THE AFTERMATH OF DEFUNDING: EXAMINING HOW INSTITUTIONAL LEADERS APPROACH MITIGATING INEQUITIES IN ACADEMIC SUCCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES AFTER THE DEFUNDING OF FEDERAL TRIO GRANTS

by

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(Under the Direction of Erik C. Ness)

ABSTRACT

The federal TRIO program is an evolving group of national initiatives purposed to serve first-generation college students and students from low-income households, primarily. As a way to broaden educational access and opportunities, institutional leaders apply to operate federal TRIO programs on their campuses. However, the Department of Education periodically defunds these programs at the institutional level. Drawing upon resource dependence theory and building organizational capacity, I studied the aftermath of defunding through a qualitative, multisite case study design.

Through analyzing archival materials, institutional documents, and interviews, I explored the following research questions at two universities in the Southeastern United States: 1) Prior to the Department of Education defunding the granted project, what was the scope of the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement program or Student Support Services program on campus; 2) how have institutional leaders changed identity-based services that were available to their federal TRIO program participants prior to the Department of Education defunding their granted project; and 3) how do institutional leaders perceive their institution's organizational capacity to provide identity-based services for federal TRIO program eligible students without federal TRIO grants?

Ultimately, I found that the scope of the existing programs, the continuation of their services, and institutions' capacity to continue services are interrelated. More specifically, the scope of the program and elements of the institutions' capacity either propelled or deterred the institutional leaders to continue providing services for the target population. This resulted in distinct differences in how institutional leaders sought to mitigate inequities in educational access and opportunities. Furthermore, several implications emerged from this study.

A key implication is that institutional leaders should position their federal TRIO programs on campus with intentionality – they should situate federal TRIO programs in units with similar objectives of the programs. In addition, they should devise plans to continue services in ways that their institutional capacity can withstand upon a defunding. Finally, policy makers should consider giving institutional leaders more time to prepare for a defunding and resources to aid them through the process of trying to sustain momentum and services beyond their federal TRIO programs' grant cycles.

INDEX WORDS: Federal TRIO Programs, TRIO, Defunding, Building Organizational Capacity, Grants, Resource Dependence, Educational Inequities

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation, and the completion of this degree, to my family members who wished me well on my collegiate journey but are not here to witness my return.

Tommie L. Cunningham

My Grandfather

Jimmy D. Quarles, Jr.

My Brother

Leroy Quarles

My Uncle

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Contextual Background

Access to higher education in America has been an issue within the academy since its inauguration on American soil by way of the founding of Harvard University in 1636. For centuries, policy makers and institutional leaders have failed to provide access to higher education equitably to all citizens across various identity groups, especially to citizens who hold marginalized and underrepresented identities (Ladson-Billings, 2007). Within the last century, federal education policy makers have created programs to provide greater access to post-secondary education for multiple marginalized populations – federal TRIO programs are an example of such federally created and funded programs (Clinedinst et al., 2003).

Federal TRIO programs (TRIO) have a rich history in educational legislation and is an evolving group of national initiatives that serves first-generation and low-income college students, primarily. The origin of TRIO was the creation of the Upward Bound program through the Educational Opportunity Act of 1964, the Educational Talent Search program through the Higher Education Act of 1965, and the Student Support Services program through the Higher Education Amendments of 1968 ("History of the federal TRIO programs," 2011). In addition to creating the Student Support Services program, the Higher Education Amendments of 1968 also position all three ‘demonstration’ programs in one place, the Office of Education (now Department of Education), hence the triad’s name – TRIO (Groutt, 2003a).

The three pieces of legislation that birthed TRIO have proven to be impactful in the field of higher education beyond their intent. Within the foundational pieces of legislation, TRIO helped to introduce the ideal of equity into higher education access that had only been tangentially introduced previously through the G.I. Bill and the Morrill Acts. In his review of TRIO’s history, Grout (2003a) described how progressive TRIO legislation has been in providing access to marginalized students. The Educational Opportunity Act of 1964 is the first piece of legislation that specifically named first-generation college students. In addition, The Higher Education Act of 1965 established scholarships for students who come from low-income households, today’s Pell Grant program. Lastly, the Higher Education Amendments of 1968 was the first piece of legislation that specifically provided funding for students with disabilities. The foundational pieces of TRIO legislation defined the target population for federal TRIO programs: students who are or will be first-generation college students, those from low-income households, and students with disabilities.

Today TRIO encompasses eight programs with a total budget exceeding $950 million in fiscal year 2018 (*Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Summary and Background Information*, 2018). Two of the federal TRIO programs work specifically with students enrolled in post-secondary education: The Student Support Services (SSS) program and the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement program (McNair). The SSS program was the first college TRIO program and its mission is to increase the retention and graduation rates of program participants by offering free tutoring, course selection assistance, financial literacy education, assistance with applying for federal student financial aid, and assistance in applying for graduate school admission ("Student Support Services Program," 2017). The McNair program, named after astronaut and physicist Dr. Ronald E. McNair, has a mission to increase Ph.D. attainment among underrepresented populations by providing undergraduate research opportunities, paid summer internships, educational seminars, tutoring, academic counseling, assistance in applying for graduate school, and assistance in securing funding for graduate education ("TRIO - Ronald E. McNair postbaccalaureate achievement program," 2018). Although these programs do not solve all the barriers to access and success for their target populations, institutional leaders at colleges and universities apply for and operate these programs to provide identity-based and targeted services for their students.

The Department of Education (the Department) manages the federal TRIO grants and each program is on a five-year grant cycle. Minimizing the facilitation of many grant program competition in one year, the Department disseminates their request for proposals and host competitions for federal TRIO grants asynchronously. For instance, the Department holds grant competitions for the McNair program in years ending in two and seven and competitions for the SSS program in years ending in zero and five. The Department held the last two SSS competitions in 2010 and 2015 and the last two McNair competitions in 2012 and 2017.

Based on the procedures for awarding grants and contracts (Higher Education Resources and Student Assistance, 2011), grant readers hired by the Department assess the proposals based on the guidelines provided in the instructions. After the readers grade the proposals, the Department compiles the grades and lists them in rank order from highest to lowest score, and the Department awards grantees down the list until they have reached the number of projects for which congress has provided funding. Applicants with existing projects have the ability to gain additional points on their proposal that new grantees do not – they are given prior experience points for the success of their grant in reaching its previously stated project objectives. The Department denies initial funding and discontinues funding for all of the applicants whose cumulative scores do not make the cutoff.

Statement of the Problem

The college federal TRIO programs serve first-generation college students and students from low-income households, and depending on the program, services are intentionally extended to students with disabilities and students underrepresented in graduate education (Higher Education Act of 1965, 2011). Currently, Congress funds the federal TRIO program at a level which is inadequate to serve the entire eligible population and the program's funding comes from a discretionary budget that provides little security for program continuity. Therefore, many students who are eligible for federal TRIO programs will not receive them and the continuity of services for those who are federal TRIO program participants is subject to change with relative ease. This is best demonstrated by the proposal to eliminate the McNair program in fiscal year 2018 and to remove both McNair and SSS programs in the proposed budget for fiscal year

2019 (*Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Summary and Background Information*, 2017; *Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Summary and Background Information*, 2018).

In addition to funding being unpredictable at the federal level, the Department of Education defund institutions, for a myriad of reasons, in the competitive grant processes they host during the last funded year of each grant cycle. Periodically, the Department of Education defunds existing projects, and students once served by these projects may no longer have access to these services designed to decrease inequities in educational attainment. The Department of Education defunded approximately 50 McNair projects during the 2012 grant competition and 90 Student Support Services projects during the 2015 grant competition, and four institutions experienced a defunding for both projects in the aforementioned cycles. As a result, institutional leaders faced the obstacle of operating within annual budgets that were at minimum $220 thousand less than expected with an inability to regain these funds for five years.

Purpose and Research Questions

There are very few studies on federal TRIO programs, and in addition to the scarcity of empirical knowledge on these programs, much of the inquiry that exists surrounds participants' experiences and projects' effectiveness in achieving their goals. Therefore, there is a gap in the literature regarding the institutionalization of programmatic efforts, the management of these projects, and institutions' capability to continue services upon project defunding. Understanding this is of immense importance as funding for these programs is not guaranteed at the federal or institutional level which means there is an omnipresent possibility that projects are in their last funded grant cycle. Therefore, I am seeking to enhance the body of literature on federal TRIO programs by introducing an organizational lens to inquiry centered on college federal TRIO programs. The purpose of my study is to examine the aftermath of defunded federal TRIO programs on their college campuses. To gain in-depth insight into the impact that defunding has on a campus, I decided to use a qualitative approach with a multisite case study design for my research. Drawing on resource dependence theory and building organizational capacity frameworks, I explored the following research questions:

1. Prior to the Department of Education defunding the granted project, what was the scope of the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement program or Student Support Services program on campus?
2. How have institutional leaders changed identity-based services that were available to their federal TRIO program participants prior to the Department of Education defunding their granted project?
3. How do institutional leaders perceive their institution's organizational capacity to provide identity-based services for federal TRIO program eligible students without federal TRIO grants?

Definitions

The federal TRIO program most notably serves students who are first-generation college students and students from low-income households. However, college federal TRIO programs also serve students with disabilities and students underrepresented in graduate education, depending on the program. With the expansiveness of federal TRIO programs, it is essential for the TRIO community to have shared operational definitions of these student populations. Below I have provided the language I used in my study followed by the definitions of these populations that are found in TRIO's guiding legislative and regulative documents:

- First Generation College Student: "… (A) an individual both of whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree; or (B) in the case of any individual who regularly resided with and received support from only one parent, an individual whose only such parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree." (Higher Education Act of 1965, 2011, sec. 1070a–11(h)(3))
- Student from Low-Income Household: "… an individual from a family whose taxable income for the preceding year did not exceed 150 percent of an amount equal to the poverty level determined by using criteria of poverty established by the Bureau of the Census." (Higher Education Act of 1965, 2011, sec. 1070a–11(h)(4))
- Student with Disabilities: "… a person who has a disability, as that term is defined in section 12102 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.)" (*Electronic Code of Federal Regulations*, 2018, sec. 646.7)
- Student Underrepresented in Graduate Education: "The following ethnic and racial groups are considered underrepresented in graduate education: Black (non-Hispanic), Hispanic, American Indian, Alaskan Native (as defined in section 7306 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA)), Native Hawaiians (as defined in section 7207 of the ESEA), and Native

American Pacific Islanders (as defined in section 320 of the HEA)." (*Electronic Code of Federal Regulations*, 2018, sec. 647.7)

Significance of Study

There is an inevitability that campuses will experience defunding of their federal TRIO projects, brought on by federal budget cuts to entire federal TRIO programs or defunding from the Department of Education for projects at specific institutions. This study has the capability of providing institutional leaders and staff members employed through federal TRIO programs the understanding of the impact defunding can have on their institutional projects, ways to manage their dependency on federal TRIO programs to provide services to their eligible population, and advice on how to minimize the impact of defunding.

Although exploratory in nature, this study fills a gap in the literature and could possibly serve as a foundation for building a framework for institutional leaders' management of federal TRIO projects. This is important for stewardship purposes, and it is of particular importance due to the volatility of the federal TRIO programs and their institutional projects. Lastly, in addition to this study providing an understanding of the impact of the absence of TRIO programs on their host campuses, it can also be used to inform decisions made by the Department of Education regarding the administration of TRIO and other similar federally funded programs as well as advocacy groups with regard to how they set their agenda for equity in educational access, success, and opportunity.

Organization of Study

I have organized my dissertation into six chapters. Chapter one introduces the context and background of the problem, the purpose of my project, my research questions, and the significance of my study. In chapter two, I provided a review of literature which details the origin and contemporary profile of federal TRIO programs. This chapter also introduces the concept of educational debt and discusses obstacles faced by federal TRIO program eligible populations. In addition, I explained the core tenants of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that informed the approach to my inquiry. Chapter three details the methodology for my study. In this chapter I explained why I chose a qualitative research design and multi-case study method to explore my research questions, the process of selecting my case sites, how I collected and analyzed my data, and measures I took to develop trustworthiness in my inquiry.

Chapters four and five are my case study reports. In these chapters I described my cases and provided institutional context prior to providing background information about the TRIO programs at the institutions and detailing the themes that emerged from my data collection and analysis. Finally, I concluded my dissertation with chapter six. In my final chapter, I addressed my research questions and discussed my findings across my case studies. Lastly, I provided implications, directions for future research, and a conclusion to my study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leaders in the field of higher education, and more specifically on the campuses of colleges and universities throughout the nation, often utter the words, promises of, and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. However, pioneers of American higher education did not create colleges and universities with diverse student populations in mind (Thelin, 2004). As a result, elements of higher education's exclusionary roots still permeate college campuses (Kupo, 2011). Furthermore, the rhetoric of embracing and valuing diversity from campus leaders is solely symbolic at times, as demonstrated by the homogeneity, systemic inequities, and campus cultures of exclusion throughout higher education in the U.S. (Smith, 2015).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the protest of students and faculty resulted in campus leaders developing formal programs and services to mitigate barriers to access and success for targeted student populations (Stewart, 2011). These programs and services, that originally focused on the needs of students of color and later other minoritized populations, combated the manifestation of society's oppression in practices, curriculum, and attitudes on college campuses (Kupo, 2011). With this understanding – be it a product of empathy, lived experiences, student data, or protest – institutional leaders have established and resourced identify-based offices, programs, and services for decades. Examples of such offices include but are not limited to multicultural, international, LGBTQIA, women's, disability, and veteran offices and centers.

History of Federal TRIO Programs

In addition to the grassroots efforts that created many of the identity-based offices on college campuses, educational policy makers created a specific thread of identity-based offices – the federal TRIO program. The federal TRIO program, a group of federal educational programs that provide resources and support for students who hold specific marginalized identities, assist program participants as they navigate the educational pipeline. Federal TRIO programs primarily focus on students who are first-generation college students, students who come from low-income households, and students with disabilities, and their services span from middle school to postsecondary education completion ("Federal TRIO programs," 2017). Shuford (2011) notes that federal TRIO programs served as a model for some college leaders who wanted to add academic elements to their multicultural student services.

In total, there are eight federal TRIO programs: Educational Opportunity Centers, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement, Student Support Services, Talent Search, Training Program for Federal TRIO Programs Staff, Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math-Science, and Veterans Upward Bound ("Federal TRIO programs," 2017). College and universities across the United States, from various sectors and institution types, host TRIO program to better serve their students and they have done so for over fifty years. However, even after fifty years of existence there is little history written at length on these programs. Therefore, I used Grout's (Groutt, 2003a, 2003b) review of federal TRIO programs to shape my understanding of their history. In addition to history of these programs, I have also provided their current programmatic profiles in this section.

Precedence for Federal Involvement in Education

The constitution does not give the federal government power or responsibility over education and therefore states and municipalities have the right to control their educational systems. Furthermore, the degree to which the federal government should be involved, if at all, in education is a contentious debate that has sustained over centuries (Davies, 2009). However, the federal government has played a substantial role in providing access to education to various segments of society, sometimes by using an array of political strategies to circumvent the polarizing nature of federal involvement (Graham, 1982). In specific regard to higher education, the federal government has impacted its functioning prior to the creation of the federal TRIO programs. The Morrill Acts, the G.I. Bill, and the Civil Rights Act are all examples of federal involvement in higher education.

There were two pieces of legislation in the 1800s that directly affected higher education, both bearing the name of the Morrill Act. The Morrill Act of 1862 was the first act and it granted each state with land to use for colleges and universities. The purpose of this legislation was to increase geographic access to higher education with the desired outcome of a more educated and prepared workforce for agriculture. However, this effort to increase access to education only benefited a subset of the U.S. population as some states had state sanctioned segregation. This led to the passing of the second act, the Morrill Act of 1890. The second act required states to create a 'separate but equal' college for people of color, if a state used their 1862 grant to fund a college that denied applicants based on their race (Johnson, 1981). In essence, the first act increased access to the working class and the second act increased access to education, albeit unequal, to non-white citizens.

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, more colloquially known as the G.I. Bill, is another major piece of legislation that directly affected the functioning of higher education and the college going culture for a subset of the U.S. population. Situated within a time of war, the G.I. Bill was an attempt to increase service members' access to higher education upon their return to the country. The bill was successful, as it vastly reduced the price of higher education for service members. However, to a certain extent, the bill had a disparate impact, as some servicemen were still discriminated against based on their race (Clinedinst et al., 2003).

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is another piece of legislation that had a rippling effect on higher education. This act created protected classes of citizens, making it illegal to discriminate against them based on their membership in said groups. This act made it illegal to discriminate based on one's race, religion, national origin, or sex. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its implementation was polarizing in the U.S. Many schools, school systems, and colleges and universities were slow to desegregate as mandated in *Brown v. Board of Education* (Patterson, 2001). This legislation coupled with other rulings gradually removed autonomy away from local government, community members, and campus officials – a contested and divisive issue.

Formative Years of Federal TRIO Programs

In addition to racial inequities in the country, in the middle of the 20th century Americans began to pay close attention to income disparities. It was during this time that, through current events and literature, the American people took note that the nation was not as much of an affluent society as believed, instead roughly one-third of Americans were living in poverty (Gailbraith, 1958). The heightened concern with poverty reached the national level and prompted President John F. Kennedy to meet with Walter Heller, the Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors, and discuss the issues surrounding poverty in America (Groutt, 2003a; "History of the federal TRIO programs," 2011).

After the assassination of President Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson took office. Like his predecessor, President Johnson requested to meet with Walter Heller and soon after appointed Sergeant Shriver as the head of the Task Force on Poverty (Groutt, 2003a). During Johnson's administration, Congress created the first TRIO program. Through the passing of the Educational Opportunity Act of 1964, the Office of Economic Opportunity was formed and Education Opportunity Grants were created to form national emphasis programs (Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, 1964). Soon after, the first national demonstration program, Upward Bound, was established to support high school students who were underperforming academically, with the main goal of getting the students prepared for collegiate work (Greeneigh Associates, 1978).

One year later, James Moore and Samuel Halperin collaboratively created another monumental piece of legislation, the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Groutt, 2003a). This legislation established scholarships for low-income student and established the second national demonstration program, the Contracts to Encourage the Full Utilization of Educational Talent (Higher Education Act of 1965, 2011). The Contracts to Encourage the Full Utilization of Educational Talent is the second federal TRIO program and is today's Talent Search program. The Office of Economic Opportunity designed Educational Talent Search to be used as a tool to inform citizens about the new grants and scholarships that were available. This program is different from the Upward Bound program because it accepts a wider range of students (Groutt, 2003a).

