Case Analysis of Merging Office Cultures
Using An Appreciative Framework as a Student Intervention Model

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Erin Konkle

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David Weerts, PhD
Advisor

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Abstract

Examining student persistence from both an individual and an institutional perspective provides important knowledge and increased understanding of the student and institutional factors that contribute to student persistence or early student departure. Specifically, this study examined how Appreciative Advising shaped an office culture and perceptions about student success. The benefits of Appreciative Advising to a collegiate office and their students have been illustrated through this case study: a growth mindset, design management, proactive programming, collegial workspaces, and shared responsibilities. Institutions continue to look for the best ways to support employees and to illustrate the influence that creating a strong and cohesive culture plays in furthering the goals of student success. Continuing to understand how institutions are supporting and engaging staff offers hope and promise to the students who stand to benefit and are critical to these institution's ability to fulfill their missions.

Dedication

For every kid who has ever been told ‘you can’t’.
Yes you can!

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background of the Study

The U.S. Department of Education has called the *American Graduation Initiative* (AGI) an imperative for the long-term success of the nation. The plan calls for the U.S. to become the largest producer of college graduates in the world by 2020, and success largely hinges on increasing student persistence (Nelson, 2010). While statistics vary, current six-year graduation rates hover around 55% for students at four-year institutions (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2011) and just under 30% at two-year institutions (American College Test [ACT], 2010). Despite pockets of successful persistence initiatives that have developed on individual campuses, few approaches have been easily replicable across institutions and institution types.

In an attempt to fully understand student persistence, scholars have considered a vast array of contextual perspectives that often overlap. The sheer numbers of studies that tackled persistence suggest its importance to scholars and practitioners alike. However, a cursory review of the literature and statistics on persistence reveals two surprising considerations. First, persistence rates have been stagnant for nearly 50 years, suggesting that the significant investment in research has resulted in little progress in successfully influencing student outcomes (Astin, 1975; Braxton, 2000; Habley, Bloom, & Robbins, 2012; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, &

Associates 2010). Second, the current definitions of persistence are overly simplistic and generally consider only students who begin and finish a degree at a single institution without stopping out or transferring (Adelman, 1999, 2003; Habley, Bloom, & Robbins, 2012). Habley and Schuh (2007) suggested that the definitions frequently used to frame persistence are based on the assumption that the process of persisting is both linear and chronological, that is, that students progress in a timely fashion through sequential steps to obtain a degree. The reality is that the process is neither, but is far more multifaceted and circuitous.

While scholars generally agree that understanding student persistence is critical to individual and institutional success, they approach this task from varying perspectives. Nearly ten years ago, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) identified more than 3,000 studies that attempted to gain insight and understanding in student persistence, and that number has only continued to grow. These studies varied widely in their epistemology, ontology, methods, and the results produced. Scholars examining student persistence have conceptualized their studies using motivational theories, educational theories, sociological theories, cognitive theories, cultural theories, and more (Robbins et al., 2004). Much of the persistence research has focused on student and institutional characteristics as a way to predict individual success, as well as on the relationships between and among those characteristics (Habley et al., 2012). Finally, numerous studies have claimed to measure the influence of particular interventions that have been designed and implemented in the hopes of improving student persistence (Habley et al., 2012). Despite over 50 years of continuous research, disagreements among scholars regarding both the causes and interventions to best explain and address student persistence remain. These disagreements might be attributed to differing methodologies and ontologies, as well as to a disconnect between the scholars studying persistence and the practitioners charged with implementing the resulting interventions.

Problem Statement

Examining student persistence from both an individual and an institutional perspective provides important knowledge and increased understanding of the student and institutional factors that contribute to student persistence or early student departure. Most studies on this topic have relied on an overarching question that might be phrased in this way: "Why do students leave college without graduating?" Graduation is considered to be the end-goal of the persistence, as it capitalizes on the potential of the individual student and fulfills the mission of the institution. Graduating students also helps institutions demonstrate that they effectively and efficiently using their funds to deliver positive outcomes. This is increasingly important as higher education institutions across the nation are facing significant funding cuts.

As mentioned previously, despite an already substantial and continuously growing literature base, effective intervention strategies remain elusive. No higher percentage of students graduate today than did 50 years ago. At least two possible explanations exist for this stagnation phenomenon. First, a theory to practice gap may exist, where practitioners responsible for designing and implementing interventions do not understand or do not incorporate the suggestions from the retention scholarship. A more likely explanation is that, while the retention literature has made significant contributions to understanding persistence, it still lacks effective implementation. This lack may be, in part, due to the underlying social issues that still pose significant challenges such as poverty and educational disparities.

A clear thematic thread in the literature is the deficit approach to understanding factors that affect persistence. The deficit approach refers to a focus on what students lack in preparation or personal characteristics, what institutions lack in culture, or where institutions and individuals fail to successfully interact (Bensimon, 2005). The problem is well understood and explored, but solutions have been largely unsuccessful and even ignored. Additionally, in using graduation and linear progress to a degree as the sole measure of student success, many other aspects of the student experience have been overlooked and under-valued. Schreiner (2012) described an inherent problem with a sole focus on graduation because graduation, as an event, indicates only that a student has “survived” to graduation day with little regard for success. In any case, what is relatively certain is that current approaches are not working.

Additionally, interventions that are successful on a single campus do not necessarily translate to success in another environment, nor do institutions always choose to continue to implement interventions that show promise. Changes in leadership, structure, staffing, and even budgets can cause promising interventions to disappear prematurely (Habley et al., 2012). This confounds the original issue of finding successful interventions because they must not only work, but they must also achieve staying power within the institution. Institutions also often no longer have the luxury of a creating an office or even a position to shepherd a new interventions. This is further compounded with consolidation between offices that many institutions are using to reduce duplication and spread funds as far as possible.

Purpose of the Study

This study draws on organizational development and positive psychology literature to examine the existing gaps and shortcomings related to student persistence. A language shift has gradually occurred over the past 20 years from student departure, to student retention, and finally to student persistence. Some of the most recent literature has pushed for yet another shift, this time toward a student success paradigm (Habley et al., 2012; Kezar, 2007; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; Schreiner, Pothoven, Nelson, & McIntosh, 2009). Contrasting the deficit-approach, the student success view advocates an assets-based approach to research and subsequent interventions that may create new advances in helping students succeed in college. The shift toward success makes the case for abandoning the traditional deficits approach which views students and institutions as a "problem" to be fixed, to one that views students and institutions as full of potential and opportunity to be unleashed.

The purpose of this study is to explore the cultural characteristics of an office implementing assets-based frameworks through multiple student services programs, which exists specifically to support student persistence and success efforts. This study aims to examine the process by which an assets-based shift might occur, and how adoption of an assets-based approach may impact organizational culture. Specifically, this study examines how Appreciative Advising shapes an office culture and perceptions about student success. Appreciative Advising is defined as "a social-constructivist advising philosophy that provides an advising framework for advisors to use in optimizing their interactions with students in both individual and group settings" (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008, p. 19). Key tenets of this philosophy are the Appreciative mindset or unconditional positive regard for the student, active-listening, and positive, open-ended questions intended to elicit students' stories.

Significance of the Study

Examining ways in which Appreciative Advising may influence culture change is promising for several reasons. First, the technique has been demonstrated to be an effective tool in facilitating student success (Amundsen & Hutson, 2004). Evidence of early successes suggests that a student intervention framework, like

Appreciative Advising, could be employed to support and improve student success (Amundsen & Hutson, 2004). By expanding the Appreciative Advising framework to include faculty and other institutional representatives, institutions may dramatically change the way that representatives interact with students and each other, thereby changing the foundational culture of the institution.

Second, a transition from the traditional deficits-based approach to an assets-based approach fosters a new mindset that could allow higher education institutions to respond to the new realities of increased pressure to retain and graduate students. The practice of recognizing the expertise held within individuals and within an institution, along with the ability of each to chart the most advantageous pathway, provides a powerful incentive for transformation.

Third, Appreciative Advising provides a unique vantage to study the interplay between a successful intervention and a staying intervention – one that works and sticks around. Appreciative Advising is rooted in both positive psychology and organizational development, placing it at the intersection of success and stay. This study explores the opportunity for scholarship to inform practice to address a persistent national need and to potentially alter culture and thereby provide students with the best possible chance for success.

Lastly, this study offers a picture of the process of merging two offices with similar missions, but vastly different cultures. As higher education faces continued funding shortages and more robust accountability measures institutions will need to reevaluate and consolidate their work. Merging academic departments and colleges, as well as student support areas will likely continue to be a viable solution to address financial and accountability needs. Understanding the decision-making, process, and outcomes of merging will inform institutions pursuing this option.

Research Question

This research is guided by one primary question:

1. How does the adoption of an Appreciative Advising model influence the process and culture of merging student support offices?

This question seeks to understand the potential cultural shifts that might precede or result from implementing Appreciative Advising in an office-wide setting. This is of particular interest in this research study because of Appreciative Advising's roots in Appreciative Inquiry and organizational development. While this study does not aim to prove that Appreciative Advising increases student persistence, it will help to develop deeper understandings of Appreciative Advising as a tool to guide organizational culture change toward such an end in the future. It also provides a lens through which we might come to understand more about cultural process of merging offices using an Appreciative framework. Merging is a more and more common practice in higher education as budget constraints and accountability measure are implemented.

Overview of the Methodology

This study employs a case study design to gain a deeper understanding of the use of the Appreciative Advising framework at the individual and organizational levels. A case study design allows for depth and nuanced details that are needed to adequately address the research question. Interviews, document review, and observations provided multiple avenues for the researcher to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2008; Yin, 2009). The methodology was employed using an interpretative perspective to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of the experiences of individuals working in the offices studied.

Definitions of Key Terms

Several terms used throughout this research need to be defined for clarity. The researcher selected the definitions to best represent the scope and design of this specific study, as well as the researcher's assumptions about the content.

Culture. Culture is defined here as the collective behavior and beliefs of an organization and the internal meaning assigned to those behaviors and beliefs by the individuals that compromise the organization (Schein, 2009).

Cultural dynamics. According to Hatch (1993), cultural dynamics explore the "origin and evolutions of a culture, the enculturation process, and the problem of change versus stability" (p. 66). Cultural dynamics seeks to understand how culture is developed through values, artifacts, symbols, and assumptions and the process that connect each perspective to another.

Student persistence. Student persistence defines a student who enrolls in college and remains continuously enrolled, full- or part-time, until graduation (Habley & Schuh, 2007). While this definition may be overly simplistic, Integrated Post-secondary Education Data Systems (IPEDS) calculates an institution's retention rate based upon this definition of student persistence.

Appreciative Advising. According to Bloom et al. (2008), Appreciative Advising is "a social-constructivist advising philosophy that provides an advising framework for advisors to use in optimizing their interactions with students in both individual and group settings" (p. 19).

Organization

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter One provides an overview of the current study and a rationale for undertaking such a project. Chapter Two examines the relevant literature in the fields of organizational culture and Appreciative Advising, as well as describing a conceptual framework to guide the current study. Chapter Three provides an overview of the methods that will be used to conduct the research. Chapter Four provides the data collected during the research. Finally, Chapter Five provides analysis and conclusions from the study.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

As discussed in Chapter One, the higher education literature has shifted toward an assets-based view of student success rather than a deficits-based view of student departure. This literature review will first examine the existing literature on assets-based approaches to student success, focusing specifically on Appreciative Advising and its theoretical foundations. Then, a review of the foundations of culture and its relationship to student success will be provided to set the context for the current study. It is necessary to include both the assets-based approaches of student success literature and the organizational culture literature to provide a complete picture of how we might come to understand the office culture of an organization using the assets-based approach Appreciative Advising.

Assets-Based Approaches in Higher Education

While studies of student departure still vastly outnumber studies of student success, the literature surrounding student success is steadily growing (Habley et al., 2012; Kezar, 2007; Kuh et al., 2005; Schreiner et al., 2009). Student success is framed by assets-based approaches, which view prior successes and strengths as leverage to propel future successes. Studies in this area aim to understand the elements, both individual and organizational, that contributes to a student's persisting in college.

The theoretical underpinnings of this assets-based shift in higher education are largely rooted in literature drawn from psychology and organizational development (Cockell & McArthr-Blair, 2012; Habley et al., 2012). Relevant work in psychology has included positive psychology thriving (Schreiner et al., 2009) and well being (Mather, 2010), while organizational development literature has investigated Virtuous Organizations (Cameron, Bright, & Caza, 2004) and Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, 1987). By infusing the assets-based psychology and organizational development frames, Appreciative Advising and Education (Bloom et al., 2008; Bloom, Hutson, He, & Konkle, 2013) provide a new lens to reframe student retention and persistence as student success.

Psychological foundations of assets-based approaches. Martin Seligman (2000), considered the father of positive psychology, refocused the world of psychology on what was right with human existence rather than a sole focus on treating what was wrong. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) suggested that positive psychology was a way “to begin to catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities” (p. 5). Seligman’s first suggestion that there might be value in researching what characteristics and conditions lead to optimal function, happiness, and well-being in individuals, rather than what caused disruption and dysfunction to homeostasis, was novel (Seligman, 2002).

Positive psychology. Seligman (2011) later argued that well being, not happiness alone, forms the roots of positive psychology. According to Seligman (2011), well being goes beyond just good feelings and rather encompasses: positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning and purpose, and accomplishment. These five characteristics work synchronously to provide a foundation for a “meaningful life,” an overall sense of well being (Seligman, 2011). In this way, well being becomes greater than one individual and includes social constructs and contributions to larger societal good.

Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, and Linkins (2009) proposed positive education as a means to help students increase their sense of well being. Seligman’s research team has spent nearly two decades exploring the prospect that well-being can be taught to school-aged children. Seligman’s team created the Penn Resiliency Program (PRP) and the Strath Haven Positive Psychology Program to increase students’ ability to handle the symptoms of depression, hopelessness, and anxiety (Seligman et al., 2009), and to enhance students’ learning and social skills. In a review of the research conducted on the PRP, Brunwasser and Gillham (2008) discovered that PRP reduced symptoms of depression, reduced hopelessness, prevented cases of clinical depression and clinical anxiety, reduced behavioral problems, and worked equally well across racial and ethnic backgrounds. Such evidence suggests that assets-based skills can be taught and therefore leveraged to improve individual performance. Further, Seligman’s research team found that students who were taught using a positive education model were more successful in curricular and co-curricular environments if they “learn to identify which character strengths they possess in abundance and then use them as much as possible in school, in hobbies, with friends and family” (Seligman et al., 2009, p. 301).

Thriving. A specific iteration of positive education includes the concept of thriving. Thriving goes beyond student persistence and into the realm of student success and optimal student experience (Schreiner, Louis, & Nelson, 2012). Schreiner (2012) described thriving as:

> More than just surviving in the college environment, it conveys that a student is fully engaged intellectually, socially, and emotionally, and is experiencing a sense of psychological well-being that contributes not only to his or her persistence to graduation, but also to success in life (p. 5)

Thriving includes three key indicators: a strong engagement in academics coupled with strong academic performance, strong interpersonal connections, and an overall sense of psychological well being. Louis and Schreiner (2012) made a case for a strengths-based approach to thriving, suggesting that if students are able to leverage their strengths, they are more likely to achieve optimal performance levels and therefore persist. The researchers further argued that the strengths-based approach needs to be in curricular and co-curricular aspects of the educational experience for students to thrive.

Schreiner et al. (2009) developed and tested the Thriving Quotient™ to measure students' self attitudes and attitudes toward the learning process. The thriving factors developed measured both intrapersonal factors (e.g. coping skills, optimism, and psychological well-being) and interpersonal factors (e.g. sense of community, growth mindset, citizenship, engagement, and openness to diversity) (Schreiner et al., 2009). In an attempt to answer questions about the academic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal indicators that could predict college students' success, the researchers controlled for institutional and student characteristics to examine thriving potential (Schreiner et al., 2009; p. 12). Schreiner et al. (2009) used factor analysis to examine survey results from students (N=2474) at 13 institutions. The results of the analysis revealed that factors associated with thriving accounted for 8% to 18% of the variance in retention outcomes (Schreiner et al., 2009). The results of this study offer insights into future interventions that aim to manipulate the identified thriving variables that have the potential to increase desirable institutional outcomes.

Well-being. Building on Seligman's (2002) idea of well being in positive education, Mather (2010) explored the role of positive psychology in student affairs. Mather suggested that the work of student affairs practitioners would benefit from the same shift in perspective that positive psychology brought to psychology. He supposed that language used should not only be reflective, but generative—that is to say that it expresses an existing reality while reshaping the future (Mather, 2010).

The positive psychology literature has demonstrated the benefits of emphasizing potential, past successes, and assets instead of problems and deficiencies (Seligman 2012; Seligman 2002). Creating advising structures and other student support services that “foster healthy goal commitment,” (p. 163) offers practical ways to emphasize and even manipulate happiness, strengths, gratitude, and engagement in students (Mather, 2010).

Organizational Development

David Cooperrider (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) suggested in his seminal work that the commonly held view of organizational development, in which practitioners identify a problem, uncover the root issues of the problem, and propose a solution, was too linear a process for the changing and increasingly complex world, especially in organizational development. Cooperrider’s new theory, Appreciative Inquiry, strayed from the idea of a single right answer and offered that, for any given problem, the “range of cognitive heuristics that may be employed in solving problems is an adaptation limited only by the human imagination“(Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, p. 133). Cooperrider believed that the positive assets that an organization already possesses, often through its employees, would provide the best solutions to the problems the organization faces.

Appreciative Inquiry. David Cooperrider (Copperrider &Srivastva, 1987) proposed that most organizations have an inherently positive core and that if they are able to tap into that core they can use the positive effect to generate success

(Cooperrider, 1997; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Whitney &Trosten-Bloom, 2010). Ken Gergen (1978) proposed that a generative approach would spark new ideas and provide creative ways to view existing social structures. These advances would spur organizations to identify solutions that were previously not considered or imagined. Further, he argued that, because the solutions were internally generated, they would provide an intrinsic motivation for implementation.

Building upon Copperrider's theory, further research has demonstrated that Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a powerful approach for creating positive change in businesses, non-profit organizations, and most recently educational institutions (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). AI allows people to build relationships, have their voices heard, be positive, choose how they will participate in the change effort, and then feel supported for their efforts (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). Appreciative Inquiry provides a platform for individuals to become positively engaged in the change process, something that has been missing from previous research and subsequent interventions in student persistence and success.

Assumptions of Appreciative Inquiry. The Appreciative Inquiry process is rooted in six basic assumptions: it builds relationships, enabling people to be known in relationships rather than in roles; it creates an opportunity for people to be heard; it generates an opportunity for people to dream and to share their dreams; it creates an environment in which people are able to choose how they contribute; it gives people both discretion and support to act; and it encourages and enables people to be positive (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010, pp.19–20). The unifying thread of these six assumptions is that, as strengths are developed in one area, other areas naturally improve and weaknesses become less important. When these six underlying assumptions become part of the organizational culture through the process of Appreciative Inquiry, positive organizational development happens.

An important conceptual underpinning of Appreciative Inquiry is the idea of the Appreciative mindset. The Appreciative mindset is the willingness of the individuals to engage in positivity (Cooperrider, 1997). Thatchenkery and Metzker (2006) further explained that the Appreciative mindset is grounded in reality and embraces the normal range of human emotions, but uses reframing to focus on positive strengths and assets. Reframing what most people see as problems into potential allows for more rapid cultural change and sustained growth and development (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006). Cooperrider proposed a four-phase cyclical structure for using Appreciative Inquiry to spur organizational development. These phases are more commonly referred to as the Four Ds: Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny/Deliver (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

Discover. Discover is the first of the four phases, and theorists have often portrayed it as the phase that truly distinguishes Appreciative Inquiry from other organizational development theories (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). Discover is initiated through interviews that

> bring out the best in people and organizations: they provide opportunities for people to speak and be heard, ignite curiosity and the spirit of learning, and increase organizational knowledge and wisdom. They enhance the organization's positive core by bringing to the surface stories that illuminate the distinctive strengths and potentials. And they bring positive possibilities for the future to life. (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010, p. 143)

In the Discover phase, individuals in an organization are guided through the Discovery interview, and then their stories are disseminated to the organization at large to create an Appreciative mindset to frame the organizational development process. Crafting appropriate Discover questions that will encourage the interviewee to reveal their own successes and strengths and the successes and strengths of others is paramount in this process. Discover, when properly facilitated, provides a way for an organization to learn about the strengths they already possess and to get in touch with their "positive core" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010, p. 147). Understanding the positive core of the organization lays the foundation for the following three phases of Appreciative Inquiry.

Dream. The next phase of Appreciative Inquiry is Dream. The Dream phase draws heavily on the principles of positive psychology. Using the work of Seligman, McKay, and others, Cooperrider proposed that thoughts often guide actions and that, if the collective thoughts of an organization are focused on brighter futures, new generative ideas, and possibility, then the organization will "instinctively grow in that direction" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010, p. 178).

The new organizational Dream belongs to all of the organizational stakeholders; it is their creation, and they will be responsible for its implementation. Dream questions are foundational and "invite people to imagine beyond the boundaries of their daily work, role, or responsibility and to consider questions of purpose and calling" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010, p. 180). In the Dream phase, individual stakeholders are encouraged to let go of their role in the organization and to imagine a new organizational world. Included in this imagination session are descriptions of where this ideal company would fit into the existing market, what ideals would guide the organization's actions, and the organization's contributions to the greater good. Dreaming allows every employee to engage in the creation of a new vision.

Design. The third phase of the Appreciative Inquiry cycle is Design. At its core, the Design phase is about establishing congruency between the Discover and Dream phases (Bloom et al., 2008). The organization must consider which dreams it feels most closely match the organization's positive core—its values and strengths—and proceed forward with those dreams. However, other dreams need not be wasted. Individuals within organizations often find ways to incorporate their own dreams into their work, resulting in greater work satisfaction (Richer, Ritchie, & Marchionni, 2009).

In the Design phase, organizations create a plan to move toward the ideal organization that was imagined in the Dream phase. The organization relies upon the strengths uncovered in the Discover phase to create a plan that best utilizes organizational stakeholders and previous best practices. What makes the Design process so powerful and fundamentally different from other organizational development interventions is that it is uniquely developed by each organization to fit its specific needs. There is no one-size-fits-all plan that every organization can use to Design their path forward; rather, each organization relies on its own unique characteristics (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Likewise, there is no concrete plan etched in stone. Appreciative Inquiry is not a linear process, so the plan can be altered and adjusted at any time to account for new strengths, new dreams, or both (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010).

Deliver (Destiny). The fourth phase of the Appreciative Inquiry cycle is Deliver or Destiny. Deliver is the action phase where the Design becomes a reality and the organization moves toward reaching its full potential. A key component of the Deliver phase is the continual celebration of small successes. In order to maintain the Appreciative mindset and continue to propel the organization forward, there must be recognition for positive changes in the organization (Cooperrider, 1997). All individuals in the organization will play a role in Deliver and therefore should also be responsible for sharing and hearing positive success stories (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010).

