EXPLORING THE COMPLEXITIES OF DIVERSITY ADVISORY COUNCILS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

by

BEVERLY EVON JOHNSON

Under the Direction of Wendy Ruona

ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions are struggling to decide how to promote, engage, and support diversity and inclusion efforts. Can stakeholders with the same goals affect this process? Does the culture of higher education impact stakeholders' abilities to create institutional change? The purpose of this action research (AR) study was to understand how a higher education institution redesigns an effective diversity advisory council (DAC) and to identify factors and conditions that affect this process. Southern Region University (SRU) engaged an AR team consisting of administrators, faculty, and staff in a two-year process to address the following questions: (1) What elements are critical in developing an effective diversity advisory council within a higher education institution? and (2) What challenges impeded the process of developing a diversity advisory council within this higher education institution? The SRU DAC, an advisory council for SRU's senior administration, was the focus of this study.

The study found that strong supportive leadership, formal decommissioning of existing DACs, the AR process, and a theoretically sound model are key elements in developing effective DACs in higher education institutions. The study further found that

resistance to change and empowerment, lack of an institutional definition of diversity, and stakeholder accountability are challenges that impede the process of developing effective DACs in higher education institutions. Conclusions concerning system readiness and implications for future research and practice are discussed.

INDEX WORDS: Diversity advisory council, DAC, Chief diversity officer, CDO, Action research, Higher education, Inclusive excellence, Diversity Advisory Development Model, Diversity challenges

EXPLORING THE COMPLEXITIES OF DIVERSITY ADVISORY COUNCILS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

by

BEVERLY EVON JOHNSON

BS, Paine College, 1987

MPA, University of Georgia, 2002

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2017

EXPLORING THE COMPLEXITIES OF DIVERSITY ADVISORY COUNCILS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

by

BEVERLY EVON JOHNSON

Major Professor: Wendy Ruona

Committee: Janette R. Hill
Aliki Nicolaides

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
December 2017

DEDICATION

To Jesus Christ, who makes all possible

To my parents, Urias Ophel Johnson and Americus Sims Johnson, for setting high expectations, inspiring me to be the best version of myself, and loving me sacrificially

To my grandparents, Jacob Cosby Johnson, Vivian Curry Johnson, Johnnie Crawford Sims, and Viola Wilson Sims, for enduring lives beyond comprehension and keeping the faith while creating paths for others to follow

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

No one walks this path alone. I was blessed to have the support of my fellow cohort, who stumbled through the dark with me, searching for the light of knowledge and understanding during this journey. The dedicated and supportive faculty of the Adult Education, Learning and Organization Development program at the University of Georgia College of Education made indelible impressions on my experience, making each step meaningful and memorable. I want to especially acknowledge and thank my major professor, Dr. Wendy Ruona, who supported and challenged me throughout this experience. I am grateful to Dr. Ruona for her patience as I found my way, her understanding during difficult moments, and her advice during times of uncertainty. My sincerest gratitude to my committee members, Dr. Janette Hill and Dr. Aliki Nicolaides, who made space for my learning and personal growth. I am also appreciative of Student Affairs Professional Holly Newton Ivy for always being available and willing to help.

My sincerest appreciation to my closest confidant and friend, Latrese Bush, for being present for every moment of this experience. Your unwavering support, personal sacrifice, and consistent encouragement has meant the world to me and made all the difference. I am deeply thankful to my dear friend and fellow cohort member Shakiyla

Smith for consistently encouraging me to “head north,” allowing me to be me unfiltered, and creating space for me whenever I needed it.

I am thankful for my village of family, friends, neighbors, mentors, and coworkers who encouraged me along the way, helped me stay focused, and cheered me on. I am forever indebted to every custodian, cafeteria worker, bus driver, teacher, counselor, professor, administrator, and professor who facilitated my education. My gratitude runs deep for all of you.

Finally, to my late aunt Mirian Joyce Tiller, thank you for always seeing, supporting, and feeding the academic in me. I love you for setting a wonderful example and leaving markers along the way for me to follow. Our bond continues.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS v

LIST OF TABLES x

LIST OF FIGURES xi

CHAPTER

1 INTRODUCTION/ISSUE IDENTIFICATION: THE JOURNEY TO IMPROVED DIVERSITY 1

Developing Diversity Advisory Councils 5

Study Purpose 8

Significance 9

2 LITERATURE REVIEW: THE ROAD NOT TAKEN 12

Governance Boards Versus Advisory Councils 14

Measuring Effectiveness 16

Diversity Advisory Groups 24

3 METHODOLOGY: MAPPING THE COURSE 30

Epistemological Framework and Research Approach 30

Action Research Methodology 36

Organizational Context 38

Study Participants 38

Data Generation, Collection, and Analysis Methods 42

Data Analysis 48
Trustworthiness 49
4 ACTION RESEARCH CASE: THE TRAVELED ROAD 53
Description of the Context 53
Adopting an Action Research Approach 57
Action Research Phases 62
5 FINDINGS: SIGNS ALONG THE WAY 81
Research Question 1: What Elements Are Critical in Developing an Effective Diversity Advisory Council Within a Higher Education Institution? 83
Research Question 2: What Challenges Impeded the Process of Developing a Diversity Advisory Council Within This Higher Education Institution? 108
Chapter Summary 121
6 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS 122
Summary of the Study 122
Conclusion #1: Strong Administrative Support and a Theoretically Sound Model Are Critical Elements in Developing Effective DACs 126
Conclusion #2: Effective DACs Require Institutional Investment 129
Implications for Practice 133
Implications for Future Research 137
Final Thoughts 138
REFERENCES 139

APPENDICES

A ORIGINAL SOUTHERN REGION UNIVERSITY DAC MEMBER SURVEY....146

B AR TEAM SELECTION CHART....148

C SOUTHERN REGION UNIVERSITY CDO INTERVIEW RESPONSES....149

D SOUTHERN REGION UNIVERSITY DAC RECOMMENDATIONS....157

E SOUTHERN REGION UNIVERSITY DAC APPLICATION AND ORIENTATION SURVEY....167

LIST OF TABLES

Page

Table 1: Participant Group Data 39

Table 2: Data Generation and Analysis Methods 42

Table 3: Strategies for Achieving Trustworthiness 50

Table 4: Challenges and Effects of Initial SRU Diversity Advisory Council 56

Table 5: Research Findings....82

Table 6: Critical Elements for Developing an Effective Diversity Advisory Council (DAC) in a Higher Education Institution....83

Table 7: Critical Action of CDO....87

Table 8: SRU AR Team Member Engagement 94

Table 9: Chief Diversity Officer Interview Findings....107

Table 10: Challenges....108

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

Figure 1: Model of Board Development, Board Member Competency, and Performance 8

Figure 2: Concentric circles depicting the AR study focus 27

Figure 3: Advancement of Board Development Theory 29

Figure 4: Four phases of an action research cycle 37

Figure 5: Conceptual framework 70

Figure 6: Diversity Advisory Council Development Model (DAC-dm) 72

Figure 7: Completed and initiated action research cycles, by phases 99

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION/ISSUE IDENTIFICATION:

THE JOURNEY TO IMPROVED DIVERSITY

The academy has identified campus diversity as a central component of its educational mission (Rothman, Kelly-Woessner, & Woessner, 2011). Higher education institutions recognize that diversity success does not happen haphazardly or via disconnected effort; rather, it is an artful science that must be viewed as fundamental to operational excellence and that requires an intentional approach to change management and strategy development (Williams, 2013). Therefore, the valued goal of inclusive excellence in higher education is best realized through the strategic and intentional application of diversity initiatives within the institution that are supported throughout the organization.

One solution used by many institutional leaders is the implementation of diversity advisory councils (DACs) and other committees as a way of demonstrating commitment to addressing the needs of their institutions (Williams, 2013). These councils help institution leadership identify and address issues related to diversity, build inclusive communities, and ensure that institutional stakeholders' rights are protected. DACs are designed to help cultivate inclusion throughout the institution.

Southern Region University (SRU) is a four-year Research I university that is located in the Southern United States. It was established in the segregated South in the early nineteenth century, when women and people of color were denied access to the

school as administrators, educators, or students. Many of the traditions of SRU reflect that period. The names of buildings, streets that run through campus, and statues casting long shadows across well-manicured lawns bear the names of some of the South's greatest segregationists. Efforts to correct the wrongs of the past have been well publicized, and like many of its peer and aspirational institutions, SRU has stated that diversity is valued at the institution. A diversity plan was designed to demonstrate the institution's desire to enhance diversity and inclusion across the organization.

Since its inception, SRU has experienced many challenges and triumphs in its struggle to diversify all areas of the university. In the early 2000s, the position of chief diversity officer (CDO) was created and given the rank of associate provost. Additionally, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) was established to lead a focused institutional effort to evaluate existing programs and develop new initiatives to support diversity and equity at SRU. An integral part of ODI is the SRU Diversity Advisory Council. The mission of the council and its members at that time was to identify and address barriers to diversity and advise the associate provost/chief diversity officer in issues related to diversity and inclusion at SRU. The council, via its committee structure, was to study diversity literature and models in order to propose best practices and strategies that would improve diversity at SRU. In addition, the council would provide public campus forums for the discussion of diversity-related issues and ideas and promote a campus dialogue about diversity with a particular focus on ensuring a sense of inclusion.

The inaugural DAC was launched prior to 2010. This council was composed of 36 members representing each major administrative and academic unit of SRU.

Members were to serve a 12-month term and be replaced by another representative from the respective unit. Their initial task was to develop an institution-wide diversity plan. Over the course of the next five years, the council worked to meet the charge, never attending to the term limit that was initially planned. During this time, the council suffered from many challenges: inconsistent communication, difficulties coordinating members, change in two administrations, varying levels of interest among members, and attrition.

In spite of its challenges, the council produced a five-year diversity plan that was adopted in the spring of 2011 and distributed by late summer of that same year. Having fulfilled its charge, the DAC lost energy, focus, and function, leaving SRU without an active advisory body to advise top administrators on issues related to diversity and inclusion that affect the institution. This void negatively impacted the institution's ability to (1) be recognized as an institution that seriously addressed issues related to diversity and inclusion, (2) gather information and produce solutions based upon relevant data gathered by stakeholders of the institution, and (3) maintain a competitive edge in its ability to attract, acquire, and retain global resources.

Additionally, SRU's five-year diversity plan was scheduled to expire within 16 months of this study. The chief diversity officer, who also served as the action research study sponsor, stated the importance and urgency of putting an effective diversity council in place and shared the concern of an educational institution of its size not having an active and effective council. The CDO commented that SRU needed a diversity advisory council in place and prepared to review the results of the institution's initial diversity plan prior to the plan's expiration. Based on findings, DAC would help

to identify best practices, areas for improvement, and recommendations for changes or enhancements, and also take the next steps toward updating the diversity plan.

The CDO also shared problems faced by the original DAC. One problem was that the CDO included an unwieldy number of members, which made it difficult to experience timely and effective communication, set meeting times, and organize the council. Additionally, one-year term limits were not adhered to, which caused the council to suffer from issues related to continuity and sustainability. Lastly, members were selected by high-ranking members of their work units instead of on the basis of their commitment to diversity and inclusion. These issues resulted in inconsistent effort among council members.

Seeking best practices for establishing and maintaining effective DACs from other higher education institutions was challenging due to the lack of empirical research on DACs in higher education. Over the past decade, the chief diversity officer role has been increasingly adopted in higher education from its existence in other organizations such as IBM, Major League Baseball, and the American Association of Medical Colleges (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). The community of chief diversity officers is in its infancy and is working toward professionalizing the field. The National Association of Chief Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE) was established in 2006 with a stated vision to lead higher education toward inclusive excellence through institutional transformation (National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education website, 2016). While NADOHE has made progress toward professionalizing the position of chief diversity officer in higher education by developing and publishing a peer-reviewed journal, hosting a national conference, and

establishing standards of professional practice (nadohe.org), there were limited resources that addressed the issues SRU was facing with its DAC at that time.

In summary, SRU's CDO identified the university's need for a diversity advisory council to make recommendations and provide guidance to the institution's administration on matters related to diversity and inclusion. This need was based on the size of the institution, a student body and employee base that was diversifying rapidly, past legal challenges faced by the organization due to issues bad actions related to diversity and inclusion, and increasing internal and external expectations of inclusiveness.

Developing Diversity Advisory Councils

A search for best practices and empirical studies related to developing effective diversity advisory councils in higher education was conducted. My efforts to find associated literature did not produce research directly related to SRU's issue. I found this interesting because 2014 census data indicate that there were 4,627 higher education institutions in the United States at the time of this study (https://www.statista.com). According to Bastedo (2012), hundreds of higher education institutions are trying to create more inclusive campuses by developing various diversity initiatives. This claim is supported by the efforts of the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education. The association, established in 2007, serves as the preeminent voice for diversity officers in higher education by supporting the collective efforts of its members to lead their perspective institutions toward the attainment of the following goals:

- Inform and influence national and local policies.
- Identify and circulate exemplary practices.

- Produce and disseminate empirical evidence through research to inform diversity initiatives.
- Provide professional development for current and aspiring diversity officers.

In 2014 the association adopted the first standards of professional practice for chief diversity officers in higher education. It appears that the professionalized field diversity and inclusion work in higher education is in its infancy, and efforts to identify or develop best practices and conduct empirical studies will be forthcoming. However, SRU needed to address its current situation and was positioned to possibly contribute to findings from this study.

My search of the literature indicated that there is limited research related to advisory board effectiveness. Henderson (2004) observed that most of the literature regarding advisory boards merely offered first-person accounts of descriptions of existing board operations or guidelines to establish advisory boards. Genheimer and Shehab (2009) state, "There is relatively little written and no known comprehensive research on what it takes to establish and operate an effective advisory program" (p.169), and Rooney and Puerzer (2002) came to the same conclusion. This further identifies the gap in literature related to groups operating in an advisory capacity to organizations.

Having found no significant literature to address SRU's issue, I expanded my search to include effectiveness of nonprofit boards of directors or governing boards. These groups are significantly different from advisory councils because of their governance responsibilities. Holland and Jackson (1998) describe non-profit governing boards as "groups to whom the community entrusts power and resources so they can act

as fiduciaries and guide their organizations with caring, skill, and integrity" (p. 121). In contrast, advisory councils do not have governing responsibilities or power.

The most relevant literature found was Jackson and Holland's (1998) work with governing boards of directors and Brown's (2005) *Model of Board Development, Board Member Competency, and Performance*. Both research efforts included empirical studies related to the respective instruments developed. These tools seemed promising to the AR team in our effort to redesign SRU's DAC.

Developed in 1998 by Jackson and Holland (1998), the *Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire* (*BSAQ*) was designed to provide nonprofit boards of directors the ability to measure their effectiveness. The questionnaire assesses board performance in six competency areas (1) contextual, (2) educational, (3) interpersonal, (4) analytical, (5) political, and (6) strategic (Brown, 2005; Holland & Jackson, 1998; Jackson & Holland, 1998). After several assessments of the tool were conducted, the BSAQ was found to be reliable and valid (Herman et al., 1997; Holland, 2002; Holland & Jackson, 1998; Jackson & Holland, 1998).

Brown's (2005) Model of Board Development, Board Member Competency, and Performance was developed to determine if recruitment, orientation, evaluation, and member capacity led to better board performance (Figure 1). Brown's research included distributing a survey to 713 credit unions to determine if the model was valid. Results of the study supported the claim that efforts spent on board development increased board competency and resulted in increased board performance.

While both tools were designed to identify factors that impact the effectiveness of non-profit governance boards, the SRU AR team—having found no such tools for

advisory councils—was interested in exploring the possibility of building upon the work of Jackson and Holland (1998) and Brown (2005) to create a model for diversity advisory boards in higher education.

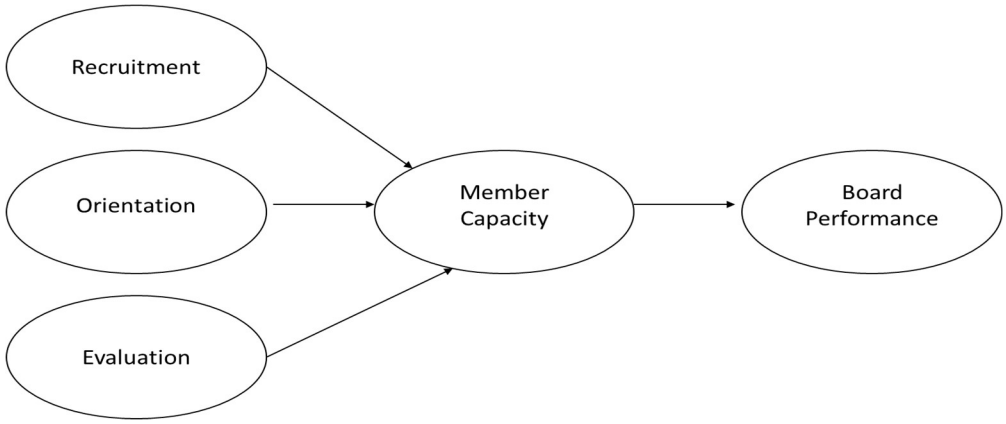


Figure 1. Model of Board Development, Board Member Competency, and Performance (Brown, 2005)

Admittedly, the purpose of governance boards is distinctly different from that of advisory councils, but the complexities related to building effectiveness within groups that support larger systems are similar.

Study Purpose

The AR team worked collaboratively to assess the conditions that prevented the initial DAC from performing optimally, investigate how effective advisory councils were created and maintained in other organizations, and support the decision and launch of a new DAC. Team members engaged in several AR cycles of planning, taking action, and evaluating action to engage in this process. The literature and research used to establish

the framework of this study were related to diversity in higher education, advisory councils, and power and influence.

Diversity advisory bodies in higher education institutions throughout the United States struggle with many challenges that are experienced by other types of committees in other organizations (Cox, 2001; Maltbia & Power, 2009; Williams, 2013). While some work has been done to measure governing board effectiveness, the literature is void of efforts with organizational advisory groups (Brown, 2005, 2007; Herman, Renz, & Heimovics, 1997; Holland, 2002; Holland & Jackson, 1998; Jackson & Holland, 1998).

The purpose of this AR study is to understand how a higher education institution redesigns an effective diversity advisory council and to identify factors and conditions that affect this process. There were two research questions that guided this study:

(1) What elements are critical in developing an effective diversity advisory council within a higher education institution?

(2) What challenges impeded the process of developing a diversity advisory council within this higher education institution?

Significance

Inclusive Excellence (IE) is the recognition that a community or institution's success is dependent on how well it values, engages, and includes the rich diversity of students, staff, faculty, administrators, and alumni constituents (http://www.du.edu/). Higher education institutions are multicultural organizations that are composed of "employees, including senior leaders, with the capacity to adapt both behavior and judgment in ways that are appropriate to a variety of interpersonal, intercultural situations" (Maltiba & Power, 2009, p. 69). Employees and students are diverse higher

education stakeholders and are sources of diverse knowledge, talent, and potential. They are vital to developing and maintaining culturally competent organizations. Building IE is a reciprocal process that requires input from its members. Institutions must build capacity to address diversity within the organization. Bastadeo (2012) suggests that the "understanding of how diversity relates to institutional capacity building" (p. 245) might "provide the impetus for new organizational models to help explain or understand the institutional changes and their new dynamics" (Peterson, 2007, p. 180).

These issues SRU faced are not unique. NADOHE is making significant progress in developing a community of diversity officers in higher education to exchange best practices and conduct research related to diversity and IE; however, there is no model or standard process for developing effective diversity councils in higher education that institutions can benchmark or replicate. This study will inform academic leaders, specifically those that are charged with increasing diversity and improving IE, by demonstrating (1) how to use AR to develop effective DACs, (2) how to apply a structured process designed to develop the effectiveness of governance boards to create and develop an effective DAC, and (3) identify challenges and critical elements of developing effective diversity councils in higher education institutions.

By undergoing a rigorous process designed to increase effectiveness in non-profit governance boards (Brown, 2007; Chait, Holland, & Taylor, 1991; Holland & Jackson, 1998), the SRU demonstrated its efforts to foster an effective DAC. The democratic and participative process of action research was used to create a structured procedure/approach/mechanism for developing a diversity advisory council from which other institutions can hopefully learn. This study will further show that the six

dimensions of effective board performance for governance boards identified by Holland and Jackson (1988) offer potential wisdom relevant to establishing and supporting a new DAC. These six dimensions can be clearly tied to the steps that Brown (2007) identified as key to board development, member competency, and performance (Appendix D).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW:

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

The highly acclaimed American poet Robert Frost penned an often-quoted work, "The Road Not Taken," in which the sole character comes to a literal "fork in the road." The character shares his observation of the two paths stretched before him—one that appears to be well-traveled, and the other untried. One onlooker might say that the character is faced with a quandary that offers significant risk of a 50% chance of failure. A more optimistic observer might view his options more favorably as a strong potential for success. After making his assessment of each, the character decides to take the one "less traveled by" and predicts that taking the road that he perceives as less traveled will make a difference. This poem provides the character with two significantly different choices, but what if there were many roads, with each appearing untried. Such is the case for SRU.

An overriding obligation of higher education is to "promote the advancement and dissemination of knowledge" (Bowen, Kurzwell, & Tobin, 2005, p. 56). In this chapter, consistent with the aforementioned obligation, I review relevant literature associated with the effectiveness of advisory councils that serve institutions in higher education on issues related to diversity. My aim is to find potential best practices and models for developing effective diversity advisory councils in higher education that SRU might consider to address its problem. The initial focus is literature that relates to developing effective

diversity advisory councils in higher education. I then extend the review to include literature that distinguishes governance boards from advisory councils. This extension is the result of a number of works found in my initial search and the need to strengthen my understanding of each group as a result of many discussions with others about DACs. These discussions revealed a lack of understanding about the distinct differences between governance boards and advisory councils across a broad and diverse group of individuals that included a university professor, a governance board member, a public sector administrator, and higher education students. My initial concern was that the confusion between the two groups might be a factor in developing an effective council. Lastly, I review relevant literature that provides empirical data on how effectiveness of advisory groups is measured and improved.

My search utilized over 90 GALILEO databases and the GIL@UGA Libraries Catalog to find peer-reviewed full-text articles, books, and other associated literature. In addition, Google Scholar and Internet-based searches were used to locate pertinent peer-reviewed works. The following terms and phrases were used as multi-search and Boolean phrases to search multiple databases to glean related works: “advisory boards,” “advisory board assessment,” “advisory board membership,” “effective advisory boards,” “effective advisory councils,” “advisory councils,” “advisory council membership,” “diversity,” “diversity in higher education,” “board assessment,” “board performance,” “board member performance,” and “effective board members.”

These searches produced very few works related specifically to diversity advisory councils in higher education. Limited literature and empirical studies related to the effectiveness of nonprofit boards of directors or governing boards were discovered. The

absence of literature in this area can be attributed to the lack of widely accepted criteria or tools for measuring board and board member effectiveness (Brown, 2005, 2007; Herman, Renz, & Heimovics, 1997; Thompson, 2011). Specifically, Thompson (2011) states,

> In reviewing the purpose of advisory boards in general, I found a limited number of citations directly referencing the makeup and profiles of advisory boards, board members . . . on college and university campuses, and in communities stressing social justice as their main objective. In addition, the majority of the citations in the overall literature reflect research conducted during '70s, '80s and '90s. These limited sources of current information confirmed my decision to examine advisory boards representing nonprofit organizations, government agencies, community organizations, and advisory committees of academic departments. (p. 2)

Governance Boards Versus Advisory Councils

A preponderance of the literature reviewed relates to governance boards in nonprofit organizations. These bodies were termed as "boards of directors" or "boards" and defined as groups with assigned governing authority and oversight capacity and that are responsible for the affairs and conduct of organizations (Brown, 2007; Herman et al., 1997) and further defined by Herman et al. (1997) as ultimately responsible for the affairs and conduct of the organization as set forth by law in the United States.

Conversely, advisory councils do not wield such power and serve to advise and inform organizations in areas assigned by organization leadership, represent broad ranges of stakeholders, and maintain ties to the community (Carnicom & Mathis, 2009; Richie,

2009; Smith, Snider, & Pickering, 2009). Specific to advisory entities in higher education, Thompson (2011) states that "advisory boards within educational organizations address, assess, educate, and influence the institution by helping sustain the organization's mission and operational purposes" (p. 3). This significant difference in responsibility is referenced throughout the literature and points to the opportunity for further study of advisory boards and their members.

While governance boards and advisory boards differ in responsibility, they do have certain similarities. Both bodies recruit, select, and engage members; address constituency concerns; and exist to meet the charge given by leadership (Brown, 2007; Franklin, 2005; Goldstein, Kriesky, & Pavliakova, 2012; Greenlee, 2010; Holland, 2002; Jackson & Holland, 1998; Smith et al., 2009; Thompson, 2011; Williams, 2013). These similarities served as a basis for this literature review.

Early challenges in navigating the literature were experienced due to shifting terms. Identification and clarification of related terms associated with advisory councils was necessary. The groups previously defined as entities with no assigned power that serve as advisory bodies to organizations were referred to as advisory boards, advisory councils, and advisory committees, but never as the singular term "board(s)." These terms were used interchangeably throughout the literature and are used likewise in this review. Governance boards previously defined as entities with assigned power were consistently defined and referred to as "boards of directors" or "boards" and will be termed likewise in this review.

Henderson (2004) provides a study of 102 surveys of journalism departments conducted to address some of the gaps in the literature. The study gathered information

concerning journalism advisory boards at higher education institutions in the United States. Respondents provided information on board composition and operation; specific board activities; board roles, functions, and areas of responsibility; board roles and secondary functions; input; and self-descriptions of boards. Additional information was gathered on departments without advisory boards. The results of the study indicated that interest in advisory boards in this discipline was strong and that continued research is advocated (Henderson, 2004).

Measuring Effectiveness

Herman and Renz (1999) maintain that "nonprofit organizational effectiveness is multidimensional and will never be reducible to a single measure" (p. 107). However, several writers support the conclusion that board members who effectively meet their legal and moral duties contribute to increased organizational effectiveness (Carver, 1990; Chait, Holland, & Taylor, 1991). Herman et al. (1997) conducted a study of 64 locally governed nonprofit charitable organizations to investigate the relationship between the extent to which nonprofit boards use prescribed board practices and stakeholder judgments of the effectiveness of those boards.

The major challenge of the study noted by Herman and Renz (1997) was the lack of criteria for defining and measuring board effectiveness; the study was further challenged by the elusiveness of a method of assessing organizational effectiveness for nonprofit organizations. While many best practices were touted as effective, few empirical studies existed at that time to support the assertion that adherence to these practices resulted in organizational effectiveness in nonprofit organizations, and very little has changed since that time, as will be noted later in this review. I purport that

defining criteria is necessary to determine effective board practices on organizational effectiveness.

Since no instrument had been previously developed for measuring the extent to which stakeholders judge a nonprofit board to be effective, an adapted version of the eleven items in *Self-Assessment for Nonprofit Governing Boards* (Herman et al., 1997) was used. Further validation of the instrument was warranted, as the instrument had not been used previously for this kind of research. Factor analysis was conducted, and the instrument's Cronbach's alpha value of 0.89 indicates that the instrument has high reliability (Herman et al., 1997).

