NOT A FOREGONE CONCLUSION:

FACULTY HIRING AT REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITIES

by

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(Under the Direction of James C. Hearn)

ABSTRACT

The American professoriate is now primarily comprised of more non-tenure track faculty members than tenure track or tenured professors. This shifting nature and organization of academic work took place rapidly and without deliberate attention paid to the long-term implications of this change (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Finkelstein, Conley, & Schuster, 2016). Most often, this structural change to the academic profession is considered a foregone conclusion, a byproduct of larger, budgetary decisions within universities.

However, these conclusions are incomplete in their exclusive focus on the financial motivations behind the increased reliance on contingent appointments. This study refines the reasons for this shift towards non-tenure track faculty appointments and away from tenure track and tenured positions by exploring faculty hiring decisions at one of the institutional types where this labor trend has been most prominent – regional comprehensive universities.

Building on research surrounding the changing academic profession and regional comprehensive universities, and using both document analysis and semi-structured

interviews, this study uses a multisite case study design to uncover the factors that shape university administrators' academic hiring decisions, especially those related to appointment type. By exploring faculty hiring decisions, this provides a typology of contributing factors in the changing academic labor systems at regional comprehensive universities and provides evidence about changes to the academic profession within this institutional sector of higher education, which is absent from the larger discourse.

Additionally, this study begins theory development around the compounded mechanisms behind changes to the academic labor system. This development begins with this study's guiding conceptual framework that draws on organizational ecology in addition to resource dependence theory and the sociological concept of microfoundations. This framework facilitates greater understanding of academic workforce trends among institutions of higher education, addressing the external, institutional, and individual factors included in organizational change processes. This study's findings include implications for both research and practice, highlighting how changes to the academic profession are not byproducts of larger budgetary decisions; instead, faculty hiring decisions and changes to academic work constitute significant budgetary decisions in their own right and have significant implications for the future success of the academy.

INDEX WORDS: Faculty Hiring, Organizational Decision-Making, University Administrators, Regional Comprehensive University, Microfoundations, Resource Dependence, Organizational Ecology

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DEDICATION

To my Mom and Dad, for their constant support and encouragement during this process and anything else I set out to do. I could not have done this without you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Faculty members play an essential role in the multiple missions of colleges and universities. Responsible for the creation and distribution of knowledge, through research, teaching, and service, academics serve many stakeholders including students, the academic community, and society at large. Given these roles, faculty members are central (or should be) to the missions and work of colleges and universities (Bowen and Schuster, 1986; Metzger, 1973). Schuster (2011) stated that "the extent to which higher education is effective (or not) in accomplishing its missions turn [especially] on the quality of the faculty" (p.4-5). The importance of the faculty for colleges and universities to produce scholarship, teach students, and serve the public necessitates scrutiny of recent changes to the profession in the context of academic hiring.

Examining changes to the academic profession is a challenging task given the varied nature of the professoriate. Not only are the faculty evolving constantly in response to the changing dynamics of higher education at large, but there are vast differences among those who make up the academic workforce. Academics vary by personal characteristics (e.g. race, gender, socioeconomic status), and they also differ in terms of structural and organizational factors including their departments, disciplines, and institutions. In the past few decades, this variation has been increasingly muddled by another complicating factor – appointment type.

Now, the majority of academic positions are non-tenure track appointments (Kezar & Sam 2010b, 2010c). This shift away from traditional tenure-line appointments and towards more non-tenure track appointments has been well-documented in recent higher education research. Most of this previous research on non-tenure track faculty examines this broad trend across the higher education landscape, using large-scale datasets like the Higher Education Research Institute Faculty Survey, the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education surveys, and the National Center for Education Statistics surveys through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (e.g. Hearn, Milan & Lacy, 2012: Kezar & Maxey, 2012).

Those studies address the growth of this segment of the academic labor force, disaggregating by institutional type and disciplinary differences among other categories. For example, Hearn et al. (2012) highlighted the growth of non-tenure track appointments across private non-profit and for-profit institutions in their longitudinal study (1988-2008). In addition, Kezar & Maxey (2012) outlined the ways that the distribution of the professoriate by appointment type has changed across different institutional types (i.e. regional comprehensive university, liberal arts colleges, research universities). Other studies around the contingent movement address the experiences and satisfaction of non-tenure track employees and the consequences of using a more casual labor force on student outcomes such as college completion and retention (e.g. Hearn, Burns, & Riffe, 2017; Kezar, 2013b).

In their comprehensive review of the professoriate, *The American Faculty*, Schuster and Finkelstein (2006) noted that changes to the academic profession, in terms of composition, constraints placed upon faculty members, and the work that academics

do, are happening at an accelerated pace. The pace of this change seems to be quickest and most concentrated at certain institutional types. While there is a nationwide shift towards more casual appointments across institutions of higher education, this trend is most pronounced at institutions that are most vulnerable to the financial constraints of state budget cuts and that have missions centered on providing broad access to equal educational opportunity – regional comprehensive universities and community colleges (Kezar & Maxey, 2012).

While there are several studies that focus on the reliance on contingent faculty members at community colleges (e.g. Eagan & Jaeger, 2009) and at research universities (e.g. Cross & Goldenberg, 2011), considerably less attention is paid to this phenomenon at regional comprehensive universities. This institutional sector is often ignored in higher education research broadly and research on academic workforce trends is no exception. In addition, many of the studies that address the changes to the academic workforce in terms of appointment type rely on large-scale quantitative data that is very useful for identifying broad trends, but in doing so, obscures variation by institutional type and the mechanisms behind this change.

Recently, there has been a significant shift from a primarily tenure track and tenured faculty to a majority non-tenure track academic workforce at public comprehensive institutions. Kezar and Maxey (2012) found that from 1997 to 2007 the proportion of full-time non-tenure track faculty members (lecturers and instructors) at regional comprehensive universities grew from approximately 9% to 11% and part-time non-tenure track faculty members grew over 10% from approximately 35% to 48% of the academic workforce at these institutions. Schuster and Finkelstein (2006), as well as

Kezar and Maxey (2012), explored the changing composition of the faculty and in both cases, the authors found that non-tenure track appointments are much more prevalent at two-year institutions, community colleges, and regional comprehensive universities than at liberal arts colleges and research universities. This growth positions regional comprehensive universities at the heart of this changing academic labor system and foregrounds the need to explore faculty work within this institutional sector.

Although many have studied the changing nature of the professoriate broadly and there is a growing body of scholarship surrounding the use of contingent appointments, much less is known about academics at regional comprehensive universities, especially as it relates to the rise of non-tenure track faculty. Given their place in the landscape of higher education, regional comprehensive universities are unique places to study academic work. Burton R. Clark (1987) noted that the positionality of public, comprehensive institutions "has left them with a muddled institutional character—neither teachers colleges nor full-fledged universities – that complicates the identities of professors who serve them" (p.13). Over thirty years later, Clark's portrayal of regional comprehensive universities remains, as more recently they are referred to as the ugly ducklings or the red-headed stepchildren of higher education (Henderson, 2009a; Henderson 2009b) and news coverage consistently frames these institutions from a deficit perspective, emphasizing their challenges rather than their successes (Gardner, 2016).

State colleges and universities educate large proportions of college-going students (Henderson, 2009a; Henderson, 2009b); however, we do not know how decisions are made about who fulfills the instructional roles and the implications of those decisions at these teaching-focused institutions. Gardner (2016) noted that these universities may be

most poised to improve social mobility compared to other institutional types and provide access to low-income and minority students (Ashkenas, Park, & Pearce, 2017). Given this reputation, the consequences of using more non-tenure track may influence the overall effectiveness of these institutions; yet, we know very little about the decision-making process for faculty hiring and its implications for the core mission of these institutions – teaching undergraduate students.

Purpose of the Study

To date, a significant amount of research documents the shift toward contingent appointments and some of the effects of this change. Despite the increasing amount of scholarship dedicated to this topic, it still does not explicitly address the decision-making processes behind this trend, especially within broad access colleges and universities, the places where this labor trend is most notable (Kezar & Maxey, 2012).

Often, this shift in the academic workforce is considered a foregone conclusion – attributed to the changing financial status of colleges and universities. Consistently, in the higher education literature, reliance on non-tenure track faculty members is positioned as an institutional issue, an organizational behavior or strategy that is not deliberate, but rather one that is born out of necessity (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Cross & Goldenberg, 2011, Gappa & Leslie, 1993). This argument centers on the idea that the increase in the number of non-tenure track appointments is an indirect consequence of larger budgetary decision-making.

To further complicate this departure from the tenure track is the fact that "organizations are made up of people" (Perrow, 1970). The movement away from tenure

and towards more non-tenure track appointments across American higher education is the culmination of the decision-making processes of those individuals that hold leadership positions within colleges and universities. The academic hiring process is, to some extent, a "black box," largely due to the confidential nature of hiring committees and one-on-one conversations among department chairs, deans, and provosts. These meeting and conversations play a crucial role in changes to the academic profession towards a more casual workforce and away from a largely tenure-based labor system.

In light of this academic labor trend, there have been calls for new models of academic work that promote equitable treatment for academics and the support the numerous responsibilities of the academic workforce. For example, Holcombe and Kezar (2017) explored possibilities of and challenges to developing new mental models about the future of the professoriate among various higher education stakeholders. However, to reconceptualize the academy in this way necessitates greater understanding of the factors that influence faculty hiring decisions, specifically those surrounding appointment type.

To better understand the substantive nature of the changing academic profession at regional comprehensive universities through faculty hiring practices, this study uses a multisite case study design at two regional comprehensive universities "to investigate complex phenomena across distinct cases embedded within their contemporary contexts where the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (Yin, 2014, p. 16). Evaluating multiple sources of evidence (i.e., interviews, document analysis, and observation) allows for the generation of themes and patterns within and across both institutions, which will aid in theory-building based on the findings of this study (Yin, 2009).

Using this methodological approach, this study leverages an ecological systems approach to gain new insights about faculty hiring processes within regional comprehensive universities. Organizational ecology accounts for the "interdependence of organizational structure, technologies used in organizations, and the collective and individual attributes of the people who inhabit the organizations" in the context of their larger environments and the availability of resources (Bidwell & Kasarda, 1998, p. 85). Drawing on this ecological theory of organizational structuring as well as resource dependence theory and the sociological concept of microfoundations, this approach addresses the compounded nature of the individual, institutional, and environmental aspects of academic hiring decisions. This study builds on the non-tenure track faculty literature and previous work on regional comprehensive universities to examine the contributing factors that influence decisions around appointment type in faculty hiring decisions at regional comprehensive universities. In order to meet this purpose, this research is guided by the following research questions:

1) What factors shape university administrators' academic hiring decisions, especially those related to appointment type?
    a. How does an institution's environmental context affect, if at all, academic hiring decisions?
    b. What are the key aspects of faculty hiring processes specific to regional comprehensive universities?
2) How does the conceptual framework proposed here, a combination of organizational ecology, resource dependence theory, and microfoundations, explain the decision-making process around academic hiring?

Significance of the Study

Addressing these research questions will provide a better understanding of the driving forces behind the growth of non-tenure track faculty members at regional comprehensive universities. The findings of this study will add to higher education research, specifically the bodies of literature that focus on the growth of contingent faculty appointments and regional comprehensive universities. This study will make several contributions. First, this project begins the development of a typology of contributing factors in the changing academic labor systems at regional comprehensive universities. Second, answering this study's research questions provides evidence about changes to the academic profession within this institutional sector of higher education, which is absent from the larger discourse. Third, this study evaluates the relative power of a new conceptual model that draws on organizational ecology in addition to resource dependence theory and the sociological concept of microfoundations for understanding and exploring labor trends within institutions of higher education; addressing institutional decision-making; and studying organizational change processes moving forward.

Organization of the Study

This study consists of six chapters, beginning with the introduction of its central purpose and guiding research. What follows, in Chapter 2, is a discussion of how this study is situated with the current body of higher education scholarship, but also how it extends that knowledge further. Previous scholarship that addresses changes to the

academic profession is reviewed, specifically focusing on the unbundling of the faculty role, academic hiring, and changes in appointment type across the professoriate. Second, the context of this study is discussed further, situating regional comprehensive universities in the larger conversation about university missions, the changing academic profession, and how organizations respond to broader environmental changes. Chapter 3 builds on the literature review and introduces the conceptual framework that guides this study, integrating organizational ecology, resource dependence theory, and the sociological concept of microfoundations. This framework underpins this analysis about the decision-making processes behind the increased reliance on non-tenure track faculty at regional comprehensive universities.

Drawing on the conceptual framework and previous literature, Chapter 4 outlines how this study empirically addresses its guiding research questions using a multisite case study research design that incorporates semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Chapter 5 details the findings of the multisite case study, addressing this study's guiding research questions. Lastly, Chapter 6 summarizes the findings and concludes this study with a discussion of its contributions to current scholarship as well as recommendations for practice and future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The academic workforce is not a static entity. Since the beginning of American higher education, the professoriate has evolved in response to external pressures and institutional priorities (Caplow & McGee, 1958; Thelin, 2011; Wilson, 1979). These changes have been documented in the scholarly literature and the most recent iteration of this evolution is no exception. Schuster & Finkelstein (2006) reignited the literature surrounding the changing nature of the academic profession with *The American Faculty*, highlighting demographic as well as structural changes across the profession using large-scale data. However, exploring these broad issues and trends obscures differences across institutional types and the mechanisms behind these labor force trends. To that end, this study answers Cross and Goldenberg's (2003) call to "understand why universities operate as they do, what problems are driving their financing and employment decisions, and what consequences flow from them" (p. 51).

This study draws on and incorporates several areas of scholarship, including research on regional comprehensive universities and the changing academic profession. First, this review of the literature will provide a brief historical overview of the academic profession, then describe changes across the academic workforce over the past few decades, addressing the nature of the faculty, who constitutes it, and how it has evolved in recent years, especially through the unbundling of the faculty role. The review of the faculty literature concludes with an in-depth examination of shifts across the American

faculty in terms of appointment type. In describing the current professoriate, recent changes across the profession as well as the consequences of those changes will be discussed. The literature that explores faculty hiring practices follows the discussion of scholarship on the changing nature of the academic profession, highlighting the documented factors that influence the processes and outcomes of academic hiring decisions. Lastly, the context of this study is provided by reviewing prior work on regional comprehensive institutions, a description of these institutions and the challenges they face. This collective review foregrounds the issues raised throughout this study, grounding faculty hiring decisions at regional comprehensive universities in the extant higher education literature.

Changing Nature of the Faculty

The nature of the faculty is challenging to pin down. The academic profession is a diverse occupation, the scope of which cannot easily be condensed given the wide differentiation within and across the profession. The title of faculty member applies to a part-time community college instructor who teaches five courses every semester and a research university professor who rarely teaches but spends most of her time managing a research lab as well as any type of position between those positions. Despite the range of those considered faculty members, the centrality of their role for institutions of higher education cannot be ignored. Gappa, Austin, and Trice (2007) highlighted this notion in the following statement:

> The faculty in American colleges and universities have always been the heart of the institutions where they work, the intellectual capital that ensure those

> institutions' excellence. The quality of the faculty relates directly to the effectiveness of a college or a university in facilitating students' learning, creating new knowledge, and linking research and practice in ways that benefit society. (p. xi).

Given their importance for carrying out the core enterprises of colleges and universities and the wide variation across the profession, it is understandable that the profession has evolved since the beginning of American higher education.

From the opening of the first American university, Harvard, in the United States in 1636, the faculty has been an integral component of institutions of higher education. Charged with responsibilities of teaching, research, and the care of students *in loco parentis* meant that the colonial universities were essentially built around the academic workforce. The term faculty members, historically, was not limited to professors. In addition to traditional faculty members, there were other instructional positions (i.e. tutors) that helped to manage the student population and teach tutorials that supplemented their coursework (Moore, 1978; Thelin, 2011).

As time went on, the low paid instructors of the colonial era became increasingly professionalized, establishing their autonomy and streamlining their academic roles. Responsibilities such as the care of residential students was adopted by others through the growth of student affairs professionals (Thelin, 2011). Additionally, there was significant growth of the professoriate in response to the proliferation of colleges and universities as a result of the Second Morrill Act of 1890; however, demographic changes among academics remained modest despite increased access to higher education for underserved students at that time.

Decades later, the AAUP's 1940 Statement of Principles (negotiated with the AAC) was broadly adopted by universities and outlined the components of tenure and academic freedom, further professionalizing the roles of faculty members. With the rights and responsibilities afforded to them in the 1940s statement, professors developed greater autonomy and professional control of their work lives (Brint, 1994). This increased professionalization was followed by the growth of the professoriate along with the greater emphasis on higher education within the United States. At the time of the Second World War, the number of colleges and universities in the United States grew exponentially to accommodate the large number of veterans who used the GI Bill to attend college after returning from the war. Alongside this boom in enrollments, the number of faculty members grew as a result (Thelin, 2011). In the last several decades of the 20th century the faculty, at large, has continued to diversify in terms of sex, race, ability, social class, and many other characteristics.

Evidenced by the history of the academic workforce, this is an ever-changing profession. In response, to societal needs, pressures, and the overall growth of higher education, what it means to be a faculty member continues to evolve in response. The modern era is no exception to this evolution. Schuster and Finkelstein (2006) argued that the academic workforce is undergoing more significant changes than ever before given the changing dynamics of contemporary higher education more broadly and, consequently, to the academic profession.

Schuster and Finkelstein (2006) discussed the broad sweeping changes across the profession in their analysis of large-scale data and argued that the paces of changes to faculty work is perhaps more notable than the substance of those changes. In a more

recent follow-up study, Finkelstein et al. (2016) argued that the academic profession is now in its third paradigm shift marked by rapid change on several fronts. These changes include demographic shifts, increased use of technology for instructional purposes, and changes in appointment type, among others. These shifts are simultaneously the products of and catalysts for change across the American higher education landscape with significant implications for knowledge dissemination and creation as well as how universities function.

This section describes a few of the major changes across the profession in recent decades – unbundling the faculty role and appointment type. While these changes to the academic workforce are not exhaustive, they constitute the most salient issues for the purposes of this study.

Unbundling of the Faculty Role

One of the more recent changes to the academic profession is the unbundling of the faculty role. The unbundling process it not a new concept; however, its effects have become more pressing given that unbundling is often discussed in tandem with institutions' more pronounced reliance on non-tenure track faculty members. The unbundling process itself refers to the disaggregation of academic work into distinct parts (Gehrke & Kezar, 2015). Previously, academic work was primarily the responsibility of tenure track faculty members or the "prototypical scholar" (Boyer, 1990). However, the unbundling process redistributes a portion of that work to other university personnel or to services external to the university (Gehrke & Kezar, 2015). For example, in the past decade, academic advisors in some colleges and departments have adopted advising

responsibilities in addition to and sometimes in place of faculty members. In this way, unbundling is a sort of outsourcing of tasks and responsibilities away from tenure track professors towards non-tenure track faculty and other academic professionals.

Smith (2008) suggested that there are three types of unbundling—professional, instructional, and institutional. The most relevant for this project are professional and instructional unbundling, which refer to the disaggregation of professionals' (i.e. faculty members) responsibilities and splitting up instruction-related activities. The unbundling of both instruction and faculty members' responsibilities creates a much larger academic workforce when you consider curriculum developers, instructional designers, graduate assistants, and those who work in sponsored programs offices among those responsible for the academic work of colleges and universities (Macfarlane, 2011).

The extent of the unbundling of the faculty role is perhaps most pronounced at research universities with multiple and sometimes competing institutional goals, including research and teaching. However, unbundling is also present at broad access institutions including regional comprehensive universities despite the fact that their primary emphasis is on teaching undergraduate students with less emphasis on research. At regional comprehensive universities, there is still a divide between research and teaching, especially as some of those institutions experience "mission creep" and engage in more institutional behaviors that mirror those of research universities (Morphew & Huisman, 2002).

In this era of accountability and doing more with less, unbundling the faculty role is one option institutions pursue to offset the costs of tenured faculty lines (Doyle & Delaney, 2009; Gehrke & Kezar, 2015). In part, this shift in thinking is related to

efficiency and resources, but it is also related to the split between research and teaching, especially among professors at research universities and the multiple roles of faculty members. Given the Bayh Dole Act of 1973 and the subsequent commercialization of research, faculty members became "catalysts of industry" through their research and this change led to the prioritization of research for many professors and exacerbated the divide between teaching and research (Slaughter, 1985; Slaughter & Leslie; 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). The resulting prioritization of research contributed to a portion of the instructional unbundling and the surge of academic professional who assist in non-research responsibilities such as advising and creating content for courses.

Research and teaching seem to be opposing tasks to a certain extent. Whereas previously the two tasks were viewed as complimentary in the traditional role of a tenure track faculty member, they are now viewed more and more as separate and competing responsibilities as the divide between teaching-focused non-tenure track faculty and their more research-focused tenure track and tenured colleagues persists (Gehrke & Kezar, 2015). Partially, this is due to the revenue-generating opportunities of research (i.e. patents, licensing, research grants, etc.) compared to teaching which is a more local endeavor aimed towards educating undergraduate and graduate students (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

Most faculty members at research universities tend to spend more time on research than teaching. Massy and Zemsky (1994) describe this phenomenon as the "academic ratchet." The propensity of faculty members to have this more external focus rather than supporting their institutions exacerbates the likelihood of separating the research and teaching components of the profession, wherein non-tenure track faculty

members are primarily responsible for instruction. Recently, though, the focus on instruction at institutions has been renewed. However, faculty members are not shifting their attention from research to teaching. Instead, evidence suggests that professors are simply adding more time to their workweeks to attend more to their teaching responsibilities (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). This increased academic workload is not a sustainable model, so the disaggregation of teaching and research may make faculty workloads more manageable and allow them to focus specifically on one of the two areas, honing their expertise.