The next piece of foundational legislation for the federal TRIO programs was the Higher Education Amendments of 1968. Through these amendments, Congress formed the third national demonstration program, Special Services for Disadvantaged Students, today's Student Support Services program ("Higher Education Amendments of 1968," n.d.). Congress established this program to assist students who were first-generation college students, students who came from low-income households, and/or students with disabilities navigate the collegiate environment. This amendment was monumental as it was the first piece of educational legislation to have funds specifically for students with disabilities, and it required program facilitators to spend 10% of project funds on that specific population (Groutt, 2003a). In addition, the Amendments of 1968 moved the Upward Bound program from the Office of Economic Opportunity to the Office of Education. This movement placed all of the demonstration grants in one location and created the triad that legislators refer to as the Federal TRIO programs ("Higher Education Amendments of 1968," n.d.).

Continued Expansion of Federal TRIO Programs

President Richard Nixon's administration changed the TRIO structures upon taking office. The new administration did not have much experience with the TRIO programs and decided to decentralize the administration of the programs. The administration created ten regions, each with their own appointed commissioner who had autonomy over the operations and priorities of their TRIO programs (Groutt, 2003a). This resulted in great variance regarding the administration of the programs and the TRIO professionals began to make regional professional organizations that soon challenged the authority of the commissioners. These organizations currently exist as affiliate organizations to the national organization that supports TRIO. The regional organizations are the Association for Equality and Excellence in Education, Inc.; ASPIRE, Inc.; the Caribbean Association of Educational Opportunity Programs; the Educational Opportunity Association; Midwestern Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel; Northwest Association of Educational Opportunity Programs; the New England Educational Opportunity Association; the Southeastern Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel, the Southwest Association of Student Assistance Programs, and the Western Association of Educational Opportunity Personnel ("Council for Opportunitiy in Education," 2017).

The Department of Education forbade TRIO professionals to talk to Congress about their programs, and commissioners used the Hatch Act of 1939 to justify this forbiddance. However, some TRIO professional sill reached out and worked with congresspersons who were willing to engage in conversation (Groutt, 2003a). Despite all the changes and confusion, the Department of Education created two new programs with a temporary $5 million allocation: Veterans Upward Bound and Educational Opportunity Centers (Gladieux & Wolanin, 1976). Educational Opportunity Centers added a new dynamic to TRIO as it served all adult learners, Educational Talent Search only served adults up to age 27 (Groutt, 2003a).

President Gerald Ford was the next to take office. During the beginning of his administration, the funding for federal TRIO programs remained constant at $70 million (Groutt, 2003a). However, Dorothy Routh proposed two changes to the TRIO programs: she proposed to split the programs organizationally into college programs and pre-college programs and to create another grant program that could help train professionals to work with students from TRIO's specific populations. TRIO professionals did not receive the first proposal well but did welcome the second proposal and established such a grant in 1976 (Groutt, 2003a). Today the TRIO Staff Training programs provide training in federal legislation and regulations, budget management, financial aid information, recruiting student who are underserved students, retaining students who are first-generation or come from low-income households, and how to incorporate technology in program operations ("Training Program for Federal TRIO Programs," 2018).

President Carter's administration created a lot of change in the organizational structure and operations of the TRIO program. During this time, his administration recentralized the TRIO programs in the nation's capital - Washington D.C. However, although the programs were centralized the regional commissioners still were involved with the evaluation of the programs (Groutt, 2003a). In 1979, TRIO programs found a more permanent home in the newly created Department of Education. TRIO professionals decided to create a national organization to represent them in Washington D.C., the National Coordinating Council for Education, which is today's Council for Opportunity in Education (Groutt, 2003a).

In addition to the centralizing the TRIO programs, President Carter's administration also changed some operational components to the way TRIO programs were granted and administered. As TRIO professionals continued to be engaged in advocacy for TRIO programs and had opposed some recommendations, they reached out to Congress and shared that they were concerned that the Department of Education would use the grants as a means to retaliate against them (Groutt, 2003b). This led to the restriction of the Department of Education's discretionary power, as it pertains to TRIO grant competitions, in the Amendments of 1980. The Department of Education was no longer able to fund programs based on regional priorities, they had to fund programs based on the rank order of their scores (Groutt, 2003b). In addition, the Department of Education began to assign programs who performed well in prior cycles an advantage in the renewal process. These amendments also opened the program to more students by moving the eligibility for low-income from 100% of the poverty level to 150% of the poverty level. Lastly, TRIO professionals worked with Shirley Chisholm to advocate for an increase in TRIO funding during President Carter's administration and received an increase that brought TRIO funding to $115 million (Groutt, 2003b).

President Reagan's administration presented two proposals to cut TRIO funding drastically. During what is now referred to as "The Twelve Day War," the Reagan Administration proposed a $55 million cut to the TRIO programs. For twelve days, the TRIO community and TRIO allies worked to fight against the cuts that resulted in a rejection of the cuts and a $10 million increase in federal funding for the TRIO programs (Groutt, 2003b). However, soon there was another proposal that included cuts for TRIO funding, the Deficient Reduction Act. This act proposed a cut of 30% for Federal TRIO programs. Again, the TRIO community fought against the cuts, and the help of the Council gathered 221 House Representatives and 34 Senators to declare February 28, 1986 National TRIO Day (Groutt, 2003b). In that same year, legislators created the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement program through the Higher Education Amendments.

President George H. W. Bush's administration created another TRIO program. Through a secondary supplemental appropriation in 1990, the Upward Bound Math-Science program was established (Groutt, 2003b). This program expanded the funding for the first TRIO program, Upward Bound, to provide TRIO's target population with more directed training in science and technology. The Upward Bound Math-Science program was the last created program of the TRIO programs.

Although there have been no additional programs added to the federal TRIO programs group since 1990, the programs have experienced fluctuations in perceived value and funding throughout the administrations of Presidents George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, Barack Obama, and now Donald Trump. Particularly in regard to my research, the federal TRIO programs absorbed substantial cuts during President Obama's administration. This led to the reduction of projects funded by the Ronald E. McNair program by one third in the 2012 grant cycle – though funding was restored in the 2017 grant cycle. Today the funding for TRIO programs remains volatile, as demonstrated by President Donald Trump's call for the elimination of the Student Support Services and Ronald E. McNair program in his fiscal year 2019 budget proposal (*Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Summary and Background Information*, 2018), which unfortunately adds to the value of this research.

Contemporary Profile of Federal TRIO Programs

The federal TRIO programs have not expanded since the 1990, and today TRIO encompasses eight programs with a total budget exceeding $950 million (*Department of Education fiscal year 2019 president's budget*, 2018). All eight TRIO programs focus on the academic success of students who are current or future first-generation college students and students who come from low-income households; some programs also focus on students who belong to groups underrepresented in graduate education, have a disability, have served in the U.S. military, and foster care youth. The reauthorizations of the Higher Education Act contain the legislation that provides guidance for Federal TRIO programs (Clinedinst et al., 2003), and for project year 2017-2018 congress allocated funds for over 3,000 projects to served more than 800,000 participants ("Federal TRIO programs," 2017). Table 1. contains a compilation of budgetary summaries and program descriptions from the Department of Education and the Pell Institute, respectfully.

Table 1. Overview of Federal TRIO Programs

Overview of Federal TRIO Programs				
Program	Description	Number of Projects	Number of Participants	Budget (in millions)
Educational Opportunity Centers	"To increase the number of adult participants who enroll in postsecondary education institutions."	142	199,722	$50.7
Ronal E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program	"To increase the attainment of Ph.D. degrees by students from underrepresented segments of society."	187	5,234	$45.7
Student Support Services	"To increase the college retention and graduation rates of its participants."	1,069	202,913	$304.4
Talent Search	"To increase the number of youths from disadvantaged households who complete high school and enroll in and complete their postsecondary education."	473	312,855	$151.8
Training Program for Federal TRIO Program Staff	"To support training to enhance the skills and expertise of project directors and staff employed in the Federal TRIO Programs."	13	2,536	$2.8
Upward Bound	"To increase the rate at which participants complete secondary education and enroll in and graduate from institutions of postsecondary education."	956	70,001	$312.1
Upward Bound Math/Science	"To help students recognize and develop their potential to excel in math and science and to encourage them to pursue postsecondary degrees in math and science, and ultimately careers in the math and science profession."	211	13,132	$58.3

Veterans Upward Bound	"To increase the rate at which participants enroll in and complete postsecondary education programs."	64	8,407	$18.2
Evaluation and Administration/ Peer Review	N/A	N/A	N/A	$6.3
Totals		3,115	814,800	$950.3

("Federal TRIO programs," 2017; McCants, 2002, p. 1)

College Federal TRIO Programs

Only two TRIO programs are for undergraduate student participants: The Student Support Services (SSS) and the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement (McNair) programs. These programs are administered by the Department of Education, yet designed locally, to support TRIO's eligible population pursue and persist through higher education. Both programs work with students as they complete their requirements for an undergraduate degree; however, their purposes are distinctly different. The McNair program, named after Dr. Ronald E. McNair, an African-American astronaut who died on the Challenger Mission, purpose is to prepare program participants for research-intensive graduate studies. The overarching goal is to increase the number of Ph.D. recipients from underrepresented populations, and by doing so increase the number of faculty who are from underrepresented populations ("TRIO - Ronald E. McNair postbaccalaureate achievement program," 2018). The Department of Education provides funding information for the program from 2000 – 2015. Based on the publicly available information provided by the Department of Education, in fiscal year 2000 the McNair program had 156 projects, 3,600 students, and a budget of $32 million. In fiscal year 2015 the McNair program had 151 projects, 4,200 students, and a budget of $35 million. Between fiscal year 2000 and fiscal year 2011 the budget for McNair grew to $40 million, but the program took a $10 million cut in 2012 ("Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program - Awards," 2018). However, the McNair program had a budget of over $45 million for the 2017-2018 project year.

The Department of Education requires each McNair program to serve a minimum of 25 students annually with the expectation that program participants will complete scholarly research, enter into a graduate program, return to their graduate program the following year, and complete a Ph.D. or another research-intensive degree within 10 years of graduation with their undergraduate degree (Higher Education Act of 1965, 2011, sec. 1070a–15). Institutions have a responsibility to ensure their McNair participants are either first-generation college students, students from low-income households, or students who are underrepresented in graduate education. At minimum, two-thirds of participants must be first-generation college students who come from low-income households; the remaining participants must be students underrepresented in graduate education. The McNair program offers its participants with opportunities for undergraduate research, summer internships, seminars, tutoring, and academic counseling (Higher Education Act of 1965, 2011, sec. 1070a–15).

Student Support Services, previously named Special Services for Disadvantaged Students (Groutt, 2003a), aids students who are first-generation college students, students who come from low-income households, and students who have disabilities as they progress through their collegiate experience. Institutions have the responsibility to ensure that two-thirds of participants must be first-generation college students who come from low-income background or students with disabilities; and at minimum, one-third of participants who are students with disabilities must also come from low-income households (Higher Education Act of 1965, 2011, sec. 1070a–14). The goal of this program is to produce more graduates from these marginalized underrepresented groups ("Student Support Services Program," 2017). In fiscal year 2000 the SSS program had 795 projects, 183,000 students, and a budget of $183 million. In fiscal year 2015 the SSS program had 1,081 projects, 205,000 students, and a budget of $297 million ("Student Support Services - Awards," 2018). The Student Support Services budget dropped in 2010, but the program's budget has returned to comparable funding in the 2015 funding competition.

The Department of Education requires each Student Support Service program to serve a minimum of 140 program participants annually with the expectation that participants will return to school each year until they graduate, stay in good academic standing, and graduate within six years of participating in the program (Higher Education Act of 1965, 2011, sec. 1070a–14). The Student Support Services program has two program types: programs for 2-year institutions and programs for 4-year institutions. Therefore, Student Support Services programs are located at various types of institutions. Program facilitators provide participants with academic tutoring, course selection assistance, financial aid information, graduate school applications, financial literacy education, and for participants at two-year institution, assistance transferring to a four-year institution ("Student Support Services Program," 2017). Students who are

Pell grant recipients can also receive a grant aid stipend to supplement their Pell grant aid.

Serving the TRIO Population

Colleges and universities are microcosms of our society. Therefore, just like our society, they embody practices, customs, and traditions that both covertly and overtly marginalize segments of society. Often universities seek to make the collegiate experience less taxing on marginalized students by offering services and programs to mitigate the effects of marginalization (Shuford, 2011). Federal TRIO programs have served in this capacity since the middle of the 20th century, supporting marginalized student groups to make education more equitable and attainable for overlooked, under-resourced, and excluded populations.

Educational Debt

The ‘American Dream’ is but a dream deferred for many Americans who were not born into specific racial and ethnic groups or socioeconomic classes who have historically had access to education. This lack of access in some cases, and forbiddance in others, set a foundation of inequities that America has yet to correct (Ladson-Billings, 2007). Although the constitution does not give the federal government power over education and access to education is not a right for citizens within itself, over the last two centuries the federal government has attempted to provide access and opportunities to a wider citizenry (Clinedinst et al., 2003).

TRIO programs do important work for communities and student populations that historically the government has been both active and complacent in their exclusion and consequential suffering. However, it is important to provide context to why there is a need for such programs. Often administrators and legislators compare marginalized student populations with students who do not share their marginalized identities (Ladson-Billings, 2007). However, to examine the disparities in educational outcomes in poor communities and communities of color compared to middle class and white communities without interrogating the histories that produced such an outcome is irresponsible. This irresponsible deficit approach positions the students, themselves, as inadequate or lacking, instead of speaking to larger and systematic issues that are actors in the academic success of students. Therefore, Ladson-Billings (2007) urged educational scholars to move beyond achievement gap language to “education debt” (p.317). Ladson-Billings (2007) provided rationale for the switch in language and stated:

> When we speak of an education debt we move to a discourse that holds us all accountable. It reminds us that we have accumulated this problem as a result of centuries of neglect and denial of education to entire groups of students. It reminds us that we have consistently under-funded schools in poor communities where education is needed most. It reminds us that we have, for large periods of our history, excluded groups of people from the political process where they might have a say in democratically determining what education should look like in their communities. And, it reminds us that what we are engaged as we reflect on our unethical and immoral treatment of our underserved populations. (p. 321)

This is worth mentioning so legislators, administrators, and citizens fully understand the need for identity-based programs and do not consider them a handout. Holland (2017) speaks to the need for such programs and services to provide the college knowledge and college going culture to enrich the opportunity for upward social mobility in underserved student populations. In addition, Sanacore and Palumbo (2016) assert that some institutional administrators are engaging in unethical behavior by not prioritizing the success of their first-generation college students and students from low-income households. Their position is that administrators have the onus to ensure they are providing their admitted students with the services and support they need to be academically successful at their institution. As actors in the success of their students, colleges and universities apply for federal TRIO programs to provide additional support for their TRIO eligible student population to resolve some of the educational debt. I have outlined this issue of deficit approaches to studying marginalized student populations to provide context to the unique challenges federal TRIO student populations face, and the responsibility educators and educational institutions have in adequately supporting marginalized student populations.

TRIO Populations

Leaders in institutions of higher education compete for and host federal TRIO programs to aid in the academic success of their TRIO eligible population. Below I have provided a description of the core TRIO population, first-generation college students and college students who come from low-income households. In addition, I have included students who are underrepresented in undergraduate education and students with disabilities, as they are a substantial population within the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement program and the Student Support Services program, respectfully. These students experience their institutions differently; however, there are some common threads in the challenges they face. Therefore, the review of the populations below should not be read as a comprehensive list of mutually exclusive challenges for the respective populations. In addition, there are multiple realities and lived experiences of students, and the descriptions will inevitable not be the lived experiences of the entire population of students who hold the various identities described below.

First-Generation College Students. The college searching, applying, selecting, and attending process can be overwhelming for students. However, these processes can be even more daunting for students who do not have parental figures in their home or communities to give guidance from first-hand experience (Holland, 2017). The information needed to make decisions throughout these processes, or college knowledge, is more frequently had in homes in which students will not be the first in their household to attend a college or university (Holland, 2017). Therefore, some first-generation college students are doubtful that they will graduate from a four year institution (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2016).

There is a large body of literature that spans multiple decades on first-generation college students and obstacles they face throughout their collegiate experiences, from their initial college search to their graduation. However, there are challenges for researchers because the body of literature inconsistently defines what it means to be a first-generation college student (Ward, Siegel, & Davenport, 2012). Peralta and Klonowski (2017) found 12 ways in which researchers measured first-generation college student status over the last decade. However, Federal TRIO programs use the definition outlined in the legislative 2011 amendments of the Higher Education Act.

The research on first-generation college students, although inconsistent in the use of the term, presents a consistent narrative on the challenges this population faces. In a national longitudinal study on first-generation college students, from 1990-2000, McCarron and Inkelas (2006) found that collectively, first-generation college students did not attain the collegiate aspirations they set for themselves while in high school. However, their continuing-generation college students surpassed their collective collegiate aspirations. Specifically, 40.2% of first-generation college students aspired to complete a bachelor degree and 29.5% attained a bachelor degree within 10 years after their sophomore year in high school. In contrast, only 28.4% of continuing-generation students aspired to attain a bachelor degree and 55.9% attain their bachelor degree in the same timeframe (McCarron and Inkelas, 2006).

In a similarly designed longitudinal study, from 2002-2012, Redford and Hoyer (2017) found trends consistent with McCarron and Inkelas' study. In addition, Redford and Hoyer noted that first generation college students were more likely to attend public institutions and come from low-income households. Furthermore, college preparation, and the lack thereof, had an impact on the academic success for first-generation college students – a lack of college readiness had a greater impact on first-generation college students than their continuing-generation college student counterparts. As demonstrated in both studies, the educational debt owed to first-generation college students and the disparities in graduation rates of first-generation and continuing-generation college students is not a result of low aspirations. Instead, the data shows that first-generation college students have great aspirational capital, as described by Yosso (2005).

Some researchers have sought to identify factors that have added to the success of first-generation college students. In a series of three qualitative studies, Longwell-Grice, Adsitt, Mullins, and Serrata (2016) found multiples commonalities in experiences of first-generation college students who are academically successful. In their studies, these students attributed their success to having challenging curricula in high school, teachers who expected them to go to college, at least one parent who provided a considerable amount of emotional support, strong work ethic, and the ability to navigate college with assistance from mentors and peers (Longwell-Grice et al., 2016).

