional culture that attends to the effects of hierarchy, competition and social power—could

approach was similar and there is some overlap between the concerns reflected in our critical policy codes, my guidelines vary significantly from hers given the broader concerns of my study.

interrupt or serve efforts of colleges and universities to respond to the needs of marginalized college students. To do so in a way that is faithful to the project's goals as well as to my theoretical framework, this required—per my interpretations—institution-level research at a minimum of three institutions of varying social status but within the same state and higher education system. Further, the significance of history and context required collection of a variety of data sources, ranging from interviews to archival records to on-campus observations.

I was able to work full-time on this project over the last two years thanks to financial support from UW-Madison's Advanced Opportunity Fellowship and the NAEEd/Spencer Dissertation Fellowship. However, given the reality that I am but one person and the context of my study implementation—collecting data while not living in my research state—there are areas in data collection, analysis and presentation that would have been more robust in a (more) ideal world. For example, while my goal was not to document the institutional habitus of each campus, deeper campus observations would have allowed me a better sense of place, which I could have used to compare and contrast with what I gathered from institutional documents and through interviews. Ultimately, my staggered data collection plan meant that I spent less time on campus at Clearfield College, which also meant fewer on-campus observations.

Second, although institutional documents and archival records were a part of data collection and analysis, the findings reported here rely heavily on interview data.⁵² In particular,

⁵² Relatedly, archives themselves are a complex embodiment rather than a straightforward documentation of happenings and history. They are a socially constructed, incomplete set of historical documents and other artifacts that are randomly organized, intermittently available or saved, and reflective of larger power relations in ways that are not visible and may be very difficult to investigate and unravel (Trace, 2002). This complexity was knotted further by my being a novice historical researcher delving into archives with limited time and on short trips to research sites. There is also the reality that part of my interest is in relatively contemporary happenings—artifacts related to which may not make it to institutional archives for some time. While the latter is to some extent unavoidable, I am eager to delve more into the challenges and

the limited historical contextualization—including the goals, development, implantation, and “success” of diversity-related efforts in the System and on the campus over time—misses some of the richness that the transversal—across time—aspect of vertical case study can offer (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2014). Just as Clearfield’s preference for multiculturalism is documented in the campus’s early historical documents, so, too, is Ashby’s desire to hold itself apart from the rest of the Higher Education System Administration itself and the other institutions that comprise the System. As one institutional history asserts, following the merger that created the System as we know it today, Ashby “tr[ie]d to wall off their prestigious comprehensive institution as much as possible from the rest of the new [state university] system” (Misc_ID001, p. 596). History matters, and these early campus roots—while not as clearly visible today—rich influences on the direction of institutional practice and beliefs even as they remain unacknowledged in daily practice. This reality is all the more salient at Clearfield where campus history was a regular aspect of respondents’ interpretations of institutional identity, practice, limitations, and opportunities.

Finally, the impact of having a strong theoretical orientation is both a strength and a weakness of this project. I am compelled by the potential explanatory power of Bourdieu’s theory of action, particularly as applied to the study of higher education institutions, which are infrequently the subject of interrogations of marginalized students’ outcomes. However, through project conceptualization, design and implementation—and particularly analysis—I was acutely aware of the danger of my theoretical hammer making everything appear to be a nail (Prell et al., 2007; Suddaby, 2010). I militated against this outcome through what scholars refer to as “compassionate analysis” (Glazer, 1980) or an “empathetic disposition” (Benson & Thomas,

opportunities of and the strategic approaches to archival research as I continue to deconstruct and reconstruct this research project.

2010). Rather than pushing the interviews in a particular direction, I attempted to “let participants lead [me] into conversations,” which I hope allowed for fuller and/or more layered exchanges (Benson & Thomas, 2010, p. 684).

Nevertheless, after each interview, I was alone with my data. In fact, I was so wary of the potentiality of theory-drive bias, that my first round of analysis drew exclusively on grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006, 2014; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967/2006), which I hoped would lead me to insights regarding equity and organizational change in higher education that were unfettered by my theory goggles. Nevertheless, despite my investment in this laborious foray, I decided that given my purposes and particular research interests, the strengths that my theoretical framework afforded me offered compelling reason to carry my specific research concerns and interests explicitly into the project.

The limitations I have noted here have no doubt influenced the direction of this study and the findings reported in this dissertation. While they can be viewed a shortcomings, I think of them as the opportunity costs of carrying out the project I imagined would be enable me to answer my research questions. Further, they were costs, yes, though not necessarily losses. As I noted, they enabled me to implement the project I have outlined in this chapter and, most importantly, they serve as fodder for the continuation and development of this project into subsequent phases.

Positionality

As Merriam (1988) notes, the researcher herself is “the primary instrument of data collection” (p. 34). The limitations above certainly structured the final product this dissertation has become but likely none so much as did who I am as a person (and as a researcher) and who others perceive me to be. Research, particularly qualitative work, is unpredictable. So while it

was impossible for me to fully anticipate my influence, and that of respondents, on the project, it was nevertheless useful to prepare for the engagement by trying to anticipate respondents' response, potential problems, and my own reaction to them with the latter likely to the most developed although still incomplete and potentially incorrect (Cowles, 1988).

I came to this work with beliefs about the ways in which the operation of power, institutional interests and history (within colleges and universities) influence—and, potentially, derail—efforts to positively influence the outcomes of marginalized students. Therefore, in investigating an organizational change effort enacted on behalf of marginalized college students, I expected not to see much good even as I yearned to be pleasantly surprised with tales of commitment, progress and success. As I began my research, I reluctantly acknowledged that EFA might simply be more of the same but I also held out the hope that varied institutional contexts create the opportunities and orientation toward more progressive and transformational institutional change. While my bias is toward skepticism, my orientation during the research process was to be critical but also open to the realities and possibilities I encountered. It was also exciting, and overwhelming, to acknowledge that the outcomes of this project could not be fully determined by my belief that institutional action (as influenced by status maintenance efforts) is an important factor in students' experiences and success. I uncovered only what I was open to and willing to see, but through the support of critical colleagues, advisors, and the unpredictability of the research endeavor—and my reflection on all of these—I was relatively more prepared to interact with what was actually there to be found.

In addition, my preconceptions were not the only ones about which I was concerned. Potential and actual respondents also brought biases to this project. They were likely to perceive me through a range of lenses, including social (e.g. race, gender, age); institutional (e.g. as a

graduate student at UW-Madison, as a colleague, as a (non)professional); political, according to their beliefs about the topics of interest and/or based on my being a student of critical scholars; and personal, based on their individual, interactional response to me. In seeking to engage a range of individuals in the support and development of this study, I knew some potential respondents would be interested in my work because of their roles in a focal or contextual institution; others because of their commitment to and/or experience with supporting marginalized populations in higher education. Some would be eager to speak with me about their concerns related to the issues that my study addresses. In fact, those may have been the respondents most eager, willing and available to speak with me.

However, in order to draw data from a larger pool of perspectives, I also needed to engage those for whom this issue might not be central as well as those for whom the issue is complex and uncomfortable. Therefore, I would come to represent for some (potential) respondents their issues of concern. The most significant step I took in managing this reality was my preparation to recognize it. Potential participants in these subgroups may engage in “‘interviewing of the interviewer’” through which they attempt to test me for receptiveness and bias (Gordon, 1956, as quoted in Caine, Davison, & Stewart, 2009, p. 171). An initial lack of trust, wariness or resistance to talking—which may be enacted through scheduling difficulty, tight responses, and offering limited openings—can be engaged by making the interview more personally relevant for the participant through initial focus on topics that may be of interest to him/her, including his or her own experience in the institution (Glazer, 1980). In at least two such cases, I overcame evasions by seeking out potential respondents at campus events, and reintroducing myself and my project, hoping both that it would be more difficult to ignore me or to say “no” in person and that seeking me face-to-face would make the potential interview

context appear to be less daunting. In many more cases, I mitigated negative reactions and therefore unnecessary bias in sampling by doing campus pop-ins, in which I either scheduled or improvised visits to would-be respondents. This strategy was even successful with respondents to whom I had not already sent introductory emails.

As noted above, class, race and social position are often lenses through which social beings are interpreted by others (Harley, Jolivet, McCormick, & Tice, 2002; Merriam et al., 2001). This is important here because these categories also influence the ways in which respondents interpret and interact with researchers, in ways researchers have very little control over and, at times, awareness of (Lee, 2005; Posey, 2009). In fact, there are ways in which our reflexive assumptions about positionality and its connection to insider or outsider status in the research site and with respondents—rather than mitigating external biases—may merely double down on our own (Pillow, 2003; Schweber, 2007). My experience of being read by respondents was most salient in terms of my position as a doctoral student at UW-Madison and my identity and presentation as a Black person. The influence of gender in this regard is less clear to me although this could have contributed to my being read as non-threatening or easy to talk to even as I inquired about or elicited commentary about elements respondents were surprised to find themselves sharing. From my limited perspective, it appeared that both supported my rapport and relationship building with respondents. My role as a graduate student at a respected institution was often used a source of camaraderie, in that respondents sought to indicate that they were aware of my institution and had some understanding of it, though their assumptions were not always correct. In addition, in some cases, this awareness of my institution was used as a point of comparison regarding what respondents knew to be true about their own campuses.

In some ways, race was the more salient of the two because of the moments in which I was aware that it colored respondents' interactions with me, including a particular kind of openness and in one case, the use of a racial shorthand I was assumed to understand. In the latter case, the respondent actually spoke less about race based on the assumption that, given what he believed he knew about me, I did not need to be told certain things:

No real intellectual reason for not doing so [talking more about race]. Just not where I felt like I needed to go. It could be my level of comfort with you, feeling like you're a person of color who through our social conversations made me feel like you understand that, you know that, already. So I don't need to repeat to you what you already know. (Interview, 1/29/2015)

In the former cases, respondents felt they could share more with me, talk more openly with me because of assumptions about my goals and values in pursuing his project. One respondent—who also identifies as a Black person—and I had met each other before, but had not developed a relationship. For our interview, she welcomed me to her home, where she fixed me lunch, including dessert, and we lingered over the recorder for nearly six hours before she noted that I could stay over on her couch rather than driving back so late in the evening to the city where I was staying.

Our interview covered many topics related to EFA but also many others that related to being a Black person in the academic, pursuing change in the institutional and in one's students. She related a disheartening tale of a White student who at the end of a semester years before, shared a concluding thought that reinforced all the stereotypes she'd been hoping to unpack and challenge all semester. I included here an extended excerpt because the intimacy inherent in her sharing this story with me is obvious, especially regarding her response:

I was just floored. Stunned. Floored. Disappointed. Frustrated. Felt like a failure. (pause) And I'm sure this kid would be one who said I did fine as a teacher, he had a fine experience. You know he wouldn't want to be mean to me. But it was clear that he thought I was trying to create a *story* to counter the reality...And you know what else I felt from him? I felt from him—because I'm telling you I felt no animosity. In *fact* I felt from him...“I just want, I want to give you the favor of being honest with you.” “We all know...”...It was a *horrible* day...It was a horrible moment. I feel like it was—it could have happened yesterday. It could have happened just an hour ago, it feels that fresh. [whispers:] “Oh so sorry for you. You seem like a nice person. I enjoyed that other business we looked at like Hip Hop and then the Slave story, I'm a little clearer on. But we know. You all create the crime”...I don't even know how much more he said. I never even heard anything else after that until a minute later I came into consciousness and I said, "It's just not true." (Interview, 10/29/2014, emphasis theirs)

I cannot say for certain that she would not have shared this story in this way with me had I not been perceived as a racial insider who might also benefit from hearing about her experience. However, I believe this to be true, considering the warmth with which she greeted me, welcomed me into her home, and was willing to peel back the layers in service of my larger project and what she anticipated I might face in pursuing this kind of work in higher education spaces.

My fieldnotes, and in particular, my research journal were great use in these circumstances to document the moments of unique or interested engagement, and to articulate the forms they took as well as my personal reaction and response to them. Kemmis (2005, 2010) refers to this as reflection-in-action or “knowing doing,” processes through which critical investigation of the research process takes places alongside completion of the project itself.

Similarly, Glazer (1980) advocates for attempts to maintain some analytical distance—“A researcher must become deeply involved with his material and allow it to absorb him while remaining emotionally vital enough to step back and perceive the contours of the data. It is a rigorous affective exercise demanding emotional reserves and critical perceptiveness” (p. 29). Documenting these experiences enhanced my awareness of my reactions, sensations, and thoughts about the research experience without letting them have undue effect—in part—by remaining below conscious perception (Purnell, 2002). This self-reflective work can be thought of as part of my study’s ethical orientation, which requires the documentation not only of the external world but also my interaction with and internal response to it (Benson & Thomas, 2010).

Reliability

Reliability, particularly in qualitative research, is both a methodological and a moral concern that researchers reflect by attending to the trustworthiness and consistency of their data and analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe four criteria for trustworthiness—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability—as well as techniques through which researchers can satisfy these criteria.⁵³ In addition, preliminary field work or “reconnaissance” research enhanced my understanding of the complex contexts I was entering and heighten my awareness of contextual information, language and local lived experience, which informed my rapport and relationship building and data collection efforts

⁵³ In addition, Morrow (2005) offers “consequential validity” as a criterion of trustworthiness related to critical research. By this she means, the research’s potential to have social and political impact by making change in the area(s) researched. Similarly, Lather (1994) offers “transgressive validity,” in which the research contributions to critical reflexivity about the research process and approach. I aim for both types of trustworthiness in this study—both in terms of changing institutional practice related to organizational change on behalf of marginalized college students as well as in the ways scholars approach the study of organizational decision-making and action. However, whether either have been or will be attained as a result of this work is a matter for future consideration.

(Benson & Thomas, 2010; Caine et al., 2009). While this may best be achieved through extended interaction within institutional contexts (Benson & Thomas, 2010), all attempts to gain and enrich my “contextually appropriate knowledge” were invaluable (Caine et al., 2009, p. 495). Caine et al. (2009) further argue that this preliminary work is fundamental to the development of intuition—an element of methodology—that emerges from an attitude of openness that facilitates perception of and response to moments that “require leaps of faith early on in the field” (p. 504).

Following Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) recommendations, I attended to trustworthiness in several ways, including through triangulation, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement, and member-checking. My study findings draw on data from multiple sources, which will allowed me to triangulate themes and findings, noting whether and how they were reflected across data sources and respondents. I engaged in peer review, soliciting feedback on data collection, analytic processes, and conclusions from colleagues, including my dissertation committee, as well as others who are veteran researchers and/or those engaged in diversity and institutional research.⁵⁴ In addition, I produced thick descriptions of each case that allow readers to track, contextualize and engage with my findings, including the documentation of disconfirming evidence. Although not meant to be generalizable in the ways in which the concept is typically conceived, my study and its findings are transferrable. That is, I have documented procedures and produced findings that make practical and theory-based contributions to the field and that can be used to enhance institutional practice and change efforts (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2000).

Member-checking is another technique researchers typically employ to establish trustworthiness. These procedures often offer participants the opportunity to engage with and respond to the ways in which what they shared has been recreated and/or interpreted (Lincoln &

⁵⁴ No identifiable study data was shared beyond my dissertation committee.

Guba, 1985), I employed these procedures conservatively and as part of data collection rather than formal analysis. Given the theoretical inclinations of my project, it is unlikely that member-checking elements of my analysis would have been particularly fruitful. Instead, as Josselson (2013) writes, I assumed "interpretive authority" for my analyses, by which I mean to signal that:

the interpretations of the material are products of the researcher, who will take care in the report to document the conceptualization and to anchor it in the narrative material selected to create the argument the researcher wishes to make. The participant has no privileged point of view. The analysis is of the interview material, not of the participant. (Josselson, 2013, p. 179)

Therefore, as I proceeded through analysis, interpretation, and writing, I attempted to pursue and present findings that felt "right" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). That is, those that emerged from my own reflective analysis and that represented my perspective on and interpretation of respondents' comments, intents, and meanings (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

During data collection however, member checking was an iterative process in which during each interview, I used benign probes to clarify questions and confirm and revisit my understandings of what a respondent had shared (Benson & Thomas, 2010). Similarly, I carried data across collection formats (e.g. interviews, archives), using interviews as opportunities to cross-check what I may have learned in another format or to confirm, expand or challenge what I may have learned in another interview. Both strategies are examples of what Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to as "communicative validity," through which a researcher examines her assumptions and claims about the data being gather in conversation with others, including respondents (p. 269). In the latter case, rather than eradicating my initial interpretation(s), any discrepancies became part of the analytic material. Hopefully, being intentional with my

member-checking procedures and goals made this a less fraught process as it also recognized the importance of meaning, interpretation, and language in a project of this sort (Carlson, 2010; Sandelowski, 1993).

Finally, as I demonstrate in “Positionality,” my own “reflexive objectivity”—that is, reflection about my own impact on the study as a particular individual and a particular kind of researcher, conducting a study of my own design—is also an important elements of this project’s trustworthiness (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 242). I agree with Harry, Sturges, and Klingner (2005) who argue that researcher subjectivity inevitably influences the research process and outcomes:

It would be naive to think that preconceived beliefs and perspectives will not be brought to bear on the data. However, researcher reflexivity works hand-in-hand with the iterative nature of the research to bring preconceived beliefs into the dialogue, rather than seeking to omit or ignore them. (Harry et al., 2005, p. 7).

As such, throughout the study, I have acknowledged the ways in which my interpretations are partial, as any would be, and was (and continue to be) reflexive about my perspective and process through the implementation of this research project. This reflection took place in my fieldnotes and research journal as well as in conversation with confidantes and other experienced researchers.

In the next chapters, I begin to share the fruit of all of this methodological and analytic labor. Part Two, “Scaffolding Equity,” presents my findings regarding the development and implementation of EFA on each campus, and the extent to which this processes helped the campus enhance equity on campus. In Part Three, “Acting from One’s Place,” I introduce a broadened perspective to examine the ways in which institutional identity, pressures, and

concerns were part of the context in which EFA implementation took place on each campus, and how this varied across campuses—that is, by institutional status.

PART TWO

SCAFFOLDING EQUITY

In Part Two of this dissertation, I situate discussion of each campus's progress in interpreting and implementing *Excellence for All* within a framework I refer to as "Scaffolding Equity." Generally, I mean this framework to attend to the foundation and structural supports that each campus established for policy implementation—that is, the key concerns, processes and tensions that guided policy activities and how these prepared—or not—each institution to implement EFA. In short, "Scaffolding Equity" addresses how well each campus prepared for and approached implementation of EFA as an organizational change meant to enhance racial equity on campus.

In Pursuit of a Model

In an effort to specify the criteria on which I would make determinations about "how well," I looked to the literature for models of ways to assess progress toward equity in policy and practice. I conducted a range of literature searches based on different combinations of the following terms: equity, scaffold(ing), assess(ing), examin(ing), institutional, organizational, change, infrastructure, (higher) education. Perhaps not to my surprise, but to my chagrin, I found no succinct reference that could serve as a guiding framework to assess institutional practice under a specific equity-focused reform. However, I did locate a handful of references that pointed to disparate features of relevance to this inquiry and one more encompassing organizational model that outlined a set of strategies the authors refer to as "equity by design" (Witham et al, 2015).

Drawing on these references as well as my own findings from data analysis, I employed the criteria below in my assessment of each campus's progress with EFA. Below, I identify the relevant criteria and sources that I employed to evaluate these organizational change efforts:

- Commitment to making change (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993);⁵⁵
- Explicit attention to racial equity in problem conceptualization and in solution development (Weissglass, 2000; Witham, Malcom-Piqueux, Dowd, & Bensimon, 2015);
- Acceptance of institutional responsibility (Witham et al., 2015);
- Equity-focused vision for success, including rejection of the status quo, articulation of definition of success and a guiding philosophy for change (Murphy, 1993; Weissglass, 2000; Witham et al., 2015);
- Equity infrastructure, including institutional supports, designated leadership, leadership support, committed resources, strategies and targeted initiatives (Deem & Ozga, 1997; Murphy, 1993; Stewart & Drakich, 1995; Weissglass, 2000; Witham et al., 2015);
- Equity-focused changed initiatives, including policies, programs and other targeted projects (Deem & Ozga, 1997; Stewart & Drakich, 1995);
- Evidence-based, use of documented and other best practices and evaluation of progress toward desired outcome(s) (Witham et al., 2015);
- Existence of equity champions (Ahmed, 2007; Witham et al., 2015); and
- Attention to capacity development (Weissglass, 2000).

In the remainder of this section, I offer summaries of *Excellence for All* implementation at Ashby University, Bradford University, and Clearfield College, guided the by research

⁵⁵ Armenakis et al. (1993) discuss an organization's "readiness" for change, which includes awareness of a discrepancy between the current state of affairs and an imagined ideal as well as the belief in the purported change agents' potential efficacy in bridging the gap.

question for this inquiry: How have three campuses of varying status interpreted, developed and implemented *Excellence for All*, a statewide equity focused change effort? What influenced decision-making and activity related to *Excellence for All* on each campus? Each summary begins with a brief synopsis of each campus's success in scaffolding equity, and each chapter is organized into three parts—Interpretation, Implementation, and Influences—that provide an overview of the way in which EFA was translated on each campus, how the campuses brought the policy to life, and, finally, what shaped implementation at each institution.

Note: Continuing the procedures used elsewhere in this dissertation, data excerpts are edited for clarity as well as to protect the anonymity of individuals, campuses, policies and the higher education system in which they are embedded. In these excerpts, “...” indicates respondents' pauses and “—” indicates a truncation of respondent stuttering, restarts, and verbal missteps.

Chapter 4

Scaffolding Equity: Ashby University

No Equity Scaffold

Ashby University issued a press release in late 2009, stating that Excellence for All would be the “bedrock” of a diversity plan it would develop in the following year (ARC_A004). The then-senior diversity officer asserted, “The [System] and indeed [our president] have challenged us to create a campus-wide movement that makes issues of diversity a part of everything that we do” (ARC_A004). Yet, Ashby never implemented Excellence for All. Instead, four years later—under a new senior diversity officer—Ashby embarked on a two-and-a-half year process to create its own diversity philosophy and recommendations. After 4 years of what one respondent referred to as a “holding pattern” (ADV01) and another 2 ½ years of talking and planning, Ashby did eventually enact its own diversity process but its timeline trailed other System institutions by more than five years—with any activity beyond planning yet to take place.

The new diversity philosophy centered a broad definition of diversity that is described in the philosophy’s guiding document, confusingly, as “individual differences in personality, learning styles; life experiences; and group or social differences that may manifest through personality, learning styles, life experiences, and group or social differences” (A_ID006, p. 17). Alongside only strategic use of Excellence for All language in the diversity philosophy, the attention paid to “excellence” and positioning Ashby as a “model public university” suggests that equity, generally, and the pursuit, specifically, of equitable outcomes for racially and ethnically marginalized students, were not central features of this effort even as some individuals on campus were wholly motivated by this concern (A_ID006, p. 8). And while it is impossible to

say what changes may still emerge from this elongated planning arc and methodical campus input process through which the entire campus weighed in on future diversity efforts, analyses reveal that the protracted and public process was more of a rhetorical engagement with EFA than one that would generate institutional change in the name of racial equity.

Interpretation

An Aspirational Model

On a campus that was largely devoid of reference and commitment to *Excellence for All* at the institutional level, one might be surprised that EFA is an anchor in the title of the alternative diversity model that was developed on campus. That reflected to a large extent the campus's preoccupation with excellence as well as its relationship with the National Education Consortium that developed EFA. Setting aside the reality that the EFA was the diversity model being touted across the System, the guiding principles and aspirations of EFA were imported at Ashby because the EFA was "held up as the pinnacle of what institutions should be doing...*the* national model for doing this [diversity work] and doing it well" (ADV01, emphasis theirs).

In addition to not being "a homegrown thing," EFA was seen as different from previous diversity plans in the state, which were usually comprised of a "series of mandates" that institutions were expected to meet (ADV01). Instead, EFA was an idealized model that took a longer view: "Under EFA, there's no destination. There is no preset destination. It takes into account that this is ongoing continual work that will likely not end until some racial utopia's achieved" (ADV01). As a guide for this continual work, EFA was "an aspiration, a declaration of what's important. It's not an arrival destination" (ASA01), and it would help those on campus reflect on values, how to actualize them, who would actualize them, identify needs, and evaluate efforts that "breathe life" into the campus's diversity work (AED01).

The Value of Diversity

EFA purportedly offered a range of ways to validate what was framed as the inherent value of diversity: “[EFA] lays out the various rationales for why diversity is important...like the economic business model kind of plan...the social justice rationale, and the educational rationale” (ADV01). However, Ashby respondents largely emphasized diversity rationales that highlighted its individual and institutional benefits. The educational or economic justification for diversity always came first even if it sometimes led one to the social justice rationale:

[We have], I believe, agreed collectively that...diversity is of value on this campus. From arguments of inquiry and creativity, that diversity is really important...[S]o if we agree that's important, how are we cultivating it? How are we expanding our own horizons on how we can make a wide variety of groups successful? (AAA02)

If diversity was accepted as a campus value, then it required efforts that supported the maintenance of a diverse collective.

Further, the individual and the institutional were often intertwined because there were consequences for not offering students opportunities to engage with diversity—for Ashby’s predominantly White student body that might be known for “technical excellence” but not for what could be called intercultural excellence, and for the campus, which would gain a reputation for producing students who lacked this preparation (ASA01). The staff person argued that unhappy stakeholders—from students to the potential employers of those students were—

part of what put some momentum behind [EFA at Ashby]. Now lots of folks can flap their lips to speak EFA but for those who have passion around rollin’ it forward, we can rock this. They can still ignore us, but, hey, there are consequences if we don’t. And not

consequences for me personally...but down the road a piece it's all gonna come out in the wash. (ASA01)

While most diversity work at Ashby was carried on without explicit attention to EFA, there was a way the philosophy could help the campus approach several of its problems.

Broadening diversity. EFA's definition of diversity—as interpreted at Ashby—was the full range of human difference. The guiding document that accompanies Ashby's Diversity Plan “acknowledges areas of individual difference in personality; learning styles; life experiences; and group or social differences that may manifest through personality, learning styles, life experiences, and group or social differences” (A_ID006, p. 17). Categories more commonly recognized as part of diversity efforts were given secondary importance in Ashby's definition of diversity, which “also incorporates differences of race and ethnicity; sex; gender, and gender identity or expression; age, sexual orientation; country of origin; language; disability; emotional health; socio-economic status; and affiliations that are based on cultural, political, religious, or other identities” (A_ID006, p. 17). This set the diversity work on campus in a different context and meant that exclusive—or even primary—focus on race and ethnicity was a thing of the past.

Many saw this expanded notion of diversity as an important and practical expansion because it included more people in Ashby's “all” and brought increased legitimacy to diversity efforts:

There's a broader, more inclusive definition of diversity, so that we're not focused mainly or primarily on race and ethnicity. We recognize the importance of difference across the human condition. And I think that has resulted in a greater awareness and support for these efforts of inclusion and equity. Because—as one person, who works in the—[Ashby

Diversity Plan] Committee, said “Diversity isn't something we are doing for ‘those’ people; it's something we're doing for “us.” For all of us. (AED03)

Some welcomed the “all of us” frame because including other marginalized populations that were excluded in a race and ethnicity framing of diversity signed a commitment to “making sure everyone has the opportunity to be successful here regardless of where you come from” (AED04). It was also deemed valuable because Ashby’s White students could potentially see themselves in the “us” of diversity work (AED04).

Expanding the definition of diversity had implications for the perceived success of diversity work at Ashby. On one hand, it might be harder to deem diversity efforts successful because that would mean helping more groups on campus. On the other hand, it might mask challenges the campus faced with particular groups. For example, it wasn’t clear what the expanded definition of diversity would mean for the campus’s attention to the disparities faced by marginalized populations on campus:

Are we watering down our efforts to speak directly to specific issues that might need to be prioritized on campus? And that’s my problem with EFA. When it was introduced at [my previous institution], we were having the same issue that a lot of campuses have: the retention of students of color. We haven’t even fixed this issue and now we are broadening our gaze and our attention...[I]t almost seemed like a cop-out. It was almost like so now when we point to how many women we have on campus, we can say we were successful but you didn’t fix this issue. Or it was almost like if we can’t say we are successful here, let’s throw a lot of stuff out there and by god, we are going to be successful at one of these things. And it just really really bothered me because our issue

at that time was retaining students of color, I was like where is our attention going to be diverted now? (AMC02)

Rather than an expansion, the EFA's diversity might represent an evasion that allowed Ashby to claim success for the other populations now included in Ashby's notion of diversity even as the issues related to race remained unchanged or were pushed into the background.

Redefining excellence. A concern with excellence was palpable at Ashby where a redefinition of this essential term meant developing new ways to think about individual and institutional success. First, current assumptions built into the meaning of excellence at Ashby centered more traditional outcome measures that excluded some students from academic opportunities. For example, some of Ashby's honors programs required a minimum GPA but students with lower GPAs, if given a chance, might improve both their skills and their GPAs by participating in these programs. One administrator lamented that "if we automatically shut them out of the door because they have a 3.5 and they don't have a 3.7, that's like the game is rigged" (AED02).

Another staff person suggested that Ashby's approach to excellence actually reflected a deficit orientation that assumed that only struggling students needed academic supports. Instead, he said, his office worked under an "excellence model," which meant they offered academic support "but you don't have to be flunking a course to get it" (AED04). Such a preventative approach was referred to elsewhere at Ashby as "going upstream" (FN, 10212014). Upstreaming is elucidated by the parable of a fisherman who—after repeatedly saving babies that came floating down river in baskets—decides to go upstream to "see who keeps throwing babies in the river" (FN, 10212014). Rather than a focus on triage, up-streaming leads one to anticipate and interrupt potential challenges (FN, 10212014).

Beyond reimagining excellence for students, EFA promoted a relationship between diversity and excellence that centered the university itself, changing what it means for an campus to be excellent. EFA pushed for more than success on standard metrics:

[EFA] seeks to ensure that diversity becomes...part of the institution's definition of what excellence is. Sounds really redundant, but I think when we talk about excellence at [Ashby], we talk about excellence in terms of our research, our faculty productivity, the placement of our students. (ADV01).

Instead, EFA encouraged that diversity be seen as integral to excellence for Ashby as a higher education institution. That is, “we can’t be excellent if we are failing so bad [sic] at diversity” (ADV01). Under EFA, if a campus isn’t diverse or doesn’t handle diversity well, it isn’t excellent. In addition, by linking inclusivity, diversity and excellence, EFA challenged a commonly held conception that those terms were at odds. One staff person described EFA as a “nice way of saying that inclusivity is about excellence. It’s not separate from excellence,” she said, “that means that we have to define excellence in a different way than just who do we admit and who do we graduate and how much money do they make” (AAA03).

A senior administrator also challenged the deficit orientation to diversity by returning to the educational rationale for diversity:

the idea that diversity and inclusion somehow waters [sic] down the intellectual rigor or academic rigor of the institution. That's a farce. That's absolutely not true...It is the intellectual inquiry that drives the enterprise, and that is the excellence. To ensure that we are inclusive in that process, you know, the way you may approach something may be very different from the way I approach it and that other people may be approaching it, so

we're valuing the different experiences and expertise that we all bring to the table.

(AED02)

He continued that shifting the understanding of how diversity relates to and contributes to the academic endeavor was the “epitome of [EFA],” and, if achieved, would “change the way we think about our enterprise” (AED02). Others echoed his challenge and lamented that the concept was assumed to be separate from—and in competition with—excellence:

So you do diversity over here and then educational excellence and quality is over here and there's a zero-sum kind of framing. So the more time we're putting over here, the more time we're taking away and undermining educational excellence. By bringing them together and saying the diversity agenda is foundational for educational excellence...is the big difference [with EFA]. (ASA01)

Thus, EFA was an “overall theme that looks for quality...in the student population” because getting better at being inclusive is equated with being more excellent because inclusion of diversity itself implies quality” (AEM01). This understanding of a new kind of excellence was grounded in belief that having the full range of human diversity included in an educational environment could “be brought to the service of learning” (AED03).

Ineffective Rhetoric with Potential

Ashby respondents generally had a negative impression of the rhetoric attached to EFA, including the very phrase itself. The few positive reactions to “EFA” emphasized its simplicity— “[It] is really easy to understand. It's not written in academese. It's not some crazy esoteric thing” (ADV01). In addition, EFA suggested that one was required to engage not because one was a “minority” but because everyone was expected to do EFA simply because “you walk in the world with other human beings” (AED01). Finally, EFA was appealing for its aspirational

quality because “[i]t might be getting close to the large-d diversity...[which is like] large-d democratic. It's a stand-in term for something that people think is a really great thing. And it has no real meaning but it's a feel-good term” (ADV01).

EFA could be seen as straightforward but that was perhaps what made it complicated: “It’s so simple, it’s hard,” one respondent offered, referring to the struggle that people had with the rhetoric (AED02). In some cases, respondents were confused about just what “Excellence for All” means. Others assumed that it was another buzzword that was likely to float out of fashion. One faculty member and administrator noted that he preferred to use “achievement gap” to refer to disparities experienced by equally qualified “underrepresented minorities” relative to their White counterparts but he wasn’t sure if that’s exactly what EFA meant (AAA02). Another administrator said that he had heard the term in the previous year or two but “I’ve never heard it defined in a particular way” even though “I’ve used it, and I’ve heard people use it” (AEM01). A staff member was surprised that the term was featured in the campus’s new diversity plan because “multiculturalism” seemed to be more prevalent at Ashby compared to other schools she was familiar with (AMC02).

Others were more frustrated with what they interpreted as EFA’s empty language and were reluctant or even refused to use the words. One administrator who was “not a fan” said the rhetoric of EFA made her want to “go up a tree” because it was an obfuscation that helped people shirk responsibility for the work that needs to be done:

I’m about the work...Do you put your money where your mouth is? Do your actions speak louder than your words?...It’s how you make people feel that’s most important and...how are we doing that? So if that’s under the framework of [EFA], great. But...[it] sounds like one of those neon signs that you like...directionally point to. It’s over there as

opposed to it's right here. And I think it has to live here...and there...and there as opposed to it's over there. (ASA03)

Instead, she suggested, be “overt,” “succinct,” “be real and talk from the heart,” by saying that Ashby is “a place where everyone thrives. I’d get much more behind that than EFA...because in the case of everybody thrives, you can see yourself there” (ASA03).

Engaging EFA

There were a number of interpretations of what EFA might require but respondents agreed on some general outlines. Specifically, EFA at Ashby would need to be a collective and intentional effort based on shared responsibility and understanding—one guided by dialogue and that inevitably leads to cultural change. One of the first steps was inquiry and reflection for individuals and the campus as a whole. Campus staff and faculty would need to think broadly about their work with students and move from a narrow concern about their own domains to seeing their work as part of a larger institutional project:

We have to start thinking about guiding principles for access for students, how to promote high quality learning rather than going about your daily teaching curriculum...or daily approaches to just skim by and get your work done. How do I change the way I create opportunities in the classroom for everybody's voices to be heard? How do I create equity...critical thinking...in my classroom, in my lab when I run a lab and I’m worried about grant dollars? How do I create opportunities for all student voices to be heard—to have high quality liberal minded thinking both in the classroom and in my research lab...How am I gonna create that space? (ADV02).

In many cases, this inquiry was perceived of as the result of or precursor to dialogue about what the campus community needs more of—its goals, challenges, successes, limitations: “You really

have to have those conversations. We say ‘EFA, what does that conjure up for you?...Let's hear it. When EFA is present in the classroom, what does that look like? Let's hear it’” (AED01).

The time and space to engage in such reflection needed to be created institutionally rather than expecting individuals to find isolated moments on their own:

we have to be savvy and sensitive to the issue in order to think about how to embrace it...People go about their daily work sometimes and don't necessarily think about what they need to do to make change. I think unless you force people into a conversation or at least create opportunities for conversation, it's hard for them to step forward and take responsibility. (ADV02)

Thus, EFA wasn't something that people learned on their own; they needed institutional guidance and support to be “creative and mindful about how to move forward and build that practice organically...I think people need to be given time and space to do that. There have to be more conversations about it”—honest conversation that also acknowledges the constraints of institutional realities (ADV01).

This inquiry and conversation could create another of EFA's central requirements—a collective sense of shared responsibility for EFA's success. Rather than leaving EFA to people defined as experts—often members of marginalized groups—EFA's principles were for everyone. By individualizing a shared responsibility, EFA guided each person on campus to act within their own locus of control “[n]o matter who you are and where situated” (AED01). No one could assume that someone else was taking care of it because then it became:

Some person's responsibility that nobody...really takes responsibility for. I think we need to stop saying it's somebody's. Instead, it's my responsibility and we own it. And we

can't say it's *our* responsibility...[W]e *have* to be very specific...It's your responsibility.