The results of this study were inconclusive in determining if prescribed board practices resulted in effective organizations because of the limitations of the instrument and because results were based on one segment of nonprofits and on judgment of stakeholders. However, the results do suggest that there is potential value in advocating for the dissemination of these board practices and that using more of these practices may result in improved board effectiveness (Herman et al., 1997).

A review of the practices respondents were questioned about reveals that many, but not all, of the prescribed practices could be applied to advisory councils. Of the 25 practices, only six are applicable practices for advisory councils; those include use of a nominating or board development committee, board manual, consensus decision-making, board profile, interview of nominees for the board, and term limits on board service. This indicates a gap in the literature as it relates to identifying prescribed practices for advisory councils and criteria for measuring effective advisory councils. Once these gaps

are addressed, the ability to conduct an empirical study of the effectiveness of an advisory council on organizational effectiveness can be conducted.

As noted by Herman et a1. (1997), the lack of widely accepted criteria for effective boards presents a challenge for measuring board effectiveness, and the absence of literature on criteria to evaluate effective advisory councils makes that effort even more challenging. Therefore, few empirical studies focus on how nonprofit boards actually deal with accountability and identify abilities to add or develop in a board or its members (Herman et al., 1997).

Even with no widely accepted criteria for effective boards, efforts have been made to identify governing board best practices that seem to have a positive effect on commissioning organizations. Herman et al. (1997) found that boards that adopted larger numbers of recommended best practices were considered more effective (Gill, Flynn, & Elke, 2005). A review of the literature (Chait et al., 1991; Herman et al., 1997; Holland, 2002; Holland & Jackson, 1998; Jackson & Holland, 1998) resulted in the following clearly and consistently identified best practices:

- targeted board member recruitment to acquire the skills and talents needed to meet the strategic goals of the organization,
- structured and informative member orientation,
- leadership development,
- clear and consistent communication,
- member development,
- strategic planning,
- active member involvement,

- clearly defined fiduciary and leadership responsibility,
- board activity assessment, and
- feedback.

Even though these areas are consistently identified, each board has its own definition of how to adopt best practices. For example, the literature reveals boards of various sizes, some with members appointed and others with potential members presented by nominating committees.

Additionally, there is no one source for "best practices," and each board operates under various conditions, which supports the assertion that measuring board effectiveness is a challenge. One can find many claims of such practices in contemporary literature, various books, and Internet sites, but few have actually devoted research to these practices.

Brown (2005) developed a model to determine if recommended practices led to more competent board members and if those board members led to better board performance. He developed the *Model of Board Development, Board Member Competency, and Performance* and then surveyed 713 credit unions to determine if recommended board development and board member competencies affected board performance. Results of the study support the contention that efforts spent on board development increase board competency and result in increased board performance.

Literature related to advisory board effectiveness is limited. Henderson (2004) observes, "The majority of literature regarding advisory boards offered either descriptions of existing board operations or guidelines to establishing an advisory board, all based on first-person accounts" (p. 60). Consistent with that observation, Genheimer

and Shehab (2009) state, "There is relatively little written and no known comprehensive research on what it takes to establish and operate an effective advisory program" (p. 169). Rooney and Puerzer (2002) had the same finding. This further identifies the gap in literature related to groups operating in an advisory capacity to organizations.

While best practices help to identify criteria and ways to enhance governing board effectiveness, the ability to appropriately measure board effectiveness is limited. The literature presents no instruments to measure advisory council effectiveness and only two board effectiveness measurement tools for nonprofit organizations, the *Governance Self-Assessment Checklist* (GSAC) (Gill et al., 2005) and the *Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire* (BSAQ) (Holland & Jackson, 1998). Both tools were designed to provide nonprofit boards of directors the ability to measure their effectiveness.

The GSAC was developed by Gill and validated in 2005. The instrument was designed to assist boards in assessing their own performance (Gill et al., 2005). It consists of 144 items, organized into 12 subscales, that assess the main factors in the performance of nonprofit boards of directors that are thought to influence the effectiveness of the organization (Gill et al., 2005).

The 12 subscales are listed below:

- Board Effectiveness Quick Check;
- Board Structure;
- Board Culture;
- Mission and Planning;
- Financial Stewardship;
- Human Resources Stewardship;

- Performance Monitoring and Accountability;
- Community Representation and Advocacy;
- Risk Management;
- Board Development;
- Board Management; and
- Decision-making.

Gill et al. conducted a study of the GSAC by having the tool completed by 32 nonprofit organizations. The results of the study indicated, with some limitations, that the tool was reliable and valid in measuring the 12 subscales and considered to have promising psychometric and practical features.

The BSAQ was developed by Jackson and Holland (1998) and consists of 65 questions developed to assess board performance in six competency areas:

- Contextual;
- Educational;
- Interpersonal;
- Analytical;
- Political; and
- Strategic (Brown, 2005; Holland & Jackson, 1998; Jackson & Holland, 1998).

Several BSAQ studies have been conducted, and the results have consistently found the tool to be reliable and valid (Herman et al., 1997; Holland, 2002; Holland & Jackson, 1998; Jackson & Holland, 1998).

Both tools provide reliable and valid ways to measure the effectiveness of nonprofit boards of directors; however, the literature provides no evidence that either

instrument has been used to assess nonprofit advisory councils. I contacted Holland and he confirmed that the BSAQ had not previously been used with advisory councils. I find that no efforts have been put forth with these or any other instruments to measure effectiveness of non-governing bodies. This provides the opportunity for additional study and perhaps the adaptation of the instruments to fit the needs of advisory councils.

Advisory councils connect organizations to their environments. These boards engage people who have similar interests and unique resources to offer to the organization, which is one way to attract new ideas and provide "fresh insights, powerful connections, access to valuable resources, and excellent public relations" (Teitel, 1995, p. 59).

Advisory councils are only as effective as their membership. Advisory council members should be diverse and representative of their stakeholders; have a strong interest in the work of the council; and bring needed skills, talents, networks, and resources to the council (Carnicom & Mathis, 2009; Davis & Davis, 2009; Greenlee, 2010; Thompson, 2011). Members have the unique ability to "assist the organization through their knowledge, inspiration, imagination, and talent" (Thompson, 2011). Advisory council members, much like governance board members, should bring assets to the council that will enhance the council's ability to strategically align the goals of the council with those of the larger organization (Thompson, 2005; Thompson, 2011). Once board members are selected, they must be properly oriented to the work ahead (Genheimer & Shehab, 2009; Thompson, 2011). Clear expectations must be communicated early and throughout the orientation phase. The goals and mission of the advisory council and the organization must be presented to new members.

Advisory board member development efforts are essential to maximizing the effectiveness of advisory councils. Organizations should create environments that encourage member development. Specifically, Davis and Davis (2009) point to the work of Senge (1990) to identify the importance of team learning, which is the core of learning organizations. Board development can take place during regularly scheduled meetings, retreats, and summits, and board development may be delivered in person or via printed materials, online modules, or electronic newsletters. Every advisory council must make member development a priority in order to maximize the effectiveness of the board.

As stated earlier, no research has been conducted to determine specific processes or best practices that generate effective non-governing boards; however, the following list represents some of the most recommended best practices for both governing nonprofit advisory board and governance board members:

- attend meetings regularly;
- establish and understanding of the purpose of the board;
- dedicate to serving the goals of the board;
- assist in policy-making;
- be willing to volunteer for additional assignments;
- share the positive work of the board with other colleagues (invite colleagues to participate in events and sponsored programs);
- learn about the organization, its mission, goals, and anticipated outcomes;
- participate on committees;
- assist in developing community surveys related to the organization's programs;

- help to promote programs;
- be a motivator (use your talents and energies to urge excellence);
- examine activities and policies of the College;
- be an advocate; and
- communicate the positive news and successes of the board (Andringa, 2002; Dyer & Williams, 1991; McLeand, 1991; Thompson, 2011).

Diversity Advisory Groups

Williams (2013) characterizes a diversity advisory entity as "a group of diversity stakeholders who have formally joined forces to shape and in some instances implement a shared plan for the future relative to diversity in a particular organizational context" (p. 409). These diversity advisory groups are key components of an institution's formal diversity infrastructure and serve as a potentially powerful platform for thinking strategically and raising questions (Cox, 2001; Freudenberger et al. (2009); Maltbia & Power, 2009; Williams, 2013).

There is scant literature on diversity advisory committees, which is surprising considering the resurgence of interest in academic advisory boards (Henderson, 2004) and the fact that most higher education institutions in the United States have dedicated resources to address diversity and inclusion issues. These resources have been used to establish the position of chief diversity officer, which in most institutions is at the associate provost level, and to create diversity advisory committees, commissions, task forces, and councils, as evidenced by these stakeholders creating their own national associations and conferences (e.g., National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher

Educations, Annual National Conference for Race & Ethnicity in American Higher Education).

Morrill (2006) attributes the limited literature dedicated to diversity advisory committees to two causes: (1) desegregation in higher education took place just over 50 years ago and has been slowly embraced, and (2) strategic planning in higher education leadership is a relatively recent phenomenon, although it was common in the private sector through the 1960s. It was not until the 1980s that higher education and the public sector began to use the mechanism of strategic planning.

The most concentrated literature addressing the effectiveness of diversity councils in higher education is found in the final chapter of the recently published *Strategic Diversity Leadership: Activating Change and Transformation in Higher Education* (Williams, 2013). Williams dedicates 28 pages to defining diversity, describing the types and roles of diversity advisory groups, and providing examples of how these groups have been activated in higher education institutions across the United States.

In his work, Williams (2013) notes that "typically, diversity committees struggle with the same issues that challenge the effectiveness of other types of committees" (p. 411), such as lack of clear directives and long-term agendas, reliance on incomplete information, poorly constructed rosters, and final decision making authority (Cox, 2001; Maltbia & Power, 2009; Williams, 2013). He outlines many of the same practices noted earlier for empowered governing boards, such as membership selection and diversity, targeting the group's work, and knowing when to decommission a diversity advisory group. Williams dedicates a page to describing diversity advisory groups as a hub for strategic thinking.

While Williams (2013) clearly identifies the value of effective diversity advisory committees, he does not identify criteria or tools for measuring advisory council effectiveness. This further indicates the need for additional research in these areas, because higher education institutions must develop and promote responses to diversity that communicate to society their recognition of changes taking place in society (Aguirre & Martinez, 2006).

The literature supports my stance that effective advisory councils play an important role in organizations and have anecdotally been credited with improving the effectiveness of the commissioning organization. Yet empirical data do not exist to support this assertion, as criteria of advisory council effectiveness have not been developed, and therefore an instrument to measure effectiveness has not been created. While some work has been done to measure governing board effectiveness, the literature is void of efforts with organizational advisory groups (Brown, 2005, 2007; Herman et al., 1997; Holland, 2002; Holland & Jackson, 1998; Jackson & Holland, 1998). Thus, the ability to rigorously measure and enhance the effectiveness of diversity advisory councils in higher education does not currently exist.

The most promising effort addressing these dilemmas rests with Jackson and Holland's (1998) work with governing boards of directors. Their work has produced a set of six practices that foster board accountability and the *Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire*, both of which have been deemed valid and are widely used (Brown, 2005; Chait et al., 1991; Holland, 2002; Jackson & Holland, 1998). Adapting these resources to identify criteria and measure effectiveness of advisory councils will create a basis for continued research in these areas.

Bastadeo (2012) suggests that discerning the relationship between diversity and institutional capacity building might "provide the impetus for new organizational models to help explain or understand the institutional changes and their new dynamics" (Peterson, 2007, p. 180). The lack of identified methods to select, develop, and maintain effective diversity advisory councils identifies a gap in literature and supports.

The purpose of this AR study is to understand how a higher education institution redesigns an effective diversity advisory council and to identify factors and conditions that affect this process. SRU's goal was to improve the effectiveness of its diversity advisory council (DAC) by retiring a non-functioning DAC and developing a new DAC based upon six dimensions of effective board performance identified by Holland & Jackson (1998) (Figure 2).

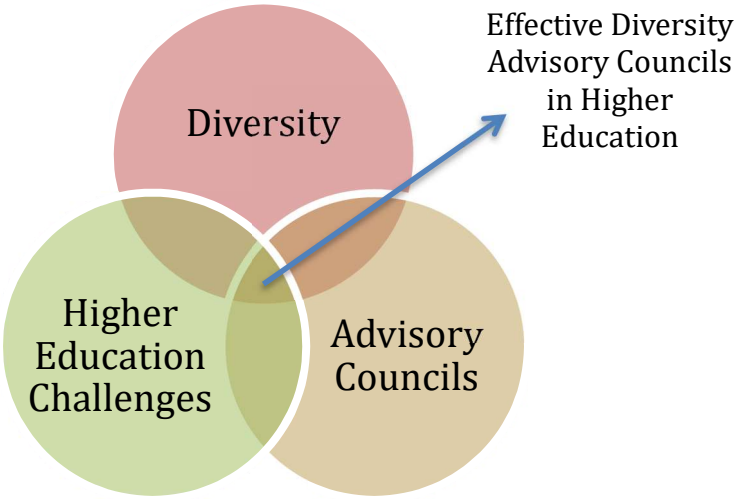


Figure 2. Concentric circles depicting the AR study focus.

This study also sought to understand the factors and conditions that affect this process by answering two research questions:

Research Question 1: What elements are critical in developing an effective diversity advisory council within a higher education institution?

Research Question 2: What challenges impeded the process of developing a diversity advisory council within this higher education institution?

Once the process of creating an effective advisory board is developed, characteristics of effectiveness are identified, and conditions that impact the process are determined, a model can be developed and replicated in other higher education institutions. The outcomes of this AR study will add to the development of this process.

As evidenced by this literature review, SRU encountered a "fork in the road" that did not provide a well-traveled road to consider; instead, as First Lady Michelle Obama suggested in her May 2012 commencement speech at Virginia Tech, it presented an opportunity to "invent the future" and a call to students to chart their own course (https://www.whitehouse.gov). This study provided the opportunity to merge Brown's (2005) Model of Board Development, Board Member Competency, and Performance with Jackson and Holland's (2007) six dimensions of board development by applying theories to advisory councils (Figure 3). The AR team recognized that higher education institutions exist within and experience the same dimensions identified by Jackson and Holland (2007) and based on study data indicated that the new DAC could benefit from evolutionary work of Jackson and Holland's (2007) six dimensions of board development research. The merging of these theories designed for governance boards and applying them to an advisory board provides the opportunity to contribute to the existing board development theories and make a contribution to the limited research on advisory councils.

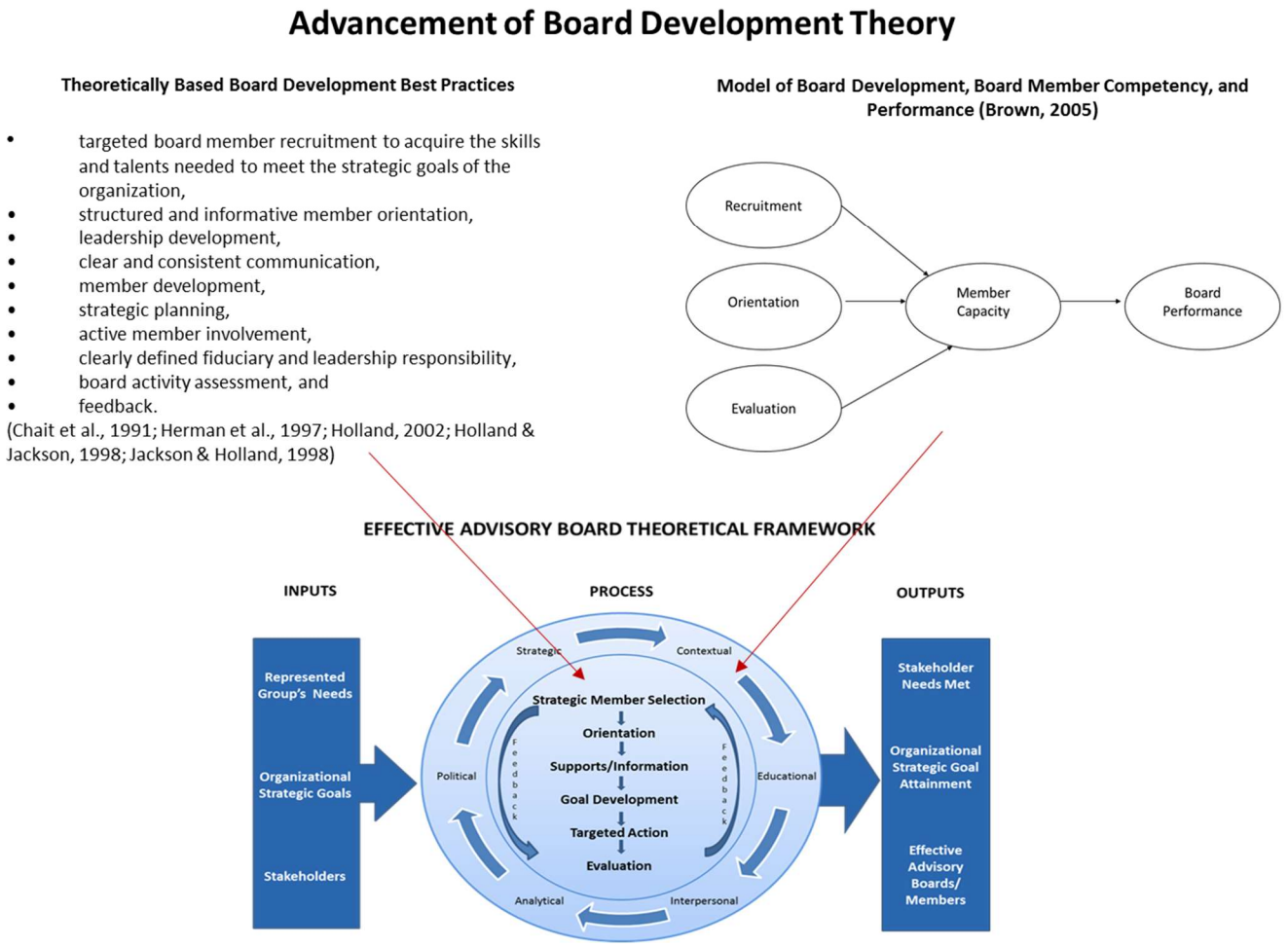


Figure 3. Advancement of Board Development Theory.

.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY:

MAPPING THE COURSE

The purpose of this AR study is to understand how a higher education institution redesigns an effective diversity advisory council and to identify factors and conditions that affect this process. The following research questions guided this study:

1) What elements are critical in developing an effective diversity advisory council within a higher education institution?
2) What challenges impeded the process of developing a diversity advisory council within this higher education institution?

This chapter describes the design and methodology of this study, including details of data collection and analysis, validity, limitations, and researcher subjectivity.

Epistemological Framework and Research Approach

This qualitative study was undertaken to discover "(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). This includes my interpretations and meaning making, which are dependent on my previous and current knowledge structure (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007), as well as the interpretations and meaning makings of other members of the research team" as well as other members of the research team. An interpretive/ constructivist approach was used in this study. Merriam (2009) defines interpretive research as research that "assumes that reality is socially constructed, that is,

there is no single, observable reality. Rather, there are multiple realities, or interpretations, of a single event. Researchers do not 'find' knowledge, they construct it" (pp. 8-9). Creswell (2007) explains further:

> In this worldview, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences . . . . These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrow the meanings . . . . The goal of research, then is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views . . . Often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially . . . formed through interaction with others (hence social constructivism) and through historical cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives. (pp. 20-21)

The purpose of interpretive/constructivist research is to describe, understand, and interpret multiple realities (Merriam, 2009).

Acknowledgement of multiple realities and the reflexivity required in quality AR makes way for the researchers to investigate their own subjectivity. Coghlan and Brannick (2010) state that reflexivity is a concept used in qualitative research to explore the relationship between the researcher and the object of the research. According to Dupuis (2000), "Symbolic interactionists…place great emphasis on the role that self plays in defining situations and the meanings that things have for us (p. 47). Investigating my epistemological stance and subjectivity required me to delve deeply into how I make meaning of experiences and data. Throughout this study, I used various methods to reveal and gain understanding of how I interpreted various aspects of the study. I was mindful of my subjectivity and found it to be a tool and a blind spot, both of

which I managed through investigation of and reflection on my own thoughts, as well as exploration with others.

I am aware that my life has been shaped largely by the color of my skin and my gender. While I generally see and describe my life as full, I am aware that it has been void of privileges that are exercised regularly by others. My foundational subjectivity is rooted in my experience as a Black female reared in a Christian household in the Southern United States, along with my younger brother, by my parents, who—like the majority of people in my predominantly Black neighborhood—were married and gainfully employed. My father was the second child and oldest son in a family of sharecroppers who planted and harvested cotton for a number of White farmers in the segregated South. Raised by married cohabitating parents who pledged to send all four of their children to college, my father attended a historically Black college/university (HBCU) but returned home after his first semester to help my grandmother support and attend to my ailing grandfather and younger sibling. The United States Army drafted him, and after serving his three-year obligation, he returned home to complete his studies at the local technical college, where he earned excellent grades and won awards for leadership and academics. My father later joined the United States Postal Service as a clerk and, after winning a racial discrimination complaint against his employer, he became the first Black manager in his region. He eventually worked his way up to postmaster, breaking the color barrier along the way. Because of his education, ability to conduct research, and willingness to challenge people and processes, others sought his counsel and recognized him as a leader in our community.

My mother grew up with her siblings and married parents. She was the youngest of six children, and like my father, reared in a family of sharecroppers who raised crops for White farmers in the segregated South. However, neither of my maternal grandparents received much formal education—my grandfather could neither read nor write, but he could count money and developed his own system of calculating measurements. After sharecropping ended in her community, my mother moved "to town" to complete high school and to help her eldest sister and her husband raise their five children. Her determination to have a better way of life served as her "North Star" as she navigated her way through the world, and especially as she set an example for and raised my brother and me. My mother spent the majority of her working years in factories, until she became a paraprofessional at a local elementary school after the factory she worked in for 30 years closed during the Great Recession.

My parents had high expectations for their children, as did the large community, who supported and enforced their standards and expectations. They maintained a morally strict, but loving, middle-class household. My parents had high levels of self-esteem and fostered the same in my brother and me. By exercising reflexivity during this study, I became aware of how my parents walked an obstacle course through moments of discrimination while balancing protection and self-direction through significant events as they raised us and how their actions shaped how I view and present myself in the world.

One example of how my parents shaped my world-view occurred when I was in elementary school and came home crying after a White male classmate, who rode the bus with me and whom I considered my friend, kicked in the stomach and called a derogatory name. Instead of going to the boy's home or sharing the event with my father, my

mother and I left for school ten minutes earlier than usual the next day. (My mother drove me to school every day.) Upon arriving at school, my mother did not slow down to let me out of the car so that I could walk down the sidewalk with the students who walked to school. Instead, she pulled the car into a parking space, took me by the hand, and walked into the sanctum of the school office with her head held high and asked to speak with the principal. My mother very calmly but with a tone of authority told the principal what happened and her expectation that the matter be handled immediately. The principal, who was an older White woman, apologized to my mother; then, following my mother's eyes as they transitioned to me, she apologized to me. My mother hugged me goodbye and walked back to her car to get to the factory where she would spend the next eight hours on her feet working on an assembly line. The boy apologized to me that afternoon after spending part of his day in the principal's office. Hearing the authority in my mother's voice as she kept a calm demeanor while speaking to someone who in my eyes was the ultimate authority and witnessing the impact of her words were drops into the ocean of my self-esteem.

Experiences such as this and other inputs—such as media, music, books, and observations—have created and shaped my epistemology that equality is a right and diversity is necessary. In instances when that right is not given, we must pursue it in a manner that is persistent and dignified. This stance often makes me unaware of the plight of others and micro-aggressions that can slowly erode diversity and equality. It can also result in acute sensitivity to matters related to diversity and inclusion, which sometimes lead to assumptions about the motives of others.

I exercised reflexivity during this study by reviewing my verbal and written thoughts and discussing my interpretations with colleagues, AR team members, and my major professor. By sharing my reflections and recording feedback from others, I was able to recognize my subjectivity, address blind spots, and change the lens through which I view certain things. An example of this occurred while I was reviewing findings with my major professor. She pointed out how I was "reaching" and did not have the evidence to make the statement I had just made. After investigating my thinking, I was able to acknowledge that I had made an inference based on my personal experience and not on the data.

Stake (1995) posits that "good case study is patient, reflective, and willing to see another view of the case" (p. 12). This AR study produced a single particularistic qualitative case study involving the investigation of a current phenomenon within a real-world context that relied on multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2014). Pluralistic case study is an especially good design for practical problems, as it focuses on a specific situation, event, program, or phenomenon arising from everyday practice (Merriam, 2009).

Diversity is an organizational concept that requires organizations to conduct analysis and develop solutions that lead to increased inclusion of all stakeholders (Bastedo, 2012). This bounded qualitative study, which was undertaken to develop a DAC at a higher education institution, also provides insight on "(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). The interpretive/constructivist approach was used in this qualitative study.

Case study was chosen as an overarching methodological strategy because it supports the research questions of this study and it emphasizes "the study of a phenomenon within its real-world context and favors the collection of data in natural settings" (Yin, 2012, p. 8).

Action Research Methodology

Action research (AR) was the methodology used in this study. Action research is a systematic approach to investigation concerned with addressing an issue and the development of practical knowing through a participatory process (Stringer, 2007, Reason & Bradbury, 2008). It is a "set of self-consciously collaborative and democratic strategies for generating knowledge and designing action" (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 1) in the search for pragmatic solutions to organizational issues.

Action research is a four-phase cyclical process engaged in by a team of action researchers; it is participatory, democratic, and concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). The process is an orientation to inquiry with the following characteristics:

- Equitable – acknowledges equality of stakeholders
- Democratic – enables participation from research team members
- Participatory – every research team member is involved in the process
- Collaborative – participants work jointly throughout the process
- Iterative – progressively repetitive
- Reflective – requires consideration and evaluation of all phases of the project
- Scientific – produces findings that can be measured and replicated in other organizations

The aim of AR is to maximize the potential of all members of an organization, solve current organizational problems, and create change within an organization while adding scientific knowledge through a series of iterative cycles. The four phases of AR are (1) constructing, (2) planning action, (3) taking action, and (4) evaluating action. A pre-step phase of context and purpose identification precedes the initial AR cycle (Figure 4). Action research provides inter-level dynamics analysis of first, second, and third person practice to examine the impact of interventions on the four levels of complexity described by Coghlan & Brannick (2010) as individual, group, intergroup, and organizational.