In addition to characteristics and experiences that students bring with them, institutional leaders can work to make their colleges and universities more conducive for first-generation college student academic success. Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, and Covarrubias (2012) found that first-generation college students' academic performance can be enhanced by a change in institutional culture in American higher education. In their study, Stephens et al. (2012) found that first-generation college students are more likely to be raised in working class communities where they are taught community interdependence as a cultural norm. However, institutional culture at American colleges and universities are steeped in middle class cultural norms where independence is a highly valuable attribute. This disjunction in cultural norms between first-generation college students and the institutions at which they study, or mismatch as described by Stephens et al. (2012), has substantial impact on first-generation college students. Therefore, institutional leaders should work to include their students in conversations, activities, and academic assignments that promote interdependent engagement.

Institutional leaders can also increase academic success of their first-generation college students by improving their academic advising structures. Swecker, Fifolt, and Searby (2013) quantitatively explored the relationship between the academic success of first-generation college students and their academic advising. In their study, they found that the frequency of academic advising sessions has a significant positive relationship with the academic success of first-generation college students. As a result, they suggest that universities shift the responsibility of understanding the importance of advisement sessions to themselves, increase the number and capacity of their advisors, and share information with TRIO programs.

College Students from Low-Income Households. Similar to first-generation college students, low-income is a term that researchers and educational leaders use inconsistently. However, for this study, I define students who come from low-income households consistently with the federal government. The 2011 amendments to the Higher Education Act operationalizes low-income status as a household taxable income that does not exceed 150% of the poverty line. For example, per the guidelines effective in January of 2018, the federal government deems a family of four to have low-income status if their taxable household income does not exceed $37,650 ("Federal TRIO Programs Current-Year Low-Income Levels," 2018).

Students from low-income households systemically face obstacles that result in low academic success rates. Thusly, income disparities in the United States have manifested as disparities in education attainment for students with less access to wealth. Students who received the Pell Grant, a form of federal need-based aid, are more likely to attend for-profit institutions or go to cheaper not-for-profit colleges, have more student loan debt, and have lower bachelor degree completion rates (Cahalan, Perna, Yamashita, Ruiz, & Franklin, 2016). It is evident that selectivity of colleges and universities, even if unintentionally, is influenced by the access to wealth their students have. Regarding highly selective institutions, roughly 5% of their student population is comprised of students from the poorest quartile, and over 67% of their students come from the wealthiest quartile (Cahalan et al., 2016).

This has great implications for access to education, as the question becomes access to what type of education? Arne Duncan, a former Secretary of State, once said, "The simple fact is, every hard-working student in this country must have a real opportunity to achieve a meaningful, affordable degree. America's prosperity, our democracy, and our identity as a land of opportunity, depends on it." (Duncan, 2015, para. 7). In order to achieve true access to education for students with the most financial need, institutional leaders have to take responsibility in ensuring their students have access to support systems on campus. In addition, faculty members and the way their courses are design can also be instrumental in retaining students from such households (Morales, 2014).

First-Generation College Students from Low-Income Households. Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) introduced the term intersectionality to describe the experiences of those who experience oppression in the intersection of their membership in multiple marginalized and subordinated identity groups. Although originally applied to black women specifically, intersectionality is more broadly applicable and can also describes the experience of first-generation college students who also come from low-income households. Students who are in the intersection of being both a first-generation college student and a student from a low-income household experience their oppression in a compounding way.

As mentioned, first-generation college students are more likely to come from working class and low-income families (Stephens et al., 2012), and these students often experience mismatch between their interdependence cultural norm and the independent cultural norm of the middle class that is present at most colleges and universities in America (Stephens et al., 2012). Corroborating this, students who came from similar households identified their socioeconomic status as an obstacle as they transitioned to college (Longwell-Grice et al., 2016). They found mentorship valuable, but experienced a straining disconnect with their family as they navigated their two realities, which is particularly troubling for students who are raised in a community where interdependence is a cultural norm.

This intersection is one that TRIO programs serve most often, as many TRIO programs require that two-thirds of the program participants be both first-generation college students who are also from low-income households. The data on this population also supports that this intersection experiences a compounding type of oppression. For the 2003-2004 first-time freshmen class, students from low-income households, first generation college students, and first-generation college students who came from low-income households have very different graduation rates: 37%, 31%, and 21%, respectfully (Cahalan, Perna, Yamashita, Ruiz, & Franklin, 2016).

Students Underrepresented in Graduate Education. The discussions about diversity in American higher education have been taking place for over a century. This has brought about some legislative changes that have influenced the demographic of higher education drastically. Need-based aid, the Pell Grant, and Title IX are all examples of efforts to create a more heterogeneous population in higher education. Initially literature and efforts that surrounded diversity primarily concentrated on the enrollment of undergraduate students. More recently diverse representation in graduate student enrollment, administration, and faculty have emerged as concerns for the academy (Hinton & Thompson, 2010; Smith, 2011). The one college federal TRIO program that focuses on students underrepresented in graduate education is the McNair program, which fits within the program's purpose to increase the representation of said population with Ph.D.s and other scholarly research-based degrees, and an undergirding goal of increasing faculty of color in the professoriate.

There are various pipeline and retention issues that create a more homogeneous graduate student and faculty population. Furthermore, there is a tendency to view higher education as the end of a linear educational pipeline that starts in the K-12 system. With this view, higher education's diversity issues are solely a result of the success and failure of diverse student populations in K-12 (Smith, 2011). However, Arum and Roksa (2011) recognize that there is an achievement gap issues in the K-12 system that rolls over and is sustained in the collegiate system. In addition to this educational debt, higher education also has a difficult time identifying and harnessing the talents of diverse populations (Smith, 2011). Therefore, despite the shortcomings of the K-12 system, higher education must take some onus in its failure to diversify its production of scholars.

However, recruiting and admitting students underrepresented in graduate education into graduate programs only partially mitigate the issues around their underrepresentation in Ph.D. attainment. Hinton and Thompson (2010) note that there are many students underrepresented in graduate education who start doctoral programs and do not complete them. Vincent Tinto (1993) suggests that after students of any racial and ethnic background are admitted into a doctoral program, they are faced with navigating through three stages: transition and adjustment, attainment of candidacy, and completion of the dissertation. However, navigating through the program and completing it is more difficult than being admitted (Rosovsky, 1990). Speaking in reference to African American populations, yet applicable to other students underrepresented in graduate education, researchers have noted that given the underrepresentation of African Americans in the professoriate, it is unfeasible for them to serve as the sole advisors for the population (Gasman, Gerstl-Pepin, Aderson-Thompkins, Rasheed, & Hathaway, 2004). This deficiency in the availability of same race mentors for underrepresented groups makes it crucial for all faculty who mentor students underrepresented in graduate education to understand what their students need from their mentorship (Garrison-Wafe, Diggs, Estrada, & Galindo, 2012).

In addition to preparing underrepresented students for graduate school, which is effectively the academy's production of its own labor market (Smith, 2011), the McNair program administrators are seeking to diversify the professoriate. However, faculty of color have historically experienced exclusion and devaluing in the academy. In a review of over 20 years of literature centering the experiences of faculty of color, Turner (2011) describes how departmental, institutional, and national climates can affect faculty of color. On the departmental level, the enjoyment of teaching for faculty of color was their primary reason for persistence and job satisfaction. However, these faculty members experienced an undervaluing of their research interest and theoretical frameworks, and they felt that their credentials and intellect were challenged in the classroom. In addition, isolation, perceived biases in hiring processes, unrealistic expectations, and being a sole representative of their racial and ethnic group was problematic. At the institutional level, faculty of color who had networks and allies coupled with professional support programs, administrative support, and a political understanding of the work environment had favorable working conditions. However, the lack of diversity, recruitment and retention, and the presence of exclusion and tokenism contributed to a less favorable working experience. Nationally, the legal landscape and affirmative action, research outlets, salary inequalities, and a lack of appreciation for value added from diversity contributed to field job dissatisfaction.

Students with Disabilities. The Federal government took its first stance on the education of students with disabilities with the passing of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1966 (Singer & Butler, 1987). This act mandated public schools to identify and provide special education for students with educational, developmental, emotional, and physical disabilities. This governmental intervention resulted in the public school systems providing more students an education tailored to their individual needs, and the influx of students who began to receive services were those whose care was more expensive or teachers were less likely to identify their disability (Singer & Butler, 1987).

Although the government's first pervasive intervention to the societal oppression of students with disabilities was the passing of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, the government's first effort to attend to the needs of students with disabilities in higher education was through the passing of the 1968 amendments of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Groutt, 2003a). Institutional leaders have done much on college campuses to accommodate students with a myriad of disabilities, but there is still much work to do. However, a difficulty in discussing and addressing services for students with disabilities is the large array of different obstacles students face because the experiences and needs for students vary with the type of disability they have. Furthermore, the development of a student and even their progression into adulthood can vary drastically depending on their disability and impairment (Janus, 2009).

Although services on college campuses have improved over the past few decades, some student affairs professionals still do not feel knowledgeable about diagnosis, accommodations, or laws concerning students with disabilities (Kimball, Vaccaro, & Vargas, 2016). This narrative corroborates what students voiced soon after the passing of laws In favor of inclusive campuses for students with disabilities – students expressed that administrators, faculty, and staff lack the awareness and ability to provide adaptive aids for their educational journey (West et al., 1993). In addition, institutions use new technology to increase accessibility for students with disabilities. However, and ironically, the technology used to enhance the experience and information accessibility of many students can be inaccessible for others. An example of such instances is a longitudinal examination of the growth in institutional website complexities and how it has decreased the accessibility for students with disabilities (Hackett & Parmanto, 2005). Unfortunately, students with disabilities have historically been excluded like many of the other federal TRIO populations, thus the programs work to mitigate their educational debt as well.

Academic Success

Retention Programs

Research regarding student retention and departure has gone on for decades. Tinto’s (1993) student integration model and Bean’s (1982) models of student departure research are foundational components of retention research. These theories undergird much of college campuses efforts to increase student retention by increasing their students' connectedness to their institution and academic goals. Both theorist talk about the importance of personal and institutional factors, how they intertwine, and the outcome of retention (Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992). Tinto positions a student's departure as a joint effort between the student and the institution – both having a role in and facing the consequences of a student's departure. Tinto (1993) states:

> "Insofar as dropout is defined as a failure on the part of the individual to attain a desired and reasonable educational goal, so too does that leaving represent a failure on the part of the institution to assist the person achieve what he/she initially set out to do in first entering the institution. Here the interests of both parties overlap." (p 143)

This points to the uniqueness of the attrition in higher education and how it is fundamentally different from attrition in the p-12 pipeline. For post-secondary education, students have applied for admission and universities have deemed them admissible. Therefore, as Tinto suggested, attrition in higher education is reflective of both the student and their institution of higher education because both are actors in the student academic success. However, the Pell Institute's compilation of concurrent studies on first-generation students and students from low-income households academic success makes it clear that the educational debt is both present and sustained (Cahalan et al., 2016). This debt is something higher educational professionals are knowledgeable of and tasked to address. Some institutions develop institutional programs to address the disparate academic indicators of their marginalized student population to their counterparts, some secure federal TRIO programs to aid in closing the disparities in achievement, and some do both.

Impact of College Federal TRIO Programs

Federal TRIO programs have existed for over half of a century. In that time, they have received both praise and critique. Unfortunately, peer-reviewed literature on federal TRIO programs is sparse, but most of the literature on federal TRIO programs show positive effects. In a study on TRIO professionals, Wallace, Ropers-Hullman, and Abel (2004) found that many faculty, staff, and administrators are not knowledgeable about TRIO programs, this may contribute to why there is dearth of empirical studies on the programs. However, campus members who are knowledgeable of TRIO programs find great value in them (Wallace et al., 2004), and the literature that does exist on the SSS and McNair programs speaks to the breadth of impact these programs have on their participants.

In addition, since 1997 the Department of Education has commissioned four studies to assess the impact of TRIO programs (*National studies find TRIO programs effective at increasing college enrollment and graduation*, 2009). In a longitudinal study spanning over 45 institutions, Chaney, Muraskin, Cahalan, and Goodwin (1998) examined the impact SSS programs had on their participants over three years. In their study, using multivariate regression models, they found that SSS had a significant impact on student retention and the impact on retention was most significant for students who participated in SSS instructional courses, workshops, and peer-tutoring. They concluded that program participants had higher grade point averages, credit hour accumulation, and retention rates than their similarly marginalized non-participating counterparts.

Regarding the McNair program, Gittens (2014) qualitatively examined the experience of 18 McNair program alumni who successfully completed their doctoral studies. In this study Gittens concluded that the McNair alumni perceived their involvement in the McNair program to have substantially aided in their socialization into graduate studies. In a preliminary assessment of McNair programmatic components, program participants found value in the financial resources made available to them in addition to the research, internships, and mentorship opportunities. Furthermore, the research participants, recent McNair alumni, found their mentors to be effective in introducing them to academic culture, which corroborates Gittens' study.

In addition to the academic support offered by retention programs – funded by institutions or federal TRIO grants – the space and the community that retention programs offer to students with shared identity is advantageous for the participants (Holland, 2017). Although not exclusively researching TRIO program participants, Holland used survey and interview data to explore how African American students (a population that qualifies for the McNair program) transitioned from high school to college and framed their research with Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth. In doing so, Holland noted that peer-to-peer community allows students to more easily develop and utilize their Community Cultural Wealth – a collection of forms of capital that is plentiful in students of color but often underrecognized by institutions of higher education. Ultimately, retention programs help students realize their own ability, foster the capital that they bring to colleges and universities, and provide the social and academic support needed for success (Cabrera et al., 1992).

Guiding Frameworks

In this study, I explore the ways institutional leaders move forward after experiencing the defunding of their college federal TRIO programs. In essence, the institutional leaders have a sudden reduction in financial resources to serve TRIO's target population; however, the population's needs remain. The Department of Education defunding the institution's federal TRIO program is a change in the environment that affects the institution's financial capacity to serve the target population. Therefore, it is important for me to examine this phenomenon with frameworks that address the environmental changes and the institutions' ability to manage and absorb the impact of such changes in the environment to continue their initiative to serve their TRIO eligible population adequately. To do so, I have chosen to use resource dependence theory and building organizational capacity as guiding frameworks for my inquiry. One key distinction between these two is resource dependence theory is a theoretical perspective and building organizational capacity is conceptual. Thus, resource dependence theory suggest causality while building organizational capacity provides an applicable framework for institutional leaders to use as they consider their capacity to fulfill a particular goal or mission.

Resource Dependence Theory

Resource dependence theory emerged in 1970s along with some other widely known organizational theories such as transactional cost economics, institutional theory, and agency theory (Davis & Cobb, 2010). All of which, excluding agency theory, were further developments of Thompson's (1967) work on organizations. As put by the theory's originators in their seminal piece, Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) spoke of the resource dependence perspective as a necessity for organizational survival within its environment. As originated by Katz and Khan (1966) the open systems approach to viewing organizations focused on interconnectedness. Resource dependence theory expanded the concept to include the environment as a part of an organization's system. This focus on the external environment is key to resource dependence theory, and its proponents argue that it is not sufficient to examine an organization's components and their relationship to each other without paying attention to its contextual environment. To explain the importance of an organization's environment for its survival, Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) noted:

> Problems arise not merely because organizations are dependent on their environment, but because this environment is not dependable. Environments can change, new organizations enter and exit, and the supply of resources becomes more or less scarce. When environments change, organizations face the prospect either of not surviving or changing their activities in response to these environmental factors… What happens in an organization is not only a function of the organization, its structure, its leadership, its procedures, or its goals. What happens is also a consequence of the environment and the particular contingencies and constraints deriving from the environment. (p. 3)

In addition, Pfeffer and Salancik posited that understanding organizational effectiveness, organizational environment, and organizational constraints is essential for developing a contextual perspective of the organization. An institution's contextual effectiveness speaks to the degree in which the organization is producing an acceptable good for its consumers, which makes this element an external assessment. Regarding environments, it is difficult to succinctly define an organization's environment. However, Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) stated that "organizational environments are not given realities; they are created through a process of attention and interpretation." (p. 13). Therefore, contextual environments constantly change as organizations dedicate resources to understand different aspects present in their larger environment. Lastly, contextual constraints are what limit the autonomy of those in power, resulting in the minimization of the effect of leadership beyond symbolic benefits. Although Pfeffer and Salancik are a bit cynical about leadership and leaders as actors, they acknowledge that leaders can work to change their environment, making it more suitable for an organization, and/or working to change an organization to fit the demands of the environment – both methods are efforts toward survival (Pfeffer & Salanick, 1978). Davis and Cobb (2010) notes that the core tenets of resource dependence theory are 1) social context is important, 2) organizations have strategies to enhance control in their pursuit of their interest, and 3) power is a determinant of internal and external organizational actions.

Social Context. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) explains that organizations are constantly working to maintain their existence which requires them to work with, react to, and change their environment as needed. However, social context influences the way an organization engages with its environment. Organizations encompass many people and complex structures. The people within organizations have collective interest and form coalitions based off their interest. This leads to demands on the organization that can be incompatible with demands from another group in the organization. When this happens, organizational leaders make decisions that favor a group's interest at the expense of another group's interest. However, interests are not always competing, and when interest are compatible a decision to support a group's interest consequently fulfills the need of another group. In addition to individual and collective interests, the organization's boundaries impact its social context. These competing interest and the environment create organizational constraints, which often influence organizational behavior with little regard to who is in management (Pfeffer & Salanick, 1978; Powell & Rey, 2015). Pfeffer and Salancik note that organization and their environments are always in flux and descriptions are only snapshots of a moment in time. Therefore, the social contexts for organizations are also in constant flux.