Gehrke and Kezar (2015), in their literature review of faculty unbundling, chronicle how the unbundling and rebundling of the faculty role has occurred since the inception of American higher education in various forms. Ideally, the unbundling process, with the assistance of other academic professionals, would free up faculty members to do what they are best at and create a more efficient means of carrying out academic work (Gehrke & Kezar, 2015). In reality, though, resource constraints and duplication limit the success of unbundling. Unbundling increases the number of people involved in any one academic task. For students, this may be troublesome, potentially increasing the number of people they have to interact with in order to be advised (Gehrke & Kezar, 2015).

Additionally, this may limit the amount of interaction between students and faculty members, which is known to improve retention rates among students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Ultimately, it seems that the proliferated academic professionals are not part of the professoriate at large, but play a supporting role that assists faculty to varying degrees. Additionally, resource allocations within institutions already make it

challenging for faculty members to fully enact their research, teaching, and service roles (Rosinger, Taylor, Coco, & Slaughter, 2016; Volk, Slaughter, & Thomas, 2005), but this growth of other academic professionals may add to the resource needs of an institution, exacerbating its financial constraints.

While these non-tenured employees may not always be labeled as faculty members, their contributions to academic work certainly add to the productivity and success of the instructional missions of colleges and universities (Macfarlane, 2011).

Appointment Type

The quintessential faculty member is one who is on the tenure-track or tenured who conducts research, teaches classes, and contributes to the day to day operations of the institution through service responsibilities. However, in the past few decades, this "typical" faculty member is no longer representative of the professoriate at large. As Gappa et al. (2007) stated, "Some institutions have shifted the pattern of appointment types without carefully considering the long-term impact on faculty members and the academic workplace" (p. 15). As described by Kezar and Sam (2010b; 2010c), there is a new faculty majority, which consists of a larger proportion of non-tenure track faculty members than tenure track and tenured faculty members.

These non-tenure track appointments are wide-ranging, including instructors and lecturer positions, adjunct (part-time) positions, and clinical faculty to name a few of the more common positions (Kezar & Sam, 2010c; Kezar & Sam, 2010c). The significant change related to these positions across the academic profession lies not in their existence, but rather the sheer magnitude of their growth as well as the replacement of

tenured faculty lines with one or more contingent positions as a cost-savings strategy for institutions (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001). While there have always been a considerable portion of non-tenure track faculty members since the beginning of higher education in the United States (Cain, 2015), many argue that this more recent shift is significant because of its rapid pace. Schuster and Finkelstein (2006) argue that the academic profession has always been changing and evolving; however, this shift from primarily tenured appointment types to more precarious appointment types is one that happened very quickly and may be a more permanent change overall.

While non-tenure track instructors have long comprised a portion of academic positions, the amount of contingent faculty has significantly changed in the past forty years. From 1979 to 2013, "the proportion on full-time limited-term (non-tenure-track) appointments increased by half (from 10.3 to 14.9% of the total) and that on part-time appointments increased 75% from 24.0 to 43.0%," which resulted in part-time faculty members constituting "43% of the 1.5 million instructional staff in the United States" (Finkelstein et al., 2016, p. 58).

In the wake of this fast-paced growth, some argue that decisions surrounding contingent faculty members, their working conditions, and their role within the larger academy were made quickly out of necessity rather than deliberately (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Gappa and Leslie, 1993; Kezar & Sam, 2010b, Kezar & Sam, 2010c; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). For this reason, many non-tenure track faculty members struggle with negative work environments, plagued by isolation given their lack of participation in governance and not fully occupying the traditional professorial role of their tenured and tenure track colleagues (Bland, Center, Finstad, Risbey, & Staples,

2006; Kezar & Sam, 2013).

This shift from tenured positions to contingent appointment types has taken place throughout the academy, but the extent to which this shift permeates different institution types and academic disciplines is not uniform. Schuster and Finkelstein (2006) as well as Kezar and Maxey (2012) explored the changing composition of the faculty. In both cases, the authors found that contingent positions are much more prevalent at two-year institutions, community colleges, and regional comprehensive institutions than at liberal arts colleges and research universities. In addition to this differentiation by institutional type, there are also differences in the number of contingent faculty positions by academic discipline given differences in content, courses offered, and disciplinary norms (Becher & Trowler, 2001).

While the number of non-tenure track faculty has grown overall, there is wide variation in how that growth occurred within distinct academic disciplines. Schuster and Finkelstein (2006) found that the non-tenure track appointments are much more common in the social sciences and humanities than in the natural science and professional programs. For part-time contingent faculty, the largest gains took place in education, agriculture, home economics, and the humanities, while engineering had the smallest growth of part-time instructors (NEA, 2007). For full-time non-tenure track faculty, the health sciences and humanities had the largest gains, accounting for 22.4% and 15.9% of faculty positions in 1998 respectively (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). The institutions and academic disciplines that employ more part-time adjunct instructors have greater resource needs than those who do not and therefore, rely on the costs saved by employing

temporary faculty to address their financial constraints (Doyle & Delaney, 2009; Marginson, 2000).

Given the pervasive resource constraints of colleges and universities, especially at less prestigious institution types and within low-resourced academic disciplines like the humanities and social sciences (Kezar & Maxey, 2012; Rosinger et al., 2016). Often times, higher education research suggests that the use of non-tenure track faculty is not a conscientious decision on the part of administrators, deans, and faculty members (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Cross & Goldenberg, 2011). Instead, researchers argue that the use of this precarious labor is the consequence of many other issues within institutions such as changes in enrollment numbers, the protection of tenured faculty, and the challenges of graduate education programs (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Cross & Goldenberg, 2011). The lack of foresight that often plagues these decisions may contribute to the negative consequences documented in the scholarly literature related to the use of contingent appointments. These negative consequences, though, do not necessarily stem from individual contingent faculty members since they are typically very committed to instruction and contribute to positive gains in student success in the classroom. In contrast, the negative outcomes associated with non-tenure track faculty point to the lack of sustainable and inclusive policies within institutions that allow for contingent faculty members to thrive in their positions (Kezar & Sam, 2013; Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007).

Implications of non-tenure track faculty. Baldwin and Chronister (2001) as well as Cross & Goldenberg (2011) suggested that non-tenure track faculty positions

allow academics to pursue the type of work that aligns best with their expertise. From this perspective, non-tenure track positions allow for individuals to do their best work in their respective tasks. However, there is no one way for colleges and universities to use contingent appointments. Baldwin and Chronister (2001) used the NSOPF-88 and NSOPF-93 faculty surveys, institutional policy documents, and site visits to explore the varied contexts in which higher education institutions were compelled to use non-tenure track faculty. They addressed both external factors (e.g. criticisms of tenure, loss of public trust) and internal factors (e.g. labor market, faculty workload). The authors went on to discuss how the expectations and responsibilities of non-tenure track faculty vary across institutional types, discipline, and appointment type. Given this wide variation, the implications of the rise of non-tenure track faculty members is also mixed and somewhat unclear. Here, three implications of greater reliance on contingent appointments—undergraduate education, governance, and compensation and support—are discussed in turn.

Undergraduate education. One of the most prominent overall values within colleges and universities is undergraduate education. While institutions of higher education simultaneously pursue many goals, there is general consensus that educating students is the top priority across institutions regardless of sector, size, or history. There is not a large amount of scholarship focusing on the role of contingent faculty in undergraduate education; however, the small number of studies that have been undertaken found mixed results (Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005; Umbach, 2007; Eagan & Jaeger, 2009). Umbach's (2007) study found that, "part-time faculty interact with

students less frequently, use active and collaborative techniques less often, spend less time preparing for class, and have lower academic expectations than their tenured and tenure-track peers" (p. 110). Similarly, Eagan & Jaeger (2009) found that among community colleges, students who had more exposure to non-tenure track faculty members in class were less likely to transfer to a 4-year institution. Those two studies found the consequences of contingent faculty on undergraduate education to be negative, both in terms of instructional quality and student outcomes.

However, not all of the outcomes of non-tenure track faculty are negative. For example, Ehrenberg and Zhang (2005) found that graduation rates increased as the number of contingent faculty members rose at colleges and universities, especially given that the primary focus of non-tenure track faculty members is on instruction and they are often at the front lines of innovative pedagogical approaches. Overall, the quality of instruction and the results for student outcomes are conflicting. Despite the lack of clarity surrounding the implications for undergraduate education, institutions continue to hire more and more contingent faculty members to cut costs and become more efficient (Monks, 2007; Doyle & Delaney, 2009).

The consequences for instruction may not be the sole responsibility of the non-tenure track faculty members. Colleges may be limiting the effectiveness of these instructors by expecting a high level of institutional commitment without the compensation and incentive structure provided to their tenured and tenure-track peers. Often, the restrictions and limited opportunities placed on non-tenure track faculty members make them feel "powerless, alienated, invisible, and second class" (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 180). Considering this latent marginalization of contingent faculty

members, they are not likely to have strong feelings of loyalty to the college or university where they teach despite their deep commitments to instruction and the success of their students.

Governance. In addition to undergraduate education, shared governance may be one of the most central and long-standing components of higher education. Often, shared governance in conjunction with tenure and academic freedom is considered one leg of the three-legged stool that guides the professoriate. In 1966, the American Association of University Professors issued the Statement on Government of Colleges and University, which stated "the faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process" (Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities, 1977). This seminal higher education document entrusted the academic affairs of colleges and universities to academics, rather than administrators or the board of trustees. Despite the legacy of shared governance and its importance for colleges and universities, there are imperfections in its execution.

One glaring example of this imperfection is the neglect of non-tenure track faculty participation in governance, a fact that is even more troublesome given the potential benefits of non-tenure track faculty members' participation in governance and the increasing presence of instructors off the tenure track. Bradley (2004) discussed how adjunct faculty members are "largely unprotected against sudden termination of their employment…vulnerable to student complaints," and they, consequently, "may not feel free to teach rigorously, discuss controversial topics, make heavy reading assignments, or

award low grades to those who earn them" (p. 30). The climate of non-tenure track faculty may diminish their desire to participate in the decision-making process of the institution, further alienating them from their tenure track and tenured colleagues and deprofessionalizing them. There are some instances when non-tenure track faculty members serve as representatives and participate in shared governance, usually only in a token capacity (Gappa et al., 2007). Meanwhile, tenured and tenure track faculty members often take this form of institutional service for granted due to its perceived lack of prestige amongst other tasks such as research and teaching (Bradley, 2004).

The inability to contribute to the day-to-day functions of the university prevents contingent faculty members from developing what Gouldner (1957) described as "loyalty to the employing organization," one of three markers associated with cosmopolitans and locals. Additionally, this exclusion limits the professional reputation of non-tenure track faculty members among those who have tenure or are on the tenure track. Nelson (2010) suggested that participating in governance relates back to the vulnerability and instability of contingent positions, emphasizing the lack of authority and participating in decision-making as consequences of threatened job security. Kezar and Sam (2010a) pointed out that the shrinking role of faculty members in university governance allows administrators to make decisions about student learning and faculty working conditions with increasingly less input from the faculty. However, "without [non-tenure track faculty] participation, input on these conditions is effectively out of the reach for the largest group of faculty in many postsecondary institutions" (Kezar & Sam, 2010a, p. 83). Since contingent faculty now constitute over two thirds of the profession, this is a large group

to exclude from university decision-making, especially when their primary focus is on instruction.

The rise of contingent faculty limits the collective voice of the faculty at large in university decision-making and endangers academic freedom, threatening the authority and autonomy of the faculty writ large. These threats encourage them to organize to respond to these threats and to improve their working conditions related to their compensation, shared governance, and academic freedom. Faculty unionization spiked in the 1970s and has remained steady since then (Ladd & Lipset, 1973). Through both the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), faculty unions have proliferated, especially among broad access institutions (Gerber, 2014; DeCew, 2003; Hutcheson, 2000). The growth of faculty unions shows no sign of stopping. If anything, this movement is gaining momentum. This shifting dynamic creates a degree of conflict within the academic profession. Friedson (2013) stated that there are essentially two faculties in today's colleges and universities, the professional faculty and the unionized faculty. While organizing represents an opportunity to improve working conditions and pay across the professoriate, unions' inherent conflict with the core ideals of professionals may limit their growth across the higher education landscape. The proliferation of faculty unions and contingent faculty members' desire to collectively bargain highlights the challenges surrounding university governance and the growth of non-tenure track faculty members.

Compensation & support. Compensation as well as the organizational structure of an institution communicates values, norms, and priorities. While there is a formal

organizational structure, there is also an informal hierarchy present in many colleges and universities, especially among faculty members of varying ranks and the corresponding power dynamics and prestige. Within the informal faculty hierarchy, non-tenure track faculty members occupy the lowest levels. The consequences of their hierarchical station are, at once, obvious and subtle. On the one hand, as previously discussed, contingent faculty members are systemically left out of decision-making about curricular issues and governance, in general (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001). In addition to that omission, there are other subtler ramifications of the faculty hierarchy including exclusion from departmental meetings or not being listed on the departmental website (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001). These instances of being excluded and alienated, leave non-tenure track faculty members with feelings of isolation and invisibility (Cross & Goldberg, 2009; Gappa & Leslie, 1993).

In conjunction with the consequences of the informal, power-laden faculty hierarchy, contingent faculty members are often compensated poorly. Gappa and Leslie (1993) and Baldwin and Chronister (2001) among others, found that these instructors are often denied professional development funds in addition to their low pay. More specifically, Monks (2007) found that "full-time non-tenure track faculty are paid 25.9% less, and part-time non-tenure track faculty are paid approximately 64% less per hour than comparable full-time tenure track assistant professors" (p. 499). Despite this substantial wage gap, non-tenure track faculty members are not wholly dissatisfied.

Overall, non-tenure track faculty members desire to become well-respected academic citizens within the larger professoriate (June, 2009). While non-tenure track faculty members often report feelings of isolation and marginalization, institutions

reported positive benefits of their positions at the same time. The flexibility of non-tenure track positions allows some instructors to hold positions outside of the university at the same time, especially those in professional fields such as medicine, law, and business (Leatherman, 1998). In addition to flexibility, Bergom, Waltman, August, and Hollenshead (2010) found that faculty in contingent positions report positive feelings towards collaborative work and recognize their membership in the larger academy. In order to bolster these optimistic perspectives about their positions within the academic citizenry, larger professional associations also seek to link contingent faculty members across institutions.

Faculty Hiring

In light of the unbundling faculty role and greater reliance on contingent faculty employment, this study argues that faculty hiring decisions serve as the hub and mechanism behind these larger shifts in the academy. Empirical work on and discussions of faculty hiring practices comprise a significant portion of prior scholarship on the professoriate and academic working conditions.

Much of the literature on faculty hiring focuses on exclusionary practices and prestige-seeking that frequently plague the academic job market. This research is most often descriptive and prescriptive, exposing harmful patterns in academic hiring processes concerning race and gender (e.g. Bailyn, 2003; Gregory, 2001; Ware, 2000) but also offering suggestions on how best to leverage hiring to seek equitable solutions to diversifying the professoriate (e.g. Kayes, 2006; Smith, 2000; Smith, Turner, Osei-Kofi, & Richards, 2004). Still, other work emphasizes the reproduction of prestige that takes

place in academic hiring when applicants are hired based on the reputations of their advisors, the status of the institution where they received their doctorates, or by mean of "cultural matching" between those who are hiring and those who are hired (Clauset, Arbesman, & Larremore, 2015; Rivera, 2012). From this work on academic hiring, it is evident that many factors may simultaneously interact and influence academic hiring decisions, including the personal, departmental, institutional, and environmental.

As early as 1958, Caplow and McGee systematically interviewed administrative leaders, department chairs, and departmental colleagues surrounding the vacancy-and-replacement process during academic years, 1954-55 and 1955-56 at ten major universities. The authors explored the decision-making process of academic departments and noted the interplay among market demands, academic departments, and the university at large, highlighting trends in the academic labor market and broader recommendations for several stakeholder groups involved in the academic hiring process.

Many of Caplow and McGee's arguments are still relevant for academic hiring today. However, discussions around appointment type were not as common or as pressing then as they are now. In response to discussions of broad trends about the growth of contingent faculty appointments, Kezar and Gehrke (2014) acknowledged this significant change in the following statement:

> Simple answers also hide the fact that hiring practices have changed in recent years; hiring decisions have become decentralized to departments, non-tenure-track faculty appointments are no tracked as tenure-track appointments are, larger strategic plans related to faculty hiring have been abandoned, and intentional reflective hiring practices often are missing. (p. 44).

The shift in the academic workforce necessitates renewed attention to academic hiring processes. Cross and Goldenberg (2011) examined hiring practices and changes in appointment type at research universities exclusively and there have been several studies at community colleges as well (e.g. Flannigan, Jones, & Moore, 2004; Twombly, 2005); however, there are very few studies that examine this phenomenon within and across regional comprehensive universities. For that reason, this study addressed how the increased use of contingent appointments has influenced or changed administrators' decisions-making processes behind faculty hiring at regional comprehensive universities.

One exception that focuses on broad access institutions is Kezar and Gehrke's (2014) survey of academic deans on their perceptions of the academic workforce, including those on contingent appointments. 48% of their responses were from deans of master's institutions (regional comprehensive universities). Their findings showed that deans spend very little time on academic hiring, rarely use data to support their decisions, and typically hire non-tenure track faculty members to teach introductory courses and general education requirements.

In addition to this survey data and larger quantitative trends, there is a need to provider greater depth of understanding and nuance of the variation in hiring practices across institutional types. Cross and Goldenberg (2003) addressed this differentiation in the following statement:

> The circumstances and hiring practices of two-year colleges are entirely different from those of comprehensive or small liberal arts colleges, just as these in turn are different from the hiring practices of major research universities. (p. 50)

In their in-depth analysis of faculty hiring practices and how university decision-making

influences administrators' choices surrounding faculty appointment types, they found environmental (finances, local ecology), institutional (institutional data, cost) and individual (instructional quality) characteristics that influence these staffing practices. In line with Kezar and Gehrke (2014) and Cross and Goldenberg (2003), this study answers the call to examine hiring practices in order "to restore the integrity that is being lost through the lack of intentionality in hiring and supporting faculty" (Kezar & Gehrke, 2014, p. 46).

Lastly, in addition to the literature surrounding specific faculty hiring practices there is another body of work that addresses the key aspects of the broader academic labor market including secondary labor markets, the importance of place, and the rise of the gig economy. While Caplow and McGee (1958) introduced this work, Breneman and Youn's (1988) volume provided an economic and sociological perspective on the segmentation of the academic labor market, examining how "the nature of labor market outcomes may be explained by the nature of academic organizations" (p. 2). They found that structural, institutional factors had a marked influence on the academic labor market.

More recently, Rhoades and Torres-Olave (2015) built on Breneman and Youn's work around the segmented academic labor market, discussing the role of academic capitalism on the professoriate. They argued that academic capitalism shaped the academic labor market by making it more market-like, including the rise of secondary labor markets comprised of postdoctoral researchers, non-tenure track full-time instructors, and part-time adjuncts. This secondary labor market is distinct from the primary (i.e. tenure track) labor market since it is local rather than national, but it is important to note that there is stratification within the secondary labor market as well; the

labor market for non-tenure track full-time positions looks more like the tenure track market than those of postdocs and adjuncts (Rhoades & Torres-Olave, 2015).

Another key aspect of the research surrounding academic labor markets is the importance of place. McGinns and Long (1997) discussed the significance of location in the academic labor market in terms of resources and competition, stating,

> Coupled with the force of centrality is that of competition. Just as there are more academic employment opportunities for scientists in the Boston metropolitan area than there are in all of Alabama, there are also far more competitors for resources. (p. 347)

In this way, it is not only the opportunity of a location that is important for academics seeking employment, but also the density of competition for resources. Rhoades and Torres-Olave (2015) noted this as well, remarking on how the increased competition for resources and density of institutions in an area also shapes the secondary labor markets for contingent faculty and how those secondary labor markets are also geographically distinct from the primary labor market of tenure track faculty which is typically a national market.

Ultimately, though, the fragmentation of academic labor markets, and most especially the growth of the academic positions that comprise the secondary academic labor market (i.e. non-tenure track positions and postdocs), constitutes an evolution within and across the professoriate. Through a historical approach, Angulo (2018) posits that the shift towards a more casual academic workforce is not a side effect of university decision-making around other issues, rather he argues that it is a result of a larger economic shift towards temporary workers because of social, economic, and political

developments since the start of the twenty-first century. Additionally, universities have begun to use more corporate strategies in their hiring practices in light of declines in funding for higher education. This casualization of the academy and changes to the academic labor market necessitate increased attention to the subsequent changes to the university hiring practices for tenure track and non-tenure track positions.