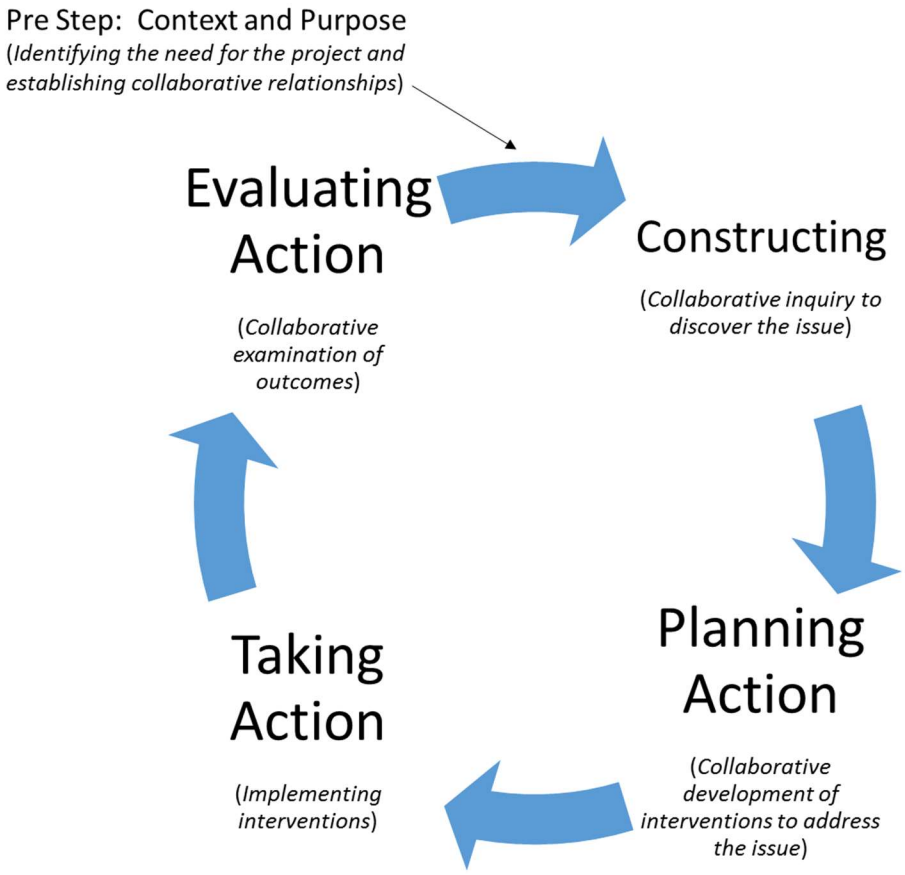


Figure 4. Four phases of an action research cycle. Adapted from "Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization" by D. Coghlan and T. Brannick, 2010, p. 8.

Organizational Context

The bounded system in this study is a large four-year land grant university located in the Southern region of the United States with over 34,000 students, 9,800 employees, and many faculty members with international reputations for outstanding research in their fields. For the purposes of this study, the pseudonym Southern Regional University (SRU) will be used to identify this university. Southern Region University, like many other higher education institutions, is becoming increasingly diverse. The university wanted to have a functioning DAC to help the institution meet its strategic diversity goals and enhance inclusion across multiple campuses. However, SRU's DAC became defunct after the institution adopted its five-year diversity plan four years earlier. SRU's CDO identified the need to establish a functioning DAC to advise institutional leaders on and enhance efforts related to diversity and inclusion on campus. Disbanding the existing DAC and redesigning a new council was the issue that the CDO wanted to address.

Study Participants

Five participant groups participated in this study: the (1) AR project sponsor, (2) AR team, (3) Original DAC, (4) New DAC, and (5) CDOs. Research participants signed consent forms to participate in the study and did not receive compensation for participating. Members in each of the participant groups generated data related to the research questions associated with this study. Pseudonyms identified members of each participant group, with one exception. I identify myself by given name. Table 1 presents a description of the participant groups and the number of members in each.

Table 1
Participant Group Data

Group	Description	Number of Participants
AR Sponsor	SRU CDO who engaged and contracted with the AR facilitator to conduct the AR project/study	1
AR Team	Stakeholders selected to co-construct interventions, inclusive of AR facilitator	6
Original DAC	Original SRU Diversity Advisory Council Members	36
New DAC	New SRU Diversity Advisory Council Members	13
CDOs	CDOs of institutions within SRU's governing system	6

AR Sponsor

Consultants and AR facilitators should identify the project sponsor in the first stage of engagement. The larger organization system is considered the client, and the consultant or AR facilitator should focus on improving the relationship with the larger system rather than one individual representing the system (Anderson, 2012). However, a client representative will serve as sponsor for the project. Southern Region University's project sponsor for this study was Dr. Lawrence. At the beginning of this study, Dr. Lawrence, a mid-career African-American female, had recently been named SRU's CDO and associate provost. Her responsibilities included directing SRU's Institutional Office of Diversity and serving as DAC liaison.

Dr. Lawrence's participation in the study included engaging and contracting with me to serve as AR facilitator to address SRU's issues related to the inactive DAC. She

also participated by assisting in the AR team member selection process; providing guidance, data, and clarity to the AR team; and engaging members of the new SRU DAC.

AR Team

Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to identify six AR team members. This sampling strategy is "based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2009). Dr. Lawrence, Jean-Pierre, and I used a decision tree (Appendix B) to assess and rank SRU stakeholders as potential AR team members according to criteria that were informed by Chait, Holland, and Taylor (1996), Thompson (2011), and Williams (2013). Seven criteria were used to select potential AR team members:

- Have an interest in and commitment to the goals and mission of OID
- Possess and be willing to use organizational influence for the benefit of the AR team
- Possess skills, talents, and resources that can benefit the AR project
- Be willing and able to work with and participate in a group
- Be tolerant of others that have differing experiences, backgrounds, beliefs, etc.
- Be willing to commit time to the AR project through its duration
- Be willing to participate and give consent to participate in action research

AR team members were recruited by invitation of Dr. Lawrence.

The AR team included six diverse members with the following attributes:

- Three female and three male members
- Multiple sexual preferences/identities

- Multiple races and ethnicities
- Three continents and four regions of the United States identified as places of origin
- Ages ranged from mid-thirties to early sixties
- Two administrators, two faculty, and two staff members, all with varying years of higher education experience

AR team members worked collaboratively as co-inquirers through the iterative AR process to examine and reflect on the successes and challenges of the former DAC and the needs of SRU and its stakeholders, plan and implement interventions, and collect and analyze data on the outcomes of these interventions.

Original DAC

All members of the original SRU DAC participated in the study. I recruited the total population of 31 remaining original SRU DAC members via verbal request and in writing. There was no sampling strategy used for this group of participants because the total population was recruited for the study.

New DAC

The new SRU DAC comprised 14 members. The total population of the new DAC signed consent forms to participate in the study. As with the original SRU DAC, there was no sampling strategy used.

CDOs

Southern Region University is one of seven institutions within the university system of the region that have a named CDO. The total population of the other six CDOs participated in the study. Similarly, to the original SRU DAC and new SRU DAC

groups, the total population of the CDO group participated in the study, precluding the need for sampling.

Data Generation, Collection, and Analysis Methods

Qualitative data is conveyed through words and collected through interviews, observations, and documents in the participant's setting (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Data generation began after the University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted approval for the study. Five distinct sources provided data, as presented in Table 2 and described below.

Table 2
Data Generation and Analysis Methods

Collection Source and Method	Study Participants	Analysis Method	Trustworthiness	Research Question
Meetings **Recordings, transcripts, notes, e-mails, journal entries**	AR sponsor AR team	• Transcribe recorded meetings • First Cycle: descriptive coding • Second Cycle: pattern coding	• Member checks • Audit trail • Reflexivity • Peer review • Thick description	1, 2
Interviews **Recordings, transcripts, notes**	CDOs AR sponsor AR team	• Transcribe recorded interview • First Cycle: descriptive coding • Second Cycle: pattern coding	• Audit trail • Reflexivity • Peer review	1, 2
Researcher notes	AR facilitator/ researcher	• Consolidate typed and transcribed recorded data • First Cycle: descriptive coding • Second Cycle: pattern coding	• Audit trail • Reflexivity • Peer review • Thick description	1, 2
Surveys **Electronic surveys**	Original DAC New DAC	• Consolidated data • First Cycle: descriptive coding • Second Cycle pattern coding	• Audit trail • Peer review	1, 2
Documents **Internet, original documents**	AR team	• Authenticated documents • Reviews	• Audit trail • Reflexivity • Peer review	1

Meetings

Two types of meetings were held during this study: AR sponsor and AR team meetings. Dr. Lawrence and I participated in regular sponsor meetings. These meeting provided opportunities to provide feedback to the sponsor, gain clarity as needed, gather pertinent data related to the organization and the issue, and maintain momentum with the project. There were seven AR sponsor meetings held during the course of this study.

AR team meetings provided team members with opportunities to work collaboratively to attend to the four phases of AR, identify issues, conduct research, and generate data. The AR team participated in 11 meetings during the AR study. I recorded each meeting on my iPad and mobile phone, and I served as scribe for each meeting to maintain consistency in recording and formatting. Initially, serving as recorder, scribe, facilitator, and team member was challenging. At one meeting, we were 15 minutes into the discussion before I realized that I had forgotten to start the recording at the beginning of the meeting. However, I soon became comfortable serving in these roles simultaneously.

Interviews

Interviews are a widely used method of collecting qualitative data (Merriam, 2009). As defined by deMarrais (2004), interviewing is "a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to the study" (p. 55). During this AR study, three groups participated in one-hour semi-structured interviews: (1) CDOs of institutions within the same university system as SRU; (2) the project sponsor, Dr. Lawrence; and (3) members of the AR team.

CDO interviews. The university system that governs the region that SRU is part of has six other institutions that have CDOs. During the initial constructing phase of the AR study, the AR team wanted to collect data on the practices of peer institutions as related to diversity advisory councils. The AR team decided that one way to collect this data was to conduct one-hour semi-structured interviews with each of the six CDOs in the region. Due to the timeframe set by the AR team for completing these interviews, the most efficient approach was for me to conduct all of the interviews.

I informed Dr. Lawrence of the AR team's intent to interview each of the CDOs. To support the AR team's work, she recruited the other CDOs at their next meeting by informing them of the study and making them aware that I would be contacting them for consent to participate in the study. I then developed an interview guide based on input from the AR team and reviewed it with my major professor to ensure that the outline was well structured. Each CDO received an introductory e-mail, which contained providing an overview of the study, information about participating in the study, a consent form, and options for participating in the study. Each of the CDOs consented and participated in the interviews (Appendix C).

Recordings were made of each interview and later transcribed so that the interviewee's comments and tones were captured accurately. I took notes throughout the discussion to track my thinking and key points that emerged from the discussion. Probes and follow-up questions helped gain additional information or clarity (Merriam, 2009). I paraphrased what I heard the interviewees say during the interviews to gain verbal verification of my understanding of their responses. I compared notes with the transcripts of the recordings to ensure that the conversations were captured accurately.

Interview data were compiled into a spreadsheet and shared with members of the AR team. The AR team members reviewed and analyzed the data independently and then collectively during the next AR team meeting. Members discussed their analysis of the data and reached consensus on codes and emerging themes.

AR sponsor and AR team interviews. I conducted final interviews with Dr. Lawrence and each of the AR team members at the end of the study to gather data on their individual experiences. One-hour semi-structured interviews provided data for both of these participant groups. The interviews were conducted in-person, with the exception of the interview conducted with James. By the end of the study, James was working at another higher education institution. He chose to have his interview conducted by telephone. Interviewees were eager to participate in the interviews and share their AR experiences with me related to the research foci.

A paid transcriptionist transcribed recordings of the interviews to ensure accuracy. I employed the same strategies that I had used with the CDO interviews. Notetaking, use of probes, and follow-up questions helped me gain clarity and verbal verification of my understanding of responses. I compared notes with and transcripts of the recordings to ensure accuracy.

Researcher Notes

Qualitative research is emergent and multifaceted. I took notes on what was taking place with the various components of the study and with my own thinking and subjectivity to maintain a record of the study and my reactions to what was or was not occurring. I refer to these notes as researcher notes.

I recorded my observations and interpretation of what was occurring during AR team meetings, including dynamics between AR team members, interactions between me and the project sponsor, and other study participants. Two modes of documenting were used to capture my researcher notes. Some of the notes were typed and stored on a USB drive or handwritten in a notebook, and others were recorded using my cellphone and iPad. The handwritten notes were typed and the recorded notes transcribed; both were then merged, by date order, with the notes that were originally typed.

The practice of keeping researcher notes provided an audit trail of my study, a way for me to record my reflections, and thick description of what was occurring in the study. By engaging a colleague to review these data, I was able to add peer review to my researcher notes. All of these strategies were used to enhance the trustworthiness of the data.

Surveys

The original SRU DAC and the new SRU DAC consented to completing surveys. The responses provided by these two groups produced data related to their experiences as DAC members. We used Qualtrics, a widely used qualitative research software, to develop and distribute all study surveys. This data collection method ensured participant confidentiality.

Original DAC survey. The draft survey design for the original DAC was shared with the AR project sponsor and my qualitative research professor, and I used their feedback to modify and add clarity to the questions to improve the quality of the responses. The final survey comprised 10 questions that provided open-ended, Likert scale, multiple choice, and dichotomous response options (Appendix A). The survey was

distributed after Phase 1 of the study to 31 original DAC members. Of the 31 surveys distributed, 24 members began the survey, and 20 members completed the survey, resulting in a 64% response rate.

New DAC surveys. Gathering data related to the experiences of the new DAC members was important to gain knowledge about how the new DAC members experienced the interventions introduced to the system and to identify issues that may need to be addressed in the next AR cycle. Data collection occurred twice during Phase 3 of the study—once after completion of Interventions 3 through 5, and once after the introduction of Intervention 6.

Each survey originated with a draft that was refined using input from the AR sponsor, AR team, and my major professor. These surveys were also developed and distributed using Qualtrics software. Each survey included questions that provided open-ended, Likert scale, multiple choice, and dichotomous response options.

The first survey included 5 questions and was distributed to each of the 14 new DAC members (Appendix E). We received 12 responses, resulting in an 86% response rate. The second survey contained 13 questions and was distributed to each of the 13 new DAC members (one member resigned from SRU and was not able to continue in the study), resulting in a 92% response rate (Appendix F).

Documents

The AR team reviewed original DAC documents and documents from other higher education institutions and non-profit organizations in an effort to identify best practices. These data were gathered through Internet searches and direct requests from

SRU and non-profit organizations. The AR team members authenticated all documents used in the study.

Reviews of the documents occurred throughout the study at various AR team meetings during which we discussed the documents. Action research team members would read documents and take notes to identify best practices, processes, historical data, terms, and definitions. Team members compared their individual notes. Recordings of these discussions were then transcribed with the AR team meeting data described in the AR team meeting section of this chapter.

Data Analysis

Ruona (2005) states that "the purpose of data analysis is to search for important meanings, patterns, and themes in what the researcher has heard or seen" (p. 236). My search for important meanings, patterns, and themes began with the conversion of study data into written electronic format and printing of the documents. Then I began the process of cleaning the data. I read transcripts of audio data while listening to the recordings, carefully taking notes and correcting typing errors. I reviewed other written data and corrected typing errors, completing the cleaning process. This important measure facilitated an efficient and thorough analysis process. I entered the clean data into HyperResearch, a data management software, and prepared for initial analysis using First Cycle descriptive coding and Second Cycle pattern coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) to identify key codes and emerging themes.

First Cycle coding began as I read the data related to both research questions and assigned descriptive codes to data "chunks," (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana). After completing the initial First Cycle descriptive coding, I stepped away from the data for

several days and returned to do a second First Cycle descriptive coding to eliminate and add codes as I refined my analysis.

Second Cycle pattern coding began when the preliminary data codes were condensed and recoded to produce a second codebook. I reviewed the Second Cycle data with my major professor. After receiving her feedback, I conducted an additional Second Cycle pattern coding process to reduce the number of themes that I had originally identified. My major professor and I reviewed the data again and agreed that the additional Second Cycle pattern coding was necessary, as it produced fewer, but stronger, themes related to the research questions. The condensed codes were linked to the correlated research question, which led to the findings presented in Chapter 5.

Trustworthiness

Stringer (2007) identifies trustworthiness as a measure for rigor in AR accomplished by various checks to ensure that the research outcomes are not solely based on the researcher's perspective or simplistic analysis. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as attributes of trustworthiness. Five strategies were used in this study to ensure trustworthiness. The strategies were member checks, audit trail, reflexivity, peer review, and thick description. Descriptions of each of the strategies and the data sources to which they were applied are displayed in Table 3 below.

The first strategy I used to ensure trustworthiness was to create a detailed record of the study that included researcher notes, logs of meeting dates and communications, and folders containing meeting notes and other documents. This strategy is called an audit trail. White, Oelke, and Friesen (2012) describe an audit trail as a detailed,

comprehensive accounting of all data collected. Due to the large volume of data generated from this study, it was critical for me to maintain a detailed accounting of it. This practice not only enabled me to stay organized, but also established evidence of my actions should someone else want to check my work.

Table 3
Strategies for Achieving Trustworthiness

Strategy	Description	Data Source				
		M	I	R	S	D
Audit trail	A detailed account of the methods, procedures, and decision points in carrying out the study	X	X	X	X	X
Member checks	Taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking if they are plausible	X				
Reflexivity	Critical self-reflection by the researcher regarding assumptions, worldview, biases, theoretical orientation, and relationship to the study that may affect the investigation	X	X	X		X
Peer review	Discussions with colleagues regarding the process of study, the congruency of emerging findings with the raw data, and tentative interpretations	X	X	X	X	
Thick description	Providing enough description to contextualize the study such that readers will be able to determine the extent to which their situations match the research context, and, hence, whether findings can be transferred	X	X	X		

Note. M=Meetings; I=Interviews; R=Researcher Notes; S=Surveys; D=Document Reviews. Adapted from *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (Merriam, 2009).

Member checks were the next strategy I used to ensure trustworthiness of the data. Merriam (2009) states that member checks occur when researchers take data and their interpretations back to the people who generated the data and ask if they are

plausible. I used this strategy to validate study data produced by AR sponsor and AR team member meetings because I had ongoing access to both groups. I compared meeting transcripts to the digital recordings and made the necessary corrections. Then I compared the edited transcripts with my meeting notes to develop cumulative meeting notes that the AR sponsor and each AR team member received by e-mail for review and comment prior to the next meeting. Action research team members were also able to access copies of the transcripts through Dropbox and e-mail. Subsequent meetings included discussions of the data so that members could provide direct commentary, which allowed me the opportunity to also triangulate the data.

As shared earlier in the Epistemological Framework and Research Approach section of this chapter, I used reflexivity extensively throughout this study. By engaging in critical self-reflection regarding "assumptions, worldview, biases, theoretical orientation, and relationship to the study that may affect the investigation," I was able to uncover blind spots and biases (Merriam, 2009).

Becoming aware of and acknowledging my subjectivity guided me to seek input from others about my interpretation of the data, which ensured the trustworthiness of the data. Sharing the "process of study, the congruency of emerging findings with the raw data, and tentative interpretations" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 259) moved me beyond my way of "seeing" to accept the interpretations of others and acknowledge my biases. I met regularly with a colleague to discuss my work and share data. As I talked about my study and interpretations, she took copious notes. After a predetermined amount of time, she would review her notes and ask probing questions that would challenge some of my

thoughts and support others. We would review and discuss transcripts to determine if my interpretations were substantiated by the data.

The remaining strategy I used was thick description, which refers to the researcher's use of detailed accounting of field experiences in which the clearly stated patterns of cultural and social relationships are contextualized (Holloway, 1997). I applied this strategy by intentionally capturing what was occurring or had occurred during my observations, discussions, and experiences, providing details to the readers of the data so that they would be able to determine whether my findings were transferrable.

CHAPTER 4

ACTION RESEARCH CASE:

THE TRAVELED ROAD

An African proverb states, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." This proverb indicates that collaborative efforts endure. Action research is a practice of co-operative inquiry and co-construction of interventions to address organizational issues (Heron & Reason, 2001). Collaboration is the foundation of the AR process. Action research team members must engage in and embrace this group process in order for viable interventions to be developed and implemented for transformational change within an organization. In this chapter I will present the SRU DAC development case, which was an AR approach to address one of the institution's issues related to diversity and inclusion. Details of the organization, the AR process, and the AR team experience will be detailed, demonstrating the usefulness of AR and the challenges and benefits that come with it.

Description of the Context

Southern Region University is a large four-year land grant university located in the Southern region of the United States. It is recognized internationally as a high-level research institution with over 34,000 students, 9,800 employees, and many faculty members with international reputations for outstanding research in their fields. *U.S. News and World Report* has consistently ranked the institution as one of the best colleges in the United States.

Beginning a New Chapter

Established during segregation, SRU was integrated by a few African-Americans in the early 1960s amid the tumultuous Civil Rights Movement. While the desegregation of SRU is noteworthy, it would take another 40 years for the University to create and fill an associate provost position for institutional diversity and another five years to establish a diversity advisory council (DAC) to foster diversity and inclusion at the institution. In 2002, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) was established to lead a focused institutional effort to evaluate existing programs and develop new initiatives to support diversity and equity at SRU. An integral part of ODI is its DAC. The DAC was established to assist ODI in the creation and implementation of various strategies designed to advance and enhance diversity at SRU.

The goal of SRU's administration, as stated in the OID documents, was to assemble a group of diverse stakeholders to identify and address barriers to diversity and to advise the associate provost/chief diversity officer on issues related to diversity and inclusion at SRU. The council, through its committee structure, would study literature and research related to diversity and inclusion to identify best practices and develop strategies that would improve diversity and inclusion at SRU. In addition, the council would provide public campus forums for stakeholders to promote a campus dialogue about diversity, with a particular focus on ensuring a sense of inclusion and empowerment.

According to OID documents, the initial DAC was launched in 2008. A roster of initial DAC members shows that the council was composed of 36 members representing each major administrative and academic unit of SRU. The documents also state that

DAC members' terms would be limited to 12 months, at which time each member would be replaced by another representative from his or her unit. These records also show that the first charge to the group was to develop a five-year diversity plan for SRU.

The DAC began working on the five-year diversity plan, but the journey to completion was challenging. Specific challenges and their effects were identified in the data collected in this study (Table 4). Members were selected by their administrators or supervisors in an effort to have representation from most units across the university. The result was a DAC that included 36 members with varying degrees of interest in the mission of the council. Member interest and the size of the group presented immediate challenges. The size of the DAC made it difficult to convene members, communicate effectively, and share information. Participation in the DAC began to decline as the group experienced initial challenges. These challenges kept the council from working effectively and delayed development of the diversity plan. During the original DAC member terms, SRU had two university presidents, two provosts, and two chief diversity officers. These changes in administration also delayed the DAC's progress, as each new administrator had different expectations of the DAC. Lastly, the one-year term limit for DAC members was not enforced, which resulted in attrition and added to the frustrations of the members.

Over the course of the next five years, the council worked to develop the diversity plan. Institutional Diversity Office (IDO) documents and interview data show that the DAC experienced many stops and starts to their work, and eventually a small "working group" finalized the plan and presented it to the larger group. In spite of its

challenges, the DAC produced a five-year diversity plan that was adopted by the administration in April 2011.

Table 4
Challenges and Effects of Initial SRU Diversity Advisory Council

Challenge	Effect
Non-strategic selection process	Participation dropped as those who did not have an interest in DAC disengaged
Too many council members	Difficulties coordinating/convening 36 members Inconsistent communication Difficulties sharing information
Changes in Administration	Slowed the council's progress as members sought direction on completing SRU's five-year diversity plan
Term limit not enforced	Attrition

SRU met its goal of convening a large group of representatives that were selected by various means to represent as many areas of the institution as possible to create a five-year diversity plan, but the institution had not fulfilled the mission of the DAC. It was clear by the end of the diversity plan development effort that the original DAC design would not meet the needs of the university as an advisory unit that was well versed and educated in the latest diversity and inclusion research and best practices. Former DAC members and the project sponsor indicated that the original DAC design was not sustainable. The large number of members detracted from the mission of the council. Eventually, a subgroup was formed to handle the majority of the work and present it back to the larger group to move the council to the performing stage. Although the project was completed successfully, the group realized that its current structure was not effective and, consequently, it became dormant. One former DAC

member commented during a conversation, "We could never get everybody together" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 3, 2013). This statement and others like it provide evidence that the group remained in the forming and storming stages for extended periods of time and never formerly advanced to the performing and adjourning stages identified by Tuckman (1965).

Adopting an Action Research Approach

Dr. Lawrence was named chief diversity officer in 2011, shortly after the diversity plan was adopted. She was the third administrator in nine years to be appointed to this role. After a brief period of time, Dr. Lawrence realized that her list of priorities must include addressing the advisory needs of the university on matters of diversity and inclusion. She stated, "*On a campus this large we need more people involved in the process of diversity and inclusion. We need to make sure that DAC is functioning effectively and helping shape diversity and inclusion at SRU.*"

After making an assessment of the council's mission and spending time with the group and most members individually, Dr. Lawrence further realized that working to create an effective DAC would take time and resources that were not readily available to her. She also realized that in order to move forward with this effort she needed the support of the university's president. She remarked, "Unfortunately, I have limited staff and time to work on fixing DAC right now. My staff is working on other projects and I can't afford to pull them away right now." I have spoken with the president about the university's need to have a diversity advisory council to provide recommendations on matters related to diversity and inclusion and he agrees that an effective DAC should be in place."

Selecting Action Research

Dr. Lawrence was seeking a way to redesign SRU's DAC in the midst of taking up her new role when I reached out to offer my support. During the course of our conversation, I listened to the challenges of the DAC and recommended action research as an approach that would help create solutions through collaborative inquiry, research, ideation, and co-constructed interventions. I suggested the guiding change approach described by Coghlan and Brannick (2010), in which "the direction is loosely defined and the leadership points the way and keeps watch over the process" (p. 65). I believed that this approach would allow for the AR team to take a constructionist approach as we dialogued and planned for change. As an action researcher, I could see the potential for success using this framework. After several conversations, Dr. Lawrence agreed that an action research approach would be an effective way to address SRU's issues and engaged me in the role of convener of the AR team.

Action Research Team Selection

Once the contracting phase of the project was complete, Dr. Lawrence, Jean Pierre (a member of her staff), and I began the task of identifying members of the AR team. A key component in AR is the selection of the AR team members. This component requires purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling in AR is the conscious selection of participants based upon "the extent that individual is affected by or has an effect on the issue of interest" (Stringer, 2007, p. 43). I shared with Dr. Lawrence the critical requirement of selecting a manageable number of stakeholders who were passionate about the project and had the ability to effect change. Dr. Lawrence agreed that the AR team would consist of six members, including me. She immediately

appointed Jean Pierre to the team because of his role within the ODI office and his history with DAC.

I suggested the use of a decision tree as a strategic process to identify the other four AR team members and serve as a method of purposeful sampling. A decision tree was developed to enable us to assess and rank potential AR team members according to criteria that were informed by Chait, Holland, and Taylor (1996), Thompson (2011), and Williams (2013) and that was deemed essential by Dr. Lawrence and me (Appendix B). The decision tree comprised seven criteria:

- Have an interest in and commitment to the goals and mission of OID
- Possess and be willing to use organizational influence for the benefit of the AR team
- Possess skills, talents, and resources that can benefit the AR project
- Be willing and able to work with and participate in a group
- Be tolerant of others that have differing experiences, backgrounds, beliefs, etc.
- Be willing to commit time to the AR project through its duration
- Be willing to participate and give consent to participate in action research

Dr. Lawrence, Jean Pierre, and I independently used the decision chart to identify potential AR team members. We then reviewed all the names and determined the top four candidates.