It's my responsibility. We all have a role. (ASA03, emphasis theirs)

This individualization would help make EFA integral to institutional practice, not something supplemental or extra. As one administrator said, the work required is “just part of the whole package. It's hard to separate it out, saying now I have to pay special attention to this or this. It's just part of the whole thing” (AAA02). Rather than being something the campus did, respondents believed that EFA was meant to be something that Ashby *was*, a central feature of its institutional identity. By saying, “This is how we are here on this campus,” EFA would be a living embodiment of institutional values that are “claim[ed] in advance” (AED01). These two pieces—working from individual to institution and from institution to individual—“coming together is revolutionary” for Ashby’s efforts to embrace EFA (AED01).

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the effort to live up to EFA principles includes environmental change aimed at “creating [an] inclusive and equitable environment where those words [EFA] become the core principles that are embedded in the way everybody treats one another” (ADV02). Talk would not be enough. EFA-driven change efforts at Ashby would also need to dismantle systems that “block access” for some (AED01). Some on campus—typically those tasked with the support and success of students from marginalized populations—were already engaged in this work but these isolated places were far from common at Ashby:

They're bringing in students who...this place was not constructed to serve and trying to keep them in the mix long enough that we can help to transform [Ashby] so it's more a place that is for all of us. It's our house. But right now it ain't our house. There are little huts, but it ain't sufficient to stay with just the huts...But we need the huts 'cause we ain't gonna have nobody here if we don't have them huts where people can go get rejuvenated,

bandaged up, but not bandaged up to send them out to get beat down again. So we got to transform this place. (ASA01)

EFA highlighted the necessary culture change that could help make Ashby a place where all could be successful. But to “create group and social dynamics that embrace differences—race and ethnicity and class and gender and religion and sexual orientation and political affiliation, etc.—we need to intentionally engage with that work” (ADV02). Rather than hoping for transformation through “osmosis”—in which “just having diverse folks together” is enough to generate change—capacity building and cultural change must be “deliberate” and grounded in institutional values (ASA01).

Defining Success

Despite these understandings of EFA, respondents generally had very little to say about their aspirations for EFA but one respondent was clear about the desire to see EFA’s rhetoric transformed into consistent action and reflected in values and actions at the leadership level.

These elements would communicate that “this is central to our values” and demonstrate:

how [EFA]’s a horizontal kind of thing, throughout campus, available to people to seek out if they need to. Very clearly saying that we support this in x, y, z: money-wise, resource-wise, people-wise, commitment-wise, accountability-wise. All of that detail. Not just, “We just do it.” How? How do you do it? That would make me feel like they’re serious about it. (AED01)

With this level of integration, Ashby would have moved beyond mere rhetoric in support of EFA to indications that the policy and philosophy are actually alive on the campus.

Implementation

Despite having “a lot of the right rhetoric and...quite a bit of action along those lines” and the external pressure to produce graduates who can navigate a diverse world, Ashby was the only System campus not to embrace EFA as its campus diversity plan (ASA01). As a result the policy did not have much visibility on campus. In fact, for at least one respondent, EFA was a thing of the past: it was something that *had* happened and that *had* been talked about “maybe two or three years ago” (AAA03). Linked to the previous senior diversity administrator, some assumed EFA left when he left the institution, and there was nothing left to show for it because “there was not necessarily anything that was put into place that I can say, like, ‘This is the driver for EFA’” (ASA02).

Although relatively limited, the familiarity with EFA at the individual level indicated awareness of EFA at the policy level, what was more challenging to discern was EFA influenced practice on-the-ground at Ashby. Slim, non-specific references to curricular changes, priorities of campus leadership, and activities in particular units or departments indicated that there is little to EFA at the institutional level beyond referential inclusion in the emergent Ashby Diversity Plan. For example, when asked about evidence of EFA on campus, one respondent noted the presence of EFA in the curriculum of “some faculty in some of the schools” (ADV02). And that “some of the leadership on campus...embraces the terms and the philosophy and tries to enact them on a daily basis”—as in the Office of Diversity—but that “it’s lacking in some other places” (ADV02). Several in the Office of Diversity also offered that the reflection circles facilitated by some of its staff were helping different units discover how EFA principles could and should live in their work. Beyond this, one respondent noted that he has heard of EFA but “haven’t heard that talked about...much recently” (AAA03), and another offered, “[I]n terms of a formal

project...called EFA and its goals, I'm not aware of that specifically...I'm sure it is here, but I don't know it by name" (AEM01).

Another respondent shared that "[I]ots of large units are thinking about how to bring life into the idea [of EFA] to make Ashby a place that is truly inclusive for all stakeholders" (AED01). This included the administrator of a large non-academic unit who produced a toolkit to accompany an inclusion initiative he launched. He hoped that attending to inclusion and "people diversity" across all human difference and levels would increase his unit's employee engagement (enthusiasm, commitment) and its ability to "capitalize on the strengths and talents of all staff" (A_ID043, p.4). The administrator was mentioned by several for his commitment to and plan for EFA; however, the toolkit exclusively attends to the educational and business cases for diversity and makes no mention of "Excellence for All."

Ashby Diversity Plan. The Ashby Diversity Plan (ADP) appeared to be the only institution-wide work inspired by EFA, which served as a guiding philosophy for the developing diversity process. According to respondents, Ashby's development and implementation of the Ashby Diversity Plan (ADP) could be seen as one way to help the campus realize some of EFA's aspirations by "holding [EFA], centering, grounding, working on it" (AED01). However, the ADP wasn't meant to be an EFA plan. In fact, ADP and EFA are seen as quite separate efforts with the former being Ashby's approach and the latter the approach of the System administration and every other public campus in the state. For this reason, one student affairs administrator suggested that the [ADP] "can be related to EFA" even though it wasn't directly and intentionally linked to it (AED04).

Beyond the plan's title and occasional reference to EFA in the plan, the most significant influence that EFA had on the ADP, it seems, was on the understanding of diversity used in the document:

[EFA] is really the definition of diversity that was used by the [ADP] committee with that broader approach to how do we make this place really inclusive, how do we create a campus climate [that] recognizes and celebrates and respects these areas of difference? (AED03)

That ADP's "focus is not just on race and ethnicity" (AED03), however, is mentioned more frequently as a difference from other diversity plans than as a similarity to EFA. In fact, EFA's presence may indicate little more than the perseverance of one Diversity Plan Committee member who admitted to advocating forcefully for its inclusion in the ADP. He said, "I'm going to say something that sounds really haughty but I wrote three quarters of the [plan] and it is as close to using [EFA] as I could get it, while still taking the weird bits and pieces and blobs of crap that people spewed out" (ADV01).

Success for All Students Program. There was only one effort on campus that drew explicitly on EFA to spur changes that could have an influence any part of campus. This unique space, the Success for All Students Program (SASP), was designed around "using assessment and evaluation as a resource for living into and creating and supporting more authentically inclusive and responsive teaching, learning, living, and working environments that are conducive to success for all" (ASA01). The program's creator wanted SASP to be a "community of practice" where undergraduate and graduate students would work with staff, faculty and administrators to develop student success-related projects "in the service of innovation and...capacity building for the intervener and the intervention itself" (ASA01). SASP was one of

the few—if not the only—formal efforts at Ashby that helped individuals live out EFA principles in whatever “circle of concern” in which they had influence on campus (ASA01). Believing in “the power of one,” SASP’s creator wanted to “facilitate and try to create the conditions for empowerment,” through which any one person—regardless of their position in the institution—could learn to “discern” and “interrupt” the structures and practices that inhibited student success (ASA01). Through self-reflection and intentional action, she hoped to support the work of those who were “willing to be a carrier of a healthy virus ‘cause viruses don't knock and say ‘Can I come in?’ They just look for ripe terrain” (ASA01).

Examples of the “ripe terrain” the coordinator hoped to inspire were shared at a SASP retreat in Fall 2014. One student presenter introduced retreat participants to changes in the administrative unit where she was a work-study student. The student told a tale of a job in which she had previously just come in and done paperwork, filing—tasks typically associated with student hourly work. However, the unit staff—after being exposed to a different framework and goals through SASP—came to understand that they, too, had a role in student success even though their work did not reach the classroom. In addition to student-workers and staff going through a mini-version of SASP, the unit created a student development model aimed to “make student work in the office more meaningful and collaborative” (FN, 10282014). By living into this model, staff came to see students not merely as cheap labor but “as collaborators and contributors” who could gain key skills and connections but also bring new ideas to the unit (FN, 10282014). An example of the changed relationship between students and staff in the department, the student was the lead presenter for the project’s introduction at the SASP retreat. The collaborating staff member sat to the side, speaking very little as the student walked the group through the presentation. The unit found that its new approach had a positive effect on staff

experience, student development, communication, the office community, and the development of an office culture that said “be who you are [not] be who we are” (FN, 10282014).

While SASP held much potential for change at Ashby, its creator was no longer interested in setting her sights on large-scale institutional change:

I’ve shifted from a focus on...the organizational thing from me directly doing it [to] trying to build the capacity of myself and others to do it...I’m less focused on trying to change, directly change organizational units, and [now I’m] working it through helping folks who are situated in different organizational units to help make that change happen.

(ASA01)

This shift reflected an awareness of where she thought she might have the most influence but also was the result of years of upward struggle in a department and institution that did not fully support her work. Nevertheless, having an institutional umbrella as well as the flexibility to design a program from the bottom-up was an opportunity she ultimately embraced:

I have no dedicated budget but the reality is that my *time* has been freed up to do it. It was hellish to get to here. I used to have to do it more informally. At least I'm able to do it as part of my job. It's coming out of my hide, but at least I'm able to do it as part of my job. (ASA01)

The more people on campus who understood how they could generate changes on students’ behalf, according to ASA01, the less likely the status quo would be to flourish unchallenged. Student failure, she asserted, is “defined as the problem is in the person;” instead, she wanted to focus on what was wrong with the system. And, “I’m not asking permission [to do this work],” she said. “Even if I didn’t have [SASP], I would be doing it, just more informally” (ASA01).

Successes

Given the aspirations for EFA alongside limited implementation of the policy at Ashby, it is not surprising that few respondents highlighted successes related to EFA on campus.

Nevertheless, two respondents identified institutional attributes that could *potentially* support EFA efforts on campus. Primarily, the longevity of diversity work at Ashby was presumed to be enough to keep the concern and activities on the institutional radar:

[Diversity] has been a long commitment so I think that there are folks that are committed to doing this work. I do. And some of it is done because it's coming from within. Some of it is done because folks are lightin' a fire under them beyond this university. These have been political commitments from way back...that have been driven by not only organized student actions but by community actions. Yeah, so I don't think it's been optional whether they [Ashby] can just chill. (ASA01)

According to the ADP's guiding document, "For more than 30 years, [Ashby University] has made issues of diversity, equity and inclusion a high-level priority of institutional life" (A_ID006, p. 5), starting with its expansion under the so-called G.I. Bill following World War II. Having made diversity an explicit campus commitment meant that there were people on campus who were focused on this work, and who had been for some time. As result, Ashby could rely on "some champions [for EFA]...who are doing amazing work" and bring "a lot of intention, a lot of mindfulness" to diversity efforts on campus (AED01). These efforts stood out because "[t]here are a lot of things that are going on [at Ashby] that don't exist in other places. It needs to be a whole lot more but, I mean, I try to acknowledge what is that *ain't* in lot of other places" (ASA01, emphasis theirs).

Ashby's history of diversity work also set an expectation that could encourage individuals on- and off- campus to attend to and push the institution to realize its commitments:

“We've been doing this forever—whether it is ‘diversity’ or... ‘multiculturalism’...[or the] ‘social justice’ component...[We’ve] been doing this for long time. People know that there's at least an expectation” (AED01). This expectation was further spurred by Ashby being seen as a “poster child” for the National Education Consortium, the organization that created EFA: “[I]f you gonna be [a poster child], then people are going to call you on it. In other words, they’re going to say, ‘What you doing? [sic]’” (ASA01). The longevity of diversity work on campus could also generate ripples that would likely stimulate future work. People involved in Ashby’s existing diversity work, across different units on campus, could bring that experience and its related questions back to their home units, spurring inquiry there. As a result, one might be more likely to see some of these diversity elements and concerns make their way into daily practice, like staff meetings, making diversity something that is attended to on a regular basis.

Finally, as noted, the rhetoric of EFA was challenging for many respondents but one respondent believed it might also support EFA on campus. EFA’s rhetoric was useful because it was a System-level value that was taken up, even if in name only, by campuses across the state. Just as a history of engaging diversity issues on campus set an expectation, so, too, did the take-up of the rhetoric of EFA. This was significant because “at least if there's an aspirational declaration...then we can hold up the mirror and say, ‘Okay, this is who we say we are...How we doing? [sic]’” (ASA01). The larger vision set out in the language of EFA could become a metric against which campus members could assess institutional process and hold Ashby accountable to its claims. The rhetoric espoused by the institution could also serve a protective purpose. Rather than merely isolated individuals doing equity focused worked, the EFA rhetoric that had been picked up offered a collective cover:

there is at least rhetoric that says [Ashby is] about [EFA]. Because when I raise it, then it's not easily dismissible because I'm not doing it because [I] said; I'm doing it because that's what we claim we're about. So for me, I appreciate that at least the rhetoric is there. Because then when I'm called to task, "I can say well this is because dada dada." And so they either they got to say, "Well I didn't really mean for you to do it." And they don't want to look like that... So part of what I'm trying to cultivate is the strategic image management in all of us. Know the water you're swimming in, know the rhetoric or the...guiding principles that are claiming who we are and what we're trying to be. (ASA01)

Some individuals pursuing EFA—even in an institution that lacked wide adoption—did so with the confidence of working under a cloak of espoused institutional values: "It gives me a way of saying this is the umbrella under which I'm operating, so back the hell off" (ASA01).

Influences

On a campus with few visible indicators of a institution-level commitment to EFA, the search for influences leads to a mixed bag filled primarily with individual actors and institutional orientations that, on the whole, diminished—rather than amplified—engagement with EFA at Ashby.

National Education Consortium

Although EFA had been offered as a "framework for further diversity work across System" (AED03), one respondent asserted that System "mandated [EFA] for everyone else," seeming to excuse Ashby from this mandate (AED01). More significant for some Ashby respondents was the policy's original source, the National Education Consortium, a national education organization that aims to influence education reform efforts. NEC wrote a number of

papers related to EFA, and has infused EFA throughout its organizational mission and work with educational institutions, resulting in an unprecedented “magnification” of EFA in the NEC and nationally (ASA01). When introduced as an educational approach, EFA was significant because it countered institutions’ tendency to have “siloes diversity initiatives, multicultural initiatives versus educational quality initiatives” (ASA01). EFA brought these together. In addition to the direct influence of NEC itself, the national organization influenced EFA at Ashby through its influence on other institutions’ diversity work. For example, part of the background work to the ADP process was a review of other campuses’ diversity plans, “all of which included to some form or fashion...EFA either as the model by which they created their plan, or, how it was kind of shaped” (ADV01).

Beyond the model it offered, EFA’s connection to a powerful national organization like NEC also gave it validity. The ADP Committee member who advocated most strongly for EFA did so because the policy was well regarded: “I was trying to push the committee into looking at EFA because it is the national model for doing this and doing it well” (AED01). Adopting a policy lauded by the NEC also offered Ashby other benefits, according to one respondent, “[I]n certain circles where they can pontificate about how progressive they are...being kind of the poster child at NEC, that’s a plus...Our state is the poster child, but [Ashby] is the poster child for NEC’s EFA” as well as other higher education reform efforts (ASA01).

Actors

In the absence of a large-scale EFA effort on campus, the policy’s limited visibility at Ashby seemed to reflect the influence of a handful of independent actors who were, for the most part, invested in or connected to EFA. One respondent alluded to the role of the former campus

president whose tenure at Ashby started shortly before EFA's introduction. Although "[w]e're a little late" in moving on EFA, she said, "[I]t's not that we weren't doing anything" between State Diversity Plan II (the state system's second diversity strategic plan) and the Ashby Diversity Plan (AED03). Instead, the diversity activities during those six years reflected the concerns of the president who reportedly said, "Well this is what we're going to do. We're going to focus on underrepresented minority groups, especially [underrepresented minorities] and women in STEM majors. We'll focus on faculty diversification. Let's focus on campus climate, and global competencies" (AED03). With this, the president "laid down what we were supposed to do, and that really became the marching orders for the then [diversity administrator]" (AED03). Rather than intentionally acting against EFA, according to this respondent, the president brought her own set of priorities that led campus efforts until the finalization of the ADP in 2014.

More significant for EFA's progress was the influence of the then-senior diversity officer whose strong presence both facilitated and hindered Ashby's diversity work, according to several respondents. Although other diversity activity took place under the administrator's guidance: faculty diversity programs, an institutional self-study ("the year before [he] left was the first time that this university ever thought to ask people what you're doing about diversity")—EFA did not flourish on his watch (ADV01). One respondent said, "System certainly has taken [EFA] on. Other institutions in the [System], they've embraced it but [Ashby]...we have an interesting relationship with [EFA] given [its connection to the previous diversity officer]" (AED02). Although the reasons are not fully transparent, interpersonal conflict was often used to explain this outcome.

Credited with bringing EFA to Ashby, the administrator was known nationally for his work on diversity in higher education—"[H]e was the guy. *Is* the guy, still"—and his national

promotion of diversity activity at Ashby made the campus seem like “diversity on steroids” (AED02, emphasis theirs). But, despite having written the “bible on diversity,” the administrator was less successful in his work at Ashby than expected:

[W]e never got to the see that thought in action at [Ashby]...and I think some of it was...there were haters. And some of it was just...that he was not a middle-of-the ground kind of person. You either love him or you could care less. (AED02)

Interpersonal conflict inhibited the administrator’s work on several fronts even though his expertise might have been clear. One respondent said, “I don’t think he was ideal for [Ashby]. Somebody of his experience and stature is similar to what we need—He’s written about it. He’s known for it. He’s done it at another similar enough institution” (ADV01). But “he also came in and kicked a few butts, took a few names” (AED02).

In addition, his personality apparently caused conflict; he was perceived as boastful because he was “willing to talk about his accomplishments” but “here at [Ashby], people don’t talk about their accomplishments because everyone’s supposed to be accomplished. That’s the idea” (ADV01). Finally, the former diversity officers apparently lacked credibility because he was not a faculty person—an important credential at Ashby—the absence of which likely “exacerbated the personality issues” (ADV01). As Ashby came to “care less” about the administrator, the “interesting relationship” between the administrator and others at Ashby fueled resistance to EFA. One respondent surmised that even the ADP process, first initiated while the administrator was still at Ashby, “was intentionally set up to fail” due to animus toward the diversity officer (AED02). He said that the diversity officer and other senior administrator “hated one another...and I think this was one of the ways in which the Provost was trying to...gin up

cause to push [the administrator] out” (ADV01). At a virtual stalemate with his superiors, the diversity officer ultimately left Ashby before planning for ADP had really begun.

Resources

A small handful of others played supportive roles that helped keep EFA on the Ashby radar even if not fully realized. For example, whatever limited visibility EFA had at the institutional level at Ashby appears to be tied to the efforts of an ADP Committee member who was familiar with EFA as a national model, and tried “to push the [ADP] committee into looking at [EFA]” (ADV01). As a result, EFA is referenced in the ADP but not in many other places on campus.

Personally driven. Further, there were pockets of EFA commitment at Ashby that reflected the efforts of particular individuals. Two respondents whose motivations for doing EFA were personal led the projects that helped spread EFA values across the campus. Rather than a policy, EFA represented a long-standing life philosophy. As a result, their commitment to it was more intimate, and nonnegotiable. For one who had “believed in [EFA] before I even knew about it,” this personal orientation allowed her to disengage from concerns about authentic commitment to EFA at the institutional level: “I haven’t been tracking [campus efforts] closely anyway, because the EFA mantra is what I do my work...under and has been from way back...I’m glad they’re coming along, but if they don’t, we still got to do this” (ASA01).

Another described her relationship with EFA as having “started early on” (AED01). Knowing that she, her family and the others in their condition had done nothing to deserve the poverty in which she had grown up, she identified the differences between them and the wealthy as the result of injustices that allowed for the protection of some but not others. Through her mother’s teachings, she’d learned “when you see something wrong in your eyes, don’t look at

somebody else, Look at yourself. What is your role in it?...How are you going to be really...making a difference?" (AED01). Given this background, she had been "doing EFA as long as she could remember" (FN, 11032014), and likely would continue to do it no matter where she was: "If I were back on the streets, I'd probably be doing the same...would just be doing what needs to be done, no matter where" (AED01).

Perhaps related to this personal orientation, these two were the only respondents who connected EFA to the experiences of all members of Ashby's campus community. AED01 believed that the principles of EFA could and should apply to everyone on campus such that "there is voice for each and everyone of us." By focusing on equity, rather than on achieving discrete goals, she believed EFA could help Ashby be a place:

where all voices are in the mix. Where people are able to...join this campus community and find that this is not a place of struggle to be seen or heard or believed. That this is also their space and they have a say in their educational experience here and that there is this ongoing assessment, valuation of who is successful here and why and who is not successful here and why. And this goes for students, for staff, for faculty members, for community members...whether you are a grounds staff, whether you're a janitor, whether you're going to be a student, whether you're going to come here as a faculty member, we invite you here. (AED01)

Similarly, ASA01 emphasized the necessary orientation for this work. She said that being "about EFA" means having:

A growth mindset orientation and not [to] be judging solely on presentation of self in the moment. Whether it's students, faculty, staff, or administrators, the question is: who is

this person, what are they bringing as assets and resources, and what are they also bringing that they might need to work on? (ASA01)

Taking such an approach would guide campus members' development by focusing on their potential rather than merely what they had achieved (or not) so far.

Design

There was no shared interpretation of who was the focus of EFA efforts—Is it everyone in campus community from facilities staff to faculty? All students? Or particular students whose success and outcomes have lagged historically? Given its potentially broad applicability, respondents largely believed that EFA was concerned with all *students*, aiming to “create an opportunity...for all students to thrive not just *survive*” (ASA03, emphasis theirs). This starts with asking, as one administrator shared, “Are we offering a path to success for all types of students regardless of their background—their race, their gender, sexual preference, whatever—is this a place where *all* groups could succeed?” (AAA02, emphasis theirs).

Openness of opportunity could be seen as central to Ashby's work as a college campus—to not prejudice, to develop students rather than weed them out based on what they can do today. Instead, embracing students from their starting point required what a staff member called a “talent development orientation,” which is:

foundational to [EFA]...as opposed to just a talent search orientation, which is sort and sift and find the best. So it's...prospecting for diamonds...Talent development is prospecting for diamond potential. And it's not saying one is right or wrong; it's saying as an educational institution our primary driver ought to be talent development. (ASA01)

To effectively support all students, Ashby would need, this staff person believed, to learn who it could support as a campus and to become adept at identifying the diamonds-in-the-rough who could thrive in the kind of educational atmosphere that Ashby offers.

Challenges

Even with a long history of diversity-related commitment, activity and expectations, EFA work at Ashby faced a number of challenges related both to the campus itself and to the policy. In addition to the influence of individual actors and resistance to the rhetoric of EFA, a perceived lack of institutional commitment coupled with Ashby's institutional independence from the System presented challenges to EFA implementation on the campus.

Individual actors. As discussed above, EFA may have been subject to outright resistance because of its connection to a former diversity administrator. According to respondents, the campus's "interesting relationship" with the administrator who helped push EFA onto the back burner on a campus already disinclined to follow System's lead (AED02).

Racialized rhetoric. EFA's rhetoric garnered resistance because it was "a loaded term" that "gets misinterpreted" (AED02). In particular, EFA's relationship with race was problematic for some. A staff member shared that she "never really embraced the term and I wouldn't use it" because EFA's "general approach to diversity" seemed like an evasion that papered over the challenges that marginalized populations continued to face on campus (AMC02). Conversely, for others EFA drew troublesome attention to race on campus. One poorly handled incident revealed how easily the term could be "misconstrued" and become "controversial" (AED02). A senior administrator noted that EFA's assertion that marginalized students should be represented in all areas and opportunities to the same extent that they are represented in the general population led to claims that:

representational equity was basically saying that we're supposed to give or are requiring faculty to give grades based on race. So we have to have a certain percentage of grades for Blacks. So to a lay person, if you hear “representational equity”...you can make a logical assumption that “Oh they about [sic] to start giving out grades based on race.”

And people ran with it--that's the thing that surprised me—people ran with it. (AED02)

People running with it motivated some on campus to pull away from EFA because “when you put out concepts that can be easily misinterpreted you're just adding fodder out there” (AED02). This was true, in particular, the administrator said, “[w]hen you have people out there who are actively looking to gut or pull the teeth out of any robust diversity infrastructure, you know, our lawyers, they're risk averse...And so they have to take care of the institution” (AED02). Still, he regretted the retreat, seeing the controversy as an opportunity to educate and debunk but self-protection prevailed.

Stuck on rhetoric. There was a sense that Ashby hadn't acted on EFA because it lacked commitment to the philosophy. Several respondents had a difficult time identifying work related to EFA at Ashby, and some, remembering hearing about it in the past, assumed that EFA was something of before, not now. And its connection to current diversity activity was unclear:

I can really not tell you like what are the specific initiatives that support [EFA]. It's a concept...but...there was not necessarily anything that was put into place that I can say, like, “This is the driver for [EFA].” Basically, I think [EFA] was the...predecessor for this new diversity plan [ADP]. (ASA02)

For others, however, EFA's link to the ADP was even less obvious. After a peak of attention several years prior, EFA appeared to disappear from the institutional diversity scene at Ashby, “I haven't heard that talked about...much recently. It was sort of maybe two or three years ago that

that was sort of ‘the thing.’ And I’m not sure how it fits into the [ADP] that they’ve been working on” (AAA03).

Further, one respondent said, “We have very nice, fancy language. I don’t know if the commitment and the heart is there [on campus]...Look at people who are power holders, stakeholders...I don’t know if people really have paid attention to this” (AED01). Further, the “footprints”—the espoused and enacted commitment—of key leadership appeared to be missing, which was a critical precursor to the campus being able to “breathe life into [EFA]” (AED01). Although ADV02 touted the commitment of leaders from the Office of Diversity, most senior leadership had little to say about EFA. One who did suggested that a goal of the ADP process was to shift responsibility from Office of Diversity leadership to others across campus. He said, “[My department has] a few ideas about stuff that could or should be done but more importantly we need everybody to get involved. So that has taken a while for people to wrap their heads around. It took me awhile to wrap my head around it because—I knew at some point, *I* was going to be the one left holding the bag, right?” (AED02, emphasis theirs).

Institutional independence. Perhaps the biggest impediment to Ashby’s progress with EFA appeared to be the belief that the campus simply didn’t need it. A senior administrator commented, “I think system is doing good things” but said she wasn’t clear that “*any* of the campuses I would say are using the *System* as their template exclusively” (AIL01, emphasis theirs). She said that Ashby “use[s] [another concept] more as our tag line” for inclusion and engagement efforts on campus, and went on to detail Ashby’s unique position:

We are a large enough campus with enough resources and skills among our student services and faculty and diversity groups that—how to say this?—I think we need less outside assistance. And I will also say, we’re sometimes a little bit resistant to outside

assistance because—we have a pretty strong internal culture going here with...a really good group of people and some of the smaller campuses which have fewer internal resources, I think have probably used some of the...System direction a little bit more and it's probably been more helpful to them. (AIL01)

None of my respondents were surprised that Ashby hadn't gone along with System to more fully adopt EFA.

One staff member coyly shared that there was only one System campus that didn't have EFA as its primary campus diversity plan. In explaining why Ashby hasn't gotten more involved, he said, facetiously, "I know it's shocking to learn that we would be special...[but] the reason why we had a separate [Diversity Plan II] is because we're a special flower and we have special and different needs" (ADV01). Nevertheless, he ultimately echoed the president's assertion about Ashby's uniqueness, saying that as an ADP committee member, he:

didn't really pay much attention to what System did, and/or try to look into what they did, because we operate so independently. [System] could get rid of [EFA] tomorrow and it wouldn't change anything here. I think one of the other reasons why we got to do our own thing is because we started doing our own thing before System did. (ADV01)

The separation between diversity work at Ashby and in the System carried over from the earliest formal diversity planning in the state with the campus consistently drafting its own diversity plans (A_ID006)—a history that some assumed put Ashby in a special category

Ashby respondents touted the campus's long history as a leader in the area of diversity and inclusion. When I asked an administrator if Ashby would take on what he had called the "scary" responsibility of attending to inequities on campus, he answered:

I would say we're better than most... We're better than most... The degree to which we gauge success, I mean depends on through which lens you're looking, right? So you could say, "No ain't nothing happening 'cause... our numbers are still the same. The experience still feels somewhat hostile." And yet, I think... shifting philosophies, shifting thought processes, shifting the way we do our business. That kind of culture shift, and transition, that's the hardest kind to make. And that's the space we're actually doing very well in, I think. (AED02)

The committee member who jokingly referred to Ashby as a "special flower" also framed this "better than most" orientation as one of the impediments to Ashby's diversity work: "I would say that all of our missed opportunities and challenges are unique to [Ashby] in so far as we think at [Ashby] we've got it all figured out and so, we don't need to be very intentional in what we are doing" (ADV01).

Conclusion

Despite its much-touted long history of commitment to diversity and diversity practice, Ashby University did not take up *Excellence for All*. Instead, its preference for autonomy and diffuse diversity responsibility alongside concerns about the perception of campus diversity efforts, led the campus to develop its own diversity plan—the Ashby Diversity Plan—which had yet to bear much fruit by the time of my data collection. After a number of years of discussion and planning for the ADP, the biggest signal of a commitment to diversity—though not necessarily the pursuit of racial equity—beyond isolated pockets on campus was a wealth of rhetoric, which served a number of purposes, including the protection of those pushing diversity work in those isolated pockets.

Chapter 5

Scaffolding Equity: Bradford University

Making Its Way Toward Equity

Just after Ashby University issued its 2009 press release, members of Bradford University's Diversity Committee discussed feedback from a recent Excellence for All site visit conducted by the System. According to the meeting minutes, "[Bradford] is in an advanced state in comparison to other [System] campuses. However...we [are] still challenged with the support of historically marginalized students across diverse groups and across climate issues" (ARC_B002).⁵⁶ Given this context, the campus's implementation of Excellence for All was dominated by a relatively shared determination to help students—no matter their background—reach their full potential (B_ID019), to improve outcomes for marginalized students, and to improve overall campus climate. Bradford was also motivated by the experiences that racially marginalized students had on the predominantly White campus, including their experiences of prejudice and bias in the classroom.

Even before my data collection began, Bradford had made significant strides with its Excellence for All efforts, including establishing itself as a campus with an appetite and unique capacity for collaborative change, which resulted in a plethora of Excellence for All activities across campus and some improvement in student outcomes even as concerns about the pace of change surfaced. As one example, Bradford revamped its general education program—moving from conceptualization to implementation of a major restructuring—in less time than it took Ashby to develop its diversity recommendations. Further, Bradford's central use of Excellence

⁵⁶ "ARC" indicates a document retrieved from a campus's archives. The code that follows is the unique identifier for that document.

for All and investigation of and response to disparities in students' outcomes and experiences helped the institution create a structure in which significant equity-focused institutional change on behalf of racially marginalized students will likely continue to be possible.

Interpretation

Responding to the Rhetoric

EFA spread at Bradford despite largely negative response to its rhetoric. To some, EFA was little more than “the hot new term in research” (BQFA01) or a “buzzword” that needed explaining (BADV01). Virtually indistinct from diversity, EFA appeared to be no different from other terminology that had floated in and out of vogue: “every year we have a different term, a different word...every year something different” (BMC01); “a new narrative” but not a change” (BQFA02). One said plainly, “[EFA] is what we call diversity now” (BIR01), and another assumed that doing EFA meant “we just needed to rename what we were already doing” (BMC02). Even those who acknowledged differences in the practices associated with EFA, felt like “we don’t need a new term” (BQFA01) because “I don’t think there’s a difference at all. I think it’s pretty much the same” (BSA02).

The EFA committee chair—widely recognized as *the* EFA champion on campus—resisted using the phrase because “it just feels like a very jargon term” that “can be alienating to people or feel exclusive” (BQFA03). The response of relatively new staff highlighted the questions EFA raised. One who had never heard of EFA, said it took “a while to figure out...why aren't they talking about ‘diversity’ and why aren’t they talking about ‘multiculturalism’?” (BSA02). The other, a senior administrator, confessed that EFA wasn’t very “tangible,” saying, “I guess it’s one of these things, you know it when you see it” (BIL01). Seeming to accept defeat on the rhetorical level, another senior administrator shared that EFA was “certainly better than what

else we could come up with,” but, he continued, “it’s also a term I have to explain a lot. And, so sometimes that defeats the purpose” (BP01).

Dangerous implications. Even those who believed in EFA’s principles wondered if it was race-neutral sleight of hand. Worse than meaningless or inaccessible, some feared pernicious implications. Because System’s framing “does seem to suggest that everything is held on the same par,” it was argued that individuals on campus were “rightfully afraid” there’d be “less emphasis on students of color” (BQFA03). This was worrisome because the educational crises faced by these students required prioritization, not de-emphasis. As a respondent said, “[L]et’s skip all these issues?...Ok now, it's everybody and everybody's the same. And now we are going to do *this* and we are going to do *these* things but we are going to lose track of *that*” (BMC01, emphasis theirs). According to the committee chair, EFA’s broad definition of diversity also seemed to demonstrate that “they don’t want [EFA] associated with race...They want people to have positive associations...So they tried to...almost deracinate it in a way. So I think there's a little bit of a conservative move there” (BQFA03). Still, she continued, “I’m not sure what the other choice is” (BQFA03).

Hopeful, if reluctant, embrace. Other respondents appreciated EFA because it was broadly conceptualized and aspirational. One recalled, “I remember thinking that ‘I like this.’ I like the whole notion that we're not trying to put things in *boxes* and I guess be more narrow” (BQFA04, emphasis theirs). For others, EFA “feels great right now” in part because it “*is* representing broader concepts” (BAA01, emphasis theirs), and “doesn't focus on just one group—It focuses on everybody” (BMC02). Even some skeptics endorsed EFA as a “moral imperative” (BIL01) that seemed to represent “profound, real interests in what I believe” (BQFA02). For example, one respondent—reflecting on changes in the academy, which was “no

longer the stronghold of the elite, the historically elite”—said, “[T]he last thing I want to be...is an obstructionist of the future because I’m living in the past with the same fears from the past, the same suspicions as the past” (BQFA02). For others, it combated a blight on diversity efforts: the assumption “that you're lowering your standards, like particularly academic standards. You're lowering your rigor in other words. That's the only way, in some people's minds, inclusion can happen” (BQFA03). Instead, EFA “makes it clear that they are raising the bar. They expect high standards” but, ultimately “that dream of people collaborating...and working on an effort that will create a more democratic world. I think that that's there in the plan of [EFA] and that's the beauty of it” (BQFA03).

Including Difference

EFA was seen to promote recognition, respect for and response to difference through efforts that sought to “make sure that we have a broader understanding of things, so that we are cognizant of the differences around us” (BREC01). Instead of “the outdated melting pot,” which prioritized assimilation, EFA was about “difference succeeding” (BQFA01). Intended to make Bradford “the right place for lots of people” (BSA02), EFA linked difference and inclusion to Bradford’s educational mission “to give an equal opportunity for success to all students” (BP01). Knowing “that not everybody comes in with the same skills or the same opportunities,” this meant asking “How can *all* students have an equal chance to succeed?...How do you level the playing field for everybody as much as you can?” (BP01, emphasis theirs).

Given the policy’s broadness, an EFA leader noted that “it’s not just for the students. It’s for the entire campus community and it’s quite frankly for the [city], too” (BQFA07). For faculty and staff, this meant “making sure that people from diverse backgrounds and diverse interests have a place at [Bradford], that they want to be here and that they feel like they can do their best

work at this institution” (BQFA08). Believing “equity for all people, equality for all people is possible,” Bradford wanted equitable representation of groups across campus programs, activities and success (BQFA03). This would require a systematic process to extend to all campus constituents:

break it down by groups. What will it look like for faculty? What will it look like for students? What will it look like for potential students? What will it look like for the folks that work here?...The folks on the grounds....and it's going to look different but everybody has got to be at the table and everybody *must* have a voice. (BQFA07, emphasis theirs)

EFA and Diversity

Two primary ways of interpreting EFA indicated differences in understandings of the policy's purpose and, therefore, its target population. Although the language the different groups used was similar, it signaled different priorities for EFA. Largely described as being about “all” students, EFA was framed around different interpretations of that “all.”