Another key component in the Deliver phase is the construction of team-oriented action plans. Appreciative Inquiry espouses the belief that the organizational chart is less important than having the right people at the table to push the change agenda forward (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Relying on the strengths of individuals already present in the organization often means that cross-level and cross-functional teams must be established from time to time. These teams are not meant to be continually operational, but rather to address specific needs and tasks (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010).

Deliver gives organizations, and the individuals that comprise them, a sense of empowerment and self-efficacy. Deliver establishes a supportive environment that encourages further creativity, growth, and development.

The four Ds of Appreciative of Inquiry are a cyclical, not linear, process. Organizations can progress forward or backward as needed. Once in the Deliver phase, organizations begin sharing positive stories and naturally begin the Discover stage again. Appreciative Inquiry encourages continual development and change, believing that organizations can always do more to engage their positive core and stimulate growth.

Appreciative contexts blend the overarching scholarly bodies of psychology and organizational development to stimulate positive interactions between organizations and the individuals comprising them. This blending occurs through a social constructivist framework, which provides an interactive, self-situated, and culturally responsive lens.

Social constructivism. Appreciative approaches are rooted in social constructivism. Social constructivism espouses the belief that education is not simply a process of telling and receiving objective knowledge, but rather a subjective process of constructing knowledge based upon current schemas and past lived experience (Dewey, 1916). Appreciative approaches embrace an interactive teaching and learning process, where

> learners are able to actively link new ideas and concepts they encounter to existing ones they have already encountered. Thus, AE [Appreciative Education] celebrates the fact that individual and organizational learning is influenced by prior knowledge and experiences, and the ways individuals choose to make linkages among the past, present, and future (Bloom, Hutson, He, & Konkle, 2013).

Appreciative approaches seek to construct a positive association between past experience and future potential, encouraging the learner to adapt a mindset of success and well-being. Outcomes, then, whether for planned changed or student learning and development, are rooted in social interactions. It stands to reason that positive interactions lead to more positive outcomes, if institutions and students can develop programs and practices synchronously.

Education is not simply insular knowledge construction, but also a process influenced by social interactions. While learning is generally an internalized process, social interactions influence the construction of an individual's past lived experiences, which inform values and beliefs. Vygotsky (1978) suggested that learning is first a social process of obtaining information through interaction and then an internal process of reflection upon the obtained knowledge. Language becomes a keystone of Appreciative approaches through interpersonal and intrapersonal speech that allows for shared understanding and personal development. Social constructivism is the basis for the prospective powerful nature of the Appreciative approaches because it simultaneously incorporates socialized learning with individual reflection.

In summary, social constructivism informs an understanding of the learning process, while positive psychology challenges the deficits-based, problem-solving-oriented mentality across the social sciences and organizational development. The theoretical underpinnings of this assets-based shift in higher education are largely rooted in positive psychology and organizational development. David Cooperrider (Cooperrider & Srivastva,1987) proposed that most organizations have an inherently positive core and that, if they are able to tap into that core, they can use the positive effect to generate success (Cooperrider, 1997; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). Ken Gergen (1978) proposed that a generative approach would spark new ideas and provide creative ways to view existing social structures. These advances spurred organizations to identify solutions that were previously not considered or imagined, and because the solutions were internally generated, there was also an intrinsic motivation for implementation.

Appreciative Inquiry in Higher Education. While the literature that pertains to using the Appreciative Inquiry approach in higher education is still sparse, the body of research is steadily growing. Recognition that higher education is facing new realities and new challenges that require new ways of thinking has helped spur this shift (Habley et al., 2012; Mather, 2010). Several studies have focused on the use of Appreciative Inquiry in higher education.

In *Institutionalizing Retention Activity: Toward a Theory-Based Model,* Saunders (2002) examined the feasibility and usefulness of using Appreciative Inquiry to institutionalize retention initiatives. A single case study at Columbus State University provided an illustration of a university using AI to move toward institutionalized retention (2002). The underlying assumptions that Saunders (2002) made in using an AI-based approach is that individuals interpret reality, and that a positive, strengths-based interpretation will produce more effective results than a deficits-based approach (Saunders, 2002). In 1999, Columbus State University hired a new dean in the College of Arts and Sciences who faced poor retention rates, restructuring, significant diversity, burnout with support staff, and a large incoming freshman class. Believing that framing the issues at hand in the constructs of existing college assets was the best way to address the issues, the Dean initiated an AI process (Saunders, 2002). The AI plan pulled together a task force of 16 staff and faculty members, representative of each of the 16 College of Arts and Sciences departments (Saunders, 2002). Additional representatives from University Advising, Student Success programs, and the University Honors program were also included in this group (Saunders, 2002). The Dean challenged the group to describe the college "at its best" which yielded the following: a respectful and nurturing environment for students in the college, a strong commitment to academic integrity, a strong college advising program, and a sense of belonging and community (Saunders, 2002). Using the assets list as a foundation, the task force created a dynamic list of priorities with shared responsibility among all parties—or as it is referred to in the Appreciative Inquiry process a "provocative proposition"—to address the growing list of issues (Saunders, 2002). At the end of the first year of following the new proposition, the college saw increased retention rates, increased student satisfaction surveys, and increased optimism for future improvements (Saunders, 2002). Feedback to the task force was overwhelmingly positive, and the institution moved to adopt the proposition institution-wide (Saunders, 2002).

Lehner and Hight (2006), in *Appreciative Inquiry and Student Affairs: A Positive Approach to Change*, used case study research to examine the use of AI in a division of Student Affairs. The purpose of this study was to explore change paths in the Office of Residence Life at the University of the Southeast. In this case study, the

Director of Residence Life, a 20-year veteran employee of the institution, had seen significant changes to her staff (Lehner & Hight, 2006). The staff expressed concerns about feeling disempowered and under-utilized. The Director launched the AI process with the express hope of improving the office culture and communication within the team. An external consultant was secured to shepherd the group through the AI process. A series of interviews with individual staff members revealed the following assets: a young and vibrant staff with innovative ideas and professional ambition. The group's "provocative proposition" was to foster a supportive community where all stakeholders could be challenged, appreciated, and valued. In moving forward, the residence life staff decided that they would use the new proposition as the basis for hiring decisions, performance reviews, and interactions with students. A year later, feedback from the process showed that the staff felt more empowered, work satisfaction had increased, communication was improved, and job performance was better (Lehner & Hight, 2006).

Additionally, Yoder (2005) suggested that Appreciative Inquiry could be used as a framework for developing the unique identity of community colleges. Elleven (2007) suggested that all higher education institutions' Divisions of Student Affairs could use Appreciative Inquiry to develop positive and supportive environments that encourage student growth. San Martin and Calabrese (2011) suggested the use of Appreciative Inquiry to uncover the potential in at-risk student populations. Bushe, Gervase, and Coetzer (1995) proposed that Appreciative Inquiry could be used as an individual intervention to develop leadership skills in executives. This is just a small fraction of the literature that exists for using the Appreciative Inquiry theoretical framework as the process for group or individual change.

The articles reviewed above have several consistent themes. First, they use a constructivist framework to nudge the way that individuals construct their knowledge in a positively skewed direction. As Schwandt (1994) noted, constructivists "invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience" (p. 237). This research is predicated not only on the underlying assumption that concepts are invented, but that they can be intentionally altered by choosing one's mindset. Finally, these studies actually begin with the acknowledgement of a problem that prompted the research, but then move immediately away from a problem-focus to an asset-focus.

A criticism of Appreciative approaches is this focus on the positive. Critics have argued that such a stringent focus on what works is not a realistic approach to most change. Real problems exist and must be addressed, or they will eventually cause damage. Both Saunders (2002) and Lehner and Hight (2006) seem to fall victim to narrow focus on what is working without addressing the issues that prompted the change process. It may be helpful moving forward to reframe some of the language as neither positive nor negative, but rather to view changes as simply movements toward optimal functioning at an organizational or individual level.

Appreciative scholars believe that reality is rooted in choice. If one chooses to look for the best or chooses to look for problems, they will find exactly that.

Appreciative Advising. The paradigm shift from student retention to student success provides a solid foundation upon which diverse and successful programs can be built. A shift, however, to an inclusive, strengths-based language would serve to strengthen student academic support services. Bloom et al.'s (2008) Appreciative Advising, which draws from the organizational development theory of Appreciative Inquiry, may provide just such a framework.

Appreciative Advising seeks to optimize advisor interactions with students. Bloom et al. (2008) noted that:

> embracing the Appreciative mindset, advisors intentionally use positive, active, and attentive listening and questioning strategies to build trust and rapport with students (Disarm); uncover students' strengths and skill based on their past successes (Discover); encourage and be inspired by students' stories and dreams (Dream); co-construct action plans with students to make their goals a reality (Design); support students as they carry out their plans (Deliver); and challenge both themselves and their students to do and become even better (Don't Settle). (p. 11)

Bloom and Martin (2002) first connected Appreciative Inquiry to academic advising in their article "Incorporating Appreciative Inquiry into Academic Advising," while Amundsen and Hutson (2004) first described Appreciative

Advising. Bloom et al. (2008) defined Appreciative Advising as “a social-constructivist advising philosophy that provides an advising framework for advisors to use in optimizing their interactions with students in both individual and group settings” (p. 19). The Appreciative Advising model has been successfully used to positively impact retention rates at institutions such as the University of North Carolina Greensboro (UNCG), the University of South Carolina’s Academic Centers for Excellence (ACE), Rollins College, and the University of Central Florida. These early successes with the Appreciative Advising framework have produced a growing body of literature seeking to expand the use of the model’s six phases beyond advising to student affairs areas as diverse as academic support, student life, Greek life, financial aid, residence life, and other areas traditionally considered co-curricular or administrative.

Appreciative Advising has been implemented at over a dozen institutions across the nation. Appreciative Advising’s foundation in Appreciative Inquiry supports increased organizational effectiveness of higher education institutions by providing a guiding framework for creating strategic plans and strategic outcomes, as well as evaluating and assessing existing plans. Rollins College in Winter Park Florida used Appreciative Advising to redesign their first year student programs and saw a nearly 5% jump in freshman retention which was already nearing 90% (See Appendix 2).

Much research exists on the practice of Appreciative academic advising (Bloom et al., 2009; Bloom & Martin, 2002; Hall, 2008; Hutson & Bloom, 2007), and the practices identified in this area of student services shape ideas for application in other areas. Bloom and Martin (2002) discussed methods for practicing the four phases of AI in advising students. In the Discovery phase, advisors ask students about their passions and strengths. In the Dream phase, advisors work with the students to build on the strengths and interests identified in the Discovery phase. In the Design phase, the advisors encourage the students to devise goal-reaching strategies toward realizing their dreams. The Destiny phase involves the advisors allowing room for the students to accomplish their goals. Within all of these phases, advisors must ask only positive and affirming questions.

While strengths-based researchers draw from a wide-variety of theoretical roots, Appreciative Advising is a specific framework that provides a positive, student-centered, and multi-layered approach to guide interactions with students as well as create, manage, and deliver academic content and out-of-class experiences (Bloom, Hutson, He, & Konkle, 2013). Appreciative Advising contributes a six-phase structure to enhance the effectiveness of interpersonal interactions. Specifically, advisors should: intentionally use positive, active, and attentive listening and questioning strategies to build trust and rapport with students (Disarm phase); uncover students' strengths, skills, and stories (Discover phase); encourage students' dreams (Dream phase); co-construct student dreams into achievable action plans (Design phase); support and motivate students to carry out the plans (Deliver phase); and challenge both themselves and students to continually rethink and reinvent themselves and their futures (Don't settle phase) (Bloom & Archer-Martin, 2002; Bloom et al., 2008; Bloom, Hutson, He, & Robinson, 2011).

Martin Covington's self-worth theory has also influenced Appreciative Advising. Covington believed that several factors affect a student's need to protect his/her personal values or sense of worth through the attainment of academic achievement. Those include performance, level, self-estimate of ability, and degree of expended effort. Self-perception of ability has a direct and indirect effect on self-worth. Even in the absence of accomplishment, the perception of high ability can positively affect self-worth; however, this perception must be backed up with accomplishment in order to sustain a sense of self-worth. In K-12 classrooms, teachers do this by reinforcing the value of trying, in hopes that performance/accomplishment will follow (Covington, 1992). Bloom et al. (2008) tied this theory to Appreciative Advising by stating:

> Appreciative Advisors understand that motivation to achieve tends to peak when institutional expectations and student beliefs about ability and person strengths align. They also believe that through positive questioning, academic advisors can assist students in identifying these strengths and aligning them with their future life and career goals as well as with institutional expectations. (p. 16)

Kamphoff, Hutson, Amundsen, and Atwood (2006-2007) examined a strengths-based framework aimed at improving student retention in their study, "A Motivational/Empowerment Model Applied to Students on Academic Probation." The authors specifically explored a particularly successful UNCG program that targeted students on academic probation (Kamphoff et al., 2006). The authors used a constructivist approach that focused on altering an individual student's experience through empowerment and changed perceptions (Kamphoff et al., 2006). In the fall of 2001, UNCG infused a struggling program, Strategies for Academic Success, with a new strengths-based framework drawing from the tenets of "Reality Therapy, Appreciative Inquiry, Social Cognitive Theory, and Covey's models for person success" (Kamphoff et al., p. 399). The purported goal of these structural changes was to change student perceptions of prior failure in hopes of spurring future success through personal responsibility, positive affirmations, life-planning, self-management, and positive interactions (Kamphoff et al., 2006). The study included 309 students in an experimental group (students on academic probation with a Grade Point Average (GPA<1.5) who received advising and classroom instruction with the new Strategies for Academic Success model, and 80 students in the control group (students on academic warning with a GPA = 1.5) who did not receive services including the new model (Kamphoff et al., 2006). From the fall of 2000, the last year without the new model, to the spring of 2003, the end of the third year with the new model, there was an 18% increase in student retention for students in the experimental group and a static retention rate for the control group (Kamphoff et al., 2006). A limitation of this study is that students on academic probation were able to opt-in to the program, rather than being required to participate (Kamphoff et al., 2006). Students who chose to opt-in to this program may have been more committed to staying at the institution than their peers who chose a less intrusive program.

Howell (2010) showed that, for academic advisors who implemented Appreciative Advising, the framework had a positive impact not just on their students and work, but on their personal lives as well. She interviewed nine academic advisors from three different institutions who were actively using Appreciative Advising in their own work. Howell identified four emergent themes: effectiveness, skills, work relationships, and other relationships. Howell found that advisors using the framework reported that they had excellent job satisfaction, felt more connected to their work, had a sense of self-efficacy, and had positive regard for their advising relationships. Howell also noted that Appreciative Advising contributed to a more positive work environment, though did not specifically detail in what way the interviewees defined their environment as more positive than prior to adoption of the framework.

Drawing on Howell's (2010) findings of a positive work environment for individual professionals using the Appreciative Advising framework, this study more broadly examines that environment from a systemic view. For an entire office utilizing the Appreciative Advising framework, how do we come to understand that office's culture? The next section explores the organizational culture literature to understand how Appreciative Advising might shape institutional culture.

Foundations of Culture

Integrating the concepts of individual and organizational influences on student success draws closer to incorporating culture into the equation. Culture is both static, something that already is, and dynamic, something that is occurring. A review of literature on the foundation of organizational culture, culture change, culture in education, and culture and student success provides context to the dichotomous nature of the term *culture* and its relevance to this study. The following section reviews the foundations of the field of organizational culture.

Foundations of Culture in Organizations

Over 60 years ago, Kluckhorn, Kroeber, and Meyer (1952) identified well over 150 working definitions of culture. Since that time, that number has only increased. Rooted in fields of sociology and anthropology (Cameron & Quinn, 2011), organizational culture gained serious attention in the 1980s, when scholars of organization studies identified it as "a crucial factor affecting organizational performance" (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, p. 18). The works of Edgar Schein (1983, 1984, 1985), Geert Hofstede (1980; 2001; 2010), and Terrence Deal (1982, 1983) refocused the field on the often overlooked and unspoken influence of an organization's culture. Straying from the traditional empirical studies presented as scientific articles, early literature about culture “is best represented by book-length ethnographies” (Denison, 1996, p. 622).

Fortado and Fadil (2012) compared four lenses through which organizational culture is sometimes viewed. The authors suggested, “an organization’s culture could be the genesis of a significant competitive advantage in the business environment” (Fortado & Fadil, 2012, p. 283). Hofstede’s (1980) “software of the mind” (p. 287), the organizational development lens of process consultation, and finally Cooperrider’s (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) Appreciative Inquiry lens examined culture in its original field of human relations. Fortado and Fadil (2012) explored theoretical underpinnings of each lens and the measures and methods through which they are understood. The purpose of the article and its primary finding are one and the same; that is, there are multiple ways of thinking about and exploring an organization’s culture, and organizational managers can no longer afford to ignore culture’s role in organizational dynamics and success.

Organizational culture is an evolving field, and scholars continue to examine it through multiple ontological lenses. Through this evolution, several consistent elements of organizational culture have emerged.

Elements of organizational culture. In 1984, Geert Hofstede published a study of culture in a multinational organization. Examining 32 value statements in subsidiaries of one organization in 40 countries, Hofstede identified four dimensions of common culture: individualism versus collectivism, large versus small power distance, strong versus weak uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity versus femininity. In each of the four dimensions, Hofstede identified important differences based upon cultural nuances and made concrete suggestions for management to address each difference. In essence, Hofstede found that understanding the dimensions of culture is as important as addressing the differences in each dimension; therefore, culturally responsive management strategies are optimal for success (Hofstede, 1984).

In 2001 Hofstede updated his original publication, *Culture's Consequences*. The update expanded the data to over 50 countries and added additional replications and analyses. The update also introduced a fifth dimension to the framework, long-term versus short-term orientation (LTO) based on findings from Minkov suggesting cultures either demonstrate stability or flexibility (2007, 2008). A subsequent study showed (Minkov & Hofstede, 2010) LTO was strongly correlated with self-stability measures and more prominent in Eastern European and Asian countries.

Schein (1983) explored the role of an organization's founder, though the term often applies to a strong leader, in organizational culture. This article explored the ways in which cultural elements are embedded in a given organization (Schein, 1983). Schein suggested that the basic process of embedding was inherently a teaching process. From his observations, Schein, developed nine elements for embedding and transmitting an organizational culture: (a) formal statements of organizational philosophy, such as charters and creeds; (b) materials used for recruitment, selection, and socialization; (c) design of physical spaces, facades, and buildings; (d) deliberate role modeling teaching and coaching by leaders; (e) an explicit reward and status system and promotion criteria; (f) stories, legends, myths, and parables about key people and events; (g) what leaders pay attention to, measure, and control; leader reactions to critical incidents and organizational crises; (h) organization design and structure; and (i) organization systems and procedures; and criteria used for recruitment, selection, promotion, leveling off, and retirement of people (Schein, 1983, p. 231). Finally, Schein argued that an organization's success might largely be dependent upon the leader's ability to analyze and understand the organization's culture and then leverage its assets in a productive way.

In 2010, Schein updated his work on culture and leadership to include new complexities and an exploding field of organizational culture. In the updated work he examined how factors not previously included, but now a focal point in examining any culture, ethnicity, gender, environment, technology and others influenced culture. Schein noted that these factors were dynamic and prone to constant change and they also varied widely between organizations. He also included the idea of less stable cultures because of the rises of mergers and acquisitions. While we know a great deal about individual static culture factors, comparatively we know far less about how cultures interact with one another and occasionally collide (Schein, 2010).

In 1996, Denison presented a deconstruction of the interwoven culture and climate literature, suggesting that culture and climate were two closely related phenomena viewed through different epistemological lenses. Denison (1996) specifically noted that studying culture required qualitative research methods and an appreciation for the unique aspects of individual social settings. Studying climate, in contrast, required quantitative methods and the assumption that generalization across social settings not only was warranted but also was the primary objective of the research (p. 621). The difference between the oft-overlapping terms, Denison argued, was that culture researchers were concerned with the evolutionary process of social systems, while climate researchers were concerned about the impact of those social systems. Denison's conclusion from this comparative study was that, in practice, there is significant integration between the elements of culture and climate. While researchers may draw sharp distinctions between the two constructs, practitioners who apply the insights gained from such research likely do not which merits inclusion of climate.

While scholars do not agree on a single set of elements that comprise organizational culture, there are common dimensions from the work of foundational scholars that appear again and again in the literature. We come to understand how those elements interact within an organization through several different models of organizational culture.

Models of organizational culture. Schein (1983, 1996) posited that organizational culture was a key construct in understanding the function and dysfunction of any organization collectively, noting that "organizational psychology is slowly evolving from an individualistic point of view toward a more integrated view based on social psychology, sociology, and anthropology" (Schein, 1996, p. 229). Schein then explained that the prevailing methodology, quantitative methods and numerically measurable outcomes, made it difficult for researchers to grasp the true influence of culture. In a disjointed field, where sociologists studied organizational behavior without accounting for the individuals that comprised them while psychologists studied individuals without giving credence to the environments that influenced them, culture was a way to integrate the power of both constructs. Discussing the failure of the field to grasp the importance of culture, Schein (1996) explained:

> We did not grasp that norms held tacitly across large social units were much more likely to change leaders than to be changed by them. We failed to note that "culture", viewed as such taken-for-granted, shared, tacit ways of perceiving, thinking, and reacting, was one of the most powerful and stable forces operating in organizations. (p. 231)

Schein (1985) posited that culture is comprised of three co-existing layers: artifacts, values, and assumptions. Artifacts exist at the surface of the organization and are “the visible, tangible, and audible results of activity grounded in the values and assumptions” (Hatch, 1993, p. 659). Values are the socially constructed norms that have intrinsic value to the members of the organization. Assumptions are the basic ontological beliefs about reality held by the individuals in the organization.

Hatch (1993) expanded Schein’s model of organizational culture (1985) to create the Cultural Dynamics Model. Hatch’s model introduced two changes to Schein’s original concept of organizational culture: the addition of symbols to artifacts, values, and assumptions; and a focus on the relationships linking assumptions, values, artifacts, and symbols in contrast to a focus on each as a static category.

Hatch went onto to retroactively apply these methods to Gioia’s and Chittipeddi’s (year) work at a large American university. In attempting to understand both the static cultural elements and the fluid cultural changes, Hatch (1993) argued that “a balance of interest in all of the cultural elements and the processes that link them” (p. 682) could be identified and understood. Hatch believed her model could be used to examine both the organizational culture and the individuals’ existence within that culture.

Cameron (2004) suggested the Competing Values Framework as a way to assess existing organizational culture and develop a vision for culture change.

Through case studies of successful organizations, Cameron developed four categories to describe an organization's culture: clan culture, adhocracy culture, market culture, and hierarchy culture. A clan culture is characterized by a friendly, almost familial, workplace. Adhocracy cultures are creative, risk-taking environments. Market cultures are product-orientated, results-driven environments. Finally, hierarchical cultures are highly structured and formal workplaces. Next, Cameron (2004) presented seven steps which organizations could use to move toward their desired culture: clarifying meaning, identifying stories, determining strategic initiatives, identifying small wins, crafting metrics, measures, and milestones, developing communication and symbols, and engaging in leadership development. Cameron's dominant findings were that successful organizations understood their current culture and had a shared vision about their future preferred culture.