Dr. Lawrence decided that she would make phone calls to each of the top four candidates and invite them to lunch to discuss the project and the role of the AR team members and to extend an invitation to join the AR team. Within a week, Dr. Lawrence had met with three of the candidates, spoke directly and at length with a candidate who

was out of town, and secured a commitment from each of the four candidates. Dr. Lawrence's participatory leadership style and ability to leverage her motivational influence was crucial in the AR process and was a key factor throughout this project. She artfully leveraged her motivational influence, which resulted in commitment and dedication to the effort, as evidenced by each AR team member candidate accepting her invitation.

It is important not only for action researchers to have a stake in the problem, but also for external stakeholders to feel represented among the AR team (Stringer, 2007). As a result of purposeful sampling, the AR team was composed of a diverse group of administrators, faculty, and staff. The diverse attributes of the AR team include the following:

- Three female and three male members
- Multiple sexual preferences/identities
- Multiple races and ethnicities
- Three continents and four regions of the United States identified as places of origin
- Ages ranged from mid-thirties to early sixties
- Two administrators, two faculty, and two staff members, all with varying years of higher education experience

AR Team Orientation

Dr. Lawrence convened the SRU AR team on the campus of SRU in September 2014. Each of the AR team members participated in the meeting. During the meeting, members introduced themselves and shared why participation on the AR team was important to them. Dr. Lawrence presented the history of the original DAC and the issue facing SRU that the AR team would address. Dr. Lawrence then presented the charge to the AR team to redesign SRU's DAC.

After introductions were made, Dr. Lawrence shared the issue to be addressed and provided a historical grounding of SRU's DAC. She then eloquently told the team why she chose to pursue AR as a method of resolving the issue. Her articulation of the characteristics of AR and the iterative cycles of improvement was impressive. Had I not introduced her to AR six months earlier, I would have thought she had extensive experience with the methodology. As she spoke, I could see others in the room being drawn to her, as though she was unfolding the solution to life's greatest mystery. She then spoke of her vision for a new DAC and how the new council would serve SRU. Her final statements were a charge to the group and her definition of success for the AR team.

I followed Dr. Lawrence, providing an overview of the AR process that included a description of my role and the roles of the other AR team members. Everyone appeared eager to begin and quickly agreed to the requirements of the study and project. AR team members received the results of the original DAC member survey to review and prepare for our discussion at the next team meeting. The AR team had been officially launched.

Action Research Phases

This AR study was conducted over the course of 24 months. The seven interventions that were co-constructed by the sponsor, researcher, and AR team were organized into three phases. Phase 1 of the study involved Intervention 1, which was the decommissioning of the original DAC. The intervention developed in this phase was co-constructed by Dr. Lawrence, a member of her staff (who later became a member of the AR team), and me. Phase 2 of the study included Intervention 2, which was the AR team's research efforts and the development of the redesign of the SRU DAC. The intervention in this phase was the co-constructed design of the DAC-dm model created by the AR team. Phase 3 of the study comprised Interventions 3 through 8, which was the introduction of the six interventions within the DAC-dm model into the SRU system. Details of each phase are included in this chapter.

Phase 1 – Intervention 1: Decommissioning of Original DAC

Based on Dr. Lawrence's assessment of SRU's DAC, we concluded that decommissioning the original DAC would be the first intervention. There were three justifications for this intervention:

- The initial charge of the group had been met;
- There had been no formal individual recognition for the years of work done by the members; and
- A new DAC structure and member selection process was needed.

SRU's culture, much like most highly bureaucratic organizations in higher education, has a strong political component that impacts meaningful faculty involvement in complex matters (Ginsberg, 2011; Lamal, 2013). Dr. Lawrence wanted to

decommission the original DAC before launching an AR team to redesign the council. She wanted the decommissioning of the original DAC to focus on the work and achievements of the past members and not be preempted by rumors of any kind that would take away from the celebration. I worked with Dr. Lawrence and her staff to develop a strategy to decommission the original DAC. We collaboratively planned and executed a recognition luncheon for the DAC members.

The luncheon took place in August 2013, with 31 of the original DAC members in attendance. During the luncheon, the Assistant to the President extended gratitude on behalf of the president, thanked the members for their work on the University's first-ever five-year diversity plan, and acknowledged the sacrifices the council members had made to make the diversity plan a reality. Dr. Lawrence acknowledged the work of DAC prior to her appointment as chief diversity officer. She also thanked the members for their support during her tenure, announced the launch of the AR study, and introduced me to the group. I gave an overview of the study's purpose, announced the survey to the group, and made myself available for questions and answers after the luncheon. Many DAC members expressed appreciation to Dr. Lawrence for recognizing their work in such a nice way.

Several methods of data collection were used during each of the four AR phases identified by Coughlan and Brannick (2010), which are constructing, planning action, taking action, and evaluating action. Observation data were recorded in my researcher notes, which included notes from sponsor meetings, planning sessions, personal diary entries, notes taken during and after the luncheon about the event, and personal experiences that DAC members shared with me. Additional data were gathered from a

survey of the remaining 31 members (Appendix A). The ten-question survey had a 64% response rate. Data from Phase 1 will be presented in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Phase 2 – Intervention 2: Development of the DAC-dm

Phase 2 of this study occurred over a 10-month period. During this phase, the AR team engaged in collaborative inquiry, research, and intervention development to address the charge given by Dr. Lawrence. Data were collected through document review researcher notes, my personal diary entries, and transcripts from meetings and interviews. The outcome of this phase was a six-phase Diversity Advisory Council Development Model (DAC-dm) that was based on the governance board work of Holland and Jackson (1998) and Brown (2007). The DAC-dm served as the redesign for the SRU DAC.

Initially, the AR team met once per month. After the second meeting, the AR team determined that meeting monthly was insufficient for the group to maintain momentum and meet the milestones of the project within the academic year. The team unanimously decided to hold bi-weekly meetings on the SRU campus. Team members were engaged throughout the project, with the exception of one AR team member who reluctantly resigned after contracting a serious illness that required multiple hospitalizations. The process was challenging at times, but the team always resolved conflict before the end of each meeting, as agreed to in the team's initial meeting.

Reading over the e-mail messages, listening to portions of meeting and interview recordings, reading portions of transcripts, and reviewing materials that were produced during the AR team meetings brings up some emotions that I would rather forget. I remember how nervous I would get during the drive to the SRU campus to meet with

other members of the AR team, these high-ranking individuals on campus who have written books on diversity, led diversity initiatives on SRU's campus, and served on many SRU advisory councils or committees. Believing they must have felt that I was wasting their time, incompetent, rambling, etc. by the time I would pull into the parking lot (an hour early), I would be so far up the Ladder of Inference that I would be nauseous (Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, & Smith, 1994). By the end of the meeting, I would have to go to my car and pull myself together for the two-hour drive back home.

Thinking back on the first few AR team meetings, I realized that I did the majority of the speaking; acknowledging that my open-ended comments and questions did not seem to engage the group was hard. The quietness of the room and the blank stares were excruciating. The first meetings seemed endless, and the project seemed to stall at the gate.

The imposter syndrome engulfed me. My Type A personality merged with fear of being exposed as a fraud. There were the long hours of preparation for the AR team meetings. I tried to make sure that everything was taken care of. The meeting room reservation, email notifications, attachments, reminders, agendas, and meeting notes had to be "perfect" because I had to "prove" myself to these highly esteemed AR team members. This was exhausting—and defeating. I felt responsible for the entire project.

Then one comment from my major professor, Dr. Wendy Ruona, freed me from my angst. She simply said, "Can't someone else host a meeting?" That one question punctuated the equilibrium of my thinking, causing a shift in how I viewed myself in relation to this project and the AR process. I was able to get out of the way and actually let the group function as an empowered group.

After I began to let go and trust the other members of the AR team, the group began to gel and the process became less stressful. Once I let go of some of what I deemed as my responsibilities, the team was able to advance through the stages of group development. Each member eagerly offered to host meetings and bring in additional resources. However, the administrative tasks remained my responsibility.

Document review. Being specific about the term used to label the challenge facing an organization is vital in the early stages of an AR project. Rather than using the terms problem or opportunity, which might have led to "convergent thinking", the term "issue" was intentionally chosen to describe the challenge to be addressed by the AR team (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). The AR team spent several weeks examining documents created by the original DAC, listening to firsthand experiences of original DAC members, and analyzing the data produced by the original DAC member survey. The AR team framed the issue as SRU needing an effective Diversity Advisory Council to help administration expand diversity and inclusion at the university. Having this co-constructed goal before us throughout the AR process was helpful, as it kept the group focused and moving forward when valuable, but distracting, subjects arose.

Having reviewed data, the AR team was able to confirm the issue, assess the previous state of the DAC, and identify the desired future state of the council. The AR team was prepared to enter the phase of planning action to address the issue. This process required the team to gather information about councils dedicated to addressing diversity and inclusion in higher education.

Literature review. There is a resurgence of interest in advisory boards in higher education, "yet there is limited research on the topic" (Henderson, 2004, p. 60).

Identifying a widely accepted model or practice related to developing DACs in higher education was one of the AR team's first challenges. Efforts to find empirical evidence of emerging practices or other studies were not fruitful. The team had hopes of finding best practices that could be considered for our project. An initial literature review revealed that there was a gap in the literature related to diversity advisory groups. The majority of the literature found was related to governance boards, which are significantly different from advisory councils. The AR team was drawn to the governance board research of Holland and Jackson (1998) and Brown (2007); both provided insight on characteristics of effective governance boards and processes for developing effective councils. Although those researchers did not provide best practices for developing or maintaining an effective DAC, the AR team determined that an approach similar to theirs could be applied to the redesign of the DAC at SRU. After initial team discussions about the literature review, I sought out and met with Dr. Thomas Holland in April, 2013, to discuss his work and get a better understanding of how he and co-author Jackson evaluate and develop effectiveness in non-profit governance boards.

The team also gathered best practices and processes of other non-profit organizations. The Sarasota County and National Alliance on Mental Illness advisory board handbooks were key in this process. Both documents enabled members to compare and contrast the differences between governance boards and advisory boards, as it was important for us to be able to distinguish between the two as we developed appropriate interventions and to gain information about the purpose, structure, and member responsibilities of boards and councils.

Environmental scan. The AR team decided to conduct an environmental scan among peer institutions to further research best practices. The team looked for two key factors: how institutions defined diversity, and what practices existed in peer institutions across the region.

Defining diversity. Williams (2013) states, "Too often campus diversity committees are stymied because leadership fails to provide a clear definition of diversity and the committee is unable to clarify what diversity means in the context of its work as a group" (p. 415). The AR team reviewed the original DAC's definition of diversity and agreed that it was inadequate to guide future work. We decided that before we could begin redesigning the DAC, we needed to look at how the AR team defined diversity. Our first task would have been to look at the chosen institution's diversity statement, but SRU did not have an institution-wide diversity statement. There was a Faculty Statement on Diversity that was displayed on the undergraduate admissions page, which was approved by SRU's University Council in the early 2000s. However, this statement was determined by the group to be insufficient. We then decided to look at diversity statements and definitions from 12 other higher education institutions across the United States.

After reviewing the diversity statements and definitions of these institutions, each member was asked to submit his or her ideas about the group's working definition of diversity. The group discussed and debated all collected data and contributions before coming to consensus on our working definition. The AR team developed the following definition of diversity and inclusion: *The pursuit of social justice, which requires openness, collaboration, barrier removal, and creating an environment that all members*

of the University community, regardless of their backgrounds, can contribute and achieve their fullest potential.

Peer practices. After coming to consensus on the definition the team would use, we turned our efforts toward researching practices of peer institutions across the region. Six institutions were identified. Dr. Lawrence agreed to invite her peers to participate in one-hour interviews. I was once again surprised at the willingness of the other CDOs to participate in these interviews. Once again, the effective leadership of Dr. Lawrence proved helpful, as shown by these comments:

"Sure, I will participate! Anything to help Dr. Lawrence!"

"Whatever you need. I know Dr. Lawrence has been working on resolving this. Hopefully, she can help me with my council."

"Dr. Lawrence is awesome to work with. I look forward to speaking with you!" All interviews were scheduled and held within 25 days.

Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that each institution operated its diversity advisory program differently. Practices ranged from creating committees around diversity initiatives such as Black History Month to being part of the University Council's burdensome process. The interviews confirmed what the group found in the literature—that there was no ideal model or identified best practice for developing or maintaining a DAC.

DAC development model. Having no widely accepted model or practice related to developing a DAC in higher education, the AR Team decided to design a model based on Jackson and Holland's (1998) *Six Dimensions of Board Competency* and Brown's (2007) *Model of Board Development, Board Member Competency, and Performance*.

This major decision led to the development of the study's theoretical framework (Figure 5), which combined Jackson and Holland's (2007) identification of board competency in six dimensions (contextual, educational, interpersonal, analytical, political, and strategic) with Brown's (2007) board development model which directly associated board performance with member recruitment, orientation, and evaluation.

The AR team co-constructed a conceptual framework composed of three major components: inputs, process, and outputs. The framework identifies the needs of represented groups across the institution, strategic goals of the institution, and stakeholders as system inputs. These three inputs are necessary to develop an effective DAC with a goal of improving institutional diversity and inclusion.

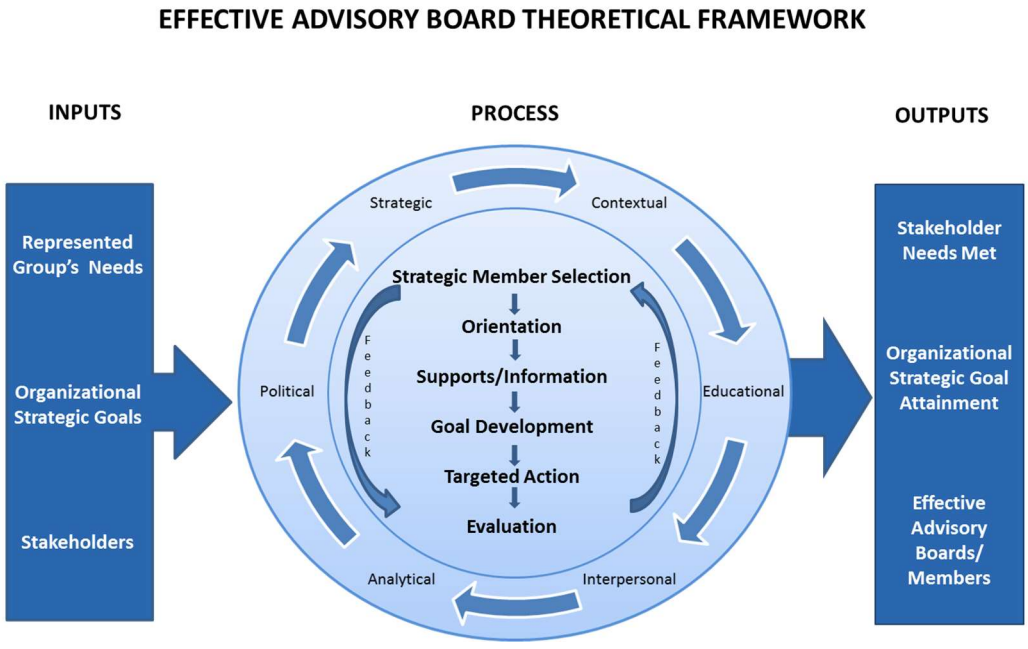


Figure 5. Conceptual framework. This conceptual framework depicts the inputs, process, and outputs of the study.

The AR team further identified the process of establishing an effective DAC. The process component of the framework adopts Jackson and Holland's (1998) *Six Dimensions of Board Competency* and adapts Brown's (2007) resource dependence theory based on *Model of Board Development, Board member Competency, and Performance*. Brown's model was used to develop a six-phase diversity advisory council development model that was situated inside Holland and Jackson's (1998) six dimensions. The co-constructed process component of the framework has been named the Diversity Advisory Council Development Model, as shown in Figure 6.

These are the six phases of the DAC-dm:

1. Strategic selection: Members are to be selected based on interest in and knowledge of diversity and inclusion, ability to contribute to the mission of the council, and capacity to improve council performance.
2. Orientation: Members must be oriented to the council by receiving information on the organization, mission of the council, their roles and responsibilities as members, and introduction to other members.
3. Supports and information: Members must be provided administrative supports, tools, and information regarding diversity and inclusion issues facing the organization.
4. Goal development: Members must work collaboratively to co-construct measurable goals for the council.
5. Targeted action: Members must co-construct targeted actions to achieve the goals of the council.

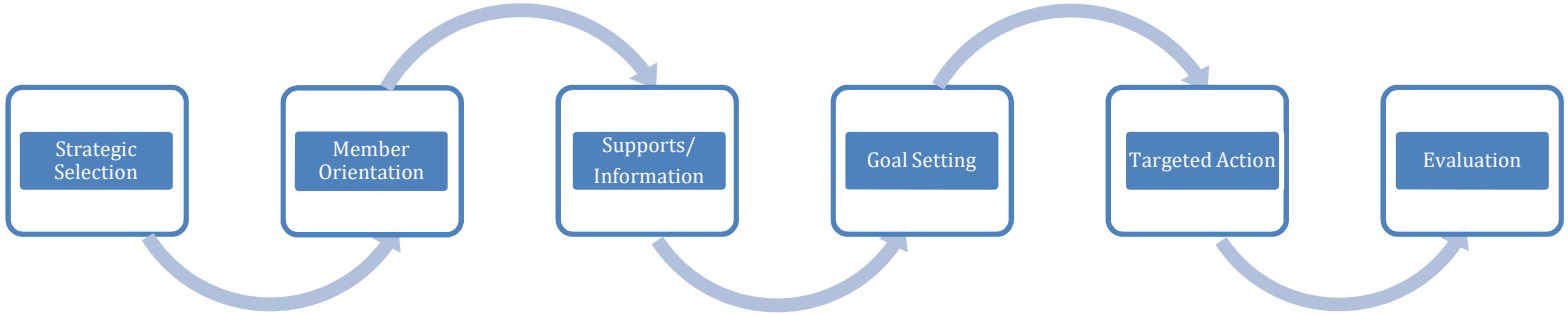


Figure 6. Diversity Advisory Council Development Model (DAC-dm). This model depicts the six phases of diversity council development.

6. Evaluation: Members must evaluate the actions of the council to determine if the identified goals have been met and if the targeted action was effective to determine the overall effectiveness of the council.

These six phases are situated within Holland and Jackson's (1998) six competencies:

1. Contextual: The council understands and takes into account the culture, values, mission, and norms of the organization.
1. Educational: The council takes the necessary steps to ensure that members are well informed about diverse populations and inclusion practices, the organization, professions working there, students enrolled, and the council's own roles, responsibilities, and performance.
2. Interpersonal: The council nurtures the development of its members as *a group*, attends to the council's collective welfare, and fosters a sense of cohesiveness and teamwork.
3. Analytical: The council recognizes complexities and subtleties in the issues it faces, and it draws upon multiple perspectives to dissect complex problems and to synthesize appropriate responses.
4. Political: The council accepts that one of its primary responsibilities is to develop and maintain healthy two-way communications and positive relationships with key stakeholders.
5. Strategic: The council helps envision and shape institutional direction and helps ensure a strategic approach to the organization's future.

The AR team co-constructed a purpose statement and processes for the six DAC-dm phases and presented them to Dr. Lawrence as the new SRU DAC development

process in June 2014 (Appendix D). Dr. Lawrence adopted the new design in June 2014. The model was implemented in August of the same year.

Phase 3 – Interventions 3-8: DAC-dm Implementation

Once the new DAC process was adopted, Dr. Lawrence moved quickly to implement it. She requested that I help guide the implementation process and that the AR team assist with member selection. In August 2014, Dr. Lawrence stated that she wanted to have the new DAC in place by January 2015. She assigned two staff members to assist with the implementation.

Intervention 3 – Strategic Selection. I moved quickly to hold a joint meeting with the assigned staff members and the AR team. We developed an implementation plan that included the following steps:

- Announcing the new DAC and application period
- Developing the application process
- Adhering to selection recommendations made by the AR team
- Announcing the 13 new members of the DAC
- Evaluating the strategic selection process

The redesign of the DAC was announced in September 2014, with a call for new members to apply through an online application process that required a statement of interest, a recommendation letter, and completion of an interest form. The application period ended with 43 applications.

The AR team reviewed all of the applications and ranked them based on a rating scale developed by the AR team. The ratings were presented to Dr. Lawrence, and she made the selection of the 13 new DAC members. The new members were announced in

early November 2014. The AR team, along with the two staff members, shared reflections of the strategic selection process and provided feedback to Dr. Lawrence for future process improvement.

Intervention 4 – Orientation & Intervention 5 – Supports and Information. A one-day retreat for new DAC members was held near the end of 2014. Twelve of the members attended in person, and one member participated virtually. During the orientation, members received their charge from the provost and orientation information from Dr. Lawrence, participated in group activities, and received information from various diversity stakeholders across campus—including three AR team members. Dr. Lawrence also introduced three of her staff members who would serve as administrative support to the DAC. After the retreat, DAC members participated in a survey that contained questions related to the application process and the retreat.

Intervention 6 – Goal Development. In the spring of 2015, two facilitators led the DAC members through a two-session goal development process. Diversity advisory council members collaboratively identified goals for the DAC to focus initial efforts on and agreed to work in groups (goal teams) to refine and identify targeted action around the goals. Members completed evaluations of both facilitated sessions. The evaluation data were shared with Dr. Lawrence for future process improvement.

Intervention 7 – Targeted Action. During the second goal setting session, the goal teams agreed to meet over the summer and bring their work back to the larger group in late summer for review and refinement. The work groups failed to meet over the course of the summer. When Dr. Lawrence contacted the representatives of the goal teams, each provided various excuses for their team not meeting. Some of the responses

included, “no one led the effort to get a meeting together” and “everyone was busy over the summer.” Dr. Lawrence expressed disappointment in the lack of work done by the teams, stating, “I can’t believe that nothing was done over the summer.” The study ended after the initiation of Intervention 7 due to the length of time required to complete this project.

Action Research Team Process

The AR team experienced some bumps along the way, but functioned well as a result of norms established during the first meeting, a high level of member participation, and skilled facilitation. There were times when AR team members dug their heels in about things they strongly believed in, such as social justice, power, resources, and representation. During one AR team meeting, three members debated specific terms to include in the SRU DAC purpose statement. After a significant amount of contentious debate, the members transitioned from defending their views into negotiation, as one of the AR team members said in exasperation, “I just don't want this to become too watered down where it becomes exactly what we have.” This statement opened up space for everyone to pursue compromise; by the end of the discussion, one of the other team members who was involved in the debate replied, “Okay. All right. Okay.” when asked if he could accept the terms of the compromise. This is an example of how this AR team performed and how effective the AR process was in this study.

Rothman, Kelly-Woessner, and Woessner (2011) “argue that divisions within the university are important and that shifts in power within the university require that we consider how professors, students, and administrators interact with one another to shape institutional culture.” (p. 7). Having experienced this dynamic in my higher education

career, I had initial concerns of whether the assigned power and influence ascribed to rank in academia would negatively impact the group. I was specifically concerned that the two staff members would not feel empowered to give their opinions or disagree with the other AR team members who were faculty members and administrators.

Those concerns dissipated over the course of the next two meetings, as the group bonded quickly. This can be attributed in part to the team's "check-in" practice at the beginning of each meeting, where members shared what was happening in their lives since the last meeting. Over the course of the study, the group supported each other through sickness and eventual loss of a parent, medical challenges, job interviews, promotions, and work challenges. Group members began supporting each other outside the group with cards, calls, lunches, and other acts of concern and kindness. Team members also began debating and challenging each other with no negative impact on the cohesiveness of the team. The group quickly progressed to the performing stage (Tuckman, 1965). Evidence of exchanges between AR team members is provided in Chapter 5.

While my concerns about potential impacts of power and influence related to internal group interaction were assuaged, I was surprised by the AR team's initial caution and even resistance to power given by Dr. Lawrence. Action research team members became stuck on the charge that had been given only two weeks prior. Much of the third AR team meeting was spent trying to "decipher" the written version of Dr. Lawrence's charge instead of the spirit of the words and the actual presentation of it. One AR team member commented during the meeting, "My perspective would be that this group provide her the options to make the decision. She is the administrator in charge."

The team eventually embraced the power that we were given, but only after I agreed to go back to Dr. Lawrence and verify that the group actually had the power to make changes. During AR team member interviews at the end of the study, one AR team member stated, "It's very different from most university exercises I have been involved in because . . . people in leadership positions at universities generally have an agenda that they are trying to put in place and have a desired outcome already." Each of the AR team members expressed similar reactions to the AR process. They shared how participating in this AR process changed how they worked within the group and stated that they would use the process to address other issues.

Action research involves research at the individual level and the team level. Coghlan and Brannick (2010) describe the individual level research as first person research, which involves the development of the individual(s) involved in the process. They also describe team level research as second person research, which is development that takes place over time in terms of identity, actions, and stakeholder relationships. Both first and second person development was achieved during this study.

The accolades and expressions of appreciation given by the AR team members during their final interviews took me by surprise. All of the team members conveyed how impressed they were with my ability to articulate the AR process, keep the group moving when we became stuck, and keep our focus on the group's purpose. One AR team member, who held the rank of assistant dean, said that this was the best committee he had ever served on at the institution. Another team member, who held the rank of associate dean, shared that the AR team had become a support group for her and that she was going to miss our meetings.

This AR team experience was a valuable part of this study for me. During this process, I made some friends, faced some fears, and found my calling. I am a change leader. This experience has taught me to trust what comes naturally, mute the critical voice in my head, and follow my instincts. I am confident in my ability to continue to lead collaborative change efforts in systems large and small.

Throughout this AR process, group members explored issues, identified challenges within higher education and SRU, and learned from each other's diverse experiences, views, beliefs, and feelings. Collecting and reviewing data, researching best practices, and co-constructing a significant intervention plan created opportunities for AR team members to engage in collaborative inquiry, constructing, action planning, taking action, and reflection. Team members were able to articulate how this process helped the group develop beyond the project. Some comments made by the AR team members include the following:

> *I think, you know, this process[AR] was operated more slowly and I think there was much more time directed towards collaboration and community building, within - the AR team. Whereas in, you know, other committees or projects that I've been on or - or led, it was really the task at hand kind of driving the timetable. And I felt as though instead, it was kind of the - the community or the relationships driving the timetable.*

Conclusion

During Dr. Lawrence's final interview, I asked her about the next step for DAC. She stated that she would go back to the DAC and find out how they wanted to move forward. A new semester was about to begin, and she appeared hopeful that the members

would be able to move forward. She shared that the time commitment required might be an issue but thought that the members could find a way to work through it.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS:

SIGNS ALONG THE WAY

The purpose of this AR study is to understand how a higher education institution redesigns an effective diversity advisory council and to identify factors and conditions that affect this process. The following research questions guided this study:

(1) What elements are critical in developing an effective diversity advisory council within a higher education institution?

(2) What challenges impeded the process of developing a diversity advisory council within this higher education institution?