Managing Dependence. In essence, in order for organizations to decrease their vulnerability to a reduction in a resource they must actively position themselves in such a way to secure their vitality even in the absence of said resource. Organizations have a few ways in which they can manage their level of dependence on a resource. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) provide five ways in which organizations can manage their dependence on resources: 1) mergers, 2) joint ventures, 3) board of directors, 4) political actions, and 5) executive successions (Pfeffer & Salanick, 1978). Hearn (2003) adds that institutions of higher education have multiples ways to reduce their dependency including but not limited to auxiliary enterprise, fundraising and development, and financial decision-making and management. Organizational growth, especially if they become too large to fail, is another way to reduce dependency (Davis & Cobb, 2010). Furthermore, Bess and Dee (2007) posit that organizations can manage their dependency by: 1) reducing their dependency through the diversification of suppliers and consumers; 2) establishing external linkages to build partnerships, joint programs, and formal policies that link organizational functioning; and 3) through the enactment of a new environment through lobbying, marketing, merging, and coalition formation. However, Balderston (1995) and Harris (2002) cautions organizational leaders not to lose their missions while engaging in tactics to reduce dependency.

Power Dynamics. David and Cobb (2010) calls the power element of resource dependence theory a hallmark, asserting that it distinguishes the theory from others. Understanding the power an organization has within and on its environment is important for organizational leaders as they attempt to manage strategically. The power element is pervasive throughout the other elements, as power shapes the social context and an organization's ability to manage their dependence on others. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) note that power is the determining factors of what happens within and to an organization; and resource importance, discretion over resource allocation and use, and the concentration of resource control composes an organizations power and ultimately their dependence. Consequently, organizations are constantly seeking to decrease the power that other organizations have over them, which also increase the amount of power they have themselves (Hillman, Withers, & Collins, 2009).

In this study I use resource dependence theory to frame my inquiry. Though this theory predicts and describes consumer behavior, it has wide applicability that goes beyond consumer and producer relationships found in the business sector. The context of higher education is different and thus it is important for knowledge creators and users to be cognizant of these differences when assessing the theory's applicability. However, inherent uncertainty concerning funding for federal TRIO programs and institutional projects make resource dependence theory a fitting perspective for my study. Furthermore, although resource dependency has a wide range of applicability, Tolbert (1985) suggests that resource dependence theory is particularly helpful in examining administrative patterns in public and private institutions of higher education. However, resources alone are not sufficient to maintain an initiative or the pursuit to the fulfillment of an institutional mission. Therefore, I use an additional framework, building organizational capacity, to situate my inquiry.

Building Organizational Capacity

Few organizational change and strategic management frameworks focus specifically on institutions of higher education, most such frameworks focus on non-profit and corporate organizations. Although these three organizational types – corporations, non-profit organizations, and institutions of higher education – have similarities, their differences call for approaches to management and change that are unique to their distinct characteristics (Toma, 2010). Toma's (2010) building organizational capacity framework is not a theory, instead it is an applicable framework that provides institutional leaders with the understanding of the elements needed to support their initiatives – he explains:

> There are various strategic-management frameworks, such as BOC, across these traditions. As mentioned previously, organizational capacity is the administrative foundation within an institution that is essential to establishing and sustaining the initiatives – and ultimately the change, and even the transformation – embodied in its vision. What enables organizational capacity is the application of an appropriate strategic management framework by leaders and senior managers, providing them with a checklist to apply with respect to planning and implementation (p. 20).

Building organizational capacity framework builds upon the prospective and descriptive traditional schools in strategic management to address the specific needs of institutions of higher education and their leaders. In the building organizational capacity framework, Toma included eight elements that he argues are essential for strategic management in higher education: purpose, structure, governance, policies, processes, information, infrastructure, and culture. Some of the elements that comprised building organizational capacity are also in other strategic management frameworks. However, Toma (2010) argues that even complex frameworks designed without the thought of higher education do not adequately provide guidance for leaders of institutions of higher education.

However, knowing all of the elements or components of an institution is not, within itself, sufficient to address the complex issues that an institution may face adequately. Therefore, in addition to the inclusion of the specific elements mentioned above, building organizational capacity also calls for systems thinking which "… considers groups of variables simultaneously in order to study their effects, focusing on the nonlinear interactions between and among them" (Toma, 2010, p. 26). In essence, this means that all of the elements within the framework are interconnected and nothing within an institution happens in isolation. In addition to interconnectedness of institutional elements, building organizational capacity stresses the importance of purpose and positions it as the most centered of all institutional elements.

Building organizational capacity uses a practical approach to assess an institution's capacity to fulfill a purpose with a model that include elements that are particularly important in higher education. Federal TRIO programs have clearly defined purposes which institutions attempt to fulfill when they apply for TRIO funding, which makes building organizational capacity a fitting framework for this study. Similarly to how Powell and Rey (2015) used resource dependence theory to explore the organizational capacity of institutions, I will use building organizational capacity as a complimentary conceptual framework to resource dependence theory as I examine institutions who have experienced a defunding.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

The Department of Education defunds an existing TRIO program in grant competitions for a myriad of reasons – some more substantive than others – and institutional leaders must decide how to move forward without the external funding. In these situations, institutional leaders are at minimum marginally aware of the needs of first-generation and low-income college students, but no longer have access to the $1.1 million they once had to mitigate some of the oppressive obstacles, or educational debts, that are ever-present for the TRIO eligible population. The purpose of my study is to examine the aftermath of defunded federal TRIO programs on their college campuses. Drawing on resource dependence theory and building organizational capacity frameworks, I will explore the following research questions:

1. Prior to the Department of Education defunding the granted project, what was the scope of the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement program or Student Support Services program on campus?
2. How have institutional leaders changed identity-based services that were available to their federal TRIO program participants prior to the Department of Education defunding their granted project?

3. How do institutional leaders perceive their institution's organizational capacity to provide targeted services for TRIO eligible students without continued federal TRIO funding?

In this chapter, I describe how I examined the aforementioned research questions. I also detail my research design, sample selection criteria, data collection methods, and data analysis strategy. In addition, I explain the steps that I took to ensure my study was valid and reliable. Lastly, I conclude this section by disclosing and discussing my biases as a researcher and the assumptions that I have in regard to this study.

Design of the Study

Essentially, in this study I sought to gain an understanding of a phenomenon. Therefore, the philosophical perspective that guided my exploration was constructivism, or interpretivism. Within this perspective, the researcher seeks to understand the lived experiences of others, acknowledging that individuals make sense of their experiences with a schema that comprises past social interactions, history, and culture (Creswell, 2014). In philosophical alignment with constructivism, I chose to employ a qualitative approach for my inquiry. As noted by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), there are four key characteristics of qualitative research: a focus on meaning and understanding, utilization of the researcher as the primary instrument, an inductive process, and provision of rich and descriptive data. These elements were necessary for me to answer my research questions adequately.

For this study, I chose a common qualitative design – case study – because I examined a bounded system closely. As stated by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "the other types of qualitative research – such as ethnography, phenomenology, narrative, and so on – are defined by the focus of the study, not the unit of analysis" (p. 39). There are multiple explanations of what composes case study design, but for the purpose of this study I modeled my exploration on the "twofold" definition Yin (2014) provides:

1. A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident….
2. A case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (pp. 16-17)

College campuses are clearly defined bounded systems in which there are more variables than data points, and as a result, they are an ideal site for case study research. For this project, I used institutions of higher education as cases and I studied two of them in detail, making this a multi-case study design. I chose the multi-case study design in order to provide an opportunity for theoretical replication, in which I identified and selected cases that were different to contrast their findings, which ultimately increased the level of trustworthiness for my study (Yin, 2014).

Case Selection

In case study research, case study selection is a two-tiered process. The first tier is the selection of the bounded system, the case; and the second tier is the selection of the people, activities, and documents to be included in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In addition, tier one has two phases: narrowing down possible cases, then purposefully choosing the ideal cases to be studied (Yin, 2014). For this study, I used institutions of higher education for my cases in my tier one of selection and college federal TRIO program's accessible and relevant sources of data for tier two of selection. I have detailed my pathway to case selection below.

Tier One of Case Selection

For this study, I used the institution of higher education as my bounded systems. To identify the potential cases of interest that would be useful in answering my research questions, I identified the institutions that had college federal TRIO programs who the Department of Education defunded in their last grant cycles. There are two college federal TRIO programs: The Student Support Services program and the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement program. The Department of Education defunded approximately 90 Student Support Services programs in the 2015 grant competition and 50 Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement program in the 2012 grant cycle.

The number of potential cases was relatively large after identifying the institutions who the Department of Education defunded, and therefore I employed a two-phase approach to selecting my cases, as explained by Yin (2014). In this approach, one must create a criterion to reduce the number of potential cases (phase one) than select from a smaller pool of cases based on characteristics of the cases that will make it ideal to study (phase two). For the first phase, I identified institutions in which the Department of Education defunded both their Ronald E. McNair and Student Support Services programs in the 2012 and 2015 grant competitions, respectfully. This resulted in four potential cases with diverse institutional characteristics. Selecting institutions that experienced defunding for both college federal TRIO programs allowed me to conduct research at sites in which students had access to multiple services and programs that centered first-generation college students and students from low-income households. In addition, these college federal TRIO programs often work in tandem, especially on campuses where Student Support Services functions as a feeder program for McNair, so changes in shared services, spaces, and processes have the potential to be more pronounced. I gained access to one of the four institutions.

For the second phase, I used the maximum variance selection technique, as described by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), and selected two cases that were very different. As a result of gaining access to only one institution that met my initial criteria, I requested and gain access to an institution that experienced a defunding and refunding of a program. My second institution also had the other college TRIO program on their campus. The differences in the institutions' history of defunding and institutional characteristics allowed me to search for themes that are pervasive throughout both of my cases and themes that are not. These institutions differ in their sector, Carnegie classification, and minority servicing institution designation. In addition, these institutions have very different enrollments, retention and graduation rates, Pell grant recipient percentages, and university endowments. In order to provide confidentiality for participants and the institution's namesake, I use the pseudonyms Palmer University for my first case site and Donahue University for my second case site.

Case Study Sites

Palmer University

My first case study site is Palmer University. This institution is a medium-size, public, master's institution in the Southeastern region of the United States. Palmer University, or PU, is located in a midsize city and has graduation and retention rates lower than the national averages. PU is a historically black university and black students comprise a great majority of the student population. In addition, more than 70% of students at Palmer University receive the Pell grant, which indicates a substantial amount of PU students are in the TRIO target population, in terms of household income. I discuss Palmer University in greater detail in chapter four, its case study report.

Donahue University

My second case study site is Donahue University. This institution is a large, public, doctoral research institution in the Southeastern region of the United States. Donahue University, or DU, is located in a rural town and has graduation and retention rates slightly lower than the national averages. Historically, DU was an institution that only accepted White students, but it is currently designated as a predominately white institution and its enrollment is comprised of over 30% students of color. In addition, more than 65% of students were not Pell grant recipients, indicating that the average student would not qualify for TRIO programs, based on household income alone. Similar to Palmer University, I discuss Donahue University in more details in its case study report, chapter five.

Data Collection

For my second tier of selection, I identified the data I would collect and the sources I would use for collection. I chose to collect data from archival records, interviews, and documents. This multiple source approach, or source triangulation, allowed me to obtain a holistic view of my case from various perspectives. In addition, triangulation also increased the trustworthiness of my study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). I provide more details about my data in this section.

I have operationalized archival records for this study as information that the Department of Education stored and made available to me through the Freedom of Information Act. These documents include the institutions' grant proposals – I obtained their 2012 grant proposals for the McNair program and 2015 proposals for the Student Support Services program. Though I requested it, the Department of Education did not grant me access to the grant readers' assessment of the institutions' proposals, a report of the institutions' final scores for their proposals, and the institutions' defunding letters. However, the proposals obtained availed the institutional plan to serve the population through the grant programs. In essence, the archival records provided insight into the needs, objectives, and resources of the institutions at the time of their defunding.

In addition to reviewing archival records, I also conducted interviews. These interviews were semi-structured and varied in content slightly from individual to individual. My interviews were face-to-face with key actors in the defunding process and/or management of the college federal TRIO programs on their campus. TRIO programs often operate in isolation from other institutional offices (Wallace et al., 2004), and therefore there are few people on campus who are able to speak to the inner workings of these programs. I was able to secure five interviews at each case sites with people who worked for a defunded program, work for a current TRIO funded program, and/or people that had a form of supervisory responsibility of the TRIO programs on their campus. These interviews allowed me to understand the realities of what occurred during and after the defunding period based on various lived experiences and ways of making sense of the situation.

Given the specificity of my project, federal TRIO programs and services for TRIO's target population, speaking with those who were knowledgeable about the specific programs and services on their campuses was an invaluable data source. These interviews afforded me the opportunity to engage in more nuanced conversations with my participants. Though I was only able to secure ten interviews in total, coupled with my other data sources, I was able to reach the point of saturation. The interviews provided context to the archival records regarding the functioning of the TRIO programs, and they also assisted me in selecting documents to collect and analyze.

Lastly, I analyzed institutional documents that were relevant to my inquiry. Therefore, I reviewed institutional missions, strategic plans, and websites. As anticipated, the availability of data through this source slightly different from case to case. Ultimately, this data type provided a contextual richness to my case data and case descriptions. Also, my document analysis helped me further understand the way in which my cases operated. Collectively, all three sources – archival records, interviews and documents – provided a triangulation of my data. This resulted in my data being rich enough to observe the convergence of data, identify themes, and make conclusions in relation to my research questions. I have provided a chart below to succinctly disclose the data I included in my analysis.

Table 2. Inventory of Data Types and Sources for Case Studies

Inventory of Data Types and Sources for Case Studies		
Data Type	Palmer University	Donahue University
Archival Records	• Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement program grant application (2012) • Student Support Services program grant application (2015)	• Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement program grant application (2012) • Student Support Services program grant application (2015)
Interviews	• Provost & Senior Vice President, Academic Affairs • Associate Vice President, Academic Affairs • Faculty, Physics Department • Interim Executive Director, Academic Success Institute • Interim Director, TRIO Office	• Vice President, Enrollment Management • Vice President, Student Affairs • Director, Multicultural Office • Assistant Director, McNair Program • Coordinator, Student Support Services
Documents	• Freshmen Institute (2015) • Freshmen institute (2018) • Mentoring Program (2015) • Mission Statement (2015) • Mission Statement (2018) • Organization Chart (2015) • Organization Chart (2018) • Pres. Letter to Students	• Academic Enhancement (2012) • Academic Enhancement (2018) • McNair Program (2012) • McNair Program (2018) • Mission Statement (2012) • Mission Statement (2018) • Multicultural Office (2012) • Multicultural Office (2018)

	(2015) • Pres. Letter to Students (2018) • Student Support Services (2015) • Student Support Services (2018) • TRIO Office (2015) • TRIO Office (2018) • Tutorial Services (2015) • Tutorial Services (2018)	• Organizational Chart (2012) • Organizational Chart (2018) • Strategic Plan (2012) • Strategic Plan (2018) • Student Affairs and Enrollment Management Division Mission Statement (2011) • TRIO Office (2012) • TRIO Office (2018)

Data Analysis

Analytical Strategy

I designed my study with my conceptual framework in mind and I explored if there were elements of my framework observed in my data. Although I gathered data and analyzed it both within and outside of the confines of my theoretical framework, I considered my project mostly inductive in nature. Following the suggestions of Merriam and Tisdell (2016) regarding qualitative case study data collection and analysis, I started the foundational pieces of axial coding at the onset of data collection. This included coding the archival records, interview transcripts, documents, and memos with shorthand, as they were collected. As I collected and coded the data, I added it to a comprehensive database. From the axial coding, I identified commonalities between codes and created categories. After I reached the point of saturation with data from my cases, I identified themes that were useful in explaining the phenomenon. Upon completion of thematic descriptions, I created my case reports, chapters four and five, detailing my data analysis.

As I collected my data, I uploaded and managed it in a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, more specifically, NVivo. As explained by Yin (2014), this software assisted me in retrieving coded text and run reports on the occurrences of words and themes throughout my data. As discussed, I acquired archival records, conducted interviews, and collected documents – all of which were text-based data – and I added them and my field notes to the software. However, NVivo's capacity to analyze data is very limited, and as the researcher, I used empirical thinking and reasoning to create codes, identify themes, and construct conclusions.

Analytical Technique

Multiple techniques are available to case study researchers. To explore applicability and explanatory power instead of testing a theory, I used a the theoretical framework to develop a semi-structured interview protocol and employed the constant comparative method, developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), to analyze the data in my study. I used deductive reasoning to develop my interview protocol and initial codes; however, I made room for and anticipated the emergence of additional codes as I collected data. Therefore, my analytical technique contained both deductive and inductive elements.

In addition, I chose to also employ what Yin (2014) refers to as a cross-case synthesis. This technique called for me to analyze my cases individually, and then examine similarities and differences of the cases in comparison to each other. I purposefully selected case sites that had different institutional characteristics to produce a theoretical replication that allowed me to examine my cases in such a way.

Therefore, after I completed my case reports independently of each other, I then created my discussion chapter which juxtaposed the cases to each other in relation to my research questions. Using the cross-case synthesis allowed me to examine each case deeply and draw comparative and comprehensive conclusions.

Trustworthiness

In this dissertation, I aimed to demonstrate mastery in the application of knowledge that I have acquired throughout my doctoral program and add to the body of literature in my field. However, in order to accomplish the aforementioned, I had to conduct my research ethically and address issues of validity and reliability. In this section I discuss limitations of my study and measures I took to mitigate them. Ultimately, my focus on reliability and validity helped to increase the level of trustworthiness for my project and conclusions. Although there is some overlap in the way I planned to mitigate issues concerning the two, I have addressed reliability and validity separately below.

Limitations

Throughout the design and implementation of this study, I incorporated components within the study to provide a strong sense of trustworthiness as it relates to my findings and conclusions. However, every study has limitations and this one does as well. One limitation of this study is the propensity for TRIO programs to be isolated on college campuses. Therefore, few campus faculty and staff members have a depth of knowledge in regard to the programs, their goals, and how they function. In addition, this study focuses on events that happened between three and six years ago which may have an impact on individual's recall in regard to processes, events, and decisions made. Lastly, changes in campus personnel and leadership is a limitation, especially for Donahue University.

Reliability

When referring to reliability, I am referring to the non-probabilistic likelihood that another researcher could draw similar conclusion based on the data that I collected for my study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Unlike in scientific or experimental research, qualitative researchers do not control environments and therefore do not expect replicated research designs to yield the same results. However, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) notes that reliability in qualitative research signifies that if another researcher were to evaluate the data collected they would reach a similar analysis. In order to create reliability in this project I engaged in member checking with participants to ensure my synthesis spoke to what they disclosed. In addition, I created memos throughout my data collection and analysis, which detailed my thoughts and decision throughout the research process. Both of these techniques gave me more confidence that my analysis is logical and my conclusions are reasonable.