A new diversity. For proponents of EFA as a new diversity, the policy’s value was its attention to difference, which they saw as an opportunity to attend to the needs of all students. Unlike diversity, which “so many people had interpreted...only through race” (BQFA01), they saw EFA as “all-encompassing because it’s really the depth and breadth of diversity” (BSA01). Although not everyone agreed that diversity was necessarily narrowly conceived, part of the work under EFA was to broaden people’s understanding of EFA to include “every kind of difference...LGBTQ, disability, what have you” (BAA02). By “looking at *everyone's* experience” (BSA01, emphasis theirs), EFA could help Bradford become a more inclusive community that

“focused on people and a variety of differences and embracing those differences and really creating a campus community that is going to support everyone as best we can” (BQFA04).

“All” means everyone. For this group, “all” simply meant everyone—“everyone matters,” everybody is included—that is, all members of the campus community (BQFA07). The all-means-all respondents liked EFA because they believed the campus community includes everyone, “all difference”: “[W]e are talking LGBTQ community. We are talking students of color. We’re talking disabilities. We’re talking male, female, including everyone regardless of their background” (BADV01, emphasis theirs). So, EFA isn’t “focused on this group or that group or really groups at all” (BQFA04). EFA could unite the campus in service of student success because it involved “everybody on campus. Not from any point...not from the faculty, but everybody. Facilities management to whatever people are on campus ...and that we look at excellence as being the primary here of everything that we do” (BMC01). One respondent acknowledged that racially marginalized populations were still important to EFA. “I don’t think our students of color have—taken a backseat...in any way, shape, or form,” a senior administrator argued, instead EFA helps “all boats rise” because it “expands people’s responsibility for students of color and all of our students...If we just say it’s ‘students of color,’ then it’s a responsibility of the multicultural office” (BSA01).

Beyond diversity. Another group of respondents saw diversity-as-difference as potentially shortsighted and regressive, a distraction from urgent problems the campus faced. “It’s with everything,” one respondent charged (BMC01). They interpreted System’s differences framing to mean that “[we] need to think about differences of experience for all different kinds of identities,” and ignore disparities faced by marginalized populations (BQFA03). These skeptics instead saw EFA as not simply substituting for but moving beyond diversity, meaning

that it required much more than diversity did. Proponents of this interpretation argued that EFA called for more—specifically action and institutional change. Thus, “[EFA] is the next level up. It’s where you’re supposed to move to action...[EFA] asks those who claim it should then do something to include” (BQFA02): “actually provide the tools and provide [“diverse students”] with the skills that they need, the tools that they need to succeed. You also need to do a lot of work on your campus to make that possible” (BQFA03).

“All” but especially the previously excluded. For this group, “all” meant everyone but especially those who had been excluded—that is, all marginalized populations. In pairing inclusion with exclusion, there is subtlety in the usage of “everyone” here that distinguishes it from the above. Consider the faculty member who discussed Bradford’s goal of “serving every student and giving every student the same opportunity.” She shared that programmatic changes in the general education program allowed her to build relationships with students who previously might have struggled without being noticed—in this case, a Black student, first generation students. She framed it as serving *every* student, but she was talking about students who previously hadn’t had “the same” opportunity. A committee member argued that exclusion had larger social implications; for a society to be successful, she argued, “you can’t have expendable people...[E]very citizen, regardless of so-called differences...should be included...We need every good brain” (BQFA02). Thus, EFA centered “all” over “a few,” “making everyone...regardless of race, regardless of ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, age...feel welcomed here...It’s not just for certain groups, certain types, certain socioeconomic status. It’s for everyone” (BQFA06).

The use of “we” as a floating referent by a staff member who identifies as Hispanic indicates the concern among some in this group specifically about the racially marginalized:

there's an array of activities that we do that help promote [EFA] on campus through all these things that we do to educate, to promote awareness...so that people can understand where *we* come from, how *we* learn and what *we* need to do to move that needle again.

(BMC01, emphasis mine)

Some of the *we*'s refer collectively to marginalized populations on campus; others to Bradford's responsibility to these populations. One EFA leader offered a demographic justification for this emphasis, citing census data regarding the growth of racial and ethnic groups, saying, "So we better be prepared so we educate everyone that comes to our doors...and that we treat them in a way that—we show them that they matter" (BQFA07). Another argued that the emphasis on marginalized populations was necessary because the profound disparities faced by these students represented an "academic crisis [that] has to be one of our foremost things, because it's about full citizenship" (BQFA03). By identifying the outcomes of "students of color" as an "academic crisis" that is unique within the student population, she encapsulated an orientation that was common, though not universal, among members of the EFA committee. She further asserted that—despite System's framing—Bradford's interpretation didn't, as some assumed, reflect a misunderstanding of the policy intentions:

I would say that actually [Bradford] defines [EFA] more as [NEC] defines it...If you go to a conference, [the NEC is] still very much focused on what is happening to students of color. So while they're the ones themselves who invoked this term and created it, I think it is being misused in a lot of places because people don't understand what [NEC] means by it...I am not suggesting that the only thing they do is for students of color. But, again, in terms of the priorities? I think the priorities are still for students of color. I don't think that a lot of people recognize that. And I am not sure why. (BQFA03)

Defining Success

When asked how they would measure the success of EFA, respondents primarily wanted to see a commitment to EFA infused throughout the campus, including through changes in everyday practices. With that foundation, they hoped, Bradford would be poised for other substantive changes that would signal success for EFA: improvements in students' college outcomes and experiences, campus climate, and campus diversity.

“Institutionalized” Commitment

Some believed EFA efforts were largely preaching to the choir with “the people who embraced it before probably still embrac[ing] it” (BQFA04). Instead, they wanted EFA to be a campus-wide “expectation” (BAA01), meaning that no other activity would “be a priority over and above [EFA]” because it would be “integrated into everything” as a guiding philosophy and shared responsibility for all members of the community (BQFA03). Serving students would be primary: “it’d be woven into—our DNA. It’d be part of our culture that we would think about student success first and—how we’re there to serve” (BSA01). Then, one EFA leader stated, “[my] whole department shouldn't even matter...I’ve got to work my way out of a job because that to me is the—epitome of this school having leaned into ensuring that everybody matters, that [EFA]’s operationalized” (BQFA07).

Leadership commitment. Institutionalization of EFA would require “commitment from higher-level folks” (BQFA04), particularly the new campus president. In a best case scenario, the new president would choose EFA as “one of the things I'm hitching my legacy on. And so I'm going to from the beginning entrench and move it forward, give it the heft of my position” (BQFA02). Still, the president’s support, alone, would not be enough. Full campus support of EFA required “a dynamic group of leaders who were inspiring, and who were at every single

level...In other words, all administration levels at this university would make it a priority within...whatever they're responsible for" (BQFA03).

Longevity. Finally, institutionalizing EFA wasn't just about "changing people's hearts," it was also about "plan[ning] for the *long* term" (BQFA02, emphasis theirs). Part of this was recognizing that the work of EFA never stopped: "I don't think we can say, '[W]ell we're there and we can stop because it's a continuing, evolving thing" (BQFA06). Bradford needed, one respondent argued, a methodical, thoughtful approach that could carry the institution through the "7, 8, 9 years" of waiting "to see tangible results": "You want institutional change...let's just start with step 1 and complete the process to step 2, complete the process to step 3. If you want to skip over these steps, then be prepared for the shit to fall apart" (BQFA02). Likening the work of EFA to "eating the elephant"—which can only be done "one bite at a time"—another emphasized the cyclical nature of living into EFA: "You've got to be—systematic about it. —You make the changes. You do the assessment/ evaluation and see if some things have changed. You tweak it if you need to...But—it's an ongoing thing" (BSA01).

Campus Practices

Changes in campus practices would also signal success for EFA. In short, institutionalization meant more and better. "More" as in increasing the number of campus participants—faculty, staff, and students—in current programs and "better" as in increasing staff's cultural competence or "understanding of what is it that our students need and want" (BSA01). EFA success also meant "more" in terms of having "really, major supports" in all parts of campus (BQFA03), including the classroom elements of EFA to ensure that students' success doesn't rely on them "fitting—the way we teach" (BQFA01). Academic support would also extend beyond the classroom with faculty aware of and "collaborat[ing] with other offices...So

that when they saw a student was not doing well academically that they would then know to reach out” (BQFA03). Finally, armed with greater understanding of student needs, Bradford hopefully “would be flexible enough to deliver those programs and services and intervene when we need to and not be held up by policies or...antiquated practices” (BSA01) because “the one size doesn’t fit...I think we’ll fail at [student success]—if we’re not more flexible...Standards should always be high...but how we help them get there is the way that we need to be flexible” (BMC01).

Student Outcomes and Experiences

Most centrally, success with EFA at Bradford would mean “we’ll just be graduating more prepared students, which is sort of what our business is” (BQFA01). Respondents hoped for fewer students struggling in entry-level courses and increased retention, especially among marginalized student populations on whose behalf respondents wanted to see progress in “closing the achievement gap” (BSA01). Respondents also recognized the link between educational success and campus engagement and climate, so student satisfaction would also be an important measure. More broadly, “student perception of the campus” would be “a good gauge” because students “will continue to tell you whether they feel like they’re feeling welcomed and accepted here or they feel like nothing’s changed. So I think you’ll really get a good gauge of it” (BQFA06).

Campus Climate

Respondents believed success with EFA would bring a change in campus climate. With “institutional props” in place, one respondent said, “now the question is can we really create a climate that lives up to the goals of [EFA]?” (BQFA01). Respondents’ indicators of “a transformed sense of climate” (BQFA03) included reduced harassment for students in and out of

the classroom; that “no one is feeling marginalized” (BQFA07); and “if more students feel comfortable here...I’ll even broaden that. If more *people* in our campus community feel more comfortable being who they are” (BQFA04, emphasis theirs). In addition, two respondents believed that changes in Bradford’s reputation might accompany improvements in the campus’s reputation. One said, “If we suddenly became known nationwide as the best [EFA] university there is, wouldn't that be cool?” (BQFA01). The other offered that Bradford could become known as “a place that's *fabulous* for new scholars” from marginalized backgrounds who might say, “I want to get my first job at *least* [at Bradford]... ’cause I *hear*...that they are good for—somebody like me...They see my value.’ When the word of mouth goes out and about...we will be there” (BQFA02, emphasis theirs).

Campus Diversity

A final aspect of success would be “visual” (BQFA01), meaning “you would have... a lot more people who are of different races, ethnicities, nationalities...but also queer students” (BQFA03). Respondents hoped this diversity would be reflected across the community, including among faculty, staff and administrators. One respondent said campus demographics and students’ inability to distinguish between African faculty (of which there were a few) and African American faculty (of which there were almost none), “tells you that our faculty's not diverse” (BQFA01). Finally, the goal was not merely about representation, “a better track record in terms of both recruiting and retaining—diverse individuals” (BQFA04). More importantly, respondents imagined “a *vibrant*, diverse community. *That* to me is where we should be” (BQFA07, emphasis theirs).

Implementation

EFA activities took several forms, all of which fed Bradford's student success and culture change priorities: "[W]e've put structures. We've put resources. We've got personnel, and they are also...part of helping us shape that institutional consciousness about being inclusive" (BAA01). Several programs focused on student outcomes, particularly for racially, ethnically and socioeconomically marginalized students, including based on their first generation college status. Second, there was an emphasis on capacity building, including information and training for students, staff and the community. Assessment was the final major activity.

Student Success Programs

One of the first efforts was an inquiry-driven investigation of entry-level courses, "who's failing, who's got Ds and who's withdrawn from class, particularly for students of color, and how do we need to address this in the class" (BQFA07). The project was guided by equity-mindedness, through which individuals examine "institution-based dysfunctions and consider their own roles and responsibilities as well as those of their colleagues in the production of equitable educational outcomes" (B_ID020). After studying outcome disparities in 100- and 200-level courses, faculty working groups investigated inclusive pedagogies and developed a five-year vision for the courses, including their aspirations for students' experience, instructors' responsibilities, and key action items and potential obstacles for instructors and students to be addressed. This template was the beginning of a systematic attempt to remake these entry-level courses with attention to what marginalized students needed. The EFA committee chair, who co-led this effort, discussed her motivation, "[T]he way I've always thought is that social change is happening in the classroom...[and] here was a chance to change possibly a larger system" (BQFA03).

Second, Bradford's redesign of its general education program was "built on EFA principles" (BQFA08). In fact, one administrator said that the program and EFA were meant to "mutually reinforce" each other: "It's all part of the same general umbrella...they're both working with student learning outcomes that are shared" (BP01). EFA's equity principles were reflected in the program's design, which centered research-based "high-impact practices [that] work best on underserved students" like small classes, learning communities and meaningful connections between coursework and the real world (BAA01). The program was also designed around several inquiry topics, one of which related to intercultural competencies, and required "that everybody has to take a course that deals with some form of diversity and cultural difference" (BP01). A third influence of EFA on the campus was the training that faculty who would be teaching in the general education program received. It was led by the teaching and learning center, which had selected EFA as one of its major initiatives (BAA02).

Summer Transition Program. Third, one project was guided almost exclusively by EFA principles: a new summer bridge program that was piloted in 2014. Called the Summer Transition Program (STP), it was motivated by research findings, including those of an assessment team brought in to help "improve inclusion, retention and climate on your campus," (B_ID022) and "heavily modeled" on best practices from first-year programs in the System and elsewhere (BQFA05). STP emerged from the redesign of a program that originally supported "students of color. They were low socioeconomic status, academically challenged" but after losing federal funding for summer programs, ended up "serving students who were *already* doing well and were kind of getting an advantage or a head start on college" (BQFA03, emphasis theirs). The EFA chair, who a part of the redesign effort, said the team that ran the original

program was open to a proposal because “even they were a little surprised where the program had moved” but the committee’s approach was also crucial:

We said very overtly, ‘We don't know what will come out of this but let's negotiate. Let's see what we might do together... We have these things happening with students of color.’ And we talked about it very explicitly... So I think taking the blame out and saying we understood that it came from the federal funding issue, the loan issues and that it was no judgment on them but this is the program we wanted. (BQFA03)

After “a pretty seamless negotiation,” the new team had “a really good outcome”: a free and “robust” (BQFA07) four-credit, six-week residential program that was paid for with pooled resources, pro-bono services and “a lot of kind of creative funding and just piecing things together as best we could” (BQFA03). Everyone’s willingness to chip in, one respondent said, was indicative of a cultural element at Bradford—an inclination toward broad-based collaboration. Noting that “about 50 people” across the campus were involved in the program in one way or another, the EFA committee chair echoed this sentiment, saying, “That's where we're successful is when we bring a lot of people together” (BQFA03).

The target population was “students of color and that in some way come from either a disadvantaged environment or a poor school district” (BREC01) but who “if they took some courses and learned a little bit about university life before they had to start and jump right in in the fall, that would allow them a better chance to succeed” (BP01). The ultimate STP cohort was “predominantly African Americans from [an urban center in the state] but also other ethnicities as well” and was comprised of two subgroups. One group was “not going to be admitted to the university. So their only option was to come to the bridge program, and be successful in the program in order to actually come here” (BQFA04). The other group was students who had been

admitted with “some question about would they be successful” (BQFA04)—that is, it was “anticipate[d] that they're going to have trouble if they come in without having some sort of orientation or acclimation” before the fall (BQFA03).

The program launched with a small cohort of 14 students—15 including a student who left the program early for family reasons—with the aim of “get[ting] them prepared for college-level work” (BQFA08) and acclimated to the college campus “in a smaller...much more personalized environment, so that when day one comes of the fall semester and all of a sudden there’s thousands of students around them and they don’t have to feel so lost in the shuffle” (BREC01). During the program, the students became “very heavily engaged with the faculty and the staff” and familiar with campus resources; were explicitly supported through parent involvement and mentoring components; and gained academic skills through interactive, meaningful and personalized learning opportunities (BREC01). Explicit instruction was meant to “get them off the high school mentality into the college mentality” (BMC01), which recognizes the need for students to successfully locate assistance from campus resources.

The final STP program resulted in a summer schedule that was “highly structured...almost every moment was accounted for and they even had a curfew,” which might make the students’ transition in the fall a little more difficult” but it made for a stronger and more effective summer bridge program experience (BQFA03). STP was designed as a student engagement focused, co-curricular model that was structured around a recent best-selling book about the Great Migration, *The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson, and included reading “parts of” the text, 3 field trips, and oral history interviews with local transplants (BQFA07, emphasis theirs). Program elements also introduced students “to the kinds of big questions that they'll experience right away in the fall” in the new general education program (BQFA03).

Finally, other college success skills like math, reading and writing were also incorporated through group and individualized instruction focused on activities tailored to students' interests.

All parties reportedly enjoyed their experience with STP. Students for the opportunity to “[connect] with other young people who are thinking about these problems, showing them why they might be important, showing them why they might care about them” (BQFA03). And for the program designers and implementer who made it possible for these 10 new students to join the freshman class. They looked forward to welcoming 25 new STP participants in Summer 2015, sure that the program needed to continue and likely would given its new revenue model, through which the steep program costs would be covered by the additional tuition dollars generated by the new admits generated by the program—“students who wouldn't have been here without [STP]” (BQFA03).

Capacity Building

EFA infrastructure. Bradford created formal structures for EFA, which, one respondent suggested, was one of the ways “[Bradford] has made advances that other [System] institutions haven't” (BQFA01). There was a network of EFA committees, the most visible of which was a standing committee housed in academic affairs, and comprised of staff, faculty, administrators, and students, although the faculty presence was the most conspicuous. According to one member, it focused on “the first levels of how to make [EFA integration] work,” which was “figur[ing] out how to build bases for *sustaining* of the [EFA] building” (BQFA02, emphasis theirs).

In addition, the campus created a new administrative position— “one of the strongest recommendations” from a campus climate survey (BQFA01). Logistically, the hire raised the profile of EFA because of its administrative position: “That's a *huge* role to have filled. It's a

huge role. Rhetorically it's a huge role in terms of the make up of—our administration... So that shows me the commitment. They hired her” (BQFA02). The new hire oversaw the academic hub of EFA—centers focused on “ethnicity and diversity,” LGBTQ and gender—to indicate the centrality of academic support to EFA (BP01) and that “it is just not the [Office of Diversity] that is doing this work” (BQFA01). These centers augmented the EFA infrastructure and—along with those focused on tutoring, teaching and learning, and, newly, veteran students—were highlighted for their quality programming and responsiveness to students.

Programs and services. Respondents said there was “no shortage of opportunities to go and learn more” through an expanding array of EFA-focused brown bags, workshops and seminars (BADV01). A major thrust of these efforts was creating spaces for conversation across difference for all members of the campus community. One respondent explained the importance of “difficult conversations”: “It's not to be rabble rousers or to bring up issues that people would rather that we not. James Baldwin, to paraphrase him, he says, ‘You can't fix what you can't face’” (BQFA07). In addition to a dialogue series that encouraged participants’ “willing[ness] to ‘shatter your jar’ in order to discover new treasures,” the committee hosted an on-campus forum following the protests in Ferguson (B_ID024). It was well attended by members of Bradford’s on- and off-campus communities, and was an example of what one respondent called ““us at our best’” (FN, 11102014).

Student development. Some EFA opportunities focused specifically on helping student “understand how to live bigger lives” and “see the world in a bigger way” (BQFA02). One approach was mentoring programs, in which alumni or peers acted as social and academic resources, especially for first-year students. One EFA leader was also planning a session on nonviolent protesting that might help students engage with the climate of frustration and protest

sweeping college campuses “in a more intellectual and more practical and a more way that aligns with their soul” (BQFA07). Some efforts focused on students’ lives beyond campus. A study abroad initiative encouraged students to take steps toward international travel, wanting students to understand that their backgrounds might carry a “perception” but “that doesn’t define really truly who you are” (BQFA07). After students received their passports—“You can’t even *begin* thinking about ‘I want to study abroad. I wanna do something’ if you don’t have a passport” (BQFA07, emphasis theirs)—became ambassadors for the program and with support from an EFA leader and others on campus began to imagine their first trips. For Bradford students, most of whom had “never left those areas they come from,” seeing the world might be unimaginable, but “once you open up their minds and they see another world that they’ll come back and say, ‘Wow, I can do this...There’s another world out there for me’” (BMC01).

Staff and Faculty Development

Commitment to student success was about more than the classroom because “excellence in any area” required that the differences students brought to campus would be recognized and supported (BQFA01). This meant incorporating EFA into departmental and divisional planning and—given that EFA was new for some and would be developing for all—attention to faculty and staff’s “continual learning” under EFA (BREC01).

Staff development. Many at Bradford believed that EFA was “an inside-out process” guided by individualized commitment and development (BREC01). This was essential even for those not directly involved in the university’s academic project, a belief that undergirded staff development in one of Bradford’s largest divisions, which had been doing this “soul-searching”

for several years (BSA02). Using a standardized guide⁵⁷, staff reflected on their values, strengths and challenges related to EFA, and set improvement goals—whether “you’re a custodian or an administrative assistant...if you’re [head of the division]”—that were supported by formal professional development opportunities for staff in “different development phase[s]” to learn more about, and reflect on their own, cultural competence (BSA01). The division also used the guide to review “things that could put up roadblocks or obstacles in the programs and services that we have in place” (BSA01). For example, they reviewed offerings through its health center to understand which groups of students weren’t using it, why and to make necessary adjustments that incorporated student input. Before that they’d focused on “a multicultural inclusive customer service” to help staff incorporate EFA into their idea of good service (BSA01). The next phase was to go through these assessment processes again to establish new goals because “We got the tip of the iceberg. Is there anything in there that we should be grappling with?” (BSA01).

EFA also influenced recruitment in the division—the only unit on campus to integrate EFA into its hiring practices, including all job postings. Search committees looked for at least an articulated commitment to EFA. In a search for an athletic director, for example, they chose not to interview four candidates because:

there was not *anything* in their cover letter or in their resume that showed any kind of commitment or involvement in diversity or inclusion...[P]eople were like, ‘Oh, But you’re really missing out on some good people.’...[But] they’re not going to fit in this mold, [if] they don’t share those same values. (BSA01, emphasis theirs)

⁵⁷ The division’s transformation efforts were guided by an EFA resource guide, developed elsewhere, according to which “[t]he ultimate goal is to make inclusiveness a habit practiced by everyone at the university” (B_ID025). After an educational program focused on developing staff’s “cultural competence” (BSA01), the resource guide offers three phases that involve assessment, responding to assessment findings, and then evaluating those responses (B_ID025).

A respondent in another division was chagrined that interviewers merely asked how candidates would “promote diversity” instead of how they would support all students’ success: “Do we have *opinions* on diversity or do we *act* it out?... That’s like a dummy-ing down question. We’ve got to get better at that” (BAA01, emphasis theirs).

Faculty development. Efforts also focused on faculty’s support of EFA goals because “we want social justice for people, but we forget that our very grades...and what seem at times minuscule things we do in the classroom, that those do make a difference in those ultimate outcomes” (BQFA03). To this end, an administrator said that her measure of a reforms’ success is whether it “reach[es] the instructor’s desk. Meaning, when they plan their lessons...does it get in the syllabus? Does it get in the classroom? I think that [EFA] is getting in the classroom” (BAA01). This was the result of professional development opportunities on inclusive instructional strategies. One EFA leader “work[ed] with faculty, bringing [EFA] topics to classes...thinking about pedagogy and how you’re presenting various information and conducting your classroom environment” (BADV01). In addition, the teaching and learning center on campus offered programming on the “inclusion of diverse and relevant material in classes” (BQFA02) and improving “pedagogical approaches used in critical gateway courses” (BAA01).

Beyond the classroom, faculty learned about student services and how to help struggling students. Informational sessions were necessary because “[m]any faculty are confused and not that knowledgeable about what support is available on campus” but there were also efforts to improve communication between instructors and support areas (BQFA08). There were, for example, concerns about the use of an early warning system through which professors could communicate with struggling students—less than half of faculty participated. In addition, few

explicitly discussed the warnings in class, which left it up to students to follow up or, worse, disregard the warning because, ““Dr. So and So didn’t say anything, so I can ignore it or—it must be a mistake”” (BADV01). In response, the EFA committee was creating a faculty workshop to help improve the system’s use and to share ways for faculty to support struggling students.

These were the primary efforts associated with EFA but the committee also engaged in community development—“[W]e’ve gotta ensure that the climate’s right. Then we’ve gotta ensure that the city’s right” (BQFA07); presented awards to publicize EFA and recognize those “who are helping carry out [the EFA] mission” on campus (BQFA08); hosted fundraising events to raise scholarship money; and provided technical assistance to other areas of campus, including conflict mediation. Finally, nearly every respondent lamented the lack of faculty diversity, including the near absence of Black faculty. Unlike with the committee’s other endeavors, however, a clear response to this challenge never materialized. An EFA leader led an exchange trip to an HBCU for faculty and administrators, but it wasn’t clear if this program was in response to the EFA action committee’s best practices report. There were other ideas but, for respondents, change depended on whether the administration would ultimately make this issue a priority.

Assessment

Through research, planning, implementation, and evaluation, respondents conducted research, identified challenges and opportunities for change, and set a course for making those changes. Research served several purposes. One, staying aware of EFA-related work on campus. All EFA activity was part of a “big web” with elements that were “inextricably linked...[with committees] doing work in a variety of different pockets” and others not connected directly to an EFA committee (BQFA04). A second purpose was to identify best practices. For example, an

EFA leader was researching the effectiveness of other System campus's approaches to supporting racially marginalized students. Earlier, an external assessment team provided programmatic and structural recommendations. Finally, information gathering helped generate buy-in about the need for certain programs, including evidence for the effectiveness of inclusive pedagogy.

Measuring success. One respondent said that “[EFA] requires assessment,” because inclusion is built on knowing who is being excluded, particularly from opportunities for success: “How do we know we’re going to point A from point B and we’re actually succeeding?... There’s a shift in the way we *think* in everything that we do... and how we’re moving... I see more assessment pieces all around” (BMC01, emphasis theirs). Success-focused assessment helped respondents understand how different groups were faring on campus and to evaluate the progress of improvements. One goal was simply to learn about students: “What are their attributes, holistically? What’s the incoming class’s attributes?... We test, test, test, we assess, assess, assess. So we have that information to work with” (BQFA02). A second goal was to improve outcomes in arenas related to student success: transition, program participation, academic performance and students’ “social cognitive emotional adaption [sic]” (BQFA05). Another discussed the importance of “interrogating the data,” including by disaggregating by gender, race, and ethnicity, and sharing findings because “that’s going to break... some myths. It’s going to maybe promote people to do some action” (BAA01).

With some on campus reportedly averse to assessment, seeing it as a laborious data entry task, part of the developmental work related to EFA at Bradford was helping staff and faculty to develop “an appetite for numbers” (BAA01). This assessment orientation was particularly important in areas where disaggregated data wasn’t the norm. One staff member who was asked, “How are your students of color doing?” I don’t know. I don’t separate them out... [But] [i]t

makes me stop to think, are we doing everything we could be doing? Are we excluding anybody?” (BMC02).

Evaluation efforts included larger-scale assessment, which “allows us to look at what we are doing. If we are moving in the right direction when it comes to [EFA] and everything that we do on campus” (BMC01). Two significant assessment projects that informed EFA’s “foundational work” were a campus climate survey and an institutional inclusion assessment, methods from which became regular practice at Bradford (BQFA07). In fact, one respondent suggested that the inclusion assessment, which pre-dated EFA, was its actual beginning because “it identified first of all the broad level of who needed to be included...[a]nd it helped us with definitional work: what is equity, and...based on results, it suggested ways to fill gaps of people who were left out” (BQFA02). In addition, as noted in “Staff Development,” large-scale assessment—e.g. national surveys and institutional data systems—guided the program review practices in one division, including investigation of differential participation in programs and services and an inquiry process to identify “areas that maybe a department needs to work on—to be more open, to be more inclusive” (BSA01). Finally, campus assessments affected institutional programs and planning and direct student support because the campus could identify struggling students and connect them to supplementary programming or supports.

Effects

Many of the effects of EFA were covered under successes—new programs, changes to institutional culture—but some of the effects were also more about individuals and their experiences on campus. These changes largely reflect the effective practice inspired by EFA.

Broadened perspective. Respondents reported that EFA had made them more aware by broadening their perspectives and bringing campus realities to their attention. Many learned

about students' outcomes, including wide gaps for marginalized populations—an “alarming” discovery, especially for faculty who are “insulated...involved in your own little world...my classes, my research” (BQFA04). They also learned about the lived experiences of faculty from marginalized backgrounds who “are often taxed a lot more...had to work a lot harder in order to tread water or keep pace with other people, with their peers” in part because of additional demands placed on these faculty by students and the campus community (BQFA05). For one administrator, the learning opportunities that EFA presented helped her realize she shouldn't focus only on her own values when working with others: “[I]t's not, ‘Do unto others as you would have done unto you,’ but it's ‘Do unto others as they would have done unto themselves.’...[T]hat excited me about [EFA] ‘cause it shook me up a little bit” (BSA01).

Dialogue. Respondents reported more conversation across campus, including about potentially difficult topics like race and “more purposeful dialogue about equitable practices” (BAA01). A White faculty member related a conversation she had with a Black staff person about racial dynamics in one of her classes, saying this type of exchange was not uncommon: “[W]e're having so many more of those conversations—not just me. but everybody...[W]e have issues on this campus...that we need to address, but we are not able to address them if we just pretend like everything is fine” (BAA02). This new openness made it more possible to communicate across the campus hierarchy, in part, because there was a greater sense of being heard with “leadership and everybody being comfortable and being at the table and being able to communicate” (BMC01). Changes also emphasized dialogue with students, learning from their experiences and building trust—ultimately, the awareness gained in these discussions created a “whole other level of responsibility for the instructor” (BAA02).

Paying attention. Respondents also reported a change in their reflective practices. They were more self-aware of difference and the implications for inclusion in their work with others. Department- and campus-wide data projects helped bring a focus on race to senior administration, which inspired them to “help tailor and bring to almost every conversation what's happening and how does this impact the racial and ethnic groups” (BIR01). One respondent reported an increased awareness of language, for example, referring to “scholars” instead of “multicultural” students—“[t]hat’s another way of thinking. So we're moving towards how we're viewing our students and how others need to view them” (BMC01). Another discussed the inclusion orientation of her team—“we used to have ‘walk-in’ hours. Well, we call them ‘drop-in’ hours now”—including mandatory Safe Zone training⁵⁸ for staff, including student workers (BADV01). For one EFA leader, this was not merely about marginalized students because even the students who comprised the majority could benefit most from “[l]ived inclusivity,” which she defined as the incorporation of diverse perspectives: “[I]f there was not a person of color on this campus, we could still be inclusive if we were to bring all of these practices” (BQA07, emphasis theirs).

Inter/personal connections. EFA also changed the way some staff experienced the campus. Several, most notably faculty, became connected with others involved in EFA work. This gave one respondent the opportunity to “see very different approaches...[t]hings I would never think about...Having a diverse group of people on the committee, and learning about how they think we could help students, that makes me learn, too” (BQFA08). The comfort that accompanied increased interaction, collaboration and communication was of particular

⁵⁸ SafeZone Training is an interactive workshop that focuses on “inclusive and respectful language, the process of coming out, understanding sexual and gender identity, taking action on our campuses and in our workplaces, where to go for help and much more” in order to “give participants the skills they need to provide support and to create environments that are safe, welcoming and inclusive” (The Gay Alliance of the Genessee, 2016).

importance for staff from racially and ethnically marginalized backgrounds. One reported that team and individual conversations about EFA values, goals and successes “made us closer” and “gave me that trust that I can say something, that I can be myself and say things without you feeling offended by it” (BQFA06). Finally, seeing others’ commitment was “contagious” because seeing the model of other “people who are putting in a lot of effort and they're really—engaged, it is easier for you to be engaged...[S]eeing the level of commitment that some of these people have, that certainly helps to feed me” (BQFA04).

Successes

Generally respondents felt Bradford was “striving in the right direction” (BQFA06, BAA01, BMC01), which signaled “pretty strong commitment [to EFA] across campus that maybe hadn’t been there—*definitely* wasn’t there before” (BREC01, emphasis theirs). The most often-cited successes of EFA were academic programs created under or influenced by the policy. Alongside other positive changes, including the increased emphasis on assessment, respondents were optimistic about changes in Bradford's institutional culture.

Programs and activities. Discussed more fully above, the review of outcomes in entry-level courses, redesign of the general education program and launch of a new summer bridge program were widely recognized as successes. One aspect of the course review project was their reframing of the emphasis on marginalized populations: “We got away from you're doing it to be a helper, right? You're doing it to assist them, right? But rather, they're already making vital, *really* important contributions” (BQFA03, emphasis theirs). Supported by regular workshops on inclusive pedagogy run by a teaching and learning center on campus, “we’re definitely seeing influences on a lot of different people who teach...realizing that they can—make a change, that

there are things that people have figured out to do” (BQFA08). Also, respondents reported decreased rates of *D*'s, *F*'s, and course withdrawals.

The redesign of Bradford's general education program was a success, first, because of its impact on students. Encouraged by EFA, it went “a long way—in helping a greater student understanding of the institution and an awareness and understanding of cultural differences and inclusivity” (BQFA07). As a result of the program, students “successfully navigated in those first three semesters, and [were] well on their way toward the degree,” including through decreased rates of dropped courses, higher GPAs, and increased retention rates (BIR01). Second, it was an eye-opening experience for faculty, most of whom had had limited experience with first-year students and “never realized our students had so far to come... Their first impulse is probably, ‘Oh, our students aren't as good as they used to be.’ It's not [true]. You just didn't know them very well” (BP01). A faculty member said, “It's a totally different experience” to focus on ensuring the success of every student in your class and “I will never look at a classroom the same... I have had so many people to say the same thing” (BAA02).

Finally, the Summer Transition Program pilot was lauded primarily because the academic experiment worked. All but one program participant who had to leave early for family reasons were eligible for admission at the end of the summer. With 4 students having already been admitted, that meant 10 new college-ready students from racially marginalized backgrounds, which “doesn't sound like a lot... but for our campus that's actually a lot” (BQFA03). The students, “across the board, they had impressive gains” on pre- and post-tests (BQFA05). In addition, the students were still enrolled and “doing well here as students” into the following spring—“That's [EFA] at work,” one respondent said (BQFA04). Beyond the collaboration behind STP, respondents were also “really excited and proud” (BQFA07) because—even though

14 was too small a number—“that's like a huge investment. I was proud that the university *would* invest in them and *know* that that was important. I haven't always felt that way” (BQFA03, emphasis theirs).

Assessment. The growing attention to assessment was held up as a success because it reflected focus on the campus-wide learning outcomes that comprised the shared definition of success at Bradford. They focused on “measuring and telling our story and being realistic and putting the data back out there” (BAA01), which both contributed to program improvement and demonstrated willingness to, “as the [former president] used to say, ‘show our warts.’ And when there are problems, recognize them and don’t try to cover them up [but] try to resolve them” (BP01). Respondents reported an increased use of pre- and post-evaluation data to investigate student learning, no matter how short the program. In fact, one administrator said the emphasis on evaluation had become so prevalent that her team was “hungry for data now. There's not a choice” (BAA01).

Culture change and awareness. Acknowledging that Bradford was “probably a little further ahead than most of the other campuses” likely because “we had further to go,” a senior administrator noted progress in institutionalizing EFA: “[T]hese moves to make more dramatic changes in our [general education program] and to tie [EFA] to that as well. That's a big sea change. That's a big culture change” (BP01). Significantly, he said, “there's nobody pushing back [on EFA]. We've moved beyond any questioning of why we needed to do this or why we needed to do that. It's how do we make it better?” (BP01). Institutionalization meant increased awareness of EFA on campus—including among students—that also manifested in individuals’ approach to their work, which has “made us more intentional in thinking about are we being inclusive. So when we are developing a program or a handout or a website, asking ourselves that

question” (BADV01). The shift in intentionality also changed how people experienced Bradford; it was now “a lot more welcoming to all groups, no matter where they are coming from...[I]t’s made it more welcoming for staff on campus as well” (BQFA06). Respondents reported being able to speak more openly, especially about race: “If we’re able to come to a conversation and use the word ‘Black’ or ‘White’ or ‘Latinos’ or whatever and we can feel comfortable in having these conversations, that means that we’ve reached some other level here” (BMC01).