This chapter presents findings from data generated by AR team members and multiple stakeholders who participated in an (AR) study at Southern Regional University (SRU). Data were generated by study participants over the course of 24 months. The data were gathered from sponsor meeting transcripts, diversity advisory council surveys, action research team meeting transcripts, interviews with six chief diversity officers of peer institutions, observations, documents, interviews with the project sponsor and action research (AR) team members, and research notes and journals. First Cycle descriptive coding and Second Cycle pattern coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) was conducted to identify key codes and emerging themes. Related themes were collapsed into findings that address the questions related to the study. The findings are organized

by research question with corresponding themes that emerged during data analysis.

Table 5 provides an overview of the findings and related themes.

Table 5
Research Findings

Research Question	Finding	Theme
1. What elements are critical in developing an effective diversity advisory council within a higher education institution?	Strong supportive leadership from institutional leader(s)	• Participatory leadership
	Formal decommissioning of prior diversity advisory groups	• Group adjournment • Recognition • Feedback
	Action research (AR) process	• Engaged stakeholders • Increased collaboration • Provided method and process • Individual learning • Provided facilitation
	Theoretically sound developmental model	• Diversity Advisory Council Development Model (DAC-dm)
2. What challenges impeded the process of developing a diversity advisory council within this higher education institution?	Diversity and inclusion work elicits fear and resistance	• Diversity and inclusion is seen as adversarial • Resistant attitudes • Liability concerns
	Empowerment	• Stakeholders challenged by empowerment
	Defining diversity	• Identifying an accepted definition of diversity
	Accountability	• Member accountability

Research Question 1: What Elements Are Critical in Developing an Effective Diversity Advisory Council Within a Higher Education Institution?

Several actions were taken to transform the way SRU orchestrated its DAC. Moving from a nonfunctioning DAC to appointing members to a new form of DAC required dedicated planning and execution over a 10-month period. The critical elements found in this study are shown in Table 6.

Table 6
Critical Elements for Developing an Effective Diversity Advisory Council (DAC) in a Higher Education Institution

Research Question	Finding	Theme
1. What elements are critical in developing an effective diversity advisory council within a higher education institution?	Strong supportive leadership from institutional leader(s)	• Participatory leadership
	Formal decommissioning of prior diversity advisory groups	• Group adjournment • Recognition • Feedback
	Action research (AR) supports the development of diversity advisory councils	• Engaged stakeholders • Increased collaboration • Provided method and process • Individual learning • Provided facilitation
	Theoretically sound developmental model	• Diversity Advisory Council Development Model (DAC-dm)

Strong Supportive Leadership

Support from SRU's administrators was a key element in establishing a new DAC. SRU's president, provost, and associate provost/chief diversity officer supported the efforts to decommission the original DAC, redesign a new DAC through a collaborative process, and establish a new DAC. Support from SRU's leaders was essential to this project.

Dr. Lawrence, the study sponsor's participatory leadership style and ability to leverage her motivational influence was crucial in the AR process and was a key factor throughout this project. She effectively wielded positional and personal power (Northouse, 2013). As associate provost, Dr. Lawrence is assigned position power associated with her rank as an institutional administrator. However, this power is secondary, as she effectively exercised her referent power when interacting with others. Evidence of her positive effect on the process is outlined in Table 7. The success of the multiple phases of this AR project is correlated to the power and influence exercised by Dr. Lawrence. This study and the multiple phases would not have been possible without her sponsorship. Analysis of documents—such as emails and letters written by Dr. Lawrence, agendas, and researcher notes—indicated her leadership throughout this study.

Analysis of data gathered during this study evidenced the finding that supportive leadership was a significant element in the development of the new DAC. Study participants clearly identified the benefits of having to supportive leadership.

> " *Actually, a great example of that is Dr. Lawrence. Dr. Lawrence was [working within a smaller SRU unit] and she was . . . [serving in an advisory capacity] there. Did she have influence? Absolutely. The bulk of her influence eventually translated into her being given more power and [eventually] being in SRU's senior leadership. And the way she wields that power isn't the way most people do. She uses her influence in order to make sure that others feel powerful. And that's a leader that I think I would want to be like eventually. (Jean-Pierre)*

- *Dr. Lawrence is so awesome! I would volunteer for anything she asked me to do! (New SRU DAC member)*
- *I give Dr. Lawrence a lot of credit both for putting together such an effective council and for doing such an excellent job of inspiring and guiding us, and I give her and her staff credit for the excellent planning that goes into each meeting. (New DAC member)*
- *It seems like once people get connected with [the new SRU DAC] and the work that is coming out of Dr. Lawrence's office, everybody just wants to be a part and wants to participate. And I think we're really building relationships that can actually bring some change. (Beverly)*

Excerpts from my personal journal notes contain my observations of Dr. Lawrence's leadership style:

- *We were able to discuss and have some rich discussion about the charge that we got from Dr. Lawrence. (personal journal)*
- *The discussion was very lively today. Dr. Lawrence gave some great feedback. She's just an awesome sponsor to have. She has a wealth of knowledge about what's going on at the University around diversity. She's had an opportunity to work very closely and talk with [the president and provost] about [the AR team's work]. (personal journal)*

I also commented on the effectiveness of Dr. Lawrence's leadership style during an interview I participated in with another action researcher about my experience during this study:

" *Dr. Lawrence has mentioned wanting to give the [AR] team recognition, for the work that they - that we've done, and having the president write a letter and do that kind of recognition. And she also has mentioned to me personally that she wants to do a dinner for the team. (personal journal)*

SRU's associate provost also demonstrated her support of the New DAC by attending the retreat for new DAC members. During the retreat, she spoke with the new DAC members informally, asking questions about their interest in and work related to diversity at SRU. She also spoke to the group formally, expressing the need for the DAC and offering the full support of SRU's administration. Additionally, she gave the formal charge to the new members, officially establishing the new DAC.

Support from other institutional leaders also directly affected the development of the new DAC at SRU. Throughout this AR study, AR team members commented on the authority held by top-level administrators in expanding diversity and inclusion efforts at SRU. During an interview, AR team members made a statements about the need for support from SRU's institutional leaders:

" *We don't always have that flexibility (as a public institution) but we should be clear on what our values are and what matters to us. And the president or the provost should feel empowered to always provide a sense of security to the campus environment. (Monique)*

" *I'm excited that this year at the senior administrators retreat, Dr. Lawrence is going to be talking to senior administration about the next level and the next steps in building diverse [and] inclusive campuses here at the SRU. To me, that's an instance where she can use her influence [to] push the powers that*

be to take more action that can transform the landscape. Without [senior leaders] buying into the need for a diverse and inclusive campus here at SRU, it takes a longer time for influential people like [me] to build up the [interest]. (Jean-Pierre)

The comments of the AR team members, and others like them, demonstrate the need for supportive leadership in the development of diversity and inclusion efforts in higher education.

Table 7
Critical Action of CDO

Action	Impact	Data
Engaging an action researcher to facilitate the redesign of SRU's DAC	Set the tone for collaborative process	AR team meeting transcripts, AR team meeting notes, AR team interviews, researcher notes
Personally inviting each AR team member to join the AR project—over lunch or coffee.	Each person asked volunteered to join the AR team.	AR team meeting transcripts, AR team meeting notes, AR team interviews, researcher notes, documents
Co-constructed and participated in a decommissioning event of the original SRU DAC	Provided closure to the original DAC and made DAC members feel recognized	Original DAC survey responses, original DAC member comments, researcher notes
Personally convening the AR team to provide a history of DAC and an overview of the AR project, introducing the AR facilitator, and giving the charge	Grounded the AR team, initiated group development, demonstrated the priority of DAC at SRU	AR team meeting transcripts, researcher notes
Adoption of the DAC-dm model	Creation of a new DAC at SRU	AR team correspondence, email, organization documents, DAC member surveys

Formal Decommissioning of Current DAC

At the start of this study, SRU's DAC had not formally met in more than a year. The project sponsor and I agreed that a decommissioning of the original DAC was needed before efforts began to redesign the group. Tuckman and Jensen (1977) state that a "final discernable and significant stage" of group development is adjournment (p. 426). Formally decommissioning the group was important, but even more important was the process of adjourning the group. SRU chose to decommission the original DAC by hosting a recognition luncheon with all remaining members of the original council. During the luncheon, the original DAC members were recognized for their contribution, formally decommissioned, informed of the redesign effort, and asked to provide feedback to inform the redesign process.

Group adjournment. Informing DAC members that the university was ready to move toward a different DAC model took careful consideration. Disbanding this longstanding council, even in its dormant state, had the potential to be misinterpreted as a move to decrease diversity and inclusion efforts at SRU. During an initial meeting about the study, Dr. Lawrence remarked, *"We have to be sensitive to how this will be perceived across campus, especially at an institution of this size."* She continuously expressed concern about the impact of moving away from the original DAC structure. I empathized with her, having my own experience of introducing change in a large organization.

Dr. Lawrence shared additional regular thoughts about:

" *I think that it has been such a process that some of the - some of the people, particularly those who do a lot of around diversity, might be a little relieved to kind of be allowed to step off for a second. (Dr. Lawrence)*

Jean-Pierre also provided some insight on the value of formally adjourning the original DAC:

- *[The original members need] closure and acknowledgement. Because again, understand, some of these people have been doing this for the last three to four years or even longer. They want their closure. So in the form of a nice letter, you know, officially telling them. (Jean-Pierre)*
- *At some point, you know, we've got the diversity plan, which came from a lot of their work. And the plan itself was some form of closure, but we didn't close it because we still met afterwards and we still called them probably two or three times afterwards. So there still was that closure, but then the acknowledgement that - that was the foundation for thinking this is [actually] leading to the next step. (Jean-Pierre)*

After careful consideration, Dr. Lawrence made the decision to decommission the original DAC. I recommended that a formal process for adjourning the group be developed. Tuckman (1977) identified group adjournment as a final stage in group development that allows group members the opportunity to achieve closure and receive recognition for their accomplishments. Dr. Lawrence stated that she wanted to give SRU's administration the opportunity to acknowledge the original members and ask for feedback moving forward. She discussed how she wanted to express her appreciation to the original members: *"You all have done some great work. Now how do we keep DAC as a relevant advisory committee at the University level and an effective tool for the institution?"* Formally decommissioning the council provided this opportunity.

The collaborative decision to formally decommission the group demonstrated the end of one process and conditioned the original DAC members and other university stakeholders for future actions related to expanding diversity and inclusion at SRU. Dr. Lawrence decided to host a luncheon to honor the work of the original DAC members and to inform them of the AR project that would launch the following month.

DAC member recognition. During initial discussions about adjourning the original DAC, Dr. Lawrence and Jean-Pierre spoke of the need to acknowledge the work of the council by recognizing the members in a meaningful way. I inquired more deeply to ensure that I understood the scope of recognition Dr. Lawrence and Jean-Pierre were describing:

> *" Do you have resources to have a more substantial meeting to recognize [the original DAC members]? Maybe have some notables from the campus to acknowledge their efforts and to acknowledge the period that they've served and maybe there's a certificate for these folks or a letter that can go in their file? Something that really lets them know that this is our way of saying of thank you and to look at their accomplishment? (Beverly)*

My questions led to a rich discussion about how the original DAC members were to be recognized. Jean-Pierre and Dr. Lawrence shared their thoughts on how the original DAC members could be recognized:

> *" I think that the people who we're talking about, and just thinking off the top of my head, some of them, you know, yeah, they want their closure, they want their recognition. So in the form of a nice letter, you know, officially telling them – thank you. (Jean-Pierre)*

- *I think that we could definitely [provide] a letter from the president. (Dr. Lawrence)*

Over the course of the discussion, Dr. Lawrence expanded the recognition to include a tangible recognition for the original DAC members. She wanted to give more than a certificate or award. Her intention was to provide each original DAC member a memento that would spark conversation with others and provide an opportunity for dialogue about DAC:

- *I know for years I got these awards and they're just this piece of granite that's engraved. We want it to say for service on [DAC] from 2008 to 2013. [To say something about] diversity. Exactly. Something they can put in their office [and] they could physically [and] publically show. (Dr. Lawrence)*
- *There's a letter that they can file away; then there's the lunch that shows that they're appreciated. (Dr. Lawrence)*

The luncheon provided an opportunity for the administration to acknowledge and validate the work of the original DAC. This process provided closure and officially released members from the group's charge. Comments made by attendees were recorded in my researcher notes as follows:

- *The luncheon was so nice. I am so glad to hear that DAC is continuing! I thought it just died after the diversity plan was accepted. (original DAC member)*
- *Wow, this was a great event! Let me know how I can help with the next DAC. (original DAC member - 1)*

- *This was a nice way to wrap up our work. Thank you for the letter acknowledging our work and the memento. (original DAC member - 2)*
- *Thanks for this. I look forward to receiving the survey. (original DAC member - 3)*
- *It's nice to get some recognition after all this time. (original DAC member - 4)*

Before leaving the luncheon, Dr. Lawrence commented, "This was exactly what was needed!" Additionally, she commented during a telephone conversation after the luncheon, *"I have received several comments from DAC members thanking me for hosting the luncheon and providing the mementos. I am glad we took the time to properly disband the group."*

DAC member feedback. Providing original DAC members the opportunity to reflect on their experience with the group was important. I constructed a 10-question survey and received feedback on the design from my major professor and Dr. Lawrence. After completing revisions and obtaining approval from the sponsor, the survey was distributed to 31 original DAC members (Appendix A). Twenty-four members began the survey, and 20 members completed the survey, resulting in a 64% response rate. The feedback from the original DAC member evidence the value of formally adjourning the group.

Feedback from the original DAC members provided valuable information to the AR team during our DAC redesign efforts. Members of the AR team used the data to determine which aspects of the original council were effective and which were ineffective. AR team members often referred back to survey responses throughout the

project. During one AR team meeting when members were discussing the experiences of the original DAC members, Nima made the following comment:

> " *I think it's interesting to hear kind of some of the background . . . . And you know, the thing I was noticing is that . . . people for the most part are feeling like the process was effective. I think . . . these additional comments . . . about lessons learned, needs to go into think pile because . . . those comments [beg the question of] how much teeth did this process have in terms of increasing awareness [of] these marginalized groups. (Nima)*

The survey data also enabled the team to validate its recommendation to the project sponsor. During the meeting where the AR team's recommendations were presented to Dr. Lawrence, AR team representatives reviewed our process and described the actions of the AR team:

> " *Then we took a look at the survey responses [from] the old DAC [members] to gather some data about some of the things that they saw were challenges as, well as some of their hopes and aspirations for the next DAC." (Beverly)*

Action Research Process

According to stakeholders involved in this study, SRU's engagement of the AR process for re-establishing its DAC proved successful. The AR process enabled SRU to accomplish its goal of engaging a diverse group of stakeholders to develop an effective process of designing its DAC. Action research methodology provided a facilitated process that was collaborative, flexible, and reflexive. The use of AR for this study resulted in a collaborative, high-performing facilitated team that was able to efficiently address SRU's issue.

Engaged stakeholders. SRU's AR team was engaged and high functioning over the course of the study. The active participation of the AR team members led to a redesign of the DAC within the timeframe provided by Dr. Lawrence. Analysis of the data shows a high level of engagement among AR team members throughout the process, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8
SRU AR Team Member Engagement

Action	Engagement Level	Data
AR team meeting attendance	11 AR team meetings were held. No AR team member missed more than two meetings, and members were rarely tardy.	AR team meeting transcripts, AR team meeting notes, researcher notes
AR team member assignments	AR team member assignments included reading articles, conducting document reviews, researching other institutions' definitions of diversity, analyzing data, reviewing AR team meeting notes, and ranking new DAC applications. Only one assignment was not completed by an AR team member.	AR team meeting transcripts, AR team meeting notes, researcher notes, documents
Intervention development	All AR team members contributed to the development of each of the interventions.	AR team meeting transcripts, AR team meeting notes, researcher notes, documents
Intervention participation	One member did not participate in the retreat for the new DAC members due to a schedule conflict.	AR team meeting transcripts, AR team meeting notes, researcher notes, documents

AR team members attended scheduled AR team meetings at a high rate and with limited tardiness. There were 11 scheduled AR team meetings; no member missed more than two meetings. On the rare occasions that members missed or were tardy to meetings, they sent advance notice to all team members via e-mail or text messages. The few times AR team members missed meetings, they were out of state, undergoing medical procedures, meeting with administration, mourning the death of a relative.

Assignment completion was also high. AR team members agreed to work on various assignments outside the team's scheduled meetings. These assignments included reading articles, researching diversity definitions of other higher education institutions, analyzing survey and interview data, conducting document reviews, reviewing AR team meeting notes, and ranking new DAC applications. Each member completed all of the assignments with the exception of one team member. Jean-Pierre did not complete one assignment.

AR team members were actively engaged in the inquiry process and the co-construction of interventions. As detailed in Chapter 4, team members spent significant time discussing, debating, and developing each of the interventions in Phase 2 of this study. AR team members also participated at a very high level in the initial stages of Phase 3 of this study.

Dr. Lawrence shared her thoughts on the engagement of the AR team members:

" *You all have been very thorough . . . I really want to thank you all for the amount of work [you have done]. I really appreciate the - the level of thought and effort and conscientiousness you all have given to it. [This has been an opportunity] to really think critically about what's going to serve our*

institution as we move forward. And I think that you all are definitely doing that and I truly, truly appreciate it. (Dr. Lawrence)

" *Well, I can tell that. I can tell by [the] engagement from everyone that they're bringing their A game to the meetings. (Dr. Lawrence)*

Increased collaboration. Collaboration is a requirement of AR; without it, AR does not exist (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1987). I had initial concerns about the group being able to meet this fundamental requirement of AR. Higher education is laden with multiple levels of power and authority.

The diverse epistemologies of the group provided unique insight into the AR process and provided for a diverse collaborative effort. An example of how SRU's AR team overcame the hierarchical culture of higher education was demonstrated in an exchange between Tom, a straight white heterosexual male administrator in his sixties, and James, a black gay male staff member in his thirties. During a discussion about the purpose and goals of the redesigned DAC at an AR meeting, Tom and James engaged in staunch debate related to determining if the term social justice should be a stated goal of DAC. After ardently debating several other topics throughout the meeting, James, feeling empowered to express himself openly to the group, stated in exasperation, *"If we take social justice out now, it'll never come back in. So I can say it'll never get back!"* James was so focused on making his point to the other members of the AR team that he missed that he missed Tom's acknowledgement that James's point was valid and accepted, as well as his suggestion that social justice be highlighted as a standalone bullet item. After a few moments of awkward silence, we could physically see James's realization that he had become so focused on expressing himself that he had missed the

fact that Tom had made a compromise. James's knitted brow relaxed and gave way to a look of bewilderment, then a blank stare. Then James, known for his willingness to share his thoughts, quietly said, *"I'm with you."* The team burst into laughter. This type of engagement among AR team members created a high level of trust and collaboration.

My researcher notes reflected my surprise at how the AR team members demonstrated equality and collaboration amongst ourselves:

- *I am amazed at how the members of the team flow in and out of debate, teasing, affirming, and challenging each other with ease. We truly see each other as equals. (researcher notes)*
- *Where else on this campus can a staff member, an administrator, and a faculty member each having different views express those views in varying tones, volumes, and gestures with no one taking anything personally or feeling slighted? I can't believe how we hash things out and move forward. (researcher notes)*
- *I feel so empowered by this group! (researcher notes)*

Analysis of study data gathered from AR team members found that AR team members thought the AR process increased collaboration:

- *I found this very similar to professional organizations that I've been in where regardless of someone's position or title outside the volunteer organization or professional organization, everybody comes to the table equal with a goal for the benefit of that organization in mind, and that's why I felt there were a lot of parallels to the way my time in professional societies has been. (Tom)*

- *People on the committee [were] willing to . . . put their perspective out there [and]. . . when it came to compromise everybody was willing to come down and say okay, yeah, I can agree with that wordsmithing or that phrase or use of this or that word. (Tom)*
- *So I will just say I have really enjoyed being on this [team]. You know, some of these [projects] can be brutal. They can be brutal, right? An indentured servitude for some people. But this has been great. I think the group has really worked and wrestled with a lot of these things. (James)*
- *[When I hear] Dr. Lawrence [talk] about us, she says, 'You [all] don't realize it, but [you] have [your own language].' She says and it makes people . . . say, 'Oh, I want to jump in, but I don't really know how to jump in.' She says it's very evident that [we] have spent a lot of time together and like each other.*

Overcoming the power structures inherent in higher education institutions (Rothman et al., 2011), AR team members freely presented various points of view throughout the AR process. Team members demonstrated a sense of empowerment through interactions with other members with various levels of academic rank, thus using AR as an emancipatory process (Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

Method and process. As detailed in Chapter 4, SRU's AR team used the AR process to develop eight interventions. These interventions are divided into three phases, each containing AR cycles that occurred during each phase of the study. During the course of this study, five AR cycles were completed and two additional cycles were initiated as shown in Figure 7.

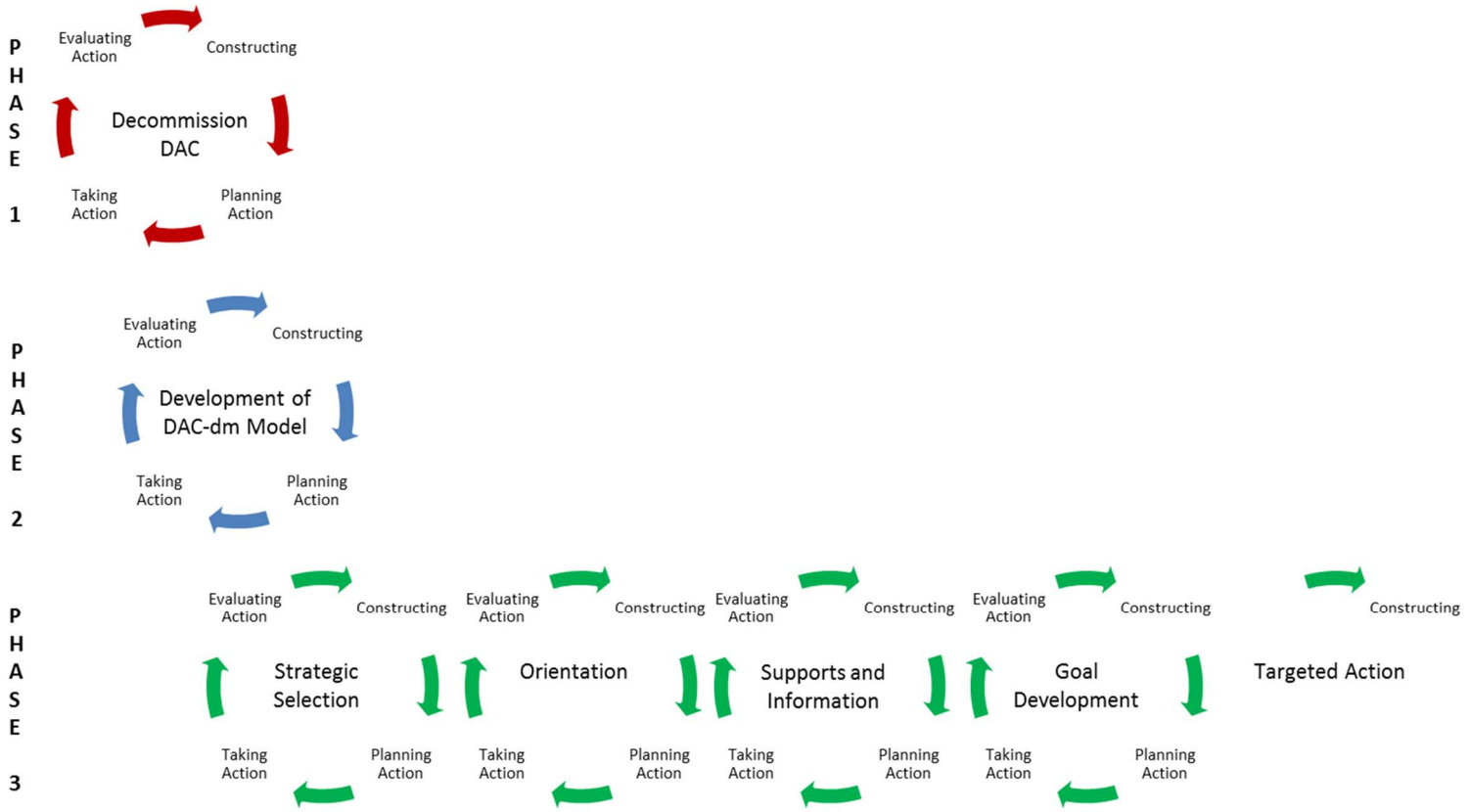


Figure 7. Completed and initiated action research cycles, by phases.

Dr. Lawrence and the AR team members had not experienced AR previously. During my initial sponsor meeting with Dr. Lawrence, I asked her if she had any experience with AR. She replied, "I have heard of it but I have never used it." AR team members provided similar responses when I posed the same question to them. One AR team member replied, "No, I am not familiar with this methodology; however, it sounds interesting." By the end of the study, Dr. Lawrence and the AR team members were able to clearly articulate the AR process.

A close analysis of AR team interview transcripts shows that Dr. Lawrence and each remaining AR team member credited the success of the project to the AR process. Several team members commented about how AR provided a method and process for our work:

- *[In other approaches, stakeholders] can get kind of pigeonholed in their thinking. So to have multiple people come in and talk about process and infrastructure [was new for me]. As I look back, and even when I think about going into a different job, I think that I will take the experience that I had on the action research team and apply it to [my] next position. (James)*
- *I think [the AR process] gave us time to really think seriously about what the goal of the DAC should be, how to strategically be inclusive, making sure that multiple voices are heard and that the DAC has direction. (Monique)*
- *I think [the AR process] is more structured in the sense that it was very contemplative as to the process we took. The process we went through wasn't hurried, and so it gave us time to make sure that we were collectively on the same page. (Tom)*

" *You know, just [us] - to make sure that DAC continues to stay relevant and effective [so that] in that in five years, we're not back at this moment with Dr. Lawrence saying, 'Jesus, I got to get rid of this DAC and start all over again,' which could easily happen if there's not a process. (James)*

Individual learning. The AR process was developmental for AR team members. Meeting regularly, collaborating, and working toward a common goal enabled AR team members to develop in different ways. AR team members attributed their individual development, whether personal or professional, to the AR process.