Faculty Conclusions

Across previous scholarship on the changing faculty career, there is little discussion of faculty members at public, comprehensive institutions. This institutional context may be addressed less given that the socialization of graduate students at research universities neglects a heavy emphasis on teaching (Austin, 2002). Consequently, there is sometimes internal conflict about the high teaching responsibilities at regional comprehensive institutions compared to the professorial roles modeled for graduate students at research universities. The difference between some faculty members' expectations and what the role of a faculty member at public comprehensive looks like with high teaching loads and significantly fewer research responsibilities than is typically required at research universities can cause a certain degree of dissatisfaction among faculty members at comprehensive institutions (Henderson & Kane, 1991; Terosky & Gonzalez, 2016).

Most salient for this project, many of the studies that focus on non-tenure track faculty members describe broad trends in the growth of this sector of the profession (e.g. Hearn et al., 2012; Kezar & Maxey, 2012). Those studies that do focus on specific institutional contexts primarily address community colleges (e.g. Eagan & Jaeger, 2009)

and research universities (e.g. Cross & Goldenberg, 2011). Kezar (2013a) serves as an exception, exploring departmental cultures and their effects on non-tenure track faculty performance at public, Master 1 Carnegie Schools. This institutional context was used for Kezar's study given the corresponding budget deficits and large populations of students. Using case study methodology, Kezar (2013a) identified four departmental cultures (i.e. destructive, neutral, inclusive, and learning) that influence contingent faculty members' performance and contributions.

While Adrianna Kezar's work often employs case study methods to explore workforce (in)equity, departmental culture, and non-tenure track faculty members' experiences, there has been very little qualitative work that focuses on the decision-making processes around faculty hiring decisions, specifically focusing on appointment type. Instead, there are several studies (e.g. Ehrenberg, 2006; Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005; Hearn et al., 2012; Kezar & Maxey, 2016) that use quantitative methods to examine the growth of this population over time and its potential for institutional efficiency. Rather than emphasizing flexibility and cost-savings opportunities, a qualitative approach to examining the factors involved in faculty hiring decisions provides greater nuance and depth to understanding the changing academic profession. To that end, this study addresses the lack of attention paid previously to non-tenure track faculty members at regional, comprehensive universities and qualitative approaches to understanding the mechanisms behind the increased reliance on non-tenure track faculty members and what that means for how institutions function.

Public Comprehensive Universities

Public comprehensive institutions make up a significant portion of the higher education landscape. Their longstanding missions emphasize service to the state and their surrounding communities. Initially, these institutions began as normal schools focused on providing vocational education, specifically trades that would aid them in employment in the surrounding region post-graduation (Finnegan, 1991). Ogren (2003) discussed the evolution of normal schools in her historiography that examines how the notion of the "nontraditional student" gradually evolved, as normal schools became teacher's colleges, and, ultimately, regional comprehensive institutions. Students at these institutions were considered "nontraditional" at the time of normal schools because they were often socioeconomically underprivileged and seeking vocational training and skills for employment purposes rather than seeking a liberal arts education at what were considered more traditional, quintessential institutions of that time. Public comprehensive institutions extend access to less prepared students, providing an affordable postsecondary option often center on vocational education.

Identification and contextualization. The Carnegie Classification Report of 1976 described public, comprehensive institutions as institutions that teach the liberal arts curriculum as well as vocational programs (Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, 1976). Additionally, it stated that regional comprehensive institutions generally enroll 2,000 or more students and may have some graduate programs, but very few doctoral programs, if any. The purpose of these institutions is to provide an affordable, 4-year education to students throughout the states. Gardner (2016) notes that

regional comprehensive institutions are known as the workhorses of higher education, educating 30 percent of the students in the United States. As Gardener stated, these institutions prioritize teaching and service to their community above almost all other institutional purposes.

According to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), there are currently 760 comprehensive institutions and those institutions combined enroll over 4 million students. With many institutions ascribed to this institutional type, a succinct and all-encompassing profile of public comprehensive institutions is challenging given the variation within this category. The variation may be the root cause of the lack of attention paid to these institutions in the broad body of higher education literature. Often, researchers' approaches to discussing public comprehensive institutions echo Birnbaum (1988), who suggested that these institutions are most often described as what they are not rather than what they are. In previous scholarship, public comprehensive institutions are most frequently described relative to other institutional types – research universities, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges. In these comparisons, regional comprehensive institutions are considered the redheaded stepchild, the ugly duckling, or the invisible colleges (Henderson, 2009b).

As middling institutions in the prestige hierarchy of higher education, public comprehensives have a high amount of inter-institutional variation. They range in terms of size since some public comprehensives enroll as few as 2,000 students, while some have as many as 30,000 students (Henderson, 2009b). Some public comprehensive institutions reside in rural, secluded locales, while others are in metropolitan cities (Henderson, 2009b). The quality of students at these institutions varies as well

(Henderson, 2009b). Often students at comprehensive institutions are not as well prepared as those that attend liberal arts colleges and research universities. This may be a result of the limited recruiting base of these institutions, since they typically enroll students from a very limited geographic radius in comparison with more prestigious institutions (Henderson, 2009b). This level of student preparation places the onus of remediation and additional support services on these institutions to graduate students. Additionally, the limited applicant pool of these institutions means that student enrollment at public comprehensive institutions are dependent on the population growth of the surrounding area. Therefore, if an institution is in a rural area and the population dwindles so, most likely, will student enrollment at that institution (Gardner, 2016). This presents obstacles in budget planning, especially considering decreases in the proportion of state support at these institutions.

Challenges to comprehensives. In recent years, the challenges associated with public comprehensive institutions have received a fair amount of attention. In a *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, Selingo (2000) highlighted how these institutions suffer from mission creep and funding issues. More than a decade later, Gardner (2016) wrote his own article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* about the future of public, regional institutions and echoed many of the same concerns as Selingo, suggesting not much has changed since 2000. One of the crosscutting concerns in these two articles was the idea of mission creep. In line with DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) arguments surrounding isomorphism among organizations, mission creep is the idea that institutions at the lower end of the prestige hierarchy seek prestige and legitimacy by emulating more prestigious

institutions (Henderson, 2009a; Morphew & Huisman, 2002). The result of this "creep" is that institutions like public comprehensive institutions begin behaving more like research universities. For example, some public comprehensives may increase the research requirements of its faculty members or may seek name changes as universities rather than colleges in order be more like research universities. Selingo (2000) mentioned that several comprehensives dropped the "State College" portion of their names as a new makeover with greater prestige.

These name changes and cultural shifts within institutions may seem fruitless; however, colleges and universities are more than just budgets and bottom lines and these shifts in institutional norms and traditions may have significant implications for the future of these institutions (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). At the same time, however, there is much more to being a research university than changing an institution's name. Often, mission creep infiltrates comprehensive institutions throughout the organization as well as the name on the top if its letterhead, but because of both resource constraints and their organizational mission, comprehensive institutions are unable to emulate the magnitude and reach of research universities.

As state funding for higher education decreases, public, comprehensive institutions are not exempt from these cuts. These cuts are especially troubling when you consider the limited applicant pool of these institutions and their missions to provide affordable education. Often, in response to these financial cutbacks from the state, comprehensive institutions increase their tuition to offset the deficit (Gardner, 2016). These tuition increases alter the missions of these institutions by potentially limiting access. Tuition hikes are difficult to counteract given the difficulty for comprehensive

institutions to go out and find other students to enroll than it is for institutions with greater resources such as research universities and private liberal arts colleges.

The financial constraints of public, comprehensive institutions require institutions to adapt. One strategy to mitigate those fiscal limitations is by relying more heavily on non-tenure track faculty positions, which lower the resources needed for faculty salaries. Little research has focused on the interplay between institutions of this type and their environments. This study seeks to address this limitation by exploring organizational responses to limited resources and the repercussions for both academic life and the institution as a whole.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Calls for greater efficiency abound in colleges and universities across the country as administrators and academics seek new ways to do more with less, while simultaneously providing high quality education and extending access. This is a complex and challenging endeavor given that universities do not always change rapidly. However, these pressures to cut costs and change the way institutions function have long-term implications for the future of higher education in terms of day-to-day operations, academic outcomes, and how individuals work to carry out the missions of colleges and universities. One way in which some institutions attempt to mitigate the effects of financial constraints is through faculty hiring decisions.

This study builds on previous scholarship on the changing academic profession and the identity and nature of regional comprehensive universities. Extending this work, this project evaluated the contributing factors involved in academic hiring decisions around faculty appointment type at two regional comprehensive universities. Given the organizational nature and complexity of this phenomenon, a conceptual model that emphasizes the interdependence of the external environment, organizations, and the populations of workers within them is needed. To that end, this study's guiding conceptual framework (Appendix A) relies primarily on the theory of organizational ecology, and also incorporates on resource dependence theory and the sociological concept of microfoundations.

Combined, organizational ecology, resource dependence, and microfoundations inform this framework for studying the contributing factors that university administrators and faculty use to determine appointment type in academic hiring decisions. The rapid growth of contingent academic appointments at regional comprehensive universities necessitates a systems perspective. The fact that this trend is widespread across institutions suggests that the factors that influence faculty hiring decisions are not only a product of intra-organizational factors, rather they are the products of interactions among three levels – environment, institution, and individuals. These three theories provide the explanatory power to conceptualize the broader system in which faculty hiring decisions are made, especially when universities are theoretically conceptualized as organizations open to external pressures.

This framework situates academic hiring decisions as strategic opportunities to mitigate compromised resource flows, especially those associated with decreased funding for higher education (Doyle & Delaney, 2009). In this way, faculty hiring decisions and the use of varied faculty appointment types seems to be the result of interdependencies among environments, organizations, and intra-organizational individuals. First, organizational ecology directly addresses that interdependency and how influential changes in environmental resources are for how organizations function as well as the growth and reduction of intra-organizational populations (i.e. part-time adjuncts, full-time lecturers, non-tenure track faculty members, and tenure track and tenured faculty members) (Bidwell & Kasarda, 1985). Second, resource dependence theory emphasizes the need to reduce organizational uncertainty by broadening the number of resource flows to ensure survival (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Finally, the concept of microfoundations

highlights the importance and value of individual actors and their everyday actions as drivers of gradual organizational change (Powell & Colyvas, 2008).

Guided by organizational ecology, resource dependence theory, and microfoundations, this framework strengthens our considerations of the multi-level interdependences within and across the environment, the institution, and those who work within the institution. This emphasizes how institutional resources can diminish or increase certain categories of workers. Together, these three theories highlight the complexity and nuance involved in academic hiring decisions and the multiple and, at times, competing factors that potentially influence institutions' increased reliance on non-tenure track faculty members in response.

Open Systems

Implicit in this model is the conception of organizations as open systems. Essentially this study is an extension of questions posed by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967), who examined the "intricate problem of how what happens inside the organization is related to market and technical conditions outside the firm" (p. 5-6). Thinking of colleges and universities as open systems presumes that organizations break into smaller, interconnected parts as they grow, resulting in a more porous boundary between the institution and its environment. This permeable barrier (represented by the dashed lines in Figure 1) makes the organization vulnerable, requiring adaptation to reduce uncertainty (Baron, 1984; Birnbaum, 1988; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Scott & Davis, 2007). Based on this premise, universities do not operate in a vacuum, and are subject to environmental pressures that necessitate a response. These adaptive behaviors take different forms. For

example, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) put forth the idea of coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphic change among organizations in response to environmental pressures. Most salient for this project, the open systems perspective serves as a foundation for thinking about how constraints and uncertainty that stem from universities' environments prompt adaptation, which creates shifts among the distribution of workers within them.

To address the difference facets of this conceptual model (Figure 1), each of the theories and concepts that inform this approach and their relevance for addressing academic hiring decisions are discussed, in turn, below.

Organizational Ecology

Charles E. Bidwell and John D. Kasarda developed an ecological theory of organizational structuring that deals directly with the organizational interdependence Underutilized in higher education research, Bidwell and Kasarda's work grew out of the population ecologists, the formative use of ecology in organizational theory. Hannan and Freeman (1977) are well known in this area for examining selection and competition processes among organizations; however, their work focuses primarily on the interplay of organizations and their environments, with little thought given to what that might mean for populations within the institution. To address those concerns, Bidwell and Kasarda (1985) outlined organizational ecology, which better acknowledges interdependency at three levels – environment, organization, and inter-organizational populations. In doing so, the authors bridged the internal/external binary of organizational change processes to holistically address the interplay of influences on institutional decision-making.

In this line of thinking, Bidwell and Kasarda (1985) situate organizations as human ecological communities that house populations within them. Similar to the open systems perspective, organizational ecology also highlights adaptation at every level. Bidwell and Kasarda echo human ecologist Amos Hawley (1968) who noted that "the community has an environment, defined as all phenomena external to the community's populations that potentially or actually affect the form or size of these population and, therefore, the structure and size of the community itself" (p. 330). Organizational ecology also notes the importance of resource flows (i.e. time, human resources, and fiscal resources) from the environment. Changes in those resource flows in terms of volume or the way they are distributed among populations within the ecological community have implications for the growth and reduction of populations within the community (Bidwell & Kasarda, 1987).

Under the ecological theory of organizational structuring, Bidwell and Kasarda (1985) acknowledged the potential for changes in environmental resources and the repercussions of those changes on the populations within that organization. Consequently, this theory addresses how changes in state or institutional budget could hypothetically influence the growth or reduction of university employees (i.e. tenure track professors, tenured professors, full-time instructors, and part-time adjuncts). In this way, organizational ecology accounts for fluctuations of resources including time, finances, labor and the subsequent effects on a populations' (i.e. different groups of university employees) ability to persist in that environment. Additionally, organizational ecology captures the nested position of academic hiring decisions – situated at the intersection of the broader environmental pressures, institutional climate, and groups of

university employees. This process culminates in a reciprocal system made up of the environment, university, and employees, from which resource inputs turn translate into outputs and a symbiotic relationship ensues through the university and its employees.

Resource Dependence Theory

The second theory that frames this study is resource dependence theory. Resource dependence theory conceptualizes the varied nature of higher education institutions in both form and function and the consequent differences in resource inputs necessary to carry out their missions. Resource dependence theory highlights the relationships between organizations (in this case, colleges and universities) and their sources of their financial, human, and other resources embedded in the context of the organizations' environmental conditions, allowing for variation of this framework across institutional types (Froelich, 1999; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). These dependencies are primarily represented by the Environmental Factors in Figure 1, which names several factors that exert external pressures on regional comprehensive universities.

The current environmental conditions, fraught with diminished funds (proportionally) for higher education from the state and federal government, emphasize the need for financial flexibility as they seek out new external funds and adapt to fiscal constraints (Barringer, 2016; Baron, 1984; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). The need to find new funding sources differs across institutional types given the different missions, norms, and needs in terms of financial flexibility (i.e. resource dependencies) across the different sectors of higher education institutions (Barringer, 2013). That is, there are different financial challenges faced by

community colleges and regional comprehensive universities than by large public research universities. To that end, distinct institutional types employ different strategies to combat or adapt to these financial constraints and limit the uncertainty surrounding them.

Given these varied resource dependencies, there are differentiated adaptations for workers across institutional types. One way in which institutions may seek to lessen the sting of limited fiscal resources is by increasing the number of contingent faculty appointments. As previously stated, this tactic is undertaken across sectors and institutional types but may be most prominent at broad access institutions (Kezar & Maxey, 2012).

Microfoundations

The previous two theories address institutional behaviors and changes in higher education institutions. In addition, they address college and university responses to environmental pressures, addressing changes in how institutions carry out their missions, evolve over time, and compete for finite resources (i.e. time, money, prestige). In this way, these theories frequently focus almost exclusively on macro-level issues and neglect an emphasis on the individuals whose actions and decisions collectively constitute those organizational behaviors and responses.

Consequently, the incorporation of microfoundations into this framework adds the individual-level component to this approach to understanding academic hiring decisions. The concept of microfoundations theory asserts that since organizations are highly institutionalized (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), the actions of individuals that operate

within them contribute to overall organizational behaviors and changes. Exploring the microfoundations of organizations answers calls for more research "on how the local affairs of existing members of a field can both sustain and prompt shifts in practices and conventions" and the need for "more attention to everyday processes" within organizations (Powell & Colyvas, 2008, p. 277).

To date, there are only a few instances of higher education research that employs microfoundations to better understand organizational processes. Taylor and Cantwell (2015) used microfoundations to understand the role of individual faculty members in driving demand for international doctoral students at research universities in the United States. In another example, Barringer and Riffe (2018) used this microfoundational aspect of neoinstitutional theory to explore the influence of university trustees on university behaviors, practices, and policies using a case study of two AAU institutions. This study extends the use of microfoundations in the context of colleges and universities to address institutions other than the most elite; the roles of administrators (i.e. department chairs, deans, provosts); and further explore how "what we perceive as organizational behavior is actually caused by individual-level actions" (Taylor & Cantwell, 2015, p. 415).

For the purposes of this this study, microfoundations alludes to the individual actions of administrators and faculty members in the academic hiring decisions. It is their actions that collectively alter (over time) the academic workforce within their institutions via their decision-making. By examining what Colyvas and Powell (2006) referred to as the "principles and practices" of an institution, we can better understand the driving forces behind organizational change; in this case, academic hiring practices (p. 310).

Conclusions & Applications

Combined, these theories guide this conceptual framework for studying the environmental, institutional, and individual factors that contribute to academic hiring decisions and the implications of resource constraints on those responsible for instruction. This framework can help us better understand the growing number of academic appointment types and the changing distribution of academics into those various categories, and, potentially, the ramifications of that growth for how institutions function.

The nested context of the factors that influence academic staffing decisions necessitates a systems perspective. The open systems perspective acknowledges the vulnerability of institutions to outside forces and uncertainty. Meanwhile, resource dependence theory recognizes the reliance of organizations on varied resource pools. Universities are open systems vulnerable to environmental pressures with several resource dependencies such as tuition dollars, state appropriations, and research dollars. Because of organizational uncertainty, when the volume or number of resource flows to an organization is changed or compromised in some way, the institution must adapt and either seek new resource streams or find alternative ways to minimize its resource needs by revaluating how it functions.

In light of resource dependence theory, this study situates academic hiring decisions as one means of adaptation employed by universities to mitigate compromised resource flows. In this way, the rise of non-tenure track appointments seems to be the result of interdependencies among environments, organizations, and intra-organizational populations. Organizational ecology directly addresses that interdependency and how

influential changes in environmental resources are for how organizations function as well as the growth and reduction of intra-organizational populations. Lastly, microfoundations incorporates an emphasis on the actions of individuals in these decision-making processes and the idea that administrators and faculty members, embedded in their organizational and environmental contexts, carry out the actions and decisions that collectively and over time make changes to their overall institutions.

Combined, these theories guide this approach to studying the changing academic profession and the implications of resource constraints on those responsible for instruction. This framework can help us better understand the changing types and growing number of academic workers as well as the ramifications of that growth for how institutions function. Evaluating how compounded contexts influence changes in the academic labor system and its consequences for both universities and the professoriate is a difficult task given its intangibility; however, it is essential that we study this process and its short- and long-term effects for faculty members, administrative employees, undergraduate education, and institutional outcomes to improve overall organizational effectiveness and educational quality.

This conceptual framework provides a foundation for research on changes among university workers as well as the layered nature of their positionality within and among both their respective institutions and the larger environment. The utility of organizational theories in higher education lies in their ability to situate changes in how institutions carry out their missions, evolve over time, and compete for finite resources (i.e. time, money, prestige). However, without taking into the account how organizational and

environmental changes influence the people carrying out the missions of universities, something is missing from those theoretical applications.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative research is “an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there” (Patton, 1985, p.1). This study uses a qualitative research design to better understand and explore the decision-making process around appointment type in academic hiring, addressing the gaps in the literature surrounding the mechanisms behind the changing academic profession and discussions of faculty work within and across regional comprehensive universities. More specifically, this study uses a multisite case study to better understand the contributing factors involved in the changing academic labor system within regional comprehensive universities at the environmental level, the organizational level, and the level of individual administrators. To empirically address these research questions and purposes, this section outlines the research design, case selection, data collection strategies, and the role of the researcher for this study.

Design Strategy

The goal of this study’s research design is “understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To that end, this design strategy allows for the exploration of the contributing factors in academic hiring decisions and the meaning of those factors for university administrators. Consequently, this study poses questions

that answer why, how and to what extent; therefore, a qualitative approach is most appropriate for addressing these types of questions (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

To evaluate these questions and examine decision-making processes around faculty appointment type at regional comprehensive universities, this study uses a multiple case study design since this study seeks to "investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2003). Previously, much of the work related to non-tenure track faculty and academic hiring has been quantitative, examining broad trends as well as student-level outcomes in light of the growing number of instructors with contingent appointments (Eagan & Jaeger, 2009; Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005, 2006; Finkelstein & Schuster, 2006; Finkelstein et al., 2016; Hearn et al., 2012; Hearn et al., 2017; Kezar & Maxey, 2012; Umbach, 2007). There are a few notable exceptions, though. For example, Kezar (2013b) conducted a qualitative study of 25 cases (academic departments) that examined departmental policies and practices for non-tenure track faculty members at regional comprehensive universities and identified four types of departmental culture with regards to support for those with contingent appointments.