Influences

Flexible National Model Endorsed by System

System’s introduction influenced the shape of EFA at Bradford. Instead of “a fence around our backyard” that imposed structures and parameters like other System plans had, EFA was “a loose fence and it goes for miles and miles and miles...and it becomes your backyard rather than System’s backyard” (BSA01). Although for some it was “bewildering” that “we didn’t get more guidance on how you implement things in terms of resources and those kind of things” (BQFA03), the “grassroots-bottom up” approach nevertheless had at least one positive outcome (BQFA01). It allowed System campuses “to actualize [EFA], to implement it, to make it the campuses’ own and to add their own flavor and uniquenesses that are part of campuses’ individual mission and culture” (BSA01). Because each campus developed its own definitions, goals, projects, and assessments, this decentralization sacrificed “consistency amongst the campuses” but also allowed for “adaptation and buy-in” (BSA01).

That EFA was tied to the National Education Consortium was also influential. Bradford had a long history with the organization: “We’ve participated in a couple of their national projects. We brought them to campus. They have showcased us in their publications. We’ve embraced what they’re trying to do” (BAA01). There was also a philosophical fit. NEC’s “big

agenda [of] quality education and inclusivity together” was reflected in practical frameworks (like EFA) that “embrace[d] that consciousness that's present right now at [Bradford]” (BAA01). Bradford, like NEC, was focused on all students’ success but EFA indicated that the NEC is “still very much focused on what is happening to students of color” (BQFA03). Connecting to NEC, thus, became a resource for Bradford that “help[ed] us have a support and maybe kind of vetting our identity with a national identity and joining us with other campuses that...have that similar vision” (BAA01).

Institutional Priorities

A handful of institutional priorities drove Bradford’s customization of EFA. First, EFA connected to learning outcomes and practical approaches for inside and outside the classroom, EFA was a solution to a pressing need: a proven model that would guide the campus’s efforts to “level the playing field for everybody as much as you can” (BP01).

Student success: Academics and experience. Second, Bradford was focused on improving students’ academic success and experience of the campus. This focus reflected educational realities on campus as well as the influence of “[EFA] on the academic affairs side,” which housed the most visible aspect of EFA on campus (BQFA03). Thus, EFA was infused “into various academic components around campus” (BP01). As one EFA member asserted, “[N]o matter how much you say you support [EFA], if you are not teaching it at an academic institution, what does that say? If everybody isn't seeing themselves in the curriculum and not just in specific classes, it's not effective” (BQFA01). By influencing academic support, EFA could play a significant role in guiding the campus toward success for all students and draw an even tighter link between diversity and academic success efforts.

Student experiences. Respondents also believed that “the student experience here isn't just academic. There's the out-of-the-classroom and there's the extracurricular. So all areas of the campus focusing on and being really sensitive to—how are students experiencing their life here” as well as to disparities in those experiences (BAA01). Instead of “just assum[ing] that—everybody is all excited” about current programs, they hoped to engage students’ needs and interests, communicating “[W]e *want* you to find something that makes your heart sing...[and] if you can't find it, then we'll work with you to find other people that are interested in that same kind of experience” (BSA01, emphasis theirs), but I didn't come across examples of how this worked in practice. For some, this meant “think[ing] about intersections” to respond to questions like, “[H]ow does a female of color veteran—what's her experience and how do we support *that* person versus a [Southeast Asian] male with a learning disability, right? Because—a person doesn't fit in to just one of those categories” (BADV01, emphasis theirs). However, it wasn't clear how the campus engaged this orientation more broadly.

Serving the underserved. Bradford respondents acknowledged “that not everybody comes in with the same skills or the same opportunities that others have had” (BP01). To ignore these realities would abdicate the campus's responsibility for students' academic support. So, a third institutional priority was a desire to serve the underserved based on understanding of “which students are having issues”: “What about our underserved students?...What *else* can be done? What *else* is going on? What *else* do we need to know?” (BAA01, emphasis theirs). Even more, one respondent thought this orientation was motivated by the lived experiences of Bradford staff, faculty and administrators, of which a “critical mass” had been first-generation college students themselves and who “brought in that perspective...And so then it got added to the language and it got added to the planning” (BQFA02).

Being a “needle-mover.”⁵⁹ One of the most palpable drivers of EFA activity was the pursuit of change. When I asked how Bradford had accomplished so much under EFA when other System schools had barely budged, one respondent said that when people at Bradford saw an opportunity, they acted on it...together. Behind this momentum was the recognition of ongoing challenges that hadn’t been addressed through piecemeal efforts of the past. A senior administrator acknowledged, “We’d have small programs that were doing a great job with a few students but...[u]ltimately...our number weren’t changing much in terms of retention in particular, or graduation rates” (BP01). Bradford’s action-orientation was particularly palpable among the EFA committee, which was tellingly comprised of “action teams,” rather than sub-committees (BMC01). As one leader indicated, part of the committee’s success was its ability to “harness...that people want to do and can do and feel very passionate—but they don’t have a channel by which to express that or do it. So I think that’s what captivated people” (BQFA03).

External Benchmarking and Projects

External sources were influential. In one instance, the EFA committee recruited an external assessment team to identify strengths, weakness and needs “[s]o we could hopefully design a [summer bridge] program that would be better than if we ignored that kind of stuff” (BQFA04). External benchmarking guided program development, but it also revealed that models were difficult to find because “the specificity of how people were successful didn’t necessarily fit with what we could do always” but also because we are a normative school. We’re not the best, we’re not the very worst, but in that middle slot. Most people are doing just like we’re doing. They’re struggling” (BQFA02). Finally, several respondents connected EFA to the outcomes of projects with external entries through which respondents gathered and analyzed

⁵⁹ Quote taken from interview with BAA01.

institutional data. For example, one said that EFA actually started “on a more significant level” in 2005, with a System initiative to disaggregate student data that “brought the awareness of equity or inequity among the various racial ethnic groups on campus” (BIR01). These projects not only informed the design and selection of EFA projects but they were also used to benchmark success. One committee member said that returning to these assessments “allows us to look at what we are doing. If we are moving in the right direction when it comes to [EFA] and everything that we do on campus” (BMC01).

Design

Four interrelated goals guided much of EFA on Bradford’s campus. The primary goal was to improve student success outcomes, which they hoped to achieve through a second goal of infusing EFA to influence not just academic programs but every aspect of campus—its culture and ethos. Third, the campus engaged in an educational project to enhance community members’ understanding of difference. Finally, some respondents hoped to provide personalized experiences to support the success of students, faculty and staff.

Committing to student success. Success for all students was portrayed as a shared priority that gave the campus a common purpose. Some respondents articulated a desire to “reduce gaps in outcomes” (BQFA05) and, occasionally, to improve retention, but primarily, success meant that “movement is always towards graduation,” as one committee member stated plainly, “[I]f you admit ‘em—[the campus]’s supposed to be equally theirs and we’re supposed to try to get them to graduation, simple as that” (BQFA02). While for many, “nothing less was acceptable” (BQFA07), a handful believed that being “inclusive in the broadest sense” meant “allow[ing] people to be successful on their terms, however they define success” (BSA01). For example, one staff member told her team “that it’s not really our job to keep students here. It’s

our job to help students figure out what they want to do and that may not involve [Bradford]” (BADV01).

Either way, EFA was an organizing principle for this goal because it encouraged the campus to ask, “How can *all* students have an equal chance to succeed?’...[and t]o *commit* to the front door and make sure that everyone in here has a good opportunity to graduate” (BP01, emphasis theirs). For marginalized populations, in particular, one member asserted, this meant the campus should “provide them...with the skills that they need, the tools that they need to succeed” (BQFA03). So, inclusion was a critical link between EFA and student success because students were successful on campuses where they felt connected and could imagine being successful. Although many recognized students’ success as a shared responsibility, that belief was apparently not pervasive, according to respondents. Students were still sometimes blamed when they struggled but, as one said, “I feel like...it's not only the student failing; it's me failing the student. And I want staff and faculty to be at that level. And until we are there, we have a long ways to go” (BQFA06).

"Infusing" EFA.⁶⁰ A second EFA goal was to "infuse it throughout campus” (BP01) to make it a “normative” part of the culture, “something so fundamental that it shouldn’t be arguable” (BQFA02). Before EFA, the campus had “too many pockets” that were operating with “little cooperation” and that “need[ed] to be placed in a larger framework” (BP01). But EFA was more than a framework, it was a guiding philosophy—a way to “operationalize” “diversity as an [institutional] value system” that drove efforts to increase diversity, improve student experiences and outcomes, and emphasized “what's required of the institution” to make these goals a reality (BQFA07). Infusing EFA was a long-term project, that in the short-term required respondents to

⁶⁰ Quote taken from interview with BAA01.

“make the best base,” without which EFA “crumbles because you used substandard material, or you didn't think, or you didn't understand the chemistry of the cement...but our goal...if it's a long term project in the ethos building for the institution, is to get that base” (BQFA02). The long-term goal was for EFA to become “part and parcel of our culture” (BSA01) such that EFA principles are: “so integrated that it is a way of being...so rather than calling special attention—‘Oh, over here! Don’t forget!’—it becomes natural....It gets woven in and it would be missed if it wasn’t there” (BAA01).

One of the most articulated elements of infusing EFA was that all members of the campus community accept individual and institutional responsibility for student outcomes. Infusing EFA “just makes it everybody's work” instead of “the work of certain people...whatever office on campus that was set up to work with students of color...[Diversity] had been in a marginalized place and only one office was often in charge of that” (BQFA03). Through EFA, each person would see their work as part of what “we do in...a system that impact all kinds of students,” which “expands people's responsibility for students of color and all of our students” (BSA01). If that doesn’t happen, “it’s throwing the train of [EFA] off. And *you*, not the student, has then begun the process of not being successful. See I think we bear the real responsibility for this thing” (BQFA02, emphasis theirs). Beyond understanding students’ needs, taking responsibility for students’ success meant “it’s our responsibility to provide them with the—services and experiences that will allow them to reach and attain those goals...[I]t also puts the onus on us to remove the obstacles” (BSA01). Thus, EFA required action, which set it apart from diversity— “[EFA] really suggests the work that institutions need to do in a way that diversity doesn’t and then didn't bring about” (BQFA03).

The “university project.” A third institutional goal was what one respondent called the “university project” of helping students to become “educated” people (BQFA02) by figuring out “what kind of exposure can we give them to the world that they’re going to need to live in?” (BP01). Emphasizing learning opportunities outside of the classroom, an EFA leader said, “I just don’t want the students graduating without understanding who he or she is and without having had an opportunity to explore that through programs, through conversations, through readings” (BQFA07). In addition, all of the campus community—faculty, staff and administrators—were expected to engage in a similar project; part of having an inclusive campus is “educating the campus community” (BMC02), which means “it’s not just about educating students” (BQFA06). An EFA leader expanded this, saying her work is “not just for the students. It’s for the entire campus community and it’s quite frankly for [our city], too” (BQFA07). This, according to one respondent, was a central though underemphasized aspect of EFA because the policy isn’t explicitly framed as a learning project, but “It’s a new way of approaching things...So we still need to continue to train and educate our population...the work behind [EFA] is always the educating” (BMC01).

Personalization. Finally, as respondents aimed to be more inclusive, they hoped to do so in a way that was individualized by “always seeking out services—that understand who [students] are, where they come from, not just assume that everybody is the same” and “learn[ing] to be flexible in looking at different, creative ways because the one size fits all model for retention doesn’t work. We all know that. Though old news is still new” (BMC01). This was helping shift the campus mindset about its work with students. Instead of, ““This is the policy. This is the procedure so too bad, too sad,”” one administrator said that Bradford is asking ““Okay, what is it we can do to help you?” instead of throwing up the roadblock” (BSA01). This

“*vision* of a student-centered institution” echoed one EFA leader's own undergraduate experience in which “connecting to folks, connecting to faculty, connecting to administrators who made me feel that I mattered... They personalized my education and that's what I want to help do for the students that *I* get a chance to run into here” (BQFA07, emphasis theirs).

Target Populations

EFA efforts focused on underserved groups that were identified largely based on data about campus-based academic performance and experiences. Campus-wide, Bradford disaggregated student data to understand how and if groups of students accessed different academic opportunities (e.g. the campus honors program) or experienced different levels of academic performance (e.g. were more likely to fail or withdraw). Within this larger group, most EFA leaders prioritized students who were marginalized in terms of their racial or ethnic background: “[W]e always looked at... underrepresented minorities... [to] find where the gaps were compared to the university overall outcomes” (BQFA05). This emphasis reflected respondents’ concerns about the historical and contemporary educational experiences of racially marginalized students, what one respondent referred to as a “crisis of equity”: “[Y]ou look at who is in need, and then you provide what is needed, right? And... that might mean to other people that seems inequitable, right?... But if you want equality... that's to me the only way to do it” (BQFA03). Attention to these students had predated EFA, so even those who pushed for a broader interpretation of EFA knew that “programs and services that address some of the needs of our students of color—that’s always going to be kind of like our foundation” (BSA01).

Even with the pull of history and injustice, respondents’ justification for focusing on racially marginalized students was not only moral; it was also grounded in data about longstanding disparities at Bradford: “When we're thinking about making sure that all of students

succeed, we have to make sure that we look at those who are not succeeding... [T]here are many who are not succeeding but we have data about race” (BQFA01). As one committee member shared, “[F]or 10 years...we've known that students of color come in and 1 in 3 will leave. We've known that for quite a while” (BQFA03). Another respondent concurred, saying, “we have had problems...very well-documented *problems*” in outcomes for Black students, in particular (BQFA04, emphasis theirs). In addition, with only slightly more than a quarter of Black students graduating within six years, an EFA leader asserted, “[T]he work that I do—demonstrates that it's about everyone. But I make no apologies of helping the African American students, in particular, because they're doing the worst here” (BQFA07).

Challenges

Respondents shared challenges the campus would have to overcome to reach its goal of infusing EFA. Most significantly, they talked about the difficulty of coordinating the multiple pockets of EFA activity across campus; the general slowness of the implementation process, including the generation of results; and resistance to EFA. Finally, many respondents questioned Bradford’s ability to live EFA when its community lacked diversity.

Coordination. While EFA was meant to bring a guiding philosophy and umbrella, it led to a proliferation of working groups, committees, councils—“pockets of people doing their own thing” (BQFA06) but without “one particular plan that...tries to incorporate all the different components we have” (BP01). Many agreed that among the challenges the committee faced, “a big one was coordinating...and reducing the duplication of effort... [because] it wasn't as cohesive as it could have been” (BQFA05). In some cases, the limited coordination reflected a sense of differing underlying orientations to EFA, and a lack of willingness to cooperate. First, there was a perceived discrepancy between student and academic affairs, in which the former

was portrayed as focused on individual skills and the latter on structural changes that would improve educational outcomes. They also appeared to disagree over the extent to which racially marginalized students should be prioritized within EFA with student affairs more likely to embrace a diversity-as-difference approach. A third coordination challenge was the act of actually uniting programs. Rather than continuing to exist autonomously, programs were expected to deliver on shared goals and those that couldn't likely would not be retained, which was "very contentious and a very problematic and delicate thing" because people have "a lot of pride about their programs even if they have seventy percent failure" (BQFA02).

Slow process and results. Several respondents saw the slowness of EFA as one of its main drawbacks—getting the work done took a while and results were often slow. One respondent remarked that the transition to EFA had "really been a long slow painful process" (BREC01). Agreeing that EFA got off to "a little bit of a slow start," some respondents attributed this to System's rollout, which devolved decision-making about program design, goals, and target populations to the campuses which slowed the implementation process (BSA01). One member said that working on the EFA committee "helped me see how long it takes to get anything done. There's a lot of institutional inertia...Just seeing how do you carry out something...Who do you need to help you, who do you need to tell about it, how does the word spread?" (BQFA08). Still, even if "any kind of organizational change—it takes a while" (BSA01), it's possible that EFA, by its nature, wasn't speedy: "progress came slower. It was more discussions, and building alliances with people and groups, forging a little bit that way" (BQFA05). But people wanted to see outcomes. The new president, who considered himself to be an EFA advocate, said—given the lack of compelling data after "supporting [EFA] in the last 5, 6, 7 years"—"with all due respect to my great colleagues, I don't know how effective [EFA

activities] are...[M]y support for [EFA] is unwavering...but at the same time—they have to show me that what we're doing [works]" (BIL01).

For several respondents, the extended search for the new EFA hire was a prime example of things taking too long. Whether the numerous failed searches were “botched” or just the victims of bad timing, respondents agreed that the process had dragged on for too many years and had taken a toll on EFA’s progress (BQFA01). A committee member said that finally having the new hire “was a big thing...[because] that position was vacant for so long. Really seemed like a very negative thing” even as others on campus extended themselves to pick up the slack (BQFA08). One respondent explained the effect of having an interim for 7 years, saying, “So imagine what happens over time, it's not complacency but it's rather a kind of steadying the ship and let's do what we need to do” (BQFA07).

Resistance. Some on campus simply weren’t open to EFA. Despite mounting evidence, some were slow to accept the realities and others resisted an imperative to supplement what they saw as students’ own shortcomings. One EFA committee member guessed that “a sizable minority” thought EFA was “a total sham, a total waste of time, and a total inverse [sic] racism...[I]f we don't do well as people who are non-White, we don't deserve it because we're not ready for it and—we don't belong” (BQFA02). But, she continued, they felt the same way about “working class and poor Whites,” many of whom were also failing and would be helped through EFA (BQFA02). Others sought shelter from what they interpreted as the critique of the policy, finding it difficult to assimilate the disparities that EFA uncovered: “[Y]ou pride yourself on student success and then you find out that—some of the things you are doing or the processes you have in place—are limiting access...It's like, ‘Oh crap.’ Some people take that a little personally” (BSA01). Similar reasoning motivated resistance to the increased emphasis on

assessment EFA carried because, one information suggested: “I think a lot of folks think that assessment is looking at them. That they didn't do their jobs right. No, it's about how the student is doing, how the student is feeling, what did [the student] learn” (BMC01).

Some in the Bradford community resisted EFA because they felt like they didn't need it. They saw themselves as already “cultural competent” and therefore “we don't need to have any [EFA] goals because we're there” (BSA01). Others, it was believed, felt that they didn't need EFA because they “don't think it—is relevant to them. They don't—see where the problem is” (BQFA08). An EFA committee member related a conversation that was indicative of this oversight, saying that early in her career, a colleague struggled to understand concerns about gender inequity in their science department because, the colleague said, “we don't have many women chemistry majors, but the ones we do have are our best students” (BQFA08). Countering this, she said, if women are “only willing to stay if they are getting straight As, that means they're not sure they belong. If men can be here with a C-average, then women should—feel that they could be a [department] major with a C-average, too” and the department would know that they'd been successful when they graduated “mediocre” women (BQFA08).

Even as respondents saw the resistance “becoming less” (BREC01), it still took a toll. One committee member had been “super burnt out” the year before after so much “lifting and carrying all the time and fighting—not fighting but—cajoling my colleagues” (BQFA02). Another staff member imagined that “[b]eing a change agent [for the campus] is hard” because it “takes a really mighty strong person to come into an environment where they are going to be challenged every day or maybe frustrated every day or run into the ignorance every day and that's their job” (BREC01).

Campus diversity. Campus diversity was an oft-articulated concern among Bradford respondents. They bemoaned the lack of student diversity in the student body though one suggested that there were inherent limitations in that regard because Bradford draws students from a predominantly White region. When asked about EFA efforts that hadn't been successful, one EFA leader said she "can't put my head at anything" but pointed out the "lack of students of color on this campus" (BQFA07). In addition, because Bradford is "still a majority White student body," it's difficult for some to identify ways to improve the success of marginalized students because "we still don't have a lot of minority students on campus and we can't lose them out of general [courses] if they're not there in the first place...So we're waiting for the influx" (BQFA08).

More pointed to the lack of staff and faculty diversity, which they saw as solvable, and integral to "[h]av[ing] the workforce suggest the world you're telling your students exists and that they will join" (BQFA02). Most respondents spoke of needing faculty and staff "of color" but one respondent talked about "bringing experience to enhance your teaching," noting that Bradford was missing other diversity that could be important models for students as well, "I know faculty members who have hearing impairment but we don't have a lot with disabilities. We have a handful of faculty that are out as LGBTQ. We have no faculty that is out as trans" (BQFA01). Increased staff and faculty diversity would help make Bradford a more comfortable and accessible environment for racially marginalized students, but affected the campus generally: "If we can't support a diverse campus community, I think that speaks volumes to students and it also—makes the environment kind of stagnant and creates some problems in terms of learning" (BQFA06). One of the campus faculty spoke incredulously about her potential impact on White students, saying that more often than not:

I am the only Black professional person they will have met...I will be the only one they've ever had to model. I'm the only one who's ever had a sense of authority in their lives. Seriously? This is the United States of America. It's not Iceland. It's ridiculous. (BQFA02)

Perhaps more frustrating was the belief that while many would admit that Bradford hasn't "done a very good job with that [faculty diversity] and we need to" (BP01), the only impediment is the willingness to lean into the challenge. Resources weren't the problem, one staff member argued, "What we don't have is the will" (BQFA02).

Actors as Institutional Assets

The success of EFA at Bradford was largely attributed to the people involved. First, respondents noted the influence of various administrators' advocacy for EFA. The former president, who displayed a willingness "to look at challenges" (BAA01) and a social justice orientation, "from a System level often was the voice of reason and the voice that really pushed the System to do [EFA] and I think that legacy has really filtered down to the campus" (BQFA01). Respondents hoped the new president would take up this mantle: "You've got to be part of the president's sense of—his or her own legacy: 'When *I* was [the President], this is how we grew.' And I want this person to fall in love with [EFA]" (BQFA02, emphasis theirs). Finally, senior administrators were highlighted—a student affairs administrator as a "champion for students" and an academic affairs administrator for "cast[ing] a very long shadow in ways he doesn't even know" (BAA01).

EFA Committee. Second, the EFA committee was not only a structural support for EFA but its members were critical aspects of the work on campus. When asked about all Bradford had achieved under EFA, committee members talked about the importance of having a group of like-

minded folks united behind the effort. As volunteers, members joined “because they want to be there. Nobody's forced to be there” (BMC01), and the group was unequivocally committed to EFA values—that is, “promot[ing] a level of acceptance for all groups,” expanding success for all students, and expanding equity for marginalized populations (BQFA06). Perhaps most importantly, the group was comprised of individuals who “do the work” (BQFA02). Even though “these are people who have *a lot* on their plate,” one member said, “they're doing it out of their own passion, their own just commitment to ‘We're not going to let this happen on our watch’” (BQFA04, emphasis theirs). More than one member quit other committees to focus exclusively on service to the EFA committee.

Among a relatively well-regarded group, two members stuck out. First, several respondents saw the EFA chair, BQFA03, as the heart of EFA at Bradford. She “is as committed as any person can be to this stuff” (BQFA02), and recruited members by telling them that the committee “would be a group that does things. We're not going to be a group that sits around... We basically bitch about these issues once a month and then we leave and nothing ever changes” (BQFA04). She was also good at motivating people—“the chair of that committee is a great person in her wanting to make people move and think differently”—and drawing in expertise from beyond the group, which meant spreading the word the about EFA and improved the group’s projects (BMC01). BQFA03 herself was drawn in because with each positive change, “you know that's student lives...[W]hat I saw in [EFA] was that devotion to social justice and that devotion to making it matter to a lot of people at the university. And I think that's what I can get excited about.”

Second, after the new EFA hire was finally made, she and BQFA03 became a force: “[T]hat's my ride or die on campus...[S]he's just phenomenal,” the new hire said (BQFA07).

Many had the same to say about BQFA07, who was widely received as an ideal fit for the position. When she found the position announcement, BQFA07 also found a name—EFA—for the work she'd been doing for years:

this position is written for [me]. And I sent it to my...best friend from college...and she said, "You gotta apply for this." And that's...what brought it to me. Because it is—it really is what I've been doing my entire career. I really think it's how I've been raised. (BQFA07)

Respondents expressed the belief that now, with BQFA07's hire, EFA work could really begin. While acknowledging the work already accomplished under EFA at Bradford, he said, "[O]ur [EFA] vision has been reinvigorated by hiring BQFA07 and some of the ideas that she has...BQFA07's fantastic and she *has* done a lot and will continue to do a lot to make our program even stronger" (BP01, emphasis theirs). "Lucky" is a good way to describe how others felt. One noted her hire was a boon for Bradford, saying that people like BQFA07, "[T]hey aren't everywhere. And they also have or often have many opportunities" (BREC01).

Actors' attributes. Beyond the specific players mentioned above, there was a sense that the attributes of individuals involved in EFA were part of what made it so powerful. Across campus, there were people who didn't just talk about EFA or valuing it; instead, they were dedicated to making it a campus-wide orientation. This work was being done on many fronts. One committee member commented on people's willingness to "tak[e] the results of either surveys or what's happening culturally and politically and...at least immediately forming a committee that has that task" as an indication of their desire to use data to generate positive change on campus (BQFA01). Another remarked, "People are trying. People are trying. And they're trying in classes. They're trying in organizational efforts" (BQFA02). Beyond the

campus-wide EFA committee, other divisions and units created EFA committees who work could serve as models of EFA integration for the rest of campus, student affairs in particular. Even an administrator who was concerned that the division had different goals for EFA, still had to “give them a lot of credit” for integrating EFA into all of their job postings and departments, even athletics which he “wouldn't have thought would care much about that” (BP01). Finally, the EFA chair asserted that “the most successful we've got is when departments are working together to create a plan”—an indication of a collaborative spirit that appeared to thrive at Bradford and to drive EFA efforts (BQFA03).

Resources

Resource commitment was also an important element in EFA at Bradford. Early resources came from the System but Bradford's own commitment of resources assuaged concerns about how EFA's expanded notion of diversity would affect budgets. When EFA was introduced, one respondent feared that money for diversity work would “all merge in [an EFA budget], and those funds and everything that we have for our students [of color] is all gonna get watered down” (BMC01). Perhaps because these funds were sustained, another respondent said that she knew resources were a concern but for now the different areas under EFA were:

trying to work under the assumption that we will find other ways to get money so we are not fighting over a limited pot. So we try to work really closely together, so again we are not fighting. But I know that was one of the questions related to what it means to do [EFA]. (BQFA01)

In addition, the campus invested in a new EFA hire when “they could have just let that one go” after a number of failed searches (BMC01). The new hire's personal commitments and

professional responsibilities helped guarantee that issues related to race and marginalized populations would not fall by the wayside.

But there were also concerns. A senior administrator noted that it “always takes vigilance and [resource] support...to make sure that we have enough people across campus that are doing what we need to have done” (BP01). For others this vigilance was already lacking. One respondent pointed to the resources committed to another campus priority while the director positions of two centers in the EFA umbrella had been part-time for at least 8 years. Further, campus leadership justified differential allocations between these centers because they were not equally active but, the respondent argued, this was circular given that activities followed from available resources. Another was also wary of excuses, which she said reflected lack of will. Referring to the well-recognized lack of campus diversity, she was told there weren’t funds to hire more faculty, but “I’m not asking them to hire a hundred people. I know you don’t have the money for a hundred. Hire 10. Hire 10. *Decide* you’re going to increase your number by 10...and pay for it...period” (BQFA01, emphasis theirs). Finally, one respondent said, “you never know what the future holds,” remarking on the potential impact of budget cuts on institutional priorities and continued support of EFA (BQFA06).

Conclusion

Bradford University’s enactment of *Excellence for All* was motivated by a number of elements that reflected the perceived value of the policy itself as well as the internal motivations and commitments of the bulk of the campus community. Despite stumbling with its rhetoric, and even rejecting it in some cases, members of the Bradford campus community were drawn by the philosophical principles in which EFA was grounded—improved outcomes for all students, the pursuit of equity for marginalized students, fulfilling engagement for student’s across the

academic and non-academic sides of campus, and an explicit, shared goal for the campus to pursue these outcomes for any admitted student. Even as there continued to be naysayers, the movement at Bradford was toward continued action, expansion and institutionalization of EFA across the campus, with a particular emphasis on what could be achieved when disparate divisions and departments worked together on behalf of students.

Chapter 6

Scaffolding Equity: Clearfield College

Making Institutional Change but not Toward Equity

After hearing about my research interest in student success, one Clearfield administrator said the campus was a great place to study because they had been “pressured” into focusing on retention (CFN_11062014). He corrected himself to say that it was also the right thing to do but that with fewer students graduating from high school, Clearfield’s enrollments depended on retaining those who started, which made the campus’s interest in success “a little more self-centered” because enrollment generates revenue from tuition dollars (CQFA01). While many were motivated by a desire to create change for a population for whom access was so critical, they lamented that stakeholders critiqued institutional success without registering their students’ unique set of challenges compared to those at other four-year schools in the System. Clearfield students were educated in some of the state’s most under-resourced school districts; attended school part-time, mostly lived off-campus and worked full-time; and, finally, typically choose among Clearfield, a local technical college or no college at all.

Given this context, Excellence for All was not a high priority at Clearfield where broad student success dominated institutional attention. More than 7 years after Excellence for All launched in the state, respondents reported that Clearfield hadn’t really made the shift. Combined with a longstanding institutional reluctance to attend to race and diversity—despite being the most diverse campus in the System—there was a common belief that all students’ outcomes were so poor that no groups were more in need, even as gaps persisted by race and socioeconomic status. While a reshaped Excellence for All committee was poised to take on a

handful of projects and Clearfield had managed to raise the profile of student success on campus and initiate efforts meant to address students' academic challenges, their Excellence for All efforts had languished and they were unable to divert significant institutional attention to equity issues faced by racially marginalized students on campus.

Interpretation

Clearfield respondents generally had little to say about what the EFA meant or required. Among the few who did, at best, "Excellence for All" was merely a set of "new buzzwords" (CQFA01). At worst and more commonly, respondents found EFA to be unclear and meaningless. One, upon being introduced to the term, wondered, "'What is it?' Honestly, 'What is that?'" (CMC01). Another was turned off by the attitude the words seemed to carry. She said EFA "seems like sort of a pompous name. It sounds like a very academic, aren't we important kind of a [thing]...Academics like big words" (CQFA02). One committee member disregarded any legitimate philosophical implication, reasoning that the name was useless and might be embraced "if we phrased it in some other way. Like, what can we do to improve the graduation rates of underrepresented minorities? I think *that* kind of thing...a fairly high percentage of people on campus would be interested in doing" (CQFA01, emphasis theirs).

When asked for a definition of EFA, one committee member stumbled, "Yeah, that's a great question...[I]t's just being inclusive, I think, and being welcoming, and open...[but] I don't think we've ever really defined it" (CQFA01). Finding EFA "hard to explain," he suggested twice that I Google the phrase to "get a better feel for it...I think it is a little nebulous...what it is" (CQFA01). The nebulousness was a source of frustration when this respondent was first introduced to the phrase:

in the back of my mind I'm going, "Oh my gosh, here we go again." So then when they described it, I was like "Oh, I don't know what this is." 'Cause they used lots of terms and I was like "Ah man, this is going nowhere." (CQFA01)

Others were still pleased to see people participating in EFA activities because it demonstrated "that a lot of people supported this concept of EFA even though...sometimes they don't necessarily know the whole philosophy behind it and I don't even know the whole philosophy behind it" (CMC03).

However rather than support for EFA, participation in EFA activity might just have reflected ongoing engagement with diversity given that it wasn't clear to all that there was a difference between EFA and diversity. Perhaps this was because the shift to EFA didn't appear to be particularly unique or meaningful. A staff person noted that "EFA" and diversity were still used "interchangeably" by some on campus (CMC03). An EFA committee member shared that EFA was "pretty synonymous with diversity...EFA here is ways to figure out how to incorporate diverse perspectives into all aspects of the university, make sure that we value the diverse perspectives that...people bring and that we...help people be successful" (CQFA04). Another said the committee was "basically sort of a diversity group" and could have pursued the same work if "it was titled 'Diversity Committee'" (CQFA01).

Inclusion and Diversity

Respondents at Clearfield saw EFA as primarily about two things. First, EFA was about inclusion; it meant to include everyone on campus—"from all walks of life, all ethnic backgrounds" (CIR01), "whoever—or whatever their circumstance is" (CMC01). An EFA committee member shared, "the inclusivity piece is making sure that we have...policies and procedures and different programs across campus that can help promote the diversity and

inclusion...of many different populations” (CQFA05). This was echoed by a campus administrator who indicated that EFA at Clearfield means “we want everybody to be involved. And we don’t want to miss anybody. We don’t want to focus on just one group and ignore the others. They're all important” (CP01).

A staff member who shared that EFA “just means that when we work together that we really need to make a conscious effort to make sure that everybody is included...that everybody’s opinion is voiced,” said he’d already seen this modeled by the campus president:

I was at a meeting once with [our president] and everybody's talking and [the president] turns over to me and is like, “Ok, well, we’ve kind of heard from everybody. What about you?...I just see you over there thinking. What are you thinking about?” And giving me that opportunity to kind of voice my own opinion...[T]hat's what the [EFA] means is...being actively conscious about your environment around and making sure that others are included. (CMC03)

Related to inclusion was a second perceived tenant of EFA: acknowledging, respecting and leveraging difference, and “exposing folks to all of the differences that students, staff and faculty have on campus” (CMC01). EFA suggests that “a diverse group makes it a more excellent group,” meaning that “diversity is good for it's own sake because it makes the ability to solve the problem...better” (CQFA01). Thus, respecting difference would allow Clearfield to take advantage of the “great opportunity” to “exchange ideas and create synergy” that homogeneous groups don’t provide (CMC01).

Doing More with Diversity

The understanding of EFA articulated by Clearfield respondents drew a connection between EFA and diversity. Some saw EFA as a broadened definition of diversity while others

believed that EFA offered a reframing of diversity. In either formulation, EFA required more—more than diversity did: a more expansive definition of the target population, embracing a different understanding of the value of diversity. One staff member said that EFA wasn't just about diversity but about “acting in harmony”:

we need to move beyond just celebrating our...differences and that's kind of where EFA comes in...We not only need to celebrate our differences but we also need to work together as a...solidified entity...[T]hat to me is what EFA means: is that we are inclusive about how we work with one another not leaving people out. (CMC03)

“Diversity” merely highlighted recognizing and celebrating difference—values often associated with the word “tolerance” or the “need to put up with others” (CMC03). Instead, EFA urged the campus to focus on intentionally pursuing goals as a collective rather than merely seeing itself as a campus where people from diverse backgrounds happened to gather.

Broadening diversity. EFA was largely seen to have a broadening effect on the definition of diversity. The policy's emphasis on “inclusion” was a central facet of this interpretation (CEM01). For some, this was a good match for Clearfield because a focus on inclusivity was already a part of the campus's mission statement. Still, in thinking about EFA's relationship to diversity, there was a discrepancy in respondents' understanding of who was really the target of these inclusion efforts. For some, “all” meant all. To be faithful to EFA, Clearfield must consider everyone:

Not just...the Caucasian student or just the African American student or...just the Hispanic student but all of 'em. They're all important to us...and they all have things to contribute. And so when I think of EFA, I like that term because I think it's broader and means we...consider everyone, all of our constituencies here on campus. (CP01)

For others, the expanded diversity of EFA was meant to include marginalized groups that hadn't been considered in previous diversity plans. EFA moved beyond race but didn't leave it behind. Instead of thinking about diversity as “racial and ethnic diversity... [EFA]’s been more broadly defined as diversity meaning sexual orientation, gender issues and so on. So EFA apparently addresses everything...[EFA], we heard, would cater to all sorts of *excluded* groups” (CQFA03, emphasis mine). EFA continued to center race and ethnicity and the challenges faced by these populations but also included other marginalized or historically underrepresented groups.

Even with attention to marginalized students, the addition of other focal populations could further tax—given the absence of additional resources—a campus already struggling to support students from racially and ethnically marginalized groups. One respondent noted that given these circumstances, “the emphasis on race and ethnicity would be reduced” (CQFA03). Another was apprehensive about the potential of this diverted attention:

while we haven't been successful in making a change in that [race-related] achievement gap, now you are adding all the other populations? And...you didn't increase the resources? *This* group? They're not important anymore. They're going to lose...[T]heir statistics are going to get worse. So I didn't want to have that feeling [of needing to do more] multiplied because now...it's going to be worse. It's going to be even worse statistics than before. (CMC01, emphasis theirs)

Nevertheless, he acknowledged that with EFA as currently implemented at Clearfield, this diversion “hasn't yet been a part of my experience” (CMC01).