Participation in the AR process resulted in individual learning for the AR team members. AR team members expressed how participating in the AR project provided connectivity to other members of the group. The group developed a norm of using the first fifteen minutes of each 90-minute meeting to share what they were experiencing outside the group. Over the course of the study, members shared their experiences of managing the failing health and ultimate death of a parent, medical challenges, job promotions, research developments, becoming a finalist in a national faculty search, and other family related celebrations. Providing this time enabled the AR team members to express themselves in a safe space; receive feedback, information, and support from other team members; and reflect on their feelings and actions. Excerpts from AR team member interviews that support this finding include the following:

" *It became more than just this formal process. It became a relational process for all of the team members. And I think just - you know, the whole respect piece was a big part of why we gelled so much. And so it's just a wonderful*

group of people to engage both on the professional level, but just also on the personal level. (Jean-Pierre)

- *I think, you know, this process was operated more slowly, and I think there was much more time directed towards collaboration and community building, within - the AR team. Whereas in, you know, other committees or projects that I've been on or - or led, it was really the task at hand kind of driving the timetable. And I felt as though instead, it was kind of the - the community or the relationships driving the timetable. I think, you know, the group was pretty amicable. I felt like, you know, I - I got to know two out of the three on a more kind of personal level. (Monique)*

AR team members were asked to reflect on one thing that they learned during their experience as an AR team member. Their responses included the following:

- *So the action research process really helped me think through [things]. . . . I know you feel passionate about that, [but] just listen to what somebody else is saying. Yeah, I know you disagree with that, but you haven't had enough time to consider the merits of what they're saying before you continue to be so vehement about your disagreement. And I think - somebody who was always - who puts a lot of energy into everything, I think the action research process really was a part of my own building process to stop and listen and not be the one having all the ideas and saying - saying all the stuff. (Jean-Pierre)*
- *I guess it affected me personally in the sense of - it informed me or made me learn of how far this campus still needs to go. And, you know, while it's been 50 years since SRU has become integrated - and . . . you know, that's the only*

diversity issue we need to worry about - that there's still a long way to go at this institution. (Tom)

- *I kind of learned from this action research process that we may have everything in our head and we may think that we're clear in communicating that, but we've got to make sure that we're really intentional because people come to this from all different perspectives, all different point of views, varying levels of education, varying levels of understanding. Their commitment may all be strong, but there's a lot of variables to that and we've got to check in with people. And people want to hear that. They want to know that their voice is being heard and that it's taken into account. (James)*
- *I think probably two different kind of learning experiences. One is around kind of our process of benchmarking what other campuses have done or are doing in - in regards to their advisory committees or boards or however they're defined. I think that was a good learning opportunity for all of us. And I think the second kind of personal learning point for me was just that, you know, perhaps I'm not as isolated as I think I am. You know, there - there are kind of supporters out there. I might not interact with them all that frequently, but that, you know, there is kind of this support system on campus. (Monique)*

Through this AR project, members learned the AR process, how to accept input from others, how they perceive others, and how others perceive them. By articulating what they learned through the AR process, AR team members substantiated that individual learning occurred during this study.

Facilitation. The AR team members expressed that creating a new DAC at SRU required the engagement of a skilled facilitator to help gain and maintain focus and momentum. Facilitation was a key component throughout the three phases of this study. Dr. Lawrence stated during one of our meetings that a challenge she faced with the original DAC was the lack of a facilitator. SRU's DAC became dormant after the president accepted the diversity plan because DAC did not have a person to convene the members and help the council move forward. She also stated that the members looked to her for facilitation and she did not want to fill that role:

- *One of the things that was challenging is just that [there was no] facilitator. [It was difficult] for me to lead the meeting, bring the issues to the table, begin the conversation **and**—at the same time—facilitate conversation, watch my time, take my [notes]. It was too much.*

Data analysis showed that a skilled facilitator enabled the AR team to reach consensus, stay on task, and move toward our stated goals. When AR team members were asked to share what they believed to be key in the AR process, many on the team stated that my facilitation of the group was important:

- *Oh, I think first, your management, [and] leadership [kept] us on task on a regular basis, but not hurried. (Tom)*
- *[Even with] the guidance that you gave us. [You were] never steering us towards a specific goal. It was steering [us] towards completion of the task. (Tom)*
- *I think your ability to have that structure laid out. You know, the recording, [and preparing] agendas. I really feel like that is what helped us maintain*

movement throughout the process because we easily could have been derailed into just talking for hours at a time. So I think that was really important. (Monique)

- *I will say you did a great job of keeping us on task and moving us. [You] walking us through and then every time we got back together, recapping everything. Communication that you sent out to us was clear and there was a recap on it. You know, when we forgot, you were there as our memory. (James)*
- *I think we were able to do exactly what was expected. One of the other pieces of the dynamic was your role [as facilitator]. You allowed [those of us who are] opinionated people to roll with it and - your role [sometimes as] listener but also other times, kind of putting on your facilitator hat and saying, "Okay, we're going to move forward" or "We haven't reached consensus, so let's get some consensus." That role itself made a - made a big difference. I think it helped [both the dynamics] and the ability for people to express themselves. Even when it was difficult for others to accept but still come to a consensus. (Jean-Pierre)*
- *I will just give a quick shout out to Beverly as well, who has really kind of managed all of us, which [was challenging]. She has done a lot of work, does all of the backend work that we don't do. So I just really want to give a shout out to Beverly as well. Because this would not have been as smooth and we wouldn't have got as much work done maybe if we didn't have a leader like that. (James)*

The new DAC also needed a facilitator. I served as facilitator of the new DAC into the AR constructing phase of Intervention 6 (Goal Development). I engaged two additional facilitators to develop two goal development sessions for the new DAC members. We worked with Dr. Lawrence to create agendas, develop group activities, secure space, and provide details of both sessions to the new DAC members. Both meetings were held late in the academic year and were well attended. My researcher notes reflected my satisfaction in the high level of attendance: *"Only two members absent from both meetings – Wow! They were all so excited and engaged - exchanging ideas about how to begin their work."*

Theoretically Sound Developmental Model

The AR team collaborated to conduct research to find existing best practices or models to develop effective diversity advisory councils in higher education institutions. Results of our literature review identified a gap in the literature. AR team members decided to conduct interviews with six chief diversity officers at higher education institutions within SRU's region to determine if there were best practices that were in use but not documented. I held interviews with each of the selected CDOs, and the AR team analyzed the data (Appendix C). Analysis of the data showed that none of the CDOs interviewed were using theory-based practices, and each was using a distinctly different method of engaging stakeholders to enhance diversity and inclusion at their institution. Table 9 displays findings from the interview data. After participating in a conference call about advisory group models, with some of the same CDOs interviewed, Dr. Lawrence commented, *"I was just shocked in the two minutes that people called out their model*

that they were so different and disparate. I was just like, 'Oh, okay, there are . . . a whole lot of different models out there."

Table 9
Chief Diversity Officer Interview Findings (N=6)

Inquiry	Response
Is there a theoretically sound model or practice in place?	• No theoretically sound model or practice is currently in use at any of the institutions
Is there a diversity advisory group in place?	• Yes = 4 • No = 2
What does your institution needs from a diversity advisory group?	• Stakeholder engagement • Strategic member selection, member development, stakeholder engagement and buy-in • Strategy

After reviewing the data, AR team members agreed that the team had made sufficient efforts to find a widely used best practice and model. Based on the data collected, the AR team collaborated to construct a diversity advisory board development model for SRU's next DAC.

The collaborative approach to redesigning the SRU DAC resulted in the development of the DAC-dm. The co-constructed model was a product of the AR Team's 10-month effort to redesign the SRU DAC. The DAC-dm is a six-phase model based on the governance board work of Holland and Jackson (1998) and Brown (2007). A detailed description of the model is provided in Chapter 4.

SRU adopted the DAC-dm as its model for the development of the new DAC. The new DAC members began the first phase of the model, which began Phase 3 of the study, in late 2014. The new DAC successfully completed the first three phases (strategic

selection, orientation, and supports/information) of the DAC-dm model and entered into the fourth phase (Goal Development) before the end of the study.

Research Question 2: What Challenges Impeded the Process of Developing a Diversity Advisory Council Within This Higher Education Institution?

Taking up diversity and inclusion work at a higher education institution is challenging. Analysis of data gathered during this AR study indicated that persistent challenges exist that impede the process of developing a DAC within a higher education institution (as outlined in Table 10). These challenges exist inside and outside of the institution.

Table 10
Challenges

Research Question	Finding	Theme
2. What challenges impeded the process of developing a diversity advisory council within this higher education institution?	Diversity and inclusion work elicits fear and resistance	• Diversity and inclusion is perceived as adversarial • Resistant attitudes • Liability concerns
	Empowerment	• Stakeholders challenged by empowerment
	Defining diversity	• Impeded council development
	Accountability	• Member accountability

Diversity and Inclusion Work Elicits Fear and Resistance

Throughout this study participants stated that discomfort of some individuals affected the efforts toward—and at times, discussions about—diversity and inclusion. The findings related to the affect this discomfort caused are shared in the second research question.

Diversity and inclusion work is perceived as adversarial. During the course of this study, participants shared their experiences regarding diversity and inclusion efforts. The theme that diversity and inclusion are seen as adversarial by many emerged from an analysis of the data. This theme, coupled with the national debate around race in America that hung in the background during the campaign period leading up to the 2016 United States presidential election, highlighted the fact that diversity and inclusion is a topic that triggers conflict. This triggered response is realized within higher education institutions.

Resistant attitudes. Study data indicate the existence of resistant attitudes toward diversity and inclusion efforts. After the first DAC meeting, new members provided feedback via a 13-question survey (Appendix F). Question 7 of the survey read, *How has the culture of higher education influenced the work of the Diversity Advisory Council?* DAC members' responses show a perceived resistance to diversity and inclusion in higher education:

- *Our work has been influenced by this culture in both positive and negative ways. The culture of higher education is simultaneously resistant to change, and on a trajectory of increasing diversity and enhancing multicultural education and awareness. The work of DAC is therefore limited in some ways by the culture of tradition that supports doing the same things that have always been done in exactly the way they have always been done. (Response 1)*
- *Higher Ed culture creates silos in areas where there could be more collaboration; and, the higher ed culture enforces the independent 'my grant,*

my impact, my recognition' culture that in many ways naturally works against the idea and notion of inclusion at the faculty and staff level. This energy trickles down to resources available for students and those charged with developing student programs that encourage more diversity and inclusion at the University. The DACs work to identify these silos, engage influential players on campus, and fill gaps in D&I[diversity and inclusion] will chip away at this problem. (Response 2)

Data gathered during the study include comments from AR team members about how diversity is an adversarial topic:

- *I feel as though race is just a less safe issue for the Institution to actively engage. [SRU has] a lawsuit in our past. We are in the [Southern region of the United States]. We're dealing with issues of neighboring states and their struggles. So I think around issues of race, it's probably better [or shall I say] the Institution feels it's better to stay under the radar. (Monique)*
- *There's been a lot of things in the headlines over the last year or so that make it pretty apparent that this country still has a long way to go. And while having grown up in the - in the 60s and seeing what went on in the civil rights struggle, [I am] thinking that progress had been made, [but] it's pretty evident there's still a long bit of progress to go. It's not just a black/white issue now that we have so many other cultures in this country that need to be recognized. (Tom)*

Dr. Lawrence also commented on this topic:

" *[Diversity] feels very political . . . in higher ed. . . . I think each school and . . . leadership at that time, at that school is so specific in terms of what they're willing to do, there's a lot of trepidation around terminology and phrasing. [What is] the charge . . . and do we want to go that far and what are we saying if we do that? I think in higher ed, you often get a lot of hesitancy and conservatism around [diversity], [which] causes it to always be this kind of thing where, [when you read] the language . . . you're like, 'I'm not quite sure what that said. Did they say anything?' There's a lot of that often in higher ed. And I understand that and I think . . . [it] depends upon where you are. (Dr. Lawrence)*

My researcher notes show my resistance to taking on this AR project:

" *I am a bit apprehensive to take on this project as my dissertation study. As a black female, I don't want to appear angry. I also have concerns about how my professional peers will see my work. Will they consider my topic as 'less than'? This is not a topic that is widely discussed or engaged by my peers. (researcher notes)*

The AR team struggled with diversity-related resistance in higher education as the AR team grappled with previous experiences with SRU's Legal Affairs Division and defining diversity (as evidenced below). Based on an analysis of the study data, this resistance seemed to be widely recognized by multiple stakeholders.

Liability concerns. Analysis of data gathered through participant interviews, AR team meetings, and informal communications reveal persistent concern regarding legal

action held by institutions within higher education. This concern was received as a barrier to enhancing diversity and inclusion work in these organizations.

As detailed earlier, one of the first challenges of the AR team was identifying SRU's definition of diversity or a diversity statement. My researcher notes indicated that AR team members described the Legal Department as the place where things "go to die," and that if we wanted to gain momentum on this project, we had to avoid engaging the legal arm of SRU. Transcripts of some of the AR team meetings illustrated the dialog between AR team members about challenges of "getting past legal" on things related to diversity. During an AR team meeting, team members discussed the challenges the original DAC had with trying to get SRU to adopt a diversity statement or definition:

- *That's an issue because if the new DAC comes out and they're not going to be operating in a vacuum, obviously. But if they don't have that leverage [so that] they can be able to say those things they feel are important, without having that pressure and influence [from Legal Affairs] like, 'Oh no, if you put this in the document' - and I heard this so many times during the process – 'that's not [a sanctioned plan].' (Jean-Pierre)*
- *It'll never get accepted. (Monique)*
- *And that's why the process [of the original DAC's work] lasted so long. I mean, I remember Legal Affairs, in fact, having a big part with [what we can and can't say]. (Jean-Pierre)*

The AR team members resorted to developing a working diversity definition/statement. The team was intentional in referencing that the definition/statement was a working definition/statement so that SRU's Legal Affairs

would not have to review it before the group could proceed. During an AR team meeting, members were struggling with how to move forward with a working definition/statement of diversity. After a couple weeks of co-constructing a working definition/statement, AR team member Tom commented,

- *Again, I think it would be good to say that it's a working definition so we don't have to get into that argument with people further on and we can drop having to worry about how it fits in the legal language. This group is providing a philosophical definition of diversity that we feel allows the committee to go about meeting its responsibilities to the institution and all legal searches for language or whatever needs [*sic*] to go through EOO and not through [IDO]. (Tom)*
- *And moving on to [Nima's] statement, and she admits that it probably wouldn't pass SRU legal, but still she wanted to write it. (Beverly)*
- *We can't say what the University will do because that has to go through legal and all of that and we may never see it again. (Beverly)*

Empowerment

Initially, the AR team members struggled to accept the fact that Dr. Lawrence empowered the team to construct a new DAC design void of any preconceived ideas. During one of the group's first meetings, we reviewed Dr. Lawrence's charge, which included measures of success for the group. The success measure that presented challenges for the group was stated as, *"Success will be determined by a reengineered diversity advisory group purpose, mission structure, and election process."* The group

became “stuck” during our discussion about this statement and could not move forward in the process.

AR team members resisted the opportunity Dr. Lawrence had presented to the group: the opportunity to make our own design. AR team members often inquired about the team’s authority to make certain decisions related to the DAC redesign or made statements related to being “stuck”:

- *I guess my perspective would be that this group provide her the options to make the decision*.” (Tom)
- *So I guess I’m kind of stuck in that our job is to develop the function of the new DAC and who’s going to be on it, what the roles are going to be, and what it should pursue and how to evaluate its effectiveness. (Monique)*
- *Has Dr. Lawrence mentioned anything about . . . whether DAC will go back to [its original structure, or] that [we] are the ones who are going to get this done and [we] have to meet [a specific number of] times to get this done? (Jean-Pierre)*

Due to the AR team members’ resistance to the authority given by Dr. Lawrence, the team requested that I meet with Dr. Lawrence to make sure that it was her intention to have the group create the new design and processes for DAC.

I met with Dr. Lawrence after the AR team meeting, and she confirmed that her expectation was for the AR team to create the new design and processes for DAC. I conveyed Dr. Lawrence’s message with the group at the next meeting. This confirmation seemed to move the group along until the end of the development process, when the group asked that I invite Dr. Lawrence to the next meeting to make sure that the co-

constructed design was what she wanted. After meeting with Dr. Lawrence, the AR team finalized and presented the design. During my final interview with Dr. Lawrence, she shared that an AR team member came to her for confirmation about her expectations of the team. Dr. Lawrence shared, *"I think it's almost like they're trying to protect the [old] process by not going too far."*

Analysis of transcripts from final AR team member interview data also evidenced members having challenges with the authority given by Dr. Lawrence:

- *A couple of times, we sent you back to Dr. Lawrence to get some clarification on what our role was, but I think [once it] became [clear that] we pretty much had free reign to provide to her a recommendation on the committee and that there wasn't something already pre-decided, I think that gave us the liberty and freedom to, you know, move forward without reservation that we were going to do this [for naught]. (Tom)*
- *From the perspective of [an] administrator, there is nothing more frustrating than, say, faculty coming to me as a department head and say, 'We want this accomplished. And we want it accomplished this way.' And . . . sometimes them saying that it needs to be accomplished this way is not in the cards because . . . I may not have the resources or the system may not allow that approach, not knowing what resources [Dr. Lawrence] has and what latitudes she has to deal with the bureaucracy at her level. I'd rather say this is what we say is the goal and we recommend that, these approaches are . . . feasible ways to [go] about [doing] this without trying to implement something on her*

that she doesn't have the resources for, nor really the control to manage. (Tom)

- *And I think once it was fully realized that [the AR team was empowered to redesign the DAC], then I think that kind of empowered us to[say], 'Let's let the good times roll,' and, you know, we started to have, I think, some very open and meaningful discussions about things. (Tom)*
- *The check-ins with Dr. Lawrence, I think probably helped us to kind of remember why we were doing this. (Monique)*
- *You know, who is setting the direction There were times where I was like, 'Well, I think, Dr. Lawrence just needs to inform us on this' or 'This is her decision' or '[We need] for her to clarify.' (Monique)*
- *I think a little bit of a challenge for me [was] sometimes throughout the process not ever really being definitively clear and hearing directly from Dr. Lawrence more – [I think] . . . I would have wanted to hear more about her thoughts about [the AR team's work] and what exactly [the AR team] was going to be doing. (James)*
- *[Dr. Lawrence is]a very competent woman and [she] is very connected. (James)*

Defining Diversity

An initial challenge facing the AR team was the lack of an accepted institutional definition of diversity. It was clear from the group's first work session that the lack of a common definition was going to be a challenge. The AR team's first effort was to review documents related to the previous DAC and diversity at SRU.

After reviewing several documents in search of an official definition of diversity, the team could only find a reference to diversity in the SRU diversity plan and the SRU faculty statement on diversity that speaks specifically to race and ethnicity, geographic diversity, linguistic diversity, and experiential diversity. Team members commented that they had not seen a published definition of diversity at SRU. Tom asked, *"Is there an ultimate document that is fairly recent that captures the administrative perspective on diversity?"* After a discussion and search of the Internet, the AR team surmised that a public definition for diversity did not exist for SRU. AR team member comments included the following:

- *So this is an interesting thing in my short time here and [an] observation about some of this stuff is the inconsistency [around diversity]. This is kind of alarming in a lot of ways. This faculty statement on diversity, a) because of what it doesn't say, but b) that I think we have these other plans that say and speak to a larger sense of diversity. So I think that's the inconsistent message that we kind of have going on here as it relates to diversity. [Not only] what we say as in plans or internally how we talk about [diversity], but then how we articulate it or translate that to the public is [different]. So I think that's really [what] we should look at and [modify] it to some cohesive consistent message around some of these things. (James)*
- *Even the EEO website does not have - this is the Southern Region University's definition of diversity. It just has this statement and different links that you can click on for different policies and forms if you have a complaint or something like that. (Beverly)*

Our first individual assignment was to spend the next week researching and developing our own definitions of diversity. At the end of the week, everyone's definition was shared with the group. At the next AR meeting, we negotiated and deliberated on terms and statements before coming to consensus that the concept of diversity is fluid and that focusing on a definition was impeding the work of the group. The exchange that followed during the second work session helped the group move beyond the impasse of defining diversity.

Once the complexity—or perhaps the impossibility—of adequately defining diversity was recognized, the AR team decided it was more important to create a working statement of diversity versus a definition of diversity. The outcome of that decision was a purpose statement for the DAC. The AR team collectively developed this purpose statement:

> *DAC is committed to inclusive excellence, providing a welcoming campus environment, and fostering of work and learning communities supportive of differences and similarities of all people. Inclusive excellence will be pursued through developing and implementing strategies to increase the awareness and value of diversity to build a more compassionate campus community where varied perspectives are sought and valued.*
>
> *The purpose of the Diversity Advisory Council is to actively pursue this endeavor and demonstrate:*
>
> 1. *Accountability*
> 2. *Visibility*
> 3. *Transparency*

4. *Engagement*

5. *Education*

During my final interview with Dr. Lawrence, she commented,

" *And it just depends upon how the leadership sees it in terms of what they - how they define diversity, actually. Not - you know, no matter what the school says diversity is, what I have learned is that people have it in their head what diversity is, and it depends upon how they feel about that and how - what they feel is the importance of that is really going to dictate how it plays out on the campus.*

Accountability

Accountability was a challenge that impeded the process of developing the new DAC. At the end of the second goal development session, Dr. Lawrence asked the DAC members to divide into groups around the four major goal areas they had developed. She then asked that each group identify a facilitator and plan to meet over the course of the summer and report back to her on their work. Members quickly arranged themselves into groups, and the session adjourned. The new DAC members participated in a survey after the second goal development session. In the survey responses, new DAC members indicated the need for a facilitator:

" *I believe the DAC has done good work in the year since it was formed, although the work has proceeded more slowly than I expected. We were supposed to meet over the summer but that didn't happen, and the subcommittee I'm on met once, but has had difficulty finding a subsequent meeting time, so our work has stalled. I've felt that every DAC meeting is well*

organized, productive, and worthwhile, but we don't have as much to show for that time as I would have expected to have at this point. (Response 1)

- *The scheduling of meetings was not done promptly or in an efficient manner, which caused much time to pass between meetings and the original momentum lost. Now, there is no support at all with the subcommittees expected to schedule meetings on their own. (Response 2)*

The resistance of the new DAC members to assume accountability for the council and for the AR team or the IDO to establish an accountability system seemed to be a challenge for the new SRU DAC. Without an accountability system, DAC members became inactive.

Analysis of data related to the original DAC also showed challenges related to accountability. Some of the comments included the following:

- *I still have drafts of those accountability pieces for every single goal [of the diversity plan], including who's responsible, and those pieces were yanked out. (Jean-Pierre)*
- *I'm a little fearful, though, Tom, that the previous DAC got majorly sidelined when [the former CDO] was asked to present kind of a draft of the plan in front of the deans and they kind of tore her to shreds. That was that accountability issue, like - are we going to need to put this in our annual reports and what does that mean. (Monique)*
- *And so everyone kind of feels like they are a special case. And so because they are a special case, they can't be held to the same standard or they can't*

be held accountable in ways that other groups are held accountable. (Monique)

Chapter Summary

Data collected and analyzed for this study provide sufficient findings to address the two research questions contained in this study. Four key elements of developing an effective DAC at SRU were found. Additionally, four challenges that impeded SRU's process of redesigning its DAC were found. Conclusions based on these findings will be presented in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

"Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

The purpose of this AR study was to understand how a higher education institution redesigns an effective diversity advisory council and to identify factors and conditions that affect this process. The following research questions guided this study:

(1) What elements are critical in developing an effective diversity advisory council within a higher education institution?

(2) What challenges impeded the process of developing a diversity advisory council within this higher education institution?

This chapter presents a summary of the study and its findings; explores two conclusions, the study's assumptions, and the learning that resulted from the study; and closes with final reflections.

Summary of the Study

Southern Region University initiated a project to decommission its inactive diversity advisory council, redesign the council, and commission a new DAC using AR methodology to address the institution's issue of not having an effective DAC. A study of SRU's process was initiated simultaneously to answer the questions presented above. Data for this study were generated by (1) the study sponsor – SRU's chief diversity

officer, (2) AR team members who were strategically selected using a decision tree (Appendix B), (3) CDOs from higher education institutions within SRU's university system, (4) original SRU DAC members, and (5) new SRU DAC members. The data analyzed were gathered from sponsor meeting transcripts, diversity advisory council surveys, action research team meeting transcripts, interviews with six chief diversity officers (CDO) of institutions within SRU's university system, observations, documents, interviews with the project sponsor and AR team members, and research notes and journals. This three-phase study spanned 24 months and resulted in the development of eight interventions to address SRU's issue. As AR facilitator, I collaborated with the project sponsor and AR team members to decommission the original DAC and develop and implement the six-phase Diversity Advisory Council Development Model to the SRU system. The DAC-dm is based on the non-profit governance board development research of Holland and Jackson (1998) and Brown (2007). Interventions 1 through 5 were successfully completed. Intervention 6 was implemented but not completed due to various challenges that will be presented later in this chapter.

Critical Elements

The first research question asked, "What elements are critical in developing an effective diversity advisory council within a higher education institution?" To answer this question, original DAC members were surveyed, seven chief diversity officers were interviewed, and a literature review was conducted to identify best practices, models, or empirical studies that would identify critical elements the SRU AR team could consider in the development of the new SRU DAC. This process produced no critical elements or best practices for DACs. None of the chief diversity officers interviewed were using

DACs at their institutions, five of the six were using various groups to enhance diversity and inclusion at their institutions, and one chief diversity officer was not using any group (Appendix C). The groups that the five CDOs were using varied widely and included the following:

- committees dedicated to diversity events or projects (e.g., academic diversity alignment committee, Black History Month committee, and diversity summit committee);
- multiple presidential diversity commissions, each with its own processes, no formal evaluation process, and both random and informal feedback; and
- a standing committee of the much larger University Senate.

A review of the literature did not produce any critical developmental elements related directly to DACs. However, literature related to non-profit governance boards produced by Holland and Jackson (1998) and Brown (2007) was discovered. The lack of identified methods to develop diversity advisory councils identified a gap in the literature.

Without existing best practices or empirical data, the project sponsor and AR team developed their own approach. This approach included decommissioning the inactive DAC and using the work of Holland and Jackson (1998) and Brown (2007) to inform the development of the new SRU DAC. Data were coded and thematized to identify significant elements in the process of developing the new SRU DAC. Analysis of the data resulted in four critical elements in the SRU DAC development process: (1) strong supportive leadership from institutional leaders, (2) formal decommissioning of prior diversity advisory groups, (3) the AR process, and (4) a theoretically sound developmental model.

Challenges

The second research question asked, "What challenges impeded the process of developing a diversity advisory council within this higher education institution?" To answer this question, data generated from Phase 2 and 3 of the study were coded and thematized to identify challenges faced by SRU during the process of developing the new DAC. Original and new SRU DAC members, AR team members, and the study sponsor experienced or identified six challenges to developing an effective DAC at SRU:

- Stakeholders were challenged by empowerment.
- Diversity and inclusion is seen as adversarial, leading to resistant attitudes and liability concerns.
- Lack of an institutional definition of diversity impeded the work.
- Member accountability stalled DAC's progress.

The study sponsor and AR team worked to overcome the challenge of empowerment that the AR team experienced. As AR facilitator, I worked with the AR team and sponsor to move the team through this challenge. The AR team accepted the freedom to redesign SRU's DAC and was able to work collaboratively and effectively to address SRU's issue after receiving clarification and assurance from the study sponsor.

The AR sponsor and team members were not able to resolve the challenges of diversity and inclusion being seen as adversarial and the lack of an institutional definition of diversity. By creating a working definition of diversity, the AR team was able to avoid the need for institutional and legal review, enabling the team to successfully reach its goal.

The remaining challenge of member accountability was not resolved or successfully addressed during the study. At the end of the study, the new SRU DAC members were plagued with issues related to volunteerism and lack of facilitation. These challenges caused the new DAC to stall during Intervention 6 – Goal Development.