Cameron, Bright, and Caza (2004) introduced the concept of virtuousness in organizations, building upon positive psychology and organizational development, as well as the work of many other organizational scholars (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Lipman-Blumen & Leavitt, 1999; Cameron, Bright, & Caza, 2004). Virtuousness is defined as "what organizations and individuals aspire to be when they are at their best" (Cameron, Bright, & Caza, 2004, p. 767). Virtuousness leads to flourishing conditions that can be developed and enabled in organizations (Cameron, Bright, & Caza, 2004; Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003).

Cameron, Bright, and Caza (2004) explored the relationship between virtuousness and organizational performance. Their study examined 18 organizations randomly selected without the researchers' prior knowledge of virtuousness in the organization using measures of perceived organizational performance and financial outcomes as an objective measure of organizational performance. The authors used hierarchical linear modeling, regression analysis, and factor analysis to analyze the data. The results showed a relationship between an organization's reported virtuousness and both the perceived and objective outcomes including innovation, customer retention, turnover, quality, profitability, and financial outcomes.

Foundations of Culture in Higher Education

Akin to an organization, the fundamental culture of an institution can impact both the quality and scope of education. Similar to organizational culture, culture in higher education is defined as "the shared values, character, mission, and identity of an organization or group of people" (Braskamp et al., 2008, p. 27).

Elements of higher education culture. Tierney (1988) presented an overview of organizational culture concepts specifically related to higher education and conducted a case study highlighting elements that are specific to the culture of the academy. Tierney, citing Dill, noted that educational institutions are uniquely characterized by "lifetime employment, collective decision making, individual responsibility, infrequent promotion, and implicit, informal evaluation" (1988, p. 7).

Further, in presenting the case of Family State College, Tierney (1988) suggested that to study culture in higher education more appropriate elements of a cultural model would be environment, mission, socialization, information, strategy, and leadership. In exploring each of these six elements, Tierney concluded that to comprehensively understand academic culture necessitated the inclusion of different elements from those of traditional organizational culture studies.

Mission and higher education culture. Mission is the guidepost used in education to push an organization toward long-term goals and express what an institution desires to be (Kuh et al., 2005). Along with teaching and research, service is frequently included in institutional mission statements (Bradley & Lim, 1997). A second mission, referred to as a living mission, is defined as the way that faculty and staff approach their work and describes their goals (Kuh et al., 2005). Incongruence between the institutional mission and the living mission can cause ineffective programming and a decreased ability to successfully engage students (Leslie & Fretwell, 1996). For example, Kezar and Kinzie (2006) conducted a multi-site case study that evaluated student engagement based on university mission statements to discern whether or not mission statements predict student engagement. They discovered that:

> there are meaningful differences based on mission that can be used to guide institutions to create congruence between their mission and the practices that promote student learning and to better implement approaches to

> student engagement … institutions that align their mission with their policies and programs are more effective and efficient. (Kezar & Kinzie, 2006, p.169)

Mission is just one piece of a campus culture. The true significance of a campus culture is not in the words of the mission statement, but rather in what is practiced by the collective individuals that make up the institution (Kezar, 2007). Those practices are identified through some of the other key components in campus culture. For example, values are the expression of the institution's core purpose and meaning and therefore are deeply embedded in the campus culture. Administrators are challenged not only to identify their purpose, but also to identify ways to encourage the institutional community to develop holistically in alignment with that purpose (Braskamp et al., 2008). Institutions must consider whether their values align with their mission if they seek to create a cohesive culture (Braskamp et al., 2008).

Character, or social norms and accepted practices within the campus culture, help to guide the behavior of individuals within the community (Braskamp et al., 2008). They create an emotional connection between the individuals and the institution (Kezar, 2007). In developing character, institutions must consider their vision for the future (Braskamp et al., 2008). Just like values, they must ask if their institutional character supports the institution's vision. Campus cultures can be changed, developed, or sustained. To develop a positive and strong campus culture, "educators must tend to their institution's ethos on an ongoing basis and consistently work to align policies and practices with it" (Kezar, 2007, p. 14).

Evaluating, or even understanding, a campus's unique culture is difficult at best. Not only is campus culture constantly evolving, it is not always consistent within a single institution (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003). Individuals, who have different life experiences, understand their campus culture in different ways (Colby et al., 2003). For this reason, it is crucial that universities are clear in defining their culture through mission and values, and that both are continuously incorporated into every aspect of the institution.

Culture change in higher education. Institutions continually cater to new student populations and are therefore presented with an opportunity to regularly change or develop their cultures. In order to successfully adapt to these external changes, institutions must have a firm grasp of their current culture and nuances, which may in turn block the opportunity for culture change (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Kezar and Eckel (2002) examined six institutions over a four-year period in an attempt to understand if institutional culture is related to the continual change process in the academy and whether or not violating the existing cultural norms of the academy blocks change. The findings suggested that an external lens is needed to understand the internal culture of an institution. Further, the results offered a new way to conceptualize change and its relationship to culture; specifically, culture is the modifying element in the change process rather than the element to be changed (Kezar & Eckel, 2002).

In 2005, Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt published the results of the Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) study. DEEP researchers, using data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), conducted a regression analysis to identify four-year institutions that were performing better than expected in “academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student interaction with faculty, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environments” (p. 14) and had higher than expected six-year graduation rates (Kuh et al., 2005). The results of the regression analysis produced 20 institutions that were performing well beyond expectations (Kuh et al., 2005). The institutions showed significant diversity in terms of size, location, institution type, and student population and included both public and private institutions, two Historically Black Colleges and Universities [HBCUs], and research intensive and liberal arts institutions (Kuh et al., 2005). The DEEP research team then conducted two multi-day site visits to each institution to review documents, interview faculty, staff, and students, and conduct observations. The results of the site visits produced a substantial amount of data that provided a rich picture of effective practices on each campus. An important theme in the DEEP findings was that there was no one set of blueprints to follow in order to create an institution that produced high graduation rates (Kuh et al., 2005). Another theme in the DEEP findings was that the more time that students commit to curricular and co-curricular endeavors, the more likely they are to succeed (Kuh et al., 2005). Likewise, institutions can and should create an organizational structure and allocate resources in a way that encourages all students to engage on campus (Kuh et al., 2005).

Organizational culture and mergers in higher education. Also relevant to this study is how organizational culture is understood in the context of mergers in higher education, whether it is at the institutional, college, or departmental level. The vast majority of the literature on mergers and acquisitions exists in the context of business and industry, while far less has been writing about mergers in higher education. In this relatively small field, the majority of the studies focus on international higher education in Australia and Europe with there is far greater national government regulation. For example, Harman (2002) suggests that the majority of the higher education literature on mergers examines monetary and structural reasons for change with little focus on culture implications. Harman and Harman (2003) found in examining a small group of institutions in Australia that mergers in higher education tend to present unique challenges because higher education institutions tend to be deeply entrenched in custom and tradition. Additionally, they are strongly rooted in the paradigms propagated by different fields of study. The scholars did find several benefits to merging smaller institutions into larger conglomerate with more diverse offerings. These benefits included strengthening academic offerings, enhancing an institution research profile, providing adequate support for teaching and research, and opportunities or community building (Harman & Harman, 2003).

In 2005 Mills, Bettis, Miller, & Nolan explored a merger of six departments in into a single department at Midwestern university. Six people, one from each of the merging departments kept a journal during the process which were then coded and interpreted by the research team. Several key findings were reported from merger experience that are germane to this study Among them, ineffective language and communication stifled the ability of the newly formed department to develop a new representative culture. As the research team explained

> A positive environment for dialogue and interaction must be promoted, which means that both commonalities and differences must be explored for the value of each, and that interactions and communications must be open and respectful. Open communication could have facilitated sense-making, and identifying shared values and orientations could have allowed us to establish agreement on the important issues the department's faculty faced. If a common language had been presented or developed as an early step in the reorganization, we might have had a baseline from which to build new culture and identity. (p. 615)

The newly formed department also lacked conditions for open faculty discourse where ideas could be openly shared and discussed. This might attributed to a failure of positional leaders, namely the Chair of the new department and the Dean of the College in which it was housed. The positional leaders also failed to present a cohesive vision for the new department or to offer a space where faculty within the department were able to take a leadership role in creating a new vision.

Pavlyutkin (2014) examined radical institutional change in higher education. Pavlyutkin identified three orders of change; 1. First order change that is incremental and responsive; 2. Second order change that offers new strategic visions and structural overhauls; and 3. Third order change that is radical in nature and revisions the entire identity of institution. The study used case methodology to examine a radical merge at a European institution to understand how sensemaking informed the process and outcomes of merging. Pavlyutkin noted, "Mergers were characterized as costly, stressful, destructive, and ambiguous organizational transformations (p. 4). The study found that culture, specifically labeling, rumoring, and translation, was a crucial to the process organizational merging and sensemaking after the merge to build identity and cohesion.

In 2011 McKether, et al. documented a 10 year study of the merge between the University of Toldeo and the Medical University of Ohio. The study aimed to understand the collaborative nature of institutions after a merge. The researchers found that although the institutions were now under the same umbrella improvement in cross disciplinary research still accounted for a very small portion of grant applications. More than 5,000 grant applications were submitted from the

University in a 5 year time period. While there were a significant number of grant applications with multiple researchers theses largely represented interdepartmental collaboration. Out of the more than 5,000 submitted grant applications only 130 were jointly submitted from researchers at the Medical University and University of Toledo suggesting that the merge was more in name than practice.

Others offered less complete studies in merging itself, but drawing on experience and existing literature made some recommendations for higher education institutions to consider when contemplating mergers. Kezar (2012) in a summary of organizational change noted the need to be culturally responsive when combining groups and take into account the needs of both groups. Respecting the history of what each group brings to the table, taking into account the current climate, and facilitating an understanding of the future direction of the planned change can help to ease some the natural tension of transition times (Kezar, 2012). Kezar (2012) also emphasized the importance of sense making to help contextualize changes. She argues, like many scholars (Buono & Bodwitch 1989, 2003; Locke, 2007; Pritchard, 2003; Senge 2014) that when the reason for change is well communicated and clearly understood by the team, resistance to the change is significantly lessened.

Organizational Culture and Appreciative Advising

The literature on organizational culture, culture change and merging cultures informs an examination of Appreciative Advising in several ways. Appreciative Advising continues to gain momentum in the field of academic advising and student development, yet large gaps exist in the literature presented above. Bloom, Hutson, He, and Konkle (2013) introduced the use of Appreciative Education as an expansion of Appreciative Advising. Through the Appreciative Advising in their daily advising interactions, many advisors have enhanced the quality of advising for students in their offices. Still, creating an Appreciative office likely goes beyond single advisors using the framework in their own advising interactions. The organizational culture literature clearly demonstrates the shared nature of an organization's culture and the dynamic process through which it is created. Both literature bases are necessary to understand attributes of an Appreciative Advising office as a learning organization, and ways to cultivate such a working environment. Strategies to sustain the synergy of an Appreciative Advising session in the larger office community are currently missing.

Thus far, literature in the field has explored only aspects of Appreciative approaches in various higher education contexts. For example, Bloom et al. (2011) proposed a way to incorporate Appreciative Inquiry into college teaching. Yoder (2005) suggested that Appreciative Inquiry could be used as a framework for developing the unique identity of community colleges. Elleven (2007) and Lehner and Hight (2006) suggested that all higher education institutions' Divisions of Student Affairs could use an Appreciative approach to develop positive and supportive environments that encourage student growth. San Martin and Calabrese (2011) suggested Appreciative approaches to uncover the potential in at-risk student populations. Bushe, Gervase, and Coetzer (1995) proposed that Appreciative approaches could be used as an individual intervention to develop leadership skills in executives. This is just a small fraction of the literature that was presented above to support the use of Appreciative approaches for group and individual change.

Appreciative Advising has started to shift from a "new" practice in organizational development to a sustained and proven practice (Bloom, Hutson, He, & Konkle, 2013). An increasing number of organizations are beginning to use the Appreciative Advising method to direct change within their organizational and leadership structures (Bloom, Hutson, He, & Konkle, 2013). Additionally, Appreciative Advising is being used in other fields, increasing its literature base, creating a structure that supports an organization's positive growth and development, and shining a light on individuals' positive assets and organizational successes.

Summary

There is a growing body of literature that scaffolds Appreciative Education including Positive Psychology, Appreciative Inquiry, Organizational Culture, Organization Development, and Organizational Change. This study examines Appreciative Advising as an intersection of these fields of study and a new framework for guiding institutional change. As with any new framework the ideas need to be tested and examined to determine their usefulness and effectiveness. This study is only a first step towards that end.

Schuh (2011) recently wrote, “Before identifying selected strategies Senior Student Affairs Officers might employ to help improve retention and graduation rates, it is important for the division of student affairs to adopt a theoretical framework to guide its approach to improving retention” (p. 15). Appreciative Advising, which is a modified version of the organizational development theory of Appreciative Inquiry, warrants further consideration through the lens of organizational culture and change to explore its efficiency and effectiveness.

Chapter Three: Methods

The research question guiding this study is: How does the adoption of an Appreciative Advising model influence the process and culture of merging student support offices? A qualitative case study was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of Appreciative Advising on the office culture at small, private, four-year liberal arts colleges and on student success. This chapter outlines the research perspective, research design, research questions, research setting and subjects, reflexivity, pilot study, data collection, instruments, data analysis, and credibility, consistency, and trustworthiness of data.

Research Perspective

This research was undertaken from the primarily interpretive paradigm with some influence from constructivist and social construction.

Interpretive perspective. The interpretive paradigm is particularly useful in this study because rather than simply examining the question 'what is happening here?' it helps to provide context of multiple perspectives to answer the question 'what does this mean?' According to Fish (1990) interpretive research perspectives generally "seek to gather full detail from the perspective of organizational members" (p.69). In this study the experience of staff varied widely based upon prior experiences and worldview.

Fish (1990) explained the various advantages to using an interpretive perspective which include: providing grounding for subsequent mixed-method or quantitative studies to appropriately target phenomena, providing a holistic picture including varying participant positionality and view-points, and providing an explanation for personal experience. This is important in the current study for several reasons. First, there is a need for understanding of the context of viewpoint that each participant held in the merging of very different office cultures. Second, mindset is critical component to successful implementation of Appreciative approaches and so there is a need to understand a participant's way of thinking.

Third, interpretive studies aim to understand the experience of change. Lusher, Lewis, and Ingram (2006) noted,

> Interpretive studies focus on those experiencing change, trying to understand their perspective, and how they make meaning of the change process (p.)

Interpretive researchers ultimately take the stance that change succeeds or fails based on the understanding of the process of those directly involved (Rhodes, 1997). This is an important consideration for the current study because it explores individual participant's sense making of an organizational change.

Finally, interpretive perspectives view research as cyclical, or perhaps more accurately described as a spiral (Gummesson, 2003). Data can be interpreted and then re-interpreted and re-examined again and again as a new perspectives and understandings become available (Gummesson, 2003). Numbers and words only exist within the meaning that someone else assigns to them and that meaning can and should be re-assessed and re-evaluated often (Gummesson, 2003).

Constructivist perspective. Guido, Chavez, and Lincoln (2010) posited that in social constructivist research the "central purpose is to make sense of human experience and to understand and derive shared meaning within a particular context" (p. 15). A social constructivist paradigm supposes that knowledge comes to be known through human interpretation, which is inherently value laden and contextual (Guido, Chavez, & Lincoln, 2010). Individuals experience the world in different ways, and thereby develop meanings of those experiences differently (Creswell, 2009).

In this study, both the researcher and subjects hold a subjective view of the phenomenon being studied. Consistent with social constructivist beliefs, the data gathered and analyzed will be mutually constructed through the interactions of the researcher and the subjects (Guido, Chavez, & Lincoln, 2010). The phenomenon in each of these cases can best be understood within the context in which it emerged and continues to exist (Guba & Lincoln, 1990). Further, the phenomenon can be understood only through the individuals who experience it (Creswell, 2009).

A social constructivist paradigm is particularly salient to understanding the phenomenon in this study because assets-based approaches assume that one can choose, or at least alter, his or her own worldview. Patton (2002) noted "constructivist philosophy is built on the thesis of ontological relativity, which holds that all tenable statements about existence depend on a worldview, and no worldview is uniquely determined by empirical or sense data about the world" (p. 97). That is to say, all worldviews are contextual and therefore malleable.

This is ultimately a study of individuals within a culture, therefore social construction also influences the researcher's paradigmatic view. Crotty (1998) explained the importance of the subtle differences between constructivism and constructionism, noting the distinction itself is an important one because:

> constructivism taken in this sense points out the unique experience of each of us. It suggests that each individual's way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other, thereby tending to squash any hint of a critical spirit. On the other hand, social constructionism emphasizes the hold our culture has on us: it shapes the way in which we see things (even in the way in which we feel things!) and gives us a quite definite view of the world. (p. 58)

Primarily this study is about the individual experience in the context of culture, but the inclusion of culture necessitates consideration of constructionism.

Constructionist perspective. Finally, because language plays a key role in assets-based approaches (Bloom et al., 2008), constructionism provides a lens through which to view the influence of power of language on culture. Patton (2002) explained that:

> power comes into the picture here because, as views of reality are socially constructed and culturally embedded, those views dominant at any time and place will serve the interests and perspective of those who exercise the most power in a particular culture. (p. 100)

In this particularly study, each office director in initiating an assets-based shift exercised the power and language.

Research Design

The design of this qualitative research is a single-site case study. Case study was selected to gain a deep understanding of the experiences of individual subjects with the bounded system of an assets-based office culture. Yin (2008) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p.18). In this study, the boundaries are the context of an office culture after an assets-based student retention intervention program was initialized.

Merriam (2009) noted the specific features of a case study as “particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic” (p. 43). Particularistic refers to the bounded phenomenon being studied, descriptive the depth of report, and heuristic the increased understanding of the case for the researcher or the reader (Merriam, 2009). Case research is further delineated from other qualitative designs because it is more vivid and descriptive, highly contextual, informed by the reader's interpretation, and generalized only through other reference populations (Stake, 1981).

In this study, a single case provides a deep, holistic description of the phenomenon. Case study design was not the only option available. For example, an ethnographic design might be employed given the cultural nature of the phenomenon being studied. However, when considering the researcher's epistemological and ontological perspectives and the research question's focus on a possible change in culture, rather than a pure interest in the culture of an office, a case study design provides "a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables" (Merriam, 2009, p. 41). This is possible by examining how individuals perceived that a cultural shift might have occurred. The research study investigates whether a positive pre-existent office culture is necessary to successfully implement Appreciative Advising. It also seeks to understand whether the implementation of Appreciative Advising is a profoundly felt experience on the office culture as a whole, such that the positive environment emerges through the process. A case study approach was employed because the particular richness of the approach helps one understand the office culture through the experiences of the individuals who work within it.

Conceptual Framework

Hatch's (1993) expansion of the work of Schein (1983) was used to conceptualize this study. In focusing on what Hatch referred to as manifestation, realization, symbolization, and interpretation processes, researchers could come to understand the elements of an organizational culture (symbols, artifacts, values, and assumptions) as well as the processes that developed and changed these elements (manifestation, realization, symbolization, and interpretation).

Expanding on Schein's original three levels of organizational culture, Hatch (1993) explained the four stagnate elements of organizational culture. Artifacts are the easily identified, tangible items and stories that express values or assumptions of an organization. Symbols are the easily identified, tangible items that hold an interrupted meaning of the values or assumptions of an organization. Values are the known and recognized goals of the organization. Finally, assumptions are the intangible, often subconscious beliefs of an organization.

In addition to understanding culture, as it currently exists through the four elements listed above, Hatch also included dynamic interactions between each element to incorporate the change process. Manifestation is the process by which cultural assumptions become known elements (through cognition and emotion). Realization is the process by which values are demonstrated as artifacts. Symbolization is the process by which literal artifacts are given additional meaning as symbols. Interpretation is the process by which meaning is derived from symbols and assumptions.

Figure 3.1 shows the relationships between the elements of the organizational culture and processes used to develop and change the culture.

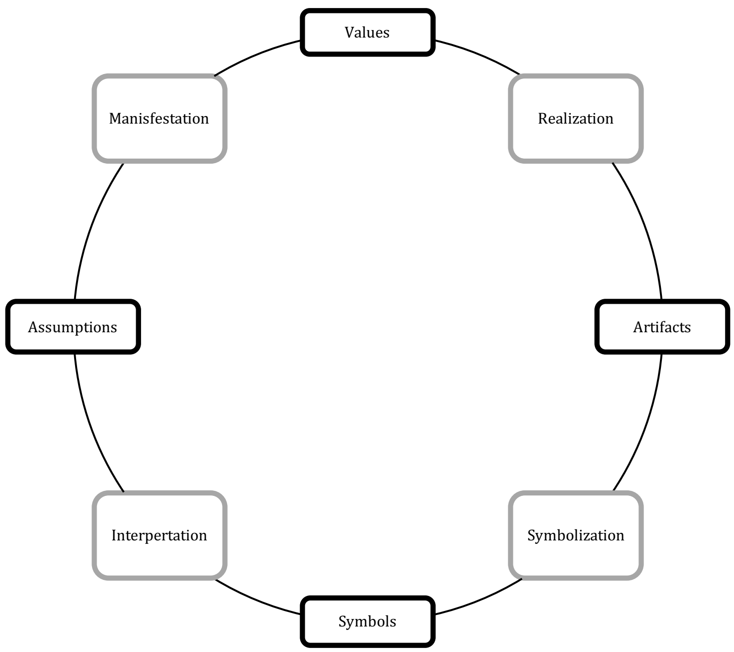

Figure 3.1. The Cultural Dynamics Model demonstrating the four elements and four processes of culture. Adapted from Hatch (1993).

According to Hatch (1993), "the advantage of a dynamic version of organizational culture theory lies in the new questions it poses [...] the dynamic perspective asks: How is culture constituted by assumptions, values, artifacts, symbols, and the processes that link them?" (p. 660). This dynamic model allows for the researcher to understand simultaneously what culture is, how it came to be, and where it is going. Understanding that culture is fluid and can change by both intention and incident undergirds the assumption made by the researcher in the current study.

In her seminal work, Hatch (1993) explored the application of the Cultural Dynamics Model through previous work of Schein (1985) and Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991). In her application to Schein's work, Hatch made specific reference to the ways in which a researcher could approach the study of the four cultural processes discussed above using a collective of qualitative research methods.

Process	**Method**
Artifacts	Document Review/Interview/Observation
Values	Observation/Interview
Symbols	Document Review/Interview
Assumptions	Interview

Table 3.1. Processes and Methods of the Cultural Dynamics Framework

Process	**Method**
Manifestation	Document Review/Interview/Observation
Realization	Observation
Symbolization	Document Review/Interview
Interpretation	Interview

Table 3.2. *Processes and Methods of the Cultural Dynamics Framework*

Hatch's model informs the current research in several ways. First, it was selected because it includes not only the elements of a culture, but the processes that lead to culture development. This is relevant to the current study because the adoption of the Appreciative Advising model was an intentional undertaking at the case site, Central South University (CSU), and as such the research question seeks to understand both the elements of the current culture and aspects of culture change. Second, the inclusion of symbols as a cultural element in Hatch's model is important because the Appreciative mindset and Appreciative language both draw on symbolic interactionism. Thus, Hatch's model provides for a more in-depth understanding of the symbolic elements of the Appreciative Advising model. Hatch's four elements of culture also provide the framework for the data collection instrument helping to guide the questions that the researcher has framed. Hatch's four processes of cultural development provide the initial framework for coding gathered data. Finally, Hatch's focus on qualitative methods in the development of the Cultural Dynamics Model supports the qualitative nature of this study and lends itself to gaining deeper understanding.

Research Setting and Subjects. A single office, the Office for Academic Support Initiatives and Services at Central South University, was selected as a case for this study. While five offices nationwide have currently adopted Appreciative Advising as their student service delivery model office-wide, a single site was studied alone because of the unique way in which it adopted the Appreciative Advising model.

In the fall of 2009, the Office for Coaching and Academic Support (CAS) in the Division of Student Affairs at Central South University adopted the Appreciative Advising model for the Academic Coaching program. Graduate students in the Higher Education and Academic Leadership (HEAL) program were trained to use the six phases of Appreciative Advising to coach undergraduate students from across the university in academic success.

During the summer of 2011, CAS merged with the Center for Academic Programs (CAP) and became the Office for Academic Support Initiatives and Services (OASIS). OASIS began the process of adopting the Appreciative Advising model into its existing programs. The office is now home to 10 student support and intervention programs including programs in tutoring, early warning, coaching, advising, and special student populations programs. OASIS now has 21 full-time staff members, seven Graduate Assistants, 20 CAS Coaches, and 50 Peer Mentors who are all trained in the Appreciative Advising model.

The researcher used purposeful selection (Maxwell, 2013) to narrow from the five possible sites for this study to a single site. Relying on Maxwell's five possible goals for purposeful site selection (i.e. representativeness, heterogeneity, extremity, comparison, and productivity), the researcher selected a single site to satisfy three goals: representativeness, extremity, and productivity.

First, the case site was selected to be representative of the five possible sites available to the researcher. There was not a representative institution profile among the five sites, but each office had a high level of autonomy, incorporated Appreciative Advising as a director-driven initiative, had a high level staff member directly involved in the Appreciative Advising national team, and served approximately the same number of students. When considering these factors, the site selected is representative of the available sites.

Second, the site selected also offered some extremity in comparison to the five potential sites. The site initiated Appreciative Advising as an office-wide, student service model after a merger between several academic support offices and programs. OASIS adopted the initiative that was first used by CAS, which then moved under the umbrella of OASIS after the merger.

Finally, productiveness of the relationship between the researcher and the site was considered in order to best answer the research questions. This is a necessary goal in this situation for the researcher to have adequate access to the sites for data collection. Maxwell (2013) differentiated this from this convenience sampling and noted “it is purposeful because it is intended to provide the best data” (p. 99). In the case selected, the researcher has a professional and collegial relationship with the Associate Director.

While some comparisons might be considered during data analysis, the researcher did not consider comparison for the intent of purposeful sampling. In selecting a case study methodology, the study is primarily interested in gaining a deeper understanding and fuller context at a single site rather than variance between sites.

Central South University. Central South University (CSU) is a public, research-intensive university located in the southeastern United States. CSU is an accredited member of the South Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). CSU has been highly ranked by *U.S. News and World Report* (2014) as one of the best colleges in the South.

A profile of the case site institution is provided in Table 3.3.

Enrollment	**Selectivity**	**Retention First to Second Year**	**4-year Graduation Rate**	**Carnegie Classification**
23,363	**61% admitted**	**87.2%**	**55.7%**	**Research Intensive**

Table 3.3 Institution Profile *(Institutional Assessment and Compliance Report, 2012)*

All students	**31,288**	**14,015**	**17,273**
Undergraduate	23,363	10,747	12,616
Degree seeking	23,028	10,589	12,439
First-time	4,625	2,045	2,580
Transfer-ins	1,770	842	928
Continuing	16,633	7,702	8,931
Non-degree seeking	335	158	177

Table 3.4 CSU Student Population (IPEDS, 2014)

All students were included in the population profile because any student taking a course at CSU has access to the resources provided by OASIS.

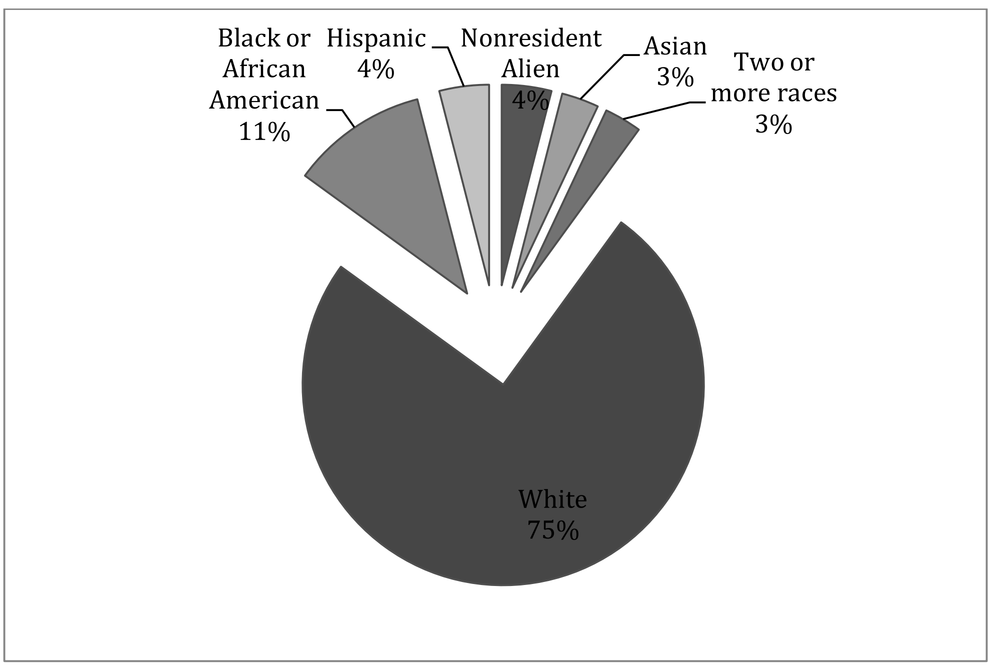

Figure 3.2 Demographic Profile by Race (IPEDS, 2014)

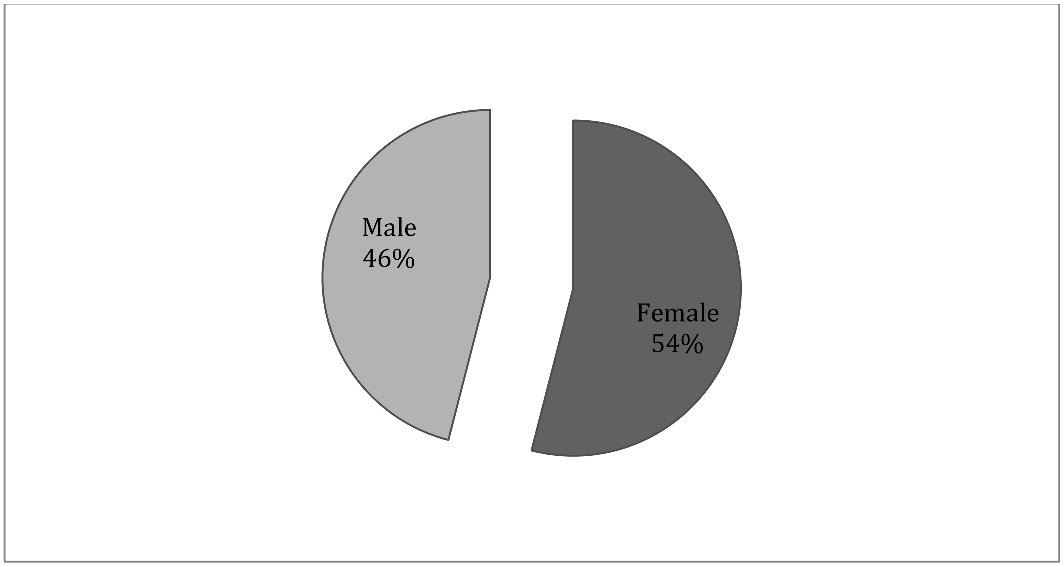

Figure 3.3 Demographic Profile by sex (IPEDS, 2014)

In-state residents make up 54% of CSU students. CSU is home to five fraternities, seven sororities, and more than 100 student organizations. There are 25 residence halls on campus that house 6,200 predominately lower division students. CSU is a doctoral and professional degree-granting institution with very high research activity according to the Carnegie classification. The institution admits just over 60% of students who apply and has a first to second year retention rate of 87.2%.

Reflexivity

As the researcher, I am the primary data collection instrument in this study. In writing and asking interview questions, taking field notes, and deciding upon themes, my own positionality, embodiment, and subjectivity should be known to the reader to help provide a context for the case report. As Patton (2002) pointed out, "the perspective that the researcher brings to a qualitative inquiry is part of the context for the findings" (p. 64).

While initially skeptical of its usefulness and realistic implementation, I was introduced to the Appreciative Advising framework as a Master's student at the University of South Carolina. I have since created the framework for the online advising course, designed the layout of the summer advising institute, served as a faculty member for the online course and summer institute, and published articles, chapters, and a training workbook on the topic. I also now consult with institutions interested in using Appreciative Advising outside of the academic advising context and the intersection of Appreciative Advising and StrengthsQuest. Additionally, I have a collegial relationship with the institution selected as the case site in this study.

Pilot Study

Prior to collecting any data, the researcher conducted a pilot study to test the interview guide and observational techniques to be used during the actual study (Glesne, 2011). The pilot study took place at the researcher's home institution, with professional advisors who currently use Appreciative Advising in their work, and are moving toward using it office-wide. All participants in the pilot study have a professional working relationship with the researcher. After the research instruments and researcher's technique were piloted, necessary adjustments were made before beginning fieldwork (Glesne, 2011).

Data Collection

The researcher collected data in person in the form of interviews, observations, and document analysis over the course of 12 weeks. The researcher made three five-day visits at the site to conduct interviews, observe meetings and interactions that occurred (both professional advisor to professional advisor and professional advisor to student), and review office documents.

The researcher selected interview as the primary data source because the overarching research question aims to understand both the current and previous office culture. Patton (2002) stated, "we cannot observe everything … interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective" (p. 341). While the current culture is an observable phenomenon, the researcher must rely on interview data from participants to understand individual perspectives of the previous culture.

The researcher conducted, recorded, and transcribed individual, face-to-face interviews. Additionally, the researcher interviewed all staff, including professional advisors, in the office individually for 60 minutes. Finally, the Director identified prominent partners on campus and a group of students using the office's student support services. A random sample was drawn from this group to participate in 45-minute group interviews or 15-minute individual interviews. Using what Patton (2002) called combination sampling (i.e. purposeful and random sampling) within each case strengthened the credibility of the research.

Interviews for this study took place in the summer and fall of 2014 and included staff and leadership from CAP, CAS, and OASIS offices. Participants are represented below in each position or office they worked in and therefore maybe counted more than once.

Office	Staff	Leadership
CAP	4	0
CAS	2	1
OASIS	10	4

Table 3.5. Interview participants by office

In qualitative research, determining an appropriate sample size is often an art rather than a science. Larger samples provide more breadth, while smaller samples allow for more depth (Patton, 2002). Because the office staff sizes are relatively small at the selected site, every employee was interviewed. These interviews focused on the broad themes that were explored more in-depth in the longer interviews. The researcher believes that this is an important part of the data collection process and wants to share the voice of all of the individuals to be included in the observational data.

Previous and current documentation in the form of office policies, forms, de-identified advising notes, published print materials, online materials, and others were reviewed prior to, during, and after each site visit (Creswell, 2009). The documents provided the researcher with discrepant or substantiating evidence

(Merriam, 1998). In addition to what was learned directly from the documents themselves, they provided steams of inquiry that helped to guide the researcher in observations and interviews (Patton, 2002).

Finally, the researcher collected observational data during a five-day site visit. The researcher directly observed five-day new staff and graduate assistant training. Patton (2002) addressed the necessary duration of observation, dependent upon the study design and data saturation, as enough time to answer all the questions. While there are limits to a five day observational period, it was the most viable option given availability of time and resources for researcher and participants

Instruments

The researcher created a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix A). The interview guide was piloted with a small group of academic advisors at the researcher's home institution. The interview guide was informed by the conceptual framework of this study based on scholarship of Hatch (1993). The researcher was the primary instrument in this study and the semi-structured interview guide supported that end.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the data using methods consistent with the qualitative design of the study. Analysis occurred throughout data collection and continued after its completion. The overarching themes that guided the initial attempt at data analysis in this research were borrowed from Schein's (1992) three levels of organizational culture. Schein proposed that organizational culture is composed of: (a) artifacts, including physical spaces, print documents including policies, and other tangible aspects of the organization; (b) values, including basic beliefs and shared assumptions, attitudes about organizational operations, and other unwritten and/or less visible norms; and (c) assumptions, including unspoken and unseen rules that guide behavior (Schein, 1984). Once sufficient data was collected to develop new themes, Schein's work was shifted to serve as an overarching organizational theoretical frame to support the new themes (Creswell, 2009).

Document analysis. Data analysis of office policies, reports, and other relevant documents began before any site visits occurred during the refinement of the interview guide. In selecting to begin the analysis process with documents, the researcher became familiar with the office and chose areas of focus for interviews and observations that are highlighted in the documents. All documents, by their print nature, were categorized in Schein's first level of organizational culture; therefore, any themes selected from the documents were considered very tentatively until further data collection occurred.

Interviews. The researcher sent e-mail requests to current and former staff of the offices studied. Participants who self-selected to be interviewed scheduled a time that was convenient to them in a location of their choosing. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed after the conclusion of the site visit. Interview notes were reviewed during transcription and expanded when possible. After transcription, the researcher considered both the interview transcript and the expanded interview notes together to search for themes relevant to the research question.

Observations. The researcher took field notes and tape-recorded the interactions when allowed. Each evening during site visits, the researcher expanded the field notes from short-hand to include full details recalled by the researcher and then conducted a preliminary examination for themes relevant to the research question. In conducting the initial examination during fieldwork, the researcher was able to add questions to the interview protocol as needed.

At the conclusion of each site visit, the researcher compiled all fieldwork (interview, documents, and observations) and examined them as a single unit. Using an open-coding method guided by Schein's (1983) theoretical framework, the researcher selected themes relevant to the research questions. Only after each site was analyzed and coded individually was the site data compared cross case to identify common and discordant themes.

Two types of qualitative data analysis were used to organize and analyze the data: coding and memos. The researcher used the three together to provide a full and complete picture of all of the available data.

Memos. Memos, created by the researcher, were used to gain a fuller picture while the research was on-going (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher took notes while listening to the interviews, reviewing documents, and reviewing observation notes to help organize the data (Maxwell, 2013). Memos were continually created and used a secondary coding source to provide either confirmation or dissension with the primary coding sources: interviews, observations, and document analysis.

Coding. The researcher completed initial coding using the predetermined categories from Hatch's (1993) Cultural Dynamics framework. The eight predetermined categories from Hatch provided lens through which the researcher read the data. The second round of coding used an open coding approach. In the open sweep of the data no preset categories were used and the researcher selected data that appeared often or in significant ways. In the third sweep, the researcher used an axial coding method to examine the data that the researcher highlighted in the open and preset sweeps and condense those into new categories that highlighted what the researcher selected as most important. Finally, themes were created to collapse or re-categorize the codes with the preconceptions of the original framework (Maxwell, 2013).

Confidentiality

The researcher was unable to offer complete confidentiality to each participant who chose to be interviewed. Deductive disclosure (Tolich, 2004) left some possibility that participants would be able to be identified through the stories they shared. The researcher explained before the start of each interview that every reasonable effort would be taken to maintain confidentiality. All interviews were recorded and the data was cleaned during the transcription process removing as much identifying information as possible including names, titles or positions, and employment terms. Additionally, some data was excluded because it posed to great a risk for deductive disclosure. Interviewees shared personal and often difficult work experiences that they feared might negatively impact them if their identity was disclosed. To keep all participants from potential harm those stories are not included. The IRB research protocol is included in Appendices B, C, and D.

Data Reporting

The data is presented by case site in order to express continuity in the story of the office unit. Each theme category presented is supported with evidence drawn from the interviews, documents, and observations. Direct quotes are given priority in the report to support themes and include the voices of the research participants.

Summary

Qualitative case methods were selected to inform this because of the nature of the research question. Through a series of interviews, observations, and document analyses the researcher gathered data to help answer the research question. Data was sorted using pre-determined themes from Hatch's (1993) eight stages. In chapter four the data gathered is presented in chronological order. First the interviewee reflections each individual offices are offered followed by the interviewee reflections of the merge process and the post-merge developing culture.

Chapter Four: Results

In review, this study sought to answer one primary question:

1. How does the adoption of an Appreciative Advising model influence the process and culture of merging student support offices?

Data were collected over a four-month period beginning in July 2014 and ending in October 2014. During this time, the researcher conducted interviews and observations of a weeklong staff training. Document analysis took place before interviews and observations began and again after they were completed. The researcher interviewed each participant over the phone at a time of the participant's choosing. Interviews occurred both before and after the weeklong staff training, but no interviews were conducted during the staff-training week.

Participant Demographics

The researcher interviewed 17 participants one on one for 35 to 75 minutes. Participants self-selected to be part of the research project by responding to an e-mail request from the researcher. Four of the participants were male, and 13 were female. Sixteen interviewees had worked for Office for Academic Support Initiatives and Services [OASIS], Center for Academic Programs [CAP], or Office for Coach and Academic Support [CAS] for at least one year. Two interviewees had been part of CAP or CAS, the transition to OASIS, and worked for OASIS for at least six months post-transition. The transition period was considered to have occurred from August 2011 through August 2012. Eleven interviewees were graduates of the HEAL program at CSU. Fifteen of the interviewees were Caucasian.

Organization of the Data

The following data is presented chronologically. The first section (Office for Coaching and Academic Support) and second section (Center for Academic Programs) include direct interview quotes and document analysis data. No observation is provided for these two sections because the offices merged prior to the beginning of the research, making observation impossible. The first and second sections are presented in an arbitrary order because they occurred concurrently in chronology.

The next section describes the transition of CAS and CAP into a single office: Office for Academic Support Initiatives and Services (OASIS). The transition section encompasses all interview data and documents for the first six months of OASIS, August 2011 through February 2011. No observation is provided for the third section because the transition period occurred prior to the beginning of the research, making observation impossible.

The fourth section describes OASIS in the period after transition. This section includes interviews, document analysis, and observation data.

The description of how the data was coded can be found in Chapter Three.

Presentation of the Data

The following sections are the chronological presentation of the data including direct quotes from interviews and observations, samples of documents, and observational notes made by the researcher during site visits.

Office for Coaching and Academic Support (CAS)

Description. CAS, in its most basic conception, first opened its doors in 1995 to support the University's Residential College. According to one CSU senior administrator with oversight of both the CAS and CAP programs, the original concept was to put "in place someone who cared about student success in the place where they lived". At that time, it was common to hear in a student orientation speech "look to your right and left … in four years, two of you won't be here," but the university made an intentional decision to pursue a different future, believing that student retention could improve if the university provided proper support. According to the senior administrator, the language needed to be closer to "look around; people in this room are going to care deeply about you as a human being" with the hope that increased individual touches with students would increase retention. CAS continued to be housed in the Residential College until the mid-2000s when it was moved to University Housing to serve all students living on campus at the university.

Rather than viewing the small size of the staff – a coordinator, an assistant coordinator, an administrative assistant and a pool of graduate students - and the relatively meager office surroundings as challenges, the CAS staff embraced them as quirks and points of pride. The staff also took pride in their productivity. A coordinator noted, "I would just describe it as we were very … I would say highly productive. We just did a lot of good work with a relatively small infrastructure".

Small size, big results. The CAS office was never large in size, encompassing "a director, a coordinator, a couple of grad assistants and the student assistant" said one coordinator. Their size was comparatively small, as a staffer noted: "we were a lot smaller obviously, a whole lot smaller than other offices serving similar numbers of students in the one-on-one way that we were". Despite this seeming drawback, CAS was still able to be quite productive. The office utilized graduate students in the Higher Education Administration and Leadership (HEAL) program to serve as coaches, which helped to increase their ability to meet with students individually.

CAS was located within a residence hall, in a space that was dated and not always optimally functional for the work that needed to be completed. The office had been several distinct rooms and offices that were patch-worked together to make the CAS office over time. The walls were mostly covered in wood paneling and the floors were uneven in places. The office was located in residential quad down the street from the student union and the library. The CAS staff embraced their space, noted a coordinator:

> Our physical location was a whole lot different. I mean we were in a [residence] hall, which was an older residence hall, and things didn't always

work, and I'm sure it had mold everywhere. Physically it wasn't really fancy by any means, but it's funny because I think that it led us to having kind of a homey feel.

The CAS staff added many personal touches, such as photos, books, and rugs, to make the office feel more like their own space.

As the office grew in programming capacity it became a known entity across campus. A coordinator explained:

And I always say that we were really a small office, but we got so much done. We were just incredibly efficient, and we had a lot of students come to see us. And I guess just one point of pride was the fact that we were so small and we had just tremendous presence on campus that they knew about [CAS] and students were using [CAS] and we were able to do that with a really kind of small footprint.

Despite being such a small entity, their footprint was quite large.

An Appreciative coaching model. CAS staff believed that their approach to student coaching programs was unique because it was based upon the Appreciative Advising framework, something that had not been done systemically at any other university. This framework was adopted somewhat early in the creation of the office and coaching model. An Appreciative Advising expert accepted a position at the university in the HEAL program and was introduced to the CAS office.

The CAS coordinator at that time believed that using the Appreciative

Advising framework would help to ground the new coaching program and "provide sustainability and consistency" to the work it was doing. The coordinator at that time described the decision:

> I think because we're such a big campus, the fact that CAS had kind of found a niche, something that no other office was doing was the one-on-one coaching using the Appreciative framework, asking these questions that no one else was asking. And again the timing of this was another really … I think serendipitous thing, because I started with the coaching program in 2007 which is when it started, and I was looking to enhance something or not just talk about study skills. And then she came along and introduced this Appreciative framework, and all of a sudden we're doing things in these one-on-one appointments that no one else had been doing on campus. So, it's just kind of word of mouth.

CAS coaches were trained to use the Appreciative Advising framework. Data collected from the coaching program after the implementation of Appreciative Advising showed an increase in student GPA for students on academic probation after meeting with a CAS coach at least one time (Figure 4.1).

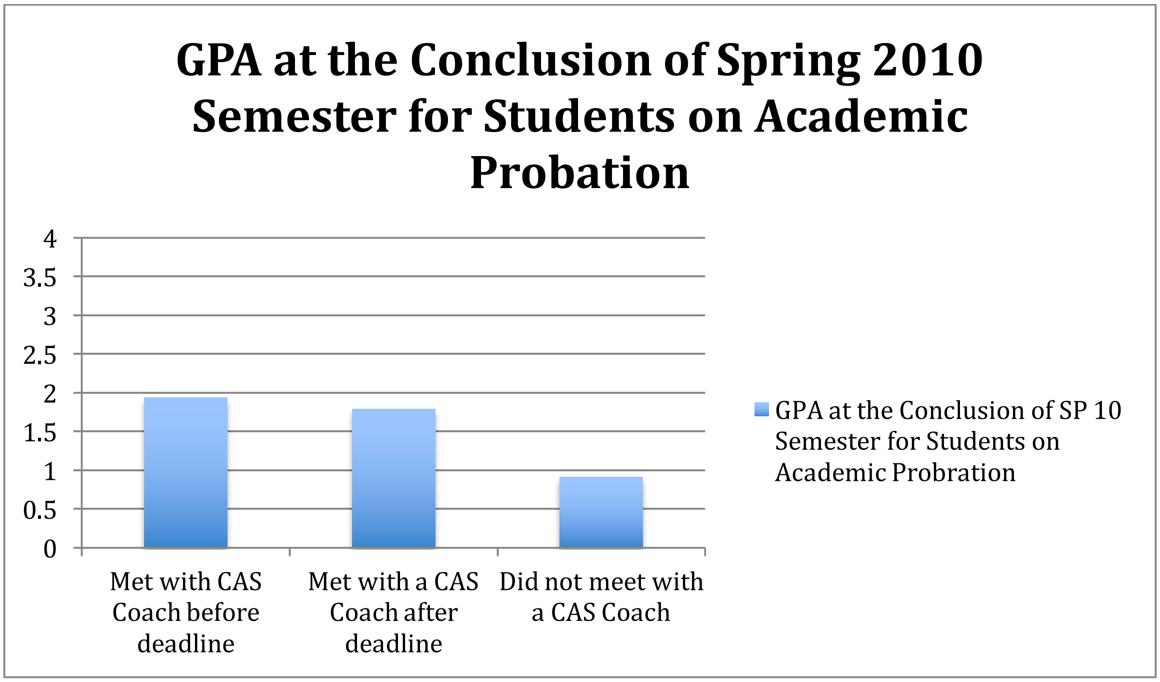

Figure 4.1. GPA at the Conclusion of Spring 10 Semester for Students on Academic Probation

CAS coaches also used a document, *The Academic Plan*, created to follow the phases of Appreciative Advising and provide students with concrete resources to use in planning their academic path. The *Academic Plan* included a contract that the students would sign agreeing to follow the program outlined with their coach.

Partnerships spur growth. Partnerships played a large part in the growth and success of the CAS office. The CAS staff was intentional about seeking out new partnerships to help grow their student population outside of the built-in on-campus student housing population they were initially designed to serve. A coordinator stated,

> Building those partnerships was absolutely instrumental and I guess the backbone of the [CAS] program, and I think they were very easy to form because our campus partners saw the value in it both from a data standpoint and from just student satisfaction standpoint.

Notable partnerships included those with Greek life, first year seminar courses, financial aid, and student conduct.

They saw a snowball effect with the campus partnerships that they formed. The staff tended to frame challenges that they had as short-lived growing pains. A staff member in the CAS office noted,

> [The partnerships] were relatively easy to form. It was interesting; we started with just one. We started with our partnership with financial aid, and we had some success with that. We had some data that's supported the coaching model there and then that led to another one, which led to another one, which led to another one.

The staffed leveraged their successes to build upon one another.

The partnerships that CAS had taken considerable time to form helped them to become a known entity on campus. They were seen as a one-stop shop for any student at the university that needed academic support. They were equally well known to colleagues and other professionals on campus.

A supportive culture. The CAS staff also expressed a significant amount of trust in each other and in themselves. Work was often delegated and shared among colleagues within the CAS office. A staff member, noted, "I think there was a lot of trust. People were, I think, pretty invested in the work, and they were supporting each other and that kind of thing".

This trust, however, was not necessarily extended to other offices on campus. A graduate assistant noted:

> We really thought we were the experts. I trusted my colleagues in CAS to do a really good job, but I didn't necessarily want other people on campus trying to take our stuff. I mean we were doing a really good job, but we definitely held our work close to our chest.

The CAS office staff consistently described their own culture in a positive and growth-oriented context. Staff shared that they often felt supported and had the necessary support and resources to complete their work. CAS staff were also clear that the Appreciative Advising framework was central to their work and one staff member noted that it was not only a student intervention framework, but really informed the work of the office.

Summary. The CAS staff across the board shared positive experiences while working for the office. They felt confident work, supported within the office and within the large Division. They viewed themselves as a team, if not a family. They took pride in their work and the relatively small group that was assembled to accomplish it. All of the interviewees from this office said they would work their again.

Center for Academic Programs (CAP)

Description. CAP was developed in 2006 and modeled after the CAS program. CAP was intended to serve students on campus that did not live in university housing. At the onset of CAP, a discussion was initiated as to whether CAP and CAS were both necessary. Some staff at that time was of the opinion that a single office to serve all students would be more efficient and effective than two offices, one serving on-campus students and one serving off-campus students. CAP developed a different model of student success programing that was not based on the CAS coaching model. CAP programs included Supplemental Instruction, Student Call Center, and Special Populations including transfer students. In 2010, CAP expanded to include intervention programs including Cross Campus Advising and Financial Literacy. The CAP office had a larger staff consisting of a Director, five coordinators, an administrative assistant, and a pool graduate students and student leaders. Each of the five programs was supervised by program coordinators, who then reported to the director.

A divisive culture. CAP was a relatively large office with a very divisive staff. Collaboration was not encouraged within the office or with other areas on campus. The office was located centrally on the second floor of the library right next to the student union and across from the main campus quad. The office consisted of the administrative assistants open space, a small office shared by five graduate assistants, followed by a hallway of coordinator offices. Each coordinator had one graduate assistant staff and shared office assistants. The Director's office was at the end of the hallway.

Collaboration that did occur was treated with suspicion. As a staff member noted about collaboration,

> It was so divided and it was, really, it was kind of cliquish it was, like lots and lots of closed-door conversations or spontaneous coffee chats where people had to run out of the office because they were upset about something and needed to talk about it with someone who wasn't in the room. Conflict was everywhere, but it was never in the room.

The office doors were almost always closed and, although five program areas were cohoused in CAP, efforts were rarely collaborative.

Communication challenges. Communication in CAP was obstructed and became a symbol of the deeper cultural issues that permeated the office. Several staff noted that the "overly structured" communication was the result of a secretive environment. One staffer stated, "there were a lot of things we weren't allowed to talk about—things we all knew but that no one ever acknowledged. I think [leadership] thought that, if we weren't talking to each, then none of those things would get out".

The obstructed communication pattern trickled down into the use of resources. Each functional area became highly independent, and communication between areas, despite being housed in the same office, had to follow a specific chain of command. Graduate Assistants all reported to separate supervisors specific to their functional area (i.e. Supplemental Instruction, Call Center, etc.) and resources were not freely shared between functional areas because budgets were also kept separate. One GA noted,

> I wanted to borrow a resource from the GA [graduate assistant] that was sitting right next to me. When I asked, she said that it was fine but I would have to ask my supervisor to ask her supervisor. Literally to see if it was okay, I had to email my supervisor who had to email [the other GA]'s supervisor, who then had to email the GA to see if it would be in use. Then everything went back through that process for something I already knew was okay. Things like that made it really hard to work efficiently.

The separation between functional areas manifested in some very concrete incidents surrounding the use of makers, binders, and paper because each functional area maintained its own budget rather than having a single budget for the office. For example a graduate assistant shared,

> The best example is the marker example. There were different markers for tutoring and markers for supplemental instruction. I mean that in itself was an indicator of how the office was very, very siloed. And we all had different budgets. So, if you had binders, it was different binders for different programs. Trying to communicate between programs was almost impossible,

> which is almost funny because the coordinators worked about 10 feet from each other.

Documents from the CAP office also looked unique to each program. Some documents shared the CAP and/or University logo on the bottom corner, but there seemed to be little consistency when and if that was used. Individual programs did not have unique branding so all external documents were created individual by either the program coordinator, the graduate assistant for that program, or a student leader in the program.

The fractured communication system became the outward symbol of the secretive nature of the office and the lack of collaboration and trust between the functional areas.

Personnel challenges. Several staff members reported that it was well known, but not talked about, that a member of the leadership team was dealing with destructive personal behaviors. Two said that they had gone to other leadership within the Division of Student Affairs and to Human Resources to attempt to get assistance in the office. While change was very slow to come, eventually this led to staff changes within the office. Unfortunately that did little to help the cohesion of the CAP office. As one coordinator noted,

> Things got pretty bad for a while, because it was … it became obvious that they were trying to figure out what to do about her. And so, when that all went down, when she left—or talent was reallocated, which is what they told us, it

> was very confusing because it was kind of just all put on our plates and that was like she was leaving. We knew that it was a pretty bad thing, and we had a lot of hopes that maybe somebody really great [would] come in. But we got an interim director, and he was very good for the time that he was there, but he was there part-time. He tried to kind of hold things together without knowing too much about what was going on. And then we were told, we were combining with each other. And that's when things got really kind of tricky, I guess.

Staff who were part of the office early in its formation described a laid back, though somewhat disorganized, environment. Leadership was collegial but lacked direction to motivate the staff or move projects forward. Discussing one member of the leadership at that time, one coordinator said:

> She was very personable, and she was very caring—very much like a mom. And she would come in the morning, and she would like come down the hall and she would get there whenever that was. She would kind of like pop her head to every person there, and [ask], "How you are doing?" and sit down in your office for 25, 30 minutes and, like, talk to you about her life and everything, but just didn't seem into the work we were doing.

As new staff was on-boarded, pressure was put on leadership to provide a more structured environment. Another coordinator pointed out,

> In the beginning, it was definitely very, very laid back; very … just no pressure, no accountability, but also no support. Then when the new folks came in, they were, like, this is not comfortable—we can't function in an environment like this. So, they pushed a lot more for … they pushed for accountability. And the director tried, I think, to offer that, but did not really find a lot of success.

The coordinators and graduate assistants interviewed all expressed that they had tried to redress the issues in their office using several avenues from senior leadership in the division to the human resources without much success. The CAP office seemed to lack cohesive leadership at the top of the organization to unify the office and left each coordinator essentially working independently.

Damaging comparisons. In an attempt to provide both accountability and motivation, senior university administrators began to showcase the CAS office as a model to aspire to in CAP. Senior administrators often shared successful CAS projects, reported on CAS data to division leadership, and even wrote publications that highlighted the CAS coaching model. CAP staff began to question why leadership "would go to division meetings and report on CAS data and programs and not their own programs in CAP". Another coordinator described the resulting consequences:

> I think that is when we started to become really competitive instead of collaborative. It felt like we could never do enough to get the attention of our

> [leadership]. No matter how great our programs were, they weren't CAS coaching programs, the golden child. They were in a sense the red-headed stepchild.

Another coordinator added:

> We all became really protective of our own programs. I think that was in large part because it took all of my efforts to get my program noticed from time to time so it didn't feel like I could possibly support another program. There just weren't enough seats at the table. Though, in hindsight, maybe if we had banded together and showcased our programs as one we could have competed with the CAS program.

This problem was not noted only internally. In fact, a CAS coordinator also pointed to this issue:

> I never want the picture of the old CAP office to be a blame game on the former coordinators. I mean, I think that whenever I hear people talk about CAP, that's usually what people say is, "Oh well, you know it's just that group." I remember the staff saying, "Why is she reporting on CAS data and not on our own programs?"—that kind of thing, which is a good question. She was very supportive of the works that CAS was doing, but I think it came at the expense of her team. I just think it played a really important part in the culture there.

The comparison was frustrating and even damaging to morale for the CAP office because they lacked central leadership to implement an office wide model like the one used in CAS or to even organize themselves as a cohesive group. They were doing good work, but had no one to advocate for or share what they were doing. As one might imagine resentment from the CAP office toward the CAS office grew.

The culture within the CAP office was not a secret on campus. The staff often felt that they were "patronized" by other colleagues on campus who knew how bad the culture was but did little to help or just prodded for information about the dysfunction within their office. For example, one coordinator stated:

> I started exploring the job, I talked to people in the university. I was discouraged from applying by several people I talked to because they said, "No matter how good the position, you do not want to work there."

Staff who worked in the office described high levels of stress, even reaching the point of physical health issues. Another coordinator said, "I started having a lot of digestive issues. I was constantly nauseous, and my doctor and I finally decided it was stress from work". Another coordinator noted, "Things were really ugly. I mean, I would sit in my car and cry before work almost every day. Just the thought of having to spend another eight hours in the office was overwhelming".

Summary. Staff in CAP office consistently described an office culture that was challenging to work in on a daily basis. Staff described having little support, a competitive environment that suppressed any collaborative efforts, and weak leadership. Staff described high levels of frustration and unhappiness in their work.

There was no unifying framework used across student programs. Additionally while all functional areas were housed under the same office umbrella they functioned as co-located independent offices in terms of structure and budget. Communication between each functional area was often strained and resources, because they were paid for out of individual functional area budgets (i.e. separate white board markers for every functional area) were rarely shared.

Transition to Office for Academic Support Initiatives and Services

Description. In August 2011, a merger occurred between the CAP and CAS offices. The merger was at the directive of senior leadership in the Division of Student Affairs at CSU. There was not programming directive, so far as a unifying framework for the work of the new office, but senior leadership did place a significant amount of support behind the initiatives of the CAS office. The new office, originally keeping the CAS acronym, would encompass both the CAP and CAS programs and would be led, at least temporarily, by a CAS staff member further cementing institutional support for the CAS culture and use of Appreciative Advising. The first talk of combining the office occurred in 2006 with the development of CAP, but the action was put off for five years because a member of senior leadership at CSU, noted:

> probably my ego got in the way more than anything else. The CAS program was my baby. A lot of other people saw the overlap before I did, and in retrospect we could have or should have, maybe, done it earlier.

Interviewees described the transition as a period of conflict for the staff in both offices. In August 2011, a new director was hired from outside the university. The new director was empowered to make significant staffing, location, and directional changes as needed. The new office was intentional in using Appreciative Advising across programs, but not as a framework to manage the transition.

A new staffing model also slowing came into being. A Director, Associate Director, and four Assistant Directors compromised the OASIS leadership team. Nine Coordinators, five Advisors and Coaches, a large pool of graduate assistants rounded out the staff. This staffing structure changed quite a bit during the merger and was often a source of tension between the CAP and CAS staff.

The need for merge. At differing times during the five-year overlap between CAP and CAS, an office merge was discussed and a need for consolidation of programs and resources noted. It became more obvious as both programs grew that consolidation was likely an inevitable outcome. One leadership team member noted:

> I think that there were two offices on campus with essentially the same mission, and that had been talked about for a while. I remember then a lot of talk about whether or not they were going to move [CAS] out of housing over to [CAP]. And the reason that it didn't move—I mean, there were lots of reasons, but Jack had formed [CAS]. I mean he created the name. He kind of envisioned it as part of housing, and so he really didn't want to let it go.

The eventual consolidation was expected, though not welcome by all within the offices. The broader campus community also saw consolidation as inevitable. The merge seemed to primarily be a matter of timing as a coordinator noted:

> When the merge happened, it was a result of lots of different things and it made all the sense in the world. And I think people saw the need; no one was surprised when it merged. I think most people were like, “Boy, that took longer than we thought it would.”

The golden child and the stepchildren. Most interviewees, even those resistant to the change, thought consolidation was in the best interest of both offices and the students they supported. There was, however, considerable frustration in the CAP office at the leadership selections to lead the transition. A member of the CAS office was selected to serve as an interim director. The division leadership felt it was important to establish the interim director as a person who would serve in a leadership position and help to guide the new office and the Division leadership wanted to continue using the CAS model. This was particularly challenging for the CAP staff who already felt overlooked in their roles and rather than unifying the office resentment between the two office grew.

Several CAP staff members noted that the interim director represented to them “a continuation of what was. It was pretty clear with that choice, which we all voiced opposition to, that we were going to continue as separate offices: the golden child and the stepchildren” one coordinator shared. Another coordinator noted that "they even wanted to keep the CAS name. It was pretty obvious that they had no interest in this office becoming an 'us'—they were fine being an 'us' and 'them'".

Think Big. Start Small. Move Fast. The trademark slogan of IDEO (2015), a design thinking firm, is "Think Big. Start Small. Move Fast." During its transition period, OASIS leadership believed that, to successfully restart the office, they would need to apply these three principles. The leadership at the time recognized a need for fast movement. A member of the leadership noted:

> There were people who felt things would go a certain way, and there were other people that felt they should go other ways. So, I knew there were some underlying issues that were out there. I also knew that the previous director—and I don't know how to refer to this in a nice way, but the previous director just wasn't very engaged in the office. So, coming into it, I always say take a year and assess what's going on and then make the changes. I was here for about a week, and I realized there were some things that needed to be done, almost immediately if the office was going to survive.

The leadership used long-term strategic ideas to push smaller early changes on a very quick timetable from the announcement of merging to office, to changes in staffing and leadership, to changes in physical location the team had little time to react and rather only time to move. This approach caused quite a bit of chaos for the staff, particularly the CAP staff. A coordinator explained, "It was very forced because of how fast everything was happening, and it was very … there wasn't a lot of opportunities to have input and to feel like you were able to develop an investment". Another coordinator described feeling as though things were constantly in flux: "I just had no idea what was happening. Every single time I went into a meeting I felt like something, like, really big changed. That was hard". This further divided the two offices because the CAP staff were frustrated that because CAS had representation on the leadership team they also had information before the rest of the office.

Restructuring to encourage buy-in. The leadership team recognized a need to restructure the organizational chart approximately three months into the transition period. The rationale behind the restructure was a need to reallocate talent in more productive ways and to build a collation of staff buy-in to the changing environment. A member of the leadership shared:

> We tried to identify the people that would most likely be on board with what our vision was for the center, and actually what the division's vision was for the center. That was my guide, and I was looking for people that would buy into that.

The new vision included the model that CAS had been using for years and so their transition was naturally quicker and came with less turmoil. CAS staff were moved onto the leadership team before CAP staff which reinforced the idea that this was not a merger between two offices, but rather a takeover by one office.

A new version of the organizational chart was proposed to break down the existing silos explained a member of the leadership team:

> We started to try and figure out who should report to who, and what the office structure would be like for OASIS—what the vision was for the administrative structure and from a programmatic standpoint. So, pretty quickly, I started to look at staffing. It was a pretty flat organization before with the director and then just a bunch of coordinators. I wanted to have some upward mobility for the staff. So, we created the [assistant director] positions, and I started thinking about how the areas would lay out. I had conversations with [leadership] about that. I had conversations with the coordinators about what programs they thought would be best together and what wouldn't work together.

Breaking the siloes, playing favorites. Leadership presented the idea that all of the work of OASIS was in fact overlapping. This was done in an attempt to break down the still pervasive "us versus them" thinking between the CAP and CAS staff. A member of the leadership team stated:

> Then at every meeting we would talk about bringing people together, and how we all do the same work. It's just a slightly different variation of it. So, SI [Supplemental Instruction] or tutoring or coaching—there's commonalities in everything we do.

Despite a new focus of "we," some programs were viewed as foundational or pillar programs. A member of the leadership team noted:

> I started to talk about how the foundation, the pillars of our office, were supplemental instruction and academic coaching. I started to tell people this; it was based on those two in some form or another. Those are our pillars—they're our most successful programs, and those are our pillars.

This focus created frustration for some of the staff, particularly the previous CAP staff who were used to feeling overlooked. The early division between the CAP program staff feeling less than the CAS program staff persisted under the idea of pillar programs. One coordinator explained, "I felt like I had moved locations but not much else had changed. My work was now just not valued in a different location".

Transparency. It was a part of the plan to bring in new leadership from outside the university. The tensions between the CAS and CAP staff were too entrenched for an internal hire to find success without tremendous effort and time. At least part of the leadership team would be external. Once the external hire was made and another member of the leadership team brought in from a different department all together, the leadership team attempted to unify the offices by giving everyone a voice and hearing concerns from all sides. A member of the leadership team noted:

> I was meeting with everybody, and as I was trying to learn what their programs were and what they needed and what they did, I tried to be

> tremendously transparent in my thinking and in my decision-making. I tried to be supportive of what they were doing, even if sometimes there were occasions where I said, "Oh, that's probably not the best way to handle that, but that's going to stay, I guess, for now."

The hope was that all staff could be preserved through open communication and transparency. A member of the leadership stated:

> Yes, it would be easy maybe for new [leadership] to come in and clean house, and think of things in that way. But one [drawback] is it's not fair for the people that came in. I mean, I knew the staff was young, they hadn't been here very long, [and] a lot of the mistakes they were making or things they were doing were rookie mistakes. Sometimes they didn't see the bigger picture; they only saw what was in front of them and what was theirs. I wanted them to have time to think about bigger things. We did some retreats early on. I brought a bunch of staff that I thought would buy into the learning center idea that I had rather than a bunch of individual programs; I brought a bunch of them to a conference—really trying to bring everybody up to speed and give them opportunities to have input. I didn't want to get rid of people; I wanted to retain people.

While the communication effort by the new leadership team was extensive, it was too little too late for many of the CAP staff who did see their voices represented in the new OASIS office.

One team, one space. One of the first decisions made by the new leadership team was to move the entire staff to one office instead of maintaining two distinct spaces which only further encouraged the divide between the two original offices. A member of leadership noted:

> What I did realize early on was that there were a few things that needed to be done, the first of which was everybody needed to be in the same location. So, that was my first big decision, and it was very unpopular. There was lots of petty bickering about the space. It was really ridiculous.

The move was unpopular among the entire staff, particularly because they felt that the space available was not ready to accommodate them. A coordinator expressed that "it was unreal. We didn't even have enough desks. We were literally sitting on top of each other". The leadership team heard this concern but felt it was important to move forward with the consolidation. Still, a leadership team member remembered, "We didn't have furniture; we had nothing. I literally pulled tables. People were using library tables as desks—which again, [was] not tremendously popular".