However respondents defined the target population, a focus on racially and ethnically marginalized students continues for two reasons. First, as one respondent said, “That is based on the achievement gap”—a concern with which had been maintained across System diversity

plans—“when we moved to [EFA]...we broadened the population that we were serving, but...we didn't remove the importance of that achievement gap component” (CMC01). Second, similar challenges were faced by marginalized populations at Clearfield—that is, “the underrepresented, racial minorities and the first generation students, who don't have the advantages that folks who are second, third generation have” (CQFA04). Thus, addressing the needs of low-income or first-generation college students was a “back door approach...that most often is going to include a lot of students of color” (CMC01, emphasis theirs). Still it wasn't clear if the lack of explicit focus on marginalized populations came from the policy or the campus itself, which “doesn't speak...about race a whole lot” (CMC01).

Reframing diversity. A small handful of respondents “speculated” that EFA reframed diversity, which was associated with “watering down standards” (CQFA04). Through EFA, which “erase[d] some of the stigma” by making explicit the desire to maintain quality and to pursue diversity, Clearfield could communicate that “we want to maintain standards of excellence but, we want to just open the gates for people who have historically not been able to participate” (CQFA04). Even more, EFA encouraged people to “think about [diversity] differently,” arguing for a causal relationship between diversity and excellence:

A diverse group makes it a more excellent group. Diversity is good for its own sake because it makes the ability to solve the problem, or whatever, better...[S]o your [diversity] goal... it's a positive thing to do...Don't think of it as ‘equality’ or ‘quotas’ or whatever, you're trying to take advantage of the multiple diverse backgrounds that people have....So, EFA kind of is a mindset change: the value of diversity itself and that you might build a group...of diverse people because that's the best environment to have.
(CQFA01)

That said, this “mindset change” was not pervasive at Clearfield. More common was a sense of responsibility—rather than of opportunity—presented by diversity to: “incorporate the views and ideas of all the different groups that we serve on campus and that were not excluding people from...what’s taking place here” (CP01).

Defining Success

Almost no respondents were concerned with the institution-level success of EFA; instead most focused on shorter-term success goals that represented—rather than larger-scale achievements—the success of concerted activities that had eluded Clearfield in the past. Still, two respondents articulated a long-term vision for EFA. Success for EFA would mean that authentic engagement with diversity had become “natural” (CMC03). Authentic engagement was already being modeled by students who enacted, one respondent assumed, a comfort with and expectation of diversity to which they had been exposed in high school:

It’s not just, “Oh, let’s include so and so organization because we need to be diverse.” It’s more about, “Let’s include so and so organization because this is what they have to offer, this is something that they can do. This is their expertise.” (CMC03)

As a result, these students were “living” EFA even if they might not “know specifically about what the philosophy behind [it] might be” (CMC03). This could be a model for faculty and staff who, despite “conscious effort,” still “need to assimilate [the philosophy of EFA] more into our day-to-day activities” (CMC03).

A senior administrator suggested that EFA was about “so much more than the numbers and the metrics” (CIL01). Instead, EFA encouraged changes in institutional culture:

It’s about what is the campus culture that you desire? Or what is the culture?...[D]o you have...a climate that is accepting of all?...[C]an you see that? Do you feel that? Can you

have conversations about race and gender and difference on campus? Can those conversations happen anywhere on the campus? Do you have a campus community that is free of discrimination and harassment? (CIL01)

Through this attention to institutional culture, EFA would be assimilated into daily practice on campus, perhaps eliminating the need for an EFA committee, according to one respondent.

Implementation

After years of confusion and inaction, by the 2014-2015 academic year, members of the Clearfield EFA committee had “decided, let’s *do*. Let’s just—figure something out, and let’s *do*. And let’s see if we can have an impact” (CQFA02, emphasis theirs). The committee pushed for change, even on a small scale, and demonstrated a proactive orientation they hoped would influence the rest of the campus:

in the past it was, “I’ll get permission and then can I do things.” And part of the problem was, well, [we] never kind of got permission. So a lot of things never happened...[W]e’re just going to do it. And if we have to apologize later, that’s fine...What we’re hoping is that...as we have these conversations, as we have these—practices and folks see...that they’re successful, *hopefully*, that will open up the doors to have some other conversations and other kinds of practices that we can engage in. (CQFA04, emphasis theirs)

The EFA committee’s work began with three projects: a pilot mentoring program, a diversity retreat, the Clearfield Respecting Difference Project, and diversity recognition.

Pilot mentoring program. Most prominent among the committee’s activities was a pilot mentoring program launched during the Spring 2015 semester. One of the committee members, who’d been a part of a similar program at his former institution served as the group’s motivator

for the project—“[H]e talked about the hidden curriculum. And...that’s what got us talking about it, and maybe what students might not fully understand when they got here to campus”

(CQFA02). The program filled a need on campus where there were “a lot of really neat peer-to-peer mentoring initiatives” but no programs that connected students with faculty or administrators together for mentoring opportunities (CED01). Planning involved recruiting members from the committee and from across campus, and developing—through a series of conversations among program participants—“an action plan...models of our first meeting with a student, [and] what some of the things we are going to be doing” (CEM02).

The program was designed for “underrepresented minorities” (CQFA01) who the EFA committee leaders believed could be “academically at risk” (CSA01). This included first-generation or low-income students who weren’t already receiving advising or mentoring through another campus program. These categories were chosen because they would “include a lot of students of color” and “kept the pool open so that we could make sure we had enough [participants] to pilot” (CMC01, emphasis theirs). Most of the mentors were also members of the EFA committee but included others from across campus—“[W]e have the chief financial officer as one of the mentors...and classified staff, and everyone in between” (CED01). The program was designed with the intention that mentors would develop relationships with mentees that would allow them to “see that we can be there to help navigate with any kind of extra questions that they might have...that they’re having trouble in a class, just anything, anything that they need” (CQFA02). After a launch event for the full group, students and their mentors would meet one-on-one—hopefully two or three times during the first couple of months—for at least the rest of the semester.

Early response to the mentoring program opportunity was positive for the mentors but less so for would-be mentees. The pilot was much anticipated by the mentor volunteers who saw it as “something really unique and exciting” (CEM02). In addition, word had begun to spread beyond the current cohort and others on campus wanted to get involved. An EFA committee leader shared, “People are nervous but they're so excited to have these interactions with students. And we're hoping it goes well...because people are like now why didn't you ask me [to be a mentor]” (CED01)? Several students declined invitations to join the mentoring pilot due to what a committee member recognized as students' “real-life issues” (CMC01) while an administrator suggested the need for students to “*realign* your priorities” (CSA01, emphasis theirs). Despite these hurdles, the pilot was planned to launch with approximately 10 mentees, and there was hope for “significant growth” in the program, including an extended pilot in Fall 2015 (CMC01).

Diversity retreat. An upcoming diversity retreat was the second most discussed project led by the EFA committee. Expanding beyond the members of the committee, the retreat would bring together about 25 people. In addition to staff, faculty and administrators explicitly focused on diversity on campus, the organizers invited other community members, including those involved in campus governance, human resources, and academic planning. In particular, they invited “some of the usual and some of the not so usual suspects”—people who might not normally be involved in diversity conversations on campus to include more diverse viewpoints and involve more people in Clearfield's diversity planning (CED01).

The primary motivation was to develop and agreement on a definition of diversity that would guide the committee and the campus's broader diversity work. Clarity was important but so was campus buy-in. One of the retreat facilitators voiced the goal this way: “[W]hat we didn't want to do was sit down...and say, ‘This is what diversity is here at [Clearfield] and y'all adhere

to it. ' Because people won't" (CMC01). Rather than telling the campus what diversity was, the organizers thought their efforts would be more successful if campus members developed a definition together. The need for the discussion was indicative of EFA committee members' values and of the stagnation that had formerly dominated the group. The campus needed to develop a shared understanding of diversity and inclusion work because none had been developed in the past. For example, people would often refer to how diverse the campus was—that is, as “the most diverse campus in the system, percentage-wise”— but “I'm not sure people know what that means” (CED01).

During the 6 hours of this “first ever diversity discussion” (CED01), attendees would reflect on and discuss a set of guiding questions:

do we need a common foundation or understanding? Is there common understanding of how we construct diversity and inclusion and social justice at [Clearfield]? How do we continue to collectively work together to come to common understanding, or common foundation? Is there merit to a common understanding emerging?...Could it impact our collective work, and how?...[H]ow do we support-slash-maintain autonomy?...[And] are there parallels between EFA and diversity?...[I]t's just basic stuff, like, this isn't rocket science. (CED01)

This plan was “called a diversity discussion in *lieu* of calling it a diversity training,” because “goal is to have them begin to think about what is diversity mean here” rather than simply being told (CED01, emphasis theirs). Building from this new foundation, the committee and others could prioritize next steps instead of just doing what had been done in the past.

While people agreed to participate, some were wary of an “agenda” lurking beneath the organizers' intentions (CED01). Other of the daylong commitment—“[T]hat's a lot of time,” one

member remarked (CQFA01). They were also unclear about what would happen during the retreat—“I’m not sure about the details” (CADV01)—or after—“I don’t know what will come out of it” (CQFA01). Still, committee members had clear aspirations for the experience. One of the organizers hoped it strengthen cooperation among those working on diversity on campus:

I just want to get everyone in the room together...I want people to put their [agendas] aside...Or at least able to articulate them in a way that’s...more central to...that foundation piece...[H]ow can we *all* have really great work and understand what each other’s doing, and how we can support each other. (CED01, emphasis theirs)

Another committee member was similarly hopeful, and open to the retreat creating new pathways for the diversity work on campus, “I hope that we can all go in open-minded and everyone feels comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas...That people are willing to move in a different direction if that's what we decide we should do” (CQFA02).

Respecting Difference Project. A third project that respondents mentioned, the Respecting Difference Project, was the only one that had been launched by the time of my data collection. Meant to “heighten awareness and to create dialogue,” the RDP was borrowed from Bradford University where it had been a response to hate crimes on campus (CED01). Rather than just reacting to trouble on campus, however, committee leaders at Clearfield “wanted to be proactive” with “people wear[ing the shirts] on days that were significant” (CMC01). Through RDP:

[S]tudents would go through Title IX and different trainings during orientation and sign a pledge that they would be a part of a respectful community and that, by signing the pledge, if something happened in the community or there's something going on

nationally—like the anniversaries that happened this year [e.g. the Civil Rights Act]—that we would come together in solidarity and wear [RDP shirts]. (CED01)

A staff member noted his appreciation when, after an altercation on campus, students wore RDP shirts—a show of “solidarity around campus” that demonstrated “what they don't put up for and they do know what they don't want to see on their campus and they do know what they expect others to behave like and, too, how they want to see others treated” (CMC03). Nevertheless, over time, the people appeared to wear the shirts “willy nilly” (CED01). Although the EFA committee leaders planned to re-launch the program in the future, it was on hold after the short pilot because of inconsistencies in implementation.

Diversity recognition. Finally, the EFA committee’s Diversity Dynamo awards were meant to “recognize people for their efforts around diversity and inclusion” (CED01). These “diversity champions” are “[p]eople who typically are *not* recognized but are model citizens of what somebody should be doing in terms of being inclusive for all” (CMC03, emphasis theirs). The awards are based on nominations—not self-nominations—and the number increased from 55 to almost 80 in the award’s second year, which, a respondent said, indicated that “people are looking at and recognizing the people who represent—the philosophy of [EFA]” (CMC03). Still, the campus has a ways to go in building awareness about EFA. One staff member who’d been recognized as a Diversity Dynamo said, “I’ve heard of it, [EFA]. I was recognized as a [misnames the award], which is our award for individuals who are being honored for their efforts towards [EFA], but I don't know a *whole* lot about it” (CADV01, emphasis theirs). After realizing her mistake with the award’s name, she said, “Oh that's awful, see I've even given you the wrong name!...I think we're still trying to work that piece [definition of EFA] out on our campus” (CADV01). The committee further encouraged public representation of the EFA

philosophy through its mini-grant program, which Clearfield community members could use to “bring a speaker on campus that's going to deal or speak about diversity issues” (CMC03).

EFA committee members anticipated that more diversity discussions would be held across campus, eventually including among “our maintenance and facility staff,” and that the mentoring program would grow to include more members of the Clearfield campus community (CMC01). I was not able to observe the impact of these activities since most would hit their stride after my data collection ended.

Successes

Perhaps the biggest success of EFA was that the committee was able to complete and/or plan a handful of efforts that were responsible for a subtle sense of optimism regarding EFA at Clearfield. There was a perception that the climate at Clearfield was relatively more hospitable to EFA and more action-oriented, which was credited to the members of the latest iteration of the EFA committee. In particular, the new committee leadership:

are *very* active and *very* aware of the achievement gap and they're ones who want to take action. So, given the two different chairs and given some additional people who are on the committee, they're like “Yes, we gotta do some things differently. We got to go out and fix the gap.” (CQFA04, emphasis theirs)

Their leadership and the perceived efficacy of the EFA committee also changed how the committee was viewed by other members of the Clearfield community. One of the committee leaders reflected that in the past, the previous committee “lost membership” because it wasn't very active and “didn't have a purpose” (CED01). She continued, “Now we have people who are interested again and like, ‘Oh!’ Maybe interested in rejoining. You know, ‘I want to be a part of this’” (CED01).

As discussed in “Activities,” the committee’s efforts included the Respecting Difference Project, which—although people “sometimes they don’t necessarily know the whole philosophy behind [EFA]”—indicated that the campus “supported” EFA (CMC03). As noted above, nominations for a second EFA project, dissemination of Diversity Dynamo awards that recognized the efforts of diversity champions on campus, had increased dramatically over the previous year, which, one respondent assumed, meant “that we’re making the philosophy of EFA visible on campus, that we are creating a culture of inclusivity and that people are aware of it” (CMC03).

While still in its pilot phase, a third, project, the pilot mentoring program represented an approach that “might not of happened last year” under previous EFA leadership—“[I]f we’re to propose this thing last year, it’s you know, No, we can’t do that. We can’t have this particular program” (CQFA04). The absence of resistance suggested “that there’s hopefully some change in the air” (CQFA04). Even as the program required extra work of mentors at a time when most people at Clearfield were “all doing more with less,” one of the organizers thought this context contributed to the program’s success: “I think the mentoring thing is huge, like you saw people who aren’t happy and this totally excited them: to be in a room with all these people and share their story on why they want to do this” (CED01).

Influences

Respondents generally believed that EFA at Clearfield represented response to a mandate from System, and that diversity at Clearfield was now known as EFA because “at a practical level, that’s what the [System] calls it now” (CMC01). One respondent recognized that “the name comes from the researchers who created the model, that created the framework...And we...as a part of the [System] have adopted that framework. So we’re calling it the same”

(CQFA01). However, development of EFA at Clearfield was heavily influenced by campus concerns related to students' outcomes and experiences on campus.

Student outcomes. Clearfield respondents were concerned about students' college success "[w]hen you serve a very diverse population...I think we have to be concerned about the...success rates of the students in those diverse groups" (CEM01). Clearfield students had relatively low retention and graduation rates compared to others in the System, which was attributed to their being a largely first generation population that lacked college knowledge and that was educated in "low-income" and "low-perform[ing]" school districts (CIR01). "Navigat[ing] the system" and learning that "some of the tactics that worked well for you in high school are not necessarily going to well here" were of chief concern:

the people who are second generation, middle class, students whose families have gone to college,...the parents can teach them, "Here's what to expect." Or their older siblings can say, "Here's what you do. Here's what you don't do." These students don't have that.

And...that's huge. I think these kinds of hidden things are really big. (CQFA04)

For this and other reasons, Clearfield faced an achievement gap in which racially and ethnically marginalized had lower success rates than their White counterparts. So, even as EFA "broadened the population that we were serving," the achievement gap was a carry-over from previous diversity plans and became a focus of EFA (CMC01). The EFA Committee hoped to deliver "sustainable" student success programs "that have an impact and don't cost a lot...sustainable programs" (CED01).

Campus climate. Respondents were aware that attention to climate issues was necessary to live into the EFA philosophy because students' college experience was influenced by academic and non-academic factors. A recent climate survey indicated that "there are still some challenges

that we have to address...and we have to be willing to do that. And I think that's part of that EFA culture that we're willing to do that" (CIL01). The lack of diversity among Clearfield's faculty was a climate concern "cause I'm not sure our faculty and staff mimic our student body...If you have a really diverse student body, you should have a fairly diverse faculty and staff. And so, what's going on?" (CED01). In addition to "employment and hiring, and making sure that we are recruiting a diverse population of faculty and staff," looking at campus climate included "diversity in inclusion programing and training...[and] looking at the campus itself to see, 'Alright, what are some other areas that we need to look at?'" (CSA01).

Broadly, transitions in the group primarily responsible for Clearfield's EFA work also affected what was possible with the policy. When he was there, the former senior diversity administrator, who had also been chair of the EFA committee, "would just talk and talk and talk" (CED01) and tended to focus on compliance with "policies and procedures," which inhibited the initiation of new work (CMC01). Then, quite suddenly, he was gone or "was disappeared," as one respondent joked (CQFA04). Since his departure, Clearfield's EFA committee had been in transition, the effects of which are discussed in more detail in "Actors" and "Challenges" below. One member said, the EFA committee was "at a transition period...I think...the other initiatives will allow us to morph and grow as a group and then...once we've coalesced, really take on the bigger things, I would hope" (CED01).

Design

While no specific target population(s) are named in the EFA policy circulated by System, it was clear from the projects the Clearfield EFA committee designed that their preference was to focus on first generation and low socioeconomic status students, and by extension "racial minorities" (CQFA03). As noted, these official categories were a "back door approach" to

including racially and ethnically marginalized students because of the typical overlap among these groups, especially at Clearfield (CMC01). Although respondents occasionally recognized the longer-term goal of making Clearfield a place where all students could be comfortable and successful and the committee created student-facing programs, students did not appear to be a primary focus of EFA efforts. Instead, activities focused most centrally on the campus community, attempting to define diversity and its goals and to raise the visibility of diversity efforts on campus.

Goals. One member shared a small set of goals that were the focus of the EFA committee: a mentoring program for first generation college students; recognizing diversity and inclusion efforts on campus; and a project to develop a more respectful and united community on campus. Through this effort, Clearfield might become a place where “everyone is treated with respect, equity and justice” (CMC02) (although the word “justice” was not commonly used among Clearfield respondents). While this aspiration was not directly reflected in EFA activities, several respondents indicated that on a larger scale, EFA was focused on “creating an environment that provides opportunities for individuals who are from all walks of life, all ethnic backgrounds to be successful within the campus”—a campus-wide responsibility (CIR01). Through cultural change inspired by EFA, these respondents hoped, Clearfield would become a campus “that’s accessible for all, for everyone...who wants to go to college based on their entrance criteria” (CMC02). As Clearfield’s president noted, EFA was integral to campus culture: “Being inclusive and defining what that means—across the institution, all levels of the institution, and excellence...not just settling for status quo but saying that this is a part of our fabric” (CIL01). More concretely, however, the EFA committee worked to develop a shared understanding of, and enhanced appreciation for, diversity on campus.

Developing shared understanding and responsibility. Primarily, the committee hoped to build a shared foundation for EFA work that the campus community would value. This was central because “we all have in our minds what we believe diversity is, but that doesn't equate to what diversity is here on this campus” but a shared definition could allow for collective but autonomous work (CMC01). Without a guiding philosophy, people were—

doing things in pockets and...not collectively or [they] are territorial...[T]here are a couple of us that are collaborating very openly to show that...it shouldn't be these silos, that we're trying to breakdown some of that. And again that it's not just one area that's important to this discussion. It's everybody. (CED01)

With the shared definition, respondents hoped, would come recognition of diversity as “this shared responsibility. That it's not just two offices but there's three or four or whatever. It's all of us and there's people that *might* be doing the work and not even realizing it” (CED01, emphasis theirs). One way to do this was to clarify and reward the range of diversity work already active on campus even if it wasn't identified as such.

Thus, the recognition goal was also related to one of the principles of EFA: broadening the definition of diversity, which could contribute to “*expand*[ing] some of our ideas about what diversity means” (CQFA04) and who is doing it. Recognition also provided useful examples that communicated “what it means to be able to...work together...as a community and how to identify the people who are making those efforts and...[helped] develop models for how people should strive to include others” (CMC03). While the foundation could be an important guide for everyday work, it might also contribute to EFA becoming an integral “part of what we do. So not just orientation...it needs to transcend other areas” (CED01).

In addition, EFA recognition was significant because it could raise the profile of diversity and inclusion work at Clearfield. By highlighting, the range of individual projects that could fall under the EFA umbrella, respondents hoped to “bring forth on campus more awareness about what it means to be a champion for diversity” (CMC03). In turn, this awareness might help get “more people involved” (CED01) and build commitment for EFA on campus:

Because nobody wants to do all the work they think is of value for diversity and...you get to the point of doing the work and then people are like, “Nah, that's not what we wanted to do.”...Or, “Nah, that doesn't fit this campus.”...So [EFA]'s a committee that's supposed to influence diversity campus-wide, but it's really difficult to have it do so without people's buy-in. (CMC01)

In addition, one respondent thought that just having an active committee could go a long way toward raising awareness about EFA on campus. The current committee was “really all about *doing* things, and hoping to get more people involved I think as we get awareness out there” (CED01, emphasis theirs).

Valuing diversity. The work of EFA was about “ensur[ing] that people are made to feel comfortable in their own skin or with...whatever their circumstance is and there is a place for them on this campus” (CMC01). And this outcome would only be achieved through the concerted efforts of the campus community to “value the diverse perspectives” of campus members and to take advantage of this diversity by working together (CQFA04). Though not widely discussed, the committee purportedly also attended to this institutionalization goal through assessment activities, including reporting requirements to senior administration. As one respondent recited to me from Clearfield’s website, the committee is ““charged with reviewing, recommending and coordinating proposals related to the implementation of policies, programs

and practices that enhance diversity, inclusion and equity” (CIR01). While largely framed passively, there might be a link between these assessment activities and culture change on campus: “We're responsible for evaluating diversity initiatives and climate on campus and then...making suggestions to the [President's team] on what we should do...to become a more diverse, welcoming campus” (CQFA01).

Challenges

Generally, there was very little EFA activity at Clearfield. One EFA committee member's assessment that the group was now about “more talk than doing” encapsulates the overarching theme regarding the challenges Clearfield faced in implementing EFA (CQFA02). While the absence of the specific challenges—chief among them, the EFA committee itself—outlined below would not guarantee the success of EFA at Clearfield, their presence was certainly an impediment.

EFA committee. The primary hindrance was the group that guided EFA on campus. Previously known as the Diversity Committee, the EFA Committee's work was not very visible and the committee itself was never known for being particularly active. Even those centrally involved acknowledged the perception that “the committee didn't do much and didn't have a purpose” (CED01), and that it wasn't clear “what that particular committee does to move [EFA] forward” (CQFA02). The committee's work was often characterized among members as “more talking than doing,” leading more than one member to wonder, “Why are we getting together and we're just talking? Why aren't we *doing* something more?” (CQFA02, emphasis theirs).

The intent of the EFA committee was unclear even to members themselves. A committee member noted “that committee's always had a hard time defining itself,” which affected its programs (CQFA01). For example, confusion engulfed the Respecting Difference Project.

Despite being intended for the entire campus, it was unclear: who could be involved in the program, who was involved in the program, whether there was curricular infusion. The project, meant to be “all about inclusion and awareness...lost its focus” and left some feeling excluded (CED01). In the end, rather than wearing RDP shirts on designated days, people would “wear theirs just to be wearing them as t-shirts,” which wasn't necessarily “a bad thing, but I think it kind of said what they started to feel about the program effort. Like, ‘I don't know when I have to wear them, so I'm just going to wear it’” (CMC01). An institutional leader who believed the EFA committee had “upped and downed over time,” surmised that part of the challenge was the committee's understanding of its purpose (CIL01). Unlike her experience in which committees were the place “where the work gets done,” the EFA committee had seen its role as “advisory...giving advice not doing the work” (CIL01).

The committee's leadership also posed significant problems. Changes in the campus's diversity infrastructure were frequent, including change in the administrative status of the senior diversity officer, and duplication of effort was likely between the committee and others who lead student and faculty/staff diversity initiatives. Others acknowledged the impact of the presence—and then absence—of the senior diversity administrator who had chaired the EFA committee; he focused largely on policies and compliance and generally just talking a lot during meetings. In fact, one member could only think of two things that had gotten accomplished under the former committee leader: selecting diversity award recipients and an EFA report that was required by System. Still, even after the former EFA leader resigned, the committee “had some struggles” (CEM01) and had “been floundering...not knowing, what should we be doing” (CQFA02). One member said, “[A]ll the meetings were, ‘OK, what are we going to do? What are we going to do? What are we going to do?’ And then, at the end of the meeting, no decisions have been made”

(CQFA04). One member found an upside to the leadership transitions: “I probably was pretty close to not continuing...[but] I figured I would give it one more shot to see if it would change and I like the direction that we’re headed now” (CQFA02, emphasis theirs).

In part because they “didn’t really have a clear path,” committee meetings were largely ineffective and, more often, non-existent (CQFA02). One member described the experience:

[EFA]’s really not been very active on our campus for the last three, four years. We have a committee but we don’t really meet. Or if we do meet, it’s a strange meeting where we’re kind of done in fifteen, twenty minutes after almost chitchatting, or getting that one thing that has to be done as a report...But there’s not a real concerted look at EFA or diversity. (CQFA03)

The tendency toward discussion over action wasn't unique to EFA but "sometimes it just takes a long time to make progress...[T]here's lots of discussion but at the end of the day, ‘Ok, what are we doing next?’ And it's never really clear to me what we're doing” (CQFA01). Ultimately, being a part of the EFA committee “wasn’t very satisfying work” (CQFA02). One reason “why people left the committee...Just high turnover of this area...high turnover. Frustration. High turnover” (CED01). Transitions coupled with inaction led members and others to lose faith in the effort, thinking, “‘Oh, this isn't going to go anywhere.’...I think there's probably too high a percentage that would think [EFA]’s a waste of time” (CQFA01).

As a result, “not too many people know what [EFA] is” at Clearfield (CQFA01). Asked about the progress of EFA on campus, one staff member acknowledged, “We haven’t made that shift about what that means here” (CEM01). Like others on campus, one senior administrator reported, “I don’t know what’s happening under that umbrella currently” (CP02).

Lack of student participation. Resistance among students, staff and faculty to participating in EFA personified what one respondent called the campus's "reluctance to engage some of these issues" (CQFA04). Student resistance largely took the form of non-participation in EFA activities. In response to an invitation to join the pilot mentoring program, some students said:

"I don't have time to do it because I work full-time. I go to school full-time. I don't have time for nothing else." One was, "I'm expecting a baby in a couple of weeks and I'm still going to be going to school but I don't have time for that." So, these are real-life issues and so, for them they may be well in-tune with what's happening to them, based on race but don't want to stop doing what they're doing to have a conversation about it. I think that there's populations of folk who think having that conversation doesn't matter, because it's not going to change anything. (CMC01)

While these responses may have been based on students' assessment of previous activities, one administrator suggested that, instead, it reflected students' need to reconsider their priorities and whether college is right for them:

Sometimes it's a matter of helping the students understand that we understand that you have these other responsibilities, but if you don't *realign* your priorities, this isn't gonna to be successful for you...Some of it is helping them to see that they have a need and they need to take advantage of some of the services. Some of it is, there's always gonna be a handful of students that, for whatever reason, aren't ready to be *in* school. (CSA01, emphasis theirs)

Experience with recruitment efforts elsewhere on campus suggested that students' priorities outside of the college were indeed pressing, and that Clearfield need to be more

innovate if it wanted to provide a full college experience for its busy, largely commuter population. After raising grant money to fund more than 90 paid internships, staff discovered that students wouldn't take them because they were already working, "We knew that they were working part-time and sometimes full-time but what we didn't realize is that students would not, could not give up that part-time job that sustains them" (CADV01).

Lack of staff participation. Staff and faculty also were slow to engage in EFA and diversity programs. Issues of trust seemed to be a hindrance. Organizers of the diversity retreat "had a lot of push back" especially from some faculty who "really questioned" the retreat (CED01). Through "some really forceful emails" (CED01) and "people stopping by our offices," the retreat facilitators were interrogated about the retreat's outcomes, purpose and a "rationale for every individual [invited]:"

people have asked who's going to be there. So I don't know what that means. If they're afraid to have this conversation in front of certain people or what that means I don't know what this is *a-bout* but all we want to do is have a *conversation*...[I]t's a real simple process what we have in mind. (CMC01, emphasis theirs)

Thrown by the questioning, the other organizer replied, "[W]e don't have the outcomes. 'Y'all are going to decide where we go from here.'...[T]his is just an opportunity for all us to be in a space together" (CED01).

Different expectations. One EFA committee member shared that campus members simply had different orientations toward EFA. Observing his own occasional frustration with discussion in EFA meetings, he suggested that "people are at different stages" with some seeking and others looking for "some concrete things to come out of [those meetings]":

one reason to have a meeting is to try to get that, the outcomes. Another reason to have a meeting is to just talk. And the talking can be important if, especially if...you're feeling discriminated against. Or—there are issues on campus...that you see. The talking stage might be just fine because it helps you vocalize your feelings and you just want to know somebody's listening. Well, if you're like me or a similar [White] background and you're looking for actions, and you go into a meeting where it's all issues, issues, issues, talk. “How do you feel? How do you feel?”...You're in there just going, “Ok, I understand there are issues. What do we need to do?” And I don't think you necessarily recognize the value of sharing. (CQFA01)

Aside from being at different stages, he also noted that some attendees might just be impatient, expecting “the silver bullet” that would help them solve all of their student success challenges and “these students will suddenly perform” (CQFA01).

Staff capacity. Second, staff turnover and a nearly universal increase in workload expectations as staff positions weren't refilled left Clearfield a staff with limited spare time and energy. But that's exactly what Clearfield needed—people able to contribute uncompensated time and energy:

there is a lot of work to be done and we need people to help with that work. And it's sometimes difficult because...you have to make time for it and it's not part of your job description. So it's difficult to get people more on board to actually do the work...but we need more of the ones who will do the work. (CMC03)

There was also a sense that there was turnover specifically among those most involved in diversity efforts: “We used to have people here on campus who were very committed but they

left. They left because they had to...I don't think there was much support for them. I would even say that they might have been pushed out" (CQFA03).

As people left Clearfield, their responsibilities shifted to others until those people left as well and certain activities fell by the wayside. One committee member described his inability to sustain focus on the Respecting Difference Project: "I wanted to be proactive [with the project]...However, as my responsibilities changed, I just could not maintain that, and it moved over to our LGBTQ person. She was doing it for awhile, and then [she] moved on" (CMC01). Elsewhere he's seen efforts that have struggled because it's "all volunteer, right? And so now then you've added something else to people's plate. And it kinda of went away because people just can't afford to keep taking on extra assignments" (CMC01). A former committee member shared that "faculty morale is quite bad right now because our teaching load increased [recently]," a change referenced by many respondents including non-faculty (CQFA03). "I have a normal teaching load of three classes," she continued, but "I taught five classes last fall" (CQFA03). Although it was not the prevailing response, she withdrew from non-teaching activity, and there was concern that others would follow. Despite the fact that "it's going to be a long road" for Clearfield to realize it's EFA goals, one respondent argued that it should "hold those expectations of people being inclusive...and constantly remind people that, 'Hey this is the standard we are aiming for. This is what we need to be shooting for.' And make small corrections along the way" (CMC03).

Actors

Those currently involved in the EFA committee were the strongest point of leverage at Clearfield. After a series of meetings in Fall 2014, the committee's new leaders spearheaded with other "architects" a new approach to committee work and to getting work done (CQFA04,

CED01). The group was in a moment of transition—a moment that some referred to as “rebuilding” (CQFA05) or “rejuvenating” (CSA01). Another recognized positive effects of these changes, saying, “The EFA committee I’m on now is very action-oriented...so it makes me feel...we could be doing good things” (CQFA01). Unlike the previous version of the committee, many members now looked forward to what the group might accomplish: “[W]e’re doing some pretty cool stuff and so I feel like things are just evolving in different ways” (CED01).

Being action-oriented. Of particular note was the influence of members’ past experiences and orientations toward EFA. Those highlighted as most influential had worked with racially and ethnically marginalized students at Clearfield and elsewhere. Most influential, however, were the perspectives the EFA committee members brought to their work. First, they were action-oriented. The new committee was different from the previous iteration: “[I]t’s really all about doing things...[W]e’re trying to get away from lip service to actually—figuring out how to create change on campus in the realm of social justice and diversity and inclusion” (CED01). While it was a shared orientation, one member noted that another member in particular “can’t stand to sit there and do nothing. So it’s like we’ve got to do something, tired of talking. I think key people in the room have probably made it more possible to actually do things” (CQFA01).

The committee’s action orientation meant not merely mimicking System or continuing past efforts blindly. Members recognized that “if you don’t comply to what System wants, there will be repercussions” but instead of mere compliance, they focused on soliciting and being guided by the campus’s current needs, “[W]e’re...shifting a little bit, saying, ‘Ok, we’ll still do what [System] wants from us, but let’s also explore some things that we think are really valuable for...campus” (CQFA04). This new orientation was also noticeable from outside the committee.

The president remarked that before there was “really no one in charge” but the new leadership “has brought to it...greater focus on doing something not just talking about it. It’s...what I see as a really strong outcome over the past really year” (CIL01).

New practices. Second, EFA committee members brought new, and sometimes unfamiliar, practices and values to diversity efforts, like transparency, consensus, and a desire to engage the campus community. One member asserted, “[the committee]’s never been co-chaired. It’s never operated on consensus. It’s never taken on problematic stuff”(CED01). According to one member, one aspect of the committee’s transparency approach made it difficult for some to participate. Asking questions about the “hidden curriculum,” the committee talked about student access and success and had—

discussions about power and privilege. People who have the privilege to be able to go to college and their families may have been able to go to college and been able pass down these things...Power in the sense of who's making these decisions...what decisions are they making,...where are they allocating the resources...and that makes some people uncomfortable...[S]o some people have stopped coming to the committee who are uncomfortable with those types of discussions. (CQFA04)

The group also approached their work from a collective, consensus orientation that they hoped would generate the most commitment from campus members and “allow them to have a voice” (CMC01).

Resources

First, affordability, efficacy and longevity were primary concerns—that is, “[H]ow do we actually offer services that have impact and don’t cost a lot? So how do we come up with sustainable programs that close the achievement gap?” (CED01). Sustainability was of particular

concern because programs at Clearfield, including those for academically vulnerable students, seemed to come and go. Several respondents referred to disappearing programs and resources.

Diverting resources. There also was a carry over of previous resource concerns. One respondent argued that at Clearfield “money’s not always put where the mouth is” (CQFA04). Rather than committing resources “so we can be allowed to do the things we need to do to be successful,” he asserted, that the institution tended to “rest a little bit too much on the numbers,” presenting the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity of the campus as a proxy for actual commitment to diversity issues on campus (CQFA04).

Campus resources. Finally, the “reluctance” to engage in EFA and the issues it represented, it was argued, was also reflected in the resources allotted to the effort (CQFA04). Sharing his frustration with this overall state of affairs, one EFA committee member who foreshadowed his departure and ultimately left Clearfield before the next academic year, remarked:

we’re [Clearfield] not going to put the *real* resources behind it to *really* make an effort at substantive change...[I]f you really value the stuff, you'd have a [diversity officer] who was a lot more *active* than the person was [here] and you'd be doing some of the programs like summer bridge programs. [Multicultural student services] does some amazing things with a shoestring budget [but] since you have 25% of your students of color, [you need] more money there, so we can be allowed to do the things we need to do to be successful. So...money's not always put where the mouth is. (CQFA04, emphasis theirs)

Conclusion

After years of turnover and resource constraints, Clearfield College was beginning a renewed effort to enact *Excellence for All* on campus. Although this effort was primarily comprised of discrete programmatic elements, there was some attention to the need to expand attention to EFA more widely across the campus. This was hindered, nonetheless, by the perception of EFA as a project of the System rather than a local concern to be given top priority. More pressing for Clearfield was the relatively poor outcomes of its students, which meant that the bulk of shared campus attention was focused on student success initiatives meant to outcomes for students as well as the campus's retention and graduation rates. Even as Clearfield's EFA committee attempted to rejuvenate the policy on campus, the general reluctance to explicitly target efforts on racially marginalized groups and to address the racial challenges the campus faced suggested that the campus's ability to fall back on its status as the most diverse institution in the System might continue to distract from genuine efforts at racial equity.