Conclusion #1: Strong Administrative Support and a Theoretically Sound Model Are Critical Elements in Developing Effective DACs

This study produced evidence that strong administrative support and a theoretically sound model are critical elements in developing effective diversity advisory councils in higher education institutions. Data were analyzed to identify themes that led to this conclusion.

Strong Supportive Leadership

Diversity is not only about individuals and groups; it is embedded in higher education institutions in ways that are more often ignored than addressed (Bastado, 2012) and therefore must have strong supportive leadership from the highest levels of the institution to be enhanced. Institution leaders demonstrate commitment to diversity by taking action to "support, challenge, and champion the diversity process within their organization" (Hubbard, 2004, p. 147). Based on study data, I concur with Williams's (2013) assertion that in order for higher education institutions to move toward inclusive excellence, leaders have to commit to and support diversity efforts. This level of leadership is necessary to move higher education institutions toward inclusive excellence and transform systems. Institutional efforts to develop and maintain effective DACs that are void of support from senior leaders are not likely to succeed. As evidenced from the

breakdown of the original SRU DAC, an institutional expectation without institutional support at the highest levels impedes the work of a DAC.

Southern Region University's institutional leaders demonstrated strong support for redesigning the institution's DAC throughout the process. The study sponsor provided participatory leadership by seeking a consultant to address SRU's issue of not having an effective DAC. Her proactive approach of seeking and gaining support from the SRU's senior leaders was critical in moving the project forward. She also demonstrated a high level of support by actively participating in the decommissioning of the original DAC. Her strong sponsor support of the AR process—including strategically selecting the AR team members, providing necessary guidance to the AR team, participating in the selection of the new SRU DAC members, and implementing interventions developed by the AR team—was key to the success of the project and study. Strong leadership is necessary to conduct an efficient DAC development process, which is well suited for action research. As identified in the literature, diversity advisory council members should be diverse and representative of their stakeholders; have a strong interest in the work of the council; and bring needed skills, talents, networks, and resources to the council (Carnicom & Mathis, 2009; Davis & Davis, 2009; Greenlee, 2010; Thompson, 2011). It was evidenced in this study that strong leaders help the strategic selection process.

Without strong supportive leadership from senior leaders and the chief diversity officer, SRU would not have been able to decommission the old DAC and design the new DAC. Senior leaders demonstrated this significant support by participating in the

decommissioning of the original council and the announcement and orientation of the new council.

Support of senior leadership was significant throughout this study, as they helped to implement the new SRU DAC. Study data provide evidence that the attention given to the successful launch of the new council by the president, provost, and chief diversity officer were critical in the recruitment and orientation of new SRU DAC members. New DAC members also commented that the supports provided from other institutional leaders were significant to their experience. By openly demonstrating support for the new SRU DAC, leaders were able to attract and engage members with a high level of interest in the council. While the new SRU DAC stalled after the implementation of Intervention 6 – Goal Development, I predict that any goals developed and actions taken by the new council will also need the support of leaders. Leaders will also need to hold DAC members accountable for their actions or inactivity.

Theoretically Sound Developmental Model

Altbach, Gumport, and Berdahl (1995) identified research as central to the mission of many higher education institutions. I posit that efforts to develop diversity advisory councils in these institutions should be theoretically based to enhance diversity and inclusion across academic institutions and studied to contribute to the literature related to them. After the SRU AR team searched for theory-based practices for developing effective diversity councils and found none, the AR team developed the Diversity Advisory Council Developmental Model, which was based on the governance board development work of Holland and Jackson (1998) and Brown (2007).

Few empirical studies have been conducted to measure governing board effectiveness, and the literature is void of efforts with organizational advisory groups (Brown, 2005, 2007; Herman et al., 1997; Holland, 2002; Holland & Jackson, 1998; Jackson & Holland, 1998). Development of the DAC-dm enabled SRU to create a method to determine the effectiveness of its DAC. The creation of this theory-based approach helped the AR team substantiate the interventions presented in the DAC-dm and gain support from the study sponsor, other institution leaders, new DAC members, and other stakeholders. The DAC-dm provides a set of processes that higher education institutions can use to develop effective DACs. Leveraging the work of other researchers adds validity and rigor to the process, strengthening the potential value of replicating the model in other systems over time.

DACs are most effective when council members are gaining knowledge through the process. Davis and Davis (2009) and Senge (1990) identify the importance of team learning, which requires an environment that supports member learning. The DAC-dm supports this idea by presenting a six-phase process that fosters team learning at each stage of the process.

A theoretically sound developmental model for diversity advisory councils in higher education institutions is critical to maximizing a DAC's effectiveness and establishing a best practice in a field, and DAC-dm provides an option that can be considered by higher education institutions.

Conclusion #2: Effective DACs Require Institutional Investment

Williams (2013) posits that effective diversity advisory committees are valuable to higher education institutions. I concur, based on the assertions of SRU's sponsor,

original DAC members, new DAC members, and administrators. This was clearly a core belief of stakeholders at SRU. However, challenges impeded the process of developing an effective DAC at SRU. Study data show that specific components of higher education culture present critical challenges to developing effective DACs that require institutional investment to overcome.

Southern Region University is a subset of America where fear and resistance to inclusiveness are demonstrated daily throughout society and reported heavily through media. Perceived fear and resistance to inclusiveness is present within higher education institutions and emerged in this study through DAC survey responses and comments from AR team members and sponsor comments. Study data show that collaboration, resources, and support of diversity and inclusion work is impeded by this challenge. Institutions committed to enhancing diversity and inclusion should provide resources to help remove this perception. Some investments could include requiring diversity training to accompany sexual harassment and safety training, providing resources to DAC to create and promote opportunities for stakeholders to have dialogue related to diversity and inclusion, and promoting diversity as a core value at the institution. By making these and other investments in the promotion of inclusive excellence, institutions have the opportunity to reduce fear and resistance among stakeholders.

While many people claim to value DACs, there is limited literature to substantiate that claim. Morrill (2006) states that a reason for the limited literature dedicated to diversity advisory committees is the desegregation in higher education has been slowly embraced. When fear of diversity is present, systems develop policies and procedures that create a legalistic environment. Southern Region University's original DAC and AR

team experienced this type of environment when seeking the institution's definition of diversity. The original DAC and AR team faced challenges when trying to develop an institution-wide definition or description of diversity. Efforts of the original DAC were met with challenges from SRU's legal review entity. Additionally, the AR team found no SRU diversity statement or definition, which impeded the team's initial work. Another reported challenge was that creating language related to diversity often triggers excessive legal review to avoid potential legal liability, which results in documents never being approved. The AR team developed a working definition that would later become the new DAC diversity statement in order to avoid the bureaucratic process of dealing with "Legal." Institutional investment of time and resources for developing an institutional definition or statement of diversity is a way that institutions can reduce fear and resistance to diversity and inclusion efforts. Williams (2013) asserts that a lack of a clear definition of diversity hinder the work of diversity committees. This was the case with SRU's AR team. Many higher education institutions have experienced legal action related to diversity and inclusion; however, those actions should not be allowed to create or perpetuate fear among stakeholders.

The culture of higher education also inhibits stakeholders' feelings of empowerment, which makes AR an appropriate methodology to use when creating change in colleges and universities. Layers of authority within higher education impede stakeholders' acceptance of power when it is given. At the beginning of the study, stakeholders were resistant to accepting the power to design a new DAC. Institutional investment in processes that emancipate stakeholders at all levels and encourage participation in decisions that affect them will improve stakeholders' feelings of

empowerment, and I believe that this investment will increase stakeholder morale and increase diversity and inclusion throughout the system.

Another significant issue identified in this study that relates to establishing an effective DAC was accountability. At the end of the study, the new SRU DAC had stalled due to challenges of volunteerism and lack of facilitation. Both of these challenges resulted from a lack of accountability.

Altbach (2011) states that "pressures on the professoriate, not only to teach and do research but to also to attract external grants, do consulting, and earn additional income for themselves and for the university have grown" (p. 30). I would add that the pressures of participating in faculty or staff meetings, serving on other committees and work groups, and supporting institution events have also grown. All of these and other pressures that arise from personal commitments to family and community compete for the limited time that staff and faculty have to commit to significantly contributing to DACs. To reach their potential for inclusive excellence, institutions will have to invest in supports for faculty and staff to step away from their job duties to make significant contributions to DACs and, in the case of faculty, provide supplements for DAC work conducted outside the customary nine-month contract period. Failure to provide this investment leaves DACs vulnerable to volunteerism, where DAC members provide extremely limited time, as it is available.

The 14 members of DAC thrived while the study sponsor or I facilitated the group, but progress among the council members stalled when given the responsibility of organizing themselves. SRU DAC members agreed to organize into smaller groups assigned to subsets of the goals co-constructed by the group and to meet over the

summer. At the beginning of the following semester, none of the groups had met. DAC members reported that they needed a facilitator to help convene the groups, especially during summer months. Effective DACs work best when a professional or designated internal facilitator or strong leader provides the necessary supports to facilitate council members in attending to the work of the council. Institutions desiring to develop and maintain effective DACs should provide a facilitator for the council. Facilitators enable DAC members to make efficient use of their limited time by focusing on the work of the council instead of organizing the actions of the council.

DAC members should be held accountable for their participation in the council. In the first conclusion, strong supportive leadership was identified as a critical element in developing effective diversity advisory councils in higher education institutions. Having support from institution leaders helps prioritize diversity among stakeholders, leading to the identification and application of resources to support the diversity effort. However, in order to develop and sustain effective DACs, institution leaders must also evaluate and hold DAC members accountable. As evidenced by the new SRU DAC becoming stuck during Intervention 6 – Goal Development, institution leaders should continue providing support to DACs, but they should evaluate them as well. Support without accountability is not enough to achieve inclusive excellence. Leaders must also evaluate action to identify and address issues related to DACs and resolve institutional issues.

Implications for Practice

Creating DACs in higher education is complex. Rothman et al. (2011) state that fostering political and social change is a controversial goal of higher education and that efforts to build inclusive excellence are complicated by widespread public resistance.

While this study focused on the case of creating an effective DAC at SRU, practitioners must be prepared for possible resistance from internal and external stakeholders. Those seeking to develop DACs and work toward inclusive excellence in higher education should be aware that higher education is a component of a larger complex system and is impacted by internal and external systems that determine how it operates.

Altbach et al. (2011) state that traditional higher education governance is increasingly criticized for being large inefficient and bureaucratic. Those within an organization who possess power and influence and create policies and procedures that can aid or impede diversity and inclusion impact the process of developing and sustaining DACs in higher education. To be successful, practitioners should be aware of the culture, environment, and state of readiness of the institution prior to taking up the effort to develop a DAC. This is not to say that any of these should keep anyone from taking up the effort; it is merely suggested to help determine how best to move forward with efforts like the DAC-dm.

External stakeholders also possess power and influence that affect diversity and inclusion in higher education. Whether actively engaging in the process or prioritizing other concerns, these leaders affect diversity and inclusion efforts on campus. Resources, administration, priorities, and activities that occur on campus are a result of the power and influence wielded by elected and appointed officials who gain and maintain their roles by acting in the interests of those who elect or appoint them. Practitioners are advised to consider this when embarking upon the establishment of a DAC at an institution.

This study was not intended to address the current state of readiness for inclusive excellence in higher education in the United States. Rather, this is a case study designed to determine how a higher education institution could develop an effective DAC in the absence of empirical studies. This study makes an incremental step toward addressing the gap in the literature related to developing effective diversity councils in higher education. By identifying the gap in the literature, this study begins to lay the foundation for other researchers to begin working toward best practices and theory-based approaches to increasing diversity and inclusion work in higher education institutions. Many opportunities exist in colleges and universities across the United States and beyond to conduct studies and produce empirical data to develop the field and practice of diversity and inclusion in higher education.

By identifying the critical elements that help develop effective DACs and the challenges that impede the process, this study provides chief diversity officers and others who work within higher education and desire to enhance diversity and inclusion in their institutions with valuable information that can be used to build and sustain effective DACs. Fundamental to the process is securing strong supportive leadership from institutional leaders. Practitioners who gain the support of institutional leaders will be able to leverage that support to address the challenges identified.

Practitioners who gain support for senior leaders will be able to work to address the legalistic environment that may exist within the system. Taking steps to identify and address the fears of decision makers can help ease the restraints in the system, transforming the system into a more inclusive one and increasing DACs' ability to engage in meaningful work. DAC members will be able to focus their efforts on

addressing diversity issues, such as creating an institutional definition or statement of diversity, instead of navigating policies and procedures. Once fears are assuaged, processes will be changed to support diversity and inclusion efforts instead of impeding them.

Additionally, stakeholders will be able to work with senior administrators to seek resources that will significantly reduce the effects of volunteerism. These supports include shift release time for staff, course relief time for faculty, and stipends for faculty who participate in DAC activities during summers or other times when they are not covered by contract. Identifying ways to support DAC members' participation on the council will provide DAC members with space and time to make meaningful contributions to the council, increase participation, and reduce issues of accountability that significantly impede the process of developing and sustaining effective DACs.

The study also provides the DAC-dm as a theoretically sound model for colleges and universities to utilize to develop their DACs. The model provides six phases in the developmental process that can be applied to guide the establishment of an effective DAC. I strongly recommend the AR process as a methodology to be used in the development of the six phases of the DAC-dm. The collaborative process ensures that multiple stakeholders are involved in the DAC development process and establishes an environment of diversity and inclusion.

The implications for practice identified above will help establish a best practice for other higher education institutions, addressing the void that currently exists. The DAC-dm provides a first step in creating a theoretically sound model that can be replicated at other institutions. This six-phase model creates the opportunity for critique

and future research in the aim of creating sound practices for chief diversity officers and others tasked with enhancing diversity and inclusion at higher education institutions. By providing this process of developing effective diversity councils, additional work can be done to modify and enhance the model for greater outcomes.

Implications for Future Research

As thoroughly discussed in Chapter 2, the literature is void of empirical studies related to developing effective DACs in higher education institutions. The conclusions offered in this dissertation are intended to stimulate additional research in this area and support the development of DACS and those who seek ways to include institution stakeholders in their quest for collaborative approaches to increasing diversity and inclusion within their organizations. The critical elements and investments presented as a result of SRU's AR process are intended to inform other researchers. Without question, much more research is required before practitioners can identify widely accepted practices. However, the current focus on diversity and inclusion in American society provides a plethora of opportunities to explore and develop diversity advisory councils as a way to introduce transformational change in higher education institutions.

I implore others to conduct additional research to (1) identify other critical elements to develop effective DACs, (2) test the effectiveness of the DAC-dm, (3) identify other challenges that impede the process, and (4) determine if the processes to develop effective governance board members and the characteristics of those members identified by Holland and Jackson (1998) and Brown (2007) are consistent with those of effective diversity advisory councils. This research is needed to help advance the field of diversity and inclusion in higher education and support the emerging profession of chief

diversity officers in higher education, with the ultimate goal of establishing theories and best practices. The benefits of additional research include enhanced diversity and inclusion efforts across higher education and sound theory-based practices.

Final Thoughts

Higher education is a largely traditional system that operates in modern society, making it complex and in many instances ineffective. This leads to institutions getting in their own way when creating inclusive excellence. Determining how to let go of historically revered traditions to embrace new ideas, ways of thinking, and stakeholders that were not considered when higher education was first formed results in resistance to change. In order to change higher education, especially in areas related to diversity and inclusion, we must become comfortable with being uncomfortable and challenged in the process.

Practitioners within higher education must be prepared to walk a fine line when developing DACs and doing diversity and inclusion work within a higher education institution. To be effective, these change leaders must navigate the current systems while building change within the system. This is a tight line to walk and is best done when change leaders are aware of the complexities of the multiple systems. While large-scale change maybe desired, incremental change is also a win and should be acknowledged as such. Additional tools and studies will help develop wins across higher education, making collective wins more impactful and improving higher education in this country.

REFERENCES

Aguirre, A., & Ruben, M. O. (2006). Diversity leadership in higher education. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, *32*(3), 1-113.

Altbach, P. G. (2011). Patterns of higher education development. In P. G. Altbach, P. J. Gumport, & R. O. Berdahl (Eds.), *American higher education in the twenty-first century: Social, political, and economic challenges* (3rd ed., pp. 15-36). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Anderson, D. L. (2012). *Organization development: The process of leading organizational change* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Andringa, R. C. (2002). *Nonprofit board answer book: Practical guide for board members and chief executives*. Washington, DC: Board Source.

Bastedo, M. N. (Ed.). (2012). *The organization of higher education: Managing colleges for a new era*. Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press.

Bowen, W. G., Kurzwell, M. A., & Tobin, E. M. (2005). *Equity and excellence in American higher education*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia.

Brown, W. A. (2005, Spring). Exploring the association between board and organizational performance in nonprofit organizations. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *15*(3), 317-339.

Brown, W. A. (2007). Board development practices and competent board members: Implications for performance. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *17*(3), 301-317.

Carnicom, S., & Mathis, P. M. (2009). Building an honors development board. *Honors in Practice*, *5*, 41-46.

Carver, J. (1990). *Boards that make a difference: A new design for leadership in nonprofit organizations*. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass.

Chait, R. P., Holland, T. P., & Taylor, B. E. (1991). *The effective board of trustees*. New York, NY: Macmillan.

Coghlan, D., & Brannick, T. (2010). *Doing action research in your own organization* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Cox, T. (2001). *Creating the multicultural organization: A strategy for capturing the power of diversity*. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Davis, J. L., & Davis, H. (2009, Fall). The learning organization implemented in education through advisory committees. *Education*, *130*, 114-117.

deMarrais, K. P. (2004). Qualitative interview studies: Learning through experience. In K. B. deMarrais & S. D. Lapan (Eds.), *Foundations for research: Methods of inquiry in education and the social sciences* (pp. 51-68). Mahway, NJ: Erlbaum.

Dupuis, S. L. (2000, November 5). Institution-based caregiving as a container for leisure. *Leisure Sciences*, *22*(4), 259-280.

Dyer, D. A., & Williams, O. M. (1991). *Developing effective boards, councils and commissions*. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University: Virginia Cooperative Extension.

Franklin, S. (2005, January). About the Certification Examination Advisory Group. *Cost Engineering*, *47*(1), 7.

Freudenberger, W., Howard, J., Jauregui, E., & Sturm, S. (2009). Linking mobilization to institutional power: The faculty-led diversity initiative at Columbia University. In W. Brown-Glaude, *Doing diversity in higher education: Faculty leaders share challenges and strategies* (pp. 249-276). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Genheimer, S. R., & Shehab, R. L. (2009, April). A survey of industry advisory board operation and effectiveness in engineering education. *Journal of Engineering Education*, *98*, 169-180.

Gill, M., Flynn, R. J., & Reissing, E. (2005, November 4). The governance self-assessment checklist: An instrument for assessing board effectiveness. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *15*(3), 271-294.

Ginsberg, B. (2011). *The fall of the faculty: The rise of the all-administrative university and why it matters*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Goldstein, B. D., Kriesky, J., & Pavliakova, B. (2012, April). Missing from the table: Role of the environmental public health community in governmental advisory commissions related to Marcellus Shale drilling. *Environmental Health Perspectives*, *120*(4), 483-486.

Greenlee, B. J. (2010). School advisory council demography: Birds of a feather. *Planning and Changing*, *41*(1/2), 3-17.

Greenwood, D. J., & Levin, M. (2007). *Introduction to action research: Social research for social change* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Henderson, J. K. (2004, Spring). A survey of advisory board ABC's . . . advice, balance, and charge. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, *59*(1), 60-76.

Herman, R. D., Renz, D. O., & Heimovics, R. D. (1997, Summer). Board practices and board effectiveness in local nonprofit organizations. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *7*(4), 373-385.

Heron, J., & Reason, P. (2001). The practice of co-operative inquiry: Research 'with' rather than 'on' people. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research* (pp. 179-188). London, England: Sage.

Holland, T. P. (2002, Summer). Board accountability: Lessons from the field. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *12*(4), 409-428.

Holland, T. P., & Jackson, D. K. (1998). Strengthening board performance: Findings and lessons from demonstration projects. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *9*, 121-134.

Holloway, I. (1997). *Basic concepts of qualitative research*. Oxford, England: Blackwell Science.

Hubbard, E. E. (2004). *The diversity scorecard: Improving human performance*. Burlington, MA: Elsevier Butterworth Heinemann.

Jackson, D. K., & Holland, T. P. (1998). Measuring the effectiveness of nonprofit boards. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *27*, 159-182.

Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (1987). *The action research planner*. Geelong, Australia: Deakin University Press.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Maltbia, T. E., & Power, A. T. (2009). *A leader's guide to leveraging diversity: Strategic learning capabilities for breakthrough performance*. Boston, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann/Elsevier.

McLeand, M. (1991). *Together we work: A handbook for community arts councils*. Ontario, Canada: C.A.D. Office.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., & Baumgartner, L. M. (2007). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Morrill, R. L. (2000). The use of indicators in the strategic management of universities. *Higher Education Management*, *12*(1), 105-14.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Peterson, M. W. (2007). The study of colleges and universities as organizations. In P. J. Gumport (Ed.), *Sociology of higher education: Contributions and their contexts* (pp. 147-186). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (Eds.). (2008). *The Sage handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Richie, C. S., Jr. (2009, March/April). Commissioner's corner: An introduction. *Journal of Housing & Community Development*, 11-12.

Rooney, D. M., & Puerzer, R. J. (Eds.). (2002). *The smaller engineering school and its industrial advisory board: An effective partnership?* Paper presented at the Frontiers in Education conference, Boston, MA.

Rothman, S., Kelly-Woessner, A., & Woessner, M. (2011). *The still divided academy: How competing visions of power, politics, and diversity complicate the mission of higher education*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Senge, P. M., Kleiner, A., Roberts, C., Ross, R. B., & Smith, B. J. (1994). *The fifth discipline fieldbook: Strategies and tools for building a learning organization*. New York, NY: Crown Business.

Smith, J. C., Snider, D. E., & Pickering, L. K. (2009, January). Immunization policy development in the United States: The role of the advisory committee on immunization practices. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, *150*(1), 45-49.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stringer, E. T. (2007). *Action research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Teitel, L. (1995). Using advisory committees effectively in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education*, *11*, 59-70.

Thompson, C. (2005, February 1). Safety advisory group gets mixed marks from members. *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy*, *62*, 236-239.

Thompson, S. (2011, May). The establishment of effective advisory boards for promoting social justice in the arts on college campuses. *International Journal of Business and Social Justice*, *2*(8), 1-9.

Tuckman, B. W. (1965). Developmental sequence in small groups. *Psychological Bulletin*, *63*(6), 384-399.

Tuckman, B., & Jensen, M. A. (1977). Stages of small-group development revisited. *Group & Organization Studies*, *2*(4), 419-427.

White, D. E., Oelke, N. D., & Friesen, S. (2012). Management of a large qualitative data set: Establishing trustworthiness of the data. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *11*(3), 244-258.

Williams, D. A. (2013). *Strategic diversity leadership: Activating change and transformation in higher education*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Williams, D. A., & Wade-Golden, K. C. (2013). *The chief diversity officer: Strategy, structure, and change management*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Yin, R. K. (2012). *Applications of case study research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

APPENDIX A

ORIGINAL SOUTHERN REGION UNIVERSITY DAC MEMBER SURVEY

Original DAC Member Survey

A. What is your connection to the Southern Region University Diversity Advisory Council (DAC)?
    1. I have served as an Office of Diversity - Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC) member.
    2. I am a current or former Office of Diversity – Diversity Representative.
    3. I am a current or former Office of Institutional Diversity Employee.
    4. I interact/interacted with the Office of Institutional Diversity as a student.
    5. Other
    6. Total

B. Based upon your experience, did the members of the Diversity Advisory Council work collaboratively as a group?
    1. Yes
    2. No
    3. Total

C. Based upon your experience, select the one option that best describes your assessment of the Diversity Advisory Council's effectiveness in increasing awareness and inclusion of minority populations (i.e. persons with disabilities, older persons, persons identified as minority ethnic groups, and persons identified as LGBT) on the UGA campus.
    1. Very Effective
    2. Mostly Effective
    3. Somewhat Effective
    4. Not Effective
    5. Not Able to Assess
    6. Please select this option and use the space below to explain your answer.

D. Select the one option that best describes your support of the Diversity Advisory Council?
    1. Extremely Supportive
    2. Mostly Supportive
    3. Somewhat Supportive
    4. Neither Supportive or Non-Supportive
    5. Non-Supportive
    6. Not Able to Assess
    7. Please select this option and use the space below to explain your response.

E. In your opinion does UGA need an advisory group to help increase awareness and inclusion of minority populations (i.e. persons with disabilities, older persons, persons identified as minority ethnic groups, and persons identified as LGBT) on the UGA campus?
    1. Yes
    2. No
    3. Please select this option and use the space below to explain your response.

F. Based on your experience with the Diversity Advisory Council, please share three wishes that you have for the next advisory group. Please select and enter your response for each wish.
    1. Wish #1 - (Please select this option and enter your response in the area below.)
    2. Wish #2 - (Please select this option and enter your response in the area below.)
    3. Wish #3 - (Please select this option and enter your response in the area below.)

G. How long were you a member of the Diversity Advisory Council (DAC)?
    1. 1 Year or Less
    2. 2 - 5 Years
    3. 6-9 Years
    4. 10 Years or More
    5. I have never served as a DAC member.

H. Please select the one option that best describes your participation as a member of DAC.
    1. No Participation
    2. Limited Participation
    3. Average Participation
    4. Above Average Participation
    5. Full Participation

I. If given the opportunity, would you serve as an advisory group member for The University of Georgia Office of Institutional Diversity in the future?
    1. Yes
    2. Maybe
    3. No

APPENDIX B

AR TEAM SELECTION CHART

Potential IDO Action Research Team Member Decision Chart

	(Name)		(Name)		(Name)		(Name)		(Name)	
Have an interest in and commitment to the goals and mission of OID Interested/participative AR team weight = 10		0		0		0		0		0
Possess and be willing to use organizational influence for the benefit of the AR team weight = 7		0		0		0		0		0
Possess skills, talents, and resources that can benefit the AR project weight = 10		0		0		0		0		0
Be willing and able to work with and participate in group weight = 10		0		0		0		0		0
Be tolerant of others that have differing experiences, backgrounds, beliefs, etc. weight = 10		0		0		0		0		0
Be willing to commit time to the AR project through its duration weight = 10		0		0		0		0		0
Be willing to participate and give consent to participate in action research weight = 10		0		0		0		0		0
Totals	0		0		0		0		0	

APPENDIX C

SOUTHERN REGION UNIVERSITY CDO INTERVIEW RESPONSES

Question	Institution 1	Institution 2	Institution 3
1.) Does your institution have a diversity advisory council? If not now, has there ever been a diversity advisory council at your institution?	No -working to develop a diversity stakeholder council, with the intent to develop an advisory board to CDO's Office which will include external stake holders.	No; 6 presidential diversity commissions	No; Diversity Committee-standing committee of the University Senate
2.) How does your institution define diversity? Is there an institution-wide definition of diversity?	Diversity Statement: We will recruit, develop, retain, and engage a diverse cadre of students, faculty, and staff with a wide variety of backgrounds, perspectives, interests, and talents, creating a campus community that exemplifies the best in all of us—in our intellectual pursuits, our diversity of thought, our personal integrity, and our inclusive excellence."		*Stated that the institution's def is in the strat plan, but I could not find it. Defined within the Strategic Diversity Plan.
3.) Please describe your institution's diversity advisory council.	Diversity Council	6 presidential commissions (GLBTIQ, disabilities, gender & work life issues, racial & ethnic dialogue, sustainalbility, veteran affairs); chairs of each commission meet monthly (joint commission); organic	A committee of the Univesity Senate and is made up of elected faculty and staff, and students from across the University; follows a very structured process

Question	Institution 4	Institution 5	Institution 6
1.) Does your institution have a diversity advisory council? If not now, has there ever been a diversity advisory council at your institution?	Yes; has a Diversity Committee for the last 5-10 yrs	No. However, there are project-based advisory councils: diversity summit planning adv board; safe zone program;academic diversity alignment committee *15 years ago *** had an institution-wide diversity advisory body that become defunct within a few years	Yes. President's Commission on Diversity
2.) How does your institution define diversity? Is there an institution-wide definition of diversity?		the variation of social, biological and cultural identities, or the sum total of experiences among people existing together in a defined setting	3 definitions (never transmitted)
3.) Please describe your institution's diversity advisory council.	Faculty, student, administration, staff; not strategic; project-based; infrequent, loosley formed subcommittees	N/A	The commission works collaboratively with the Presisent's Office. Students, faculty, staff, (adding community).