The rationale for sharing the same office space, aside from physically breaking the barriers between CAP and CAS, was to allow the two groups to begin to work together, share resources, and understand each other's programs. A member of the leadership team stated:

Everybody needed to be in one space, because [we can't] share anything until we understand who each other is, and what's important, and what our programs are doing, because not only were these silos of resources like, "My program has these markers and yours doesn't," [but] there were also silos of programs, and they didn't know what each other was doing. So, [supplemental instruction] didn't know anything about tutoring, or didn't know anything really about the use of about financial literacy, and so on and so forth; you can run down a list of programs. There was just no cross communication there. We said, "Well, we're going to bring everybody together because people need to hear, see, and work. We need to make a team." We knew it would be unpleasant, but it had to happen quickly, rather than have these sort of silos persist for years and years while [leadership] learned all the things that they needed to learn in order to make good decisions about programs.

Another member of the leadership team noted:

The goal was to get myself and all of the coordinators and everybody in the office together, so I [could] see what's going on and how they operate. The key is that then we [could] start to establish some kind of a common language, common culture, common everything. That was not overly popular, but I tried.

In the new space, formerly the CAP office on the library's second floor, the coordinators' offices were transitioned to a leadership hallway where the Director's, Associate Director's, and Assistant Directors' offices were located. Many of the doors had glass panels or were left open to encourage communication and interaction between functional areas. The coordinators were relocated to glass cubes in a newer part of the office in a corridor to the left of the leadership hallway. Behind the coordinators' cube was a large open working space that housed the OASIS Graduate Assistants, referred to as the Grad Pad. Past the Grad Pad was a very large conference room. For the Director of the office to get to the conference room they would have to pass by every other staff member in the office. This set-up in many ways encouraged face time between the leadership of the office and the coordinators and graduate assistants. During the observed training two members of the leadership team specifically noted that printing to the Grad Pad printer's was encouraged and provided time to interact with other staff.

Sharing resources. Another decision made early on that was very unpopular among the coordinators was the consolidation of programmatic budgets and graduate assistants. The rationale behind budget consolidation was explained by a member of the leadership team,

> There's all these little arguments and bickering going on about things like pens, and whose pens [those are]; this is mine versus yours. So, what I tried to do was first identify […] the most important things that the office is doing

> that are high profile, their impacts on students, that just can't be touched without tremendous depth of knowledge on my part about what was going on within them. So, I didn't want to change any of the programs, but I did identify that we had to stop some bickering, so financially I took away everybody's budget, which was unpopular. But I said, "Wait, I'm not going to give everybody separate budgets. We're going to centralize the administration money, and if you want something, you come to me and we buy it for everybody. So, we're not going to have separate paper clips for each program; we're just going to have paper clips."

The CAP staff found this decision particularly troubling because they had always had their control of their own budgets in their functional area. One coordinator noted that "when they took our budgets away that was frustrating. It was pretty much the only autonomy we had while we were being swallowed by CAS, so the budgets really felt like all we had left of our identity". Another coordinator mentioned that "the budget consolidation was really a slap in the face. I forget the reason that [leadership] gave for doing it, but it felt really manipulative—like this was just one more way that CAS was taking control".

Graduate assistants (GAs) were also consolidated. Previously, each programmatic area had recruited their own GAs; however, that process was changed so that GAs were recruited just for OASIS and later assigned to programmatic areas. A member of the leadership team explained this process:

> If you wanted to be a GA in this office, each coordinator was going and interviewing GAs separately—which, as you could imagine, would be incredibly wasteful for an office, to have all their coordinators interviewing up to … what is it, 10 people you can interview during GARP [Graduate Assistant Recruitment Program]? It was possible for a student, for an incoming grad student, to interview with an [OASIS] coordinator, like, four different times.

Another member leadership team expanded on this process, stating:

> They were furious when we took that away, but we charged someone who we thought was on the fence with our new direction with consolidating this process. So that we hire a GA, or a set of GAs for the office and, yes, they will specialize in certain areas, but they're for the office. Yes, they will have a particular supervisor, but they work for everybody.

Other staff members saw this as another grab at power. One coordinator explained, "We couldn't even hire our own GAs. Everything was for the office. There was almost nothing left that was ours individually or belonged to just one program". This was another way in which the CAP staff felt they were being forced out of OASIS.

The animosity between the two staffs was not a secret internally or externally. The reasons behind the animosity are presented quite differently depending on whom you ask. This presented a challenge for the leadership team:

> There's an incredible amount of tension between CAP staff and the CAS staff, and it was just ugly. Lots of animosity, and I didn't know all of the back story, and of course nobody really could tell me an honest and open version of it because they all had a dog in the fight, I guess.

Consolidation was arguably more difficult for the CAP staff who felt that they were making far more concessions than the CAS staff and that they were already undervalued. This became more evident as the consolidation process moved forward and the conflict continued. Much of the conflict happened "out of the room" between small subsets of the staff. A member of the leadership team explained:

> There wasn't a lot of support for any kind of consolidation. Everybody wanted to keep their silos; all the coordinators wanted to keep their silos, which didn't surprise me. Although I didn't know that there were factions and all these things going on early on, so I didn't know who was on whose side. People were pretty good at coming to me and pretending like, "Oh, yeah, this is great. We love what you're doing," and then going and talking [about] how they didn't like it, or how it was not going to work, or how they just were going to resist, and there was just lots of…. We'd have staff meetings where I would talk about vision or I'd talk about structure, and everybody would nod and smile, and then they'd run back to their offices and have these powwows about how it wasn't going to work, or wasn't a good idea, or they

> didn't like it. I don't know what they actually said because I never really bought into it, but there [were] clearly some factions.

A new resource room was created in the space that formerly housed all of the graduate assistants when the office belonged only to CAP. Paper, binders, pens, markers, clips, and a copier were all now centrally located in one place. They were available for any member of the staff to use for any program. The existence of this room alone was a visible change in the culture for the CAP staff.

New visions. Early on in the consolidation process, the entire staff went on an out-of-office retreat to the northern part of the state. Leadership team rationale for the retreat was to get out of the "mine" and "yours" space and attempt to clear the air and create a new mission and vision that would provide a path for moving forward. Several things became clear during this retreat including that there were team members who would likely not be retained, that the staff divisions went well beyond expected growing pains, and that resistance to the merge had reached levels of inertia. One coordinator described the experience:

> We all drove to this retreat and—let's be honest, we split up getting there by the existing alliances. So, we get there, and it felt like everyone but the director was completely on the defensive. I remember [leadership] asking us a question—it was a really simple question; I can't remember though—and everyone refused to answer. It was crickets. No one would talk, no one would participate, and that is when I knew this wasn't going to get better unless a

> lot changed.

Another coordinator added:

> I guess there were two people in particular, one from each office, that really hated each other. Like, they just never got along, and there was a lot of bad blood going back a long ways, and so it felt like you had to decide between them—who did you support? And so that divide was just impossible to get around. I really wanted the new office to work, but I didn't feel like I could be loyal to one person and work with the other.

During the staff retreat, mission and vision planning occurred within the university's "blueprint" system designed to provide offices with mini-strategic plans. This revealed more unrest within the office. As one member of the leadership team shared:

> I really struggled with the core mission and purpose. That is not … I mean, clearly it is education, clearly it is development, and clearly it is about helping people advance to the next stages in their personal and professional lives, but I don't know that I feel a common conviction. I think that we want to do well, and I don't think we have malintent, but I think that, yes, there is a strategic plan, but I don't think … I don't see the ownership in it. I don't see the lower level buy-in in it.

The new vision was created largely by the leadership team and communicated to the coordinators and graduate assistants. The resistance to the merger from the

CAP staff and the previous silencing of their voices and work made them less likely to participate in the creating a new office vision. The OASIS leadership team, to move the office forward and out of turmoil as quickly as possible, designed a vision based on the work of the CAS office and presented it to the staff as what was to be. The CAS staff was generally already on board with the new office vision because it was largely drawn from the vision they had been working with for years.

Turning points. A turning point in OASIS was the direct result of the loss of a staff member. During an office training the group broke for lunch. An OASIS leadership team member shared "I wanted everyone to go to lunch together so we could talk and start to get to know each other outside of our office roles and camps." One staff member, who others described as the central to the counter-cultural group declined the invitation. An OASIS leadership team member shard, "I think she could go because she had another meeting – I think she might have said it was with a student." The staff departed the office and when they returned they found this woman's office space emptied and a note of resignation with her key on her empty desk.

A coordinator described,

> I was really surprised. I knew she was really unhappy and she had a really bad relationship with the leadership team, but I didn't expect to end that way. It was hard because I knew the person who was most likely to push

> back against the leadership was gone. It was one of those moments that I realized that things were going to be changing even if we resisted.

A member of the leadership team recalled it this way,

> So there's two things, I don't remember the order in which people left, but some people left in a nice way and some people left in a abrupt way. I would say there's only one person that left in a abrupt and unpleasant way, and they did it dramatically. The day this person left was the day that the office culture changed. It wasn't a complete 180, but there was a relief, there was a sense of relief in the air. Because this person was instigating so much negativity and they were the first person to go and literally the day after this person left, things were better. A few people cried, they were friends and they'd had no idea that this person would leave. But the rest of that training was so much better. It wasn't me deciding it, they came to me and said, "I can't believe how different it is now. I'm so much more relaxed and I feel much more comfortable." I don't remember the timeline, she made it six months I think and then she quit. When she quit, I think it took about another six months or maybe a year for everybody else in that group to find other jobs. They didn't do it in a quick way, it was slow. But there were much fewer problems between everybody in the office. I don't think they were looking for jobs because they couldn't stand to be here, they might not have loved it but they were doing ok, I think they were looking for jobs

> because they were young professionals and it had been a couple of years that they had been in these positions now, and as opportunities came up for advancement they went. So everybody that else left, I think left for better positions.

The abrupt staffing change went a long way in breaking down the counter culture. Loyalties began shifting and buy-in to the new vision grew.

Summary. The transition to the new OASIS office was described as challenging by leadership, coordinators, and staff alike. The cultures described by staff in the CAP and CAS office were very different. Each office also used a different approach to student program, CAS using Appreciative Advising, and CAP not using a unifying framework. There were several watershed events, most notably the staff member who quit mid-day.

Office for Academic Support Initiatives and Services (OASIS)

Description. In September of 2012, the intense transition period, as defined by the researcher, ended and OASIS began in earnest with a new location for the office, a new onboarding processes for staff, new branding, and the beginning of a cultural shift. At the time of this study in 2014 OASIS had 24 full-time staff, eight graduate assistants, 140 student leaders, and 20 graduate coaches. In the 2013–2014 academic year, the office supported 64,000 student visits with 10,000 unique student visitors. OASIS believed it was poised to pursue an agenda of sustainable innovation seeking stable expansion. While the leadership was not intentional in using Appreciative Inquiry or Appreciative Advising to lead the organizational change, the use of these methods in programming bled into the culture. Several key turning points moved OASIS toward its new more cohesive culture grounded in an Appreciative Mindset including departure of several staff members at the core of the counter-culture and a change in focus to a learning organization grounded in data.

A one-stop shop. OASIS has worked to create a centralized group of programs that support students in all realms of success in their own office. The OASIS phone extension was chanted during new student orientation in the summer of 2014. Directly inside the office door was a stand with literature on every program offered by OASIS and some programs outside of the office.

OASIS has also worked to create partnerships and relationships with other offices across campus to help students experience the university in a more centralized, cohesive way. During new staff training significant time was given to other offices that partner in some way with OASIS. This provided the staff with the knowledge to help a student with nearly any issue by either directly supporting the student or providing an appropriate referral.

These changes were facilitated by changes in office structure and reporting lines, co-locating all of the leadership team into one area, sharing resources which then necessitated collaboration, and incorporating new staff. One coordinator explained this by saying:

What I really appreciated about our process for our students is it really made

> the university less confusing. The advising aspects of the university can be really complex because of the decentralization of our efforts. And [OASIS] became this one really tangible thing that a student could understand and navigate, which I really appreciate.

Another coordinator noted:

> I pretty much view things as a one-stop shop, and I think our students do as well. I become even more impressed with the depths of services that we provide. So, not only of course knowing that we have [coaching] as a really strong pillar of our outreach, but Cross College Advising and serving now as a cross college advisor, I can see how complex that is and how much of an undertaking that is for an office to take on, and that makes me even more appreciative of what we are able to provide students.

The centralization effort also had a broader scope to demonstrate the efficacy of the office and appropriate use of resources. Centralization allowed OASIS to address the duplication of programing between the former CAP and CAS offices. A member leadership team noted:

> In an effort to empower people, we had really created a pretty decentralized university, and I just don't know … I don't know that the era of higher education that we're in right now works very well at decentralization. I think, to really make it clear to our legislators and to our parents, to our students, that we are using our money well, I think we have to be a little more on the

> same page and a little less about being in your own space with your own people and your own resources. That was a really critical part of centralization into the OASIS office.

Another way that the office has centralized was to move from individually selecting GAs for specific programs to selecting graduate students as a group for the OASIS office and then later assigning them to specific programs. GA's were all co-locate in open work area of the office referred to as the 'grad pad'. GA's had individual programmatic tasks assigned to them but were able to easily and openly collaborate with each other on projects. This also allowed staff to pass tasks to GA's a group rather just assigning it to a specific person in their functional area.

Rapid growth. Fast growth not only allowed for inclusion of more programs to better serve students, but it also offered significant staff growth. Adding additional staff members after the offices merged allowed for a new recruiting and onboarding process that supported the developing culture. As a member of the leadership team noted:

> We were really able to get out of our long-standing tradition of hiring almost exclusively from the HEAL program. That had posed a number of issues. The program lacked diversity, so our office had become quite homogenous. It also meant that all of our new hires were aware of the problems in the office. So, you know, by bringing in new folks from the outside, we were really able to bring in people that we thought fit with the new direction we were going, and

> we were able to bring them in in a way that they understood our new culture expectations.

The rapid growth also allowed the OASIS leadership team to work on the office strategic plan thinking about long-term sustainability and future directions. A member of the leadership noted:

> [OASIS] grew so fast and now has some really solid footing. I think it has such solid footing, though, that I think we now need to be doing more to integrate our efforts, making sure, I think, that everybody is on the same page, but also as a leadership staff having more broad conversations about the big picture direction for the office.

A member of the leadership team was quick to note that there is a difference between improvement and even growth and change. The leadership team thought the use of language was critical in helping the staff, who had been through significant changes, to focus on their work and quell anxiety and distrust. A leadership team member described this process:

> So once we hit our stride, probably 10 months or so into the merge and [staff] knew who their new bosses were and people knew what their new position responsibilities were, I got up in front of the staff, and I said, "I think we need to now take a breath and start changing our language from using the word *change* to *growth*." And what I meant by that is we're not going to switch your bosses around, we're not going to do another organizational

> chart shift, we're not going to move your office at the drop of a hat, we're going to stay this way for a little while, and we're going to focus on growing and getting better. And what growth means is we might add new positions, we might add 40 more [supplemental instruction] leaders, we might add a new space in a residence hall, we might do some of these things, but perceive that as growth; don't perceive that as change. And let's acknowledge the fact that these last several months have been anxiety-provoking, but now we can calm people down a little knowing that, okay, hey [leadership] just said, "Hey, things are going to stay the same for a little while. We're just going to perceive this as growth."

OASIS did not necessarily grasp or appreciate the difference between the continuous changes and growth. One coordinator shared,

> The changes seem more intentional now, and I think I understand the reasons behind them, which helps. They also don't happen as often. At one point during the merge, I was never sure when I came into work where or who I would be working with or for! That has definitely settled down, but I still think we are constantly in a state of change. Almost every staff meeting we have involves an announcement of some sort of change to the staff or a program or something.
>
> We change a lot. I guess that is part of our culture now. We're a change culture.

This idea of change and growth was highlighted in the staff training several times. There was a full half-day session of dreaming of new ideas for improving the existing programs. During several other training sessions the idea was shared of better executing existing programs and creating "out-of-the box thinking, innovative new programs" if a need could not be addressed within an existing program. This message to create something new if it did not exist seemed to be heard or at least executed more often by male staff.

Intentional planning. OASIS is working to become more anticipatory in its functioning. From strategic planning efforts to the office "blueprint" and key performance indicators, OASIS leadership said they want to stay a step ahead of what is happening rather than be in step with events or even a step behind. A leadership team member stated:

> I think we approach planning as essential now. None of us want to be reactionary. We have all worked in other offices, including this one at times, where things happen in a very reactionary way, and [we] do not want that to exist in our operations because it creates uncertainty and more dissention among the staff.

She also noted the reactionary nature of the university as another reason to keep a step ahead and lead changes. OASIS leadership views an anticipatory focus as essential to breaking down silos in the office. A leadership team member shared:

> And I think that we as an institution are extremely reactive. I think we just work to meet the need, and then I think we have a little bit of trouble with just creating it and moving on and jumping to the next thing without a lot of

> learning or forward thinking. And I think that may inform sometimes what happens in a vision where I think that we would benefit from strategic thinking which then allows us to break up the siloing. When we aren't strategic and forward thinking, what that then means is that offices within a division may work in some ways to compete with each other because they are not unified sometimes by that common purpose. So, I don't think we are a bad place, but I think that we could do better at unifying our efforts and unifying our purpose. We work hard to keep that in our line of sight.

Another component of the anticipatory approach was a new intentionality driving the work in OASIS. The leadership introduced data-driven decision-making that was supported by current research in the field as a way to guide programing and development. Additionally, by staying current with upcoming trends, OASIS can plan for anticipated changes. A member of the leadership team stated:

> I would really use the word *intentionality*. I think we tried to be very intentional with what we're doing and asking the questions of how can we meet … how can we use the data that we have, how can we use the knowledge that we have in the literature, how do we use our own understandings, our own gut instincts as well, to drive our progress? And then we also have been very intentional about asking when we know we are making progress and how we make sure that, amongst our team, team members are empowered to take ownership of those responsibilities rather

> than always feel like, "I've got to run this by [leadership] to make sure that I can go in this direction."

In addition to being intentional, OASIS aims to use an anticipatory stance to push improvement. A coordinator noted that "when we are able to plan ahead we can really work on getting better, not just patching up holes all the time". A member of the leadership team echoed how this improvement has worked in practice:

> This morning we had a conversation about the structure of the office, for example. There is no real impetus right now to make a change, but we were able to have that dialogue. It was laid as a question of: How should we be structured? How many graduate assistant positions do we need? Because we're already thinking about how do we … how can we be more efficient next time? I think that, yeah, I would frame it as continual, reasonable, practical changes.

During the staff training there were many times when coordinators were encouraged to share, either with the entire group or at least within their functional areas, ideas for improvement, growth, or change. It was clear that many of the plans were already set, and inclusion of coordinators in blue print planning varied by Assistant Director. Some staff felt more engaged in this process and some Assistant Directors noted being more intentional about including their coordinators in this process.

Empowering the team. The OASIS leadership team universally expressed feeling empowered by each other and by the division leadership who oversaw the office. Leadership team members said they felt empowered not only when implementing the programs they were responsible for but also in forward thinking about the office big picture. One member of the leadership team noted:

> I think that [division leadership] is going to hire people who are big thinkers. But I also think that by default when you work with [division leadership] as a direct report, you learn to empower yourself and you learn that he is empowering you by giving you that space. I think that he does drive that culture. I don't know if he realizes how much he does, but it's not a prescriptive drive. It's not like he walks in here at the beginning of the year and says, "I'm telling you to be creative." It is just … it's just clear that he is giving the space where you should be creative.

Leadership team members felt that they were trusted to make moves without having to run every decision by the associate director, director, or division leadership. An OASIS leadership team member shared this observation:

> Having transitioned over from [an area] that, I mean, you are afraid to move in some ways. And that is not the case with [OASIS, which says], "You go ahead and move. But don't go crazy with it, of course, but you go move, go and do what you need to do, and know that all I need is an update. And if

> you're really concerned about it, then let's come and talk, but really and truly I'm trusting you."

Interviewees frequently discussed this trust and empowerment in contrast to other areas within the university or even with positions at other universities. Leadership team members also felt that this made them more efficient in their work. One noted:

> I would say as I compare with other offices I think that it's much easier to be able to produce a product faster with [OASIS] than it was with other offices. Sometimes when I work with other offices, it feels like nobody can make a decision because everybody has got to run it up the chain and see if everybody is okay with this. And I didn't find that to be the case with [OASIS] in that, yes, [there] was leadership in place, but it really seems to me that individual areas are empowered to be able to do whatever they needed to do to get the job done and to meet the request of a campus partner or student. That definitely didn't exist before. Even with the decentralization, we were so afraid to make a decision that we just didn't generally, but that has completely changed.

Another member of the leadership team echoed this thought:

> I feel very empowered as a leader in the office to read literature, to collect data, to … qualitatively and quantitatively, to ask questions of stakeholders and other peers that can inform the next set of questions. So, I think it begins

> with a little bit of individual inquiry, and then I feel honestly very comfortable taking those reflections or those thoughts on change to both our leadership team meeting and to one-on-one appointments. There has never been a moment where I have walked into a meeting and was hesitant to share an idea. As a matter of fact, I mean, even in this morning's meeting, [Ava] said to me, "I encourage you to continue to bring up your thoughts and really be bold in your statements because that's how we make progress." We got to be honest with each other. I really appreciate that. I think sometimes in other offices I have seen and experienced, the hierarchy gets in the way of making the change. You're too afraid to really say what you want to say and what you need to say. That's not the case here at all. I feel like they particularly really want to make sure that we are being efficient, that we are being effective, and then we are not continuing excuses or kind of just crazy policies and practices that we run into as we navigate other parts of the institution. We want to be much more efficient than that.

During the staff training responsibilities were shared among the leadership team, coordinators, and Graduate Assistants. Very few things were led by the Director. The tasks assigned to the Graduate Assistants were largely social in nature, including ice breakers and short energizers throughout the day. Assistant Directors were most likely to lead sessions during training. Coordinators were not heavily represented in training presentations.

Increasing responsibility. The leadership team used promotion as a means to empower some staff members. The leadership team identified staff members that they thought were onboard with the new direction of OASIS and began to give them more responsibilities using staff empowerment to create stronger buy-in. They particularly identified staff members that they viewed as "on the fence," staff members that had been retained but were not entirely happy with the direction that the office was taking. Leadership hoped that giving these staff members increased responsibility would help create buy-in to the leadership plan. A leadership team member explained:

> As we started giving people little bits here and there, promoting some people and making people responsible for office-wide things, especially people we considered on the fence, most people responded pretty well to this and became much more engaged and for the one or two who it didn't work with, well, it helped us to know that they might not be right for this team.

Another member of the leadership explained:

> Some of the groups started to break down as we gave all the people responsibilities because they were charged with doing things that would break down silos, would break down some of this bickering. But because they had been charged with leadership, to do some leadership things for the office, and they were good workers, and they wanted to do well, and we knew they wanted to do well, they were really torn between, "Well, do I execute this

> task which is going to upset my friends, or do I not execute this task in which case I look like I can't perform my job?" In the end, most chose to perform their job well.

Not all staff members viewed the promotions as a form of empowerment; in fact, several viewed this process as punitive. Rather than promoting based on merit, one coordinator noted that it seemed that promotion was based upon "friendship, or who was willing not to question the leadership team. It almost felt like, if you posed questions, then you were considered a trouble maker and punished". Another coordinator stated:

> There was a position that was never opened for anybody else to apply; it was just given out. And then another staff member was promoted the same way. The position was never opened, it was just created, and that person was … well, they said there were new job responsibilities for him. And jobs were created for friends of people who had worked there. And it was never, I mean, in the end for them to think that we didn't see what was happening was crazy. So, I think that, like I said, the environment just became either you were already on the team or you weren't.

Another coordinator explained the confusion around promotion:

> There were a lot of times where I genuinely did feel like I was in some kind of weird dystopian world where you want to allow the question of the government, where your actions were constantly monitored, and things that

> you didn't know were being watched are being watched, where they created such a fear environment that people would tattle on other people for doing things that were not offensive. I don't know how to put it, but people will be more likely to get on the good side of the leadership by undercutting someone else. And the leadership promoted this by going to people and saying things like, "This is what I'm seeing from X person. Are you seeing this? Can you tell me anything about that?" And when you're put in that position and you see that people they were asking you about are being demoted and they are changing around resources and promoting other people, but promoting people based on what seems to be clearly arbitrary things like how much they like you.

The issues of promotion were also present in the perceived gender differences.

Gender Differences. Empowerment views among the staff were not as clear as they were with the leadership team. Male staff generally said they felt very empowered. Male staff identified being able to make decisions with less oversight, to ask for role changes or promotions, to pursue new projects and ideas, and to take leadership roles within the office. One male coordinator explained:

> You know it's interesting … I wouldn't have said this early on in the development of OASIS, then I think I moved a little more carefully, but now, yeah, I definitely feel like I can ask for what I need. I think my boss recognizes my strengths and we just click really well. I can be really honest and ask for

> what I need. I make changes to my programs and even my position as needed. I mean, I run it by my supervisor, but I feel like I can do it.

Another coordinator stated:

> I never want to be in a job ever and I never want to be in an institution where I don't feel like I can just be honest ,and I truly feel like I can be honest in my position and with my leadership in the process. And I think that there are plenty of other people across the divisions who want to have that same level of honest dialogue. I just think we got to find the mechanisms to make it happen. And what that's going to mean is we're going to bring up some tough topics and have to make hard decisions, and in the time in which we operate in higher ed, that means we can be more efficient and retain more students and most importantly graduate more students, and drag on, and let's go and do it. I have seen this both as a member of an office that reports to [leadership] and now as a direct report on [the leadership team]. [Leadership] does not walk in with a prescriptive way that it will be done and how you will communicate your results. He always has a finger on the pulse, but never a thumb that's pressing down, if that makes sense.

Another male leadership team member added:

> I think we're very change focused. I think we want to make sure the changes are always rational and reasonable, and that's what goes back to the individual inquiry and then really thinking about why and how. But there has

> never been a moment where I thought, "I can't even bring that forward because I know it's going to be shot down." That's not the case at all. I think that they are very receptive and very empowering for you to ask the question of "How can we do this better?"

This sense of empowerment, however, was not echoed by the female staff in OASIS. The female staff felt they were more often told what to do than consulted on what could be done. The female staff also felt that their voices were not appreciated when shared in the larger conversations within the office. One female coordinator recalled:

> I want to contribute. I want to be part of the conversation, but I don't really see a role for me or a way for me to do that. It feels like leadership team makes a lot of decisions behind closed doors, and that doesn't feel transparent or fair always—like they say they want input, but I don't feel like anyone is listening when I offer input. I think I have good ideas, but no one really hears them. (Olivia)

Another coordinator added that she thought "the only place for me to share my ideas is our staff meetings, and it is pretty easy to either forget or pretend to what you heard there and just go on with the plan". One female coordinator more bluntly explained:

> I was asked not to ask questions and not just me. I was actually pulled aside and I was told, "You ask a lot of questions." And I was told, "You need to not

> ask questions in staff meetings any more. You need to write them now to talk to us privately because, when you ask questions in staff meetings, it makes people think that you're questioning us and that you don't buy into what we're saying. And if that happens, then that's going to create problems because if they think that you are not onboard with what we're doing, then they're not going to be onboard with what we're doing." I was basically completely silenced.

During interviews male staff expressed feeing very comfortable asking for role changes when they felt it was necessary. Female staff on the other hand expressed confusion around promotion and changing roles and often shared that they did not have a good understanding of how and when promotions were made.

An Appreciative culture. Most staff members identified that the office now encourages an Appreciative focus in programming office-wide. Staff members receive training in Appreciative Advising during yearly staff training and in new staff onboarding practices. The main focus of this training was to be used externally with students. A member of the leadership team explained:

> I think by default we really operate under a very Appreciative focus because we are about equipping students with what they need to reduce confusion and to maximize results that produce next steps.

Another coordinator explained that the Appreciative focus was much more obvious after the merger and that there is a much bigger push for the program to use and understand it:

> When I first started working there, I incorporated it into my advising, but the center as a whole did not use it. After we came together, it became much more of a push to use it, and that all programs understand it at least.

OASIS appears to be pushing for an Appreciative workplace just by using Appreciative Advising it its programs. Staff members are enrolled in the Appreciative Advising course and go through the Appreciative Advising Certification program. Leadership team members use an Appreciative approach to supervision, and the leadership team is well-versed in creating an Appreciative Inquiry as a change methodology. A member of the leadership noted:

> I would say we certainly strive to be an Appreciative office with recognition and then things like that. I'm sure it's not going to come as a surprise, but … we send people to the certification, and we certainly talk about Appreciative Advising in our trainings and things. But I think part of it is just kind of like living an appreciative life. I mean, that might sound a little corny, but it's the idea that we get to do the work every day on a college campus, we learn something every day, and I think that it's the leadership and the assistant directors and the coordinators [who] kind of hear that and think about that, and it goes through the whole office.

The offices in OASIS have glass walls. This was done intentionally to create an open space with more light. It was also done to express transparency. The doors in the offices that were not reconstructed from glass have glass centers. All staff are encouraged to keep their doors open when possible.

The focus on cross training, or having staff understand and be able to work in multiple functional areas, shows the organization's support for and the value of all of the programs that are offered in OASIS. As one member of the leadership team pointed out:

> I've been really impressed with the fact that we've got financial literacy as part of our office because all these things are critical when a student comes to meet with you because they're struggling with study skills. They are probably struggling with study skills because they don't have time to study because they have to work and then they need to graduate on time, but they haven't. Maybe they haven't taken enough credit hours, or they didn't transfer in with enough or [it] didn't follow them. So that motivates an advising conversation. It's been really interesting to me to see how so many elements that may not seem to be connected really do connect very well and how willing the officers are to be cross-trained so that we're not constantly referring within ourselves and being a little institution within a bigger institution.

Titles were important symbols in OASIS that denoted a commitment to the team and the mission of having a united office. They represented the new structure of OASIS and the move from a very flat organization to a more hierarchical structure. A member of the leadership team stated:

> I mean I think that the titling is important. You've got, of course, student assistants; you then [have] graduate assistants. You've got coaches and advisors. At the next level, you've got coordinators, and I think the word *coordinator* carries with it some heavy emphasis in the office because I think when you're given the title coordinator it's very much made clear that that title is empowering you to run a program. And the assistant director title, I think people respect. I will be honest to say I don't know if they completely understand it. So, that may also be shallow thinking on my part because I haven't … when I moved over, we were also in the process of expanding gateway and we're in the enrollment cycle. And I don't know that I was really able to spend a lot of time truly transitioning to the office. It was more just, "I'm here. Let me meet the need." And then, of course, the associate director and the director jobs. I think that coordinator is probably a very significant symbol in the office. I would also say I think it's kind of significant that all of the folks who are … most of the folks who are coordinator, associate director, or director are on one hallway, so it kind of creates a leadership hall. I've never heard anyone complain about it at all. I think it's good because then it should reduce siloing because I think we were all with our individual staff, so

> we feel like individual officers, and that's not at all what we should be doing. But I think that's a symbol when all your leadership is in one centralized area.

During the staff training, Appreciative language was pervasive in many of the sessions. Recognition of staff excellence was a common theme in the four days. Creating a culture of excellence, where the team consistently worked to get better, was also something that came up time and again during multiple sessions. Training sessions also frequently included Discover story telling, Dreaming, and Designing as their framework. The notion of 'team', 'we', and 'us' was also frequently engaged. Positive restlessness was encouraged again and again.

Summary. The post-transition OASIS staff described their office as collegial, appreciative, and an enjoyable place to work. They believed their work to be valuable to the office and the University community. New staff had little to no context for the prior turmoil that engulfed OASIS in its early days, suggesting a real shift in culture. Issues of gender and organizational structure still raised questions, but gone were the challenges to the competency and authority of the leadership team.

Review of the Data

Key themes of storytelling, centralization, empowerment, fast changes, and recognition came up frequently in interviews and observations. The merge to create OASIS was in no way easy and led to significant staff turnover. In just outside of one year after the merge occurred all of the remaining CAP staff had transitioned out of the office and into new positions elsewhere effectively demolishing the counter-culture. The newly created OASIS culture more closely resembled that of CAS prior to the merge, and the remaining staff more heavily represented that office. OASIS is considered a successful office internally at the University and in the broader Higher Education community – it has won numerous awards and distinctions for programming. A discussion of the significance of the findings, relationship to the literature, limitations, and recommendations for further study follow in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five

Chapter Four presented qualitative data describing the merger of the CAS and CAP offices that emerged as the OASIS office. The case study presented the experiences of staff in their own words and recollections, and encompassed insights from researcher observations. This chapter explores the key themes that the researcher identified in relation to the research questions, additional themes related to the study of organizational culture, and implications for practice. It concludes with a discussion of limitations of this study and how those limitations might be addressed in future studies. Finally, the researcher offers concluding thoughts.

Key Themes in Response to the Research Question

The researcher identified several themes in the data in response to the research question: How does the adoption of an Appreciative Advising model influence the process and culture of merging student support offices? The themes are presented within the conceptual framework provided by Hatch (1993) rather than the chronological presentation used in Chapter Four. Chapter Five follows Hatch's structure by examining artifacts, values, assumptions, and symbols alongside manifestations, realizations, interpretations, and symbolizations through themes that the researcher identified during the coding process. The eight static and dynamic culture categories were consolidated into four overarching categories each containing a static and dynamic element.

Artifacts and symbolization. Artifacts are visible and tangible representations of values and assumptions (Hatch, 1993). For example, this includes observable, structural, and tangible components of an office – what is on the walls, how furniture is arranged, where staff members are located in the office, and others. Symbolization is the process of transforming an artifact into a symbol (Hatch 1993). For example, the graduate assistant workroom – or grad pad – was a visible artifact, but also a symbol of the collaborative culture being nurtured in the office. In this case, artifacts and symbolizations in this study included centralizing all staff into a single office and sharing resources to create the feeling of a single team rather than individual functional areas pursuing a single goal.

Theme 1: Structure and culture change*.* The concepts of artifact and manifestation were evident through the decision to consolidate the office. One of the first decisions the permanent OASIS leadership group made was to centralize the team and have all staff work from the same physical space. The leadership team believed this move was necessary for OASIS to begin to operate as one single office rather than two separate offices sharing a name. Centralizing staff forced the already existing and very disparate CAP and CAS cultures into direct opposition with one another. Several participants described that during the very early stages of the merger process, before a new director was onboard, CAP and CAS co-existed under the same umbrella but without consequential interactions. Putting the two cultures in direct opposition of each other was one the first steps taken in developing a single culture.

This structural strategy has been discussed in past literature by, though largely in the corporate setting. Buono and Bowditch (1989) noted,

> The full potency of organizational culture can be seen during a merger or acquisition when two disparate cultures are forced to become one. Organizations that may appear to be highly compatible on the surface and that seemingly should be able to achieve valuable merger synergies can have underlying cultural differences that seriously threaten their integration. Organizational members are usually so embedded in their own culture prior to major organizational changes that they rarely fully realize its influence on their behavior (p. 142)

This very much applies to the OASIS office. CAP and CAS existed separately with very congruent missions and goals but their culture was very different. Consolidating these offices made logical sense and on paper may have seemed like a simple process, but in reality was quite difficult.

In the early stages of the merger a multiple cultures emerged rather than a single dominant culture. As the OASIS leadership made intentional choices to move toward a dominant culture, an Appreciative culture emerged . A strong counter-culture, however, remained in tact because the offices were in many ways unequal partners (Harman, 2002). This did not seem to be unique or influenced by the use of Appreciative Advising, rather the CAS office emerged as the dominant office because their staff were placed in the highest leadership positions and had significant institutional support despite the CAP office bringing more staff and programs to OASIS.

OASIS adopted Appreciative Advising office-wide in an open push to provide a unifying thread to undergird the work with students in the office. This thread had been previously only used in such a widespread way in the CAS office. All programs in OASIS implemented Appreciative Advising as their modality of working with students. Additionally, all trainings and onboarding procedures with both student workers and staff included Appreciative Advising. During the weeklong summer staff and graduate assistant training a morning session was devoted to the topic *"Creating an Appreciative Office".* OASIS staff was given the opportunity to take the Appreciative Advising online course to deepen their understanding and strengthen their skills in the framework.

Another element leading to culture change was the display of visual artifacts. Visual artifacts of the wide spread use of Appreciative Advising was evident throughout the physical office space. Several staff members had posters on their doors and walls that showed the wheel representing the six phases of Appreciative Advising and certificates demonstrating the completion of the Appreciative Advising course and in some cases Appreciative Advising certification. Several staff members also noted in interviews that they were encouraged to keep their office doors open to create a welcoming environment. This was a cultural component that was previously present in the CAS office, but largely absent from the interviews with CAP staff. Schein (2010), among others suggest that these visual artifacts are important to creating and managing "counter organizational subgroups" (p. 368). In this Appreciative setting, this seems to be a very typical manifestation of organizational artifacts where open and welcoming environments are used to create feelings of transparency and lessen resistance and suspicion (Bloom, Hutson, and He, 2008; Bloom, Hutson, He, and Konkle, 2013).

Theme 2: Resource consolidation. In addition to centralizing the staff, the leadership team also consolidated office resources. Monetary resources, office supplies, and office space all became shared commodities to allow two separate offices to function as one. OASIS shifted to consolidate teamwork when possible. An example of this was the change in process to hire graduate assistants as a team instead of individually for each program.

Consolidating resources was more easily done within a shared space. No longer were there markers, paper, paperclips, and pens for each individual program, but a single resource room available to the entire staff. This mode of operation more closely aligned the pre-merge culture of the CAS office and was a significant departure from the siloing described by the CAP staff. Consolidation for some staff was seen as way to encourage collaboration and teamwork, while others viewed it as punitive and a loss of personal and program autonomy. This change was consistent with the way the CAS office had been previously operating because they were running a single program with multiple staff whereas the CAP office was running multiple programs with a single staff member responsible for each program. Ultimately the OASIS leadership team considered both perspectives and decided to place the still developing team above individual program autonomy in hopes of continuing to break down some of the separation between programs and staff. As Schein (2010) noted, “the strength and stability of culture derives from the fact that it is group based” (p. 141) and the OASIS leadership team was still in the process of stabilizing the new culture.

Consolidation of both resources and concepts was abundantly clear in the physical office space. Signage, print materials, nametags, and even staff jackets were all branded with the OASIS moniker to create a feeling of ‘we’ rather than ‘I’. Individual programs were secondary to the larger team. This was particularly prevalent in the document analysis. The CAP office largely branded their work by individual program and the unifying office was secondary if mentioned at all. The CAS office was home to a single program so the change was not evident in their documents. The new documents produced by OASIS were clearly branded with the consolidated office placed first and individual programs second. Past literature has suggested that building culture relates to having shared pools of resources (Allen & Allen, 1987; Frischman, 2012; Schein, 2010). This strategy of resource consolidation can influence culture in a number of ways. In this case presented it was an outward sign of both innovation and flexibility. The choice was not made by the leadership team for monetary reasons, it was done to force staff were to operate in new ways and often in concert with each other. Sharing graduate assistants, branding, and even markers brought staff together, sparked conversation, and began to break down existing silos. In an Appreciative setting, resource consolidation was largely an outward sign of the new organizational value of collaboration.

Values and realizations. Values are the mission and goals for the office found in policies and espoused beliefs (Hatch 1993). Realizations are the expressions of values through action (Hatch, 1993). Values are often found in office policy manuals, standards of practice, and strategic plans and goals (Knoke, 2000). Realization often occurs when a value is expressed as an artifact. For example, the dress code of organization is among its values, but can be observed when that value is realized as an artifact. In this case study, empowerment was a key organizational value that was part of the promotion process. Collaboration was a realized value that was both woven into the organization's espoused beliefs and outwardly expressed in the physical space.

Theme 3: Changing Culture through Empowerment. Career advancement was used as a carrot to encourage staff buy-in to the changing culture. Responsibility was given to staff members who were on board with the changes being implemented by OASIS leadership and, at times, taken from those who were not. The leadership team made significant changes to titles and organizational structure to allow not only for a more cohesive flow, but for staff advancement as well, while some autonomy was taken away.

Empowerment was also central to the experience of the members of the leadership team. All members of the leadership team who participated in the study said they felt empowered in their work with the programs and staff that they oversaw directly. Two members also noted that they felt empowered to ask questions and help create new initiatives, two key tenants of Appreciative Advising, in the new OASIS culture.

Empowerment was not as explicitly valued at the staff level, though several staffers did report that they felt empowered to do the work needed with students. At the staff level, results of this effort differed between male and female staff with male staff feeling much more empowered within their direct roles and in the larger office collective than female staff. Gender differences are discussed in greater detail in a later section. These findings relate to previous literature surrounding loyalty and resistance. Schein (2010) suggested that,

> The individual will hold on to certain [values] to ratify his or her membership in the group. If someone asks us to change our way of thinking or perceiving, and that way is based upon what we have learned in a group that we belong to or identify with, we will resist the change because we do not want to

> deviate from our group even if privately we think that the group is wrong" (p. 145).

In the OASIS office the CAP staff created a strong counter culture to preserve a sense of security and loyalty in what they viewed as an often unequal partnership with CAS. OASIS leadership worked to change the loyalties of staff members that they thought were 'on the fence' between cultures by giving them leadership positions within the new office. In many ways this served to build morale of those staff members who were willing to identify with the new culture, while further decimating the morale in the counter culture group. Harman (2002) noted that that breaking and then realigning loyalties can be an effective cultural change agent.

In an Appreciative Advising setting, empowerment seems to express itself in much the same way that it does non-appreciative settings. A dominant culture between the two merging organizations development and the non-dominant group held tightly to what they perceived as forced change.

Theme 4: Collaboration as agent of culture change. External collaboration was an important part of the CAS office's development and growth. CAP staff generally described collaboration as lacking externally and internally. After the merger resulting in the creation of OASIS, internal collaboration became a central value in creating a sense of a unified staff and office and producing a new culture.

Collaboration was outwardly expressed through both the centralization and consolidation efforts in OASIS. It was also expressed in the procurement of additional stand-alone programs that were brought under the OASIS umbrella after the merger. Stand-alone programs such as community college transition programs and student veteran programs were included in OASIS to broaden the concept of a one-stop student success support service for all students on campus.

Some prior CAP staff as forced described internal collaboration. The overall focused shifted to OASIS as primary brand and programs as secondary forcing all programs to consider their relationship with one another. In the weeklong staff and graduate assistant training that the researcher observed each day included some time to work on a cross-functional team project. The goal of this project was to have staff and leadership from different programmatic areas working directly with one another. Additionally, a significant portion of the first day of training was spent exploring all of the programs that OASIS offered and giving all staff an opportunity to participate in discussion and potential development of each of program.

The focus on collaboration relates to past studies of organizational culture development, in particular community building in new organizations (Pritchard, 1993; Senge 2014; Schein 2010). Senge (2014) suggested that

> The challenge for community building work is to help people find a way to move towards common goals without having to think and act like everyone else (p. 148).

Commons goals, along with shared spaces and resources to encourage the conversations, created a stronger affinity and sense of 'team' in the OASIS office.

This affinity, as noted in the literature, helped to spur a natural tendency to collaborate and partner.

The idea of 'group think', however, was particularly prevalent in the OASIS organization. Several staff members noted that if you did not think in an appreciative way you were exiled from the community and viewed as an outsider. In an Appreciative setting, collaboration seems to manifests itself in this unique way because the framework so heavily focuses on mindset rather than a specific output. While in some ways the mindset fed an "infectious commitment" (Senge, 2014, p. 25) where shared values were easily recognized and communicated it also created significant 'othering' of those who resisted.

Assumptions and manifestations. Hatch (1993) suggests that assumptions are intrinsic beliefs that inform an organization's values, while manifestations occur when those assumption are evoked cognition or emotion. Examples of assumptions include the role of leadership with shared or authoritative power or the basic goodness or flaws of human nature (Knoke, 2000). Manifestation of those assumptions might include stories of shared governance or a 'bad apple' employee. In this case study the growth mindset was an underlying assumption of OASIS that guided much of its work through and after the merger. Stories were commonly used to illustrate the multiple underlying assumptions of OASIS.

Theme 5: Growth mindset. OASIS focused on growth rather than change in the organization. In this way, their strategic positioning was based upon sustainability rather than continual disruption. The initial period of disruptive changes led to significant staff turnover, particularly from the CAP staff very few of which were retained. Staff, particularly original CAS staff, expressed mistrust at various levels of the organization.

Staff specifically noted that refocusing the continued changes on growth helped to create a feeling of stability. Staff and leadership both noted that changing the focus to growth help downplay changes left on the agenda. OASIS leadership tried to instill a generative growth mindset in the staff, a theoretical foundation of Appreciative Advising. The leadership team talked about change in relation to the office mission and vision. They often framed challenges and changes as growth in programming and staff development.

During observation periods, the staff engaged in a dream session lead by a member of the leadership team. The dream session focused on striving toward excellence in programmatic areas. There were changes discussed during this session, but the facilitator consistently reframed the conversation using growth orientated language rather than change language. The underlying assumption that was reinforced in observations and interviews was that growth was necessary for OASIS to meet growing student needs while change was a relic of a previous culture. This particular finding illustrated a unique aspect of appreciative thinking and how it can be used to shape culture. The language of “growth” helped to continue to encourage progress and forward movement without the threat of constant change

(Senge, 2014). The growth focus helped to create an underlying assumption of balance between progress and chaos.

In an Appreciative setting, this manifests itself in this unique way since one of two outcomes may result at the end of the first change cycle. One outcome is that the change is completed the new culture becomes the status quo and nothing further is pursued. The other outcome is that once on 'problem' has been fixed, a new one is identified, and then a new change cycle begins. These two outcomes frequently lead to a feeling among staff of stagnation or chaos, a main concept in the Competing Values Framework (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). The intentional shift to growth helped to staff to feel a sense of balance between the two.

Theme 6: Stories to express meaning. Stories can be way to express assumptions of the culture of an office, but in the case of OASIS stories were an assumption in the OASIS office. A common theme in the changing culture of OASIS was the use of stories, in the form of both storytelling and story listening which are both key tenets of Appreciative Advising. The leadership team met with staff individually multiple times to hear their stories. These meetings focused heavily on concerns with the merging offices, changes in leadership, and programmatic changes. Successes that were highlighted came primarily from the coaching program in CAS, which helped to drive dissent early on in the transition.

An intentional effort was made to bring in new staff from outside the university and specifically outside the HEAL program. This approach allowed for

OASIS leadership to write their own story moving forward without being as strongly tied to the pre-merger identities either of CAS and CAP.

The telling of a new story was particularly evident in the office history observed during staff training and the interviews with staff members who were not employed with the University before the merge. New staff had little to no knowledge of the culture clashes that occurred in the merge of the CAP and CAS office. The story of the office culture and history was so thoroughly cleaned by the end of the transition that the old conflict was not even a faded memory, but nearly non-existent. These findings are consistent with the organizational development literature that suggests that interpretive approaches are essential to facilitating “sense making” among actors and building cohesion (Kezar, 2012; Lusher, Lewis, & Ingram, 2006). Additionally, telling ones’ story in a way that it connects to another’s, or in this case an office, can help to create a sense of meaning and purpose, loyalty, and increase sense of belonging because the storyteller sees themself as part of group (Kezar, 2012).

In an Appreciative setting, this seems to manifest itself in a unique way: each person had a role in creating and telling the story, thereby eliminating the traditional protagonist and antagonist story roles. This was particularly evident in the interviews with OASIS leadership who did not identify an antagonist in the CAP office, but rather noted that the “barriers” the CAP staff faced in integrating into the

OASIS culture were the result of failed culture in the CAP office that was attributed to no one person or cause.

Symbols and interpretations. Hatch (1993) suggests that symbols are associations with the wider values of the organization, where interpretation links assumptions to new symbolic meaning. For example, organizations might use symbols like logos, colors, and even sounds to visually represent their organizational values. Interpretations might link a symbol such the World Trade Center, which was a symbol of global business and the strength of the American economy, to freedom and mourning in the wake of September 11, 2001. In this case study language was a symbol of the underlying Appreciative Mindset and advancement and reward came to be interpreted through titles and teamwork.

Theme 7: Language. Language was a recurrent theme in the CAS office before the merge and in the OASIS office after the merge. The leadership team was intentional in using positive language to talk about changes happening in the office. Some staff, particularly from the CAP office, viewed the positive language as "forced" and even "punitive" at times where negative language was quickly silenced.

Language is an important tenant of Appreciative Advising and assets based frameworks in general. Language was identified as a particularly big hurdle for the CAP office staff in transitioning to OASIS. Language, from the website to documents, was adjusted to reflect the Appreciative Advising model's integration across all programs which much more closely reflected the CAS office before the merge to OASIS.

The language shift was almost immediate with little to no transition period, which left the CAP office feeling like outsiders particularly because it was so different from the office culture from which they were transitioning. Schein (2010) noted that, "culture supplies language and language provides meaning" (p. 89). A common language like the one used in Appreciative Advising can strengthen the sense of group identity (Schein, 1989).

Positive language is a key tenant of Appreciative Advising and is used to symbolize the underlying assumption about the goodness of human nature (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008). Schein (2010) also touched on the belief in the goodness of people saying,

> Leaders must have faith in people and must believe that ultimately human nature is basically good and, in any case, malleable … humans can and will learn if they are provided resources and the necessary psychological safety (p.367).

While the OASIS leadership team was intentional in expressing their belief that the resistance from the CAP staff was neither their fault or unable to be overcome, for many of the CAP staff the divide was still insurmountable and language became a very divisive symbol.

Theme 8: Advancement and Reward. Despite using Appreciative Advising as a student services delivery model, very few of the staff described an Appreciative environment during the active merger. This was especially evident in the domain of recognition and reward. Pre-merger, the CAS office, the only one using Appreciative Advising, described a very Appreciative environment where their work was often recognized and appreciated both internally and externally. The CAP staff described resistance a negative work culture, and a dearth of recognition both from their internal leadership and from external campus leadership. The CAP staff also described what was termed by one staffer as "excessive recognition" of the CAS office at the expense of the CAP office which one of the reasons that the CAP office was not keen on moving toward using Appreciative Advising across all programs.

Recognition during the transition was an important symbol because it represented one of the largest culture conflicts between the CAP and CAS offices. Recognition, including promotion, was given to staff that were acclimating well to the OASIS culture. Recognition was also carefully and intentionally doled out from OASIS leadership to encourage staff members that they considered "on the fence" about the new direction of the office.

OASIS staff that were hired after the merger was over described a congenial and collaborative culture with some individual recognition and significant team recognition. The still remaining pre-merger CAP staff described an improved, although somewhat forced, move toward group recognition. The CAS staff was advantaged in this way because they were coming from a culture where group recognition was a norm, while the CAP staff were rarely recognized as a group and only occasionally recognized for individual achievements. There was still underlying feelings of programmatic favorites that were more likely to receive individual recognition expressed by a few participants.

During the observations the researcher witnessed significant group recognition with little to no individual recognition. During staff training, an emphasis was placed on what the OASIS office had completed, how the OASIS office had grown, and the importance of the office to the Division of Student Affairs. A couple of programs were identified as central to the work of OASIS and they were highlighted in more forward ways than other programs, but without individual staff recognition for the people with programmatic oversight. In prior studies, recognition has been shown to be important in maintaining morale and positive climate (Tesluk, Farr, & Klein 1997). In an Appreciative Advising setting, this seems to be very much in line with the assumptions of the goodness of people and the belief in an individual's ability to succeed if given the proper support (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008).

Additional themes

The researcher identified two key themes in the data that did not directly relate to the research question but were significant enough to warrant a discussion below. These themes relate to the speed of the merger and perceived gender differences.

Speed. Changes in OASIS happened quickly, often before infrastructure was in place to support changes. This theme was seen in deciding to merge the offices, co-locating the offices, announcing staffing structure changes, and making budget decisions. The fast nature of the changes left struggling staff members feeling frustrated and out of the loop, which likely led to some of the staff turnover.

The leadership team explicitly noted that they wanted transitions to happen fast to avoid allowing time for dissention and mistrust to build. Pre-merger staff that was not in agreement with the changing culture was turned over relatively quickly, and new staff was on-boarded with relatively little information about the offices pre-OASIS. The speed at which changes happened seemed to allow for a more rapid culture change. The speed at which these changes were implemented is neither consistent nor not consistent with principles of Appreciative Advising. Little is mentioned about the speed with which the framework might be implemented. Appreciative Inquiry, because of its cyclical nature and inclusionary practices, tends to be a lengthy process (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010).

Gender differences. Some respondents mentioned gender differences frequently throughout the interview process, and the researcher noted some gender differences during observations as well. Male staff contributed more frequently to conversation, led small discussions, and took leadership roles during the weeklong training regardless of position. It is difficult for the researcher to discern if the gender differences arose from something within the office culture or if they are part of a larger institutional, regional, or even national phenomenon. Gender differences were commented upon more frequently after the merger to a single office.

Specifically, female staff frequently reported that they did not feel like they had the autonomy to make decisions without prior approval of the leadership team. Male staff reported that they felt empowered to make decisions and those they were comfortable approaching the leadership team when they believed that it was necessary to have approval of the leadership team. This discrepancy was found only in the staff levels below the leadership team. Members of the leadership team expressed feelings of empowerment across genders.

It is worth noting that the CAS and CAP offices both had female senior staff, while OASIS had a male as the most senior staff member. The leadership team in the OASIS office, however, was fairly evenly divided between genders. Additionally, staff reporting to a male superior did not express different views of gender oppression than staff reporting to a female superior, leading the researcher to believe that direct supervision was not part of the finding. Gender and cultural change has been expressed in the organizational literature as generally tending to favor masculine discourses over feminine discourse (Hawkins, 2008; Kerfoot & Knights, 1998; Knights & McCabe, 2001). Findings from this study suggest that Appreciative

Advising may not mitigate challenges related to gender equality in developing an Appreciative Advising office.

Study Limitations

Several factors created limitations in the size, scope, and timeline of this study. These limitations influenced the results that were gathered and should be considered when reading the study in its entirety and more specifically considering the implications for practice.

First, it should be noted that these results cannot be generalized to other campuses or institutions, though they may inform practice. Qualitative research is most appropriate for generating meanings and understanding of phenomenon, and thus is not designed to be generalized across settings (Merriam, 2009) The campus studied had a unique environment, as all campuses do, and their programs were designed with that specific environment and student population in mind.

In addition, a small sample of the three office staffs self-selected to participate in this study. Interviewee responses reflected their own experiences and biases, so the data does not represent universal views of the various constituent groups at this institution. Participant bias in viewpoint may also reflect the self-selection of the participants and their own motivations for responding to the interview request. The researcher worked to mitigate this bias by looking for repeated claims across interviews and observable or documented events. This was a method of data triangulation which aims to strengthen the study's validity.

The study occurred only over a four-month period of time, while the actual merger of the two offices occurred over a much longer period of time. Because of this discrepancy, the researcher was unable to gather any observational data directly before, during, and after the actual merger process. A significant amount of data was reliant of participants' own recollection and reporting. Yet, this is common in case studies that often rely on respondents to reflect on past events (Bogdan & Bicklen, 1992; Merriam, 1998).

Implications for Practice

Several implications for practice are derived from themes that were developed in this study. Appreciative Advising positively influenced the office culture in multiple ways. This includes reframing challenges and change via a growth mindset, employing design management strategies to guide an organization toward what could be, adopting proactive programming strategies, developing a collegial workplace environment, and sharing responsibility.

Studies have shown that adopting an Appreciative Advising framework as a student intervention model can positively influence student success outcome measures. This qualitative study suggests that adopting an Appreciative Advising framework to support student success may also positively influence an office culture. While OASIS leadership did not set out to pursue an Appreciative Inquiry process to lead the office merger, the use of Appreciative Advising seemed to bleed into the merging process and set the tone for the developing office culture.

The merger process was in no way easy or without ups and downs along the way. It is important to note that the turning point for the OASIS office may largely be attributed to staff changes. No one was directly fired or asked to leave during the process, but some staff felt isolated and therefore self-selected other opportunities that they felt were a better fit. As OASIS brought in new staff they were able to recruit a team that bought into the Appreciative workplace culture and Appreciative Advising as student intervention model.

Ultimately, OASIS faced similar challenges in merging to what is often described in the organizational change literature (Mills, Bettis, Miller, & Nolan, 2005). OASIS faced issues of creating a common vision, language to talk about that vision, and space to carry out that vision. Using an Appreciative approach did not mitigate these challenges in significant ways. In fact, some staff were resentful of the approach and so it became a hurdle in itself. This study suggests that administrators must be attuned to how an Appreciative approach might silence differences if not carried out in an appropriate way.

The CAS office, which used Appreciative Advising as their coaching framework, had a culture that staff described as “developmental,” “happy,” “fun,” “family-like,” and “very positive.” The CAP office on the hand was described as “challenging”, “competitive”, “siloed”, and “negative”. After the merger, OASIS adopted the Appreciative Advising framework across all OASIS programs, and the culture began to align much more closely with that of the CAS office than the CAP office. Buono and Bowditch (1987) explain this finding suggesting, “the thicker the culture where a greater degree of shared beliefs and values is evident, the more potent will be the culture’s influence” (p. 147).

Size and resources would have tipped the scales in favor of adopting the CAP office culture, but because the CAS culture was so strong it emerged as the dominant culture. This finding suggests that merely using Appreciative Advising as a framework for student interventions may influence the direction of the office culture.

Growth mindset. Using a growth mindset can help organizations to create an environment that tolerates conflict and failure. In framing these two necessary practices as opportunities for growth rather than setbacks, the organization can move forward more effectively and efficiently. This was evident in the current study as leaders focused on the language of growth, which resulted in participants sharing a feeling of balance between the chaos of constant change and the inertia of stability. Other offices could use the idea of a growth mindset to encourage innovative thinking, where new ideas can be pursued without fear of failure. Additionally, a growth mindset could be useful in managing staff and planning because it encourages growth from what is known rather than simply change to something different or maintaining the status quo.

Design management. Design management involves utilizing design thinking to make decisions. In an Appreciative context, design management builds on a the growth mindset and looks at how things could work, rather than how they do work, allows for prototyping of multiple concepts, and moves forward with the most salient ideas. For example, in the current study, OASIS did not employ a design management approach. Early in the merge process OASIS was more reactive in their approach to developing the new culture and disseminating the counter-culture. Other offices might employ a design management piece early in the process to allow for the co-existence and testing of multiple ideas allowing staff to actively participant in culture development.

Proactive programing. Successfully implementing a growth mindset and design management practices allows organizations to focus on more proactive, rather than reactive, programing. When leadership is not faced with the challenge of constantly putting out fires, they are able to think ahead, anticipate needs, and lead from a more proactive stance. After the merge, OASIS was able to take steps towards proactive programming where staff were allowed develop new programs before their was a critical need and intentionally seek out beneficial partnerships. Other offices might benefit from incorporating proactive programming as a piece of design management. For example, the technology giant, Google, allows employees a percentage of time each year to work on new inventions. In a higher education context, offices that are employing growth mindset with design management might allow their employees to do future planning and anticipate what students needs might be and design program prototypes to test multiple ideas before moving forward.

Collegial workplace. Collegial workspaces are open in both space and communication. Allowing for constructive, growth-oriented feedback and conversation encourages a collegial environment where colleagues share ideas and resources. Creating open spaces within an office where staff can gather to facilitate this sharing can be particularly effective. This was a particularly effective method for OASIS. Co-locating staff into one area where resources could be easily shared naturally encouraged collaboration. Additionally, it made it more difficult for the 'us' and 'them' counter-culture to continue to exist because it was constantly confronted with the a new culture of 'we'. Collegial offices also encourage the psychological safety needed for a growth mindset to thrive by reducing the fear and consequences of failure.

Shared responsibilities. Sharing responsibilities for tasks among leadership and between leadership and staff enhances buy-in from all stakeholders. When staff feel empowered to take on new tasks and build on current responsibilities under a shared vision, productivity and satisfaction seem to improve as well. This was not particularly evident in the OASIS case between staff and leadership, though male staff did note that they felt empowered to take on new tasks without direction from the leadership first. Among the OASIS leadership team they did feel that they had a culture of shared responsibility. Building on the collegial workplace, OASIS leadership felt empowered to seek each other out as well as external partners to continue to develop existing programs. Other offices might benefit from working toward a culture of shared responsibility where staff feels both supported and empowered to make decisions on their own. This, again, builds upon the previous practice recommendations to create workplaces that are highly effective and able to focus on creating high quality programs to support student success.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study contributed to the literature on Appreciative Advising and organizational culture in several ways. First, the use of Appreciative Advising, which has a strong focus on common language and open space, seemed to bridge a common struggle in mergers which is the inability to clearly communicate the path forward (Mills et al, 2005). In using a common language that was also responsible for dictating the vision Appreciative Advising provide both the voice and path. While not everyone choose to stay on the path it never seemed unclear or confusing. Second, while staff buy in to the Appreciative approach used in OASIS was not universally supported it did provide a framework that created a more cohesive environment. Appreciative Advising is a collaborative framework based up on stories, dreams, and co-created plans. Appreciative approaches cannot be used individually and so naturally lend themselves to collaboration and teamwork. Third, it demonstrated that there is no magic bullet to diffuse normal tension and issues that arise because of merging cultures, but that conflict of mergers can be healthy and valuable to an organization when evaluated from a growth mindset.

While this study shed light on several aspects of cultural change in an office using the Appreciative Advising framework as a student intervention model, it also raised further questions and prompts new directions for research. For example, future research on this topic might examine culture change and appreciative approaches at other types of institutions, like community colleges, large and medium-sized private institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and other public institutions that do not have a research focus. Exploring Appreciative Advising and culture change at these institutions could help scholars understand how institutional mission, size governance,, and other factors may influence the development of appreciative cultures.

Another area of focus for future studies is to compare institutions within a similar regional area, student population, and institution type to evaluate the effect of those differences on culture. Exploring Appreciative Advising and culture change within diverse settings could help us understand how individual and macro level factors might be at play in the change process.

Future studies might also the process and outcomes of merging entities within higher education. Combining offices is a particularly salient topic given economic realities facing higher education and increasing focus on administrative budget tightening, reduction in duplication, and cross-disciplinary collaboration. In particular, the data from this study might be re-conceptualized through the merger literature, examining how entities adopt a shared organizational identity. Such studies would be timely as colleges and departments across the U.S. continue to merge in an effort to cut costs (Kiley, 2011, Marcus, 2013).

Conclusions

Culture change in higher education is a complex process that requires support and participation at all levels of an institutions. OASIS has created programs that are working to support constituents already engaged in this work and to further expand it across campus. Their work has garnered national recognition from several professional organizations.

OASIS staff demonstrated a commitment to utilizing an Appreciative Advising framework to help students succeed on their campus. Institutions across the country are looking for ways to engage their students effectively engage students to increase persistence to graduation. This relates to the national graduation goals as articulated by President Obama in speeches across the nation suggesting that higher education should be accessible, affordable, and accountable (White House, 2015). The benefits of Appreciative Advising to a collegiate office and their students have been illustrated through this case study: a growth mindset, design management, proactive programming, collegial workspaces, and shared responsibilities. Institutions continue to look for the best ways to support employees and to illustrate the influence that creating a strong and cohesive culture plays in furthering the goals of student success. Continuing to understand how institutions are supporting and engaging staff offers hope and promise to the students who stand to benefit and are critical to these institutions ability to fulfill their missions.

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Appendix A

Semi-Structured Appreciative Advising and Office Culture Interview Guide

Overview

Tell me a little about yourself and your history at Central South University

- Length of employment
- Other offices
- Current position

Artifacts

How, if at all, did your office space physically change after adopting the Appreciative Advising model?

- Colors
- Physical layout
- Décor
- Furniture placement

How, if at all, did processes for students change after adopting the Appreciative Advising model?

- Appointment scheduling
- Follow-ups
- Website

Symbols

Tell me about the way the office personnel are organized.

- Team members
- Selection
- Training

What things, if any, do you do to communicate to students that this is an Appreciative Advising office?

- Documents
- Body Language
- Décor
- Explanation
- Approach to work
- Inclusion of phases

Values

In what ways, if any, does this office incorporate Appreciative Advising into its work with students?

- Documents
- Student interactions
- Student training

In what ways, if any, does this office incorporate Appreciative Advising into its work organizationally?

- Policies
- Documents
- Staff meetings
- Performance reviews

Assumptions

What is Appreciative Advising?

- Mindset
- Six phases
- Approach
- Model
- Theory

- Framework

    1. *How does it guide your work?*

Explain what it means to you to work in an Appreciative Advising office.

- Positive
- Student success
- Team
- Values

In what ways, if any, does the office encourage or support student success?

- Approach
- Goodness of students
- Ability to succeed

Conclusion

What should I have asked that I did not?

What else would you like to share?

Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix B

Request for Participants

Good Morning,

You are invited to participate in a dissertation research study about office culture in the Student Success Center at the [redacted]. You were identified as a possible participant because you have experience with and knowledge of the [redacted] Student Success Center. Your participation would include a 30 - 45 minute phone interview. Your participation and responses will be kept anonymous and confidential. Participation in this study is completely voluntary.

If you would like to participate, please click on the following link to schedule an interview time. I will contact you at the phone number you provide at the time of the interview. If none of the times available work, please contact me and I would happy to find a time to talk that works for you.

CLICK TO SCHEDULE: http://www.meetme.so/ErinKonkle

Additionally, I will be in [redacted] August 4th - 8th to observe Student Success Center training.

If you choose to participate, I ask that you read this form and contact me with any questions that you may have. The interview will be conducted by Erin Konkle, Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.
Best-
Erin Konkle

Appendix C

Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study that requires an interview. You were selected as a possible participant because you have experience with and knowledge of the [redacted] Student Success Office. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be interviewed. The interview exercise will be conducted by Erin Konkle, Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development.

Background Information

The purpose of this semi-structured interview is to learn about your experience with the University of South Carolina Student Success Center.

Procedures

If you agree to participate, I would ask you to be prepared to answer a few questions about your experiences. I will be recording the interview and, later, I will transcribe it word-for-word. No identifying information will be connected to your individual responses. The responses will be reported along with those of other interviewees in the researchers dissertation and possibly research articles thereafter.

Risks and Benefits of being in exercise

This is a minimal risk exercise. I do not anticipate any potential problems before, during, or after the interview.

There are no benefits involved in this exercise.

Compensation

There are no compensations involved in this exercise.

Confidentiality

The transcript and consent documentation will be kept private. Only Dr. David Weerts and Erin Konkle will have access to them.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Participation in this exercise is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions

I, Erin Konkle, will be conducting the interview under the supervision of Dr. David Weerts. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact me at konkl011@umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this exercise and would like to talk to someone other than me or Dr. Weerts, **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the interview.

Signature:_______________________________________ Date: ____________

Signature of Interviewer:______________________________ Date: ____________

Appendix D

Institutional Approval –University of Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Twin Cities Campus

Human Research Protection Program
Office of the Vice President for Research

D528 Mayo Memorial Building
420 Delaware Street S.E.
MMC 820
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Office: 612-626-5654
Fax: 612-626-6061
E-mail: irb@umn.edu or ibc@umn.edu
Website: http://research.umn.edu/subjects/

December 13, 2013

Erin Konkle Humphrey Sch of Public Affairs Room 130 HHHSPA 7451A 301 19th Ave S Minneapolis, MN 55455

RE: "Understanding Culture in An Appreciative Workplace" IRB Code Number: 1311P46061

Dear Ms. Konkle

The referenced study was reviewed by expedited review procedures and approved on December 10, 2013. If you have applied for a grant, this date is required for certification purposes as well as the Assurance of Compliance number which is FWA00000312 (Fairview Health Systems Research FWA00000325, Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare FWA 00004003). Approval for the study will expire one year from that date. A report form will be sent out two months before the expiration date.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of this study includes the consent form received November 25, 2013.

The IRB would like to stress that subjects who go through the consent process are considered enrolled participants and are counted toward the total number of subjects, even if they have no further participation in the study. Please keep this in mind when calculating the number of subjects you request. This study is currently approved for 15 subjects. If you desire an increase in the number of approved subjects, you will need to make a formal request to the IRB.

The code number above is assigned to your research. That number and the title of your study must be used in all communication with the IRB office.

As the Principal Investigator of this project, you are required by federal regulations to inform the IRB of any proposed changes in your research that will affect human subjects. Changes should not be initiated until written IRB approval is received. Unanticipated problems and adverse events should be reported to the IRB as they occur. Research projects are subject to continuing review and renewal. If you have any questions, call the IRB office at 612-626-5654.

On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success with your research. Sincerely,

Christina Dobrovolny, CIP Research Compliance Supervisor CD/bw

CC: David Weerts