Validity

Qualitative researchers attend to issues of validity to ensure their research consumers that the data collected is an accurate depiction of the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In order to establish validity in this study, I gathered data from multiple sources. By conducting interviews with those currently and previously involved with the TRIO programs at different hierarchical levels, I collected data from multiple perspectives which triangulates my data. In addition to interviews, I also reviewed document and archival records, which provided a triangulation of my data sources.

Research Bias and Assumptions

I sought to establish a strong ethical foundation to this research project. I designed and presented my research proposal to my dissertation committee as well as the University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board before I begin data collection. In addition, I engaged in research reflectivity. Therefore, I understand that both the participants and I change during this research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Dealing with defunding may be hard on those who were and are involved. I was careful to recognize this throughout the process and express sensitivity and empathy. Lastly, I recognized that I have a connection to TRIO – such connections can influence researchers in their design, implementation, and conclusions, if unchecked. Therefore, I was intentional in minimizing inappropriate influences.

Researcher Bias

I have been a member of the TRIO community for approximately nine years and I have seen college federal TRIO programs from multiple perspectives. I was a McNair scholar in academic year 2009-2010, and then worked as a student facilitator for the program until 2012. I rejoined the TRIO community as a TRIO professional in 2016 when I entered into the role of assistant director for TRIO Student Support Services at Georgia Southern University. Lastly, I wrote a proposal for and obtained the Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program at Georgia Southern University.

As a scholar, student worker, professional, and grant writer for college federal TRIO programs, I have great insight into the inner-workings of these programs, professionals who operate them, and university leadership who host them. This insight is useful in qualitative research; however, when unchecked great insight can create biased conclusion and ignored alternative reasoning. I am aware of this bias, and I gave keen attention to it throughout my inquiry, coding, and conclusions.

Assumptions

Although I will take caution to attend to my biases, there are some assumptions that underline the project. In this research project, I assume that institutional leaders were aware of TRIO programs' services and the needs of the target population at their institution. Depending on the hierarchical level, some institutional leaders can be disconnected and not be fully aware of the impact that defunding can have on the students involved in the TRIO programs. In addition, I assume that institutional leaders are forthcoming with information and recall key events and decisions concerning the defunding of their TRIO program.

CHAPTER 4

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES AT PALMER UNIVERSITY

I begin this chapter with a description of the context of Palmer University, a pseudonym that I assigned to my first case site for this study. After the general description of the institution, I discuss the context of Palmer University in regard to federal TRIO programs and with specific regard to the Student Support Services program. Lastly, I provide my case analysis of Palmer University and disclose the themes that emerged from the data through my analysis.

Institutional Context

Palmer University is a public, 1890 land-grant institution of higher education that is located in the Southeastern United States. In reference to its Carnegie classification, PU is within the master's colleges and universities grouping and has a student-to-faculty ratio of 18:1. An agricultural and mechanical university, PU has an undergraduate enrollment of less than 6,000 students and is a minority serving institution with an HBCU – Historically Black Colleges and Universities – designation. As a residential undergraduate institution with such a designation, full-time students, Black or African American students, and students under the age of twenty-five comprised over 90% of undergraduate enrollment at Palmer University.

In fall of 2017, Palmer University admitted 90% of the students that applied and less than 20% enrolled. Of those who attended, more than 75% of PU students enrolled with an ACT composite score of less than 20. In the 2016-2017 academic year, more than 90% of PU students received financial aid and more than 70% received the Pell grant – a need-based award from the federal government. Overall, the campus is comprised of over 50% female students and less than 20% of undergraduate students are engaged in on-line learning. Lastly, regarding academic persistence and completion, the institution has first-year retention rates below 60% and six-year graduation rates below 25%.

Palmer University's mission has undergone relevant changes since the defunding of Student Support Services in 2015. In the spring of 2015, the institution's mission statement spoke to serving students who are "qualified and capable" with offerings of various degree types in different fields of study. However, the 2018 version of the mission statement does not mention qualified or capable students at all. Instead, in the mission statement's first sentence there is a commitment to "access and opportunity." In addition, the institutional leaders added a vision statement to the 2018 document, which includes their aspirations to become "… the premiere land-grant institution of choice for students…" and be recognized for globally competitive students. In contrast, the institutional leaders referred to Palmer University as an established "center of excellence" in the 2015 version of their mission.

According to Palmer University's strategic plans for 2008-2015 and 2015-2025, institutional leaders were conscious of their need to increase their support for students and increase the number of students who are academically prepared for college. As written in the 2008-2015 strategic plan, developing "a national model for meeting the needs of students who are not academically prepared when they begin their matriculation in institutions of higher learning" was listed as an opportunity for the institution. In the 2015-2025 strategic plan, the institutional leaders prioritized their effort to "recruit, enroll, and retain an academically well-prepared and diverse student body." Both statements spoke to the institutions awareness of the challenges they were facing in regard to student academic success.

Palmer University has a rich history of serving students from minoritized households. As a land-grant institution it has an obligation to its state, and as a historically black university it has a socially responsibility to meet the needs of the Black or African American students it serves. One of the ways that PU has provided services for both of these populations is through its TRIO programs. In the section below, I provide greater detail about the context of federal TRIO programs at Palmer University, with special regard to their Student Support Services program.

TRIO at Palmer University

Palmer University personnel have offered federal TRIO programs on its campus for multiple decades. However, the Department of Education defunded their Ronald E. McNair program during the 2012 competition and the Student Support Services program in the 2015 competition. Prior to its defunding, the Ronald E. McNair program was located within an academic department and it served more than 25 students annually. The Student Support Services program was situated within a centralized TRIO office, along with the Upward Bound program, and served 212 students annually with an operating budget of less than $1,500 per participant. Given the isolated nature of the

McNair program, my data collection and analysis focus primarily on the Student Support Services program at Palmer University. Below, in Table 3, I list the college and pre-college TRIO programs that were hosted at Palmer University during each defunding of the college programs and during my case site visit. Note that the TRIO fiscal years represent funding as of the fall. Therefore, the 2012 defunding of the McNair program and 2015 defunding of the Student Support Services program are reflected in the fall of the aforementioned years.

Table 3. TRIO Program Inventory at Palmer University from 2012 - 2018

TRIO Program inventory at Palmer University			
TRIO Program	Fiscal Year 2012	Fiscal Year 2015	Fiscal Year 2018
Educational Opportunity Centers			
Ronald E. McNair			
Student Support Services	✓		
Talent Search			
Upward Bound	✓	✓	✓
Upward Bound Math-Science			
Veterans Upward Bound			

The Student Support Services program served a role for Palmer University that addressed a specific need of the institution. Within the grant application for renewal of the program, the application mentioned that Palmer University had experienced an influx of students who did not meet the academic profile necessary to successfully complete their collegiate curriculum. However, the institution admitted these students as a way to increase enrollment which was in a downward trajectory. Thus, this institution had a desire to secure continued funding for the Student Support Services program to fill this gap. According to the 2015 SSS application:

> Palmer University has an overwhelming majority of newly enrolled eligible students…. The eligible students arrive at the institution hopeful for an opportunity to attend and graduate from the university. Unfortunately, many of these enrolled students arrive onto campus underprepared for the academic rigors required in postsecondary education…. The university is currently unprepared and ill equipped for the magnitude of homeless/displaced, socially inapt, mentally unstable, emotionally detached, and academically underprepared students. TRIO Student Support Services will bring added value to the university's drive and sincere desire to increase the institution's retention and graduation rates by providing supportive services and activities to its eligible and selected students.

In addition to the individual services the program provided, Student Support Services at Palmer University also provided a support system for their program participants. The staff of the Student Support Services program maintained a good rapport with students and supported them academically, socially, and in their extra- and co-curricular involvement. Therefore, students were able to visit the Student Support Services office and receive guidance regarding multiple components of their identity as a student at Palmer University. In an interview with the director of the academic success institute, who served as the previous director of the TRIO Office, she stated:

> But really and truly, you know, Student Support Services was kind of a one stop shop because we helped them on all of those fronts. If they ran into problems with financial aid, we helped with that, you know. If they needed tutoring, we

> helped with that, counseling, all of the services that they needed. They didn't get the run around. They didn't have to go to all these different places. They knew they could come to one central location, and not only would we help them, we would also support them in other things they did. If they were active in other organizations and activities, then we would try to go and support them and those activities. So, we really became that extended family in a way, with boundaries, but they knew we really cared about them and we were investing in their success.

In their 2015 application to continue their Student Support Services program, the proposal outlined three objectives of the program. The objectives focused on the target population's persistence, good academic standing, and graduation rates. Though the wording of the objectives were standardized by the Department of Education, institutional leaders were instructed to set ambitious yet attainable objectives for their individual projects. Therefore, it is contextually relevant to note that Palmer University found the following both ambitious and attainable:

> Seventy five percent (75%) of all participants served by the SSS project will persist from one academic year to the beginning of the next academic year or will have earned a bachelor's degree at the grantee institution during the academic year…. Seventy five percent (75%) of all enrolled SSS participants being served will meet the performance level required to stay in good academic standing at the grantee institution…. Forty percent (40%) of new participants

served each year will graduate from the grantee institution with a bachelor’s degree or equivalent within six years.

After the Department of Education defunded the Student Support Services program at Palmer University, the institution did not formally continue services for first-generation college students or students who come from low-income households. The TRIO Office’s 2018 website acknowledges that the Student Support Services program is no longer in existence at Palmer University and it does not direct interested students to any additional offices for similar services or community. In my interview with the director of the academic success institute, she mentioned that she is not aware of any offices that are targeting the TRIO eligible population. A faculty member in the physics department shared that the institution does not have an office or program dedicated to the specific population and offers that it may be for good reason, such as stigma that may be associated with it and the large number of students who would qualify may make it overwhelming. She stated:

> In my personal opinion, I don't think anybody would like to be classified as low-income and go to an office like that as a student. I'm sure they'd know they'd like to get the benefits but at the same time, you know, they don't like to be classified in those kinds of categories. So that is the reason. Like I don't think the university has anything set aside, I don't think they are even thinking of having an office or something like that…

Although the Student Support Services program was not formally continued after the Department of Education defunded the project at Palmer University, elements of the program continued beyond the funding period. Most notably, the director of the TRIO Office was retained in that role for two years before becoming the director of the academic success institute. This innately created a sense of continuity for program participants and the university community. In addition, when she took on a new leadership role at the institution in 2017, she recruited some of her former staff members to aid in academic success work. This created an opportunity for some of their former students to stay connected with the personnel they worked with in previous years.

The director of the academic success institute also mentioned how attached some students were to the success of the program and the program's staff. In our interview she mentioned that students wanted to stay connected after the Department of Education defunded the program. Furthermore, she discussed how the institution and more specifically, her team, was impacted due to defunding. She stated, "… even though we only served 212 [students], it left a void. It left a void because we really hurt. I would say personally, our hearts ached for it because we knew how much the students needed that additional support."

Palmer University has hosted TRIO programs for decades, and as a result, the TRIO programs were integrated in the institution's mechanism for outreach, retention, and success. However, they were defunded for their college program – Student Support Services – and had to find a way forward in its stead. During my visit at Palmer University I collected data from some key professionals who had recollection of the

Student Support Services program at Palmer University. Themes emerged from this data and I discussed them in the next section.

Emergent Themes

Throughout my data collection and analysis for Palmer University, I noticed three themes that emerged. These themes spoke to the institutional context, culture, and actions in general, and are key in understanding how institutional leaders faced the realities of defunding at Palmer University. I decided to name the themes using the exact words of participants to bring the voices of my participants forward during my analysis and description of their campus. I have detailed the three emergent themes below.

"Limited Resource Institution"

The first reoccurring theme that emerged was Palmer University's identity as an institution with limited resources. This was said directly in some situations and was also implied in others. While referring to the services that some institutions put into retention efforts and programs, the provost mentioned that, "it is much, much greater than a limited resource institution can invest." Most notably, the institution was limited in resources with regard to data and finances. While discussing her attempt to challenge the decision of the Department of Education to defund the Student Support Services program at Palmer University, the director of the academic success institute noted that it was a challenge to get the data they needed. She stated:

> The COO at the time, to the president, was supposed to be the point person. And so we had to, me and my boss, were told to go through the readers' comments

> and everything, and we did find some areas to challenge. I was even docked on operating more than one TRIO program when that was something you were able to do. So, we found a couple of areas…. It was one area, some data, a deficiency that they noted. Well, at the time the person who was over our institutional research, I had the hardest time trying to get some of the data that I needed…. I had been back and forth trying to get that information. So we couldn't do anything about that… Well, in the midst of trying to get all that done, the COO got in trouble. And when all that mess started to happen, it just kind of crumbled.

Ultimately, she was not able to get the data that she needed to combat the defunding of Palmer University’s program. However, in addition to the lack of data access, particularly for the purpose of defending their grant proposal, she also mentioned that she does not have access to the data to determine if her students identify as first-generation college students or students who come from low-income households in the academic success institute that she currently manages at Palmer University.

Beyond access to data for the purpose of writing a grant or providing more tailored services to students in the academic success institute, Palmer University is limited by the inadequate sharing of data to the campus community and robust usage of data by campus personnel. For example, the last factbook published on Palmer University’s institutional research webpage is from 2014. Furthermore, the institutional leaders have acquired a new relationship with Noel Levitz for consultation on predictive analytics, which also serves as an example of the limitations they currently have in regard to data usage. While referencing their new relationship with Noel Levitz, the provost said:

> We're working with, with one of their primary consultants and we have contracted with them too. Essentially, they're going to provide us the data analytics and the consultant is kind of helping us to work through using the data indicators and how we should alter, change, or tweak our strategy relative to retention and persistence.

In addition to data access and usage limitations, Palmer University also has limited financial resources. In regard to the defunding of the TRIO program, this would make it particularly difficult for the institution to continue to provide the services necessary to serve the target population. One example of the institution's need for financial stability is found in its strategic plan. In Palmer University's strategic plan institutional leaders included "secure the university's financial future" as one of the strategic priorities for the next decade. In addition, both the director of the academic success institute and the provost spoke about the limited resources of the institution and what could be done in regard to student success if the financial void were to be filled. The director of the academic success institute mentioned, "I think the deficiencies we have fall in that financial gap of, you know, the number of students that need the services, you know, countered with the available means to do so at this time." in addition, the provost explained:

> Another confounding variable in this process is the amount of money, let's say State University or Southern Institute (pseudonyms) can put into retention or

> programmatic efforts that are at the dormitory level or at the lab level, where you've got your writing centers, where you have your math opportunities, it is much, much greater than a limited resource institution can invest. So obviously their outcomes in some cases may be better than ours, but we think holistically, you know, if we took the same kind of students, apples to apples, oranges to oranges, we perform much better, at a much better rate.

This quote is indicative of the financial limitations that Palmer University faces. Furthermore, it disclosed that Palmer University did not have strategic retention efforts within the residence halls or writing centers available to students due to financial restraints. Also, in regard to finances, Palmer University is missioned to provide opportunities, however providing opportunities is not always advantageous in term of securing funding. While comparing Palmer University with better resourced institutions he said:

> But we can't get caught up in the game of comparing ourselves to them. Even if it causes us to suffer in terms of our outcomes because our mission is different and we have to perform that mission regardless of state and or federal law -- we've [gesturing to me] been on the opposite side of the state and federal law many times because it was not enough and it was oppositional to us, same thing in higher education. We're not going to not grant access and opportunity to children because the state or the federal government is going to penalize us if they don't perform at the level that they need them to perform. We got to give them a chance -- otherwise there's no chance

Beyond institutional resources, the finances of the students are also a concern. Most of the students at Palmer University receive need-based aid, so there is a level of price sensitivity that is noticeable even in the institution's communications. In the 2015 letter to students, the president spoke to the sensitivity they have in regard to the price of higher education. The letter states:

> In fall 2013, Palmer University was the only public institution in our state that did not increase tuition and mandatory fees – compared to the average statewide increase of 6%. Additionally, in fall 2013, the university implemented a flat rate tuition plan, allowing students to take additional credit hours at no additional cost. Students can now take between 12 and 18 credit hours and pay the same amount. These measures were designed to provide relief to students, and they have been extremely successful… At Palmer University, we are committed to putting our students first, and to providing high quality, affordable education. We recognize our students have a choice of which institution to attend, and we are grateful that you have chosen to be a part of ours.

The provost also spoke the financial obstacles that the students at Palmer University face. He stated, "the primary problem is financial – increasing costs of higher education and Pell has not increased at the same rate. So, we have anywhere from 72 to 76 percent of students, any given year, that are Pell eligible."

Palmer University is a limited resource institution and most of its students have a substantial amount of financial need. This can be challenging to navigate, especially when making decisions that will require financial resources to make a noticeable impact.

However, Palmer University's campus community has continued to serve this population in lieu of taking measures to deny their access to the institution, largely because of who they are as an Institution. I described this in the next theme.

"It Is Called Palmer University, This Is Our Mission"

Palmer University has a strong connection to and identity with its mission, especially to the reason why they exist and who they are as an institution. Their purpose as an HBCU, agricultural and mechanical, and access institution was ever present in the interviews and my review of documents. The director of the academic success institute mentioned, their commitment to access and opportunity within our interview. In addition, the faculty member in the physics department also indicated that Palmer University focused on first-generation college students and students from low-income households as a product of who they are. When asked to explain services that the institution has for the target population, the provost responded:

> It is called Palmer University. This is our mission, it's our land grant access and opportunity mission; and given that we're an 1890 land grant, minority serving institution historically black college -- that's the core of what we do.

The director of the academic success institute expressed similar sentiments with the following comment. She said:

> As an HBCU, we offer students, especially low-income and first-generation students, the opportunity to gain access to the institution – and really some students who would not be able to go to some other institutions. So, I firmly believe that because of our enrollment practices, the university has an ongoing

> desire to serve this population of students when, you know, a large number of our students do fall into one of those categories. We do have a desire to be a premier institution that is devoted to serving them.

In addition to the purpose of Palmer University, who they are as an institution – in regard to their HBCU designation – plays into the institutional culture at the university. Based on the responses from interviewees, the faculty and staff are deeply invested in the success of the students. The current director of the TRIO Office and the faculty member in the physics department spoke about faculty and staff members who volunteer their time to make sure students are successful. The faculty member also mentioned that towards the end of the semester faculty members volunteer time to provide additional instruction for students. When asked why, she stated:

> They already had that kind of life before, so they understand it and that's why like, they go above and beyond their regular service duties…. they put their time to give out as extra instruction. And also, we give back in the financial aspects too. Yeah, so like, you know, most of the faculty members are encouraged to give like, you know, point zero five percent or one percent or 10 percent…. but anyways, we are requested to, you know, give back to the students so that one day these funds will be used for the students' success.

The institution's purpose and culture are essential to their ability to serve students and fulfill its mission by providing access and opportunity to its students. Though campus community members are engaged in the day-to-day realization of the mission, the push to serve students is also supported by the university’s president. The current director of the TRIO Office noted that its everyone’s job to make sure students are successful. She also noted that the president has echoed that in his instruction to the campus community. She said:

> The university as a whole takes in, takes on the responsibility of making sure that all the students have an opportunity for everyone. Retention wise, we're looking at that whole student once they come over to Palmer University, it's the responsibility for every department. I don't think there's a department here that does not, especially, we've been charged by our President to make sure that we are retaining these students once they come through our door. So, everything that we do here Is for that whole complete student, whether they are low-income, however they come here, how they come through the doors. We're trying to do what we can to retain them and to make sure that they have that great post-secondary experience.

In addition, the director of the academic success institute also mentioned the president’s support in regard to providing access and support services to students. She stated:

> I was so proud of our president, he recently had a faculty and staff meeting on retention, and he made the comment that, “you know, I've heard some people say, well, we just need to up the requirements as far as who we let in." And he said, “that's not what we're about.”

The mission of Palmer University is essential to the functioning of the institution. As noted above, institutional decisions are made in tandem with who the institution is and the people that it serves. Therefore, institutional leaders have to delicately balance their resources, as mentioned in the first theme, and what they are purposed to do within their state and community. The next theme ties the other two together, as it speaks to the way the institution has strategically dedicated sources to serve its students and mission.

“Whatever It Is That Can Be Done”

In addition to the informal continuity of services at Palmer University, institutional leaders shifted the university’s attention to developing a culture of holistic academic support for students enrolled at the institution between the defunding in 2015 and my site visit in 2018. In referring to the service the institution provides to its students, the current director of the TRIO Office said, “once you enter those doors, whatever it is that can be done and whatever it is that everybody can do, in their perspective places, that's what we do at Palmer University.” Though the defunding of the Student Support Services program may not have been a contributing factor that initiated the cascade of institutional changes, the changes were aligned with that of the Student Support Services program. The institutional leaders employed a concerted effort to ensure that students were provided services that increased their likelihood for a successful academic career at Palmer University. An increased focus on student support is evident in Palmer University’s strategic plan and the changes institutional leaders made to their mission statement, the structure of the campus' academic support unit, and the university's portfolio of academic interventions and spaces.

During the fall of 2015, after the defunding of the Student Support Services program, institutional leaders decided to restructure their academic support unit. Prior to the defunding, the unit was comprised of the TRIO Office, Honors Program, the Office of Retention and Persistence, and the Advising Center. However, after the defunding, the TRIO Office became a separate entity, two other units combined, and the Academic Success Institute was developed. The director of the academic success institute recalls:

> In 2015, the university made the decision that they were going to combine the Office of Retention and Persistence with Academic Advising. That was the first step and TRIO became a separate entity. And by I guess late 2015/early 2016, they decided to develop the Academic Success Institute and with the Academic Success Institute came under the umbrella of this consortium of support services…. the university was trying to specifically be designed to meet the needs of the incoming freshmen. So that's when they added service learning to it, and um, they brought in the tutorial program and Grades First, and all of that.

The former academic support unit focused on aiding students as they progressed from one class to the next and finally to "graduation and beyond." However, the new academic success institute, has a more narrowly defined mission that focuses on ensuring a "solid foundation in academic responsibility and college preparedness" of first-year students.

In addition to the change in the institution's mission and reporting structures in academic success units, Palmer University's institutional leaders have enhanced their efforts to provide academic interventions. The university's provost mentioned that serving the TRIO population is at the core of their mission as both a land-grant institution and HBCU. However, the provost mentioned that they have some new and additional academic interventions in place for students who may need them. The provost explained:

> We have extra intensive course instruction where we place students based on their sub scores on the ACT. We have more intrusive advisement practices in our academic success institute…. Uh, we have Grade First as an early alert system. Of course, we have some data analytics, a partnership with Noel Levitz to try to help us identify at-risk [students] and what are our best practices to employ to try to save them, to keep them or retain them and help them to persist.

The associate vice president for academic affairs described the intensive course instruction in our interview. She detailed:

> We've also started co-curricular classes for English, math and history. They are for-credit courses. And so, in addition to taking the English 101 for example, there is a supplemental instruction lab that is attached to that course, that is so students then have to participate in a structured lab experience…. The course combines what would be a developmental course and a regular course. So, that should save students some money and it means then they don't have to take the transitional course prior to taking the regular course, because they're combined.

In my interviews with faculty and staff members, each spoke about new initiatives to retain students. The professor from the physics department shared that the Grades First early alert system allowed students to know how they were doing in class before it's too late to turn their grades around. The associate vice president of academic affairs mentioned that the institution will launch a new summer bridge program this summer to provide proactive academic support to first-year students. In addition, the current director of the TRIO Office spoke highly of the mentoring program on campus that cultivates a culture of leadership and success. Furthermore, all but one interviewee talked about the use of predictive analytics, and the director of the academic success institute statement was a good summary of their sentiments. She said:

> One of the things they just implemented – and I think that is going to be the catalyst that will help us really get more traction on student services -- is that, predictive analytics. And so, that will be implemented in the spring. And so, having more information on our students and their needs will showcase, you know, the key areas that will prevent them or possibly prevent them from persisting… So to me it is more eye opening and that's the beauty of it, especially since the initiative was stored in the president's office – there is no way to overlook it or not understand the pressing needs of the incoming students. So, I'm excited about it. We may be behind the ball and other institutions have been using predictive analytics, but it's here now.

This theme – “Whatever It Is That Can Be Done” – is a central part of the operations of Palmer University. Although the institution did not formally replace the TRIO program with another program, the institution implemented other academic support systems and programs around the time of the defunding. As the director of the academic success institute noted, some other institutions of higher education have implemented such initiatives years ago, but they are at Palmer University now. This approach recognizes that the work has to get done and they are finally in a place to do it well.

CHAPTER 5

RONALD E. MCNAIR PROGRAM AT DONAHUE UNIVERSITY

In this chapter, I describe Donahue University, the pseudonym that I assigned to my second case study. This chapter mirrors the format of the previous chapter. After I detail the general descriptive information about Donahue University, I provide information about Donahue University's institutional context in regard to federal TRIO programs, with a keen attention on the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement program. Then, I discuss the themes that emerged from the data during my analysis.

Institutional Context

Donahue University (DU) is a regional, public institution of higher education that is located in the Southeastern region of the United States. The institution is classified as a doctoral university with high research activity, based on Carnegie's classification, and has a student-to-faculty ratio of 21:1. Located in a rural town, Donahue University is a residential campus with an undergraduate enrollment of over 17,000 students in the fall of 2017. Of those students, nearly 90% of them enrolled at DU with a full-time status and only 5% enrolled only in distance education. The institution's enrollment is made of over 60% of students who identify as White, 24% identify as Black or African American, and the third largest racial/ethnic group was Hispanic/Latino students which represented roughly 5% of enrollment.

In 2017, the institution accepted nearly 70% of students who applied and over 55% of those admitted students enrolled in the fall. In the same year, 75% of students enrolled with a 26 or lower on their composite ACT. At Donahue University, less than 35% of students are eligible for the Pell Grant (a need-based form of financial aid). In regard to academic success and achievement, 79% of first-year students return to the institution their second year and 50% of students graduate within six years of enrolling at the institution.

Donahue University has experienced a lot of changes within the last decade. The campus has had three installed presidents, two interim presidents, and multiple provosts and vice presidents during this time. In addition, the campus has undergone a consolidation with two other institutions which increased Donahue University's total student population by nearly a third. During the consolidation, one of the institution's largest divisions – the division of student affairs and enrollment management – divided into separate entities. Two alumni of the institution were selected to fill these positions. The vice president of student affairs worked at Donahue University for over 10 years, previously, but most recently worked at one of the institutions that merged with Donahue University. The vice president of enrollment management has worked continuously for Donahue, in different capacities, for over 10 years.

Between the defunding of the McNair program in 2012 and my campus visit in 2018, Donahue University has undergone changes in its mission statement. The former mission statement refers to teaching as being central to the institution's mission. The mission further explains the centrality of teaching by stating, "Donahue University faculty are teacher-scholars whose primary responsibility is the creation of learning experiences of the highest quality, informed by scholarly practice, research, and creative activities." Between 2012 and 2018, Donahue University shifted designations within the Carnegie Classification – they went from moderate (R3) to high research activity (R2), the newer 'R2' designation is noted in the current mission statement. Though DU no longer refers to teaching as a central part of its mission, the institution still focuses on "transformative learning opportunities" and creating "vibrant learning environments." However, expectations for students have gone from only providing "leadership and service as world citizens" to being "scholars, leaders, and responsible stewards of their communities" – the latter introduces scholarship as a desired activity for all students at the university.

Donahue University is currently in the process of developing a strategic plan, their website is accepting comments and suggestions from the community and institutional leaders have communicated that they will provide a working document in the fall of 2019. However, the latest strategic planning document at Donahue University was released the year prior to the defunding of the McNair program. That document contained four themes: promote academic excellence; enhance student success; increase research, scholarship and creative activity; and maintain fiscal responsibility. Within this plan, institutional leaders placed a strong focus on faculty research, including it in two different themes.

In Donahue University's 2011 strategic plan, Institutional leaders sought to "aggressively attract" new faculty with research experience and "develop differential teaching workloads that allow our strongest teachers to focus on student learning in the classroom, while our strongest researchers model the conducting of scholarly inquiry and creative activity." In addition, and in alignment with the institution's new mission, the strategic plan expressed the campus leaders' desire to become a "high activity" Carnegie research institution. In regard to student support, the plan called for leaders to "aggressively and proactively increase student retention, progression, and graduation [rates]…," enhance the general education program, and become more welcoming to military veterans.

Donahue University is a large research university in a uniquely complex situation. The institution has absorbed a lot of changes over the last year in regard to leadership as well as reporting structures for many units. Donahue University's consolidation, with two other campuses that are located in different cities, was a comprehensive project for the campus community and has resulted in a new identity for the institution. During the consolidation, the university successfully acquired the Ronald E. McNair program in fall of 2017, five years after its 2012 defunding. Throughout this chapter I provide details about this program and in the section below I explain the state of TRIO programs at Donahue University.

TRIO at Donahue University

Donahue University has decades of experience with hosting TRIO programs. The institution hosted the Ronald E. McNair program on campus that served 25 students annually with an operating budget of more than $8,900 per participant. This program was defunded by the Department of Education in 2012. However, since the defunding, Donahue University was awarded the Student Support Services program in 2015 and regained the McNair Program in 2017. The McNair program was originally placed in the TRIO office and reported to an associate vice president, because she had experience with grant programs and budgets. When the program returned it was placed within an academic unit to enhance its relationship with STEM students.

Between receiving the Student Support Services program and regaining the McNair program, Donahue University was defunded for their pre-college program – Talent Search. The institution also experienced the defunding of their Upward Bound program prior to the defunding of their McNair program. The flux of program defunding and acquisitions coupled with the complexities of Donahue University's consolidation with other institutions has resulted in substantive changes in the TRIO Office between 2012 and 2018. The office has switched locations on campus, it no longer has an executive director, and the McNair program is now situated within an academic college. Below, Table 4 shows which Federal TRIO programs were hosted on campus between 2012 and 2018. Similar to Table 3 in the previous chapter, the fiscal year represents the fall awards for TRIO programs.

Table 4. Inventory of TRIO Programs at Donahue University from 2012 -2018

TRIO Program Inventory at Donahue University			
TRIO Programs	Fiscal Year 2012	Fiscal Year 2015	Fiscal Year 2018
Educational Opportunity Centers			
Ronald E. McNair			✓
Student Support Services		✓	✓

Talent Search	✓	✓	
Upward Bound			
Upward Bound Math-Science			
Veterans Upward Bound			

The McNair Program was on Donahue University's campus since 1999, according to its archived website, and it prepared students with "disadvantaged" backgrounds for doctoral studies. In addition, the website stated that the program provided the following services to program participants: academic counseling, financial aid assistance, mentoring, research opportunities, seminars, summer internships, tutoring, and guidance for admission and financial aid for graduate programs. With the goal to increase the number of underrepresented students who attain a Ph.D., Donahue University designed their program to involve fifteen students in research annually.

The services listed above are typical of McNair programs, and institutional leaders expressed that there were needed for the target population at Palmer University. In the institution's 2012 grant application, campus leaders discussed that they needed the program to assist in closing the academic achievement gaps between students when comparing first-generation college students and students from low-income households with their peers. In addition, they discussed the need for the program as a reflection of the needs within the state. To express the significant number of eligible students, the grant application stated:

> Donahue University has a large number of potentially eligible students who are low-income and first-generation students. Based on applicant responses on the

> FAFSA, 3,178 students enrolled fall 2011 were identified as low-income, and 42% of those students were also first generation…. it is important to note that 64% of these low-income and first-generation college students are in race/ethnicity groups that are underrepresented in graduate education.

The regard to a need for academic support at the institution that mirrors the needs of the state, campus leaders suggested that public education's struggles to prepare students within the state for college level courses contributed to needs of students. They also mentioned that the state has elevated poverty levels and many of the students come from rural counties. The 2012 application notes:

> Unfortunately, many state high school students arrive underprepared to take on the challenge of a rigorous, college-level program of study. Although, there are many public high schools in the state who are making academic progress, there remains a large group that are struggling. According to the State Department of Education, only 41% of the state's public high schools made adequate yearly progress in 2011 as defined by the No Child left Behind Act of 2001…. The median county rate for persons below poverty level is 19.8% - a full 5 percent points above the state's rate [suggesting a skew from metropolitan areas] – and one county has an alarming rate of 34.4%. Sixty-eight percent of the state's counties are considered rural as they have less than 35,000 residents, and 46% of Donahue University students are from these counties.

The Department of Education provides standardized objectives for the administration of their federal TRIO Programs. In regard to the McNair program, there are four objectives and they speak to the program's expectations regarding scholarly activity, graduation school enrollment, retention in graduate school, and graduation from a doctoral program. The Department of Education charges the institutional leaders with making their objectives attainable and ambitious, thus Donahue University leaders provided the following objectives in their 2012 grant application:

> 90% of McNair Program participants served during the project year will complete appropriate research or scholarly activities during the McNair Program academic year; 75% of McNair Program bachelor's degree recipients (or equivalents) will be accepted and enrolled in a Postbaccalaureate program of study by the fall term of the academic year immediately following the completion of their bachelor's degree (or equivalent); 75% of first year graduate students will continue to be enrolled in graduate school at the beginning of the fall term of the next academic year; and 50% of the McNair program participants served will attain a doctoral degree within ten (10) years of the attainment of the bachelor's degree.

Although the department of Education defunded the McNair program at Donahue University in 2012, the institution was awarded the program in the 2017 competition. With a five-year lapse in McNair program services, upon receiving the new grant, staff members had to regain the attention of students who the program once served. The vice president of enrollment management believes that the defunding most likely resulted in a decreased number of students who engaged in undergraduate research. She stated:

> That focus kind of dissipates a bit. So, and as you know, it becomes important to enable folks to access those opportunities. And in a lot of situations unless that impetus is there and that support mechanism is there, and that encouragement is there for students who never really maybe thought that was an option for them. Then, that's something that they may not have in their purview and their mindset that they can take advantage of that. So, although I don't have the numbers to back that up, my guess is that we probably saw a shift in who is able to participate in the [undergraduate research] programs.

In addition to a decline in students who participated in undergraduate research, as a result of the program not being on campus for five years it has taken a lot of effort to get the program running. The coordinator of the Student Support Services program and the director of the multicultural student center both mentioned that they have promoted the program to students that their office interacts with. The assistant director of the operating McNair program shared with me that he would like for more people to know about the program than they currently do. However, he also shared that the program had a rough start, which he partially contributes to the consolidation being of paramount importance for administration. He shared:

> The reason why I say that is because the program was supposed to have started in October of last year and because of consolidation, the program was on the back burner, if you will. So from October, November, December, January,

> February, March, April is when there became a concern about the program. So the program actually started running in April and according to what the grant said, we needed to have a summer research institute going by May. No participants or anything of that nature, so that was hard trying to get some students into a summer research institute program with nothing as a foundation at all. So um, things of that nature showed me how the concern of the program was not in existence as far as like on the, on the radar, if you will, to do anything about it until the last minute. So that's one challenge that I had to overcome. We overcame it, so that's a good thing, and I think the reason is because I have a passion for what I'm doing.

The context of the TRIO programs at Donahue University is complex. This is partially due to the instability of the program at the institution, which is a result of the fragility of TRIO funding at the national and local level. Also, changes in institutional leadership, the institutional structure, and departmental personnel adds to complexity of the TRIO context at Donahue University. However, some consistent themes emerged from the data and I describe them in the next section.

Emergent Themes

While at Donahue University I was able to speak with key personnel who had knowledge of the McNair program and other TRIO programs. Throughout my visit and my analysis, I found that multiple themes emerged across conversations. There were three themes in particular that spoke to the essence of the data. Similar to the previous chapter, I decided to use the actual words of participants to create the themes, which allowed me to bring my participant's voices to the forefront of my analysis. I discuss these themes below in this section.

"Desire Didn't Meet Our Ability"

The first theme that emerged spoke to Donahue University's ability to continue services for the target population, to an extent, after the defunding of the McNair program. However, participants expressed that the overall desire of campus personnel to continue services did not reach the level necessary to continue services. Participants noted various reasons for why the institution's ability was not actualized. The vice president of student affairs stated, "while I think the desire didn't meet our ability before, and I don't know if it's meeting it now, I think the pendulum is switching." Institutional administrators mention competing priorities, and staff members mentioned that there is a lack of intentionality and the issue wasn't a priority for leadership.

During my visit I was able to speak to two senior level administrators. Both once had authority over the program through their supervision of the director of the TRIO Office. The participant who served as the vice president of student affairs previously had direct supervisory responsibility over the TRIO Office when he served as the dean of students, and the participant who served as the vice president for enrollment management had supervisory responsibility over the office when she served as the associate vice president for student affairs and enrollment management, prior to the institution's consolidation. Both administrators expressed that they believe competing priorities led the institution to forgo providing services in lieu of the McNair program. The vice president for student affairs believes Donahue University had the financial ability to continue the services. However, he also believes the institution didn't have an incentive to do so at that time. He explained that the institution was concerned with rankings and providing social mobility wasn't a paramount initiative. In regard to what informed the vice president of student affairs' position that the institution was financially able to provide services, he stated:

> Everything from our large student population and the significant amount of student activity fee revenue, our significant education and general budget, and the ability to allocate funds towards success of that group…. I'm confident that the university has the ability and the resources to support activities of low-income, underrepresented students, and do those McNair-like things. I really believe so.

When asked about the ability to continue services, the vice president of enrollment management believed if the program was a higher priority they would have found the resources. She noted:

> I think as an institution we would have loved to have been able to do that. But the desire did not reach a point to where that became a strategic initiative and where we carved out the resources for that. So I think desire, yes, up until a point because if you, if you desire it in a way that prioritizes that above other things, you will find the resources for it. So I think altruistically, yes, of course we

> do want to do this and do think it's important. But did it leap frog over other things that we had in the pipeline? No, it didn't.

Both senior administrators who participated in this study believed the institution had the resources to continue services had it been a priority at the time. Some staff members also expressed that the institution could do more to serve the first-generation college students and students who come from low-income households. The director of the Multicultural Office and the assistant director for the operating McNair program on campus believe that the institution could have delivered some tailored services for the target population; however, they also believe that the institution’s administration and some staff members are disconnected from the population in a way that makes it difficult. While discussing barriers, these staff members did not discuss the financial pieces, instead they mentioned the lack of understanding that campus community members may have in regard to the McNair program and the target population. The director of the Multicultural Office mentioned:

> I don't know if you're asking this but I'm going to share it anyway, and I honestly think it's because again, a lack of understanding of McNair and how it functions…. I think we are so, instead of thinking through solutions that make sense for the populations of students, we just get the business done. Let's just find somewhere else for them to go -- instead of being critical and intentional about seeing if we invest in this population of students. Here's how it will benefit the university and here's how it will completely benefit the trajectory of this individual's life. So, I think if there is more intentionality there, it could work…If

> the university can provide intentional opportunities and spaces for these students to learn in a way that's not marginalizing them further in assuming that because you're first gen you're poor - which doesn’t necessarily have to be connected, sometimes that is the case but It's not always the case – I think that would be helpful. I think we would see retention increased for that population of students. It would help students feel more connected.

In her response above and in follow-up discussions, the director of the Multicultural Office identified many factors that compromised the institution’s post-McNair funding resources, such as the desire to expediently get things done, a lack of intentionality in regard to serving the target popilation, and assumptions that staff members make about the populations’ demographics. She posits that this is a result of a lack of understanding of the program from her peer and her colleagues in leadership roles. All of these are perceived barriers to providing services created for the target population. In my interview with the assistant director of the operating McNair program, he felt like the TRIO programs were not a priority for the institution, even when they regained funding for McNair in 2017. In regard to barriers to providing services for the population during the defunding period, he mentioned staff members’ disconnect with the population. He stated:

> Barriers would be – I guess not having a familiarity of a first-generation student, knowing that they didn't have anyone as far as like a parent to graduate from a university or institution with a degree, and maybe having a more in-depth understanding of who they are and the different challenges that they face…

This theme – "Desire Didn't Meet Our Ability" – was telling of the institution's ability to fill in the gap that the defunding created at Donahue University. However, the participants expressed that for a multitude of reasons, the institution didn't not substantively engage in trying to fill the gap. These reasons spanned from competing priorities to the lack of interest as a result of misunderstanding the target population's lived experiences. However, though participants believed the institution didn't fill in the gap to the extent they were able to, they also went on to explain the role the Multicultural Office might have played in the interim between the defunding of the McNair grant and acquiring the new grant. Ultimately, the university's leadership and administration did not have an interest in continuing to provide the services that were once provided by the McNair program in 2012. However, they believe if they were defunded again, they would be more intentional in regard to how they continue services.

"Because There Is A Multicultural Office"

Though it was reflected in many ways, ultimately, there was consensus that the institution as a whole could have done more to continue the services that were removed after the Department of Education defunded the McNair program at Donahue University. Institutional priorities as well as staff members' knowledge of the population seem to have impeded on the institution's desire to intervene in the absence of federal funding. However, this theme – "Because There Is A Multicultural Office" – emerged from statements participants made about how the Multicultural Office might have served as an intermediate provider of services for the target population. In reference to the notion that her office provides intermediate services, the director of the Multicultural Office mentioned, “I think that people think again, because there is a multicultural office, then those students should be there. They should be over there getting those services anyway.”

Throughout my interviews I spoke to participants about other campus services or departments that continued similar work to their TRIO program after its defunding. Participants expressed that the Multicultural Office served the target population of students, though they were not certain if the Multicultural Office was an adequate substitute for encouraging undergraduate research or progressing the agenda for the target population’s academic success across campus. The vice president of student affairs stated:

> You know, I don't have knowledge of the intentionality of what new programs were created or the emphasis of current programs that are in place to fill the gap of McNair. I am not aware of anything that was done to fill that gap…. Now what I can imagine what did a little bit of filling that gap are certain things that were in place - the minority mentoring program and, if there was any growth, the Multicultural Office. Additionally, there were some grants that the institution received from the university system for the African American Male Initiative… actually I was part of the African American Male Initiative, in writing it…. But undergraduate research, to the best of my knowledge was not part of, well it wasn't a focal part of the minority mentoring program or the African American

> Male Initiative. Yeah, perhaps departments did something but nothing that I was involved with, nothing that I'm aware of anyway.

The vice president of enrollment management also mentioned that the Multicultural Office might have continued services, in regard to racially minoritized students. She noted:

> There may be some of that happening in our Multicultural Office. I can't guarantee that that's happening specifically for our low-income students, but perhaps from the minority student aspect it might be happening. That may be all, we are working to address gaps right now with what we know are our growing numbers of first-generation students and providing additional services and opportunities for those, but those are small steps.

The coordinator of the Student Support Services at Donahue University mentioned that the Multicultural Office's minority mentoring program might have been helpful in continuing services in addition to those her office provided to first-generation college students and students who come from low-income households. The assistant director of the operating McNair program also mentioned that the Multicultural Office might have filled in the gap of some services, but not those that were at the essence of the McNair Program. Furthermore, he did not believe the Multicultural Office functioned as the office that advocated for the target population. He explained:

> I know that, you know, they have the African American Male Initiative and the Multicultural Office, but it's not just for first generation students, if you will. And as far as I know, they were not providing anything like fee waivers for graduate

> school, GRE fee waivers, and things of that nature that I'm aware of. I don't think that those services were provided…. I don't know the full detail of it, as far as them bringing out a report to the campus to make it known that more support needs to be done or needed towards these students in general.

In addition to campus professionals identifying the Multicultural Office as a place where the previous McNair participants could have received services, even if partial, the director of the Multicultural Office also mentioned that her office was expected to fill some gaps. As mentioned earlier, the director of the Multicultural Office believes that other campus leaders assume TRIO students are getting services from her office. However, she also expressed that her office is not resourced to appropriately fill the gap:

> I think some of it is race. I think that people think again, because there is a multicultural office, then those students should be there. They should be over there getting those services anyway. But you have an office who has a staff on this campus with two and a half professionals – and I am the half because I travel back and forth at this point – tasked with providing support for underrepresented students. Just students of color, African American students let's say are about 35 percent of campus, which is a huge number of providing support for those students' socio-cultural, academic and academic support, sometimes financial support, and we don't have the staffing to do so because sometimes diversity doesn't seem to be a priority at the institution.

She also shared that her office has an expectation of providing the defunded services because people incorrectly conflate race and students being first-generation college students or students from low-income households, though there is some overlap. She said:

> So the Multicultural Office was expected to kind of pick up some things, but of course there wasn't any funding, any additional funding provided to any office to provide support to those groups of students. It's an expectation, I would say, because we share a lot of students who are from low income households who also happen to be people of color that sometimes they lumped them all together. If you are a person of color, then you must be first-gen and you must be low-income. Therefore, you must be eligible for these services. And since our programs kind of already do that, then people assume, well, if you were a part of McNair that you should just go to the Multicultural Office and that will cover it.

As described through the participants' statements above, the Multicultural Office was viewed as a place on campus where the target population of students could receive services. However, the Multicultural Office leader expressed that they are expected to fill in gaps though they are at capacity in regard to serving students their office is purposed to serve. Some other staff members also mentioned that the Multicultural Office is a good resource for the target population, but they do not offer the same level of services that the McNair program offered, and thus was not an adequate substitute for the program. The amount of intentionality that institutional leaders put into serving the target population was questioned; however, participants unanimously expressed that there is a need to provide services for the population, especially due to the prevalence of the population on campus.

"There's Obviously A Population Here"

In addition to my participants expressing that the institution didn't do all that it could to provide services after the defunding, and that the Multicultural Office was a potential place where some of the services may have continued, there was one more theme in the data. The final theme – "There's Obviously A Population Here" – was discussed throughout my visit at Donahue University. The administration and staff seem to have an elevated awareness of the population of TRIO eligible students at the institution. The coordinator for the Student Support Services program mentioned that this population is large and face obstacles. She said:

> With the consolidation there's about a little over 8,000 students on all three campuses who identify as first-gen. And now on our campus alone there's about a little over 5,000. And so, there's obviously a population here, and kind of just based off what you read in the literature, those students struggle just as much as any students but having the identifier of being a first-gen can provide some additional obstacles.

In addition to the raw numbers of first-generation college students who are enrolled at Donahue University, the vice president of student affairs mentioned a national trend. He acknowledged the growing numbers of the target population and what it means for Donahue University. While discussing the population shift in America, he mentioned that institutions must adjust to the population to be effective. He noted:

> If one looks at the population, and if you are concerned about the health of your institution, the group of students that we're talking about are going to be in the majority quickly. I mean, 2011 was the first time in the history of the country that there were more black and brown babies born than white babies. So those students are going to be in school here within a few years. And so, I think we're starting to get a better understanding of the population that is browning, that it's getting poorer – and there are more first-generation students…. If we're serious about educating students and being successful as an institution, we need to adjust based off the students who are going to be here.

The vice president of enrollment management echoed the sentiments of the vice president of student affairs. She also mentioned that the target population is growing and the institution has to do more to provide support for these students. She stated:

> I'll be completely straightforward with you on that we know we've got students coming to us now more than ever with financial need, with challenges, and with barriers that they need to overcome and that we need to do our best to make it as simple as possible and for them to navigate higher ed, because it's not very easy…. So I think it is definitely our responsibility to figure that stuff out and to increase access for these students in those situations because that's the bulk of who our students are now. We're one third low SES, we are a third first-generation, now a lot of those overlap of course, but that's a third of our students.

In addition to speaking about the target population at Donahue University, the assistant director for the operating McNair program spoke about the population of eligible students. In reference to the McNair program and the number of students they are funded to serve he stated, “there are more than 25 students who are first generation and if they could have some type of initiative in place, then I feel that it would help with the retention at the university.” In addition, he also spoke about the population and the surrounding area, since Donahue University is located in a rural town which leads to a substantial number of enrolled students being from rural towns. While describing some issues he had with how grants are funded, the assistant director mentioned that the Department of Education should take location and population into consideration. He explained:

> But I feel that the Department of Ed should have a better understanding of the population of students who are being served and be more responsive to the geographic and demographics of some of the areas in which these grants are written and that they can see the significance and importance of those grants…. For example, if there's a need in some areas, especially in rural areas where you're going to find more first-generation and low-income students, some of those grants need to be targeted in schools that can provide services to those students who are in need.

Donahue University has a diverse student population with more than 30 percent of their enrolled students identifying as students of color. However, the institution also has diversity in its student population in regard to students who hold identities as first-generation college students or students who come from low-income households. Participants talked about the number of students at the university that would qualify for the McNair program. Though eligible students may not be interested in the McNair program, the staff unanimously felt that the university has to be intentional in how they provide services for the target population to be successful, especially given the number of students at the university and in the surrounding rural area who are eligible for the program's services.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The federal TRIO programs are designed to reduce the achievement gaps, or pay toward the educational debt, for first-generation college students, students from low-income households, students underrepresented in graduate education, and students with disabilities. In the last fiscal year, the United States Congress funded the federal TRIO programs at over $950 million. This is a substantial amount of money. However, it is not always consistent, and it is only enough to serve a fraction of the target population. In addition to insufficient funding at the federal level to serve the target population, the Department of Education defunds existing TRIO projects during the grant application process for various reasons. This makes continued funding for TRIO programs and projects unpredictable at the federal and campus levels.

The purpose of this study was to examine the aftermath of the Department of Education defunding college federal TRIO granted projects. Therefore, there were two federal TRIO programs of interest: The Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement (McNair) program and the Student Support Services program. In order to understand the aftermath of defunding these college programs, I used a qualitative approach with a multi-case study design. This allowed me to collect rich data at two case sites, Palmer University and Donahue University, and analyze them separately and comparatively.

I provided a separate analysis for my two case sites in chapters four and five, which included their institutional and TRIO context, as well as the themes that emerged from the case studies. In this chapter, I provide a comparison of the two case sites with regard to my research questions. In addition, I discuss the implications that my findings have for campus leaders as well as policy makers. Lastly, I provide direction for researchers who are interested in further examining this topic and a conclusion for my study.

Findings

During the exploration of my two case sites, I sought to answer three research questions. My research questions were: 1) Prior to the Department of Education defunding the granted project, what was the scope of the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement program or Student Support Services program on campus; 2) how have institutional leaders changed identity-based services that were available to their federal TRIO program participants prior to the Department of Education defunding their granted project; and 3) how do institutional leaders perceive their institution's organizational capacity to provide identity-based services for federal TRIO program eligible students without federal TRIO grants? In this section, I discuss my findings at both campuses in regard to my research questions. Furthermore, I discuss the previous scope of the TRIO programs, the continuation of services after defunding, and the institutions' capacity to continue providing services after defunding in the context of my theoretical and conceptual frameworks – resource dependence theory and building organizational capacity.

Previous Scope of TRIO Programs

The scope of the Student Support Service program at Palmer University and the scope of the McNair program at Donahue University were notably different. Some differences in their scope were due to the purposes of the programs on the federal level and some were due to their campus organization. In regard to the differences between the scope of the programs that were due to their purposes on the federal level, the Student Support Services program at Palmer University served 212 students annually, and its objectives were focused on the retention, persistence, and graduation rates for its target population. In contrast, the McNair program at Donahue University only served 25 students annually, and its objectives focuses on students' engagement in undergraduate research, their graduate school enrollment and retention, and their successful completion of a research-based doctoral degree.

Both programs served first-generation college students and students from low-income households. However, in addition to those two populations, the Student Support Services programs recruited students with disabilities and the McNair program recruited students underrepresented in graduate education. Also, the Student Support Services program at Palmer University operated with a budget of less than $1,500 per participant and the McNair program at Donahue University operated with a budget of over $8,900 per participant. These differences are expected to be observed at any campus due to the expectations that the Department of Education have for the funded projects and the amount of funding the Department provide for the individual projects.

However, there was an element of the programs' scope that differed due to institutional decisions. One of the differences was found in the structures of the departments. The Student Support Services program at Palmer University was directed out of the TRIO Office which was situated in a larger unit that included an office for retention and persistence, the honors program, and advising. Collectively this unit focused on the academic success of students at Palmer University. However, at Donahue University, the McNair program was directed out of the TRIO Office which was a direct report to the associate vice president of student affairs and enrolment management. The office reported to the associate vice president because she had familiarity with grant funded programs and budgeting. Though a fiscally responsible decision, the McNair program was not integrated with other offices that could serve as feeders or collaborators for the program, instead it was isolated with pre-college TRIO programs.

This finding has significance as it relates to both my conceptual and theoretical frameworks: building organizational capacity and resource dependence theory, respectfully. As mentioned in chapter two, these frameworks differ as resource dependence theory suggests a causal relationship and building organizational capacity is a framework for higher education leaders. Structure is an element of the Toma's (2010) framework on building organizational capacity and it has an impact on the organization's social context, as described in Pfeffer and Salancik (1978). Palmer University's placement of their Student Support Services program in a unit with complimentary programs created an environment for staff members to have a shared goal of academic success for students, which increases the span of their program's scope. However, the McNair program at Donahue University was not placed in such a unit, thus their scope was limited to the work of the program's staff, with little assistance from campus partners.

Continuation of Services

My second research question examines the ways campus leaders continued the services of their defunded federal TRIO programs. In their seminal piece on resource dependency, Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) posited that organizations are systems that depend on and interact with their environment to sustain themselves. This element of interaction between the environment and organizations, and more specifically, organizations' ability to impact their environment built upon Thompson's (1967) earlier work. This speaks to the resilience of organizations as they absorb and contribute to changes in their environment, and it has particular relevance to my second and third research questions. Understanding the importance for organizations to manage their dependency on the environment, scholars have discussed ways for organizations to decrease their dependency (Hearn, 2003; Bess and Dee, 2007; Davis and Cobb, 2010). For this research question, I conceptualized the Department of Education and their TRIO grants to be components of Palmer and Donahue Universities' environments and discuss the institutions' dependency on the grants to continue to provide services for their targeted populations.

Throughout my study I observed that the institutions were dependent on their federal TRIO grants, to different extents, to provide services to their target populations.

Ultimately, I found that the continuation of services was different for the Student Support Services program at Palmer University and the McNair Program at Donahue University in two aspects: intentional continuity and unintentional continuity. Some intentional continuity occurred at Palmer University, and unintentional continuation of services existed at both campuses but was greater at Palmer University.

In regard to intentional continuity of the federal TRIO programs, neither campus explicitly created a plan to continue services for their defunded program's student target population. However, at Palmer University, institutional leaders retained the director of the TRIO Office for two years before placing her in another department – the academic success institute. She shared with me that some students continued to come to the TRIO office to visit with staff members. She also shared that when she moved to direct the academic success institute, she was able to hire some of her TRIO staff members which enabled some previous Student Support Services participants to continue their relationship with their program counselors. In contrast, the assistant director of the McNair program at Donahue University, who worked in the TRIO Office during their 2012 defunding, shared that when the funding ended so too did the services for participants in the program – though he and other participants believed they could have continued if the institution desired to provide additional resources.