PART THREE

STATUS, IDENTITY AND PRESSURE

“All thinking about complex phenomena is based on metaphors.”

(Alvesson, 2003. p. 18)

As indicated in Part Two, Ashby University, Bradford University, and Clearfield College varied in their responses to *Excellence for All*. I introduced the concept of “Scaffolding Equity” to situate the findings offered in the previous chapters. If we imagine a scaffold (see Figure 1, *Scaffolding Equity*), each campus’s placement on it would correspond to the extent to which they engaged with EFA to enact changes that might enhance (racial) equity on campus.

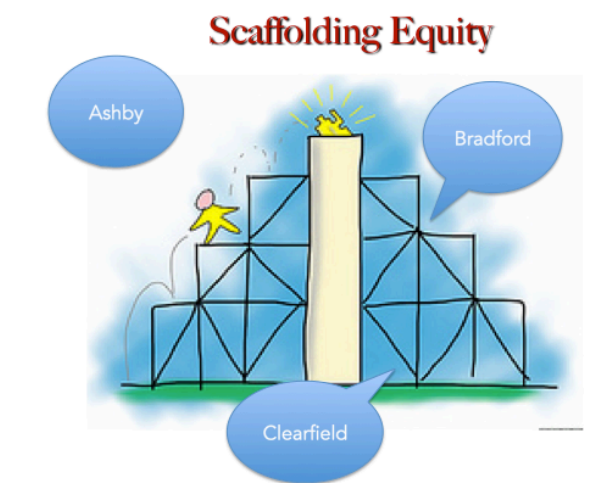


Figure 1: Scaffolding Equity

Ashby University with its own diversity-focused process had not come to build an institution-wide scaffold for attention to the educational inequities faced by marginalized students on its campus. Conversely, Bradford University successfully leveraged its focus on educational

disparities and momentum from previous change efforts to develop an infrastructure for equity that affected major divisions and practice across campus. Finally, Clearfield College—pursuing EFA largely in name only at the time of my data collection—was not poised to make great strides in the name of equity. One way to interpret these relative placements on the scaffold would be as individual achievements or shortcomings and to some extent these absolute assessments would be justified. However, the larger goal of this study is to draw attention to the ways in which social structure shapes institutional culture, decision-making and action.

Thus, in Part Three, I employ Bourdieu's (1977b) theory of practice as a metaphor—in particular, the notion of institutional habitus—to offer additional context and to reconsider the interpretation and implementation of EFA at Ashby, Bradford, and Clearfield. Bourdieu's theory of practice reveals that differentially positioned social actors develop what the theorist, quoting Goffman, termed a “sense of one's place” (Bourdieu, 1987/1990, p. 113) that is informed by habitus, an internalized sense of history, values, dispositions, classifications and practices that help each actor perceive, differentiate, and act often choosing between oppositions—e.g. good for me, bad for me; valuable, valueless (Bourdieu, 1994/1998). Habitus itself structures and is structured by internalization of objective assessments and subjective interpretations of opportunities and challenges—that is, one's understanding of “the fundamental distributions which organize the social order” and one's place in it (Bourdieu, 1997/2000, p. 98). Based on this internalization, habitus establishes commonsense practices, offers a repertoire of responses for social encounters, and influences the ways in which social actors make sense of, engage with, and respond to their immediate

environments, which, in turn, influences orientations toward future experiences and actions (Bourdieu, 1980/1990; Reay et al., 2001; Thomas, 2002).

Chapter 7

Acting from One's Place

My analyses reveal that rather than simply individual campuses responding to similar stimulus, Ashby, Bradford and Clearfield actually represent three differentially situated but related institutions that act through varied sets of interests, constraints, and opportunities. Using Bourdieu's theory of practice as a metaphor in my analysis, I aim to make visible the ways in which each campus's social position and related identity, resources and concerns seemed to shape what I found. In this chapter, I first present the different senses of self reflected at each campus, and how those shaped local priorities. Then, I demonstrate that these differentially situated campuses interpreted and responded to shared external pressures in different ways and, finally, faced unique sets of external pressures.

This section reveals the way in which social position presented each campus with challenges the others didn't face. Again, while this study does not allow me to draw causal links between social position and these particular pressures, a compelling pattern is nonetheless revealed that connects status and its concerns with institutional behavior and priorities. Findings suggest that the campus that demonstrated the most robust implementation of EFA, Bradford University, appeared primed to do so because of its own institutional identity and pre-existing concerns and goals.

“Sense of One's Place”⁶¹

⁶¹ In this chapter, I discuss similarities and differences across the three campuses to highlight the ways in which these may signal different concerns across social position or differential responses to shared concerns. The issues discussed in this chapter arose largely during the course of my discussion with respondents about the focus of my study—student success centered on interpretation and implementation of *Excellence for All*, a system-wide diversity policy. It is

Ashby University: Maintaining Excellence

Ashby generally regards⁶² itself as an excellent educational institution. “Excellent” is used to describe the reputation of many of the more visible aspects of the campus—the research produced on campus, faculty productivity and students’ longer-term outcomes. In addition, the campus is considered to be successful by most student success metrics (e.g. graduation, retention), which sets it apart from other colleges, including peer institutions. The campus also stands out on “typical indicators of success” like number of applications, the standardized tests scores of matriculants, and the number of students sent to competitive post-graduate

worth noting that I may have gleaned a different picture from my interviews if they had focused squarely on these similarities and differences across status rather being filtered through the lens of my study’s topic. Nevertheless, interested as I am in the ways in which status pressures and concerns influence organizational change in higher education, particularly as related to the pursuit of equity, I am confident that the findings presented in this chapter help to make visible the influence of social status and contextualize some of the differences reported in Part Two of this dissertation.

Finally, in writing this chapter, I did not aim to assess the interpretations of campus identity and concerns that respondents offered. Although based on subjective and objective assessments, the veracity of individual and collective claims is not at issue here. Rather, it is *that* the claims are believed—believed to shape opportunities, believed to shape obstacles—that is most significant in this analysis, considering that they, according to Bourdieu, are the basis of sense-making and action within a hierarchically organized social world constructed by struggle and competition. In this chapter, then, I aim to draw on my analyses to demonstrate that each campus did have a different sense of its place, its goals and available resources as it navigated daily activities, including implementation of EFA.

⁶² Scholars within organizational studies have debated whether organizations are rightly conceived of as collectivities that represent the aggregation of the actions, attitudes and dispositions of the individuals therein or if, at the institutional level, organizations represent unique entities that are surely informed by their constituent members but that are nonetheless more than this (see Cook & Yanow, 1993; Glick, 1988; James, Joyce, & Slocum, 1988; Namenwirth, Miller, & Weber, 1981; Spender, 1996; Starbuck, 1983). This analysis falls into the latter camp, which recognizes the existence of group- and organization-level interactions that are more than the accumulation of individual psychologies (Schneider & Shrivastaval, 1988). By taking up the organization’s position unique from that of its members, scholars who employ this approach stress both the dynamic nature of what exists at the organizational level as well as the context in which this dynamic nature evolves (Schneider & Shrivastaval, 1988). As such, I refer to the campuses, in this section, in the first person to acknowledge the possibility of organization-level awareness, concerns, and identity.

opportunities (AAA03). These metrics and institutional rankings confirm that Ashby offers a “good quality product” (AEM01). This perception, however, made change on campus difficult because “no one wants to futz with the recipe” (AED02). Thus, it was both harder to accept what the campus was struggling with and to change the patterns that created those struggles. As a campus steeped in tradition and known for academic rigor, many assumed the campus had found its best recipe and that it was better to build on that than to deviate from it.

Campus autonomy. If I had to pick one word to encapsulate Ashby, it would be “independence”—as a state of being that the campus most values for itself and for its students. For Ashby itself, independence means being a campus that was run from the ground rather than ruled from the top. This influences both internal operations and Ashby’s relationship with the System, from which the campus often saw itself as separate. Beyond an explanation offered facetiously—“we’re a special flower and we have special and different needs” (ADV01)—the more common belief is that Ashby operates independently simply because it can. As a large campus with a wide range of resources, it was less in need of guidance from System than were many of the smaller campuses. It could and did figure things out on its own, reflecting a deeper set of expertise than even System possessed in some areas. Even more, a senior administrator confessed that Ashby’s “pretty strong internal culture” also led to resistance to outside assistance (AIL01).

A joke circulates on campus that it takes six years to do anything at Ashby. This is an exaggeration but two years to achieve higher-level organizational change was suggested as a realistic estimate because of the slowness to embrace potential change. Suggestions from leadership are greeted with a “reflex push-back” even if the campus might benefit “just because that’s not the way we do things, quote unquote” (AAA01). While some believed this reflects and

supports a culture of collaboration on campus, it also leads to a “thousand flowers blooming,” which makes it more difficult to develop structures to sustain new ideas, disseminate resources wisely, and provide support to faculty and staff (AAA02). The slowness was also attributed to the campus’s shared governance model, which contributes to a campus built more on consensus, but also inhibits coordination and slows processes down. Members of the Ashby campus community learn, when getting involved with larger scale campus change, that—even if it’s worth the wait—shared governance means that “good things take a long time to bring about” (ADV02).

Student involvement. For Ashby students, the path to independence, perhaps paradoxically, is involvement. It is widely accepted that the engaged student is the successful student. There is also an emphasis on change as students’ engagement is meant to improve both their lives and that of their communities, which reflects a campus-wide commitment to sending out into the world smart, educated people who are capable of and committed to doing work that benefits others. The intent to develop civic-minded adults who recognize and respond to a responsibility to their communities also reflected Ashby’s orientation as a public institution whose works were meant to serve the larger good.

So students who figure out the university enough to make such an impact make a connection that is seen as crucial for their academic success. To support this, Ashby offers an experience:

where when you arrive on campus you have to be engaged because the university and the environment will not allow you to sit in the back and read the newspaper. It's not what the place is about. You have to be involved. (AAA02)

Students' imagined four or five years on campus are meant to foster realizations and responsibilities that might otherwise take a lifetime to develop, if at all. Thus, the emphasis on involvement is not merely about being busy but is conceived of as an "accelerator" for the kind of reflection and awareness the campus hopes students will gain about themselves and about the world around them. Although the point is not simply about being busy, students are expected to be so. "Your tray should be packed," as one administrator asserted, comparing engagement opportunities at Ashby to an appealing buffet line (ASA03). Still, some were concerned that this mantra is more of a barrage. Students are "constantly getting messages" about being leaders, which is daunting for some and contributes to a sense of competition among students striving to be the best.

The involvement mantra is sharply focused on the kind of students and citizens Ashby hopes to create but there is a more immediate return. Due in part to its size, Ashby is a "tough place to navigate" (AED04), and if students take too long to find a niche, they struggle. It is imperative, then, that students find a niche in the swirl of leadership opportunities and engagement activities to be successful. Thus, campus programs and initiatives are linked to student success because they help students "make this big campus a small campus" (AEM01). In this way, the high engagement social and academic activities, which offer students membership in smaller communities earlier, also offer visibility and the link to connections and relationships that are believed to support student success.

Diversity and institutional change. Independence and involvement aren't the campus's only defining attributes. There is also a sense of Ashby as a racially inhospitable campus. As a senior administrator remarked, it is "incredibly...difficult being a member of a marginalized population on this campus" (ASA03). Ashby's climate was one that students from racially

marginalized backgrounds and those from other countries often characterized as exclusionary. This was true for a number of reasons. Ashby was a “very White campus” whose majority students are not perceived as ready to engage respectfully with students and others who were different from themselves (AAA03). Further—although the new Ashby Diversity Plan included recommendations to correct this—much of the campus’s diversity programming is aimed at “diverse” students, which means that White students aren’t often challenged to recognize and take responsibility for their part in the campus’s racial climate. Rather than apologizing for what students don’t know, staff believed the campus should create learning opportunities much sooner in students’ college careers, in part to ensure that White students’ learning doesn’t take place “upon the backs of students who have underprivileged backgrounds” and are already marginalized at Ashby (AED01).

There are also social and cultural impediments to students from racially marginalized backgrounds thriving and feeling fully integrated at Ashby. There are current instances and a history of racism at Ashby as well as the bigotry and racial biases of their fellow students. One could count on two or three bigger incidents each year that remind people that there were racial tensions on campus that people didn’t quite know what to do with. Students also regularly report racialized difficulties in the classroom where students are often singled out by professors because of their identity to speak for their group. Beyond these direct experiences of racial discrimination, racially marginalized students were also subject to a campus on which most of the informal and formal support networks are geared toward White students. There were several contained safe spaces for racially marginalized students on campus—e.g. cultural centers, student organizations, academic programs—but they were markedly different from the rest of campus, including for the staff who worked there.

The campus also has “success gap[s]” (ASA02)—even for high-performing students from racially marginalized backgrounds—and, over time, campus issues tend to push students out or leave them feeling estranged from campus. One explanation is that the campus has programs for access but not those that address the “*active* discrimination and exclusion” experienced by racially marginalized students (AED02, emphasis theirs). Thus, there is a need for structural change related to diversity at Ashby but beyond a history of running diversity programs—particularly programs that are viewed as unique among higher education institutions; rhetorical commitment to diversity; and a presumed, generic agreement that diversity is valuable for learning, there was uncertainty about the campus’s overall commitment to diversity.

Unclear diversity commitment. Ashby has spent a lot of money on diversity over the years but not necessarily in ways that would make a lasting impact on the campus. Although some of these challenges weren’t unique to Ashby, they were potentially more frustrating because of the campus’s “portfolio of self righteous rhetoric,” which often emphasized commitments to diversity that (ASA01) didn’t translate into the actions that would produce change. Many saw the existing diversity programs as feathers in the campus’s cap that allow Ashby to signal commitments without having to live them as a campus.

Many programs lacked an infrastructure that would support improvements. For example, many of the campus’s diversity programs were considered to be effective and successful but structured evaluation and improvement efforts were rare. The general approach had been to leave it to individuals to figure out on their own how to advance equity in their small parts of campus. If Ashby were serious about this work, many believed, it would undergird these individualized approaches by creating a hub that could offer guidance to the campus community, starting with

honest conversations about the way current practices affect students and culminating in informed changes in practice across campus.

Ashby's new diversity plan aimed to address this by moving away from a check box approach for student programming and support to a broader philosophical and institutional reorientation toward diversity on campus that could lead to institutional transformation. The diversity plan committee believed that Ashby didn't just need another generic diversity plan because:

we already did most of the things that a plan would lead you to do. The recruitment programs, blah, blah, blah. We have all the window dressing that is covering up a rotting infrastructure. So it's like slapping a new coat of paint and putting drapes in the windows of a house that is crumbling inside. (ADV01)

Further, rather than a narrowed focus on the student body, which turns over every few years, diversity efforts need to emphasize changes in institutional leadership, the centrality of diversity to campus operations, and follow through on purported institutional commitments.

Currently, campus- and leadership-level attention to diversity is compliance and fear-based, encompassing what leaders believe need to be done to avoid actions “that will come back to bite us” (AED01). Even programs that contribute to individuals' capacity building related to diversity are simultaneously framed as “pressure valve[s]” that allow people to blow off steam rather than having tensions reach more contentious levels in which the campus might face law suits (AED02). In addition, typically left to the same type of people to spearhead and carry out this work—members of racially marginalized groups—current programs send the message that this is about them and not the wider institution's responsibility. Without accountability and consequences, resistance and excuses abound, including claims of limited resources (e.g., time,

financial) and a distancing that assumes that because Ashby is highly ranked, it doesn't need to attend to these issues. This is particularly true of faculty, some believed, whose research focus shields them from taking these issues seriously—a conundrum that pits the campus pursuit of prestige with its work to provide access and success for all of its students. In fact, limited accountability was so pervasive that one administrator suggested that Ashby has all the innovative ideas it needs since it's been in the diversity game for so long. The biggest impediment was that the campus hadn't figured out how to how people accountable for this work.

More generously, it was suggested that people don't act because they are overwhelmed by the complexity of the problem and don't know how to bring about positive change. Others noted a hesitance to take responsibility for the scary realities on campus. Considered a “third-rail issue” that is inevitably fraught and ripe for criticism no matter what the campus pursued, diversity practice at Ashby struggles not because people don't understand institutional realities but because they're unwilling to carry the burden of changing those realities.

Bradford University: Making Improvements

Bradford generally sees itself as an improving educational institution. There is the sense of a general intention to make the campus a better community—for students, in particular—that is guided by a belief in and willingness to accept collective responsibility for students' experiences and outcomes. Rather than the external imperative that Clearfield faces, which I discuss below, Bradford's commitment to student success is supported by individuals' intrinsic motivation to support students through what appears to be an uncommon orientation toward collaboration.

Pushing to improve. Bradford’s improvement mission is largely framed as the campus identifying and facing up to its challenges because issues on campus do not get addressed if you just pretend everything is fine. The campus wants to be better so it pursues opportunities to unearth information that might aid this process. Beyond information, the emphasis is further grounded in the campus having the confidence and courage to acknowledge the problems that are uncovered, to ask challenging questions about the campus and its practices, and then to pursue answers. Bradford’s approach to disaggregating and responding to data across divisions and departments is inspired by the assumption that—in terms of student success—“it’s healthier for an institution to be in that constant state of ‘Let’s fix it. Let’s change this.’ than to be satisfied or to hide” (BAA01). This work was pushed by campus leadership, including the former president who was perceived as a strong advocate for the campus’s commitment to recognizing and resolving problems.

The campus somehow has also drawn faculty and staff who want to make change—perhaps uniquely so. Reportedly, an external organization that interviewed people at Bradford about organizational change noted this trend, remarking that despite difficult times in the state and shrinking support across the system, “[E]verybody seems really excited to do change” (BAA02). Bradford is a nose to the grindstone kind of campus that embraces opportunities to make positive change and, simply, to do a good job even if it takes them a while to get started. One respondent marveled that other campuses didn’t seem to take the same opportunities, including through accountability tasks required by System. Saying, “[W]e just really do it right,” she related how a System-wide mandate to report on campus gender inequity resulted in a Bradford task force that exists to this day while other “campuses just weren’t doing much” (BQFA01). Still, the comparison to other campuses in this regard is rare. The emphasis is more

on faculty and staff's willingness to push for better and their excitement about opportunities to do so.

The question at Bradford, then, was what could the campus put into place to help students succeed, following from the assumption that if the students are admitted, it became the institution's responsibility to see them through to success: "If we are not doing that then we shouldn't be bringing them here" (BQFA06). This belief reflects the campus's sharpened focus on student success over the last decade or so. It had become such a "pervasive attitude" that graduation and what could be done to get students there was a common focus in campus meetings (BIR01). Although this orientation is widely shared, many point to rising commitment from faculty and credited campus administration for passionately helping to maintain the campus focus on student success.

Pushed to change. It is difficult to identify a clear impetus for the emergent focus on the institution's role in supporting student success, but it may reflect, in part, a simple acceptance of campus realities. As a regional institution, Bradford's draw is fairly well established. They will likely continue to receive similar students, many of whom are not well prepared for college—particularly those from the state's urban school districts—and therefore are not retained. The students aren't going to change so the campus needs to. To meet students' needs, Bradford embraces a "holistic approach to student support," in which offices, departments and administration across campus are seen as partners in the effort to get students to and through graduation (BAA01). Thus, working toward retaining and graduating students was everyone's job, and requires attention to both academic and extra-academic elements. Occasionally, students are also seen as partners in this success effort. And, though not every student is slated for graduation...from Bradford, the task is to provide enough information and support so that

students can make an informed decision about their next steps, even if that includes leaving the university.

Part of the attention to improvement is intended as a model for students. Campus learning outcomes indicate a commitment to civic engagement, defined as understanding local challenges, how they connect to larger concerns, and then acting on improvements. Thus, the campus aims to help students understand—by demonstrating its own willingness to grow and act—that “you don't just know and do nothing” (BQFA03). More so, however, the improvements and shared responsibility for success that Bradford pursues are seen as essential to providing their particular college population with the resources it needs to be successful. Bradford is a campus that “bring[s] in students that need help. Most of ours do. We talk about trying to bring in B or C students and—make them better,” which required a lot of support or else the campus would leave students it knew were underprepared struggling and feeling like failures (BP01). In addition, Bradford has one the highest percentages of first generation college students in the System—approximately 50%—a proportion that has increased over the last several years. In addition to their need for a wide range of academic supports, students also struggle with finances with many working hours that put their schoolwork in jeopardy. Finally, while the campus’s first generation college students “have *no* way of knowing what they're getting themselves into” when they matriculate (BAA02, emphasis theirs), the wider student body also needs a range of supports.

Further, Bradford’s focus on improvement and on student success reflects concerns about poor success measures overall but also particular concerns about the outcomes and experiences of students from racially marginalized groups given Bradford’s demographics. “We're such a *White* campus,” one respondent asserted (BADV01, emphasis theirs). Part of the challenge was the general lack of diversity on campus, which even in a fairly White region, doesn't reflect local

diversity. Racially marginalized students in this context are often the only ones from _____ group in the classroom, and have a hard time finding people to identify with on campus, including among the faculty and staff. Latin@/Hispanic and Black students, in particular, don't do well on campus, and their relatively low numbers are part of the explanation.

Beyond demographics was the additional reality that the White students at Bradford were largely from small towns where they had little experience with diversity. Save the students who come from the larger cities in the state, most Bradford students haven't met anyone from a racial group different from their own by the time they reach campus. So along with their naivety, students bring to campus "unrecognized biases," (BREC01) ignorance about racial difference, and a lack of understanding about racism, discrimination and privilege. Further, in addition to the biases of their classmates and isolation on campus, racially marginalized students often experience more blatant racism in the community surrounding campus. Part of Bradford's task, then, is to give students exposure to the kind of world that they'll need to live in—one that is very different from and more diverse than the small towns from which they hail. Ultimately, this requires an adjustment from all students—White students who have little interaction across race and students from racially marginalized backgrounds who have never been in a place as White as Bradford and its surrounding community.

In this context, racially marginalized students struggle more than White students with the social transition and adjustment to campus. These students are and feel like a minority at Bradford, not at home on campus. In addition, students bring academic difficulties, particularly those that come from the state's larger urban school districts—with Black students academically furthest behind and Black and Latino/Hispanic males struggling the most. There is also worry the transition over time of the campus's Southeast Asian population, which moved from being the

top performing group on campus to having average GPA, retention and graduation rates below the campus mean. But academic preparation isn't the only hurdle. Some faculty and staff are reluctant to give racially marginalized students honest feedback about their struggles for fear that they'll be perceived as racist; instead, they—based also on assumptions about students' capabilities—shy away from engaging students academically and holding them to the high expectations that might encourage them to excel.

A regional campus with potential. Despite these realities, with faculty and staff focused on the same primary purpose, there is a confidence about what the campus could continue to achieve. In fact, Bradford's emphasis on change and improvement—both inside the classroom and across campus—helps some staff and faculty maintain an optimism in the face of external obstacles and the challenges they face in the state. Bradford's work toward improvement is supported by its identity as a public campus with potential that is serving an important regional purpose. Even as the campus acknowledges it isn't perfect, it draws faculty and staff who are motivated by the difference they might be able to make there and the difference the campus might be able to make for them. One faculty member recalled being told during her interview that the great thing about Bradford was that it would offer her the opportunity to get involved with projects she didn't even know she was interested in. Snapping her fingers, she said, “[Y]ou come in and you can see a place that's ready to change,” citing the unimagined projects she'd been a part of, which underscored the veracity of the prediction from her interview (BAA02).

Even as it is recognized that the campus has much more work to do, Bradford believes it is moving in the right direction. As one respondent said, “We ain't where we were but we ain't where we want to be” (BQFA07). Even as most students indicate that Bradford was their second choice college, faculty and staff largely saw Bradford as “the right place to be” with committed

leadership and people eager to work together—and a wider community to serve (BSA02). They were happy to work on a campus that was helping to serve, shape and grow the immediate community. In addition to serving local students—most from within a 50-mile radius—the campus graduates students who support the region as well with more than 90% of in-state and more than a third of out-of-state students remaining after graduation.⁶³ For these reasons, the community aspect especially, Bradford is a potential “powerhouse” for the region “[n]ot because it is so academically strong. It’s not [an Ashby]. It’s not even in the shadow of [an Ashby]” but because it was the campus through which so many local students went to college and went on to have success (BQFA02). Thus, Bradford’s student outcomes were all the more important because so many students in the region gain access to college at Bradford—a great opportunity to positively affect the health of that part of the state.

Clearfield College: Struggling for Success

The context of its institutional history is palpable at Clearfield. In addition to its identity as a small, diverse educational institution, Clearfield also sees itself as young. It is consistently in conversation with its own history, including the circumstances and lingering implications of its founding. One respondent even offered that “one of the things that might be interesting for *you* is to look at [Clearfield]’s history and to understand how that history is still relevant today” (CQFA01, emphasis theirs).

An ever-present history. One element of this history was the recency of Clearfield’s founding. Founded after the mid-1900s, Clearfield is an absolutely young institution of higher

⁶³ In addition, institutional data indicate that even a decade after graduation, many Bradford alumni remain in the state—more than 85% and 25% of in-state and out-of-state students, respectively (B_ID026).

education but it is also relatively so as the youngest of all the schools in the state System.⁶⁴

Consciously younger than 60-years-old, Clearfield was different from Ashby and other research institution(s) in the state because “in higher ed, that's like a high school student. They're just—trying to figure out who we are, what are we gonna do. And I kinda feel that we're there” (CADV01).

A second salient element of Clearfield's history is that the campus was originally intended to be an outpost of Ashby—that is, a research institution serving a different region of the state. In fact, Clearfield was founded, in part, by faculty who were recruited from Ashby. They were granted a low teaching load to accommodate their anticipated research productivity. Although until recently the teaching load remained, the research status faded within a few years of its founding as Clearfield became a public regional college rather than a regional research university. The result is a “strange institution”—a very small campus that was able to attract faculty because of its low teaching load and emphasis on research but that still never produced enough research because not enough faculty engaged in it over time.

Expectations associated with the original campus plan linger. This is particularly true for some of the faculty who believe that the type of student commonly found at Ashby—high achieving by common student success metrics—is Clearfield's ideal student even as Clearfield's student body included very few Ashby types. This conflicts with the more widely held belief that rather than comparing itself to Ashby or the other research institution(s) in the state, Clearfield needs to accept its current realities—and positive attributes—rather than chasing a lost past. “It's taken us a long time to get over that historical feeling of who we are and recognizing that we are

⁶⁴ Interestingly, one respondent linked Clearfield's youth to campus's resource constraints noting that unlike Ashby, a much larger and much older institution, Clearfield has had a much smaller number of graduates for a lot less time, which means fewer alumni who've reached a stage where they can support the campus philanthropically (CP01).

a university that serves the population we serve” (CQFA01), one respondent shared, indicating that this historical feeling influenced contemporary approaches to and beliefs about student success.

Third, Clearfield was created with significant support from surrounding communities through the merger of two two-year campuses, and given a name that doesn’t immediately link the campus to its adjacent communities, unlike nearly every other campus in the System. These two realities capture Clearfield’s paradoxical relationship with its community connections. The campus both cherishes its community engagement, including the history of its founding, and rues the lack of awareness the community seems to have for the campus. For example, the memory of the two-year campuses was said to lead to a lingering confusion about whether Clearfield is a two- or four-year college, which affects how current and potential students view the campus, including whether it is a place to pursue a bachelor’s degree. In addition, many are unsure where the campus is even located because its official address is in a city most students have never heard of. The campus’s location is also problematic because many simply don’t know it is there. “We’re the best kept secret. We don’t want to be a secret!” one respondent exclaimed. Even some local business leaders aren’t familiar with the campus—a challenge Clearfield’s president has worked hard to remedy, leading to some change in recent years. Nevertheless, there is a sense that Clearfield is taken for granted in its communities, seen “as the last chance school” rather than a local viable option for pursuing a college degree (CIL01).

Despite these challenges, Clearfield prides itself on its community engagement and its role as “the people's university” (CQFA04). Beyond drawing most of its students from the surrounding communities, Clearfield is also deeply engaged in partnerships—with business, nonprofits, and government agencies—that enhance workforce, community and economic

development in the region. In addition, community-based learning is an articulated campus value and the campus was the first in the state to receive national recognition as a community engaged campus—even before Ashby, it was noted.

The most diverse, percentage-wise. Also quite important in terms of the campus's identity, Clearfield is a diverse campus, a numerical reality that is sometimes equated or conflated with a commitment to diversity. The mantra about Clearfield is that “on a percentage basis, we're the most diverse campus in the System,” a particular framing that distinguishes Clearfield from larger institution(s) in the state that have more of the students who count as diverse (CP01). For the most part, this is students from racially marginalized backgrounds but there is occasional reference to students' veteran, socioeconomic or first generation status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, and national origin. While the diversity of the student body is a draw for some faculty and staff, it is difficult to see what is *done* with this diversity on campus. Clearfield's commitment to inclusion—one of the campus's core values—is thought to inhere in the diversity of its student population such that the campus is believed to be becoming more inclusive because it is becoming more diverse. As one respondent admitted, “we rest a little bit too much on our laurels,” pointing to the numbers but not pushing for action on campus (CQFA04).⁶⁵

Despite this sense of itself as a diverse institution, progress on diversity issues at Clearfield is stymied by a lack of willingness to talk about race, which is believed to be connected to the campus's lack of commitment to diversity. Clearfield doesn't talk about race much, in part because faculty and staff are wary of making people feel less than and unearthing

⁶⁵ Ironically, as I wrote this section, I learned—perhaps tellingly—that on the website that introduces the public to Clearfield's four core values, the link for “inclusion” takes one to a page that notifies that “The page you requested was not found” (C_ID009).

trouble spots—“[W]e *want* to believe as a campus that we’re doing very well in terms of race and diversity efforts and we don’t want to challenge that. We don’t want to upset people” (CMC01, emphasis theirs). So instead of pursuing the targeted programs that might respond to disparities and experiences faced by specific groups on campus, there was a preference for “pan-ethnic, pan-racial” programming and supports, which are less scary than acknowledging specific challenges for particular racial subgroups (CQFA04).⁶⁶ Given the relatively large proportion of racially marginalized students at Clearfield, one respondent argued that this generalized approach might be viewed as easier than holding people accountable because there were so many people to be accountable to.

More broadly, however, the lack of acknowledgement of race and racial difference at Clearfield is read by some as a lack of commitment to diversity—that the campus wants to have the benefit of being seen as diverse without having to really deal with the people who bring the diversity. It is assumed that if those numbers were really valued, one would see different practices on campus; real commitment would come with resources—including leadership of diversity efforts and attention from campus leadership—that could help move the campus toward substantive changes.

Others, however, attribute the limited attention to race to the realities of student outcomes on campus: “nobody’s doing that great” (CQFA01). The campus struggles to retain and graduate students—and though there are gaps by racial group that are a concern—it is generally believed

⁶⁶ Though not necessarily causal, this reluctance to target programs for students from particular racial groups goes back several decades at Clearfield. In the early 1970s, the campus declined a visit from a representative of the state’s employment bureau who wanted to offer a session for Clearfield students from racially marginalized backgrounds. Noting that the event would not honor Clearfield’s “spirit of integration,” the responding staff member wrote, “We are vitally concerned about all students...and we have made significant strides in helping educationally disadvantaged students...Our current policy is to provide ...services to all students while not isolating or showing favoritism to any particular class or group of students” (ARC_C023).

that all students are struggling at Clearfield. Clearfield even has difficulty retaining its most well prepared students. This translates to an assumption that no group deserves special attention. So, rather than targeted efforts aimed at specific subgroups, the campus pursues “a kind of lift all boats thing” in which improvements for the general student body will presumably generate improvements for racially marginalized students and shrink Clearfield’s achievement gaps (CQFA04).

Student success as organizational change. For Clearfield, the surest way to lift all boats is to focus on student success at the campus level through an organizational change effort meant to emphasize and improve student success, specifically framed as college completion. Clearfield’s relatively new laser focus on graduation is a mission-level priority for the campus where individuals had previously pursued a more generalized definition of student success or hadn’t really been particularly concerned about it at all. Rather than an intrinsic concern about student outcomes, which is a motivation for individuals on campus, the campus’s “motivational—energy *now* is really brought out by *crisis*” (CEM01, emphasis theirs). A crisis in enrollment (as I discuss below), spurred in part by declining numbers of high school graduates in the area, and a related though distinct financial crisis were central impetuses for the concerted attention to student success: “[W]e need students in order to have the money to do—why we’re here, which is to help students succeed” (CQFA01).

The campus had begun to change the student success expectation to graduation even as they realized that not all students would graduate from Clearfield. In part, this meant changing Clearfield’s point of reference from “student success” to “completion” and “graduation,” which are believed to be tied more closely to classroom activities and academic support services than other definitions of success—e.g. personal development—might be. New budget models were

developed that reflect this shift, crediting departments more for graduates than for enrollments in courses and majors. Now retention and completion “always are on the agenda,” including being championed by the president as key institutional priorities (CSA01).

Challenging student profile. Even as Clearfield commits more strongly to graduation as the definition of student success and aims to improve student outcomes, students themselves are seen as perhaps the biggest obstacle to delivering on these changes. Although there is an effort to examine campus policies and practices to identify unnecessary hurdles the campus is creating, the average profile of Clearfield students—which varies greatly from its System peers—is the most common explanation given for the poor outcomes on campus. And even as some at Clearfield are drawn by the opportunity to serve students who “may not have been accepted by other institutions, or may not even be *qualified* to go to institutions” (CADV01, emphasis theirs), the challenges are clear.

Clearfield’s population has low ACT scores and is largely first generation, low socioeconomic status, commuter and in need of remediation before they are able to enter credit-bearing courses. They also hail primarily from school districts known to have their own serious student success challenges. Beyond their academic profile is the reality that Clearfield students may not have college in their plans. Institutional analyses revealed that for the students the campus typically enrolls, the choice is between Clearfield and no college at all. Further, even those who matriculate “don’t always look to us as a place to graduate from” (CP02) and enroll with transfer intentions in mind. Finally, Clearfield’s students face a range of competing priorities. They typically work full-time and have families and/or significant responsibilities at home; they aren’t full-time students or able to make college the top priority. Although the campus recognizes that part of its work is to meet students where they are, it was also clear that

the robust set of services needed to support the population they serve is currently beyond the campus's reach.

Shared Pressures, Different Responses

As noted above, Ashby, Bradford, and Clearfield saw themselves as different kinds of entities. Ashby University as a “special flower” whose qualities set it apart from other campuses in the System. Bradford University as an honest, hard-working trying to do the right thing. And, finally, Clearfield College, an under-resourced “teenager” still figuring itself out, and working to improve graduation outcomes. Nevertheless, as a college and universities in the same public higher education system, they shared a set of challenges—resource constraints, budget cuts and political climate—that reflected the context for public higher education in the state. Findings in this section reveal that although the same concerns arose at each of the campuses, what they meant to each campus varied as well as did the campuses' response to each.

Resource Constraints

All the campuses were facing resource constraints—budgets were tight, tuition was froze, regular cuts had come from the state. However, there was increased frequency of reference to resource constraints moving from the high(er)- to the low(er)- status campus, with more than double the references to resource constraints at Clearfield compared to Ashby and Bradford where the numbers were more similar. This preponderance suggests a deeper prevalence of concern at Clearfield. In addition, although Ashby and Bradford might appear to demonstrate similarly prevalent concerns about resource constraints, examination of respondents' comments about the issue reveals that resource constraints were a relatively more weighty concern at Bradford.

Constraints at Ashby. For some at Ashby, the resource constraints meant an awareness that there wouldn't be more—that is, that generally there would be no new revenue from the institution or from public sources, including from the state and federal governments. Others experienced the constraints as less, a push to continue “trying to do more with less” (AAA01). For example, there were fewer teaching assistantships, less support for travel to professional meetings, and take-home pay had decreased over time because raises were non-existent while the cost of benefits had increased. Still, instead of broadly feeling the need to cut back on what was being done, there was an effort to continue current programming and to ensure the future of programs, and in some cases even to expand offerings. This was possible, in part, because Ashby responded to the ongoing constraints by becoming more strategic, finding ways to “tighten the belt strap” (AED04).

One strategy was to “be really savvy” (ASA02). Current funding could be used more thoughtfully by attending to the outcomes that funded programs and activities generated—an approach that was apparently relatively unnecessary in previous years—and to make sure that every dollar spent made a difference for students. As attention to outcomes became more acute, emphasis shifted to assessment and the need for data was “much more heightened” because:

If we don't fix this problem, this now has *money* attached to it. Where before it had some sad student stories attached to it but money wasn't part of it. And that has bad and good. It ups the urgency of fixing some intractable long term problems but it also leads to some short sighted solutions for the political or...expedient solution. (AIR02, emphasis theirs)

A second strategy was to reallocate revenue by stretching current resources to cover more activities on campus. In some cases, divisions saw their budgets as a large pie that could be sliced differently than originally imagined.

A third strategy that proved to be particularly fruitful was to raise additional revenue through external fundraising efforts. In addition to seeking support for campus programs from outside sources, Ashby had been able to generate its own revenue through a “signature program” of graduated tuition increases for in- and out-of-state students, which were offset by grants to students receiving need-based financial aid (AAA01). Through this approach to “robbing Peter to pay Paul” (AED04), Ashby had raised an additional \$220-million (estimated)—with an additional \$40-million projected annually—to augment need-based financial aid, expand student support services, and add faculty positions (A_ID042).

Constraints at Bradford. Bradford differed from Ashby in at least two respects regarding financial concerns—the perceived duration and the population(s) of concern. First, contrary to what appeared to be a relatively new imperative to be more mindful of financial resources at Ashby, such worries were nothing new at Bradford. Finances had been “squeezed” for years (BP01) and a regular source of concern for some time. Rather than an emphasis on strategic reallocation—an administrative effort to shift resources—there was a sense of weariness about financial (im)possibility. It was “taxing and tiring” to need, so frequently and for so long, to be creative in funding activities and worried *if* activities could be funded or sustained (BREC01). In addition, rather than being able to continue to squeak by, it was anticipated that the time when “[y]ou do without” was not far away (BQFA02).

In some ways, students were both a cause and a solution to Bradford’s resource constraints. Enrollment seemed to be a linchpin in the campus’s financial concerns. Regular

enrollment declines over several years had resulted in millions less in tuition revenue. In addition, Bradford students were largely from low socioeconomic status backgrounds and already in need of more financial support for college to be truly affordable, which meant demand for more scholarships and financial aid. So increasing tuition revenue from current students, never mind the limitations of the ongoing tuition freeze, would result in the campus becoming more unaffordable and inaccessible to the students Bradford serves. Raising tuition for non-resident students was also unlikely. An administrator compared Bradford to Ashby, saying:

I've heard [Ashby's president] say that they wouldn't mind a tuition freeze so much because they could make it up with out-of-staters. All they need to do is turn this spigot on a little more with out-of-staters. [Ashby] could *fill* its campus with out-of-state students if it wanted to. (BIL01, emphasis theirs)

Conversely, Bradford's out-of-state numbers were so small that increasing tuition would just shrink this population. Thus, the primary alternative was to increase tuition revenue by (re)growing the student population. The campus would pursue this through marketing campaigns designed to counter several years of enrollment declines by enticing more local undergraduates as well as graduate students interested in Bradford's twin emphasis on teaching and research, and relatively affordable—and static—sticker price.

Second, the potential effect of resource constraints on student outcomes was a foremost concern. While the campus was intrinsically motivated to provide essential academic resources, it was also the reality that student success—the arc from admission through retention to graduation—is “what generates revenue for us” (BIL01). Still, effective supports were essential but expensive. Tutoring services, smaller advising loads, and smaller

class sizes in the campus's new general education program had all proven beneficial but it wasn't clear they could continue to be protected. Resource constraints also limited the depth of programming that Bradford could provide. In short, demand for services simply outstripped supply because there were limited human and time resources to provide the full range of services that Bradford students needed. As a result, some programs were shorter, less intensive and individualized, and, finally, less proactive than was desirable. In this context, there were concerns about the diminishing quality of academic programs and the potential competition among programs for funding, which would mean that the campus's ability to sustain programs would not necessarily reflect its commitments. "We're serious," one respondent said, "We're absolutely serious. But, we might not get the money" (BQFA02).

Constraints at Clearfield. Clearfield is similar to Bradford in that financial concerns are longstanding. One respondent stated, simply, "[W]e haven't had money for a long time" (CQFA02). But, unlike Bradford, and very different from Ashby, the days of doing without had already come to Clearfield. This campus was almost totally dependent on revenue generated by tuition and the state coffers. After years of tuition freezes, declining state support and enrollments, and trimmed budgets, the campus faced an imperative to "do more than more with less than less" (CADV01).

The effects of Clearfield's intense resource constraints varied. Here, I focus on two—a decrease in the size of Clearfield's staff and faculty, and impediments to the campus's ability to provide academic programs and services. First, the campus was understaffed. Over time, staff and faculty had left the campus—often lured away by relatively more competitive salaries elsewhere—and their positions were often not backfilled, leaving vacancies in nearly every department. As this trend continued, those left behind shouldered even greater, and

often seemingly impossible, burdens to help Clearfield students to be successful— “one of the forever fights” of trying to find more time and room on people’s already overfilled plates (CQFA05). While not universal, morale was a concern but even those who were optimistic about their individual work were uncertain about the likelihood of the campus reaching its goals because “collectively, I don’t know if we have enough to do” (CMC01).

Second, Clearfield students were widely recognized as not being college-ready⁶⁷ and with a host of other challenges that made persistence, and especially graduation within four or six years an outside possibility.⁶⁸ With limited human and financial resources, Clearfield could not offer and/or sustain essential academic programs. For example, Clearfield had hosted several student transition programs—summer bridge programs; first-year transition—before “the money dried up” (CMC01). Now, their relatively underprepared student body starts college with little guidance and structured supported unless they are among the small handful involved in federally supported programs for which nearly 70% of the campus is eligible.⁶⁹ In this context, one respondent asserted, even things “you’ve got to” do can’t be done, which means “you really don’t have the money that you need to be successful” (CQFA04).

There were two primary responses to the financial constraints at Clearfield—to spend less and to generate more revenue. First, the campus sought ways to decrease its expenses.

⁶⁷ For example, in 2012, after several years of declines more than 30% of Clearfield students required remediation in English and approximately 50% required remediation in math. In both cases, these figures were closer to—but still far exceeded—the percentages at two-year colleges in the state rather than at the other four-year regional campuses in the state (C_ID010).

⁶⁸ As of 2013, the six-year graduation rate for first-time full-time freshman at Clearfield averages 30% (C_ID010).

⁶⁹ The campus’s limited ability to extend this—or a similar—program to more students does have retention implications as the first-, second- and third-year retention in this program ranged from approximately 10- to 20-percentage-points higher than the overall Clearfield student body, depending on the entering cohort being analyzed (C_ID010).

One widely discussed change was an increase in faculty workload, which had long hovered between that of the research institutions and that of the other regional campuses in the state. There were several explanations for this change, but the reality is that having faculty teaching five courses per semester instead of three made each course and faculty person less expensive. Finally, Clearfield engaged in a staffing containment strategy, which—as noted above—meant that many positions were left empty for extended periods and new positions were not created.

Second, given that fundraising was an unlikely source of funding at Clearfield, there was one viable option for raising revenue: increasing enrollment. Although it was acknowledged that there were difficult financial times across the System, there was a sense that Clearfield was worse off than nearly every other campus because it had the second smallest enrollment, which translated to the second smallest amount of revenue generated from tuition dollars. In addition, declining numbers of graduating high schoolers in the state contributed to an “enrollment crisis” at Clearfield such that maintaining enrollment at a financially sustainable level was crucial (CEM01). Clearfield, thus, looked to drawing new populations—the “*untapped* market” of adult learners in the region, veterans and other online learners—and expanding the international student population, which was typically drawn by a handful of Clearfield programs like business and computer science (CQFA04, emphasis theirs).

Budget Cuts

Interestingly, despite the projected size of budget cuts being levied on the state’s public higher education system, discussion of them was common but not as widespread as concerns

about the ongoing financial constraints the campuses faced.⁷⁰ There was uneasiness about the cuts at all campuses, but Bradford and Clearfield appeared to be in more dire circumstances with direct impact on student success activities inevitable on both campuses.⁷¹ Further, discussion of the budget cuts at Clearfield were intensified by the emotional weight they seemed to carry on a campus already so thinly resourced and staffed.

Ashby. Concern about the impending budget cuts was present at Ashby but not broadly so. There was concern about the “domino effect” of cuts at the university level that would trickle down through to cuts in divisions and programs (AED01). While no specific concerns surfaced, there was generalized disquiet about potential decreases in program offerings and levels of staffing across the university. Although there would be efforts to focus the cuts on administration, rather than program delivery, the cuts this time were anticipated to be so deep and so close on the heels of other cuts that no area of campus would be untouched, meaning students would ultimately be affected. In addition, despite tuition freezes, reduced resources would mean few financial supports for students as well as increased non-tuition expenses that

⁷⁰ It is possible that the relative newness of this set of budget cuts, with details to be ironed out in the governor’s final budget that was still months away, made the cuts pressing but less immediate than everyday resource concerns.

⁷¹ It should be noted that my data collection plan may account for some of the differences seen across campuses, particularly Ashby compared to Bradford and Clearfield. While I interviewed participants at different campuses across the waves of interviewing I conducted, half of my interviews at Ashby took place in the fall semester of the academic year in which the cuts were announced. About a third of Bradford interviews took place at this time and none of those at Clearfield. Conversely, the bulk of my Clearfield interviews took place in the week leading up to a February update regarding the cuts. About half of my Bradford interviews were in the weeks surrounding this update, and about a third of those at Ashby. It is possible that if I had interviewed the bulk of respondents at all three campuses during or after this time when budget talks became more explicit in the state, I might have heard different concerns and more or less variation across the campuses. Nevertheless, undergirded as it is by the ongoing resource constraints faced by each campus, concern about the budget cuts is further contextualized and inflected by the financial realities the schools already faced, which are much less sensitive to the timing of my data collection.

impact the cost-of-attendance. Although these were seen as “problematic changes” resulting from the budget cuts (AEM01), one respondent suggested that the cuts could actually be “a hell of a motivator,” encouraging people to imagine and collaborate in ways they might not without the pressure of deep cuts (AED02).

A second concern was that the budget cuts would lead to loss of staff and faculty. Although the numbers were unclear, layoffs were being discussed and it was clear that no division was likely to be spared. The campus hoped to protect services for students but with fewer people to do the work, Ashby would see a shift away from the more labor-intensive student services like lower advising loads and, to some degree, the high impact programs the campus hoped to engage students in.

Bradford. After decades of cuts, budgets at Bradford were already tight and the amount of the upcoming cuts were unimaginable. Academic consequences seemed inevitable. Although cuts on both the academic and support sides of campus were anticipated, potential cuts to academic services were particularly troubling. Specifically, there was concern about the campus’s ability to maintain new programs that had shown progress. For example, there would be pressure to make changes in some of the elements that supported the positive outcomes of the remade general education program (e.g. small class sizes) even though a cohort had not been ushered through to graduation yet. More universally, academic support programs—counseling, advising, tutoring—that had been held harmless in previous rounds of budget cuts thanks to funding through differential tuition were unlikely to be spared in the current cuts.

Both because of the size of the cuts and because non-personnel savings had already been tapped in previous rounds of cuts, it was clear that faculty and staff departures—either through layoffs or retirements—would be the primary source of budget savings this time. One large

division had already made significant administrative cuts; one department no longer had voicemail and one of the senior administrators laughed that having already eradicated her supply budget, “I rob Peter to put paper...in my copier” (BSA01). It was anticipated that the campus would lose 80 to 100 positions in the current academic year with more to follow.

Although layoffs and retirements would be the primary response to the budget cuts, Bradford had more than one tool in its kit. The campus decided to “grow and cut our way out of it” (BSA01). Specifically, Bradford planned a four-fold increase in its marketing budget despite the deep cuts that were forthcoming because “first-time full-time freshmen are our lifeblood” (BIL01). This would not only bring tuition revenue to campus but, it was hoped, would also increase the campus’s self reliance given the assumption that recent—and longstanding—history suggested additional cuts were likely.

Clearfield. The Clearfield campus struggled to come to terms with the new budget cuts, the further tightening of an already decidedly insufficient budget. Though it was sure to come, it wasn’t clear how things could get worse because after years of a doing-more-with-less mantra, “[w]e’re out of less” (CIL01). The cuts would be “painful” given that the campus had no reserves to draw on, and deep losses to personnel—the bulk of the campus’s expenses—were inescapable (CQFA01). The emotional toll was clear. Staff were wearied by the onslaught of successive cuts—“It’s easy to feel like you’re being oppressed almost” (CQFA02). There was a desire to see Clearfield turn a corner that would bring the campus toward financial sufficiency but with the new cuts, the turn wouldn’t come soon—“I would say later than sooner. *If* we turn it” (CMC01, emphasis theirs).

Rather than imagining work-arounds, there was a sense that the budget cuts would just need to be shouldered because the campus had no other financial and few human resources to

draw on. Not only would the cuts be so deep as to inevitably affect academic programs, but it was possible that entire programs might have to be eliminated. Following the significant effort to shift campus-wide attention to moving students toward graduation, which had begun to bear fruit in the form of increased retention rates and number of graduates, the budget cuts were a primary obstacle to Clearfield's continuing to act on this renewed commitment to student success.

Although no specifics had been shared widely, like Ashby and Bradford, Clearfield anticipated cuts in faculty and staff positions as its primary response to the budget cuts.

However, unlike those campuses, Clearfield was a campus already patching together ways to continue its work as an educational institution, and its staff was already over-taxed. Doing more than one job is "just what happens here" (CMC01) and the next round of cuts meant that the small campus would become necessarily smaller with losses consuming a significant percentage of the campus's resources. Cutting 1 or 2 positions in a department of only 2 to 3 would have a significant impact on Clearfield's ability to perform even daily activities. One administrator worried that shrinking the staff below a certain level would negatively affect Clearfield's ability to deliver on its wide-ranging responsibilities as a regional institution and "we're kind of there," she said (CSA01).

Political Climate

The campuses were generally in agreement regarding their interpretation of the political climate in the state, including the significance of the continuing decline of state support for public higher education. For all campuses, the political climate was an impediment to the pursuit of campus goals, in large part due to the toll the climate took on faculty and staff. Nevertheless, comments about political climate during interviews at Bradford far outnumbered those of the other two campuses. This was a surprise given that it could be expected that the campus most in

need of the state's support—Clearfield, the least resourced campus—would be preoccupied with vanishing state support and the political climate that encouraged it. Still, while the campuses demonstrated a shared concern about the political climate and support from the state, what differed was their response. Although the responses were by no means full solutions to the financial concerns associated with the political context, it was clear that two campuses—Ashby and Bradford—imagined viable alternatives to the loss of state revenue. Clearfield, conversely, also recognized the challenge it faced but there was no plan B.

Negativity toward education and educators, broadly, from kindergarten into higher education, had become a part of the political discourse in the state. In professional, political and personal encounters, faculty and staff confronted the mismatch between their work realities and beliefs circulating publicly and a political context that did not share their value for higher education—particularly outside of vocational education or workforce development where concepts like liberal education had become “bad words” (BP01). This “very conservative” political environment (BREC01) did not emphasize the public good of higher education but rather framed it as a private benefit for which individuals themselves—rather than the state—should be financially responsible. Conversely, respondents saw education as one of the best investments a state could make in and for its citizens, using “shared coffers” to make sure students have the resources and infrastructure they need to access college and graduate, affordably (BQFA02). For many this was *the* reason to work in public higher education, particularly at Bradford and Clearfield where respondents saw their work as part of a larger democratic project that “opens up doors that nothing else can” (CQFA02) and that ultimately benefits everyone. In the state, however, there was a growing reluctance among the electorate to

pay taxes and have others benefit, which signaled for one senior administrator at Bradford that “[t]he idea of public good is completely gone” (BIL01).

This lack of philosophical support was accompanied by dwindling financial support. In fact, respondents speculated that the state’s support would continue to shrink, making its way steadily toward zero.⁷² While many pointed to the declining percentage of funding that came from the state, one respondent acknowledged that the important focus was the “relative reduction” in state support (AAA01). Attention to the dollar amount provided by the state alongside the expansion of what that funding is to cover, he argued, highlights how much more must be supported now—people, programs, students, improved outcomes—with more being left to campuses to cover. Further, it was not merely the decline in state support that created a financial pinch but the “severe budget crisis” that resulted from the combination of the loss of state support and tuition freezes, which prevent campuses from recovering lost revenue directly from students (CQFA03).

There were several perceived effects of this political climate but the two discussed most often were changes in faculty and staff hiring and retention, and morale. All three campuses felt the impact of the political climate on their ability to lure and keep staff and faculty. At Ashby there was more talk of faculty and staff considering and accepting outside offers they may have overlooked in the past. Clearfield, always unable to offer what competitive salaries lost faculty and staff as the insults of the political climate combined with the financial restrictions the campus faced. While there had also been departures at Bradford, the greater concern was the campus’s impaired ability to bring in faculty and staff from out of state. Administrators spoke of

⁷² Although it may be difficult to imagine a public higher education system funded with absolutely no support from the state, at least one projection suggests that based on historical trends, state funding for higher education will reach zero in most states within the next century—with almost 20 states zeroing out by 2050 (American Council on Education, 2012)

several positions for which offers had been extended but not accepted, due—they believe—to would-be hires being scared away by political developments in the state.

The second, more internal effect, was on morale on the campuses. Even as staff and faculty remained concerned about and committed to student success on campus, they had become wearied by the context. Not only was the task in front of them more challenging as their resources continued to be cut, but the respect they got for working under these conditions, for simply doing the work, was also diminishing—a shift in public sentiment that, when combined with other obstacles “does eat at you over a period of time” (BQFA04).

Even as morale sank lower at all of the campuses, there was a difference in the tenor of this complaint at the three schools. At Ashby, there was frustration as if enough was finally coming to be enough and job satisfaction was deteriorating. For Bradford, the “depressed” (BP01) state of faculty and staff morale was a central impediment to motivating them to continue investigating and addressing the challenges the campus faced. Not only did the external challenges loom so large but also feeling unappreciated for the efforts they did put in made convincing staff and faculty that to continue to try an uphill battle. Finally, at Clearfield, there was a sense that people’s backs were against the wall. Yes, morale was low as at Ashby and Bradford but there was a sense that Clearfield was experiencing the worst of times, which were not likely to end soon. Its circumstances seemed to be impossible as the campus attempted to adjust to a fate that was completely out of its control and beyond its influence.

Finally, as campuses came to depend less and less on state support, most were able to identify ways of at least partially compensating for financial loss. Ashby looked to two sources to replenish its resources—philanthropy and fundraising from external sources and tuition increases for non-resident students. Bradford looked to collaborative program development as a potential

revenue source. As one example, one of Bradford's new opportunities was an engineering program that offered Bachelor of Science degrees in partnership with other public regional institutions in the state and was funded through slightly elevated fees and per-credit costs. No such alternatives were voiced for Clearfield where—although the trend in higher education toward increased external funding for academic support activities was acknowledged—there wasn't a sense that there was significant room for Clearfield to expand in this regard.

Unique Pressures

There were other pressures that differed across the campuses and that reflected to some extent the campuses' varied social positions. For example, national problems facing higher education were also local problems for Ashby. Bradford was concerned about the academic preparation of its Black students who hailed largely from one urban school district. Clearfield faced pressure to improve student outcomes. I chose to highlight these, however, because—although distinctly focused—in some ways they all center institutional reputation. But not just concern about the public perception of the campus but also how public pressures and perception differentially burden, in this case, the three institutions. Making the connection back to the schools' implementation of *Excellence for All*, it becomes clear that the campuses' focus on the policy—yes, differed by institutional status—but also advanced according to the policy's match with ongoing campus concerns and pressures.

Ashby University

Ashby was subject to a range of critiques that indicated the scrutiny it was under as one of the most sought after colleges in the state. While the scrutinizers could call the campus to task, requiring some form of response, they largely were unable to force their will upon the campus. However, this indirect authority—the authority to charge and question—was powerful enough to

influence Ashby's response and subsequent behavior. The charges often ultimately left the campus frustratingly unable to summon responses that shifted the balance of power from the scrutinizers back to the campus. The result was the sense of a powerful campus on the defensive, an institution willing to throw its weight around when it saw fit but simultaneously shying away from key confrontations to the dismay of some on campus.

Critiques and inquiries came to Ashby from a range of publics— the System governing board, business leaders, parents, legislators, and via freedom of information requests. Responding to such inquiries was “where data and politics mix” (AIR02), which means that no matter how often data analysts and others sought to debunk misperceptions about the university, myths continued to circulate. Some assumptions about Ashby were commonly held. It was assumed that the faculty, too busy in their research labs, don't teach much and students are left to float on their own through their college careers. Students from racially marginalized backgrounds, it was said, are admitted regardless of their qualifications. One of the more common charges questions Ashby's relationship to the state, suggesting that only students from certain parts of the state are admitted and that Ashby's students didn't stay in the state after graduation. Institutional data prove both of these claims false but the idea that Ashby was accessible to the state is “something people don't want to believe” (AIR02). The false assumption that Ashby students don't stay and contribute to the state's workforce needs was used to advocate for cuts in public spending on the campus. This one surfaced more heavily in the months leading up to the governor's proposed budget cuts.

Finally, the campus faced consistent scrutiny regarding its admissions policies and programming for racially and ethnically marginalized students. For some critics, Ashby wasn't doing enough, for others the campus was doing too much and demonstrating discriminatory

preferences. Ashby's cultivated public image as a campus long-committed to diversity set an expectation, which some held Ashby to and challenged it when the campus fell short. Freedom of information requests embodied some of the resistance to Ashby's diversity programs, frequently seeking information about the outcomes and necessity of these efforts. This attention made the campus somewhat gun-shy in addressing racial issues on campus as evidenced by an incident related to *Excellence for All*.

Several years after the System's introduction of EFA, a frequent campus critic misinterpreted Ashby's attempt to address inequities faced by high achieving students from racially marginalized populations who would matriculate and suddenly be underrepresented at the top of the grading scale, and overrepresented at the bottom. The critic charged that Ashby's attention to rectifying these disparities amounted to a racial quota system for grading.⁷³ Instead, the over- and underrepresentation was meant as an object of inquiry through which the campus might identify the causes of these inequitable outcomes. This type of inquiry is central to the tenets of EFA, which Ashby ultimately used to deflect the critic's charges. The university's responding statement both refuted the intention to assign grades based on race and counter-charged that the critic misrepresented Ashby by suggesting that the language about rectifying grade disparities appeared in the new diversity plan rather than in the System plan that Ashby had not formally adopted. "This approach is not reflected by [Ashby]'s plan," the response clarified (A_ID047).

Although understanding of the need to be careful with language, some were disappointed by the response—a missed educational opportunity that could have brought attention to a serious

⁷³ A review of media coverage of this criticism, largely on right-leaning websites, reveals that the story did get some traction with one such report asserting that Ashby had "taken affirmative action to a new level" (A_ID045).

problem on campus. The response reflected the campus's hesitation in the face of criticism and reflected more troubling challenges related the outcomes of racially marginalized students on campus:

If we don't know why high performing students of color are disproportionately represented in the lower quartile of the grading scale when they came in with—SATs, grades, off the charts...just as good if not better than their White counterparts, something's going on. And unless we know what that something is, we're doing those kids a huge disservice. 'Cause I know—if that statistic went the other way, I'm sure someone would have raised sand about it. (AED02)

The disparities weren't mentioned in the campus response nor was the study in which they were documented. In yet another case, Ashby failed to control the narrative about its own practices, contributing to a false interpretation catching on like wildfire. It was also understood as yet another reason for the limited visibility of EFA at Ashby.

Bradford University

Bradford's special burden explicitly involved its reputation. It wanted and needed to be the type of campus that was sought out for a solid academic experience. Yet, to achieve this would require changes in both the campus perception and that of the city that surrounded it. One concern with the campus's city context was the violence that had recently affected students. During the year of my data collection, several students were attacked on- and off-campus—including two stabbings and robberies—by non-students. Two of these attacks took place during fall preview days when would-be applicants were visiting. These incidents are always regrettable, but they are particularly damaging when they occur during recruitment season, especially on a campus experiencing enrollment declines.

The general climate in the city surrounding Bradford was also troubling because it offered a largely negative climate for students, in general, and for Bradford's Black students, in particular. The surrounding city was an old factory town and was only slowly losing its "super conservative" ways...in small increments (BQFA02, emphasis theirs). Ignorance and "blatant bias" were common, and exacerbated the culture shock experienced by Bradford's racially marginalized students for whom not "be[ing] treated like—a human being or be[ing] treated with any kind of kindness or respect drives them right back home. And then leaves them with an even worse taste in their mouth" (BREC01).

Faculty and staff also faced racism in the community. They were followed in stores and pulled over in town. An administrator and her husband had had several run-ins with local law enforcement, including the husband being approached in front of their near-campus home after a neighbor called the police to report that squatters had moved into a house that had been empty for some time. Reflecting on her experience, she shared, "If it's hard for me, it's *hard* for students of color" (BQFA07, emphasis theirs). This challenging environment also had implications for recruitment and hiring since it was seen as a significant potential impediment to the acclimation of new faculty from racially marginalized backgrounds.

Re-building a reputation. As concerned as Bradford was about its students' experiences on campus and in the community, another motivation behind this focus was the campus's interests in enhancing its own reputation. There was a heightened sense of needing to rebuild Bradford's reputation as safe campus after the series of violent attacks. But the campus's tarnished reputation was even longer running than that. Historical stereotypes had been tough for the campus to shake. Bradford had an unseemly reputation as the "Bradford Empties" because of the excessive drinking known to happen on and around campus before the drinking age was

raised to 21, nearly 20 years ago. Other campuses had similar reputations, including the state flagship, but it carried a different weight for Bradford. As one administrator reflected, “[Ashby] can get away with it. It's got a lot of other things going on,” suggesting that Bradford had fewer avenues through which to clean up its reputation relative to *some* other campuses (BP01).

Beyond contemporary concerns about campus racial climate, Bradford was also still being taken to task for incidents that took place with Black student protesters in the late 1960s, which helped burnish Bradford's reputation as a racially inhospitable campus. More than four decades after the conflagration, the incidents still influenced would-be Black students' and their parents' impression of the campus. But this wasn't dismissed as one parent's oversensitivity. Because most of campus's Black and Latin@/Hispanic students hail from the same urban center, their perception of the campus racial climate and comfort and of how students like them are treated at Bradford are easily circulated, creating a significant potential obstacle for the campus to recruit and retain students who bring a great deal of the racial/ethnic diversity to campus.

While acknowledging that negative images were difficult to overcome, Bradford hoped that by doing good work and having positive outcomes, its image would change over time. One example of this good work was Bradford's focus on student success. These efforts had a range of motivations—a powerful one being the image of the campus as a successful education institution. Even as success can be defined broadly, in some regards, this simply came down to the numbers—that is demonstrating that Bradford could be successful along key metrics: retention and graduation. One staff member asked, “[I]f you're not graduating students who's gonna wanna come here? And what's your reputation gonna be? And so it's about preserving—your institution and your reputation and keeping students coming” (BADV01). To counter recent enrollment declines and grow the campus, Bradford needed to have student outcomes it could

promote and a reputation as a campus where students succeed academically. Still, it was not just about outcomes but also how those outcomes could lead to future enrollments. It was important that students left Bradford feeling that they had had a good experience, and that they would recommend it to friends and family, saying, I think you'll have a good time there, too.

Clearfield

A primary concern that echoed throughout Clearfield was the external pressure to focus on student success, particularly on measures that do not necessarily reflect institutional realities or those of Clearfield's student body. The pressure amounted to a kind of surveillance with external stakeholders attending to campus outcomes in ways that pushed Clearfield to remake institutional priorities and practices. This led to some concern that the campus would engage in certain activities because they appeased these stakeholders rather than on behalf of the students Clearfield was meant to serve. The types of stakeholders evaluating Clearfield as an educational institution were wide ranging—parents, the System governing board, state and federal governments, accreditors, and mirrored some of the same bodies who held a watchful eye over Ashby's activities. But rather than merely asking questions and awaiting answers—as with Ashby's scrutiny—these stakeholders expected action or at least created incentives that encouraged Clearfield to act in certain ways.

As is happening across the higher education landscape, incentives encouraged Clearfield to become more student-centered, which meant focusing on student achievements and outcomes rather than merely educational inputs. Most of the incentives were financial, affecting Clearfield's bottom line. Funding calculations used by the state took student success into account, creating a financial incentive for Clearfield to focus on outcomes. In addition, student success could directly generate revenue for the campus. As one respondent stated bluntly,

“[Clearfield] needs more bodies” (CQFA04), and improving its campus retention rate would help keep student bodies and their tuition and financial aid dollars on campus. Perhaps most significant, given the high proportion of low-income students at Clearfield, were federal financial aid regulations. The Feds were “cracking down,” becoming more restrictive in how they measured and monitored the satisfactory academic progress that was required for students to maintain aid eligibility and, therefore, to bring revenue to campus, which was “huge, huge” for the campus (CIL01).

Finally, indirectly, Clearfield’s relative success at retaining and graduating students helped keep a concern with student outcomes front and center. Whenever Clearfield’s outcomes were assessed, it wasn’t done in isolation. Instead, the assessment was compared to other schools in the state, regardless of differences in their student bodies. The model offered by other campuses in the System framed Clearfield as an underdog of sorts that had success metrics that were “rather low” compared to other System campuses (CMC03), typically falling below the state average. In addition, Clearfield’s retention rates were below those of even similar schools nationally and its graduate rates lagged even further behind. Thus, staff, faculty and administrators at Clearfield were moved to focus on student success because the campus wasn’t meeting expectations as set by other institutions.

Measuring success, but how? The collective weight from the attention of external stakeholders encouraged Clearfield to pay more attention to its student outcomes because “we’re judged to be successful if our students are successful” (CQFA01). In its mind, Clearfield wasn’t necessarily unsuccessful because of what actually happened on campus but more so because of the way external bodies made sense of and tracked what happened on campus. It was clear that the weight pushed the campus toward metrics that it didn’t deem wholly relevant to its student

population or institutional context.⁷⁴ Measuring success as graduation was “imposed from the outside” (CP02). It’s what stakeholders accounted for, so Clearfield needed to pay attention and improve those outcomes but students come to Clearfield with a variety of goals—with earning a degree frequently absent from the top of the list. Instead, students often come to take prerequisites for degree programs they pursue elsewhere, complete courses for skill and/or job advancement and, as adult learners, for general life improvement—all types of success that aren’t counted anywhere in assessments of the campus.

There were two other large areas of concern regarding student success measures at Clearfield. First was that Clearfield’s role as a transfer institution was a type success that largely went unrecognized. Transfer students don’t factor into government accountability measures, which are only concerned with students who start and finish at Clearfield. Clearfield got no credit for students who spent two get years on campus and then went on to graduate elsewhere; that student was essential a loss for them. And vice versa for students who transferred in after their first year or two and went on to graduate from Clearfield. This leaves the campus “stuck in the middle of this catch-22” in which it needs to attend to a large population of transfer students that is essentially invisible in institutional success data and to new freshman to respond to what peers and public officials are concerned about (CADV01).

⁷⁴ This concern—what the campus counts as success and why—was not completely absent at Bradford, though only one respondent communicated concern about the ways in which external metrics failed to “see” Bradford and its students. A similar concern—success with transfer students—was described as a “hidden” success metric though not one so central that it jeopardized the campus’s sustainability (BIR01). The larger worry was on student’s behalf, with this respondent wondering if the push for students to be full-time, for example, was a detriment to students whose own definition of success and life context made part-time an ideal fit, even if it took them longer to finish. He argued that although there was no incentive to do so, Bradford would likely have to be more creative in this regard if it were to truly recognize and respond to the needs of its students.

The second area of concern was time to degree. Graduation rates are typically calculated at the four- and six-year benchmarks but Clearfield's "students don't fit those statistics" (CIL01). Some academic programs had good outcomes that aren't reflected anywhere because success metrics don't track Clearfield's primary population. They attend college part-time, and stop out and then return as they juggle the multiple priorities in their lives. This means that they typically take longer to progress through their studies, and longer than six years to graduate though anything longer than six years doesn't influence accountability measures. This was seen as a failure of recognition rather than a failure of accomplishment. Still, garnering this recognition was a change the campus was unlikely to pursue as long as it struggled under the burden of its shortcomings related to more traditional measures of student success.

Conclusion

By drawing the lens back and looking across campuses of varying social position, we see that as institutions in the same state, Ashby, Bradford and Clearfield faced a similar set of constraints—related to financial concerns, pending budget cuts, and political climate. Nevertheless, as differentially situated entities, the campuses—despite a common context—saw themselves as different types of institution. Thus, the extent to which they were concerned about and the ways in which they responded to these shared elements varied by campus social position. Further, the campuses' priorities, opportunities and obstacles ranged, reflecting, in part, each institution's social status.

Linking the findings in this chapter to those from Part Two, my analyses ultimately reveal that the extent to which each campus made progress on EFA reflected the match between the new equity policy and the campus's pre-existing institutional concerns and priorities. Only Bradford was well-positioned for engagement because EFA fell in line with

existing priorities (improving all students' outcomes, decreasing disparities for racially marginalized populations); concerns (campus diversity and racial climate); and practices (linking academic and non-academic elements in a shared commitment to student success). At the other two campuses, the potential stimulus offered by EFA materialized to different degrees with neither taking root on campus due to EFA's lack of synergy with primary concerns and ways of being on each campus.

Chapter 8

Concluding Observations

In March of 2014, Black students at Harvard University launched the “I, Too, Am Harvard” photo campaign, saying: “Our voices often go unheard on this campus, our experiences are devalued, our presence is questioned—this project is our way of speaking back, of claiming this campus, of standing up to say: We are here. This place is ours. We, TOO, are Harvard.”⁷⁵ The campaign was a response to an article on affirmative action that was published in the school paper. The article’s author—a White student at the college—likened having affirmative action at Harvard to teaching a blind person to fly an airplane (Vingiano, 2014).

Kimiko Matsuda-Lawrence, who helped spearhead the “I, Too, Am Harvard” campaign, was hurt and troubled by the article—not in the least because the administration remained silent during the debates that followed, and did not offer any support to Black students and other racially marginalized students on campus (Vingiano, 2014). The Harvard students’ campaign inspired “I, Too, Am UW-Madison,” through which students at my own university hoped to demonstrate “that the experiences of students of color at Harvard...resonate across campuses in the Midwest...and most likely can be echoed throughout the nation. We hope this campaign will lead to serious discussions about race on our campus, and on campuses nationwide.”⁷⁶

More recently, higher education institutions across the country have faced mounting protests about race and racism as well as demands for institutional response. While just more-than-a-handful of protests have captured national attention, the events about which we had been reading daily were also taking place on more than 60 campuses across the country—at a cross-section of

⁷⁵ Retrieved December 2, 2015 from <http://itooamharvard.tumblr.com/>.

⁷⁶ Retrieved December 2, 2015 from <http://itooamuwmadison.tumblr.com/>.

colleges, including those that shape the popular imagination of what college is today as well as small-town campuses where many are surprised to learn there are enough students from racially marginalized backgrounds to even launch a protest.

I highlight these movements not only because this is the context in which higher education takes place, not only because this is higher education today. But also because institutional response to such demands frequently take the form of a set of promises, often packaged within or on the road to a diversity plan. Although the resignation last fall of the University of Missouri's president and chancellor appeared to be related to demands for change from students on that campus (Thomason, 2015), the more common response is a public commitment to enhance diversity efforts on campus through plans, consultants and financial commitments (McMurtrie, 2016; Schmidt, 2016). In November 2015 alone, Brown University and Yale University collectively pledged \$150 million to support diversity and inclusion efforts on their campuses (S. Brown, 2015; J. R. Young, 2015). A month later, students at Brandeis University ended their nearly two-week-long occupation of an administration building after the president unveiled a diversity plan that included student and faculty recruitment and retention, diversity workshops, and the creation of a senior-level administration position focused on diversity and inclusion (Stoltzfus, 2015).

This dissertation was motivated by a concern that—despite decades of this lock-step pattern—demands to diversity plans—the complaints and challenges reported by racially marginalized students on college campuses today echo those of the 1960s before which most colleges enrolled few students from racially marginalized backgrounds. Further, this research was motivated by the institutional responses I just mentioned, and a desire to understand if this is the predominant response of institutions to calls for increased attention to diversity and racial justice on college campuses, what happens when institutions attempt to act on such promises?

More broadly, I crafted this study in response to my concern about by the growing and ongoing disparities in outcomes and success experienced by college students from marginalized backgrounds. That is, students whose social groups have been underrepresented and devalued in higher education, in particular students from racial, ethnic and low socioeconomic status backgrounds. Changes with and on behalf of these students require significant ideological and structural changes in higher education spaces that will undoubtedly have important implications for work toward equity for marginalized college student populations. Specifically, I draw our attention to equity because equity is often conflated with equality, in which two entities that are imagined to be essentially the same are provided with equal support to hold them in a purportedly balanced relationship. Instead, my work recognizes the importance of equity, which requires acknowledgment of and response to differential needs. This is central to my understanding of the changes needed in higher education because part of the institutional responsibility I seek to underscore requires that colleges and universities enhance not only their *willingness* but also their *ability* to recognize and respond to diverse student needs.

Study Overview and Findings

As noted above, an equity orientation informed this research and the framing question that guided my work, How do higher education institutions respond to and implement equity-focused change efforts? I pursued the answer to my study's central questions using interdisciplinary tools that would help me understand institutional responses to equity-focused policy. To answer the first research question for this multisite vertical case study of *Excellence for All*, an equity-focused change effort in one public higher education system—How have three campuses of varying status interpreted, developed and implemented the policy?—I looked to critical policy sociology for tools to study the actors, local meanings, and processes involved in

policy interpretation, development and implementation at three campuses of varying social position. Critical policy sociology attends to the ways in which social power relations influence definition of the problem, target population, potential solutions, and proposed activities as well as the absences and presences in policy efforts, documents and outcomes (Ball, 1990, 1994; Gillborn, 2005; Howarth, 2010; Taylor, 1997; Taylor et al., 1997).

Second, and most central to this study, through the study's second research question—What influenced decision-making and activity related to the policy?—I sought to understand the factors that structured institutional practice related to EFA on each campus. Specifically, I looked to organization theory and the concept of institutional culture as it relates to action and change. While there is no one shared definition, culture is generally assumed to be a shared network of meanings and related cultural forms that are co-created through interaction and that facilitate collective action despite the existence of varied and sometimes conflicting institutional meanings (G. Latta, 2009; Martin, 2002; Trice & Beyer, 1984). Organizational studies further suggests that culture is a critical consideration within the context of institutional change because change efforts inevitably sustain, strengthen or challenge existing cultural assumptions in an organization (Gagliardi, 1986). Although empirical examinations of institutional culture and change do exist, they are few within higher education scholarship and scholars, researchers and practitioners have called for greater attention to actual change efforts.

I augmented conceptualization of institutional culture from organizational studies using Bourdieu's (1985) theory of practice, which helps clarify the ways in which social position and context influence decision-making. The theorist's scholarship emphasizes the central role of culture in groups' collective and competitive efforts to (re)produce their social world(s), including the social hierarchy in which they are positioned (Bourdieu, 1977a, 1977b,

1980/1990). By attending to the self-interested logics of practice that are built into institutional operations—particularly within institutions that comprise the educational system—Bourdieu’s framework facilitates investigation of institutional action by attending to how and why institutions take up specific practices and to what effect (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

Although all of Bourdieu’s central concepts are interrelated—field as the hieratically structured social space in which action takes place; capital, the valued resources that give shape and parameter to struggles for status maintenance and enhancement in particular fields—I draw attention to habitus as a lens through which to investigate the ways in which social structures shape—and are shaped by—objective and subjective assessments that reflect individuals’ internalization of their relative social position, the opportunities and challenges and orientations toward particular dispositions and ways of being (Bourdieu, 1977a, 1985a, 1986, 1990). Applied to organizations, institutional habitus helps to make visible the ways in which what are often perceived as disinterested entities are actually social actors engaged in their own power struggles, the results of which shape the experiences, opportunities and possibilities available to the individuals they engage and serve. This study, which attempts to wrap its arms around the whole of Bourdieu’s theory, is an important supplement to field studies that rarely take one inside individual organizations and institutional studies which rarely draw back to consider the wider context in which institutions exist.

Together, these tools offered an approach to critical cultural analysis that can uncover relatively invisible aspects of institutional culture and their influence on institutional action and transformation. In addition, critical cultural analysis is consequential because it can guide researchers toward new perspectives, questions and subjects, the investigation of which may have emancipatory potential and that might otherwise be overlooked.

Summary of Major Findings

Considering the ways in which the three campuses in my study implemented *Excellence for All*, I found significant variation across campuses, which embody differences in social position. Further, analysis of the broader institutional context of each campus made visible wide differences in resources, meaning, and response to the social, educational and political pressures that influenced daily practice. Together, these realities reveal that while there were individuals committed to racial equity and institutional change on each campus, it was only at Bradford that those individuals were representative of a wider institutional milieu that signaled a deep practical and philosophical match between local campus priorities and interests and the content and expectations of EFA.

Ashby University, the largest and most well-respected and well-resourced campus in the state, spent very little time on the policy. Perceived primarily as the priority of the state's Higher Education System Administration—rather than as a local campus imperative—EFA fell from campus attention soon after it was introduced. Instead, the campus relied on its history of practice and purported commitment to diversity, which it aimed to reinvigorate with a new diversity plan that—over the course of several years—was being heavily shaped by campus input. Despite this forward movement, the plan appears to hold little promise for changing the context of racial equity on campus centering as it does a definition of diversity that ranges from the social to the individual, suggesting a sort of equivalence among all diversity concerns on campus. Such a framing, while counter to the pursuit of racial equity, was potentially necessary on a campus whose social status drew sharp attention to institutional practices. That status also offered the campus a sense of self-sufficiency—an ability to recognize and solve its own challenges, to chart its own path—that held

it apart from other System institutions and structured interactions among faculty and staff as well as the college program offered to Ashby students.

Bradford University dutifully approached implementation of EFA. Motivated not only by the policy's connection to the campus's long-time partner, the National Education Consortium, but, most centrally, the equity philosophy at the center of EFA, Bradford saw in EFA a guiding structure for its efforts to improve student outcomes, generally. In addition, and more urgently, EFA was taken up as a cross-campus response to a range of inequities—framed largely as disparities in experience and success on campus—that have plagued the campus over time. Bradford's own recognized status as a middle-tier institutional serving middling students from the region intensified the significance of this work because of the campus need to be perceived as a viable educational option for local students—of all backgrounds. Still, even as a regional campus, Bradford needed to draw students, given declining enrollment numbers and financial concerns including declining state support.

Given this context, Bradford was concerned about student outcomes *and* about its campus reputation, which it was working to change on academic, racial, and community fronts, hoping to challenge even the perception of the city in which it was situated. There were deep concerns about these issues on campus but even as Bradford faced constraints, it was conscious of opportunities—not all of which relate clearly to institutional status: a collaborative spirit that enabled the campus to achieve significant campus change despite limited financial resources, its ability to draw additional revenue through fundraising, and a shared belief that Bradford could make changes that would ultimately have a positive affect on students and the campus itself.

Finally, Clearfield College, the smallest and most resource-strapped institution with the poorest outcomes in the state was most lacking in its ability to leverage political, economic, and

cultural power. On the receiving end of surveillance—primarily from state and federal bodies—focused on student outcomes, Clearfield’s incentives pushed it to focus on student success broadly, which it did by tweaking its academic profile to admit slightly better prepared students who might be more likely to persist; clarifying pathways to graduation; and piloting curricular redesigns. Even with the clarity of this purpose, however, Clearfield faced an uphill battle largely due to human and financial resource deficits and the challenging student profile it served. As a campus held accountable for outcomes that were more typical among full-time students at a four-year campus, Clearfield actually served a wealth of part-time college-goers who were often full-time workers, academically underprepared, and adults who had significant personal and familial responsibilities beyond campus whose outcomes were unlike those of any other students in the state System.

Alternatives for the campus were scarce. It was not well positioned to raise additional funds, so its primary recourses in difficult financial times were to expect more of its already over-taxed staff and faculty, and to hope to raise its enrollment—to raise tuition revenue—by recruiting new student populations. In this context, EFA barely registered at Clearfield. Due to staff transitions and the overworked status of those who were left, the initiative gained little traction on campus. Further, within a campus context averse both to speaking about race other than acknowledging the diversity of its student demographics and to targeted programs for racial subgroups, activities that were achieved under EFA tended to center diversity and multiculturalism rather than racial equity.

Discussion

One way to interpret the relative progress each campus made with its EFA implementation would be as individual institutional achievements or shortcomings. On some level, such absolute assessments are justified. The campuses either engaged the policy wholeheartedly or they didn’t; they either engaged in a racial equity project or they did not.

However, given this study's interest in the way in which social structure shapes institutional culture and practice—as enlivened through Bourdieu's theory of practice—my goal is to I reframe these policy findings to highlight the ways in which each campus's social position, resources, and related interests seemed to shape this study's findings.

When I began this project, I made two central assumptions about what I might find. I will focus on the first here.⁷⁷ I assumed a relatively linear relationship between status and autonomy, such that I anticipated that Ashby University would be the least likely to respond to the EFA imperative. Similarly, I thought that Clearfield's significantly less elite status, coupled with its

⁷⁷ The second assumption I carried into this project was that placement of EFA on the campus—as in the home of institutional responsibility for the policy—would be a signal for the seriousness with which a campus approached the policy. To some extent, the assumption was accurate—placement is a signal; however, much like with my rethinking the relationship between status, change and autonomy, the more I learned about the policy and its expectations, the more I saw the error in my previous judgments. As I noted briefly in “Research Design,” each campus centered institutional responsibility for EFA in different campus spaces. Ashby's EFA hub purportedly was student affairs, while Clearfield centered responsibility in its Office of Diversity. Bradford, with its campus-wide effort, had a significant EFA presence across campus, led by particularly strong representation in academic affairs and student affairs. Given my concerns about racial equity in higher education, I'd originally believed that housing the policy with other diversity programming not only signaled the continuity of this new effort but also recognition of the relationship between EFA and racial equity goals. This assumption was spurred, in part, by my awareness that System's version of the policy barely attended to race.

Referring back to the policy's antecedent, the National Education Consortium's *Expanding Excellence to All* and its relationship to EFA, it is clear that the policy's original intentions emphasize organizational culture, not diversity. Such that the way in which the campus culture engages and leverage diversity is the cornerstone for the excellence the policy seeks. As one of NEC's seminal papers on EFA asserts, there are:

several dimensions of organizational culture that must be engaged to achieve [EFA] and...to help campuses monitor changes that might come from introducing new systems and new practices. The resulting framework, perhaps most importantly, helps campus leaders focus simultaneously on the 'big picture'—an academy *that systematically leverages diversity for student learning and institutional excellence*—and the myriad individual pieces that contribute to that picture. (NEC_ID009, p. v, emphasis in original).

Ultimately, it became clear that *doing* EFA meant not isolating it within an institutional diversity ghettos but intentionally and consistently integrating it and its principles into daily practice across campus. Given this, Clearfield's use of the Office of Diversity is one indication of the lack of robust engagement with EFA, while Bradford's cross-campus integration suggests the opposite.

diverse student population, would push the campus toward more robust implementation because it would be more beholden to System and because EFA would be seen as an opportunity to address the needs of its particular student population. While my findings have revealed that, yes, status did seem to influence the way each campus responded to EFA, the relationship between status and action is more complicated than I had anticipated even though intimately linked to institutional reputation.

First, status is not fully liberating. An elite institution may have relatively more control over its agenda-setting but it does so under scrutiny that lower status institutions do not face. Ashby University, a large research university that enrolls 30,000 undergraduates and has a budget of nearly 3 billion dollars, is also one of the most sought after institutions in the state. As such, Ashby is part of the state's public imagination—representing, many believe, the highest quality public education available locally—and so it must pay attention and respond to public concerns. And given its position in multiple fields, Ashby's public stretches across the country. One of the reasons offered to explain why Ashby did not adopt EFA was the potential for misunderstanding its rhetoric. In a nearly post-affirmative action higher education environment, Ashby found itself on the defensive,⁷⁸ explaining that EFA means—not racial quotas—but a response to racial inequities even as it distanced itself from the System policy. Once Ashby lost control of this message, it was impossible to get that train back to the station. It was easier—and

⁷⁸ As one example of the anxiety that being a relatively elite institution can entail, Ashby's head institutional researcher was the only informant out of 60 I interviewed who refused to be recorded, and who was skittish and evasive before and throughout the interview. He asked to see my questions in advance, chided me for not using a university email for my correspondences, and refused to answer any questions not on the sample list I sent him, including "What drew you to work in higher education?" To contextualize this response, institutional research can be seen as the ground zero of institutional uneasiness as it is the primary point of contact for inquiries about student outcomes, differences based on race and other types of institution-level data—the issues at the center at the types of public inquiries Ashby typically receives.

served other institutional purposes—to start a new process than to redefine an old one, even one being enacted by every other institution in the System. All told, Ashby’s actions and experiences reflect a *scrutinized exceptionalism* that is imbued with the anxiety of being able to go its own way but not without looking over its shoulder.

Bradford University reveals what could be thought of as the protective status of the middle-tier. Drawing students generally from within a 50-to-90 mile radius, Bradford’s status as a regional institution adds weight to its understanding of its educational responsibilities. In addition, this local draw from largely working class and rural region positions Bradford to educate students and parents—given the large number of first generation college students it serves—about the ins and outs and possibilities of a college education, which inevitably shifts the institution’s position relative to its public even as it needs that public’s support.

Further, the university is not high enough status or the goal of a wide enough range of students for its activities to be exposed to excessive public attention. For example, a public forum in response to events in Ferguson, MO, served as a platform for the campus’s EFA committee to challenge its students to consider—and hopefully accept—their role as White allies in the movement for racial justice. An institution supported event of this tenor would likely not be permissible at Ashby, where questions at public forums like these asked participants, generically, what they each could do to help create an inclusive campus environment rather than acknowledging the racialized institutional and social structures within which such actions would take place. In addition, campus conversations about race typically centered diversity, individual uniqueness and similarity despite difference rather than engaging more complex campus-based and national racial realities. Finally, Bradford’s outcomes are strong enough that it can be competitive for grant dollars that can support equity and academically focused innovations on

campus. Together, these attributes help prepare Bradford to be an institution of *enacted equity* that responds to the racialized realities on its campus and in its wider community.

As the least well-resourced institution in the system and serving the highest need students in terms of college supports and success, Clearfield faces a deep set of unique challenges as an educational institution. In addition, many external bodies—other institutions, System administration, and perhaps most importantly, the state’s accrediting body—are paying attention to Clearfield’s (improvements in) student outcomes. Within this accountability emphasis, however, there appears to be little to no additional external attention paid to the individual and institutional needs that drive those outcomes. Relatedly, with such poor student outcomes, Clearfield is unlikely to be competitive for significant external funding, some of which awards additional points to previous recipients, stacking the deck against institutions like Clearfield. As it struggles to maintain and increase enrollment, Clearfield—as an institution of *surveilled subsistence*—has relatively spare tuition-funded coffers, which contributes to and causes other institutional challenges. One such challenge is institutional stability. There appears to be more turnover in critical positions at Clearfield than at the other two campuses. And, as noted, as positions are emptied, many are not refilled, which contributes to a perpetual shorthandedness that leaves current faculty, staff and administrators at Clearfield overworked and overstretched.

Implications

Having learned about these institutional realities at Ashby University, Bradford University and Clearfield College, we must ask, what do these findings help us understand about institutional culture, action and equity-focused efforts in higher education? First, although prospects for this may be bleak in the current higher education climate, the realities faced by Clearfield College beg for attention to the funding formulas for higher education institutions.

While additional grant dollars are available from the federal government for colleges and universities designated as minority-serving, eligibility is reserved for institutions with enrollments in which one underrepresented racial/ethnic group comprises 25% or racially marginalized students as a group comprise 50% of the student body (U.S. Department of the Interior, n.d.). These criteria exclude schools like Clearfield that have a relatively diverse but not diverse enough student population. Need-based funding—either from state or federal sources—that recognizes the needs of the population Clearfield is meant to serve would help alleviate the need for such colleges to choose between their own existence and attention to the unique and varied needs represented in their student bodies.

Second, this study emphasizes the role of higher education institutions in the pursuit of educational equity. Given many of the findings reported here, which could leave one thinking that opportunity for equity is rare in higher education, it may be comforting to remember that there were individuals who espoused progressive rhetoric at all of these institutions. What varied, however, was the extent to which these progressive voices represented mainstream orientations within the institution. The study's findings, thus, raise questions regarding what I would call equity-minded institutions. Future research should investigate not only the ways in which individuals become more equity-minded in higher education spaces—as Bensimon and colleagues have studied (Bensimon et al., 2007; Bishop, 2014; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015)—but also about the institutions in which these equity-minded professionals hold more sway. The case of Bradford University may be instructive in this regard. Is it a coincidence that so many faculty and staff who are committed to racial equity and willing to work toward it collaboratively are collected in the same institution? Or is there something broader, or more fundamental to the institutional orientation, that makes it a place where equity-mindedness can take root?

In addition, some respondents emphasized Bradford's institutional identity as what I have termed a "first generation college" that demonstrates cross-institutional knowledge of the lived experiences, educational opportunities and challenges, and developmental needs of students who are the first in their families to pursue a college education. In other words, the campus's commitment to first generation college students is believed to transcend the mere make-up of its student body to become an embodied status reflected in its policies and practices, institutional motivations, and the composition of its staff. It is worth asking whether such a shared orientation⁷⁹ above and beyond policy goals is an essential element of successful organizational change.

Finally, these findings have implications for leadership on college campuses that recognizes them as socially situated educational institutions. Kezar and Eckel (2002a)—who emphasize the centrality of institutional culture to change efforts—urge change agents to become "cultural outsiders" within their own organizations by enhancing their ability to read institutional habits and patterns, and to respond to these with change strategies that are "culturally coherent or aligned with the culture" (p. 457). The findings from this study suggest that rather than merely recognizing their own particular institutional culture and acting as cultural outsiders, change agents must also become "power brokers" who recognize the structural factors that influence institutional culture and devise ways to successfully navigate the opportunities and challenges inherent in this

⁷⁹ This idea of a shared campus orientation relates as well to the potential role that a strong, student focused mission can play. Bradford's identity as a liberal arts institution was reinvigorated and achieved mission-level status as the result of a significant institutional reform focused on student outcomes. As one informant shared, the campus's liberal arts designation went from something scarcely mentioned on campus to a defining element of the campus's institutional identity, and a strong new root in its institutional reputation (BAA02) This transformation gives rise to useful questions about the link between student focused missions that can create an umbrella under which significant organizational change can take place. (This is not to say that research institutions are doomed. Ashby is much, much larger than both Bradford and Clearfield. Examining equity efforts at the college-, school- or department level likely would have revealed a different perspective on student-focused equity possibilities that seem to have less vitality and visibility in the context of an institution-level analysis.)

relationship. This is not to say that institutional change in higher education would suddenly become easy but there is much to be learned not only about the ways in which social power shapes policy and its implementation but also how change efforts can be crafted in ways that account for the affordances and constraints that accompany institutional status.

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Table A1

Campus Comparison Data

<u>Comparison Data</u>	Ashby University <u>“high-status”</u>	Bradford University <u>“medium-status”</u>	Clearfield College <u>“low-status”</u>
Founded	Mid-1800s	Late 1800s	Mid-1900s
Carnegie classification	Research Universities (very high research activity)	Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)	Baccalaureate Colleges Arts & Sciences
Degrees Awarded	2012-2013	2012-2013	2012-2013
Associate’s	[unavailable]	Fewer than 30	[unavailable]
Bachelor’s	More than 6,500	Approximately 2,000	Fewer than 700
Master’s	More than 2,000	Fewer than 300	Fewer than 50
Doctoral	Fewer than 1,500	Fewer than 10	[unavailable]
Graduate Programs	250	14	5
Values and Recognition			
Mission	To provide a learning environment in which faculty, staff and students can discover, examine critically, preserve and transmit the knowledge, wisdom and values that will help ensure the survival of this and future generations and improve the quality of life for all.	To provide a wide array of quality educational opportunities to the people of the region and beyond through the discovery, synthesis, preservation and dissemination of knowledge.	To provide to high-quality educational programs, creative and scholarly activities, and services responsive to its diverse student population, and its local, national and global communities.
Vision	The university should improve people’s lives beyond the classroom, spanning teaching, research, outreach and public service.	The university will be a national model as a responsive, progressive, and scholarly public service community known for its accomplished record of engaging	The university is a dynamic learning community grounded in academic excellence and focused on student success, diversity, inclusion and

Motto	By God's Light	people and ideas for common good. Mingling excellence and access	community engagement. Here we are. Genuinely. Extraordinary
Point(s) of Pride	University firsts	Teaching, sustainability, sports, civic engagement	Diverse learning environment
Rankings	Typically included in most popular rankings lists, usually receiving recognition as a top university	Typically not included in most popular rankings lists, some regional recognition	Typically not included in most popular rankings lists
Recognition	Ranked nationally and internationally as among best national colleges, best college value, best public college/university	Ranked regionally as among top colleges and nationally as a master's level university	Recognized as a national liberal arts college
The Numbers			
	2013-2014	2013-2014	2013-2014
Budget	More than \$2.5-billion	Approximately \$250-million	Approximately \$100-million
Budget/undergraduate	~\$95,000	~\$20,000	~\$22,000
Budget/student (all)	~\$70,000	~\$18,000	~\$20,000
Tuition & Fees ^			
In-state	~\$10,000	~\$7,000	~\$7,000
Out-of-state	~\$25,500	~\$15,000	~\$15,000
Financial-aid: need-/merit-based aid (%)	~70/40♦	~70/20	~70/13
Enrollment:			
Undergraduate (all)	~30,000	~12,000	~5,000
Undergraduate (24yo and younger)	94%	84%	75%
Undergraduates (full-time)	Approximately 80%	Approximately 40%	Approximately 50%

Undergraduates (part-time)	Less than 10%	Approximately 25%	Approximately 30%
Undergraduates (non-resident)	Approximately 40%	Approximately 5%	Approximately 10%
Undergraduates (international)	Approximately 2,500	More than 100	Less than 100
Undergraduates (SRM)*	Less than 10%	Approximately 10%	Approximately 25%
Undergraduates (White students)	Almost 80%	Almost 90%	Approximately 70%
Graduate students	Less than 15,000	Less than 1,500	Less than 200
Admissions			
Applicants	Fall 2012 More than 20,000	Fall 2013 More than 5,000	2013-2014 Less than 2,000
Admit rate	Approximately 55%	Approximately 85%	Approximately 80%
Average standardized test score: ACT/SAT	~28	~23	[unavailable]
High school rank (Top 10%/ Top 25%)	More than 1,200	[unavailable]	[unavailable]
Admission preferences	More than 50%	Approximately 10%	Less than 10%
	More than 90%	Less than 40%	Less than 35%
	Race and first generation college-student status considered	Race not considered. First generation college-student status is considered "very important."	Race and first generation college-student status considered
Student Success			
	2012-2013	Fall 2013	2013-2014
Average GPA	3.84	3.24	2.98
First-year retention, average	95%	76%	73%
Four-year graduation, average	54%	13%	7%
Fall 2006 graduation rate (4-yr)	55%	16%	[unavailable]
Fall 2006 graduation rate (6-yr, all)	83%	50%	30%

Fall 2006 graduation rate (6-yr, SRM)*	65%	40%	Less than 30% [°]
Faculty and Staff			
Total Faculty & Staff	More than 20,000	More than 600	Less than 300 (full- and part-time faculty only)
Part-time faculty	Approximately 20%	Approximately 35%	Approximately 30%
Faculty of Color	Less than 20%	Less than 15%	Approximately 25%
Student to Faculty Ratio	~18:1	~22:1	~18:1
Degrees conferred			
Grad programs			
Diversity Practice			
EFA Campus home	Student Affairs	Student Affairs	Office of Equity & Diversity
EFA Visibility	Limited	High	Low
System Administration	2014 (team)	2012 (individual);	2009 (individual)
Diversity Recognition		2011 (team)	

Notes: Data in this table were drawn from national college and university information sites, institutional and System reports, and other institutional documents and websites.

* SRM = students from racially marginalized backgrounds. This group includes students who identify as Native American, Hispanic/Latino, Black or Southeast Asian.

^ Tuition and fees data represent the 2012-2013 academic year for Ashby and Bradford Universities, and 2013-2014 for Clearfield College.

◆ Overlap between need and merit aid recipients accounts for total more than 100.

° Some sub-group numbers are so small, that Clearfield does not represent them as percentages. As a result, the final grad rate cannot be reported for some groups. The range is 15% for Black students and 36% for Latino/Hispanic students.

Appendix A

Data Collection, Analysis, and Writing Timeline

Activity	Timing
<u>Dissertation Proposal</u>	
Proposal development and revisions	January–May 2014
Proposal defense	May 2014
<u>Human Subjects Approval</u>	
Submission of UW-Madison IRB application	May 2014
Conditional approval from UW-Madison IRB	July 2014
Submission of research request and IRB application for contextual and focal institutions, respectively	July 2014
NEC research request approved	July 2014
IRB approvals from focal institutions	August 2014
Final IRB approval from UW-Madison	September 2014
<u>Data Collection</u>	
September 2014–July 2015	
Informational data collection	September 2014
Pre-recruitment visits, observations, and introductions	June–July 2014
Informational website, document, and artifact collection and preliminary analysis	June–October 2014
Respondent recruitment	July 2014– May 2015
NEC institutional recruitment	July 2014
Respondent recruitment, ongoing	September 2014–May 2015
Primary data collection	October 2014–July 2015
Data collection, Wave 1	October 2014–January 2015 <i>In research state mid-October through mid-November</i> Ashby and Bradford University interviews (primary) and archives; National Education Consortium interviews
Data collection, Wave 2	January 2015–April 2015 <i>In research state mid-January through mid-February</i> Ashby, Bradford and Clearfield College interviews (primary) and archives; NEC interviews
Data collection, Wave 3	April 2015–May 2015 <i>In research state mid-April through late-May</i> Ashby, Bradford and Clearfield archives (primary) and interviews; Higher Education System Administration interviews

Data collection, Wave 4	After July 2015
	<i>In research state for ~10 days in mid-July</i>
	Bradford University and Clearfield
	College archives; HESA interviews;
	expert interview
Concluded primary data collection	July 2015
	<u>Analysis and Writing</u>
	January 2015–March 2016
Preliminary data analysis	January 2015
Full-time data analysis, ongoing	August 2015–March 2016
Dissertation writing begins formally	May 2015
	<u>Dissertation Completion</u>
	Summer 2016
Dissertation draft	July 2016
Dissertation defense	August 2016

Appendix B

Sample Interview Protocols

Focal Campuses: *Excellence for All*

1. **Can you tell me a bit about your position and how you got here?**
 - a. What do you enjoy most about this work?
 - b. What student success initiatives have you been involved in on campus?
 - Activities and responsibilities of institutional work
 - Perceived sphere of influence
 - Pathway to and through institution, incl. other roles and duration
 - Motivations for work
 - Experience with organizational change efforts
 - Link between work and *Excellence for All*-related efforts

2. **How familiar are you with the EFA initiative on campus?**
 - a. What is EFA?
 - b. Where did it come from?
 - c. Why was it needed?
 - Awareness and understanding of policy and its development
 - Problem/solution definition
 - Targeted beneficiaries
 - Related activities
 - Campus champions
 - Likely outcomes

3. **How would you define success for EFA?**
 - a. What would be different in 5-10 years as a result of this effort?

4. **What do you think EFA is meant to address?**
 - a. Why is that important to the university?
 - b. How important is that to you personally?

5. **Tell me about your work with EFA.**
 - a. Examples of specific projects you've been involved in
 - How got involved
 - How effort is organized
 - Expectations had & met
 - Experience with the effort on campus
 - Dynamics among people working on the effort
 - Who's involved
 - Activities involved

6. **How does EFA connect with other related efforts on campus?**

- Similarities/differences
 - Linkages to/(dis)continuity with other efforts—across campus or across institutions
 - Event/experience that best reflects EFA’s institutional impact
7. **What models have informed development and implementation of EFA at [campus]?**
 8. **What has been most satisfying in your work with EFA? Why?**
 - a. What has been most challenging?
 9. **What changes do you think have been made connected to EFA?**
 10. **What have been the most successful aspects of this effort? Why?**
 11. **Where has EFA been least successful?**
 - a. Why/What influences this?
 - b. What has been the response to this?
 12. **Given the EFA’s goals, what would you like to see done?**
 - a. How would you improve the effort?
 - Perceived changes, successes and challenges
 13. **How has your work with EFA affected your understanding of the university?**
 - What do you know now that didn’t before
 - Better understanding about _____
 - Questions about _____
 14. **How, if at all, has the [campus] demonstrated its commitment to EFA and the values it represents?**
 - a. What is motivates this level of commitment?
 15. **What do you know about EFA-related efforts at other schools?**
 - a. How do you learn about other EFA efforts?
 16. **What’s an example of another high-level institutional change effort that you think has been successful?**
 - a. What made that effort successful?
 - b. How would you compare EFA to other high-level institutional change efforts that you’ve been a part of/are aware of?
 17. **Is there anything else that we haven’t touched on that you would like to reiterate regarding what we discussed today?**
 18. **Who else would you recommend that I talk with about this effort/these issues?**

19. Can you tell me a bit about your position and how you got here?

- Tenure at institution
- Activities and responsibilities of institutional work
- Perceived sphere of influence
- Pathway to and through institution, incl. other roles and duration
- Motivations for work
- Experience with organizational change efforts
- Link between work and *Excellence for All*-related efforts

20. What comes to mind when you hear “student success”

- Ways of thinking of the term/concept
- Understanding of how shared definition is
- Link between own work and student success on campus

21. How involved have you been/are you in student success efforts at [campus]?

- Specific involvement
- Most satisfying aspect
- Most challenging aspect
- Surprises
- Lingering concerns

22. Which students are most likely to be successful at [campus]?

- Framing/attributes of successful student
- Explanations for success
- Ideal-type student for campus
- Benefits associated with success of these students
- Institutional services used

23. Which students are least likely to be successful at [campus]?

- Definition of (non) at-risk student
- How to identify/get services to students
- Challenges students bring to college
- Source(s) of challenges
- Appropriate response
- Capacity for institutional response

24. What activities, projects, etc. are happening on campus to improve student success?

- Goals of the work
- Target populations
- Variety of activities
- Related changes, effects
- (Un)successful efforts
- Leaders & participants

- Involvement with efforts
- Knowledge of similar efforts at other institutions

25. In what ways has [campus] demonstrated its commitment to student success?

- Current institutional practices
- Stories from or about specific students or institutional agents
- Belief in institutional commitment to students success

26. What motivates the focus on student success at [campus]?

- Local of control
- Perceived internal motivators
- Perceived external motivators
- Primacy of focus on students/education

27. What success has [campus] had in this area?

- Perceived recent successes, incl. important activities, moments, events, resources
- Stories from or about specific students or institutional agents
- Individual perspective on institutional success

28. What are some of the primary concerns about student success at [campus]? What work is currently being done to address these challenges?

- Problem definition
- “At-risk” population(s)
- Contributing factors
- Faculty, staff, and administrators involved
- Stories from or about specific students or institutional agents
- Individual perspective on institutional challenges
- Personal understanding of/connection to issues (incl. own college experience)
- Methods of assessment/evaluation
- Linkages to EFA and previous efforts

29. In your opinion, what would be the best way to respond to these challenges?

- Solution definition
- Factors that inhibit movement in this direction
- Response to impediments
- Response to current direction of project(s)
- Institutional work that comes close to this ideal

30. Who are the peers that you look to as models in this work?

- Why these peers?
- What are some examples you have of models that appear to be working?
- What do you think it is about them that makes them successful?

31. How familiar are you with the EFA initiative on campus?

- Awareness and understanding of policy and its development

- EFA definition
- Goals
- Problem/solution definition
- Targeted beneficiaries
- Likely outcomes
- Involvement in EFA
- Related activities and projects
- Campus champions
- Perceived changes, successes and challenges
- Definition of success (short-term, long-term)
- Event/experience that best reflects EFA's institutional impact
- Linkages to/(dis)continuity with other efforts—across campus or across institutions

32. What changes have you observed in [campus] during your time here?

- Understanding of the institution
- Conceptualizations of change
- Factors in/motivations for changes
- Response to changes
- Challenges ahead
- Individual institutional commitments
- (Dis)satisfaction

33. Is there anything else that we haven't touched on that you would like to reiterate regarding what we discussed today?

34. Who else would you recommend that I talk with about this effort/these issues?

Contextual Institution: National Education Consortium (NEC)

- 1. Can you tell me a bit about your position and how you got here?**
 - Activities and responsibilities of institutional work
 - Perceived sphere of influence
 - Pathway to and through organization, incl. other roles and duration
 - Motivations for work
 - Experience with organizational change efforts
 - Most enjoyable aspects of work

- 2. What motivates your interest in postsecondary/higher education?**
 - Role value of postsecondary education
 - Personal commitments
 - Impact/effect of the NEC

- 3. How would you define college student success?**

- 4. Which students are most at-risk in terms of college success?**
 - Problem definition
 - Identifying students in need
 - Source and response to challenges
 - Social vs. institutional responsibilities
 - Potential points of impact
 - Contributing factors

- 5. How does a focus on college student success motivate NEC's work?**
 - Activities and organizational beliefs
 - Key, strategies, techniques, projects
 - Primary issue NEC is trying to address
 - Key points of leverage for NEC
 - Challenges NEC faces
 - Reforms most concerned about
 - How NEC instigates, supports, assesses reform
 - How NEC supports specific colleges and/or systems
 - Scale of anticipated change that NEC pursues
 - Points of impact (national, state, institution)
 - Links to diversity, incl. definition

- 6. How does NEC attempt to influence practice (nationally, state-level, institution-level)?**
 - Perceived sphere of influence/impact
 - Past and ongoing efforts
 - Points of success
 - Success criteria
 - Stakeholders
 - Partners

7. Please tell me more about *Expanding Excellence to All*.

- Definition
- Elements
- Goals
- Targeted beneficiaries
- Expected outcomes
- Definition of success
- Evidence of success
- Links to QFA

8. How does *Excellence for All* advance NEC's mission?

- Awareness and understanding of policy and its development
- Centrality to organizational mission
- Origin story
- Early response, evolution
- Problem/solution definition
- Targeted beneficiaries
- Related activities
- System administration champions
- Perceived changes, successes and challenges
- Meaning to organization
- Exemplars of practice/application
- Link to "diversity"
- Likely outcomes
- Link to *Expanding Access to All*
- Next steps

9. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about these efforts in the NEC?

10. Who else would you recommend that I talk with about this effort/these issues?

Contextual Institution: Higher Education System Administration

11. Can you tell me a bit about your position and how you got here?

- Activities and responsibilities of institutional work
- Perceived sphere of influence
- Pathway to and through organization, incl. other roles and duration
- Motivations for work
- Experience with organizational change efforts
- Most enjoyable aspects of work
- Why interested in this work

12. What motivates your interest in postsecondary/higher education?

- Role value of postsecondary education
- Personal commitments
- Perceived impact/effect of the HESA

13. What functions does System administration serve?

- Describe work with System institutions
- Most important roles System plays

14. How do you define success for college students in the System?

15. What success has System had in terms of student success?

- Success at System level
- Successes at institutions
- Exemplar institutions
- Factors supporting success
- Populations most likely to be successful

16. What challenges does System have in terms of student success?

- Most significant challenges: recruitment, enrollment, retention
- Factors in these challenges
- Populations least likely to be successful

17. What efforts are active in System to address these challenges?

- System response to these success challenges
- Specific institutional efforts

18. What can you tell me about *Excellence for All* efforts in System?

- What is EFA
- Goals, what is it meant to do
- Where did EFA come from
- Initial response from campuses
- Why EFA instead of another diversity approach
- Opportunities presented by EFA

- Success of EFA
- Challenges EFA presents to System, institutions, individuals
- Response to challenges
- What it takes to do EFA well
- Exemplar institutions
- Institutions not as far along
- Relation between EFA, equity and diversity
- Why broaden diversity definition now
- How does System work with institutions re: EFA
- Changes attributed to EFA
- Personal effects/experience of EFA
- Surprises
- Do differently

19. What other diversity efforts have been/are active in system?

- Why first statewide diversity strategic plan here
- How System demonstrates commitment
- What motivates commitment
- Relationship between EFA and diversity plans
- EFA as last diversity framework?

20. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about these efforts in the HESA?

21. Who else would you recommend that I talk with about this effort/these issues?