This qualitative approach and others (e.g. Kezar, 2013a; Kezar, 2013c; Waltman, Bergom, Hollenshead, Miller, & August, 2012) provide the nuance necessary for addressing the variation across academic departments, colleges, and institutions as well as those who comprise the academic workforce. To provide an in-depth understanding, this study explores academic hiring decisions at two institutions, which allows for

replication of the analysis to generate themes and patterns within and across cases, which will aid in theory-building based on the findings of this study (Yin, 2003).

Case studies are a flexible approach since there are several definitions of qualitative case studies; however, they each cover the same core principles. Yin (2003) described case studies as an empirical inquiry of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundary surrounding a phenomenon is unclear. Stake (1995) took a more exploratory and inductive approach to case studies than Yin, stating that they are an exploration of complex phenomena in a bounded system. Finally, Merriam and Tisdell (2015) described case studies as a detailed description and analysis of a phenomenon in a bounded system. While these methodologists' definitions have subtle differences, overall they emphasize that case studies provide researches the opportunity to analyze the complexity of a phenomenon within a contextualized bounded case. Thus, the case selection and bounding of cases is central to the successful execution of a case study approach.

Case Selection

Case selection and bounding should allow the researcher to study what constitutes and who contributes to a specific phenomenon (Ragin & Becker, 1992). As Yin (2003) alluded in his definition of case studies, this research method is particularly useful in situations where boundaries surrounding a complex event are unclear because bounding the case(s) establishes a clear-cut scope in which to study the phenomenon. Further considerations surrounding case selection and bounding are also be based on the type of case study undertaken by the researcher.

Using a multiple case study design, this study begins to develop a better understanding of academic hiring decisions at regional comprehensive universities. The use of two distinct cases provides multiple institutional contexts within which to analyze this phenomenon. Additionally, this design provides the ability to use the proposed conceptual framework to analyze faculty hiring within and across both cases to understand the environmental, institutional, and individual factors that influence decisions around faculty appointment type in academic hiring processes.

To examine contributing factors in academic hiring decisions at two regional comprehensive universities, each institution constitutes a single case. This study focuses on regional comprehensive universities given the lack of attention paid to this institutional type in higher education research, but also because these institutions have recently experienced significant growth in the number of contingent faculty. Kezar and Maxey (2012) found that from 1997 to 2007 the proportion of full-time non-tenure track faculty members (lecturers and instructors) at regional comprehensive universities grew from approximately 9% to 11% and part-time non-tenure track faculty members grew over 10% from approximately 35% to 48% of the academic workforce at these institutions.

Additionally, these institutions are considered the workhorses of higher education, educating large proportions of the country's undergraduate students (Gardner, 2016; Henderson, 2009b). They heavily emphasize teaching and face state budget limitations, which, in part, lends them to a greater presence of non-tenure track faculty (Gardner, 2016; Henderson, 2009b; Kezar & Sam, 2010b; Kezar & Sam, 2010c). These

characteristics make public comprehensive institutions ideal for the study of factors that influence growing use of casual academic appointments.

The two case universities included in this analysis were selected using purposive sampling. Specifically, what Patton (2015) described as critical case sampling, in order to "yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge" (p. 276). To ensure that the cases in this study were "critical," they were chosen based on both their similarities and a few key differences that may influence faculty hiring practices to provide the greatest understanding in relation to this study's guiding questions. To accomplish that, the two universities (i.e. River Valley University and Middle State University[1]) and included in this study are both regional, comprehensive universities of with enrollments of approximately 15,000-20,000 undergraduate students and similar degree offerings (including a few graduate programs at each institution) in the southeast region of the United States. In addition to those factors, additional information about the case selection criteria for these two institutions is included in Appendix A.

To differentiate between the two cases, which may provide insight into the factors that influence faculty hiring decisions, Middle State University and River Valley University differ in terms of institutional resources, their budgeting models, and state budget priorities. First, according to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), River Valley University is in the top quartile of regional comprehensive universities in the southeast in terms of the share of total expenditures used for instruction, whereas Middle State University is in the bottom quartile. This difference

[1] The names of the universities included in this study have been changed to protect the anonymity of the interview participants.

between the cases provided greater insight into how institutional finances may influence faculty hiring decisions.

River Valley's higher proportion of instructional expenditures demonstrates a strong institutional commitment to instruction and, consequently, its faculty since resource allocations signify value statement on the part of the university (Weisbrod, Ballou, & Asch, 2008). Therefore, River Valley's priorities for and decisions about faculty hiring may differ from Middle State's, given its smaller (proportionately) financial commitment to instruction. Second, Middle State University and River Valley University have different budget models. Middle State's is highly centralized, while River Valley's is newly de-centralized. River Valley, just last year, adopted what employees referred to as an incentive-based budget model. Based on participant descriptions, this model is essentially a Responsibility Centered Management (RCM) model, giving greater autonomy to the distinct colleges across the university to meet specific institutional priorities and goals in exchange for their share of the overall budget (Carlson, 2015; Strauss, Curry, & Whalen, 1996). Since variation across budget models influences decision-making throughout the institution, these differences may subsequently change the way hiring decisions are made as well.

Lastly, state budget priorities differ between these institutions. Middle State is located in a state that has remained fairly steady in its financial support for higher education. Meanwhile, River Valley is located in a state with a high degree of volatility as it relates to support for postsecondary education. Funding for higher education has declined rapidly in the past decade, the state recently adopted a performance-based funding model, and there are competing priorities for state spending, since the state

retirement fund is insolvent. These factors that differentiate the cases from one another may highlight differences in the factors that influence faculty hiring decisions, priorities around faculty appointment types, and may provide additional insight into the role of fiscal resources in that process.

Data Collection

For research designs using case studies, researchers collect data from each of the cases to better understand phenomena in their real-life context in line with the overall research questions (Yin, 2003). Typically, case studies employ several different types of data in order to analyze themes and find patterns across data sources (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). In qualitative case studies, these data sources typically include but are not limited to document analysis, interviews, and observations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Using these multiple sources of evidence not only provides a holistic approach to studying the nuance and complexity of phenomena, but also improves trustworthiness of the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In order to address the aforementioned research questions, this study uses multiple sources of evidence to compare within and across cases using a two-stage data collection process including document analysis and semi-structured interviews (Yin, 2003).

The first step of the data collection process involved obtaining public documents from the university websites including[2]: institutional strategic plans, mission statements (to understand the goals and direction of each institutions), faculty handbooks,

[2] See Appendix B for a complete list of the documents used in this study.

collegiality statements, policies related to shared governance, and requirements for promotion and tenure (to gain a better understanding of the institutional faculty climate). This process, conducted in summer 2017, provided foundational context for both cases and foregrounded the second stage of the data collection – semi-structured interviews. While the document analysis and interviews included in this study were complimentary, there were some limitations in what could be reported from the university documents in order to maintain the anonymity of the institutions selected for this analysis.

The interview portion of the data collection for this study employed semi-structured interviews with administrators, deans, and department chairs. In order to protect participants' identities and comply with the requirements of the University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board, each institution included in the study is referred to by a pseudonym and participants are referred to only by their professional titles. Lastly, this study's research design and analysis was exempted by the University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board and was also approved by the Institutional Review Boards of both the universities included in this study (see Appendix F for the IRB letter).

In line with Kezar and Gehrke (2014), this study relied heavily on interviews with administrators (i.e. provost, deans, vice presidents), to better understand the processes for faculty hiring at both institutions because "deans are predominantly tasked with setting hiring priorities" and "less than a third reported consulting the faculty" (p. 47). Additionally, since faculty members are increasingly positioned as "managed professionals," these "academic managers," have a heavy hand in decision-making, perhaps especially in the setting of a regional comprehensive university (Rhoades, 1998).

The university administrators included in this study were involved in the decision-making processes as well as budget management for institutions, so they had firsthand understandings of the factors involved in faculty hiring decisions, especially considerations around appointment type. Lastly, these administrators were knowledgeable about the implications of the growth of non-tenure track faculty members for the institution overall, including the financial flexibility gained or challenges for instruction and student outcomes, so they could speak to the wide range of factors included in hiring decisions.

For this study, the goal was to conduct interviews with upper-level administrators responsible for academics and human resources as well as administrators at the three largest colleges across both universities including the colleges of arts and sciences, the business schools, and the schools of educations. In total, this study included 17 interviews, 8 interviews at River Valley University and 9 interviews at Middle State University (see Appendix D for a list of those who were interviewed at each university). Overall, participants were chosen at the onset of data collection based on their professional roles and their responsibility for hiring processes and they were sent an email invitation to participate in the study along with a description of the study. However, a few of the participants were added to the study using snowball sampling when participants suggested that an individual could significantly contribute to the goals of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In order to meet the goals of the study and explore the factors that influence faculty hiring decisions, the interview protocol included questions that would address this study's guiding research questions (see Appendix E for the interview protocol). To allow

participants space to construct their own meaning and provide rich, descriptive responses, each interview was semi-structured, was digitally recorded (with the participants' consent), and lasted between a half hour and an hour. Of the 17 interviews, 15 were conducted in-person and 2 interviews were conducted over the phone. Each interview was de-identified, transcribed by a third party, and stored in a password-protected digital folder.

Combined, these multiple data sources evidenced the factors that influenced administrators' decision-making in the faculty hiring processes at two regional comprehensive universities and provided a nuanced understanding of administrators' perspectives on the use of various faculty appointment types as one component of the changing academic profession. Using both document analysis and semi-structured interviews provided a holistic picture of this phenomena within and across these two public comprehensive institutions.

Analytic Strategy

To analyze data in a case study, researchers may use techniques that are common across all qualitative research such as thematic coding, open coding, axial coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described qualitative analysis as reviewing the data and, in accordance with the scholarly literature on the subject under study, generating themes across the information collected from which codes are generated and applied to the data. As in all qualitative methods, the investigator is a research tool since their interpretations of the data inform the data

analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In terms of the analysis of case study data, choosing the right approach depends on the aims of the study.

In order to best align the analysis with the guiding research questions, this study followed Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2014) first- and second-cycle coding process. This strategy involves, in the first cycle, creating descriptive codes of large portions of the data based on the conceptual framework and previous studies and, in the second cycle, expanding those initial codes through an iterative review of the data into broader themes to highlight strong patterns in the data. Qualitative research is ultimately an iterative process, so the coding and analysis work continued until saturation was reached. That is, further data collection or analysis would not lend any new developments to the findings or overall themes (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Not only did this analytic strategy lay out a useful and systematic coding process, but its utility extends to leveraging this analysis into tangible and meaningful findings. Essentially, Miles et al. (2014) suggested that researchers use this analytic approach to move "from the empirical trenches to a more conceptual overview of the landscape. We're no longer just dealing with observables, but also with unobservables, and are connecting the two with successive layers of inferential glue" (p. 292). Along that line of thinking, this study seeks to translate the findings of this analysis into a broader conceptual model, which can be used to further explore changes to the academic labor force within and across universities.

Trustworthiness

Overall, there are strengths and weaknesses of case studies; however, employing strategies to improve the trustworthiness of this case study approach helped to provide both rich, descriptive data that answers this study's research questions and a nuanced understanding of the complexity of the faculty hiring decision-making processes at regional comprehensive universities. These analytical strategies and the utilization of the researcher's interpretations necessitated careful attention to the trustworthiness of the data and the analysis throughout this study. To enhance consistency in data collection and analysis for the documents and interview transcripts, a case study database and detailed data collection protocol were created to manage all of the data and document the data collection process itself (Yin, 2003). Additionally, this study included multiple sources of evidence, which was useful for triangulating across multiple sources of evidence and for ensuring that the application of the codes was consistent across the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Lastly, this case study design included multiple cases, which Miles et al. (2014) suggested, to strengthen the rigor of this analysis because by including greater variation.

These strategies to ensure trustworthiness address some of the overall limitation of this study. While generalizability is limited when using a case study design, there were tradeoffs for this disadvantage. Although the findings of this study can only be generalized to the cases in the study and other similar universities, this design provided breadth and depth of understanding factors that influence faculty hiring decisions in a way that would have been unobtainable if more broadly generalizable research methods had been used (Yin, 2003).

Role of the Researcher

The centrality of the researcher as a tool for data collection and interpretation is the core of each and every qualitative research project and this study is no exception. Consequently, it is essential that I acknowledge my own biases and assumptions going into this work. Although I have been entrenched in the literature on faculty work and the changing academic profession for years, I did not come to this study with preconceived ideas of what factors would be influential in administrators' decision-making about appointment type in faculty hiring decisions. In part, this was due to the fact that so few studies discuss this issue, but it was also because my goal was to remain open to whatever the documents said and whatever the participants felt was most relevant for this study. In honoring the lived experiences of my participants, I sought to effectively describe their responses in this study as a way to meaningfully convey my gratitude for their participation in this effort.

Leading up to this study, my experience with regional, comprehensive universities was one of social mobility. The majority of my family members who were fortunate enough to attend college, albeit non-traditionally, enrolled at regional comprehensive universities. This was one of the reasons that I focused my work in this setting, to add to the small body of work that considers this type of higher education institution as important and worthy of empirical attention. In light of these previous experiences, I guarded myself against the exclusively positive notions I previously held about these institutions in order to remain as impartial and close to the data as possible.

Lastly, throughout data collection, my own personal (i.e. observable) characteristics may have influenced my participants' responses given that the majority of my participants were older, White men who had held their positions for many years. Since I am a young, White woman doctoral student, those participants with identities different than mine may have felt more or less willing to share detailed descriptions of their professional roles. While I cannot change the fact that this may have occurred, I acknowledge the potential for these differences. Ultimately, I can do nothing but interpret the data for this study from my own positionality; however, I did so while challenging my own assumptions, seeking feedback from others, and staying as true to the data as possible.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

In order to better understand faculty hiring practices at regional comprehensive universities, this chapter presents the findings from the multisite comparative case study analysis of the factors considered by university administrations in making decisions about faculty appointment types in academic hiring. This section describes the contexts of River Valley University and Middle State University as well as the external, institutional, and individual factors that influence administrators' decision-making processes around faculty hiring at both universities. Following a discussion of those factors across the institutions included in this study, there is a comparison between River Valley University and Middle State University that highlights the themes present within both institutions as well as those factors that are distinctive to each. Faculty hiring is a complex phenomenon with many factors that influence it. What is presented here are the most salient themes found through both the document analysis and semi-structured interviews with university administrators.

River Valley University Context

River Valley University is a regional comprehensive university located in a suburban city in the southeast region of the United States. River Valley enrolls approximately 15,000 students in 90 undergraduate programs and 27 graduate programs. This mission-centric institution emphasizes student-centered education that develops

students who will, in turn, serve the surrounding region. To accomplish that mission, River Valley's strategic plan emphasizes student success and talent development, innovation, engagement with the surrounding region, and institutional excellence, which includes the recruitment of outstanding faculty and retaining a workforce proportionate to the needs of the university.

At the time of this study, River Valley University was in transition in terms of its leadership, strategic planning, and changes to state financing for higher education. The university had just chosen a new president to lead the university who had not yet been installed and the provost of the institution had also been recently hired. In addition to these changes in the upper administration, this is also the final year of River Valley's new strategic plan (2013-2018), so as the university leadership was planning for the next five-year strategic plan and the incoming leaders of the institution there had been a great deal of reflection across the organization about goals and future directions that would enable the faculty and staff to most effectively serve both their students and the region.

Through the analysis of both the university documents and interview transcripts with university administrators it was clear that budgetary issues served as the foreground of faculty hiring discussions. More specifically, this included changes in state appropriations and the state's recently implemented performance-based funding model since this was the first year it was put into operation. Participants seemed to be generally optimistic about the potential for this new model and the possibilities for greater transparency between the state government and the university. Perhaps, though, this optimism was rooted in the fraught relationship between the state and university leading

up to this new budget model as evidenced by the institution's IPEDS reporting and annual financial report.

Another integral component of River Valley University's context is its academic workforce. According to the most recent institutional reports (2016), there were 1,023 total faculty at River Valley – 444 part-time non-tenure track, 195 full-time non-tenure track, 100 tenure-track, and 285 tenured. Compared to the previous academic year, in 2016 the number of non-tenure track employees grew by 38 instructors, tenure track faculty decreased by 6, and tenured faculty decreased by 15 professors.

To recruit and hiring the academic workforce of River Valley, administrators use a fairly standard hiring process. While there is slight variation across colleges, the typical hiring process for a tenure track faculty member involves department chairs notifying the dean of their anticipated hiring needs in the middle or end of the spring term as they plan and make budgetary decisions for the following academic year. With those notifications, the deans prioritize the hiring needs and then tell the department chairs which positions to pursue. Additionally, the dean is responsible for signing off on the position description, interviewing the candidates during the on-campus interviews, and ultimately negotiations about the final hiring contract. Once they are given permission to proceed with the position from the dean, the department chairs carry out the faculty search by appointing the search committee, comprised of 3-5 faculty members, which creates the positions description, reviews applications, and manages the campus visits of a select few candidates. Ultimately, the search committee makes a recommendation to the dean of who they think should be hired and then negotiations and the actual hiring are carried out between the dean, department chair, and the potential candidate.

The hiring process is very different for non-tenure track positions from the standard tenure track procedure. At River Valley, non-tenure track full-time positions include Non-Tenure Track Temporary (NTTT), Non-Tenure Track Renewable (NTTR). These positions typically carry a four-four teaching load with few service and research requirements and generally these positions are renewed each year, although renewal is not guaranteed. For NTTR positions, there is sometimes a search committee and the aforementioned process is followed but not always. Part-time instructional positions at River Valley include adjunct positions and Professors of Practice. Those who hold these positions teach between one and three courses and have no research or service requirements. The Professor of Practice positions are typically reserved for those who simultaneously hold positions in industry. The distinction of their title allows for a slightly higher salary than adjunct positions. For part-time non-tenure track (adjunct) positions and NTTT positions and Professors of Practice, the department chairs at River Valley unilaterally carry out the hiring process.

For those positions, the department chair is singularly responsible for posting the positions, reviewing applications, and any interviews that may take place. While the full-time non-tenure track positions are usually identified at the same time as the tenure-track positions, the adjunct positions are generally identified later and much closer to the start of the term once enrollment numbers have solidified and, consequently, the required number of courses and instructors is also known. As plans are made for the upcoming term, there are many factors that influence hiring decisions, especially in considerations around appointment type. Within this larger context of River Valley University, this

study identifies the following factors most frequently considered in administrators' decision-making processes around appointment type to use in faculty hiring processes.

External factors. Of the different types of factors that influence faculty hiring decisions, the external factors are unique in that they are at once direct and indirect, since they influence the university and decision-making processes within in it from the outside. These are broad issues that have consequences for individual actions and organizational change.

State budget. The budget and allocations for higher education in River Valley University's home state are, similar to other states, in decline. A commonplace phenomenon in the modern era, state appropriations have declined significantly over time and institutions proportionately receive less and less and of their funding from the state and federal government (Doyle and Delaney, 2009). State budget constraints were at the forefront of administrators' minds as they made decisions about faculty hiring and changes in the academic workforce at River Valley. As a response to state budget constraints, administrators have to consider "the things that they think have had to have been cut or sacrificed because of that because we have faced a number of budget constraints," said the Executive Director of Planning and Institutional Research. He further stressed the severity of the cuts stating:

> We have been very reliant on state appropriations. Not an exact number, but I think if we go back over the last 10 years, we used to get - of our budget, we used to get about 48% of it through state allocations. After the recession and the economy crashed, now we're looking at something in the low 30s […] it has pushed the burden onto the students. We have to

> continue to try to generate that money somewhere and so, well, that's where we can and push that burden.

The Executive Director's remarks acknowledge the sacrifices and changes that results from state budget cuts and the need to strategize other ways to find money to replace the lost appropriations both from increases in students' tuition but also by sacrificing and making changes within the institution. Likewise, the Head of the Faculty Senate described how state budget cuts are a somewhat foregone conclusion at this point in time:

> We know that we just expect budget cuts every year and state appropriation and so we are never quite sure how much more we can cut before we start to examine faculty lines. I think that's always on the back of the people's minds.

Given the consistency with which state appropriations have decreased in the state, administrators at River Valley know they must perpetually operate in a state of retrenchment, further emphasizing cost-savings and measures towards efficiency.

State retirement system. In addition to reductions in state budget allocations dedicated to higher education, another statewide issue is a significant consideration in faculty hiring decisions – a crisis with the state retirement system. Currently, the state pension plan in River Valley's home state is insolvent. While this retirement issue does not directly affect instructional staff at the university who most typically have retirement plans funded through the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association (TIAA) or other private investment companies, the indebtedness of the state retirement system directly changes retirement funds for staff personnel at River Valley and also influences the fiscal resources of the institution. According to the Executive Director of Planning and

Institutional Research, the institution now carries some of the financial burden of the retirement system:

> So we are now paying - because the state wasn't being necessarily responsible in paying their portion, it's now underfunded drastically. And so now, I think we are paying 50% of what - of what the contributions have to be per person and it's continued to go up and so over the last, I would say, six or seven years it went from a two-million-dollar payment that we made every year to now, I think it's maybe close to eighteen or twenty million dollars of our budget. And so not only have we seen state appropriations reduced but the amount of money that they're expecting us to hand back to them for the retirement has now also gone up significantly, and so, it's, kind of, a double hit to some extent.

The insolvency of the state retirement system compounds the financial strain from other state budget reductions and further impairs the university fiscally. Some of the administrators expressed concern that River Valley was disproportionately affected by this phenomenon because a greater number of its staff uses the state retirement system and River Valley does not have the additional revenue streams (i.e. large endowments, federal research dollars) that the state flagships have to mitigate the financial blow brought on by the disintegration of the state retirement system. The Dean of Arts & Sciences voiced this concern and also remarked on the implications of the double jeopardy of statewide financial problems confronting River Valley:

> If the governor's budget comes to fruition which I don't think it will, but the governor has proposed draconian cuts. That on top of, what has already been cut and on top of retirement obligations that we would have added together would be draconian for us. All bets are off on the things we are used to thinking about when making decisions.

The remarks of the Dean of Arts and Sciences highlights the magnitude of the mental shift needed to recalibrate in the wake of these statewide financial trends and the potential impact on the day-to-day functioning of the university.

Local Ecology. One somewhat unanticipated finding of this study was the importance of an institution's local context. While location is typically a consideration in examining broader labor trends, it has not been addressed in higher education research in relation to the shift towards more non-tenure track positions across the academic workforce. Institutions' local ecology was most frequently mentioned by participants for two different reasons – competition and supply of adjuncts.

Since River Valley is located less than 10 miles from a major metropolitan city, that positions them well to access a large pool of candidates for non-tenure track positions especially. Not only does its location provide a greater number of applicants for positions, but it also places instructors who may work full-time in industry or in their particular field into the classroom with their experiences, connecting students to the application of course content and also regional opportunities in their respective areas of interest. The Dean of the College of Business remarked on the advantages of using adjuncts in this way stating, "We do use some adjuncts by choice […] typically in elective types of classes that they're well-suited to teach." He went on to discuss the benefits of their location, "If we look out the window and see [large, metropolitan city], there's a rich bed of potential adjunct faculty out there for a business school." In this way, River Valley and, perhaps, especially the College of Business can leverage their proximity to the industry of a major city to bring experts into the classroom as adjuncts and professors of practice, providing students real-world applications for their studies.

While the local ecology of River Valley University provided opportunities, it also presented challenges, namely competition. Compared to more suburban or rural areas, there are often more institutions of higher education surrounding major cities, creating

competition for students and other resources, including employees. The Associate Provost for Administrations spoke to this issue,

> There is always competition. We have a lot of schools really close to here, especially [large research university] is huge. Of course, it's across the river. I wouldn't want to drive over there, but it's…I know one of the areas where we do lose and there [are] small autonomous, small colleges around here as well […] It does create competition especially within the faculty and staff.

Given its proximity to other institutions, River Valley has to compete with other institutions for faculty and staff, since regional comprehensive institutions are more likely to hire from surrounding region than larger research universities. This issue of geographic competition is particularly important for hiring non-tenure track instructors. Another administrator, the Dean of the College Business mentioned that he sometimes tries to group together four classes taught by adjuncts to create a lecturer position to subvert the competition and avoid hiring adjuncts who work at several different campuses in the area. In doing so, the lecturer hired to teach those courses becomes more committed to River Valley rather than trying to serve so many institutions simultaneously. Given the benefits of the labor pool and the inherent competition, location is certainly an external factor considered by River Valley administrators in faculty hiring decisions.

Institutional factors. Aside from factors external to the university, intra-institutional factors also influence faculty hiring decision-making processes. River Valley administrators must operate within the confines of institutional priorities and budgets, while also addressing the compounded issues of the external environment's influence on how the university functions.

Institutional budget. While state budget influences River Valley's overall budget and, subsequently, its hiring process, institutional budget priorities are also a concern for administrators in faculty hiring processes. Throughout the interviews, administrators at River Valley gave the impression that institutional budgets have become increasingly stringent in response to changes in the state budget. Emphasizing this point, the Dean of the College of Education stated, "We used to have a little more flexibility than we do now […] we don't necessarily have that latitude as much so right now." The Dean went on to explain the feeling of having her hands tied in these decisions:

> We look at the spread of our faculty, if you will, in terms of lecturers, assistant professors, associate, full, as much as we can. But truly, many of our decisions now are driven by budget constraints.

Across the board, administrators highlighted the role of institutional budgets in hiring decisions. There was not a single interview in which university resources were not mentioned. While somewhat unsurprising, the perspective of the participants reflected a deep understanding of the need to operate within these fiscal constraints, maintaining a student-centered approach in providing a high-quality education. In discussing the role of institutional budget cuts in faculty hiring decisions the Dean of the College of the Business responded,

> I mean, that's what's driving it. We've lost several tenure track lines over the last few years. The university is taking them for use in other places or to use as sandbags for budget reductions and things like that. […] It's a juggling act between budget, accreditation requirements and the ideal situation. The more we get away from tenure track faculty lines, the few people we have working closely with our students.

The Dean of the College of Business's response illustrates how budget cuts are taken for granted at River Valley and decision-makers across the university must make the best of

a very difficult financial situation. Similarly, the Dean of the College of Education remarked, “We can’t overspend. We don’t have what we don’t have.” This general sentiment was pervasive at River Valley, financial constraints were nothing new; however, the introduction of a new university budget model refreshed these concerns for many participants.

In response to the broader state transition to a performance-based funding model, River Valley University implemented an incentive-based budget model within the institution to align its internal metrics with those of the state. Administrators at River Valley expressed mixed feelings about this new budget model and many were adjusting to this new way of thinking and planning. Much of the optimism about the incentive-based budget model came from the upper administration. For example, the Executive Direct of Planning & Institutional Research stated, “There's a little more ownership of students if you're a dean; and now retention, persistence, graduation, all of those things have an impact on [their] budget and so now, we'll see how that works.”

Other upper-level administrators also expressed hope for the potential success of the new budget strategy. “The colleges will have a little more freedom with how they spend their funds for like faculty lines and everything,” said the Associate Provost for Administration. He continued, “They have permanent base budget funding that recurs year after year, unless there is some sort of a weird cut or something happens to take money away.” Essentially a responsibility-centered management model, the incentive-based budget model at River Valley grants autonomy to each of the colleges in meeting certain metrics to obtain their share of the university revenues.

While upper-level administrators were cautiously optimistic about the implications of the new budget model in aligning the university with state-level priorities and increased transparency across the colleges, administrators at the dean and department levels expressed some concerns and hesitation about the change. Largely, their concerns centered on the potential for internal competition for shares of the larger budget and the increased pressure to anticipate the needs of the college for the upcoming year. The Department Chair for the Computer Science Department highlighted the competitive element of the incentive-based budget model:

> [For] full-time [positions] who come out of our operating budget, we are given how much we can spend so we have to fight for that. So of course we are always trying to increase on that because we want more full-time people because they are more engaged.

Not only might university administrators have to "fight" to maintain their base operating budgets, they will also be expected to have a stronger handle on upcoming needs and changes within their respective colleges. The Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences expressed the difficulty in future planning and shared her strategy to safeguard the funds for her college:

> I provide to the provost all the money that I believe we have available for those [faculty] lines and how much the total cost of lines is that we are requesting and I request less than I think we have available in case enrollments drop, in case [of] budget cuts…so those kinds of things.

Given the difficulty of balancing faculty hiring with potential enrollment shortages and broader budgetary issues, the dean ensured that she would have sufficient funds for the college's greatest hiring priorities by requesting less. While this does provide some insurance, this tactic could also have consequences if enrollments suddenly increase as well.

Overall, institutional budget constraints played a strong role in influencing faculty hiring decisions among River Valley administrators and the introduction of the incentive-based budget model made that even more apparent, especially in its first year of implementation. This seemed to really change administrators approach to faculty recruitment for both tenure track and non-tenure track appointments. The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences summarized this point, "We'll have to think about hiring whole new ways."

Drivers of college-level variation. As evidence by previous scholarship (Schuster and Finkelstein, 2006; Finkelstein et al., 2016; Kezar & Maxey, 2012), the distribution of faculty is not uniform across academic disciplines, and River Valley university is no exception. While this differentiation is to be expected, participants' interview responses indicated that there were distinct differences in the drivers of this college-level variation.

Deans and department heads expressed that programmatic needs and differences in content seemed to drive these distinctions across colleges and departments. Of all the colleges at River Valley, the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Informatics had the highest number of non-tenure track faculty members, while the College of Education and the College of Business had greater proportions of tenured and tenure track faculty members, although the Dean of the College of Business fervently emphasized that they, "lost several tenure track lines over the past few years."

There seemed to be some tension around naming those colleges with larger numbers of non-tenure track positions in conversations across the universities. Deans of the other colleges were quick to point the College of Arts and Sciences as doing the

"worst" in terms of this particular metric and provided significant justification for their use of non-tenure track appointments in their respective colleges. The Department Chair of Computer Science in the College of Informatics shared, "for part-time it is pretty much I hire as many people as I can because I can fill the classes. If there is a demand I try and meet it." The department chair highlighted the growth of their academic programs across the college. Using adjuncts and temporary lecture positions allowed for that growth while the overall university caught up to the popularity of the majors offered in the College of Informatics. The Dean of the College of Business emphasized the need for the relevance and applied knowledge afforded to the students through adjuncts and lecturers. Similarly, the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences justified its use of non-tenure track positions as well, defending its high proportions of non-tenure track appointments in comparison to the other colleges:

> Colleges of Arts and Sciences often have a higher number of tenure track faculty per major because they have fewer majors per faculty because we teach so many gen eds. I have looked at part-time faculty metrics and we are among the top. […] The majority of the credit hours and in some cases, all the credit hours […] are generated by what we call non-base faculty – the NTTTs and part-time.

This point and the other justifications provided by the deans make clear the point that this is a contentious issue across the university. Each college is quite intentional about their use of non-tenure track faculty in relation to the unique needs of the college.

While the reasons behind the use of non-tenure track positions differed across college, the deans and upper administrators were all in agreement that program viability is an essential consideration when deciding if a department needs to hire an adjunct, a lecturer, or a tenure-track instructor. The Associate Provost for Administration summarized this point stating,

It's program viability, number of students interested in that degree program

> What they need for that program, part of the enrollment. We have to be sure that we have enough to need another faculty member because once you hire somebody and especially with tenure track, it's…you want to be permanent with a long-term position. You don't want to have to have any cuts made after you hire somebody permanently.

This statement highlights the high level of certainty administrators at River Valley felt they needed to have in order to justify hiring a tenure track faculty member. Addressing program viability was not only a numbers game, though. Mission-driven decisions about programs also came under scrutiny. For example, the Dean of the College of Education stated,

> As a state college and university, being comprehensive is our responsibility. So, we look at those programs that we know serve a greater good. Those that are high growth programs that might need a little additional staffing to get them up to speed where they need to be.

While enrollment numbers and student demand for certain academic programs was the highest priority, administrators also considered programmatic needs in terms of the overall purpose of the university in staffing decisions.

Tensions around institutional identity. Institutional identity was another factor that influenced administrators' decisions about faculty hiring at River Valley University. As previously mentioned, previous higher education research characterizes regional comprehensive universities as somewhat liminal universities, caught in between small, liberal arts colleges and large, research universities. Their identities are muddled in some respects and this notion was present at River Valley. Administrators' ideas about River Valley's identity as a regional comprehensive university and what it should be influenced

their decision-making in terms of the goals of the university and also the type of faculty members they wanted to hire.

As a regional comprehensive university, River Valley serves many purposes for its students and the surrounding area but that presents its own set of challenges, especially with limited funding. The Executive Director of Planning and Institutional Research expanded on this idea,

> I think we've tried to do broad, global, hundred percent, 360-comprehensive kind of plans and it's been difficult because then it's too spread out. You don't have the resources to adequately support all of those efforts. And so all of those things move minimally or you could kind of narrow it down and say, 'Here are the five key things we want to do.' We'll move on those in some kind of dramatic way.

The Executive Director for Planning and Institutional Research, like many other participants, reflected on the need to strategically scale back on the many aims of the university, stating, "We can't be all things to all people […] What are things that we need to do, what are- what is our niche?"

In this move to focus on targeted goals and purposes while remaining a regional comprehensive university, hiring and reappointment process were identified by administrators as mechanisms through which to evaluate River Valley's overall identity and what it should be moving forward. However, administrators' ideas about the future direction of the university and faculty hiring seemed mixed. While they promoted the importance of teaching, they would highlight the need for an emphasis on scholarship in the same breath. For example, the Dean of the College of Business stated,

> So even though as a regional comprehensive university, teaching is a big part of our mission. We're not what you would call a teaching school. So we have to hire faculty that are capable of producing scholarly research.

The remarks by the Dean of the College of Business reflects the muddled identity of the university and his response identifies a certain degree of "mission creep" present at River Valley as research expectations increase. The Dean of the College of Education felt similarly, noting,

> We put a high value on the scholarship of teaching and learning. We absolutely honor that and count that as scholarship as we should, particularly, at a regional comprehensive. But I can speak even just to the current season of reappointment promotion and tenure reviews, I do believe people are being held to a higher standard by their peers in terms of the production of scholarship than we have previously.

This excerpt from the Dean of the College of Education exemplifies the mixed identity of regional comprehensive universities, specifically the tension between teaching and research. This bifurcated strain spread into decision-making about faculty hiring. While there is a push towards more scholarship at River Valley, that would necessitate greater reliance on tenured and tenure track faculty members than they have the resources to support.

The influence of institutional type on faculty hiring is not limited to considerations of research and teaching, though; it also drives thinking about what type of colleague search committees are looking for and the type of student-centered work that is held dear at places like River Valley. The Dean of the College of Business described this work as very "unsexy," something that is not often celebrated but is vitally necessary. He went on to say that finding a blend of both research and teaching with student at the center is at the core of being a faculty member at a regional comprehensive university. He further explained the importance of students in the work explaining,

> If you really enjoy helping students […] and seeing some real success stories that have battled and fought and given up think things to earn their degree, we want to hire you. […] We talk about changing lives, of course.

> Everyone does that work in higher education. But we don't change everyone's life that goes through [River Valley University]. But I can give you a set of names that we have, that's the coolest thing in the world.

Returning to the core mission of River Valley University, student-centered education, administrators there are searching for candidates for all appointment types who are focused on providing a quality education and pursuing the success of their student above all else.

Individual factors. While there are broader environmental and institutional factors that shape administrators' faculty hiring decisions, what is perhaps most significant in the day-to-day lives of those tasked with deciding who and when to hire are the individual factors. In accordance with the sociological concept of microfoundations, organizations (i.e. universities) are made up of individual's actions, decisions, and values; therefore, the micro-level factors are just as salient as the more macro-level issues that influence hiring processes since they affect the people enacting what makes up the whole institution.

Incomplete information. One consistent finding from analyzing River Valley's faculty handbook and qualitative interviews was the importance of the dean's roles in faculty hiring, the challenge of managing the budget, serving students to the utmost of their ability, and making recruitment and hiring decisions. The Associate Provost for Administration alluded to the challenges and centrality of the deans in faculty hiring processes, especially in light of environmental and institutional fiscal limitations:

> It's lean but it makes people rely on each other more and work together to achieve all goals that they have. So the Deans…I'm really happy with the

> deans. They're all very active in everything here […] I guess they have to be, but they are very involved in all areas of their college and I see them in a lot more of our meetings and I'm sure some school they probably aren't as involved in [budgets] and that kind of thing, but they really know their budgets. They know what they can spend, they know what they are spending it on with planning and teaching, like they are very active and involved in all that.

Despite their very active roles in university-wide decision-making, there is very little training or development to assist them in their roles. Trained as faculty members, the only preparation for most of them was serving as a department chair. One of the deans interviewed was thrust into the role when the previous dean became ill and had to step down. The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences was trained as a chemist. She remarked, "I know how to isolate cells and I know how to turn protein gels and no one teaches me a budget." The Dean continued, discussing her limited education about the professional responsibilities of running a college:

> If I had not had that chair experience that gave me the ground work for learning very quickly how to do the things a business officer or college would have to do, I don't think I would have survived.

This response demonstrates the lack of professional development and experience provided to those who become academic administrators. The planning and budgeting strategies necessary to make hiring decisions and run the other college operations are difficult in any circumstance, but perhaps especially so without prior training.

The Department Chair of Computer Science expressed her frustration and wished for a "crystal ball" so she could anticipate the hiring needs and upcoming courses for future semesters. Without said crystal ball, deans are expected to do the same things as that department chair but for an entire college. These individuals are not perfectly experienced; rather, they are trying to do the best they can to make the best decisions

overall for their college to promote student success and pull together a competent and effective academic workforce.

Human cost. An individual factor that was consistently mentioned across interviews with administrators was the human cost of their decisions. Participants continually expressed their concerns about the negative consequences of their decisions for other people as well as their own personal sacrifice. The administrators worried over the distribution of the overall workload across faculty members and the subsequent changes to other employment categories. The Dean of the College of Education remarked,

> It's all the work of running a college and running a university much and it falls on the back of our faculty. So, the further way we get from having tenure track lines and tenured faculty, the more the burden falls on those few who are here. So, we certainly take that into consideration too. […] It's the human cost, if you will, in terms of how much you pile on people's backs and expect them to be able to do it and do it well.

This response makes clear the importance of the human realities of hiring decisions. Those decisions allow for the reevaluation and redistribution of the faculty workload across different positions types and it is primarily the responsibility of the administrators to prioritize roles and make those decisions. However, these decisions do not exclusively influence those in instructional roles. Given, River Valley's post-recession rededication to its core purposes, there are also implications for staff roles. The Executive Director for Planning and Institutional Research explained,

> We have great programs and we've focused on faculty being there to help the students develop, but what we're limited in is the number of staff that we have to kind of support and run the other piece of the institution.

There are sacrifices not only with the academic colleges and positions, but across River Valley in order to pursue student-centered, quality academic programs and the participants' responses highlighted the need to examine the ramifications of their decision-making across the university rather than singularly focusing on the effects within the instructional silo of the institution.

In addition to these wide-reaching implications across River Valley, administrators also discussed their own person concerns and stressors related to their role as decision-makers, especially in relation to faculty hiring. The Associate Dean of the College of Education shared,

> I got part-time faculty that are – have food insecurities, right? Part-time faculty that when they have a health emergency have serious ramifications because they're making so – such little money. And as a part-time, they're not getting health insurance. So, I can't cross that off my worry list there because […] the faculty are having these kinds of real life obstacles that kind of get in the way of their teaching.

In this way, there is real anguish and stress on the part of the university administrators who acknowledge the very personal realities of their decisions and this concern, consequently, plays a role in their considerations in faculty hiring processes.

Middle State University Context

Middle State University is a regional comprehensive university located in a rural town in the southeast region of the United States. Middle State enrolls approximately 17,000 students in 110 undergraduate programs and 50 graduate programs. The university is comprised of one main campus, three smaller branch campuses, and a strong online program for several degree programs. Middle State's mission statement

emphasizes the success of individual students and the promotion of exploration by its faculty and staff alongside campus partners. To that end, Middle State strives to increase its student population; to provide a student-centered campus experiences for its students that is affordable and promotes a global mindset; to improve its services for student veterans; and to improve the economic growth of the surrounding region.

At the time of this study, Middle State University was in the middle of its strategic plan set to end in 2020. According to a strategic plan update from 2017, the university was making positive gains towards its institutional goals of increasing enrollments and becoming a more international university. The university leadership was long-standing with a long-serving President who sought to preserve the culture of Middle State, including "good values" and always putting students first.

This culture of the university permeated discussions superseded discussions of budget constraints, although in reviewing both the university documents and interview transcripts with university administrators, it was clear that fiscal limitations were a significant issue across the university. From 2008-2017 university expenditures on academic support decreased approximately 7%, though instructional expenditures increased by approximately 5% of the total. In that same time period (2008-2017), the percentage of state appropriations for Middle State dropped from 25.16% to 18.9% of the total revenues and revenues from tuition and fees increased from 47.49% to 48.84% of the total. After these changes in financing as part of the university's strategic plan, they implemented "right-sizing efforts to optimize human resources" in order to restructure the workforce for optimum efficiency in addition to "aggressive efforts to reduce facility and utility costs."

After right sizing efforts had begun, according to Middle State's institutional reports from 2017, the university's academic workforce consisted of 702 faculty members – 526 full-time instructional faculty (lecturers) and 176 full-time tenured and tenure-track instructional faculty[3].

The hiring process for tenure track faculty members at Middle State is fairly standard with a few exceptions. While there are a few differences across colleges, the hiring process typically involves department chairs telling the dean or associate dean of the college about their anticipated hiring needs for the upcoming academic year during the spring term of the prior year, so that they can allocate the college budget for the necessary positions. From the list of needed positions from the department chairs, the dean of the college prioritizes the positions and configures the budget to address those needs, while also approving the final position descriptions of those positions.

With the approved position description, the department chair of the positions chooses tenured and tenure-track faculty members to serve on the search committee, which addresses the details of the faculty search. The search committee, comprised of 3-5 faculty members, reviews applications, chooses 3-5 top candidates, manages their on-campus interviews, and, finally, makes a recommendation to the dean and department chair of who should be hired. The dean of the college and the department chair take part in interviewing the candidates during their campus visits and ultimately carry out the negotiation and final hiring decisions.

[3] Middle State University did not report the number of non-tenure track part-time instructors.

In addition, there are two unique components of Middle State's hiring processes. First, several administrators discussed how they would strategically post academic positions, listing several appointment types on one posting – adjunct, lecturer, and assistant professors. By posting the position with all of the appointment types listed, the search committee would review the candidate pool for the most qualified applicants and then, depending on their credentials, would offer what was deemed the most appropriate position type for the candidate's qualifications. This hiring strategy allowed those involved in the hiring process great flexibility in determining the appointment type of the position as well as leverage when reviewing the pool of candidates. Second, for tenured and tenure track faculty positions is that both the Provost and President meet with each candidate as part of their campus visit. The importance of these meetings will be explained in subsequent sections of this chapter, but essentially the meetings are included so that the Provost and President can ensure that the candidates will satisfactorily uphold the culture of Middle State.

While Middle State does not use many adjunct positions, their hiring process for full-time non-tenure track positions is less daunting than that of tenure track positions. For some very specialized lecturer position, a search committee is selected and the aforementioned process is followed but not typically. Usually, the department chair is solely responsible for the hiring process for lecturer positions, posting the positions, reviewing applications, and any interviews that may or may not occur. While the process for recruiting and hiring lecturers is not as rigorous as that of tenure track faculty members, lecturers are highly regarded across the university and many stay at the university for many years, some as long as thirty years. In faculty hiring process for

lecturer positions as well as tenure track appointments, there are many factors that influence administrators' decisions about who to hire and in what type of position. Considering the broad context of Middle State University, this section identifies the most salient factors considered by administrators in faculty hiring decisions.

External factors. While there are many factors that shape academic hiring processes, many of them influence those decisions indirectly and from outside of the university grounds. In line with the open systems perspective, these external factors permeate the borders between the institution and its environment, shaping everyday decision-making processes across the university.

State budget. In accordance with prior literature on the changing academic profession, budgetary considerations served as a primary factor in faculty hiring decisions in terms of appointment type, specifically the state-level budget. Like so many institutions across the country, Middle State University experienced declines in the proportion of their funding that came from the state and federal government, but this is not a new development. Administrators reflected on budgetary issues as a forgone conclusion, a perpetual problem across the state. The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences noted,

> Many years ago, they started to shrink the higher ed portion and it's been that way for forever. Between 18% and 24% we get from the state the rest we have to generate. Which is why we have to raise tuition practically every year.

Given decreases in state appropriations, Middle State, like many regional comprehensive universities has to make up for those lost resources through tuition dollars. While this

seems like an inevitable strategy and potential opportunity, Middle State prides itself on its affordability for students which is endangered by continual tuition increases.

At the same time, several administrators acknowledged that in recent years their enrollment numbers had steadily declined, making tuition-reliance even more challenging. Despite these problems, participants seemed optimistic about the financial future of the institution by actively seeking other funding sources and ways to cut back within the institution while not operating from a deficit mindset. The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences continued, "Part of it is just generically, more money is better, and we don't get enough of it, but nobody does. I think from upper administration there's a generic pressure to find ways to get funds." There was evidence of this entrepreneurial spirit across participants, thinking creatively and strategically about the core of their work and where to devote time and resources without sacrificing quality.

This way of thinking permeated faculty hiring considerations as well, especially around ways to allow the university to be nimbler in its finances through the use of full-time lecturer positions, simultaneously maintaining what the administrators described as a necessary number of tenure track positions. The Associate Provost for Academic Support expanded on this point:

> We have gone through tight times on our finances. Hopefully, we're on the backside of that. We're starting to grow some of that – hopefully it will help. So, financial constraints certainly play into that. But even with that, we've not skyrocketed in terms of lecturers. The percentage of the budget funded by the state has shrunk dramatically, and I mean from a point of being somewhere around 70% down to being 20%.

Participants' discussions around strategic thinking around their financing centered on people rather than numbers and underscored the importance of hiring not only the most qualified candidate and those most likely to fit into the culture of Middle State, but doing

so in the most efficient way possible. The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences summarized this point,

> You've got to make it happen and you make it up with people, you don't make it happen because you wish you were heard [by the state government]. Hiring by finance and business affairs and not by academics. So, you deal with those realities.

The Dean's statement makes clear that in times of resource constraint, efficient hiring practices are central to mitigate the lack of funding and simultaneously put a workforce in place that can provide quality, student-centered education despite fiscal constraint.

Local ecology. Across discussions with administrators at Middle State, location was one of the most significant factors that influences decision-making in faculty hiring processes. Since the university is in a rural location, participants described the extent to which it was and continues to be a hindrance in recruiting faculty. The Dean of Business explained how "the smaller town has made it difficult sometimes to just hire faculty." Its rural setting worked against Middle State in hiring faculty. The Dean of the College of Education explained,

> We're in a rural area and if you leave the campus, there's not a lot outside the campus; but, many of our faculty and administrators actually don't live in [Middle State City] at all. There's not much downtown. It's not much. And so, there's really not a lot here in [Middle State City]. It becomes particularly challenging for us in some programs.

This response from the Dean notes how the somewhat unattractive location of Middle State potentially keeps the university from successful hiring practices and even those who are hired do not necessarily live near the university.

The location of the university also limits the types of faculty appointments that Middle State can employ. More specifically, participants shared how it severely impedes

the university's ability to recruit or hire adjunct (i.e. part-time) instructors. The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences pointed out, "It's not easy to hire adjuncts in [Middle State City] especially. I like to point out that I can't find a physicist on the street corner." There are just not many people in the area that have the qualifications (according to accreditation requirements) to teach undergraduate courses. Similarly, the Associate Provost for Academic Support explained,

> We have a difficult time hiring adjuncts here in [Middle State City] …We're not going to have a large number of them here anyways. So, we don't have a lot of working professionals who have the required academic background to hire as adjuncts. So we tend to staff full-time people.

Middle State's location and scarcity of qualified candidates for faculty positions made it very challenging to hire adjuncts and, consequently, required the institution and its administrator to rely more heavily on the role of full-time lecturers and tenure track faculty members. The only time administrators at Middle State mentioned using adjunct appointments was in the context of online courses, but for all in-person courses administrators referred to full-time faculty – instructors and tenure track faculty – so the institution's local ecology played a significant role in hiring decisions, and most especially the faculty appointment types used across the university.

Accreditation. Several administrators, in their discussions of factors that influence hiring decisions, explained that accreditation played a role in those processes. Accreditation was a factor in hiring decisions in both the requirements for instructor qualifications to teach undergraduates but more so the standards for the proportion of non-tenure track faculty members across universities put forth by the Southern

Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The Dean of the College of Business expanded this point stating,

> I think 2005 or 2010. There was a point in one of those two [accreditation years] where there was a – the university was required to hire a lot more full-time, more full-time faculty. And so, they hired a lot of lecturers at that time, but we also had a lot more enrollments at that time period where we were serving around maybe 30,000 students.

This response makes clear how, in the last decade or so, Middle State has moved away from greater reliance on part-time non-tenure track appointments, especially with a fewer number of students enrolled. Similarly, the Associate Dean of the College of Education, explained that, "We were told that we needed to scale back and hire more full-time folks. We are heavy full-time tenure track faculty versus lecturers and adjuncts." Decisions about hiring non-tenure track faculty were influenced not only by institution-level accreditation policies, but also at the college-level.

The Dean of the College of Business stated that the College of Business had steadily moved away from non-tenure track faculty members (both full-time and part-time) towards more tenured and tenure track faculty members to address the requirements of gaining accreditation from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). The Dean stated,

> We've been going through initial AACSB accreditation for the College of Business. So having elevated standards for school academics and we've – we haven't – it would be very difficult for us to make a lot of wholesale changes in terms of our PhD qualified tenure track faculty. For the past seven years, we've been making a lot of changes as far as closing down programs, refocus on our mission, and of course, it impacts the hiring because I have to have – based on their standards, it's – what they call 40% scholarly academic coverage at the undergraduate level and we're trying to achieve 90% scholarly academic coverage at the master's level.

To appease the external reviewers for AACSB accreditation, the dean "had to give up a lot of lecturer positions in favor of tenure track positions." The Dean went further and shared that the purpose behind the new accreditation for the college of business was to become more competitive with other universities in the state and surrounding area. In this way, the external accreditation has shaped the academic workforce at Middle State through the administrators' decisions towards a more full-time, majority tenure track professoriate.

Institutional factors. The primary factors that influenced faculty hiring decisions and considerations around faculty appointment types are not only external to Middle State University. In addition to state budgetary constraints, the university's location, and accreditation requirements, there are several factors within the university itself that shape academic hiring practices as well.

Institutional budget. Situated within the broader context of state budget limitations for higher education, there are subsequent institutional budget constraints as a result. Middle State University, like many public institutions across the United States, is dealing with difficult budget realities and the influence of intra-institutional limitations and how that affects decision-making. In discussing faculty hiring decisions, the President of Middle State stated how, "It really does take a, an assessment of every dollar you spend. You have to look for return on investment." From the top down at Middle State, every administrator was very careful about the financial investment they were making in each candidate who was hired to serve as an instructor at the university.

In light of these fiscal challenges, there was a feeling across the university that the upper administration would like to hire higher numbers of part-time non-tenure track faculty. The Associate Provost for Academic Support noted,

> To some degree, you want to leave some flexibility. You know, knock on wood, we're hopeful that our contraction is over. But we definitely dropped in enrollment […] We did not have a lay off which is something a lot of universities had to go through.

Institutional budget limitations forced administrators at Middle State to find the most efficient means of hiring, which often meant hiring non-tenure track faculty members, especially adjuncts when possible. The Dean of the College of Education supported this notion stating, "Resources are always at play. So, certainly, from an institutional level, the institution always wants to – us to hire adjuncts whenever we can and when it does not put the program at risk." He continued, "A tenured faculty member is more expensive than a non-tenured faculty. A lecturer is cheaper even still. You also have greater flexibility in terms of expanding or contracting based on program needs." The Associate Provost for Academic Support and the Dean of the College of Education found that hiring adjuncts was the best way to move forward with limited resources, but that is not the only tactic taken to efficiently hire instructors.

In many ways, Middle State's financial problems were not new information to many administrators, rather just a reality that they had to address and operate within on a daily basis. The Associate Dean of the College Arts and Sciences explained,

> Budget is always an issue – it's not necessarily a factor of lecturer versus tenure track because more often than not, in what we do, we have positions that are budgeted even though they may not be filled. We may have a budgeted position for a tenure track person and a budgeted position for a lecturer.

Instead of hiring part-time instructors, the Associate Dean of the College Arts and Sciences stressed that lines were most often established for certain types of positions and the most important strategy to preserve funding was to fight for those budget lines to stay part of the college's operating budget. In other cases, administrators were more concerned with student satisfaction to maintain enrollment numbers and, consequently, tuition revenues that bolster the institution financially. The Associate Dean of the College of Education shared,

> You're expected to make sure that we generate enrollments and in order to keep students happy. Students have to be happy in the classroom. If you have an unhappy student, then that means you have – you're likely losing dollars.

This excerpt from the Associate Dean's response indicates the importance of hiring to uphold quality in the classroom and the student-centered decision-making processes that were a hallmark of Middle State University.

Given institutional budget limitations, faculty hiring decisions became an integral consideration and mechanism for efficiency since faculty salaries combined across different appointment types comprise one of the largest line items on university budgets. Middle State's President emphasized the need to consider the bottom line of the budget when making hiring decisions in times of fiscal constraints:

> In running these universities, you have to pay yet be realistic because your resources are so limited and where do you have, why would you pay more than you have to? And that doesn't mean that you're trying to starve your faculty or your staff but the absolute truth is, if you spend more than you have to then the students have to spend more on tuition than they should, so it's a domino effect.

Balancing the multiple stakeholders of Middle State (i.e. students, employees, etc.) meant that the President acknowledged that the money has to come from somewhere and if

administrators are more efficient in their hiring practices, while maintaining quality to the best of one's ability, then students are relieved of additional tuition and fees, so those hiring decisions are at the center of complicated budgetary decisions. The President went further, stating, "I want us to pay them as well as we can, but it's a balancing act always because you have limited resources."

Drivers of college-level variation. Across interviews with administrators, programmatic concerns were raised as institutional factors that influence hiring decisions. Participants explained that academic hiring depends on the program. Their responses demonstrated variation across the reasons behind the different tactics of each college when making faculty hiring decisions. Some of these differences stemmed from the content of academic programs. For example, the Dean of the College of Education noted, "You would probably see more tenured faculty in the more theoretical as opposed to applied programs because of the research component, the research nature of the program." From this perspective, the more conceptual the field of study the greater likelihood that hires for that program would be for tenure track positions, whereas the more applied subjects would be more likely to need full-time lecturers or adjuncts who may have more experience in the field or in industry.

While for some administrators, content was most important, the need for real-world application of the material was another way that faculty hiring decision differed across academic programs. The Dean of the College of Business explained, "I personally value in hiring people with professional business, real world business experience. So if you look across our faculty, you'll find that many of our hires or maybe people who have

worked in industry." In this way, academic hiring also provided a greater emphasis on the application of course content.

Although there was variation across colleges in terms of the motivations behind the recruitment of new faculty, the most frequently discussed program-level factor that influenced administrator's hiring decisions was program viability. The Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences explained, "If we have a program that's obviously very popular or very growing and we want to grow further, we would have a tendency to hire tenure track people." This response demonstrates administrators' investment in students' most popular academic programs by hiring tenure track positions to teach in those programs.

This emphasis on program viability at Middle State was part of a drive to be more market-facing in terms of those programs that drew the largest number of students, workforce development, and focusing on a smaller number of core academic programs for efficiency's sake. The Dean of the College of Education explained the process by which department chairs could request a new faculty position within their department:

> They have to provide market analysis for the positions, for the program. That generates that if they – if they just file the program, when we know it's going to generate the faculty requirement. And then, they have to talk about how they're going to meet the faculty requirement and depending on the program, it may require a PhD, a tenure track position, or it may require a non-tenure track […] so, it depends on, really, the program.

Program viability at Middle State was really driven by fiscal constraints and accountability within and external to the university. This emphasis on program viability was not limited to college-level leadership. The President explained the need for this focus stating, "

> The burden has been lifted from the state placed on the student and so we have today…there is more accountability and it's not going away. There is an accountability now and, with all of that in mind, we have to look, we have to look at the viability of programs.

In addressing this programmatic variation and promoting successful academic programs, administrators' faculty hiring decisions were critical at Middle State in order to provide a quality education to their students but also for budgetary reasons. The President continued,

> We've got to have responsiveness. These institutions, to survive, they have to be able to meet market needs and you can't meet market needs if you don't have a faculty that's willing to change with the times and make sure those skills and the information they teach is relevant to the world in which we live; because in today's world, most institutions are tuition driven.

Given the broader financial context of Middle State, focusing on a set of core academic programs was a strategy to keep the university focused, not trying to be all things to all people. Therefore, program viability and, subsequently, its effects on academic hiring decisions were integral to the continued growth and success of the university.

Tensions around institutional identity. Across the university there was tension around the identity of university. There were two sides to administrators' discussions around institutional type. First, there were several administrators who considered Middle State to be a small regional comprehensive university, focused on serving the needs of the surrounding area with a heavy emphasis on teaching undergraduate students. The Dean of the College of Business agreed with this side of the argument stating,

> I think it's perfectly acceptable to be an undergraduate, mainly undergraduate-focused school and teaching well, and send them on their way to be more if that's what they want to do. But I think we do a pretty good job of hiring people that support that.

Those in agreement with the Dean of the College of Business emphasized the need to hire those faculty who would be best in the classroom, scholars of teaching and learning, and balked at the idea of trying to become or compete with more research-intensive university. The Provost explained,

> We would be crazy if we stepped out into that no man's land of trying to go to bridge over to R1s with all of the research agenda, grant writing skill sets that it takes to be an R1. You got to play with the cards you've got, and while we are putting more emphasis on research agendas, supporting the teaching of the discipline of a faculty member, we're not becoming a research institution.

The President also agreed with the perspective of the Provost and thought that Middle State should try find its own niche outside of the race to become more focused on research, noting, "We couldn't try to compete with [state flagship university], so how can we do that which is relevant to society and that which meets the needs, but do it in our own way." This excerpt highlights the upper administration's desire to focus on what Middle State does well without trying to emulate other institutions, especially large, public research universities.

At the same time, many others felt as though there were increased research and grant expectations and for faculty members across Middle State in recent years and that the university was shifts towards a model that looked much more like a research university than it previously had. The Dean of the College of Education explained this idea further stating,

> [It's] giving us a bit of a complex, so people that are interested in research may have this stepchild, kind of thing. And it – and it makes our discussions about tenure and promotion very interesting as well, because on the one hand, we say we are a teaching university, but it is a criteria for tenure and promotion. It sets up this interesting tension, I think, as we are

> a bit schizophrenic about who we are, why we exist. And then, yet we try to set up rules where we're acting as if we're like everybody else.

This perceived "schizophrenic" identity was acknowledged across colleges at Middle State, especially around tenure and promotion requirements for tenure track faculty members. The majority of the interview participants agreed that the university was more heavily emphasizing on scholarly publications and grants. The Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences described this shift in expectations:

> But it's – there's now a greater emphasis on research. We have actually formalized our expectations for tenure promotion effective just a matter of fact just last year. When I first came here, you - if you asked what should my promotion package look like the answer was generally, 'Well, I don't know,' just find somebody else whose package works and make yours look like theirs. But generally expect – speaking, we expect two to three top-tier publications or it can be one top-tier and then some book chapters. [Because of this shift] we can hire people now in terms of their qualifications that we had a tough time hiring in the past.

This excerpt emphasizes how research expectations were increasing at Middle State, but it is important to note that as recently as five years ago there were not standardized tenure and promotion policies in place. Therefore, the standardization of those requirements and current state of the academic job market, allows for Middle State to hire more research-productive faculty members since there are fewer and fewer faculty positions for recent PhDs and most of them are trained to be researchers more so than teachers.

Regardless of whether Middle State is mirroring the behaviors of larger research universities, the tension across university administrators around this issue is enough to generate discussions around faculty hiring and what constitutes desirable qualifications for a candidate. The Associate Dean of the College of Education explained, "The identity of the institution, a research-focused versus teaching-focused, mission-focused, or one

that espouses to try to do both and that does impact hiring decisions either consciously or unconsciously it does." The Associate Dean continued,

> Our institution is - we're teetering on this perspective of we want to be perceived more of as a research institution, but don't want to - we're trying to act like, in a way, a Research I, but we don't want all of the challenges that come with being designated a Research I institution. When you are kind of teetering in that, in both worlds, and you want to emphasize research, you have to consider hiring more tenure-track faculty because it means something to them versus a lecturer. So that's another dynamic that I think affects the number of tenure-track faculty that are hired.

The Associate Dean of the College of Education summarized how this tension around institutional identity influenced faculty hiring decisions at Middle State. The administrators who perceived the mission creep of the university discussed how they were more inclined to hire tenure track positions who were expected to produce scholarly publications rather than non-tenure track lecturers.

Individual factors. In addition to the external and institutional factors that shape faculty hiring decisions, there are also factors at the individual-level that influences hiring processes. Since individuals are involved in these processes, there is a personal element involved in the day-to-day operations of universities and faculty hiring is no exception.

Right person for the job. Across participants, academic hiring was often characterized as an opportunity to hire a colleague, the right person for the job. Administrators frequently placed cultural fit within the university above credentials and other measure by which they evaluate candidates for faculty positions. Middle State's culture, which was talked about often but never explicitly described, was integral in decision-making around new hires for both faculty and staff. The Dean of the College of

Arts and Sciences summed up the importance of finding the right person for faculty positions:

> I think the most important thing we do is hire people because universities are made up of people. And whether it's the experiences of the students or whether it's the research at the institution, the reputation ultimately of the institution, it's who you hire that eventually accomplishes these things. Or maybe who embarrasses the institution for that matter, but we don't have so much of that.

For these reasons, faculty was regarded by participants as an important mechanism for upholding Middle State's distinct culture. To that end, when hiring administrators looked for someone who, as the Provost described,

> Has a focus for student-centered teaching, outward looking rather then they'll go just there is a school where I can come in and teach everybody how to do research and I can have a nice life. It really is about is this going to fit – focusing on students. Then, that's the – that's the sole purpose of my time with them and the President's and we give that feedback back to the Deans.

This response emphasized the importance of faculty candidates, specifically those being considered for tenure track positions, meeting with both the Provost and the President of Middle State during their on-campus interviews. This gatekeeping measure provides the university leadership an opportunity to ensure that candidates will fit into the culture of Middle State and that Middle State and what they expect from the faculty member will be a good fit as well.

The time and care that the President and Provost give to those meetings highlights the importance they place on the hiring of tenure track positions at the university; however, these meetings are not granted to those being considered for non-tenure track positions. However, across participants, the potential opportunities and pitfalls associated

with faculty hiring was acknowledged. The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences explained this point, stating,

> If you make a series of mediocre hires, forget bad hires. You make a series of mediocre hires, especially if you don't do anything about it when you have the opportunity. You can have, tenured mediocre people, stay around for a long time.

For this reason, there was great care given to hiring tenure track positions at Middle State University and finding the right person for the job was paramount.

Family culture. One of the reasons finding the right person was so important to administrators at Middle State was because of the family culture that permeated the entire university. Those at Middle State, like at many other universities, do not like to fire people. They would rather get the hire right on the first try since, as the Dean of the College of Business described, "[Middle State] does not like to fire people, because it's a very, kind of, family core unit." Given this characterization of Middle State as a family provided some non-tenure track lecturers a sense of stability despite not having tenure. The Director of the Science Division and Department Chair of Chemistry explained, "

> Middle State University is very good about being committed to people so unless they're doing something that is just wrong we will retain them forever and ever. So none of our lecturers are thinking, 'Oh tomorrow I may be out of a job.'

This security promotes a collegial environment across the university and fosters collaboration, even in the hiring process itself. The Associate Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies described this family approach to the academic hiring process:

> To hire a position is going to go through a chain of command and be signed off on at the senior and executive level. We clearly have an organizational chart here, but we're a very much relationally-based institution. We talk to each other. We have a lot of dotted lines [on our

> organizational chart] and I think that's always healthy at a school like [Middle State].

Participants' consistently attributed Middle State's familial culture to the careful attention and inclusion of the President in the academic hiring process. Across the administrators' responses, the President was characterized as a benevolent ambassador for the university, a charismatic leader that espoused the core beliefs of those who considered themselves part of the Middle State family. The Dean of the College of Business explained,

> I think it has to do with the fact of how we interview and hire people. He's been able to put himself in the hiring practice as a way to have a gauge if this person is going to have the perspective to put students first.

The Director of the Science Division and Department Chair of Chemistry similarly portrayed the President as the patriarch of the university community:

> Partly, I guess, the president does feel that we're a family and that is true and again very unusual. The president knows all of us so it makes sense, so he's not disconnected, you know? If I see him across the campus, very likely he would go, 'Hey [name]! How are you?' So, that is also very unusual. Yeah. Imagine we have 600 faculty members and the president is walking around by and large knowing everyone. So that is good as well. So that is affected by this sort of a connection.

This unique, relational rapport among staff, faculty, administrators, and students influenced faculty hiring. At the individual level, those involved in the hiring process took very seriously the need to preserve Middle State's culture, including a strong emphasis on effectively and thoughtfully serving students first.

In response to these discussions around culture and its connections to faculty hiring decisions, it was clear that the President took very seriously his role as the cultural leader of the campus:

> [I have] the responsibility for making sure that there is a focus on, on the culture and the preservation of that culture. My responsibility here is to, is to assure academic quality, to assure the values of the institutions are perpetuated and protected.

The academic quality mentioned by the President emphasized the importance of always prioritizing students. The President went on to say that you can maintain a high level of academic quality if you do not hire well. Lastly, the President explained his role in the faculty hiring process as it related to the maintenance of the Middle State familial culture:

> I want to make sure that everybody who comes to this place understands what an opportunity it is, but also what a huge responsibility they have. If we hire a faculty member and we put them on that platform, that's a sacred place in my estimation and so we can't take that lightly. In the screening and the appointment process is so, so important. […] How do you preserve that culture, if indeed the culture is as it needs to be and we think it is, even the years that we worked to get to this point? You preserve that culture of service and quality, through the hiring process.

The faculty hiring process, according to Middle State's president, was the mechanism behind promoting a culture of academic quality, family, and prioritizing students and, reciprocally that institutional culture influenced administrators' decisions in academic hiring processes.

River Valley University and Middle State University Comparison

Drawing comparisons across the cases under investigation allows for the generation of themes and patterns towards developing a theory of institutional decision-making around the changing academic workforce. In reviewing the within-case findings from both River Valley University and Middle State University, it is clear that there is variation across the two universities. This section discusses the similarities and differences across the factors that university administrators at both River Valley and

Middle State consider when making academic hiring decisions around faculty appointment type.

Institutional goals and faculty climate. Middle State and River Valley are fairly similar universities on the surface. They are both regional comprehensive universities in the southeastern region of the United States. Each university enrolls 15,000-20,000 undergraduate students and their missions are student-centered, teaching-focused, and aim to survive the surrounding region through educational opportunity. These two universities are also similar in terms of future goals. Their strategic plans emphasize academic quality and innovation, but also improved management of resources. River Valley University seeks to improve resource management through recruitment of high quality faculty and staff; generating new revenue streams through alumni giving and entrepreneurial faculty behaviors; and regional partnerships. In contrast, Middle State University plans to reevaluate their resources by growing enrollments (including international student enrollments), increasing faculty driven grants and contracts, and right sizing of its workforce in order to provide a more affordable academic experience to its students.

Based on interviews and their faculty handbooks, the faculty climates at both Middle State and River Valley were similarly collegial; however, they had different types of positions and requirements for tenure and promotion. While both universities had the traditional tenure track positions (assistant, associate, and full), their non-tenure track appointments differed. River Valley had part-time adjuncts, professors of practice, non-tenure track temporary lecturers, and non-tenure track renewable lecturers. Middle State

primarily used full-time lecturer appointments that were renewable, but also sparingly used part-time adjunct and clinical professor appointments. Some of these differences in positions is only in terms of the title (i.e. clinical professors are the same as professors of practice), but the most striking difference is in River Valley's much greater reliance on part-time adjuncts than Middle State. These similarities and differences in university context and faculty climate serve as the foreground to draw other comparisons across the two universities in terms of academic hiring processes.

Less money, more problems. Middle State University and River Valley University were selected as cases for this study given differences in state budget priorities, institutional budget models, and institutional expenditures. While these differences persist, and were significant factors in administrators' academic hiring considerations, Middle State and River Valley also face many of the same financial challenges. Both universities faced and continue to receive lower and lower proportions of their revenue from state appropriations. Since these state budget cuts are longstanding, the climate of financial constraint was a taken for granted reality at both universities. Administrators at River Valley and Middle State acknowledged that there was little chance for increases at the state level, so they paid greater attention to resource management at the institution-level but in different ways.

At River Valley University, there were some new fiscal concerns among administrators in addition to the normalized notions of constraint because of issues surrounding that state retirement system's insolvency. Since the state retirement system is insolvent, the burden of paying many public employees was pushed on to the universities

including River Valley. Consequently, the university and its administrators were prepared for even greater cuts and calls for efficiency.

One way that the state and River Valley sought to improve efficiency and resource management was through new budget models. At the state level, performance-based funding was introduced and in response to its implementation, River Valley adopted an incentive-based budget model. This new institutional model emphasized metrics that were priorities at the state level and facilitates a more decentralized approach to financing. The goal was to reduce duplication and improve transparency around resource flows across the university; however, it also increased competition within and across the university's colleges to receive institutional funding. These changes in funding placed greater pressure on administrators in their academic hiring decisions to not only make effective hires but to seriously consider when a non-tenure track appointment was feasible in place of a tenure track professor to provide greater financial flexibility.

At Middle State University, the institutional budget was more centralized than at River Valley. There were still budgetary concerns because of decreased state allocations, but the fiscal changes were not as drastic as they were at River Valley. Middle State, instead of adopting a new budget model, looked to grow their enrollments from the surrounding area but also globally to increase its revenue in place of lost state funds. Additionally, according to Middle State's strategic plan, the human resources department adopted right sizing as a strategy to more efficiently restructure its workforce to carry out its core missions, reorganizing staff, faculty, and administrators as well as cost-cutting to achieve maximum efficiency across the university. This strategy influenced decision-

making around academic hiring decisions by increasing expectations around the justification for creating new positions, especially tenure track lines.

While the budgetary constraints were similar across Middle State and River Valley, their responses differed considerably. While River Valley experienced greater external pressures on their financing in light of the retirement system issues and the introduction of performance-based funding, both universities were reconfiguring their own resource management strategies and models to mitigate fiscal constraints, in large part, to keep from pushing all of the burden on to their students so that they could continue to provide an affordable, quality education. Consequently, in cost-cutting and restructuring, academic hiring decisions come under even greater scrutiny and there was a greater tendency of administrators to consider non-tenure track appointment to remain nimble financially. Regardless, academic recruitment and hiring was a point of intersection between the universities' budgetary issues and the pursuit of academic excellence.

Location, location, location. One of the main goals of regional comprehensive universities is to serve the surrounding area, so these are place-based institutions in a way that other institutional types are not. Consequently, location is a key characteristic for both River Valley and Middle State, influencing their student demographics, recruitment practices, and their employment pool as well. The local ecologies of these two universities are distinct and, subsequently, influenced academic hiring decisions differently.

River Valley is a metropolitan university located less than 10 miles from a major city, which brings opportunities and challenges. The opportunity lies in the wealth of qualified candidates for academic positions, especially non-tenure track appointments, in the vicinity. The Dean of the College of Business noted that he was able to recruit a CEO from a Fortune 500 company to teach one of the introductory business courses as a professor of practice. The greater supply of individuals with the credentials to work as an adjunct or full-time lecturer, which are typically much more local hiring processes than tenure track hiring, allows River Valley administrators the ability to hire high-quality instructors that bring a lot of expertise and field experience into the classroom for their students.

While this is a great strength of River Valley's proximity to a large, metropolitan city, there are also drawbacks. Because of the nearby city is accompanied by several other colleges and universities in the area, which creates competition for River Valley – competition for students and for employees. River Valley administrators shared that many of their non-tenure track instructors held positions at more than one institution in the area. Others noted that some other universities in the area can pay better than River Valley, so sometimes they lose faculty and staff to other institutions. This competition limits the advantage of such a large pool of qualified candidates in the area. Instead, administrators at River Valley stated that they sometimes try to group several related courses together to offer an instructor a full-time lecturer position rather than multiple adjunct positions. Administrators' goal in this strategy was to increase institutional commitment among the non-tenure track lecturers but also to keep excellent candidates at

River Valley rather than losing them to another university or remaining one of multiple colleges where an adjunct teaches courses.

In contrast to River Valley's location, Middle State University's location is rural. Middle State is in a small town with very little industry and the nearest large city is over 50 miles away. Consequently, there are disadvantages in terms of academic hiring that administrators attributed to the isolated nature of its location. There are fewer qualified candidates in the surrounding area to fill part-time adjunct positions. The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Middle State remarked, "I can't find a physicist on the street corner." As a result, Middle State employs relatively few adjuncts because of how challenging it is to find qualified candidates in the area or who someone willing to drive to Middle State to teach a course or two each semester from a neighboring city. Many members of Middle State's faculty do not live in its small, rural town because of it is, as participants deemed, an undesirable location. Instead, many live in larger cities and drive over 30 miles to campus to teach, hold office hours, attend meetings, and carry out their research.

The differences in location across River Valley and Middle State directly influence academic hiring decisions whether positively or negatively. River Valley has access to a greater number of qualified candidates, yet they must face competition with surrounding colleges and universities for instructors. Middle State does not have to compete with other universities, but given its rural location, the university has difficulty recruiting academics, especially part-time adjuncts.

Identity complex. Another factor that influenced administrators' academic hiring decisions at both Middle State and River Valley was perceived tension around the universities' identities. Burton Clark (1987) described regional comprehensive universities as those "with a muddled institutional character – neither teachers colleges nor full-fledged universities." This same characterization made over thirty years ago remains today across these two universities.

Participants at both institutions stressed the challenges with trying to be "all things to all people" as comprehensive universities and, consequently, plans were set to refocus both universities on their core purposes – teaching undergraduate students and serving the surrounding region—through strategic planning and budgetary priorities throughout the organization. Overall, the majority of participants shared that it would be very difficult for their respective university to compete with larger research universities, so it was important to carve out their niche and identify what they do best and move forward in those efforts.

At the same time, across both Middle State and River Valley there were divisions between those administrators who perceived a shift towards a more research-focuses academic workforce and those who stated that their universities had always been and would continue to be teaching-focused above all else. There were administrators at both universities who noted that the expectations for scholarly publications and research grants were increasing among tenure track professors. Simultaneously, there were other participants who stressed the importance of instructors' work in the classroom and with students as the highest priority across the university.

This divide around teaching and research was not an explicit conflict; however, most administrators across both universities noted this disconnection as a sort of lingering influence on academic hiring decisions. The Associate Dean of the College of Education at Middle State summed up this line of thinking and stated, "The identity of the institution, a research-focused versus teaching-focused, mission-focused, or one that espouses to try to do both and that does impact hiring decisions either consciously or unconsciously it does."

Hiring is personal. Throughout the interviews with university administrators at both Middle State and River Valley, participants clearly took hiring decisions very personally. These decisions were not taken lightly; however, the personal nature of these decisions took different forms across the two universities.

At River Valley, the personal component of academic hiring decisions was described in a negative way. Administrators there discussed the "burden" and "human costs" involved in these decisions and this was especially the case when participants discussed non-tenure track appointments. They described their disappointment with some of the decisions they had to make most often to ameliorate budgetary issues. The Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at River Valley University shared her concerns for those hired as adjuncts and their lack of healthcare benefits given federal cuts to the Affordable Care Act – one more thing to add to her "worry list."

In addition to that personal stress and anguish in hiring, those in with decision-making power in faculty hiring often had incomplete information. There were trying to plan for the coming semester without knowing exactly how many students would enroll, how many courses they would need, and, consequently, how many instructors would be

necessary. Often, participants described having to scramble just before the start of the term to staff the upcoming courses. The Dean of the College of Business and the Dean of the College of Education described not wanting to hire so many non-tenure track faculty members but that it was the only choice they had to fill their courses with instructors and not go over budget. Without clear and timely information about enrollment and programmatic needs, there is a great challenge in faculty hiring among the decision-makers at River Valley University.

The tone at Middle State around the personal nature of academic hiring decisions was much more positive. This was, in large part, due to the familial culture there. Administrators there viewed hiring decisions as opportunities to select a new family member who would contribute to and embody the student-centered valued that were foundational pillars by all of the participants at Middle State. Additionally, administrators stated how they, of course, wanted to hire those with excellent qualifications no matter the position, but what superseded that priority was finding "the right person for the job" in terms of their fit with the overall mission and vision of being part of the Middle State community.

Middle State's overall positivity around hiring and, more personally, choosing their next colleague starkly contrasts with the River Valley administrators' distress in making difficult decisions that were, for the most part, financially-drive. In this way, participants at both universities expressed great care in their decisions albeit for very different reasons.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

> The extent to which higher education is effective (or not) in accomplishing its missions turn [especially] on the quality of the faculty.
>
> - Schuster (2011), p. 4-5

This section provides a summative evaluation of the data collection and analysis of this investigation. To address the implications of this dissertation study, a review of the project is provided first, followed by a discussion of key findings in relation to its guiding research questions. Finally, this chapter ends with the implications of this study's findings for future research and practice.

Summary of the Study

Faculty members are responsible for executing the core missions of higher education. Their centrality in research, teaching, and service across colleges and universities necessitates evaluation, especially as the variation across the nature of faculty work continues to increase. Given that over two thirds of academic positions are non-tenure track appointments (Kezar & Sam, 2010b; Kezar & Sam, 2010c), a closer examination of the reasons behind this shift in hiring patterns is warranted.

Despite this growing body of literature, there was a need for further study of this phenomenon at a more granular level, allowing the individuals responsible for these larger changes across the academic profession to delineate the factors involved in their decision-making. Additionally, this analysis examined the contingent movement in a setting where that change is most prominent, broad access institutions. The study presented here simultaneously addressed the decision-making process behind the broad shift towards non-tenure track appointments and changes in the academic profession at broad access universities by examining faculty hiring practices at regional comprehensive universities.

This study used a multisite case study design at two regional comprehensive universities to explore the factors that influence university administrators' academic hiring decisions around faculty appointment type. Specifically, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. *What factors do university administrators use to determine appointment type in academic hiring decisions?*

    a. *How does an institution's environmental context affect, if at all, academic hiring decisions?*

    b. *What are the key aspects of faculty hiring processes specific to regional comprehensive universities?*

2. *How does the conceptual framework proposed here, a combination of organizational ecology, resource dependence theory, and microfoundations, explain the decision-making process around academic hiring?*

In answering these research questions, this study provides greater nuance about the mechanisms behind universities' increased reliance on non-tenure track appointments.

The findings of this study refine current understandings of the driving forces behind the changing academic profession, especially for regional comprehensive universities.

To address the aims of this project, this study introduced a new conceptual framework guided this study towards the development of a theory around organizational decision-making and its effects on populations of university workers. The conceptual framework used in this study was a combination of three distinct theories— organizational ecology, resource dependence theory, and microfoundations— and addressed the interdependence of the internal and external factors involved in institutional decision-making processes.

Using this framework, this study explored the factors that influence university administrators' academic hiring decisions, specifically those related to appointment type, using a multisite case study design of two regional comprehensive universities – River Valley University and Middle State University. The case study design included the use of both document analysis as well as semi-structured interviews with university administrators at each university included in the study. The document analyses provided context for understanding the distinct mission, purpose, academic culture, strategic initiatives, budgetary issues, and hiring processes at both River Valley University and Middle State University. Situated within that context, the purpose of the interviews was to allow the administrators to construct their own realities of faculty hiring decisions and the factors they each consider when choosing to hire a tenure track professor, a full-time lecturer, or a part-time adjunct (Patton, 2015).

To analyze the document and interview data, this study followed Miles et al.'s (2014) first- and second-cycle coding process to move "from the empirical trenches to a

more conceptual overview of the landscape" (p. 292). As a result, the findings from this study translate into a broader conceptual model, which can be used to further explore changes to the academic labor force within and across universities. Using this analytical strategy, this study addressed each of its aforementioned research questions.

In terms of the factors that shaped university administrators' faculty hiring decisions around appointment type, the findings were grouped into external, institutional, and individual factors. The external factors involved take three different forms – financing and location. The state-level budget cuts faced by both River Valley and Middle State translated into institutional budget restructuring and a greater need for efficiency, which, in turn, shaped hiring priorities. At the same time, the universities' locations influenced hiring through competition with other universities for qualified non-tenure track faculty members or making it more challenging to recruit faculty given an undesirable campus location.

Institutional budgets, programmatic variation, and tensions around institutional identity comprised the institutional factors considered by university administrators in academic hiring processes. These factors were fairly similar across both universities with the exception of River Valley's decentralized budget compared to Middle State's centralized budget. Lastly, the individual factors involved in faculty hiring decisions differed across the two universities but centered on the personal nature of administrators' professional roles as they make these choices. While the administrators at River Valley anguished over the lack of benefits and low salaries of non-tenure track positions, administrators at Middle State took very seriously their roles in recruiting for and hiring new members of the institution's familial community. Overall, these findings detail the

external, institutional, and individual factors involved in administrators' faculty hiring decisions around appointment type at regional comprehensive universities.

Despite efforts to enhance trustworthiness and consistency throughout data collection and analysis, there were several limitations to this study that could be improved upon in future research. First, this study only examined academic hiring practices at two regional comprehensive universities. Second, this study predominantly focused on the experiences and perceptions of university administrators rather than faculty members. This study did include interviews with a few faculty members to triangulate other responses as well as department chairs and deans who simultaneously held instructional roles in addition to their administrative roles. Ultimately, administrators make the final decisions about the creation of new positions, budgetary priorities, and who is hired, so they were placed at the center of this analysis. Third, this study addressed academic hiring decisions across the universities under study rather than focusing on the department- or program-level. Consequently, the findings presented here do obscure some of the variation within departments and programs by exploring hiring practices more broadly. Subsequent sections include suggestions for future research that address these limitations and further extend the findings of this study.

Key Themes

In exploring faculty hiring decision at regional comprehensive universities, there were several factors that shaped administrators' decisions around faculty appointment types. Of those factors, some were expected while others were more remarkable. The findings presented here were those mentioned most frequently during interviews with

university administrators across both River Valley University and Middle State University.

In previous higher education research, the main reason given for the increased reliance on non-tenure track positions was decreased fiscal resources. Financial constraints were evidenced in this study as well. Decreases in the proportion of Middle State and River Valley's budgets that comes from their respective states as well as institutional budgets shaped faculty hiring decisions. For River Valley, those cuts were compounded by the state's retirement system crisis and its transition to an incentive-based budget model. While the financial factors that influence academic hiring decisions were somewhat expected from the onset of this study, the non-financial factors considered in academic hiring processes were the most striking from this study.

The factors involved in academic hiring decisions that are not related to budgets and the bottom line are not frequently discussed in the broader discourse around the changing academic profession. However, they may be just as important in staffing universities with instructors and researchers equipped to provide a quality education to students as well as produce and disseminate new knowledge.

Local ecology. First, the locations of regional comprehensive universities were of crucial importance to the participants included in this study. This finding emphasized just how place-based regional comprehensive universities are in their recruitment practices, but also in their missions. These types of institutions are often located in rural places and serve as large employers for those in the surrounding regions, and the inability to recruit faculty or the need to compete with other, better-resourced institutions for quality

candidates may potentially hinder the success of these institutions and the students they serve.

The locations of both universities also influenced academic hiring given the subsequent competition or lack thereof. River Valley, located near a large, metropolitan city has access to a large pool of qualified candidates for non-tenure track appointments, but must compete with other nearby universities because of its metropolitan location. As a result of this competition, administrators at River Valley strategically offered candidates who were teaching part-time at several universities full-time lecturer positions to entice them to teach exclusively at River Valley. In contrast, Middle State was located in a rural, small town, so there was very little competition with other institutions; however, Middle State's geographic challenges were the scarcity of qualified candidates to hold adjunct positions and faculty members' unwillingness to live in the small town. Consequently, Middle State did not employ a relatively small number of adjunct instructors and had difficult recruiting academics because of its rural, small town location.

For these reasons, River Valley was perhaps better positioned to hire non-tenure track faculty than Middle State, but administrators at River Valley had to be strategic in hiring full-time lecturers rather than several adjuncts to provide incentives for candidates to work there rather than at another university in the area. Meanwhile, Middle State employed relatively few adjuncts and, instead, heavily utilized full-time lecturer appointments because of its isolated location.

The locations of a university influence several components of their overall functioning including faculty hiring. Regional comprehensive universities are

fundamentally place-based since they emphasize service to the surrounding region, so location may be even more important for this institutional sector than others. Since there is no changing the location of these longstanding universities, administrators must strategically navigate their locations in faculty recruitment efforts.

Tensions around institutional identity. The tensions among university administrators about the institutional identities of regional comprehensive universities was not necessarily an unexpected finding given this institutional type's reputation for having a "muddled character" (Clark, 1987). However, the frequency with which this issue was raised by administrators was notable. The lack of consensus among administrators as to whether administrators were pursuing a more research-heavy identity or recommitting to the core values of a teaching-focused regional comprehensive university has significant implications for academic hiring decisions, especially decisions around appointment type.

In previous higher education research, regional comprehensive universities have been characterized as having a somewhat scattered identity – trying to be all things to all people. In their comprehensive nature, they are a sort of amalgamation the core characteristics of other types of institutions. They have some research activities and graduate programs like research universities, the teaching emphasis of liberal arts colleges, and the affordability and broad access mission similar to that of community colleges. The complicated character and multi-faceted goals of these institutions make tensions around institutional identity inevitable and the universities involved in this study are no exception.

Throughout data collection and analysis, it was apparent that at both River Valley and Middle State University there were tensions around their institutional identity that influenced academic hiring decisions. Participants were divided at both universities about whether or not their respective institutions were evolving into more research-focused universities or remaining teaching-focused institutions that emphasized service to the surrounding region. While some administrators across both cases shared that there were increased research expectations for tenure and promotion in recent years, others emphasized the need to hire those who were most effective in the classroom. This tension, it was noted, made some administrators more inclined to hire tenure track professors who focused on research, while other were more likely to hire a full-time instructor who sole focus was teaching.

Academic hiring decisions lie at the center of this tension as a mechanism for administrators to steer the university towards a research focus or a teaching focus. Those, who envisioned a greater research focus, were more likely to want to hire tenure track professors whereas those who saw a teaching-focused future for the university would prefer to hire full-time lecturers. In this way, institutional type and, more specifically, tensions around institutional identity shaped the ways in which administrators made decision around appointment type in faculty hiring decisions.

This tension has the potential to create large differences in the proportions of different academic appointment types across colleges and departments. This disagreement around institutional identity could create pockets of more tenure track or tenured professors in the areas where administrators are looking toward more research-focused future directions and pockets of non-tenure track faculty in colleges and

departments where administrators are more closely aligned with the teaching-focused purpose of a regional comprehensive university. This theme highlights the need for agreement across the university around the direction of the university as well as greater attention paid by the upper administration to consensus-building among the deans and associate vice presidents during strategic planning processes and other future planning.

Hiring is personal. One other striking theme (especially for administrators at River Valley) that emerged from the data collection and analysis was described the personal feelings of administrators whose professional responsibilities include budgetary planning and making decisions about hiring non-tenure track faculty While previous literature has discussed the decreased satisfaction and difficulty of being a non-tenure track faculty member, there is little to no research that addresses the strain of these academic decision-making processes on the administrators who must, in some cases, make employment decisions about which of their instructors get healthcare benefits and who does not. These decisions have always been a part of academic administrators' positions, yes, but the responses from participants indicate that these decisions do not necessarily get easier as one continues to make them.

At River Valley, academic hiring decisions weighed on the administrators' conscience. Because of financial constraints, administrators often had to make very difficult decisions about cutting positions or hiring adjuncts who they knew would not receive retirement or healthcare benefits and this caused some distress. This burden associated with making decisions was very closely related to the "human cost" associated with the use of non-tenure track appointments because they are paid relatively little and, consequently, save department and college funds.

At Middle State, the personal factors that shaped academic hiring decisions centered on the university's familial culture. Administrators there discussed the importance of upholding the institution's values of putting students first and leading by example. In hiring, administrators were looking for the right person for the job, the one that "fit" best in terms of their commitment to students and to undergraduate teaching. Most importantly, though, deans and department chairs along with the Provost and President were looking for individuals with a distinct capability of serving the Middle State community and contributing as a member of the university community.

These individual factors serve as a reminder that academic hiring decisions are not simply matters of efficiency and financing. There are many individuals involved in this process and it is impossible to remove the inherently personal components of hiring, whether positive or negative, when decisions are made by individuals for the collective success of the university and its students.

These non-financial factors are little discussed and under-researched components of the academic hiring process at regional comprehensive universities. Although money drives much of the decision-making across colleges and universities today (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Weisbrod et al., 2008), researchers and practitioners must remain attuned to what other factors are at play in our decisions in order to understand a more complete picture of what is driving changes within and across the academic workforce.

Omissions. In discussing the key themes from this study, it is important to note what is not discussed as these omissions likewise convey important information about

faculty hiring practices at both Middle State University and River Valley University. Notably, there was no mention of faculty governance in discussions around faculty hiring. This may be because participants were answering questions from their administrator perspectives, or, perhaps, governance was simply not considered in faculty hiring decisions. At the same time, there was no discussion of other types of non-academic professionals

One other notable omission was discussion surrounding other non-instructional academic professionals such as instructional designers, faculty professional development professionals, and curriculum developers. While those who hold those positions are not typically included in faculty hiring processes, the proliferation of these positions and other like them is part of the larger unbundling of the faculty role. Even when asked about the increased reliance on those positions, administrators had little to nothing to contribute, suggesting that those positions may not be used as heavily at River Valley and Middle State.

Implications for Practice

The reality of financial constraints at regional comprehensive universities are unlikely to change. However, despite those budget difficulties there are practical changes that university leaders can implement in light of this study's findings to improve faculty hiring processes. Administrators' must choose whether to hire a tenure track professor, a full-time lecturer, or a part-time adjunct. Consequently, administrators are often placed in very challenging positions, weighing the balancing between what their programs, departments, and colleges need and what they can afford. However, their aim is always

the same – hiring content experts capable of improving student success in the classroom and, for tenure track professors, creating and disseminating new knowledge.

Often department chairs, associate deans, and deans do not receive much professional development around their administrative roles and, instead, they learn on the job or from talking with colleagues who have experience in those positions. Since these academic administrators make the final decisions regarding faculty hiring, greater professional development is needed to prepare them to make difficult employment decisions, while balancing budgets and managing all of their other professional responsibilities. This is especially important for hiring non-tenure track faculty since there is often only one person involved in the decision-making about who is hired for those positions in contrast to the lengthy hiring procedures for their tenure track colleagues.

In response to this study's key theme around the implications of university location for faculty hiring, it may be helpful for university administrators to evaluate other institution's faculty hiring practices at universities in similar locations. This could highlight strategies to mitigate competition for faculty with other universities in a metropolitan setting or ways to entice faculty with extra benefits or job security for universities in rural settings. This benchmarking process could yield new strategies for faculty recruitment and hiring at regional comprehensive universities.

Lastly, to alleviate tension around institutional identity at regional comprehensive universities, upper-level administrators need to engage in consensus-building among its deans, vice presidents, and associate deans. During strategic planning processes and other future planning, the president and provost must foster unanimity among the university

administrators around the movement towards a research university model or a rededication to the core mission of regional comprehensive universities that can then filter throughout the rest of the university. Agreement around the research and teaching divide will serve to ease variation in hiring trends across colleges, departments, and programs, while also guiding the decisions around appointment type in faculty hiring decisions.

These implications for practice serve to improve administrators' faculty hiring decisions at regional comprehensive universities. By improving administrators' preparations, benchmarking other institutions' hiring strategies, and building consensus around institutional identity may not only ease decisions around appointment type in hiring processes, but may also improve the overall effectiveness of the institution overall.

Implications for Theory and Further Research

One of the main goals of this study was to begin theory development around organizational decision-making and its implications for changes to the academic workforce of colleges and universities. To that end, this study introduced a conceptual framework that integrates organizational ecology, resource dependence theory, and the sociological concept of microfoundations to better understand labor trends within colleges and universities; address institutional decision-making; and study organizational change processes moving forward.

The purpose the conceptual framework developed for this study was to theoretically capture the complex nature of university decision-making process, which is positioned at the intersection of three distinct levels – the external environment, the

institution, and the employees within the institution. To account for the organizational nature and the complexity of academic hiring process, this conceptual model adopted a systems approach, emphasizing the interdependencies among the environment, the university, and university employees.

Together, organizational ecology, resource dependency, and the sociological concept of microfoundations accounted for the complexity and nuance involved in academic hiring decisions and the factors that shaped the growth of non-tenure track appointments at regional comprehensive universities. To evaluate the utility of this framework for this study, each of the three theories included in the framework are discussed below as well as the limitations of the framework.

Organizational ecology. Organizational ecology accounts for the systems perspective this framework, the three levels of interdependence as well as the role of resources in determining whether groups of university employees grow or diminish. This theoretical component was very useful for considering academic hiring decisions at regional comprehensive universities in that it captured its complexity. Identifying the factors that influenced administrators' decisions about academic hiring by external, institutional, and individual factors accurately captured the nested nature of these decisions and the factors driving them. Additionally, organizational ecology highlighted the distinct role in the growth or reduction of employees. That is, in light of changes in state appropriations and, consequently, institutional resources, facilitated the growth of non-tenure track faculty and the reduction of tenure track professors in academic hiring. In this way, organizational ecology uniquely addresses how different populations of

employees are affected by changing resource inputs into the university and the subsequent ways that organizational decisions are made.

Resource dependence theory. Resource Dependence theory emphasized the ways in which universities limit organizational uncertainty by acquiring and maintaining multiple revenue sources to limit its dependency on any one revenue stream. With several sources of funding, the university mitigates its risk. Middle State and River Valley, as with many other regional comprehensive universities, have low endowments, decreasing state appropriations, and are primarily financed through students' tuition dollars.

Given this relatively low number of revenue sources at regional comprehensive universities means they have a high degree of uncertainty in terms of their resources. This theory provided context for academic hiring decisions in that they serve as opportunities to mitigate that financial uncertainty by providing flexibility. In institutional climates where it is difficult to easily find additional revenue sources, universities and their administrators may reduce uncertainty through other means, which includes increasing reliance on non-tenure track faculty, spending less for their salaries while still filling courses with quality instructors.

Microfoundations. The sociological concept of microfoundations highlights, "how the local affairs of existing members of a field can both sustain and prompt shifts in practices and conventions" (Powell & Colyvas, 2008, p. 277). The inclusion of this theoretical component in this study's framework was due to its emphasis on the role of individuals in decision-making and how the university's identity is created and sustained through the collective actions and decisions of those who work within it.

For this study, microfoundations aligns most closely with the individual behaviors that influence academic hiring decisions since the concept of microfoundations focuses on the humanity involved in complex organizations and the ways in which individuals make decisions that, in turn, comprise the changes within and future directions of a university. In this way, individual behaviors ultimately comprise the "principles and practices" of the organization (Colyvas & Powell, 2006, p. 310). This relates most closely to the tensions around institutional identity throughout faculty hiring practices at the two institutions under study. The perceptions of individuals and, subsequently, their decisions about faculty hiring towards becoming a more research- or teaching-oriented institution has the potential to alter the identity of the institution over time. This example exemplifies the individual nature of these decisions and how the administrators, as decision-makers, constituted part the microfoundation of these two universities.

Revised conceptual framework. While the conceptual framework developed for this study was overall a useful tool for exploring university decision-making process around the changing academic workforce, there are some changes based on this study's findings that will improve the framework for future studies. Figure 2 illustrates a revised conceptual model considering these limitations. First, this conceptual model does not consider the politics that influence the external factors at play in university decision-making. None of these three theoretical components have a political aspect, neglecting the driving forces behind some state budgetary issues. For example, the external factors driving the shift towards performance-based funding and the insolvent state retirement system that influenced academic hiring at River Valley University are inherently political. Adding a political component to this model provides a more complete depiction

of this phenomenon, including the ways in which state politics permeate university decisions at a very granular level.

Second, while organizational ecology addressed the external, institutional, and individual, this systems perspective does not account for all of the nested components involved in decision-making. Although evaluating the institution-level factors was most appropriate for this study and the initial development of this framework, the finding of this study include programmatic and college variation in hiring processes may suggest the need to further disaggregate the institution further to the level of colleges and departments. However, further study would be needed to determine the utility of this disaggregation. Despite these limitations, this conceptual framework provided a high degree of explanatory power for analyzing the factors that influence administrators' academic hiring decisions around appointment type and the changing academic workforce at regional comprehensive universities.

Suggestions for future research. The conceptual framework developed for this study as well as its key themes raise several areas for future research to further understand the changing academic labor system, especially across regional comprehensive universities. First, future studies should examine the factors involved in academic hiring decisions around faculty appointment types with greater attention to faculty perspectives. While this study did include interviews with a few faculty members; however, their responses would provide greater depth to administrators' perspectives on this topic.

Second, there is still very little known about the academic workforce across regional comprehensive universities. A descriptive study that provides the number and

proportions of different types of instructors (i.e. tenure track professors, tenured professors, part-time adjuncts, full-time lecturers, etc.) and other workforce data would provide greater context for the professoriate within this institutional sector. While IPEDS provides some of this data, collecting this data from individual institutions while time-consuming would perhaps be more accurate since the reporting measures around part-time faculty and graduate teaching assistants in IPEDS are somewhat unreliable.

Third, this study's findings raise interesting conclusions about the role of an institution's location as a factor that influences academic hiring decisions in terms of the labor market supply and competition with surrounding universities. To date, prior research about the changing academic profession neglects institutions' local ecology and competition in the hiring of non-tenure track faculty. Future studies using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and network analysis could provide greater insight into trends across institutions' local ecologies (including urbanicity and density of universities in the surrounding area) influence the academic labor system and the role of competition brought on by neighboring universities. Lastly, the conceptual framework presented in this study proved useful in considering how external, institutional, and individual factors influence administrators' decision-making around academic hiring but future studies could evaluate its utility for other decision-making processes across universities.

Conclusion

In recent years, the research surrounding the changing academic profession has grown significantly, arguing that universities' increased reliance on non-tenure track faculty members is a foregone conclusion. Some argue that the change is simply the

byproduct of other budgetary considerations. The findings of this study refine that notion and argue that this shift within and across academic labor system is not a foregone conclusion. The increased reliance on non-tenure track faculty is not a byproduct of larger budgetary decisions. Instead, the decisions surrounding academic hiring *are* the larger budgetary decisions. Since faculty salaries comprise large proportions of university operating budgets, decisions around appointment type in faculty hiring processes have significant implications for the ways that universities function in terms of finances and mission fulfillment.

In order to develop new models for the modern professoriate, greater depth of understanding around the many factors that influenced the shift towards a more contingent workforce is needed and this study is a step towards that nuanced understanding.

In line with this study's conceptual framework and its ecosystem of the external environment, the university, and its employees, the individuals that work within the institution are crucial to the reciprocal cycle of resource (inputs) and the work of the university (outputs). In this way, academic hiring decisions are the mechanism by which the university continues to turn, so it is essential that research continues to address the processes by which the academic workforce changes. As those workforces change, so do the work and success of our universities in fulfilling their missions.

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Appendix A: IRB Letter

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

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Athens, Georgia 30602
TEL 706-542-3199 | FAX 706-542-5638
IRB@uga.edu
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Office of Research
Institutional Review Board

EXEMPT DETERMINATION

September 19, 2017

Dear James Hearn:

On 9/19/2017, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	The Changing Academic Profession Within State Colleges and Universities
Investigator:	James Hearn
Co-Investigator:	Karley Riffe
IRB ID:	STUDY00004966
Funding:	None
Review Category:	Exempt Flex 7, 8

The IRB approved the protocol from 8/29/2017 to 8/28/2022.

Please close this study when it is complete.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

Kate Pavich, IRB Analyst
Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia

Appendix B: List of Documents

River Valley University

At A Glance
University Mission and Values
2013-2018 Strategic Plan
Collegial Governance Statement
President's Annual Report
Annual Financial Report 2016-2017
Department Chair Handbook 2017
Faculty Policies and Procedures Handbook 2017
Faculty by Academic Rank, Tenure Status, and Full- Part-Time Status
Faculty Academic Rank 2011-2016
Employee Headcount by Full and Part-time Status
Employee Headcount by Race
Employee Headcount by Gender
Full-Time Employees by Assigned Position 2008-2011
Full-Time Faculty by Gender
Full-Time Faculty by Race
Part-Time Employees by Assigned Position, 2011

Middle State University

Mission Statement
Financial Aid Report
Quick Facts – Fall 2015
Fact Site
Strategic Plan for 2015-2020
Strategic Planning
Faculty Handbook
2015-2020 Strategic Plan
2016 End of Year Strategic Plan Update
Summary of Endowment Values and Returns
Employee Analysis Fall 2017
Expenditures by Function 2008-2017
Expenditures by Function as a Percentage of Totals 2008-2017
Expenditures by Function Per FTE Enrollment 2008-2017
Summary of Full-Time Faculty Salaries by Rank and Gender 2017
Revenue by Source as a Percentage of Totals 2008-2017

Revenue by Source 2008-2017
Revenue by Source Per FTE Enrollment 2008-2017
Full-Time Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty Teaching Load and/or Overload Standards
Faculty Qualifications and Credentials
Adjunct Faculty & Full-Time Faculty Overload Pay Scale
Adjunct Faculty Evaluations
Adjunct Faculty Evaluation Process
Faculty and Professional Staff Within the Academic Division
Full-Time Faculty Annual Evaluation Plan

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

1. What is your current position at [Institution]?
    a. How long have you been in this position?
2. How would you describe the roles and responsibilities of your current position?
    a. Can you talk specifically about your role in relation to academic hiring?
3. Who is involved in academic hiring decisions at [Institution] and what does that process look like?
4. How do you make decisions about what type of academic appointment to hire (e.g. tenure track, full-time lecturer, adjunct)?
    a. What factors go into that decision?
5. Have you noticed growth of non-tenure track instructional staff members within the [institution/college]?
6. What do you see as the overall implications of this shift? For your departments/college/institution?
7. What do you see as the strengths of using non-tenure track faculty?
    a. The weaknesses?
8. What do you see as the strengths of using tenure track/tenured faculty?
    a. The weaknesses?
9. Are there any other comments or things you'd like to add about what we've previously discussed?

Thank you!

Table 1: Case Details (2017-2018)

	Type	Location	Student Population	Student-to-Faculty Ratio	Tuition and Fees (In-State)	Tuition and Fees (Out-of-state)
River Valley University	4-year Public	Suburb: Large	12,000-14,000 undergraduate	19 to 1	$9,000-$10,000	$18,000-$20,000
Middle State University	4-year Public	Town: Remote	14,000-16,000 undergraduate	15 to 1	$8,000-$9,000	$15,000-$17,000

Table 2: List of Interview Participants

River Valley State University	Dean of Arts & Sciences Associate Dean of Arts & Sciences Interim Dean of Business Dean of Education Director of Planning & Institutional Research Department Chair Head of Faculty Senate Associate Provost for Administration
Middle State University	Dean of Arts & Sciences Associate Dean of Arts & Sciences Dean of Education Associate Dean of Education Dean of Business Provost President Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies Associate Provost for Academic Support

Figure 1: Conceptual Model

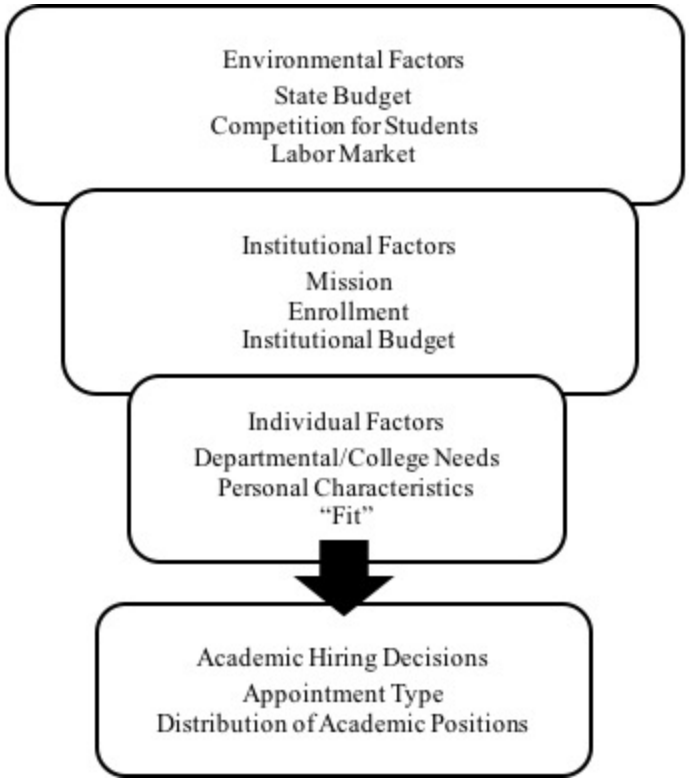

Figure 2: Revised Conceptual Model