Though institutional leaders did not create intentional plans to serve the students who were once participants in their federal TRIO programs, Palmer University's institutional leaders increased the services that they provided to students with similar goals of the Student Support Services program. They incorporated multiple academic success components to their programming which included corequisite course pairings, early alert systems, intrusive advising, and data analytics. They are also developing a pre-college bridge program to assist students who may need additional support prior to coming to the institution.

All of these new services and tools were employed with the expectation that they will help students retain and persist at the University. These are in direct alignment with the Student Support Services program, and since a majority of the students at Palmer University are also within the target population for their defunded TRIO program, campus-wide implementation of new initiatives served as an unintentional continuation of the program. The aligned purpose created fewer competing priorities with less organizational constraints. Thus, the organization behaved in a way that was best for the shared interest of its constituents (Powell & Ray, 2015). In this case, the shared interest within the institution was student academic success which helped to mitigate Palmer University's dependency on their federal TRIO grant.

However, Donahue University's institutional leaders were less deliberate in providing comparable services. Instead, most participants mentioned that the Multicultural Office might provide similar services for the student population. However, though the Multicultural Office tried to help when possible, they were not appropriately staffed or equipped to provide the services once provided by the McNair program. Interview participants noted that a lack of intentionality and relatability to the target population as well as other initiative that were institutional priorities, contributed to the institution not continuing the services that were once offered by the McNair program.

David and Cobb (2010) posits that there are three tenants of resource dependence theory: social context, managing dependence, and power. At Palmer University, student retention and persistence are overarching concerns and efforts for faculty and staff. However, despite the addition to the mission statement that included a focus on undergraduate research, Donahue University's administrators and staff members did not have an overarching concern or effort to engage the TRIO student population in scholarly activities once provided by their McNair program. Resultantly, the Department of Education had more power over Donahue University than Palmer University, in regard to if and how services would be delivered. This is evidence by Palmer University's expansion of support and services after their defunding, and Donahue University's immediate termination of services. In addition, this supports that Palmer University depended less on the Department of Education to provide the resources to fulfill the spirit of their TRIO program.

Capacity to Continue Services

Lastly, I examined Palmer University's and Donahue University's capacity to continue their federal TRIO programs after the Department of Education defunded their programs. Toma (2010) discussed the eight elements of building organizational capacity, as it relates to institutions of higher education, in his framework. The framework contains an institution's purpose, structure, governance, policies, processes, information, infrastructure, and culture. The institutions have elements of their capacity that were both well- and ill-equipped to continue the services once provided by their federal TRIO programs. Understanding that building organizational capacity framework is not a theory, instead it is a guidance for practice, I used Toma's framework to describe the helpful and unfavorable elements of institutional capacity I observed throughout my analysis.

Some of the most valuable components of Palmer University's institutional capacity, in regard to continuing services once provided by the Student Support Services program, is its purpose and culture. The Student Support Services program is designed to increase the retention, persistence, and graduation rates of its target population. In addition, being an HBCU and an 1890 land-grant institution, Palmer University's mission is centered around providing access to students with marginalized identities. Therefore, the program is aligned with the purpose of Palmer University, as many of the students at the institution hold identities that place them in the program's target population. Purpose is the most central element of an institution's capacity, based on Toma (2010). Therefore, having a strong institutional purpose that coincided with that of their TRIO program enhanced Palmer University's capacity to continue services.

In addition to the institution's purpose, Palmer University has a culture of supporting students. While speaking with participants, they mentioned how faculty members volunteer to tutor during finals, this spoke to the culture of the institution. Also, participants spoke about the expectation that everyone does their part to ensure students are successful. The purpose and culture attributed to the institution's desire to continue to enroll student with minoritized identities instead of abandoning their student population, or diversify their consumers as Bess and Dee (2008) described, to manage their need for such grant programs.

Although Palmer University's purpose and culture aided in its capacity to continue services, there were elements of its institutional capacity that impeded the continuation of services. Two elements that were barriers are governance and information. In regard to Palmer University's governance, the institution had financial barriers that make it difficult to provide services. Multiple participants mentioned the limited finances of the institution and the institutional documents also noted the need to secure the financial stability of Palmer University. In addition, the other element is information in the form of data. Though the institution is now engaging in consultations to better use their student data, accessibility of institutional data is limited and the usage of data analytics are new to Palmer University.

At Donahue University, the elements of their institutional capacity that aided in the continuation of the program were the same that were barriers to Palmer University – information and governance. During my interviews, most of the participants made references to data in terms of student demographics, their intersecting identities, as well as projections of demographic information for future students. This spoke to the awareness of the population that is at Donahue University in addition to students who will enroll in the future, which provides justification to provide additional services for the target population. The institution has accessible factbooks for the public and staff members have access to manipulate data through the Donahue University's website. Another strong element is the institution's financial ability to provide continued services. As mentioned during my interviews, Donahue has recently dedicated resources in the form of staffing to increase services provided to the population – however, those services are in closer alignment with the Student Support Services program than the McNair program.

There are some elements of Donahue University's institutional capacity that were prohibitive to the continuation of services once provided by the McNair program – purpose and structure. During the 2012 defunding, Donahue University's mission did not include an expectation for students to engage in scholarship. Therefore, Donahue University's purpose was not in alignment with the McNair program, as the McNair program is keenly focused on undergraduate research and graduate school preparation for its participants. As mentioned, purpose is a central component of Toma's (2010) building organizational capacity, so this misalignment is substantially prohibitive. Another element that reduced the likelihood for the institution to continue the services was the structure. The McNair program was located within the division of student affairs and enrollment management, yet it was isolated within the TRIO Office. Therefore, when the program was defunded, its services were not easily duplicated within its reporting structure or organizational unit, as its purpose was exclusive to the program and not of shared interest with other members of the staff.

Implications

In addition to the findings of this study, there are multiple implications that I have gleaned from this research. These implications include advice for parties who are involved with the implementation and oversight of the federal TRIO programs. In this section, I provide implications for campus leaders and policy makers. These implications are interconnected and feasible ways to reduce the impact of defunding on the participants within the federal TRIO programs.

Campus Leaders

It is critical for campus leaders to design their college federal TRIO programs in a way that is sustainable in the event that it should be defunded. This requires that intentional effort is taken to place these programs within a campus structure that is aligned with the mission and goals of the programs. For Student Support Services programs, it would be ideal to situate the granted program in an office or unit that is concerned with the retention, progression, and/or graduation of students in general. In regard to the McNair program, it would be ideal to situate the program in an office or unit that is focused on students gaining undergraduate research experience and/or students preparing for graduate education. In addition to these offices or units having the skillset to progress toward the mission of the TRIO program, their desire and ability to continue services without the grant may be more favorable than other offices and units that are out of alignment with the mission of the programs.

Throughout my research, there were no campus leaders who specifically articulated an institutional effort to continue services for the participants of their federal TRIO program. However, issues concerning the lack of intentionality were mentioned as barriers for continuing services, especially when resources were available. Therefore, in addition to providing intentionality in the placement of the program initially, upon a defunding, it would be ideal for campus leaders to devise a plan that lists the possible ways that the target population could continue to receive services. The provision of these services could be a result of a reallocation of resources or a redirection for students to receive other services that already exist on campus. However, in either situation, campus leaders should be prepared to guide the target population to the services, especially those who were already participants in the programs.

Lastly, knowledgeable campus leadership is important. Therefore, it is essential for campus leaders to be invested in the success of these programs and especially the students they serve. Also, campus leaders must be aware of the services these programs provide and the impact they have on student success and achievement. Ultimately, campus leaders have to create a culture that nurtures these students' development and is committed to ensuring an equitable educational experience for all students who enroll at the their institutions.

Policy Makers

Policy makers, more specifically the administrators at the Department of Education, are key actors in the administration of federal TRIO programs. A key implication for these policy makers is to prioritize prior experience points and the needs of the population when considering which new and continued project will get funded. Though, the Department defunds programs based on their score in the grant application process with some consideration of prior experience and population needs, I posit that the consideration of need should be greater for operating projects. Though it would require an expansion to the power that Congress grants to the Department of

Education, this could reduce the number of how many projects are defunded, especially those that are performing well with high need populations.

As mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation, the Department of Education will inevitably defund TRIO projects in the grant application process. With this understanding, policy makers should have the Department provide guidance and resources for institutional leaders to use in their planning processes to continue services in another way. This could lessen the impact of a defunding on the target population. In addition, ample guidance and/or resources could help sustain the momentum of the program until the institution can reapply for funding in five years.

In addition, the Department of Education should alter the application for grants to leverage its influence on campus leaders. The grant applications could include a section that requires leaders to build continuity plans in the event their funded is revoked or they are not renewed for the next grant cycle. Furthermore, the Department of Education should encourage continued data collection from institutions by giving institutions the ability to report services they have provided during the defunded grant cycle in their next grant application. Finally, the level to which a defunded institution has followed their continuity plan should be taken into account when they reapply for Federal TRIO Programs.

Finally, policy makers should examine other ways to initiate a defunding that will allow time for institutions to prepare for the budget reduction. It would be ideal for institutional leaders to learn of an upcoming defunding prior to the year of the grant lapsing. This could happen in multiple ways. The Department could conduct the grant application process earlier in the grant cycle, this could happen during year four instead of five. Another possibility would be for the Department to provide an additional year of funding, upon notice of a defunding, to allow institutional leaders to be intentional in the steps they make to absorb the impact of the defunding and continue to provide adequate services for the target population.

Future Research

This dissertation contributes to the literature on federal TRIO programs, and more specifically, those who serve college level students. Furthermore, I examined the aftermath of defunding these programs which, in addition to contributing to the literature, also has implications for higher education policy and practice. However, further exploration of this topic is needed. Therefore, in this section I provide some direction for future researchers to expand upon this topic or examine similar issues with TRIO programs.

One direction for future research is to expand upon this study with a mixed method approach to understanding the aftermath of defunding. This could take into account institutional characteristics in regard to the impact of a defunding and the ways institutions are likely to respond. This would also introduce generalizable findings to compliment the rich data of this exploration. In addition, another direction for future research would be to examine the aftermath of defunding from the perspectives of specific populations to include student participants, employees of the federal TRIO programs, as well as the people with supervisory responsibilities of their TRIO program. Ideally, this would be a narrative inquiry to give voice to those impacted and offer policy makers an in-depth description of how those populations experience the phenomenon. Parsing out these roles may also provide a critical insight into the lived experiences of those people with respect to their position of power on campus.

The focus and scope of my study centers on what happens after the defunding of Federal TRIO programs. However, out of a concern for privacy, I was denied access to the information that discloses why institutions were defunded. I would urge future researchers to pursue questions that precedes where my study starts. Future researchers should examine some of the factors that influence campus leaders to apply for federal TRIO programs as well as those that increase the likelihood that a campus will be defunded. This has the possibility of unearthing systemic or structural advantages and barriers for continued funding.

The aforementioned directions for future research have the potential to increase scholars' understanding of the federal TRIO program. However, in addition to the general research questions I presented above, I also encourage future researcher to test the following propositions that emerge from my study:

- Institutions with limited financial resources are more likely to experience defunding
- 1890 land-grant Historically Black Colleges and Universities are more likely to continue services after defunding
- Coupling TRIO program with similar services will increase the likelihood of continued services upon defunding

- Institutions are more likely to continue services associated with Student Support Services program than the Ronald E. McNair program upon defunding
- Institutions that make financial commitments in their grant proposal are more likely to continue services upon defunding

Conclusion

In this dissertation I explored the aftermath of defunding as it relates to the Department of Education defunding college federal TRIO programs at institutions of higher education. Through my inquiry, I found that the scope of the existing programs, the continuation of their services, and institutions' capacity to continue services are interrelated. More specifically, the scope of the program and elements of the institutions' capacity – especially the alignment of institutional and program purposes – either propelled or deterred the institutional leaders to continue providing services for the target population. This resulted in distinct differences in how institutional leaders sought to mitigate inequities in educational access and success at my two case sites.

As a result of the interconnectedness of the institutions' scopes and capacities as it relates to the continuity of services, one implication of this study is that institutional leaders should be intentional in where they place federal TRIO programs on their campuses – they should situate TRIO programs in units that have missions that are aligned with the programmatic outcomes of the TRIO programs on the federal level. In addition, institutional leaders should devise plans to continue services in ways that their institutional capacity can withstand upon a defunding. Finally, due to the instability of funding, policy makers should consider giving institutions more time to prepare for a defunding and resources to aid them through the process of trying to sustain momentum and services beyond their TRIO programs' grant cycles.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Tucker Hall, Room 212
310 E. Campus Rd.
Athens, Georgia 30602
TEL 706-542-3199 | FAX 706-542-5638
IRB@uga.edu
http://research.uga.edu/hso/irb/

Office of Research
Institutional Review Board

EXEMPT DETERMINATION

July 13, 2018

Dear Erik Ness:

On 7/13/2018, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	The Aftermath of Defunding: Examining How Institutional Leaders Approach Mitigating Inequities in Academic Success After the Defunding of Federal TRIO Grants
Investigator:	Erik Ness
Co-Investigator	Dominique Quarles
IRB ID:	STUDY00005943
Funding:	None
Review Category	Exempt, HHS (2)

The IRB approved the protocol from 7/13/2018 to 7/12/2023.

This is an exempt study, so it's not necessary to submit a modification for minor changes to study procedure. You can keep us informed of changes that don't affect the study scope by using the Add Comment feature.

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,

William Westbrook, IRB Analyst
University of Georgia

APPENDIX B

SITE AUTHORIZATION TEMPLATE

<INSERT DATE>

Institutional Review Board
Human Subjects Office
212 Tucker Hall
310 E. Campus Rd.
Athens, GA 30602

Dear IRB Members,

After reviewing the proposed study, "Exploring How Institutions Approach Mitigating Inequities in Academic Success After the Non-Renewal of Federal TRIO Programs," presented by Mr. Dominique A. Quarles, a graduate student at the University of Georgia's Institute of Higher Education, I have granted Mr. Quarles permission to conduct his research at <INSERT SCHOOL NAME HERE>.

The purpose of this study is to examine the aftermath of defunded federal TRIO programs on their college campuses. The findings from this study may provide institutional leaders and staff employed through federal TRIO programs the understanding of the impact defunding can have on their institutions, ways to manage their dependency on federal TRIO programs, and advice on how to minimize the impact of defunding. The primary on-site activities will be to collect data via semi-structured interviews and available institutional documents. Faculty and staff members who have worked directly and indirectly with the defunded TRIO programs and those with knowledge of similar programs and services on campus are eligible to participate.

Mr. Quarles will contact <INSERT SCHOOL NAME HERE> faculty and staff members to recruit them by physical and electronic email – he will include an informational letter and consent form in his recruitment communications. His plan is to have participants identified and all interviews conducted by mid-spring. Mr. Quarles' on-site research activities will take less than a week and he will be finished with on-site data collection by March 31, 2019.

I understand that Mr. Quarles will receive consent from all participants. In addition, Mr. Quarles will keep all data he collects, including the name of the institution, confidential and stored on his personal computer.

If the IRB has any concerns about the permission granted by this letter, please contact me at the phone number or email address listed below.

Sincerely,

<INSERT NAME>
<INSERT TITLE>
<INSERT DEPARTMENT>
<INSERT INSTITUTION NAME>
<INSERT PHONE NUMBER>
<INSERT EMAIL ADDRESS>

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Date:

Dear Research Participant:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Erik Ness in the Institute of Higher Education at The University of Georgia. Thank you for your participation in my research study entitled "Exploring How Institutions Approach Mitigating Inequities in Academic Success After the Non-Renewal of Federal TRIO Programs." The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of the Department of Education defunding federal TRIO programs and the ways campuses navigate this phenomenon.

Participation in this study is reserved for faculty, staff, or administrators, both currently or previously employed by the case institution, who are 18 years of age or older. Your participation will involve participation in either an interview or a focus group and should only take roughly 60-90 minutes. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that I can Identify as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

All identifiable data will be kept confidential. The interview and focus group recordings will be transcribed and destroyed upon the successful defense of the dissertation; the transcription and the key will be stored separately to secure confidentiality; and the results of the research study may be published, but participants' names, their identifying information, and the institutions' names will not be used.

The findings from this project may provide institutional leaders and staff employed through federal TRIO programs the understanding of the impact defunding can have on their institutional projects, ways to manage their dependency on federal TRIO programs, and advice on how to minimize the impact of defunding. Risks or discomforts associated with this research is minimal but include the possibility that someone will follow my methodology and identify my case sites, thus making participant identification an unlikely but possible risk.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at (706) 373-3949 or send an e-mail to dquarles@uga.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 609 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

As part of my protocol to maintain confidentiality, I am not requesting a signature for your consent. However, by continuing with this interview or focus group you are agreeing to participate in the above described research project.

Thank you for your participation! Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Dominique A. Quarles

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

General Information

- How long have you been at this institution, and in what different capacities have you served throughout your tenure?
- What is your familiarity with federal TRIO programs and were you familiar with the Student Support Services or McNair programs here?

What was the scope of identity-based services offered on campus prior to the defunding of the Federal TRIO programs? What is the scope now?

- What services did the institution provided to first-generation college students and students from low-income backgrounds through the TRIO programs?
- Have these services continued, mostly the same, specifically for first-generation and low-income students after the defunding of the TRIO Programs? If so, what department or division took on the onus to provide services particularly to these students?

How have institutional leaders changed identity-based services that were available to their federal TRIO program participants prior to the non-renewal of their federal TRIO grants?

- Are there any new departments, campus personnel, initiatives, or services available particularly for first-generation college students or students from low-income backgrounds? If so, when were these elements introduced to the university.
- Are you aware of any departments or programs who strategically recruit first-generation college students and students from low-income backgrounds to take advantage of their resources/opportunities?

How do institutional leaders perceive their institution's organizational capacity to provide identity-based services for federal TRIO program eligible students without federal TRIO grants?

- What is your perception of the institution's ability to continue to provide targeted services for first-generation college students and students from low-income backgrounds? What would increase the institution's ability to do so?
- What is your perception of the institution's desire to continue to provide targeted services for first-generation college students and students from low-income backgrounds? What would increase the institution's desire to do so?
- What is your perception of the institution's place/responsibility to continue to provide targeted services for first-generation college students and students from low-income backgrounds? Please explain.