Question	Institution 1	Institution 2	Institution 3
4.) What is the council's purpose and how does that connect with the overarching strategic goals of this institution as related to diversity?	charged with making report - recommendations each year about agenda items for the Institute [to] - to focus on - - Has a strategic plan that includes aspirations around diversity and inclusion. There is also a diverisity plan that supports the instition's stratgeic plan.	The 6 work collaboratively on programming, policy, etc. Joint commission advises the president, CDO	The committee sets law (?) and policy. They do not execute. Administrators execute *Stated that
4.1) What formal and informal activities do the diversity advisory council members participate in as a group? Advisory? Projects?	N/A	Each commission meets regularly	Regular meetings
4.2) How effective is your diversity advisory council in meeting its purpose?	N/A	Effective; always room for improvement	Pretty good, but challenging to not focus on a topic but the work
4.2.1) What are some specific outcomes/outputs that have been generated by the diversity advisory council?	N/A	Various campus initiatives related to ability, veterans, etc. - each PC has annual programs	Programs and various initiatives
4.2.2) How does your institution measure the council's effectiveness in this area?	N/A	Programs produced	Whether or not issues are resolved (presentation of bills on the Senate floor); no formal evaluation process The committee does not execute
4.3) Is the work of your institution's diversity advisory council meeting the needs of the organization?	N/A	Yes, but there is always room for improvement	
4.4) What, if anything, do you wish the diversity council would engage in to support the diversity aims of your institution?	N/A		
4.5) How does the council measure its success?	Analysis will be done after the council is running		
5.) What is the membership selection process and how long are the terms of membership?	Presidential appt. for exificio mems - faculty, staff, and students, administrative operations - nomination process for others	Each PC is idenpendent; volunteers, people with certain skills sought as needed Rising co-chairs serve two 1 yr terms; all others have an annual term (may be asked to return)	Usually a 3 yr term, but is based on the person's term on the University Senate
5.1) How many members are on your institution's diversity advisory council?	Plans for 20-30 members	Fluctuates across commissions; 12-18 each	About 20 members
5.2) How was this number decided upon?	CDO's proposed # to ensure appropriate representation		

Question	Institution 4	Institution 5	Institution 6
4.) What is the council's purpose and how does that connect with the overarching strategic goals of this institution as related to diversity?		N/A - smaller groups are made aware of the strategic plan goal related to diversity	Deals mostly with policy and current issues of diversity [crises] on campus. Helped facility the Diversity Action Plan Committee. Policy areas related to faculty and staff recruitment. students' access to *** College, campus climate, and community relations. Focused on 3 principles: reason, respect, and responsibility.
4.1) What formal and informal activities do the diversity advisory council members participate in as a group? Advisory? Projects?	Work jointly on projects	N/A - small group meetings	Regular meetings
4.2) How effective is your diversity advisory council in meeting its purpose?	Work in progress	N/A - small groups are effective in meeting their purpose	Very effective
4.2.1) What are some specific outcomes/outputs that have been generated by the diversity advisory council?	Programs		Diversity Action Plan; various programs
4.2.2) How does your institution measure the council's effectiveness in this area?	No formal process	N/A - small groups have surveys, CDO evaluation, work product	No formal process.
4.3) Is the work of your institution's diversity advisory council meeting the needs of the organization?	Not initially, getting better; Working hard to but have fallen short, showing improvement over the previous yr		Yes
4.4) What, if anything, do you wish the diversity council would engage in to support the diversity aims of your institution?			
4.5) How does the council measure its success?			
5.) What is the membership selection process and how long are the terms of membership?	Some by position - Dir. Teaching & Learning, VP Academic Affairs, Dir of Hispanic/Latino Affairs; faculty appt by schools; students volunteer No term limits	N/A - selection varyies among committees= some are dean appts.; some choose staff others students and/or community; some self-select - CDO makes final selection Generally size=6-12 2 yr appts w/ a second term option (up to a tot of 4 yrs) staggered terms; natural attrition	CDO makes recommendations to the president; faculty, staff and students. Staggered terms 1, 2 or 3. Moving to a nomination process.
5.1) How many members are on your institution's diversity advisory council?	Approx. 12 campus-based members - recently discussed that this was too many	N/A - of the varying committees=6-12	No maximum # of members; Currently 15 members. Depends on what's going on at the time. Permenant representation from Women's Center, Safe Space, Cultural Center, and Exec Assist to Pres.
5.2) How was this number decided upon?		N/A	Needs of the institution.
5.3) What characteristics, skills, abilities were desired for council members?	DSC has not been strategic about this	interest in the diversity work	People who are known for their work in diversity; deep passion for diversity work

Question	Institution 1	Institution 2	Institution 3
6.) How is the council structured?	In progress - thinking a chair or possible co-chairs; very possibly chaired by VP with a faculty and a staff co-chair (2 total); subcommittees-responsible for bulk of work (committee vets)	Each of the 6 PCs has a chair and a rising associate chair; CDO serves as a conduit across all commissions Each of the 6 PCs has it own structure, each includes students Subcommittees	Chaired by a faculty member.
6.1) How is this structure working?	N/A		Yes, but is not flexible or expedient. Est. in the 1980's
6.2) Who does the council report to?	VP of Institute Diversity/CDO	CDO	The chair reports back to the University Senate
6.2.1) How is that working?	N/A	(seems to be working well)	Well
6.3) Does the council have a chairperson?	see main question 6	See main question 6	Yes - chaired by a faculty member
6.4) Please describe the leadership that you personally provide to the group. How would you describe your leadership style?	Visionary, collaborative	Collaborative and nurturing; plays a supportive and facilitative role to the chairs	collaborative
6.4.1) How does this affect the council?	Helps define priorities and objectives, develop collaborators		
6.4.2) How would you characterize the power/influence of the	N/A		
7.) Please describe the development program/activities that council members engage in to:Prepare to engage in the work of the Diversity Council (orientation, initial training, etc...)?	Proposes - orientation via retreat (org structure, vision, mission, research)		When developing the diversity strat plan there were three retreats held. The first three meetings include some orientation, but could be more focused
8.) What factors/conditions affect the effectiveness of the diversity advisory council?	N/A		
8.1) What are 2-3 things you wish the DAC would be doing to be the most effective/contributing it could be? What are those things? What's getting in their way? What would need to change for them to be able to do these things? What must be put into place and/or done to effectively support the work of the DAC? (improved selection, orientation, supports, development efforts, feedback, etc.)	N/A		More developmental effort (pre-work, orientation, education, retreats, etc.) Providing the chair with course release to focus on the work.

Question	Institution 4	Institution 5	Institution 6
6.) How is the council structured?	Chairperson and gen members	N/A - committees are not structured; by consensus CDO serves as convenor and meeting facilitator some have subcomittees	Chairperson appointed by CDO (unsuccessfully tried co-chairs); committee structure; CDO serves in an advisory capacity
6.1) How is this structure working?		N/A - smaller group arrangement is working	
6.2) Who does the council report to?	No structure in place - possibly the president or 1-2 administators	VP for Diversity and Inclusion/CDO	
6.2.1) How is that working?	(needs development)	(seems to be working well)	
6.3) Does the council have a chairperson?	Yes	N/A - the smaller ones do not; the CDO facilitates the meetings	See main question 6
6.4) Please describe the leadership that you personally provide to the group. How would you describe your leadership style?		Open, mission focused, pragmatic	
6.4.1) How does this affect the council?			
6.4.2) How would you characterize the power/influence of the council members?			Has 4 very influential members
7.) Please describe the development program/activities that council members engage in to:Prepare to engage in the work of the Diversity Council (orientation, initial training, etc...)?	No orientation; development=common reader (everyone reads the same book) - no structured development efforts	N/A - smaller groups are provided an orientation Also, prior to the first meeting each new member recv the charter doc Up to 5Xs/yr an informational webinar is sponsored for stakeholders	Fall & spring retreat; some members attend NCORE. No formal orientation process/mentoring approach.
8.) What factors/conditions affect the effectiveness of the diversity advisory council?	Lack of structure; no set meeting times; need to gather input from outside the group Need dedicated staff		strong advisory council members
8.1) What are 2-3 things you wish the DAC would be doing to be the most effective/contributing it could be? What are those things? What's getting in their way? What would need to change for them to be able to do these things? What must be put into place and/or done to effectively support the work of the DAC? (improved selection, orientation, supports, development efforts, feedback, etc.)	Become more strategic; figure out how to engage stakeholders more fully in the solutions they want; gain collaboration and stakeholder buy-in	N/A - smaller group members should provide more spontaneity, bring more ideas to the group	Develop a university award for diversity; hold semester town hall meetings;

Question	Institution 1	Institution 2	Institution 3
9.) Tell me about the evaluation process used to gather information from council members. Stakeholders?	Will look at the quality of the recommendations; produce annual report	No formal eval process; random informal feedback	No formal evaluation process
9.1) How often is this evaluation conducted?	Annually		
9.2) Please describe how the council is given feedback on its work. How often is feedback given?	N/A		Committee members are approached about issues; through the website
9.2.1) Is this process effective?	N/A		
9.2.2) How can the process be improved?	N/A		
10.) Any final thoughts or advice as related to creating and supporting highly effective DACs?	N/A		
11.) Additional information	Plan will be submitted to the cabinet by July; goes public in Oct.	CDO staff provide admin support to the PCs Each PC has an operating budget; CDO is part of the president's office; holds exit meetings with retiring PC members; no incentives for PC members	No stipend or release time, credit for service

Question	Institution 4	Institution 5	Institution 6
9.) Tell me about the evaluation process used to gather information from council members. Stakeholders?	Climate survey; WEAVE (tied to strategic plan); just established benchmarks		No formal process.
9.1) How often is this evaluation conducted?		N/A - smaller groups are given a suvey-co-constructed with Inst. Effectiveness	
9.2) Please describe how the council is given feedback on its work. How often is feedback given?		N/A - smaller groups are provided event surveys; regular mtgs; after presentations to the president's cabinet; annual assessment	
9.2.1) Is this process effective?		N/A - smaller groups vary in effectiveness	
9.2.2) How can the process be improved?			
10.) Any final thoughts or advice as related to creating and supporting highly effective DACs?			
11.) Additional information	DSC is an emerging HIS (Hispanic serving institution); does not have a strat. Diversity plan No stipend or release time; counts as service No budget for support Unique effort to identify diversity issues with staff and faculty	No release time or stipend; service credit: consolidation has introduced challenges	Longstanding members with much clout. Losing these members would create a deficit.

APPENDIX D

SOUTHERN REGION UNIVERSITY DAC RECOMMENDATIONS

Southern Region University Diversity Advisory Council Restructure Recommendations

Diversity Advisory Action Research Team

August 2014

Abstract

The Southern Region University's (SRU) Diversity Advisory Council (DAC) Action Research Team was commissioned by Dr. Vivian Lawrence, Associate Provost/Chief Diversity Officer on September 3, 2013 to restructure the council charged with advising the institution's president via the Associate Provost/Chief Diversity Officer. The co-constructed recommendations that resulted from the team's collective ten-month participatory research, collaborative inquiry, and democratic development process are presented in this document for consideration as interventions for the new SRU DAC. The action research team developed these recommendations based upon Chait, Holland, & Taylor's (1991) six dimensions of effective governance board competency: (1) contextual, (2) educational, (3) interpersonal, (4) analytical, (5) strategic, and (6) political and Brown's (2007) board development practices.

Southern Region University Diversity Advisory Council Action Research Team Restructure Recommendations

Southern Region University DAC Purpose Statement

The Southern Region University Diversity Advisory Council (DAC), working through the Institutional Diversity Office (IDO), is committed to having a proactive and ongoing engagement to create an institution where an ethic of inclusion is inherent in its way of operating. This commitment is rooted in the pursuit of social justice, which requires openness, collaboration, identification, and elimination of barriers to equity to create an environment in which all members of the University community, regardless of their backgrounds, can contribute and achieve their fullest potential.

DAC is committed to inclusive excellence, providing a welcoming campus environment, and fostering of work and learning communities supportive of differences and similarities of all people. Inclusive excellence will be pursued through developing and implementing strategies to increase the awareness and value of diversity to build a more compassionate campus community where varied perspectives are sought and valued.

The purpose of the Diversity Advisory Council is to actively pursue this endeavor and demonstrate:

1. Accountability
2. Visibility
3. Transparency
4. Engagement
5. Education

Justification: The AR team chose the revised SRU DAC Purpose Statement based on the following:

- a review of the former DAC member survey results
- input from the Associate Provost/Chief Diversity Officer
- a review of our individual definitions of diversity based on our experiences, research, study, and education
- Holland & Jackson (1998)
- a review of and extensive discussions of diversity statements and definitions from the following sources:
    - DAC's Definition of Diversity (7/1/10)
    - Iowa State University
    - Kansas State University
    - Montana State University
    - Oklahoma State University
    - Texas A & M University
    - Texas Tech University
    - University of Arizona
    - University of Nevada, Reno
    - University of New Mexico
    - University of Oregon
    - Utah State University
    - Washington State University

- the team's desire to have an inclusive definition that did not single out individual groups but encompassed all stakeholders
- the team's desire to identify five specific goals that the council should work toward in all their work and the work of subcommittees related to the council

DAC Structure and Processes

The following are proposed characteristics of DAC:

Size

DAC membership should not exceed 13 members.

Justification: The AR team chose to maximize the council's size based on the following:

- input from the Associate Provost/Chief Diversity Officer
- feedback from former DAC members gathered in the survey
- team discussions about functional group size, challenges of the former DAC, and how the new council should function

Terms

DAC members will serve terms up to three years. At the invitation of the Chief Diversity Officer, members may serve additional terms.

Justification: The AR team had significant and extensive discussion and debate about the length and staggering of terms. Considerations within the discussions centered around:

- whether there would be value or undue risk associated with turning the council over at the end of a stated term

- whether initial one year terms extended to former DAC members would increase or decrease the effectiveness of the new council
- whether terms would tie the hands of council members and /or negatively impact the ability recruit members
- creating opportunities for effective council members to remain in place for extended periods of time and the risk of having preventing new members from participating on the council
- providing the associate provost an opportunity in writing to extend an invitation to a council member to remain in place beyond a specified term

The team came to consensus on the recommendation presented above.

Strategic Selection Process

The Chief Diversity Officer will select the initial members of DAC and replacement members in the event of a vacancy during critical times. Vacancies should be filled as quickly as possible.

A nomination process is recommended to include self-nominations and nomination by others. The nomination should require an interest statement from the nominee.

The Chief Diversity Officer may convene a selection committee to review nominations or make independent selection.

Membership Consideration

DAC membership should reflect the demographics of the SRU community and should be drawn from the following populations:

- Faculty
- Staff
- Administration
- Students
- Alumni
- Community

Justification: The AR team deliberated on the make-up of the membership of the council. The team consistently expressed a desire to have members that had a passion for diversity and inclusion and were deeply concerned about quotas and overlooking ever-expanding populations. The team was united throughout deliberations, that the council should be reflective of the SRU community, as its work would impact all members of the SRU community.

Areas of Expertise

It is recommended that core areas of expertise should reflect the realities of socially and historically marginalized and underrepresented groups along with knowledge of law regarding the protections of civil rights. These areas of expertise should be fluid to meet the SRU's needs as demographics change.

Areas of expertise to be considered are:

- *Women's Opportunities*
- *Minority Recruitment and Retention*

- *LGBTQIA Realities*
- *ADA*
- *International Populations*
- *Veterans Support*

Justification: Acknowledging Brown's (2007) work, the AR team realized that strategic selection of council members included considerations of areas of expertise, but did not want to limit those areas to the protected classes. However, strong interest and careful consideration of language was given to the areas recommended because of current realities within SRU's community.

Orientation Process

An orientation for DAC members is crucial to developing and maintaining an effective council. It is recommended that, at minimum, DAC participate in an annual one-day retreat for new and returning DAC members. The objective of this retreat should include an overview of: members' roles and responsibilities; DAC purpose and structure; IDO orientation; SRU current and historic demographics; diversity challenges, concerns, complaints and expectations.

The Chief Diversity Officer will develop the orientation.

Justification: The AR team recognized the need for a quality orientation process for new council members.

Development Process

To ensure that DAC members remain current and develop knowledge in the areas of diversity and inclusion, IDO and DAC will implement a member development process to

provide members developmental support around diversity and inclusion. This process will provide members with information on emerging trends, best practices, resources, etc. and may be part of the DAC retreat.

Justification: The AR wanted to ensure that members of the council developed their knowledge of diversity, inclusion, and the SRU's changing culture while servicing their terms.

Supports/Information

IDO will provide and/or assist DAC with the necessary resources (administrative assistance, data, etc.) and information to conduct the work assigned to the council.

Justification: The AR team realized that the council will need administrative and informational supports in order to be effective.

Goal Development

The Chief Diversity Office and DAC members will work collaboratively to develop the goals of the council. These goals should reflect the needs of the SRU community and the strategic and diversity goals adopted by SRU. Goal measures should be assigned to each goal to help the council track and measure its effectiveness.

Justification: The AR team wanted to ensure that the council worked collaboratively and singularly as a unit and not as individuals with separate goals. The council will be most effective working toward co-constructed goals.

Targeted Action

Targeted action is needed for goal attainment. DAC will develop, recommend, and/or take targeted action to successfully attain the goals of the council. The council will collaborate with the Chief Diversity Office to identify these actions.

Justification: Once goals are developed the council will work collaboratively with the Associate Provost/Chief Diversity Officer to develop targeted action to meet those goals. The AR team is adamant that the council should not be project oriented as the former council had been. Future councils should serve in an advisory capacity, commissioning committees to complete projects.

Evaluation

A formal evaluation process is recommended to ensure the council is effective in meeting the needs of SRU stakeholders. DAC will undergo an annual evaluation process to evaluate the effectiveness of the council. The results of the evaluation will be shared with DAC to identify accomplishments, areas for improvement, and unattended needs of the council.

Areas to be included in the evaluation are:

1. Fulfillment of DAC's purpose and endeavor and demonstrate:
    a. Accountability
    b. Visibility
    c. Transparency
    d. Engagement
    e. Education

2. Goal attainment/targeted action
3. Level of collaboration

Justification: In order to ensure that the council is effective there must be a method of measuring performance. By creating goals, targeted action, and an evaluation process the council and Associate Provost/Chief Diversity Officer will be able to objectively measure the work and effectiveness of the council.

Prior to finalizing these recommendations, the AR team reviewed responses from semi-structured interviews held with six University System of Georgia (USG) diversity officers to determine the practices, structure, design, composition, and purpose of other USG institutions to gather additional information. Specifically, those institutions that participated in interviews were: Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech), Kennesaw State, Georgia State, Dalton State College, Georgia Regents University, and Georgia College and State University.

Note: *The AR team developed its structured process recommendations upon a theoretical framework presented by the AR team facilitator as shown in Appendix A, which is based upon Brown (2007)*.

Respectfully submitted,

The Diversity Advisory Council Action Research Team

References

Brown, W. A. (2005). Exploring the association between board and organizational performance in nonprofit organizations. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *15*, 317-339.

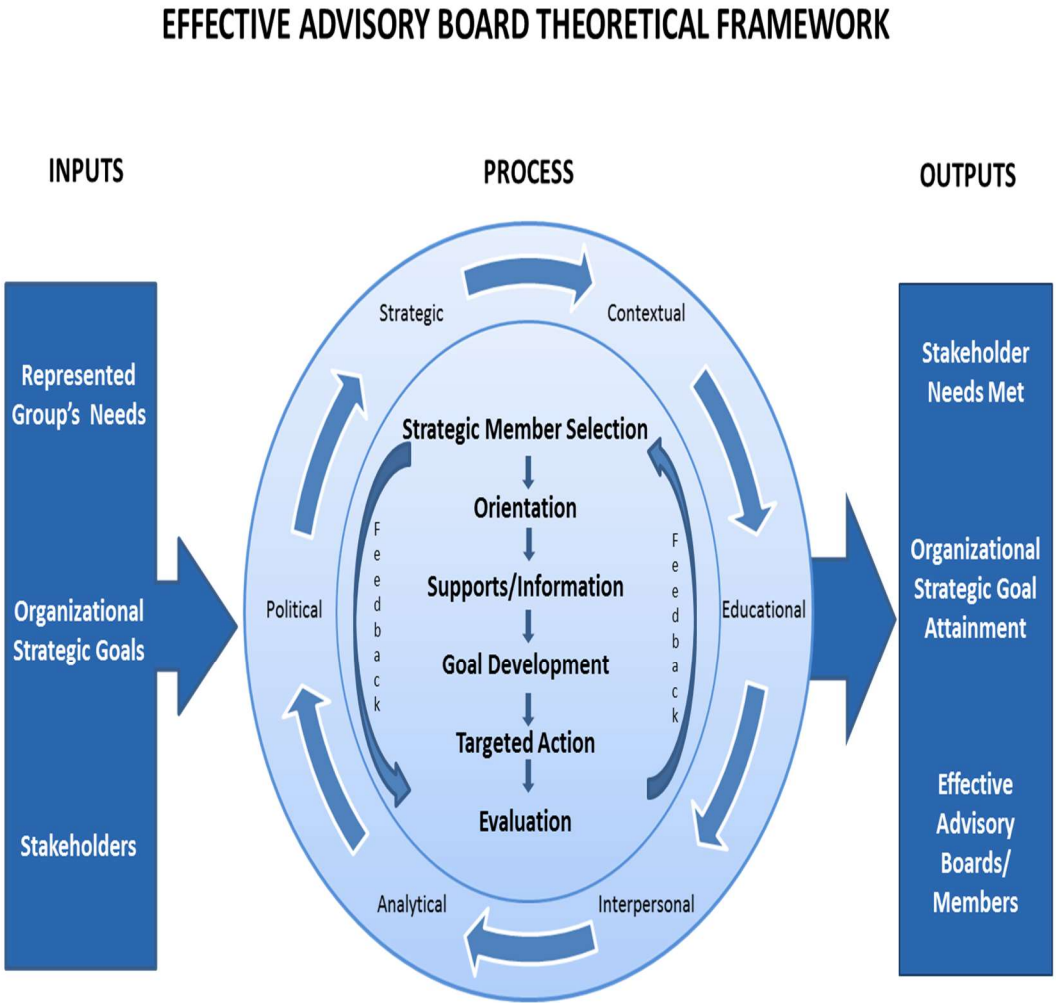
Brown, W. A. (2007). Board development practices and competent board members: Implications for performance. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *17*(3), 301-317.

Chait, R. P., Holland, T. P., & Taylor, B. E. (1991). *The effective board of trustees*. New York: American Council on Education: Macmillan.

Holland, T. P., & Jackson, D. K. (1998). Strengthening board performance: Findings and lessons from demonstration projects. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *9*, 121-134.

Appendix A

Theoretical Framework



APPENDIX E

SOUTHERN REGION UNIVERSITY

DAC APPLICATION AND ORIENTATION SURVEY

2014 DAC Member Evaluation

Our goal is to make the Diversity Advisory Council (DAC) application and selection process an informative and efficient process that provides applicants a quality experience.

1. Please rate your experience with the DAC application process.

	5 - Strongly Agree	4 - Agree	3 - Neutral	2 - Disagree	1 - Strongly Disagree
The announcement of the DAC application process provided the necessary information to successfully submit my application.					
The period of time between the announcement of the DAC application process and the submission deadline provided enough time for me to submit my application.					
The DAC application was easy to access.					
The DAC application instructions were clear.					
If disagree or strongly disagree, please share details of your experience:					

2. Please rate your experience with the DAC selection process.

	5 - Strongly Agree	4 - Agree	3 - Neutral	2 - Disagree	1 - Strongly Disagree
The period of time between the submission deadline and the email inviting me to become a member of DAC was appropriate.					
The invitation email provided adequate information about what I should do to accept the invitation.					
The formal letter I received from the Office of Institutional Diversity provided adequate information about the next phase of the membership process.					
If disagree or strongly disagree, please share details of your experience:					

Our goal is to make the Diversity Advisory Council (DAC) Orientation Retreat a quality experience where members can spend time together, gain valuable information, learn from and with each other, and prepare for the work of the council.

3. Please evaluate your 2014 DAC Orientation Retreat experience according to the statements below and the scale provided.

Objectives of the retreat were to (1) provide DAC members with information about their roles and responsibilities, (2) provide information on the formation and redesign of DAC, (3) provide institutional information related to diversity at SRU, (4) provide DAC members an opportunity to acquaint themselves with others members of DAC.

	5 - Strongly Agree	4 - Agree	3 - Neutral	2 - Disagree	1 - Strongly Disagree
The objectives of the retreat were met.					
I am knowledgeable about the evolution of DAC at SRU.					
I am more knowledgeable about my responsibilities as a DAC member as a result of participating in the DAC orientation retreat.					
I feel better connected to other DAC members as a result of participating in the DAC orientation retreat.					
The information provided by retreat presenters helped me gain insight on diversity at SRU.					
The charge given by the Provost was meaningful to me.					
Dr. L. M. Morris presented information that helped me better understand the importance of diversity.					
Dr. Lawrence's presentation helped me better understand the importance of diversity and inclusion at SRU.					
The presentation made by Institutional Research was informative.					
The team building activity helped me gauge my understanding of diversity at SRU.					
The pre-orientation questionnaire helped focus my thinking about diversity and inclusion at SRU going into the					
If disagree or strongly disagree, please share details of your experience:					

4. Please evaluate your overall experience at the 2014 DAC Orientation Retreat using the following question and scale provided.

	5 - Excellent	4 - Good	3 - Okay	2 - Fair	1 - Not Very Good
What was your overall experience at the 2014 DAC Orientation Retreat?					
If fair or not very good, please share details of your experience:					

5. What improvements would you make for the next DAC Orientation Retreat?

Retreat location:

Retreat Agenda:

Team Building activities: