CAPITALIZING WITH A BRANCH CAMPUS:

A CASE STUDY IN INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY

by

L. MICHELLE S. BROWN

(Under the Direction of J. Douglas Toma)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this case study is to examine the strategic aspects of the decision by Gainesville State College (GSC) to launch a branch campus in Oconee County, as well as what can be learned from the experience toward improving practice. GSC, an institution within the University System of Georgia, reflects the trend across higher education of pursuing strategies intended to position institutions to attract greater resources, often through increasing prestige. While not explicitly launching a campus to realize increased revenues, GSC has capitalized on a location favorable to producing impressive enrollments. Subsequently, increased revenues allowed GSC to pursue other ambitious initiatives, such as adding additional baccalaureate degrees, positioning the institution for greater prestige with moving to state college status.

Historically linked to the purpose of increasing access, branch campuses have increasingly served more entrepreneurial purposes for institutions across types during a market-oriented era of higher education. A fundamental shift away from state funding of public higher education has contributed to the need to pursue alternative streams, and colleges and universities are increasingly relying upon funding from student tuition and fees. Branch campuses, strategically located, allow colleges and universities to target

student markets, contributing to financial viability significant to institutional aspirations. However, higher education institutions encounter a challenge, balancing market forces with public purpose.

Combining interviews with 11 senior faculty and administrators with an extensive document review, I found that GSC, facing increasing competition and less stability in resources, responded entrepreneurially by launching the branch campus in Oconee County. Compelled to pursue the opportunity amid a number of risks, GSC benefitted strategically from the branch, favorably positioning the institution to support its aspirations. However, the branch concurrently challenged GSC and its traditional access mission. Finally, I suggest seven implications for practice related to launching a branch campus. Recommendations include institutional attention related to the following organizational dimensions when launching a branch campus—emphasizing mission; building resources; committing to planning; valuing culture; clarifying organizational relationships and branch mission; addressing needs peculiar to the branch; and establishing community support.

INDEX WORDS: Branch campuses; Higher education strategy and management; Community college; Entrepreneurial universities

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, James and Mattie Spears. I have always been amazed at their dedication to me and my sister while demonstrating commitment to work ethic, faith, family and serving others. Their unconditional love has anchored my growth and development. Their love and belief in me consistently encouraged me to reach for more than I ever thought I could accomplish. I love you Mama and Daddy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Across all types and sectors of higher education, colleges and universities share a similar vision of positioning themselves for greater prestige and resources. Prestige is commonly recognized as being advantageous in the higher education market, and institutions are doing what they can to secure it. Colleges and universities pursue prestige for its perceived benefit—increased resources, providing not only operational funds, but also discretionary revenues necessary for investment toward their aspirations. Regardless of their selectivity, the quest for prestige and greater resources is inherent to all institutions. While much attention is paid to the few elite colleges and universities, the majority of institutions that span the higher education landscape are attempting strategically to distinguish themselves, aspiring to reach the next level of the status hierarchy in American higher education. Institutions are employing a range of strategies with hopes of being able to demonstrate to various constituents progress toward their aspirations. As the higher education environment continues shifting toward a more revenue-driven, market-responsive approach, colleges and universities are utilizing strategies with the intent of garnering more resources and differentiating themselves from their competitors.

In order to advance their vision and compete within the higher education market, familiar institutional strategies include those that are visible as well as those that are less overt. More visible strategies include building impressive facilities such as fitness centers and other spaces for students, complete with the latest technology and other

attractions (Toma, forthcoming). Academic initiatives are also widespread and seen as beneficial to colleges and universities. Postsecondary institutions develop strategies such as offering more opportunities in study abroad or service learning programs, adding graduate programs, emphasizing honors, hiring noteworthy faculty members, and adding majors in cutting-edge fields. Strategic approaches also include intercollegiate athletics (Toma, forthcoming). Colleges and universities pursue the halo effect, assuming that success in sports will spread to other institutional functions; institutions commonly improve facilities dedicated to intercollegiate sports and pursue membership in more visible athletic conferences (Bok, 2002; Toma, 2003). Finally, enrollment strategy is fundamental to aspiring institutions. Colleges and universities aggressively compete for the most accomplished students, recruiting those who raise the student body average SAT or ACT score. Increasing student enrollment is particularly attractive, whether as a result of student convenience or launching a satellite campus to attract a particular market segment such as the working adult population.[1]

Aspirations to "move to the next level" and strategies to realize those visions are prompting institutions to be increasingly entrepreneurial. In higher education, entrepreneurship is quite diverse, broad in scope, with many permutations. Academic entrepreneurialism is not easily defined; the range of definitions highlights colleges and universities embracing market ideals and thus behaving, particularly during uncertain times, in ways characterized by risk, innovation, and opportunity. Entrepreneurship in higher education is also controversial. Entrepreneurial pursuits elicit polarizing

[1] For a more complete look at institutional aspirations and strategies employed for positioning and prestige, see Brewer, Gates, & Goldman (2002) and Toma (forthcoming).

perceptions. Some consider entrepreneurship an answer to complacency and financial deficits while others attribute these ambitions to the erosion of the social contract in higher education (Mars & Metcalfe, 2009; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

Academic entrepreneurialism and the embrace of behaviors associated with market ideals may at first resonate with the commercialization of activities associated with research universities, yet the marketplace increasingly connects with community colleges and two-year institutions (Levin, 2001, 2005). Community colleges are confronting a "perfect storm" of pressures signaled by escalating enrollment challenges, increasing costs, retirement of almost half of their faculty and administrators, and deteriorating buildings—all while state allocations cannot keep pace relative to costs in a prolonged economic downturn (Boggs, 2004). Community colleges are responding to globalization and the knowledge economy with entrepreneurial solutions. Two-year institutions emphasize corporate training programs, community partnerships, continuing education, and distance education—all positioning institutions to realize increased resources and growth in student enrollments. Expanding their traditional mission, community colleges are also beginning to capitalize by offering baccalaureate degrees linked to the growing enrollment demands facing four-year institutions (Levin, 2001; Mars & Metcalfe, 2009; Townsend, Bragg, & Ruud, 2009).

Gainesville State College, an institution within the University System of Georgia, represents these trends within higher education. Gainesville State College (GSC) is similar to the majority of higher education institutions in that it has less capacity to compete in a market-based environment. Smaller institutions, community colleges, and those that focus predominately on undergraduate education have fewer strategies to

pursue and fewer resources to tap. GSC demonstrated entrepreneurial behaviors, familiar within the higher education landscape, when it expanded its geographic reach as well as began expanding its mission, changing its status as a two-year unit to membership within the higher tier of state colleges. Faced with burgeoning enrollment while receiving proportionately less from traditional revenue sources, GSC strategically capitalized on opportunities to improve its competitive position and secure more resources.

My study examines the aspirations of Gainesville State College over the last decade, and the strategies it is employing toward realizing them. This case study investigated the implications for the institution as a result of increasing aspirations, especially those related to the branch campus in Oconee County. Using purposeful sampling, the data for this research consisted of interviews with 11 senior administrators and faculty, all familiar with the decision-making surrounding the branch campus as it emerged. Additionally, I conducted an extensive review of relevant documents, providing context and serving as an additional source of evidence documenting institutional behaviors. My investigation addressed the following research questions:

1. What aspirations have come to represent the vision of GSC?
2. Have these aspirations reshaped the mission?
3. How did launching the Oconee Campus advance the mission and aspirations of GSC?
4. What does the branch experience at the Oconee Campus suggest for launching such campuses in the future?

Along with attention to the concept of the entrepreneurial academy, DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) ideas about institutional legitimacy informed my data analysis; in particular, organizational behavior is not simply driven by expanding revenue, but also by extending reputation, especially through mimicking perceived leaders in a sector. But there were also the coercive and normative pressures that DiMaggio and Powell suggest in what occurred at Gainesville State College over the past decade as it evolved into a state college. I do not explore academic capitalism or neo-institutional theory, per se, in the discussion following, but instead employ the concepts to broadly inform my examination of the promise and peril involved in GSC's strategy of launching a branch campus, suggesting factors significant to an institutional decision to pursue a branch campus as well as organizational recommendations for practice which other institutions may find relevant.

This study is significant, as the economic and political environment will continue to notably shape higher education. The economic climate dictates the decisions of policymakers—in a prolonged economic downturn, governments will likely look for higher education to become more autonomous, relying less on traditional revenue streams. Furthermore, as higher education is frequently configured as a discretionary part of state budgets, current conditions of financial exigency suggest allocations to public institutions will be at less than full-formula funding levels. Compelled to pursue prestige and garner resources in the increasing competitive higher education market, colleges and universities inevitably will turn to entrepreneurial pursuits. Institutions strategically looking to position themselves, regardless of sector and resources available to them, must be attentive to the market (Zemsky, Wegner, & Massy, 2005).

Historically, branch campuses support society's value for democratization of access to higher education; however, more and more institutions value branch campuses to capture student markets and secure additional revenues. Branch campuses, strategically located, allow institutions to remain financially viable, contributing to institutional aspirations. They also represent an increasing challenge in higher education—how to position colleges and universities as viable institutions in the marketplace while, at the same time, remain as social institutions with missions dedicated to the public good.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on the research questions outlined for my study, I reviewed literature spanning branch campuses, including organizational domains, the entrepreneurial academy, and institutional isomorphism. The above-mentioned literature provided the appropriate background to investigate and analyze my research questions particular to Gainesville State College's institutional behavior over the past decade, including the strategy of launching a branch campus.

Branch Campuses

Branch campuses are widespread in the higher education landscape. While most commonly associated with the expansion of access, branch campuses are also characteristic of higher education's move toward being more entrepreneurial and market-responsive. Institutions prominently rely upon branches, yet there is a surprising dearth of description or studies pertaining to branch campuses. Largely ignored in books and journals, a limited number of dissertations provide the preponderance of information regarding branch campuses. Branches are proliferating across the nation and abroad in public and private sectors (Fonseca & Bird, 2007; Green, Kinser, & Eckel, 2008; Schuman, 2009), yet the gap remains in research to understand the purposes and dynamics peculiar to branch campus organizations.

Branch campuses are not new to higher education. The beginnings of a branch campus model can be traced back to the second Morrill Act (1890) as the United States began to permit access to higher education to those outside of elite status. The number

of branch campuses grew significantly after World War II with the establishment of the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 (GI Bill) offering financial help to returning veterans to attend institutions of higher education (Hermanson, 1995; Hill, 1985; Merzer, 2008; Stahley, 2002). During the era of great expansion of higher education, branch campuses were often the result of community and legislative efforts at the local and state levels (de Give, 1995; Doherty, 1991; Gibson-Benninger, 1998; McCullaugh, 1992; Morris, 1997). Largely geographically dispersed, branch campuses made a college education more accessible to many students who would be able to live at home, maintain a job, and pay lower tuition.

It's difficult to ascertain how many branch campuses exist; there is no national-level data base that reports descriptive characteristics of branch campuses, and institutions do not consistently report statistics for branch campuses to national data bases. *The Higher Education Directory* (Burke, Rodenhouse, & Torregrosa, 2007) does designate all branches with an asterisk (*), yet doesn't provide any information such as if the branch is part of a state-wide system or if it belongs to a single institution. Furthermore, branch campuses are not highlighted or separated in the Carnegie Classification system.

The mix of terms and definitions that describe branch campuses further contribute to the ambiguity. Branch campuses are often described by using other terms such as extension centers, satellite campuses, partner campuses, regional and extended campuses. The most recent descriptive term used is "twigs," characterizing branches of branch campuses (Fonseca & Bird, 2007). The U. S. National Center for Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) website

defines a branch campus as a “campus or site of an educational institution that is not temporary, is located in a community beyond a reasonable commuting distance from its parent institution, and offers organized programs of study, not just courses. “ Each regional accrediting agency defines a branch campus differently. For example, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), Commission on Colleges defines a branch campus as:

> a location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. A location is independent of the main campus if the location is (1) permanent in nature, (2) offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential, (3) has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization, and (4) has its own budgetary and hiring authority. (SACS website)

On its website, the Commission on the Institution of Higher Education (CIHE) presents a slight alteration in their definition by outlining that a branch campus offers 50% or more of an academic program leading to a degree. For my study, I will use the IPEDS definition of branch campus.

Finally, the great variety of types of “branches” adds to the elusiveness of defining branch campuses. Fonseca & Bird (2007) outline eight different types of branches correlating to mission and affiliation. The first type of branches *exists solely to offer two-year transfer programs*. An example of this type would be the University of Wisconsin system. The *upper division model* includes university branches that offer junior, senior and even graduate programs. These branches are found frequently in Western and Southern states that have established community college systems. The

distributed university model includes branches that offer a particular specialized program or school that is not offered at the main campus. The University of Georgia offers some specialized graduate programs at a branch located in downtown Atlanta. *Co-located campuses* include a combination of a branch with another type of institution at the same campus. Seven campuses in Ohio house both a four-year branch as well as a two-year technical college. The University of South Carolina is an example of a *comprehensive and independent branch system* with its flagship university (USC Columbia) and seven regional campuses. The most recent type of branches within the higher education landscape is *distant branches;* colleges and universities, particularly those positioning strategically for prestige, are establishing branch campus in other states or internationally. *Four-year branches,* such as the twelve branch campuses of Pennsylvania State, resemble mini-universities that offer both two-year and four-year degree programs and even some graduate degrees. A final type, *community college branch campuses*, includes some of the largest community colleges in the nation, such as Miami Dade College (Florida) or Maricopa Community College (Arizona), with highly developed branches. While perhaps not an exhaustive list, Fonseca and Bird provide a taxonomy in which most branch campuses could be categorized. My study investigated a branch campus that exclusively offers two-year transfer programs.

Current environment for branch campuses

Today, branch campuses serve in the democratization of college access as well as an increasing role in the market responsiveness of higher education. Branch campuses continue to be linked with society's value for access to higher education. Demand for postsecondary education continues to increase due to the need for a skilled

workforce and the increasing numbers of high school graduates. Increasing enrollments are projected between 14 percent (20 million) and 19 percent (20.8 million) through 2016 (NCES website). Currently, a number of states are employing branch campuses strategically to meet the increasing demand for enrollment capacity and an educated workforce. States such as Virginia and California have policies that encourage or mandate students to first enter postsecondary education via two-year or community colleges that house a large number of branch campuses. States (primarily located in the South and the West) that are experiencing population surges rely upon branches in particular areas where campus enrollment has reached its capacity. Where increased capacity is needed, state policies and systems also support branch campuses as being a more efficient model than establishing new institutions. The findings of a report conducted by the Oregon University System outlined the benefits of a branch campus after studying four organizational models: "It concluded that the branch campus offers cost advantages by drawing upon established academic programs, faculty, student and support services, and 'branded identity'" (OUS website). Using IPEDS data for odd years from the 1987 through 2003 data sets, Sharp (2007) studied the costs of community colleges and found that in terms of average-cost-per-student (FTE), branch campuses of four-year institutions have the lowest average-cost-per-student.

Due to branch campuses' association with expanding capacity, in addition to their value in providing access and meeting workforce demands, institutions regard branches strategically as a way to generate revenue by capturing market niches. Traditional federal and state governmental support has not kept pace with educational

expenditures, prompting institutions to have a heightened sense of the market forces and entrepreneurial strategies (Ehrenberg, 2006; Hearn, 2006; Lyall & Sell, 2006). "How well an institution understands the workings of the market for postsecondary education—technically, rather than metaphorically—and its place in that market increasingly determines that institution's capacity to earn the revenue it needs to shape its own future" (Zemsky, Shaman, & Shapiro, 2001, p. 9). Required to look beyond traditional funding sources, colleges and universities are strategically locating branch campuses to secure targeted student markets. Examples of market segments include international students, the working adult population, the military, specific instructional programs and specialized delivery, or contracting with corporations to provide training. Embracing strategic enrollment management, colleges and universities consider market segments as students providing value to the institution and requiring the least amount of institutional financial aid.

As colleges and universities in all sectors and types shift toward new revenue models (Hearn, 2003), institutions are utilizing environmental scans along with a myriad of marketing schemes in their practice of strategic enrollment management. Postsecondary education finds itself in an increasingly competitive environment where institutions are focused more on positioning themselves to find relevant market segments. "Careful market delineation allows universities to excel in definite areas that set them apart from other institutions of higher learning, and therefore provide selected student populations a unique learning value" (Lewison & Hawes, 2007, p. 19). In order to create a distinctive position in its market, Gredy (1987) outlined how an institution collected information from college-bound seniors, adults, community leaders, current

students, and faculty and staff to produce a marketing position statement for a branch campus of a major university. Programs offered at branch campuses are often aligned with target markets as institutions practice strategic enrollment management (Klein, Scott, & Clark, 2001; Lewison & Hawes, 2007).

While not relevant to my study, higher education literature contains increasing attention to the evolution of the international branch campus over the last twenty years. Once recognized as a place primarily for study abroad experiences, colleges and universities are operating branch campuses as a result of being lured by the market for international students, demand for increased globalization, and the potential to arrange research partnerships. Recent efforts by the American Council on Education (Green, Kinser, & Eckel, 2008; Green, 2007) highlight the promise and peril of U.S. overseas ventures and provide case examples of international branch campuses. Empirical research focusing on international branch campuses underscores the institutional and individual challenges significant in developing and operating a branch campus overseas (Graves, 1993; Harpending, 1996; Ozturgut, 2006)

Organizational life at the branch campus

The majority of research regarding branch campus life (within the United States) pertains to the challenges of administration and governance. Issues and concerns revolve around the relationship to the main or home campus, shared governance and autonomy, and promotion and tenure. Branch campus administrators and main campus administrators, whether in academic or student affairs, have different perceptions when asked about issues of respect, communication, authority over the budget, decision making and policy setting (Merzer, 2008). Many of these issues are

inherent to the organizational structure and governance models that branch campuses share with the main campus (Hill, 1995; Stahley, 2002). While reporting job satisfaction in their positions as branch campus administrators (particularly if internal communication was present at the branch campus), the relationship between branch and main campus colleagues is positive when advocacy and professional respect is perceived and quality communication is frequent (Hermanson, 1995). Implementation and management of new processes (Mosier, 2007; Wright, 1994) are particularly difficult when involving branch campuses because of different perceptions as well as the need for autonomy at branch campuses.

Organizational problems emerge from branch campuses at each institutional type. My study focused on Gainesville State College, an institution operating largely with an organizational structure typical to two-year or community colleges. While characteristics of all the organizational models may be found at each type of postsecondary institution, the bureaucratic and political models seem most applicable to community colleges (Cohen and Brawer, 2003). Two-year institutions are commonly organized hierarchically with a board of trustees or a governing board at the apex depending upon their governing unit. Units and subunits below contend for resources and favor from those above. The number of units depicted on an organizational chart depends upon the size of the institution as well as if their institution is a part of a multicollege district or a traditional community college.

Birnbaum's (1988) portrait of People's Community College as a bureaucratic institution typifies the rationalizing structure and decision making found at most two-year colleges. Standard operating procedures tend to guide the majority of processes

created to maintain efficiency, achieve specified goals, and adhere to mandates. The organization chart depicts the lines of authority and is presumed to explain communication as well. People, or units, located close to each other on the organizational chart are more likely to influence and interact with one another. The rationalizing structure is essential to explain the predictability of behavior within the organization as well as to those outside the institution. Promotions are based on merit and those higher on the organizational chart are presumed to have greater technical competence. "This relationship between organizational status and merit is important, since it reinforces the willingness of subordinates to accept the directives of superiors by associating rank with expertise" (p. 113). As rational organizations, two-year or community colleges strive to connect their activities and resources to objectives in planning, yet at times the processes become goals in themselves. Two-year college faculty members are concerned most with teaching rather than research. Birnbaum characterizes faculty members at two-year colleges as locals rather than cosmopolitans who identify more with their disciplines, yet he does not address the role or influence of part-time instruction. Central to the community college as a bureaucratic institution, administrative authority is supreme. "It is reflected not only in the way decisions are made but also in the culture of the institution. Adherence to rules has created a coherent but in many ways superficial culture that engages the activities but not the full devotion of many participants" (p. 119).

When a branch campus houses more than one institutional type and mission, organizational challenges abound. Dual mission campuses, such as when a community college and a major research university share the same campus, can result in

significant challenges in policy development and issues related to faculty. Program offerings and resource allocation are the source of many political battles between the different institutional types (Barrett, 2007) and faculty members have different perceptions of their role. Community college faculty members perceive themselves lower on the hierarchy than university faculty while university faculty members perceive that community college faculty members do not understand the challenges associated with research and demands to publicize (Hovekamp, 2005).

Primarily because of the smaller size at branch campuses, faculty and staff are more likely to know each other and have a sense of collegiality. Strongly valuing their relationships with students, faculty and staff at branch campuses typically "wear more than one hat." With less administrative personnel on site, faculty and staff serve in a more generalist rather than a specialist role and may be one of several one-person departments. While the day-to-day environment at a branch campus is a positive one due to collegiality and familiarity, faculty and staff at branch campuses tend to feel unappreciated and undervalued by the main campus. Branch campus personnel are often frustrated, lacking autonomy on curriculum and faculty matters, including decisions regarding tenure (Wolfe, 1995). Missing from the branch campus research is the role and influence of part-time instruction. As each sector of higher education reports an increasing dependence upon part-time, temporary and non-tenure track faculty, there has been little to no research exploring their effects at branch campuses.

The experience of students in campus life at branch campuses has also been overlooked in the research. Some students at branch campuses perceive themselves as being disconnected from the main campus (Bryant, 1993). Support services and

activities offered at a branch campus may not be at the same level as at the main campus. Distance learners at branch campuses conveyed the need for additional support to be in place for them regarding student services such as financial aid (Nelson-Reed, 2006). The community college branch experience resembles the experience of other community college students in that limited time is spent on campus. In determining how best to serve students at a branch campus (Norby, 2006), institutions need a clearly developed mission to help students meet their educational goals to complete degree requirements to transfer to four-year colleges and universities.

Only one empirically-based study has addressed the launch of a branch campus. Carol-Rae Green Sodano (1998) was the Dean of the West Campus that opened in 1996 as a branch campus of Conserve Community College in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. Using an ethnographic approach, she richly described the culturally-based conflict and related institutional change resulting from a well-established community college expanding into another area of the county by opening another branch campus. Specifically, Sodano described the organizational culture of the branch campus that emerged as a result of the values and principles held by its service community and the institution of which it is a part. Sodano described the presidential role in leading the organizational change, encouraging the creative development for the new campus as well as fostering change for the community and the institution as a whole. "The transplantation process was consciously encouraged, and prepared for, by the activities of the Strategic Planning Committee and the Values Committee, both of which were charged and guided by the President" (p. 216). Finally, Sodano's findings acknowledged the conflict that arose within the organizational culture. Conflict

stemmed from the issues of loss and gain for the participants. Individuals experienced loss through diminished power, influence, and control while shared values created cohesion among participants at the new branch campus. She iterated the importance of the role of the President in mitigating conflict that will naturally occur as a result of the institutional change involving the opening of a branch campus at a community college. Sodano's research was significant to explain the cultural change that occurs as a branch campus is launched.

Entrepreneurial Academy

"This relationship between academic entrepreneurship and the public good is often marked by tension and opposition" (p. 75). Mars & Metcalfe (2009) not only acknowledge that the scholarly research regarding the entrepreneurial academy is polarized, they also draw attention to the tension that may result when market priorities dominate traditional social priorities. The public good regime, where public funds are invested for social benefit, still exists. Yet it is increasingly challenged by the academic capitalist regime, in which colleges and universities focus on entrepreneurial partnerships with the market (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Ultimately, Mars and Metcalfe urge policymakers, institutional administrators, faculty and students to "evaluate the appropriate boundaries and applications of entrepreneurship in particular higher education institutions" (p. 6) while promoting viable entrepreneurial activities that have social value.

Literature regarding the entrepreneurial academy has expanded prolifically over the past thirty years coinciding with the increased commodification of higher education. In large part, history reflects higher education serving to create a better society and

healthy democracy. Today there is much more of a belief that the primary benefits of a college education accrue to individuals rather than higher education being viewed for its broader social role and benefits (Kezar, 2005). Once pursued by a privileged few rather than by the many, a college education is now perceived as the ticket to middle-class status, an economic necessity.

Now described as an enterprise, higher education research and literature includes rhetoric associated with market forces and competition. Traditionally depending on fixed revenues, neoliberal policies and the commodification of higher education create an environment in which institutions of higher education orient themselves to market interests. The declining values of state allocations force higher education institutions to pursue new revenue streams and student markets. Ultimately, these factors converge, requiring higher education institutions to be increasingly entrepreneurial to remain competitive (Zemsky, Wegner, & Massy, 2005).

Institutions, regardless of sector or type, develop entrepreneurial strategies to become more competitive across student markets, diversifying revenue streams and maximizing resources. Entrepreneurial strategies often coincide with positioning for prestige, commonly thought to be mutually reinforcing within higher education (Brewer, Gates, & Goldman, 2002; Toma, forthcoming). Strategies broadly range from pursuing notable faculty members, marketing to recruit accomplished students, developing private partnerships, emphasizing intercollegiate athletics, relying upon auxiliary services, and highlighting academic initiatives such as honors programs and study abroad experiences. In addition to the aforementioned strategies, colleges and universities also employ strategies aimed at the periphery, thought to be more agile and

efficient, oftentimes supporting and benefitting the traditional core operations. Ultimately, these practices lend themselves to increasing discretionary spending and the likelihood of increasing costs. While entrepreneurship most commonly occurs within research universities, market-oriented academic entrepreneurship peculiar to liberal arts institutions, community colleges, and the for-profit sector also have emerged (Bok, 2002; Geiger, 2004; Kirp, 2003; Mars & Metcalfe, 2009).

Most relative to my research, Levin (2001, 2005) provided a comprehensive look at how community colleges, within the context of neoliberalism, became increasingly connected to the marketplace beginning in the 1990's. Citing several works (Dougherty & Bakia, 1998; Grubb, Badway, Bell, Bragg, & Russman, 1997; Levin, 2005), Mars & Metcalfe (2009) outline some issues and concerns regarding entrepreneurial activities within the sector.

> "This market orientation spawned more competitive and fiscally strategic organizational behaviors and a community college sector highly in tune with globalization and the needs of the knowledge economy. This alignment of community colleges with the dominant economic agenda in many ways shifted the focus away from community-centered activities and more toward the development and expansion of a technically skilled workforce" (p. 50).

Community colleges have a long history of being responsive to societal needs; today's two-year institutions are called upon to address workforce demands with a challenge to educate increasing enrollments with less governmental support. My research examined Gainesville State College, a two-year institution transforming into a four-year state college as the state of Georgia looks to increase the number of citizens

with baccalaureate degrees. Largely as a result of political and economic forces, GSC also launched a branch campus. Two-year colleges and branch campuses historically champion society's value of access, yet my research sheds light on how the combination of market and prestige orientations to students undermines the broad commitment to access. Slaughter & Rhoades (2004) discuss how historically underserved populations lose as colleges and universities attune to the market and a college education becomes another consumption item:

> "Higher education moves away from serving a broad spectrum of students and from serving societal needs by broadening access to higher education for historically underserved populations and toward serving narrow institutional aspirations and economic interests, and the interests of already privileged students" (p. 297).

Relative to historically underserved populations is the growing concern that market and prestige orientations contribute to mission creep or academic drift (Morphew & Huisman, 2002). Examining mission diversity and the tension between prestige and effectiveness, Eckel (2008) asserts that effectiveness for a college or university is the ability to deliver one's mission or goals. "Prestige broadly in U.S. higher education becomes an issue when it reflects the strategies pursued by lower status institutions to advance their standing" (p. 177). Higher education systems emphasize mission diversity, recognizing that one type of institution cannot meet the needs of all students. In researching the trend of community colleges offering baccalaureate degrees, Plecha (2007) found evidence of isomorphism, moving from institutional diversity toward institutional homogeneity.

Institutional Isomorphism

The concept of isomorphism within institutional theory also broadly informs my study of positioning Gainesville State College, particularly surrounding the rationale to launch a branch campus and pursue a change of status. Isomorphism refers to the tendency of organizations within a field to become more alike over time. In higher education, organizations strive to be like their aspirational peers, whether adopting particular practices, policies, innovations, or structures. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggest that, particularly under conditions of uncertainty, organizational decision makers tend to mimic the behavior of other organizations within their field. Within higher education, the assumption is that status and prestige help institutions survive during uncertain times. Budget cuts are tough for all sectors; however, budget cuts strike community colleges especially hard because two-year institutions are so dependent upon state allocations as a revenue source.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggest three mechanisms or forces—coercive, mimetic, and normative--precipitate organizations to mimic the behavior of other organizations that they aspire to be like, seeking legitimacy from relevant constituents. Identifying these forces help to understand why an organization engages in isomorphic behaviors. DiMaggio and Powell outline that *coercive isomorphism* occurs when an organization's behavior or practices stems from political legitimacy. "Coercive isomorphism results from formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by other organizations upon which they are dependent, and by cultural expectations in the society within which organizations function" (p. 150). Applied to higher education, pressures can be in the form of legal requirements, standards, and cultural

expectations. Coercive isomorphism occurs when institutional behavior is based on pressures from state higher education boards, state legislatures, licensing boards, and regional accreditation agencies. *Mimetic isomorphism* is the tendency for organizations to imitate or model themselves after more prestigious organizations, stemming from circumstances involving uncertainty. Within higher education, uncertainty is a powerful force, originating from either within or outside of the institution. A lack of resources, decreased enrollments, or undefined institutional goals are sources of insecurity; imitating the practices, structures, innovations, or practices of a more prestigious, successful institution can assist institutional survival. The last mechanism, or force, of isomorphism is *normative isomorphism*. Normative isomorphism "stems primarily from professionalization [which is defined as] the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work" (p. 152). The labor force within institutions is highly professionalized. Faculty members, acculturated as professional and graduate students at prestigious universities, acquire a sense of what structures and processes are legitimate from their educational background and training.

As a highly institutionalized field, higher education is extremely vulnerable to isomorphic forces. In higher education, goals are difficult to measure and the technology (e.g. teaching) is ambiguous. Because they lack objective goals and technologies, colleges and universities largely operate in normatively-defined environments, where the need to claim legitimacy is particularly important. Citing Scott (1987) and Meyer and Rowan (1977), Morphew & Huisman (2002) write about the importance of legitimacy in higher education, "In other words, a college is a college only when those inside and outside the organization view it as a legitimate version of such.

As a result, the acquisition of normatively defined practices and structures is more important for the survival of institutional organizations than are practices that enhance the efficiency of their technical processes or the quality of their organizational outputs" (p. 495-496). Furthermore, Reisman (1956) asserts that institutions with the least resources available to them will imitate institutions with more resources. Applied to the case of my research, two-year institutions will imitate the behaviors of four-year colleges in hopes of securing legitimacy and greater resources.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

I purposefully selected Gainesville State College (GSC) for my case study. Purposeful sampling is appropriate in qualitative research where the emphasis is on in-depth understanding, not generalization. "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). Having launched the Oconee Campus in June, 2003, GSC meets this standard (Patton, 2002). Additionally, as an insider researcher, I am familiar with the institution and thus better able to uncover and interpret relevant data, recognizing that there are challenges inherent to studying one's own organization.

The Oconee Campus (OC) is located in Watkinsville, Georgia, approximately forty-three miles from the main campus in Oakwood. The OC emerged following two years as an instructional center (Athens Center) in nearby Athens, Georgia. The Athens Center opened in June, 2001, sharing space with the satellite campus of Piedmont College, a private four-year liberal arts institution. GSC opened in 1964 as a community college, Gainesville Junior College. The College traditionally offered the first two-years of a liberal arts curriculum, awarding a limited number of certificate and collaborative programs with nearby technical colleges. As of October, 2005, the College became part of another tier of institutions, state colleges, added by the University System of Georgia in the late 1990's. Currently, GSC offers a limited number of baccalaureate degrees with this new classification.

My research questions focused around college aspirations, institutional strategy associated with the branch campus, and implications for practice based on the experience of the Oconee Campus—each of which are best be explored with a qualitative approach. My aim was to achieve an understanding and make meaning of the perspective of those familiar with the decisions and outcomes relevant to the strategy and process involved with branch campus as it developed. Typical to the qualitative approach, as the researcher, I was the primary instrument in data collection and analysis. "In a subjective relationship, researchers and subjects collaborate to determine meaning, generate findings, and reach conclusions. The research relationship is a partnership" (Toma, 2000, p. 177).

Data Collection

Due to the nature of my research questions, I relied heavily upon interviews to collect data. As an employee of GSC and familiar with the organization, I readily identified a set of people associated with the institution who were likely to inform the study. I was particularly interested in interviewing individuals at the executive level, as well as those who participated in the decisions relevant to the branch campus as it emerged. I interviewed individuals based at the main campus in addition to others working at the branch campus. Respondents hold leadership positions or occupy roles with some degree of supervision. Several teach in addition to having supervisory responsibilities. I had no problems scheduling and meeting with individuals who remain a part of the institution; however, I was not able to interview a key executive officer who had moved on to become a president at another institution.

An extensive review of institutional documents triangulated my data. Patton (2002) explains that, “Different kinds of data may yield somewhat different results because different types of inquiry are sensitive to different real-world nuances. Thus, understanding inconsistencies in findings across different kinds of data can be illuminative” (p. 248). Upon permission, and in order to strengthen my study, I reviewed a wide variety of documents such as enrollment reports, accreditation reports, organizational charts, press releases, annual reports, fact books, letters, and other institutional reports (Yin, 2003). Documents provided a written testament of how the College articulated to stakeholders its aspirations as well as supporting rationale for institutional developments. Documents also record context for institutional decisions.

I used a general interview guide approach (Patton, 2002) outlining questions generated from the research questions. I derived questions from examining literature underpinning my study, aimed at understanding institutional behavior. General themes of questions dealt with college ambitions, institutional emphases and intended outcomes for launching the branch campus, allowing me to evaluate what was involved in launching the branch campus. Based on experience and knowledge regarding the branch campus, I asked each participant to make suggestions for future branch campuses. Semi-structured interviews permitted me to ask questions that emerged during the interviews. In large part, questions addressed processes (including why or how something happened at the college) and understanding (what happened and what did this mean) from the perceptions of senior administrators and others familiar with the institution and the branch campus.

I conducted all eleven interviews in June and early July, 2009. Prior to beginning each interview, I went over the approved consent form and addressed questions that arose. I digitally recorded interviews that spanned 45 minutes to an hour-and-a-half. I took notes throughout the interviews, allowing me to subsequently follow up or introduce another topic. Due to the time intensity of the process, I had interviews transcribed and then sent verbatim transcriptions to those interviewed for their review; most returned transcriptions with minimal corrections or extensions of their remarks.

Analysis of Data

I simultaneously analyzed data as it was collected (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Merriam, 2002). I began processing interviews and documents, making sense and meaning of the information while being cautious not to rush to premature conclusions (Patton, 2002). Creating transcriptions following interviews allowed me to carry out the inductive process involved with the constant comparative method (Glazer & Strauss, 1967). Along with making notes and comments in the margins of transcripts, I began coding bits of information into groups or categories that captured some recurring pattern or theme, assigning category names that reflected the purpose of my study. I refined categories with the iterative process, comparing categories with the overall data to test the emergent understandings while searching for alternative explanations (Glazer & Strauss). The overlapping process continued until the interaction or relatedness of the findings were captured, minimized, and conceptualized.

Three domains surfaced via repeated reviews of transcripts and the constant comparative approach—the evolution of institutional vision over the past decade, the intended and unintended outcomes involving the branch campus strategy, and other

implications for practice when launching a branch campus based on interviewees' experience. Within the institutional vision domain, three themes resonated with data analysis regarding ambitions—excelling as a two-year unit of the University System of Georgia, opportunity and growth, and a new status. The second domain corresponded to outcomes, both intended and unintended, pertaining to the branch campus. Even though I asked questions specific to intended outcomes, participants offered unintended outcomes in describing the branch campus experience. Along with the unintended outcomes, participants suggested lessons learned from the branch campus experience. Seven themes advanced, corresponding to areas or dimensions warranting institutional attention when launching a branch campus—emphasizing mission; building resources; committing to planning; valuing culture; clarifying organizational relationships and branch mission; addressing needs of students peculiar to the branch; and establishing community support. Each of these themes resonated with the majority (at least six of the eleven participants). I address these themes as recommendations for practice in the final chapter.

As the final step of the inductive process, I wrote the report of findings and conclusions in a case study narrative. My narrative chronicled the aspirations and direction of Gainesville State College over the past decade, providing context for why the institution employed the branch campus. I concluded with factors significant to institutions considering launching a branch as a strategy, including organizational issues that warrant attention peculiar to a branch campus model.

Researcher's Position and Assumptions

I made the principled choice to research my own organization. First, my passion for this topic runs deep. In opposition to the traditional positivist research paradigm, I believe that research can have personal significance. I have served in a key role in the branch campus since its inception as an instructional center (Athens Center) in 2001. I struggled to find any information or research to assist me as a manager in leading organizational efforts with transitioning to a branch campus. Mehra (2002) points out, "A researcher's personal beliefs and values are reflected not only in the choice of methodology and interpretation of findings, but also in the choice of a research topic. In other words, what we believe in determines what we want to study". As qualitative research draws strength from the relationship and interaction of the researcher to the topic (Toma, 2000), I am aware of the importance of reflection in my role as insider.

I found advantages in qualitatively studying my own organization. First, I share an established level of trust with my colleagues. I believed that this trust enabled my colleagues to share openly, confident in my ability to understand because I was a part of the same organizational experience. Additionally, my intimate knowledge of the case allowed me to dig deeper than an outsider could, providing better access to valuable documents (Hartley, Montato, and Toma, 2008) that strengthened my study.

All research must address bias. Denzin (as cited in Patton, 2002) states,

> "Value-free interpretive research is impossible. This is the case because every researcher brings preconceptions and interpretations to the problem being studied…All scholars are caught in the circle of interpretation. They can never be free of the hermeneutical situation. This means that scholars must state

beforehand their prior interpretations of the phenomenon being investigated" (p. 569).

To clarify my assumptions as researcher as well as a manager at a branch campus, I believe that branch campuses have a distinctive organizational culture due to their distance from the main campus and lack of autonomy in governance. With faculty and staff who often feel somewhat undervalued and isolated from decision-making, branch campus managers play a vital role in creating an organizational structure and culture built on the strengths of familiarity and collegiality. Along with consistently bargaining for resources and political favor, branch campus managers must constantly be a conduit of communication between the main campus and branch organization. As a researcher studying my own institution, my experience and values of my profession as a social worker and student affairs professional lend themselves to the practice of critical self-reflection. In addition to reporting my position and assumptions, I consistently reflected on adopting a stance of neutrality in that I did not set out to prove a particular perspective or support predetermined results (Patton, 2002). Finally, I employed strategies to ensure trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln & Guba (1985) defined trustworthiness criteria to judge the quality or soundness in qualitative research as opposed to the traditional criteria for judging quantitative research. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability encompass trustworthiness criteria. As a constructivist inquiry, trustworthiness emphasizes criteria applicable to the view that the social world is socially, politically, and psychologically constructed.

Credibility criteria are the qualitative parallels to the traditional criteria of internal validity in quantitative research. Credibility involves establishing that the results are credible or believable and from the perspective of the participants. Along with stating my assumptions and biases, to ensure credibility, I employed the strategies of triangulation, member checks, and peer examination (Merriam, 2002). Triangulation involved my use of multiple sources of evidence, interviews and document review, to test for consistency. With member checks, I asked some of the participants to comment on my interpretation of the data. I received some suggestions, allowing me to better capture their perspective. Finally, peer review consisted of having fellow graduate students read and comment on my narrative in addition to suggestions from my major professor.

Transferability pertains to the alternative criterion of judging qualitative research that parallels the traditional criterion of external validity. Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other cases. To ensure for transferability, I wrote a case narrative providing a thick description of what happened at the institution with the branch campus and its context. The comprehensive account, including participant quotations and ample information from institutional documents, allows the reader to judge its transferability.

As opposed to reliability in the traditional quantitative approach, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest thinking about *dependability* or consistency of the results for the qualitative approach. Schwandt (2001) describes dependability as "focused on the process of the inquiry and the inquirer's responsibility for ensuring that the process was logical, traceable, and documented" (p. 258). To ensure for dependability, I applied

triangulation of data sources and provided an audit trail. With the audit trail, I kept a notebook recording details of my data collection and process of analysis.

The final trustworthiness criterion is *confirmability*. Confirmability refers to having the results being confirmed or corroborated by others. To ensure confirmability, I incorporated member checks and peer review, as explained in my strategies, to ensure credibility.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Over the past decade, Gainesville State College's experience resembles many other institutions within the American higher education landscape. Globalization, increasing accountability, and educating more students with less support from traditional sources are just a few of the daunting challenges facing postsecondary institutions, including GSC. As the institution has adapted in an environment in which expectations are increasing and traditional funding sources are decreasing, findings exemplify why Gainesville State College has become more ambitious over the past decade, embracing the entrepreneurial spirit that is an increasing feature at higher education institutions across the country and around the world. This chapter chronicles how the vision or aspirations of GSC have evolved over the past decade, along with investigating what has contributed to increasing ambitions.

Drawing broadly on the concepts of academic entrepreneurialism and institutional isomorphism discussed in Chapter 2, my findings and analysis address the following research questions pertaining to understanding the strategic behavior of GSC over the past decade:

1. What aspirations have come to represent the vision at GSC?
2. Have these aspirations reshaped the mission of GSC?
3. How did launching the Oconee Campus advance the mission and aspirations of GSC?

4. What does the branch experience at the Oconee Campus suggest for launching branch campuses in the future?

Based on my interviews and review of documents, I organized the narrative to reflect how Gainesville State College has transformed, coinciding with three moments over the past decade. Each moment is reflective of a particular aspiration at the college—an evolution in its vision. While I may present these as distinct and chronological, the time periods overlap as they relate to the institutional vision. After presenting each aspiration, I draw generally on the concept of isomorphism in its three forms (DiMaggio & Powell; 1983) in a subsection titled "understanding institutional behavior," thus exploring my first three research questions aimed to address how Gainesville State College has transformed. Chapter 5 addresses my final research question, providing recommendations regarding improved practice related to launching a branch campus.

Leading the Way

Gainesville College, a two-year unit of the University System of Georgia, closed out the 1990's as a period largely characterized by stability. Participants described Gainesville College as a great place to work, with a very stable core of faculty members and an emphasis on teaching. "The work environment was cooperative, collaborative. It was sort of a community environment. Everyone had the best interest of students in mind." Participants described a typical day at the commuter campus--students would drive in to attend classes, and a number would enjoy intramurals and other clubs during a common activity hour at 11 a.m. prior to heading home or to jobs in the local area. Afternoons included a significantly lower number of class sections, followed by "the night students" (around 30% of enrollment) arriving around 5 or 5:30 p.m. after a day of

full-time work. "We were primarily an open access institution and had a number of non-traditional students, and they were with us to take core curriculum courses and in areas of concentration that we had at the time." While offering certificate degrees and collaborative programs with nearby technical colleges, GC's curriculum largely consisted of courses within liberal arts programs. Enrollment was fairly stable prior to the turn of the century. "(Until the late 90's) it seemed as if we were bumping up against 3,000 students and not quite getting there….for several years in a row, we were falling just short of 3,000 students, and each year we thought the next year it would finally happen, but it didn't."

Notable institutional events in the final years of the twentieth century included a successful conversion from the quarter system to the semester system (1996), a new President (1997), and finally surpassing 3,000 students in fall of 1999. Dr. Nesbitt began her tenure as the third President of Gainesville College in July, 1997. When she became President, she recalled that her desire was to "nurture the great environment that we had on campus." Including participation from campus stakeholders, President Nesbitt quickly began developing a strategic plan titled, "Spanning the Millennium 1998-2003," with no plans for campus expansion or expansion of curricular offerings.

Prior to the 2001 campus expansion, participants described similar perspectives of the College vision: "We were simply a two-year unit of the University System of Georgia and we were meeting the need as a two-year unit would, and that was it. There were no major plans of any change as I was aware." Several mentioned the institution offering a very limited number of night courses at a high school in a neighboring county and a growing joint enrollment program, yet most concurred with

this participant's comment, "It was primarily just to serve the local community and really wasn't looking to go much beyond the Hall County/Gainesville location."

Annual reports frequently articulated Gainesville College as a point of pride for the community, "leading the way" for students in Northeast Georgia. The President introduced the 1999-2000 annual report with the following statement:

> "What an exciting year for Gainesville College as we spanned the new century. Enrollment for the fall of 1999 surpassed 3,000 students, a record. Students are attracted to the College because of our focus on personal attention, our highly qualified faculty who are caring mentors and advisors, our strong academic and student support services that enhance student success, the wide array of student activities and the opportunities for service learning."

After pointing out successes such as renovations and construction of facilities, the award-winning Gainesville Theatre Alliance, and a large number of community outreach activities, she concluded the President's Message section, "With such support from the community and with the accomplishments of 1999-2000, the College is committed to pursuing the quest of "leading the way" in serving the students and community of Northeast Georgia" (p.1). When referring to Gainesville College's vision at that time, one participant described Gainesville College thusly, "it was a small, associate's degree-granting institution that prided itself in preparing students for transfer to four-year programs."

Gainesville College also enjoyed being recognized as being at the top of the two-year sector within the University System of Georgia. In referencing another record enrollment semester in fall 2000, the annual report stated, "An ever-increasing number

are coming from farther away to attend one of the 'best two-year colleges in the state.'" Annual reports referenced the aspiration: "Gainesville College students continued to score well on the Regents Test. Consistently, the pass rate is higher than the average for the System two-year institutions and for most four-year institutions" (1999-2000, p. 3). Another reference to benchmarking with other two-year units within the USG: "Gainesville College is the first two-year college in the University System of Georgia to fund an Eminent Scholar Endowed Chair" (p. 5). A participant remarked regarding the vision, "My understanding of the vision was to be the best two-year college in the University System of Georgia. There were no aspirations for other campuses or ambitions for Bachelor's degrees. It was to excel as the best access institution in the System." Annual reports consistently provide a testament to that aspiration:

> "Our students, who are our primary focus, continue to succeed at Gainesville College. In a study conducted by the University System of Georgia, we have the highest retention rate of any two-year college in the state. In addition, we know from System records that our students perform very well after transferring from us. We believe the secret of our success is based on the committed and caring faculty and staff, a rigorous academic program, small classes, and strong academic support services" (2000-2001, p. 2).

Other examples referencing the institutional aspiration to excel at the top of the two-year sector: "Gainesville College has the third highest JE/PSO enrollment of all the 34 system institutions" (p. 11), and "GC students gave the College an A+ on the 2001 Student Opinion Survey" (2001-2002).

Finally, at the completion of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Self-Study and Re-accreditation Visit in January, 2002, Gainesville College received what is an unusually high number of commendations— five. The list of five commendations included the:

1. College's visionary leadership in bringing baccalaureate and graduate course opportunities to its campus and constituents (via the University Center established in October, 2000);
2. Quality and comprehensiveness of the Self-Study;
3. Academic, Computing, Tutoring, and Testing (ACTT) Center for providing a nurturing, and user-friendly environment for the students and faculty;
4. Student-friendly and learning-centered atmosphere on campus; and,
5. Fund-raising support provided by the Gainesville College Foundation, Inc. and the community.

A quote from Dr. Nesbitt appeared in the 2001-2002 annual report: "In my approximately 20 years of experience on SACS visiting teams, I have never participated on a team that has given more than two commendations…What an exciting event in the life of the College." In wrapping up coverage on the SACS report, "Gainesville College, had prepared a successful report, but more importantly, we are doing what we say we do—'leading the way' in providing a quality, academically sound education for our students."

Understanding Institutional Behavior

Addressing my research questions regarding institutional behavior, my investigation revealed that, during the late 1990's and early into the new century, GC

operated as a successful, two-year institution within the University System of Georgia. Enjoying stability in resources and institutional size, faculty and staff shared a sense of community working at the institution. At that time, there were no ambitions for the institution to be anything beyond educating students regarding the first two years of college. Everyone conveyed a shared purpose and institutional mission.

While some faculty members held the terminal doctorate degree, the majority of instructors held master's degrees. Familiar within other two-year public institutions or community colleges, the organizational governance resided primarily with a central executive council. The organizational chart depicted few levels between the President and support staff within various units or cost centers. A faculty senate existed, yet it was not very vocal or influential in decision-making.

The institution drew a large percentage of its total revenue from the state, relatively buffered from the market. GC desired increasing student enrollment, yet it was not a major emphasis. The Gainesville community and surrounding counties, where the majority of students enrolled at Gainesville College originated, held a strong and positive view of the College. GC benefitted from its reputation, frequently being recognized as a leading unit within the two-year sector of the University System of Georgia and its regional accreditor, SACS.

No significant isomorphic behaviors existed at GC during the late 1990's and into the early twentieth century, due in large part to stability in revenues, the absence of competition, or other political forces. Not only was the institution leading the way for local students, GC served as a model two-year unit within the University System of Georgia. However, things soon would change.

Growth and Opportunity

Gainesville College entered into the new millennium with the beginnings of a major growth trend. The escalating population in the northeast Georgia area and the addition of another campus converged, resulting in exponential growth for the institution. Upon receiving permission to expand, GC opened an instructional center in the Athens area, the first step to an incredible opportunity for enrollment growth significant to the vision and direction of the institution. Resources gained through increasing enrollment provided the institution with visible signs of progress (such as additional facilities and technology) as well as other academic initiatives that garner recognition such as adding baccalaureate degrees, substantial grants, and study abroad. With growth and opportunity, the institution quickly transformed from a place of stability to an organization experiencing incredible change, resulting in isomorphic behaviors and subsequently shaping the mission.

Expanding To Athens—The Opportunity Develops

President Nesbitt shared these thoughts regarding the origin of expanding to Athens, "When I became President (in July, 1997), the Chancellor asked me, he said, 'I'd like you to go over and start offering some classes in the Athens area'…He had the thought as I was coming in because he really felt like we were missing an opportunity since there were students driving over from Athens, but there obviously was a market over there." Dr. Nesbitt indicated that she did meet with UGA administrators in the fall of 1997 about possibly using some of their facilities during the afternoons or evenings, yet expanding to Athens was "put on the backburner" at that time. She moved ahead with developing strategic planning efforts, typical of a president new to a college or

university. President Nesbitt reflected on the process: The "1998-2003 Spanning the Millennium Strategic Plan," included the projection of 2-3% a year growth, yet the President recalled a conversation with Dr. John Hamilton, a faculty member who, at the time, also worked with institutional research. The President remembered saying to John, "I think that's a little too small." Prior to the Athens expansion, cumulative enrollment at Gainesville College increased steadily. From fall 1998 to fall 2000, GC recorded over a 12% cumulative growth, from 2,848 to 3,254 students. One participant described GC's enrollment in the context of expansion, "We were in a growth trend….so we were poised to keep moving ahead."

One participant recalled that the subject of expanding to Athens came up again around the 1999-2000 academic year. "The USG was entertaining proposals for establishing two-year accessible, affordable opportunities in the Athens area…and there were other institutions that were interested in being in the Athens area…Georgia Perimeter was another one; I can't recall off the top of my head who the others may have been, but Perimeter was definitely one that had the same interest we did." Dr. Nesbitt recollected when considering expanding to the Athens area,

> "I did not really come with a vision of creating a second campus. There's a lot to be said for one campus. I had been at a multicampus institution and I know that it presents challenges, but at the same time, I think we had an obligation to serve the students of Northeast Georgia and so when we had that chance, we needed to take it. I was also under clear directions from the Chancellor that 'you don't need to be thinking about 4-year', and so we didn't even push that…"

Influenced by political drivers such as the Chancellor's encouragement regarding the expansion and, later, competition from other institutions, GC's situation is familiar throughout higher education. Highly susceptible to economic, political, and social forces, two-year or community colleges respond with initiatives aligning with the demand-side perspective of entrepreneurship, particularly in times of uncertain resources (Mars & Metcalfe, 2009). At this point in time, GC had experienced stability with its resources. However, the expansion to the Athens area was a risk, a compelling risk considering the competition for the opportunity to reach more students with the additional location coincided with influential direction from the then Chancellor regarding pursuit of offering of four-year degrees.

President Nesbitt began by expanding the responsibilities of Dr. Ronnie Booth, who had recently been hired to oversee the University Center, to include off-campus initiatives. Dr. Booth came to GC from Piedmont College, a private four-year liberal arts institution based in Demorest, Georgia, with a satellite operation in Athens. Soon Dr. Booth worked out the arrangement for GC to use Piedmont's building in Athens during the day while Piedmont primarily offered graduate professional programs in the evenings, targeting the working adult student.

On May 8, 2001, Gainesville College received the official notification from Dr. Daniel S. Papp, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academics and Fiscal Affairs that GC had been selected to expand into the Athens area. Dr. Papp outlined three reasons for selecting GC as the best option to move into Athens: geographical mission (GC's mission included Northeast Georgia whereas GPC cited the Metro Atlanta area); complexity of administration (GPC already had four campuses while GC had one

campus); and costs (GC's rent-free arrangement with Piedmont was beneficial). The memo concluded, "Gainesville College is hereby authorized to establish an instructional site in Athens to serve students in the Athens area and elsewhere in northeastern Northeast Georgia who qualify for admissions to a two-year institution but not to The University of Georgia." In early June, 2001, GC opened an office inside the Piedmont building at 468 North Milledge Avenue in Athens, enrolling students for fall semester classes that began on August 19, 2001.

Dr. Booth, GC's Vice President for External Affairs, led the Athens Task Force, created to plan and prepare for the first semester at the GC Athens Center. Membership of the Task Force spanned a number of areas, including academic affairs, student affairs, institutional technology and business affairs. The first term (fall semester 2001), the Athens Center recorded an enrollment of 218 students. The schedule of courses for the first term at the Athens Center consisted of 33 sections, 17 sections taught by GC full-time faculty members. In one year, the enrollment almost tripled for the Athens Center. With a fall 2002 enrollment of 627, the College quickly outgrew the Piedmont College space. GC leased a house across the street for academic support and entered into contractual agreements with Alps Road Elementary School and the Medical College's School of Nursing at Athens (SONAT) to hold evening classes.

Gainesville College also began the search for additional space and a larger permanent location. Dr. Booth and the College presented a number of options to move GC operations, but then in December, 2002, the President of Truett-McConnell (a private, two-year Baptist-affiliated institution based in Cleveland, Georgia) approached

Dr. Nesbitt about purchasing its satellite facility in Watkinsville in Oconee County, adjacent to Athens. GC's move into the area, as a two-year public institution within the University System of Georgia offering lower tuition, had created market-based change, prompting the private college to sell its satellite campus, using the profits to expand their mission to a four-year college at their main campus in White County.

An institutional white paper recounts the process of transitioning campus ownership: In March, 2003, the Board of Regents authorized the purchase of the facility for GC by the University of Georgia's Real Estate Foundation…The Foundation negotiated the sales price of $7,250,000 that included equipment valued at $1,200,000. The total bond issue through the Oconee County Industrial Authority was $8,215,000. The property turned over to GC in late May, 2003, and the College offered its June/July summer classes at the new facility in Watkinsville. A letter dated April 16, 2003 from President Nesbitt addressed to Dr. Dan Papp requested approval to use the name "Oconee Campus" to describe the new location of GC in the Athens area. "Since our new location is in Oconee County and given the strong local support we have received in that county, we believe this name best describes our presence in the area." In a letter to President Nesbitt, dated March 13, 2003, G. Melvin Davis, Chair of the Board of Commissioners of Oconee County, welcomed Gainesville College to its new Oconee Campus. "We are pleased that the institution is now a member of our community. We look forward to working with you in many capacities. Gainesville College will make a significant impact on this community." GC deepened its entrepreneurial commitment with the purchase of its new permanent location, the Oconee Campus. The 2002-2003 Annual Report documented the acquisition of the Campus:

> "which will serve as a point of access to the University System of Georgia for students in Northeast Georgia who wish to attend a two-year USG college or who do not meet the requirements for admission as first year students at four-year institutions. The strong fiscal management of the administration coupled with the hard work and extra efforts of a dedicated faculty and staff, the College weathered the tight budget year quite well. Situations such as these accentuate just how important proper planning and goal setting are to the success of an institution" (p. 2).

GC soon began negotiating the inherent risks associated with its entrepreneurship, defined as "those activities that combine risk, innovation, and opportunity, particularly in times of uncertain resources" (Mars & Metcalfe, 2009, p. 3). Isomorphic forces, particularly coercive forces, called for GC's negotiation of risk and opportunity.

The Branch--Oconee Campus

Gainesville College quickly converted the buildings at its new campus, offering thirty-two sections during the remainder of the summer (June and July) schedule. GC's IT department spent countless hours updating the technological and network capacity (installing more than 30,000 feet of wiring), the Bookstore scurried to stock books, and a large number of people from the main campus helped re-label books and materials for circulation in the Library. Everyone responded well to the transition, but the challenges soon began. The branch would begin its first fall term with a change in leadership. Dr. Ronnie Booth, set to be the Executive Dean for the Oconee Campus, left Gainesville College, accepting the presidency of a community college in South Carolina.

Meanwhile, applications for enrollment surged. On July 16 and 22, 2003, the Campus held its first orientation sessions for new students accepted for fall term. Students and parents overwhelmed the limited number of staff and faculty on-hand; during those two days, GC registered 882 students enrolled in at least one section offered at the Oconee Campus. The institution anticipated 1,200 students to attend the branch campus in the fall, yet to the surprise of the College, enrollment exceeded 1,700 students.

> "We inherited a good number of students from Truett-McConnell College…we didn't do advertising, but word got out that there was this Oconee Campus for Gainesville College in Watkinsville, and we grew overnight exponentially to the point where we weren't quite prepared for that…every person felt like we're stretched. We ended up needing to put more students in a class than we previously had done. We just felt like we were bursting at the seams in every aspect of what we did-- classroom space, resources for students, resources for faculty."

All participant accounts acknowledged the overwhelming challenges beginning for GC in fall 2003 at the Oconee Campus. Everyone conveyed how needs and concerns due to the enrollment growth quickly outstripped all resources and personnel. Common concerns expressed included the need for space, for academic support, for administrative support, and for increases in full-time faculty members. One interviewee provided this vivid account, "We had around 1,800 that first year and we had planned for 1,200, and I remember in nightmares the July that year when we were scrambling to find classes and teachers to teach the extra 600 students." With the new campus and

its surprising increase in enrollment, GC relied heavily upon part-time instruction, a nationwide trend in higher education corresponding to the academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime, a defining feature of the entrepreneurial academy (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Mars & Metcalfe, 2009). "All kinds of things were tried to find faculty to teach there, but the bottom line was, we had very few lines to assign to the Oconee Campus, and so the vast majority of the teaching had to be part-time faculty, had to be adjunct faculty." Another participant put it this way, "We had a lot of part-time faculty. I don't remember the numbers, but it was proportionately larger part-time faculty. And that was a concern."

Organizational challenges relevant to the branch campus were outlined within an institutional white paper: "The following year, we added more full-time faculty but still were far too dependent on part-time faculty because enrollment rose to 1,997." The institution increased staff when they could, up to fourteen staff members within the first year (*Tower Talk*, January 23, 2004). GC hired fifteen new full-time faculty members to teach in fall 2005. Full-time contracts outlined teaching five sections one term and 4 sections the other term; some taught overloads or additional sections beyond the stipulations included in 10-month contracts. The August 19, 2005 issue of *Tower Talk*, GC's weekly newsletter, noted the new tenure-track faculty as well as six full-time faculty members teaching on both campuses. As depicted by table 4.6 on page 75, the institution increased the number of full-time faculty positions in subsequent years, decreasing the proportion of instruction provided by part-time or adjunct faculty.

Organizationally, the enrollment demands forced faculty and staff at the branch to be very dependent on each other, wearing "multiple hats." No departments really

existed; everyone identified themselves with the campus while each reported to departments or divisions housed at the main campus in Gainesville. The physical campus (comprised of three buildings) was very small, so most faculty and staff were familiar with one another. A central workroom housed copiers and mailboxes, providing the only space on campus for employees to chat in between classes. Interviewees based at the Oconee Campus conveyed that a sense of collegiality emerged; a campus needs assessment (conducted by graduate students from The University of Georgia) in 2005 cited collegiality as an organizational strength. Space was lacking—full-time faculty members shared offices; part-time faculty members all shared one office filled with cubicles; student organizations and Student Life competed for space for events; and physical education classes were contracted out to local facilities.

GC's challenge increased as the explosive enrollment coupled with budget cuts. One participated explained, "About the time we opened that campus, there was a budget crisis, so the state was not able to give us funding to support the growth that was happening there." As a public, two-year institution, GC depended heavily on state allocations. State allocations coercively influence institutions to maintain and increase enrollments, yet allocations weren't aligning with the enrollment formula funding model for the University System of Georgia. President Nesbitt recalls, "We never got the allocation based on our 34% enrollment growth…it was something, like we did not get $865,000 of what we should have gotten for the new growth based on that 34% growth. Well, that's a bunch of faculty!" Enrollment strategy is fundamental to a public, two-year institution, relying upon the state to provide appropriations based on student growth. Recognized as the most common contributor to academic entrepreneurship, the political

and economical conditions correspond to the demand-side perspective (Mars & Metcalfe, 2009) and coercive isomorphic forces (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Along with reporting points of pride and outstanding accomplishments of faculty, staff, and students, annual reports consistently testified to the increasing student enrollment over the past several years. The 2004-2005 annual report highlighted the national recognition of the college:

> "Gainesville State College was recognized in the December 6, 2004, issue of *Community College Week* as the Fastest-Growing Public Two-Year College in the Nation for the 2004 academic year. Based on the research conducted by the Community College Week, Gainesville State College experienced phenomenal growth in headcount during the 2004 academic year with a 27% increase over 2003 enrollment figures in the category of schools with 5,000 to 9,999 students…This exceptionally high percentage in growth is due largely to the addition of the Gainesville State College Oconee Campus which is located in Watkinsville, GA" (p. 10).

Managers at the Oconee Campus maximized facilities and space, offering classes beginning at 7 a.m. and ending at 9:45 p.m. in the evening with a minimal schedule on Saturdays. The proportion of hybrid classes and online classes rose as well to ease space constraints encountered with enrollment demand. One participant conveyed how GC grappled with the enrollment challenge, "Initially it was just putting students in—overloading sections, and then we ended up evolving to the place where we started putting students in classes at the Gainesville Campus (forty-three miles away). We just couldn't grow anymore."

The institution had not anticipated the enrollment at the branch to grow so quickly, yet another unintended outcome compounded the challenge for the institution associated with the branch. One participant pointed to the concern that grew after moving from the Athens site to the branch location: "We were still providing access, but in terms of reach—we were getting students from Savannah; we were getting students from Dalton; we were getting students from Alpharetta. So the whole Northeast Georgia thing was changing…" Another responded, "I think the one thing we didn't anticipate was that about a third of the student body would come from around the state and be the Athens wanna-be's, but on the other hand, we're serving a real need there because we take the pressure off of UGA." Applications for admissions to UGA far exceed the number admitted, creating a very large demand and, consequently, increasingly higher SAT scores. Without any recruiting efforts, students from across the state of Georgia and beyond enrolled at Gainesville College. Desiring the experience of living in Athens, a number of these students planned to earn credits at Gainesville College with the intent of transferring to UGA, the flagship institution within the state.

> "Eventually we recognized that a lot of students who were going there weren't really necessarily interested in Gainesville State College but were interested in being in Athens, and parents being able to say their son or daughter was going to school in Athens. And I think the students wanted to have that Athens connection and have access to the Athens lifestyle."

Each year the College enrolled an increasing number of students originating from beyond the Northeast Georgia area outlined in its mission. Not only were these students from another area of the state, but they also presented other differences.

> "We were pulling students from all over the state. And maybe seeing an uptick in what we call the helicopter parent syndrome where the parents were almost co-enrolled with their students. Maybe a little more sense of entitlement in the student body than in the past student body."

Students at the branch were more traditional-aged, desiring full-time status. Figures 4.1 - 4.5 on pages 75-79 confirm the county of origin of students enrolled at the institution. On pages 72-73, tables 4.1 - 4.3 illustrate how GSC gained student enrollment market position with the launching of the Oconee Campus branch in the fall of 2003. Additionally, Oconee Campus students were less diverse and from families with more resources than those students at the Gainesville Campus or the Athens Center. One participant framed it this way:

> "We were in an environment full of traditional-aged students particularly that had expectations of the collegiate experience that we were not prepared to provide—not just education in the classroom, but a collegiate experience. And because of space, human resources constraints, fiscal constraints—we weren't positioned to do that."

Space constraints preventing access to anyone that qualifies for admission, coupled with serving students originating from beyond the Northeast Georgia area, resulted in a dilemma for GSC. The institution did not have the resources, or political support, to expand facilities to serve more students.

> "We know we could have a much larger student body, and we've been stymied in our growth. Some of it may be political. There's some resistance to allowing our Oconee Campus to grow…we know we can serve far more—very easily—and do

> it well. We just need the space, and we need the resources to hire the faculty and staff to do it."

Shortly after the fall 2006 semester began, President Nesbitt chaired a task force to explore managing enrollment on the Oconee Campus. She explained, "As an access institution, that is a challenge, but the College developed a plan with a target headcount of 2,250 for fall, 2007." Along with a commitment to keep class sizes small, GSC adopted a first-come-first-served method of enrollment for the branch. Students applying to Gainesville State College indicate a preference of campus, yet the College cannot guarantee enrollment at the campus preferred. Additionally, the task force addressed strategies to notify students from Northeast Georgia regarding the first-come-first-served enrollment related to the Oconee Campus. On top of strongly encouraging students from the local area in PROBE Fairs and visits to high schools to apply early, Admissions planned special events for high school counselors, conveying the need for local students to apply and register early to be assured of enrollment in classes at the Oconee Campus. Circumstances warranted the change in enrollment procedures; for students, the implications are difficult. Due to the lack of class availability at the branch, each term, students registering later in the enrollment cycle may find themselves driving forty-three miles north to the Gainesville Campus. One participant described the results:

> "Every semester that number has grown, and the number of students who could from those who had schedules at both campuses or all at the other campus, but preferred the Oconee Campus, couldn't get classes here. So now, as of last fall (2008), we had over 600 students who preferred this campus, but didn't have a

> single class at the Oconee Campus. That's quite a number of students burning up the miles between campuses. That's probably not the best way for brand new students to start college."

Unfortunately, some students cannot afford to drive to the Gainesville Campus. Other students cannot fit driving to the Gainesville Campus into schedules that include work or other responsibilities. Finally, a number of students choose not to enroll or delay enrollment at GSC. The situation at the branch campus resulted in reshaping the mission of the institution (Levin, 2001; Mars & Metcalfe, 2009; Zemksy, Wegner, & Massy, 2005). Currently, the high school closest in proximity to the Oconee Campus, Oconee County High School, stands as the largest feeder of students enrolled at the branch campus. The counties contiguous to the Oconee Campus also provide increasing numbers of students, contributing to access and increasing student aspirations in those local areas. However, the proportion of students enrolling at GSC from beyond the local counties remains a barrier to access for the local student population.

Interviewees expressed that limiting access contradicted the mission of an access institution. As an institutional strategy, launching the branch unequivocally resulted in enrollment growth, beneficial to realizing increased revenues. However, market demand relative to the branch campus also prompted the contentious situation linked to its access mission. In reflecting on the branch campus strategy, participants communicated the intended and the unintended outcomes relative to the Oconee Campus. Interviewees conveyed the intent of expanding access:

> "For somebody from Athens-Clarke County, Oglethorpe County who could get into The University of Georgia, there were certainly opportunities for them. For those who could not, it was a long drive from Oconee County to Gainesville to get that education. So I think the initial intention was to provide an access education for those who could not get into UGA into another part of the state that was nearby. I think that really was the initial goal."

Another participant offered this perspective:

> "We knew that there was an opportunity for us over near Athens. I presume it's just to build—to grow…I'm not sure exactly how much the leadership focused on growth for growth's sake or growth for our mission to serve Northeast Georgia..We had people who were willing to seize the opportunity to do it."

Due to some of the unintended outcomes, participants offered mixed responses when asked if the College had realized what it had hoped for with the Oconee Campus. President Nesbitt responded: "Yes, I think we are serving those who needed to be served over there." Another participant emphasized,

> "Yes, to a certain extent very much so. I think the population of Clarke-Oconee-Oglethorpe Counties, Morgan and Greene, Madison to a certain extent, Barrow and Jackson because those are shared contiguous counties with the Gainesville Campus, but I think we have definitely had an impact on raising the opportunities for education and to a certain extent raising the aspirations of individuals in that area."

The response from this interviewee summarized the majority when asked if the Oconee Campus has served its intended strategic role:

> "Somewhat. I think those that get their applications in on time and know what the process needs to be in order to successfully get into Gainesville State College and get the classes on the Oconee Campus—it's being met to that extent. There's still another whole population of non-traditional students that we hoped to reach in the service area that has not been reached to a significant extent to this point in time. So there's still a lot of opportunity in there to serve that population better that is not being met basically because of the fiscal and physical limitations in that area. Would we be able to expand that campus, would we be able to build on that campus a little bit more? We would be able to come a lot closer to meeting that. The fact that we're an access institution means that we hold our doors open and whoever applies and meets the criteria, we accept—our admissions standards have never been focused on any geographic limitations, so we're accepting students from a good distance away because they want to be in Athens, so to that extent, if we serve them, we're not serving people who live in our service area—since we do have the limitations that we have, some of those folks who we would like to be able to serve in the local community are not being served because students in other counties are beating them to the punch."

Understanding Institutional Behavior

Coercive forces increased, significantly shaping Gainesville College's behavior. Highly dependent upon the resource stream of state allocations from the University System of Georgia, increasing enrollment to generate more revenue based on formula funding became an institutional priority. Along with fiscal uncertainty amid the recession, GC required more revenue due to increasing costs associated not only with

serving an increasing number of students, but also with the increasing costs of adding an additional campus location and, at that time, possibly developing to state college status.

Gainesville College's formal strategic plans never included expanding with a branch campus, yet other coercive forces within the institutional environment prompted institutional behavior. In 1997, the Chancellor of the USG urged Dr. Nesbitt to expand into the Athens area, yet after not finding support regarding shared facilities from UGA, she tabled expansion to Athens. However, the System soon requested proposals from institutions desiring to offer accessible, affordable courses in the Athens area. Citing an obligation as well as an understanding of the student market opportunity in the area, GC then was compelled to expand into the Athens area as a result of coercive isomorphic forces.

How did launching the Oconee Campus advance the mission and aspirations of Gainesville State College? The Oconee Campus strategically positioned Gainesville College, increasing its competitiveness across student markets. The location of the branch, in close proximity to the flagship university within the state, allowed GC the opportunity to capitalize from increasing enrollment, a significant coercive influence for state institutions heightened during uncertain fiscal times. Amid a recession, enrollment strategy is particularly vital to those institutions, such as Gainesville College, that occupy less opportunity for diversification of revenue streams. Receiving smaller state allocations proportionate to the growing student population, GSC became much more reliant upon student tuition as a revenue stream. The College also benefitted from the exponential growth, drawing some prestige, largely due to the additional campus.

For state institutions, increasing institutional size justifies capital requests, such as for new buildings, a long and arduous process for those institutions unable to fund capital projects via other revenue sources. For example, Gainesville State College anticipates opening a large classroom building on the main campus, currently under construction, designed to house instructional capacity greater than all of the current campus buildings combined. Finally, GSC developed another prestige of a sort, becoming the number one feeder of transfer students to the flagship university, The University of Georgia.

The events and coercive influences coinciding with the "growth and opportunity" ambition began to illuminate my research question, "How have these aspirations reshaped the mission of GSC?" This particular question focused on examining the effect of institutional behavior on the mission of the institution. The narrative within this section (pages 51-56) highlights the tension surrounding how the launching of the branch campus shaped the institutional mission. Space limitations at the Oconee Campus forced GSC to negotiate enrollment processes aligned with society's traditional value of access, a large emphasis in GSC's mission. Gainesville State College made a critical choice coinciding with its access mission, maintaining small classes. Yet the institution's effectiveness, the ability to deliver one's mission or goals, remained limited to the extent that GSC was not able to provide access to all those in the local northeast Georgia area who wanted to enroll. As an access institution, inability to limit enrollment of those students originating from beyond the northeast Georgia area shaped the institutional mission. GSC and its branch campus in Oconee County raised student aspirations, providing access to some students from local areas that previously was low; however, GSC's enrollment protocol limited access proportionately to historically

underserved populations, those who typically apply later in the enrollment cycle (Eckel, 2008; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Zemsky, Wegner, & Massy, 2005).

Coercive as well as normative forces converged, shaping GC's aspirations and institutional behavior regarding offering four-year degrees. Discussions regarding offering baccalaureate degrees arose at the end of the 1990's, amid division and administrative leaders and some faculty members within the institution, a normative influence. Two two-year University System of Georgia institutions gained approval for mission change and name change in the late 1990's--Macon State (1996) and Dalton State (1998). The direction from the Chancellor, indicating to Dr. Nesbitt soon after she became president not to be thinking about four-year coercively influenced Gainesville College's behavior as an institution. Furthermore, the Board of Regents coercively halted GC's intent to expand curricular offerings with the moratorium on mission and name changes.

New Status

In the midst of expanding to another location, the institution was also making plans to pursue another status, rising to the next tier of state colleges.

> "On October 9, 2002, the Gainesville College faculty and staff approved the submission of a request to the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia to change the mission to offer selected baccalaureate degrees and to change the name of the institution to Gainesville State College. The B.S. degree in Applied Environmental Spatial Analysis, the B.S. degree in Early Childhood Care and Education, and the B.A.S. degree in Technology Management were

> approved by the Academic Affairs Committee on September 25, 2002" (Gainesville State College SACS Application).

A moratorium on mission changes within the University System was in place until the results of a statewide assessment titled "Statewide Assessment: The University System of Georgia in 2015" prompted change. With the U.S. Census Bureau projection that Georgia's population is set to grow by about 21 percent by the year 2015, two key recommendations proposed by the study included to remove the moratorium on "mission-change" requests by University System of Georgia campuses and the removal of the moratorium on name changes for University System of Georgia institutions. At the November, 2004 meeting, the Board of Regents authorized System staff to go forward with mission review (University System of Georgia website). Prior to the removal of the moratorium, Dalton College and Macon College were the first two institutions granted state college status, moving them from the two-year tier to the recently added state-college tier established by the University System of Georgia in the late 1990's. One participant reflected on the process,

> "The initial stages of that probably were—in thinking back on it—were early 2000-2002…I mean we had a very difficult process of being approved for sector change and for mission change to be a state college, which was the precursor to being approved to deliver 4-year baccalaureate degrees. And so once we passed the hurdle of getting approval as a state college, then we pursued in earnest the adding on of baccalaureate degrees which—I guess the first one came onboard in 2005. So there were several years prior to that that things were in the works."

On October 12, 2005, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia voted to allow GC to expand its mission and change its name to Gainesville State College. From the 2004-2005 annual report:

> "With this change, the institution will provide even greater educational opportunities for our region. Under its new name and mission, Gainesville State College now will offer the Bachelor of Science in Applied Environmental Spatial Analysis, a niche bachelor degree unavailable at other institutions in the College's service area. In addition to the new four-year program, Gainesville State College would continue to offer its strong lower division courses and prepare students to transfer to other four-year colleges and universities. The name and mission change reflects the larger role Gainesville State College plays in the region since it was established in 1964. The College has seen enormous growth and has evolved to meet the educational needs of its students over the past four decades" (p. 3-4).

In thinking back, the President recalled, "It's one of those things that the Institution had just matured to a point and we had the strength to really go forward with some baccalaureate degree programs." She added,

> "I think part of it was that we did have the personnel without having to go out and hire a lot of new people. We had a reputation for strong academic programs, and obviously in the Science, Engineering, Technology area—that Institute of Applied Environmental Spatial Analysis. That was the first baccalaureate degree program that was approved. And then our size, and then also our location. I mean, North Georgia and the University cannot handle the student demand for

baccalaureate degrees in Northeast Georgia. So I think it was all those things." GSC quickly gained approval for additional baccalaureate degrees. From the 2005-2006 annual report, the President introduced the additional four-year degrees with the expanded mission:

> "In this same vein, at the January of 2006 Board of Regents meeting, GSC was approved to offer two additional bachelor degrees: The Bachelor of Science with a Major in Early Childhood Care and Education (birth to 5 years) and the Bachelor of Applied Science with a Major in Technology Management degree. Finally, in April of 2006, the Board of Regents granted approval for Gainesville State College to begin offering the Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education (grades P-5) leading to certification. While we are proud of these advancements, Gainesville State College will continue to offer our strong lower division courses and prepare students to transfer to other four-year colleges and universities. This mission has distinguished us an outstanding institution which effectively serves the citizens of Northeast Georgia" (p. 1).

The new status and becoming a state college elicited perspectives regarding institutional direction and ambitions. "We became Gainesville State College….it became obvious that we're not only growing numerically, but we were also growing in our mission—the kinds of things we wanted to offer to students. And that has just continued to grow; the conversations about what types of four-year degree programs we might offer have continued to grow." Another responded,

> "I think there was a strong goal of the College to become a four-year college rather than a two-year college. I know there was a big push for that, and then

> once it was achieved, I would say there was a push for expanding programs…what the goal of the College is at this point would be to expand and eventually even possibly offer graduate degrees and become, you know, move up in the hierarchy of colleges within the state."

Another interviewee offered this perspective, "I think growth is definitely part of the vision—to grow and also to serve Northeast Georgia. And again, I don't know the relative weights of those. I think they're both important for different reasons." A final thought regarding the move, "to my mind, it was almost surreal when we finally became four-year because I thought it would take much longer to reach that next level."

When asked about what is being emphasized now and reflecting on Gainesville State College's current vision, participants articulated an array of thoughts that underline the organizational challenges that come with the expanded mission.

> "I think what is being emphasized right now is the new four-year programs, and I think that's great. I think that the programs they've chosen to move in the direction of—education and certain business-related courses—certainly there's a need for that, and I think that demographically, Gainesville's in a good position to supply that need…I just can't see diverting that much money to esoteric programs that might only serve a few number of students to the detriment of supporting the basic educational role of the college which is access—two-year…I think that they would like to think that they are still supporting the two-year mission as conscientiously as they ever did. I do not feel that in actual practice that is the case."

Providing access remains part of the mission of GSC as a state college, yet some within the campus community continue to negotiate how things are changing in regard to curricular emphasis and institutional direction. Another summarized it this way,

> "Overall, the College, I think there's a kind of group that really is only thinking about new four-year programs. There's also a group that doesn't want to let go of our core nature as an access institution, and that second population may be getting smaller, I don't know. It seems that as folks are retiring that there's fewer and fewer of those people. There's some that want to rush to become a university, I think. There are others that really don't want to let go of the small college feel, but yet still expand in the area of Bachelor's programs. There's some faculty who are concerned about, because they don't have terminal degrees, becoming a second-class citizen on the faculty. I think on the Oconee Campus there's some political realities there where the growth is being limited and we had to make promises that there would be no four-year programs there that are kind of restricting what can happen on that campus."

Evidence also exists of excitement regarding the transformation. Some faculty and staff members enthusiastically described new features such as increasing partnerships and grants, developing Centers and expanding Institute activities, expanding research and study abroad programs, and restructuring in moving from Divisions to Colleges. "There were faculty who were delighted with the idea of moving to a four-year institution…the emphasis has always been on the 2 years, 2 years, 2 years, and that has always been the major point that the President has made. But I think we're slowly, slowly redirecting and beginning to recognize ourselves as a four-

year institution—slowly." Another participant remarked, "I think there's a lot of excitement among the newer faculty because they see Gainesville State College being something different than it is now, and they have aspirations for that and they want to be a part of that change."

In describing GSC's current institutional position, President Nesbitt said, "The vision for the future is that we will remain what I call a hybrid institution. Probably for the next several years, the majority of our students are going to be here for the two years to go wherever they want to go." After discussing the intent of a niche degree in Human Services that corresponds to a need in the Northeast Georgia area, particularly with the large immigrant population, she continued, "Then I don't know of any other niche degrees on the horizon, but degrees that I know are on the horizon are more education degrees….so that's where I see our major need going frankly is in the education area."

The majority of participants also recognized that Gainesville State College's vision and direction were being influenced by Georgia Gwinnett College (GGC), another state college located in nearby Gwinnett County. The advent of Georgia Gwinnett College (first offering courses in fall semester 2007) did not have much effect on Gainesville State, yet recently, Georgia Gwinnett College received approval for offering a large number of bachelor degrees with teacher certification. One participant conveyed,

> "I see the College in putting more of its forward thinking toward the development of baccalaureate degrees with a hope that it does not compromise what we're doing for associate's degrees, but I see that's the direction we're going with hiring as far as requiring new faculty to have terminal degrees and the direction we're

> going with requests for new programs and things like that. They are all postured toward four-year baccalaureate degrees. And that may be what we have to do to remain competitive—I don't know."

In realizing that Georgia Gwinnett College's enrollment is bound to grow and Gwinnett County has been one of the top feeders to Gainesville State College, one participant summarized GSC's vision:

> "I think that…well, one thing I think is going to happen to us is that I think our enrollment growth is going to slow a little bit. But I don't think that's going to change the vision that Dr. Nesbitt and I would say that most of our Division Chairs and a good number of our faculty have—and that's to increase our number of baccalaureate programs, and then look at the possibility of offering Master's programs. And I think that's a strong possibility in the very near future."

Understanding Institutional Behavior

While continuing to offer associates degrees, GC morphed into a four-year college, renaming the institution to Gainesville State College, reflecting its new status as a state college. GSC's experience signals a national trend in higher education, that of two-year or community colleges offering baccalaureate degrees. In the 1990's, the state of Georgia enacted policy changes reframing some community colleges, transforming them from two-to-four-year institutions. A combination of economic and market forces prompted policy changes, addressing demand for "knowledge workers" in a global economy, states seeking ways to enhance the workforce and the economy, and improving baccalaureate attainment, particularly among adult workers (Townsend, Bragg, & Ruud, 2009).

How have increasing aspirations shaped the mission of GSC? Beyond those previously discussed coinciding with the branch campus, a combination of isomorphic forces altered the institutional mission for Gainesville State College. Coercive influences previously discussed (direction from the Chancellor, then the moratorium on mission and name changes) delayed their ambition to offer baccalaureate degrees and transformation to state college status. Coercive isomorphism applied as the institution depended upon the University System of Georgia for their mission change to state college status. The Board of Regents decided which degrees the institution could offer, targeting niche degrees and addressing workforce demands. With its expanding mission and curricular role, Gainesville State College currently awards the following baccalaureate degrees: Bachelor of Science in Applied Environmental Spatial Analysis; Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Care and Education; Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education; Bachelor of Applied Science in Technology Management; and Bachelor of Fine Arts in Design and Technology for Theatre. Because of the limited time since being able to offer these baccalaureate degrees, the market demand for these particular degrees remains to be seen. Currently, graduates in these areas have been low in number except for the Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education.

Furthermore in regards to coercive isomorphism, GSC depended upon the regional accreditation agency, SACS (Southern Accreditation for Colleges and Schools) for approval to offer four-year degrees. Accreditation requirements include 50% of four-year faculty to hold doctorate degrees and 40% of the four-year faculty to publish two or more publications per year. GSC had to meet standards applied to four-year institutions

or other state colleges, increasing associated costs and requiring more institutional resources.

Finally, GSC's coercive isomorphism entails a recent competitive influence, Georgia Gwinnett College. Every participant acknowledged the political favor and resources received by Georgia Gwinnett. In large part, Gainesville State College benefitted from student enrollment as Georgia Perimeter College (a two-year University System of Georgia institution) moved out of Lawrenceville with the advent of Georgia Gwinnett College awaiting its accreditation. Subsequently, Gwinnett County was the top county feeder for Gainesville State College in fall 2008. However, GGC gained accreditation approval, providing the institution the ability to offer federal financial aid. Georgia Gwinnett College anticipates steadily increasing student enrollment. Along with competing with Gainesville State College for enrollment, Georgia Gwinnett has been approved for a large slate of baccalaureate offerings including teacher certification. Gainesville State College's current ambition involves offering more baccalaureate degrees in a number of liberal arts areas to include teacher certification.

For Gainesville State College, mimetic isomorphism originated from uncertainty in the external environment regarding resources and the advent of Georgia Gwinnett College, very close in proximity to Gainesville's base in Oakwood. With the rationale that status and prestige help institutions survive during uncertain times, the addition of baccalaureate degrees raises the institutional status or prestige, thus increasing the probability of institutional survival. Other mimetic forces include modeling other institutions, such as Dalton State and Macon State that moved from the two-year sector to state college status prior to GSC's status change. A number of processes changed

as a result of mimetic pressures coinciding with the new four-year, state college status, especially those related to hiring practices and faculty duties. For example, GSC largely hires faculty members who have the terminal doctorate degree. While emphasis remains on teaching, experience in program development, grants and research now are beneficial as well.

There are a number of considerations currently in discussion surrounding the uncertainty remaining with the new status. Citing the need for legitimacy within the System as well as the need to follow other state colleges that had made the transition, the College restructured to “Schools,” moving away from Divisions, traditionally found at community colleges or two-year institutions. Currently, the four new Deans, all hires to GSC within the past several years, as well as the Vice President for Academic Affairs, also new to Gainesville State College, discuss the remainder of restructuring, duties and responsibilities within the new Schools. Additionally, the Faculty Senate is active, passing new by-laws coinciding with the new structure, meeting regularly, encouraging conversations and engaging faculty members to participate in the new shared governance.

Changes are also occurring at GSC as a result of normative isomorphism. Arising from socialization of faculty members at research or prestigious universities and membership in professional associations, most of the current faculty and administrators are excited about the opportunity to conduct research and teach higher-level courses, benefitting them professionally. Along with responding to the state’s call to produce more teachers and increase the number of citizens with baccalaureate degrees, current baccalaureate degree offerings stem from interests, expertise, and ambitions amid GSC

faculty members. Additionally, Deans and faculty members within Schools continue procedures to expand the number of baccalaureate degree programs.

Specific challenges and controversies accompanied the morphing of GSC from a two-year unit to its new status as a state college. The uncertainty, especially as it related to the transition with mission expansion and restructuring, resulted in some difficult situations. Faculty members without the terminal degree described apprehension regarding expectations of duties, restructuring, hiring preferences, and tenure/promotion processes. Some feared being marginalized among the increasing structures and processes shifting toward state college status. GSC's experience transforming to a state college resembles the challenges of other community colleges now offering baccalaureate degrees, although GSC, not a comprehensive community college, did not have to contend with technical or vocational faculty members feeling slighted (Plecha, 2007; Ross, 2007). In this regard, Gainesville State College's large liberal arts focus, vacant of a technical college division, positioned GSC for less complications transforming to state college status.

Overall, Gainesville State College exemplifies how "community colleges are among the most innovative and creative institutions in the U.S. higher education sector and continue to evolve through entrepreneurial responses to growing and changing student markets, globalization, and the knowledge economy" (Mars & Metcalfe, 2009, p. 53). Findings described how Gainesville College exited the 1990's excelling as a stable, two-year institution "leading the way," followed by tremendous "growth and opportunity" characterized by turbulent change. GSC's ambitions and transformation reflect isomorphic forces familiar to institutions within higher education. Isomorphic

forces precipitate entrepreneurial behavior, shaping institutional mission. The geographic expansion with the branch campus quickly provided access, yet the institution also quickly learned that they were increasingly serving a different student market, challenging the values associated with their longstanding mission. While not an explicit strategy to generate revenues and largely viewed as a compelling opportunity, the branch campus contributed a large part to the growth and opportunity for the institution significant to its vision. GSC's mission also altered with its new curricular role, morphing into "a new status" as a state college, capitalizing on the workforce demands to produce more certified teachers and have more citizens complete a bachelor's degree.

Evidence supports isomorphism at Gainesville State College, signaling a challenge to institutional diversity within the higher education landscape. Plecha (2007) also found evidence of isomorphism, describing the potential challenges with the nationwide trend of community and two-year colleges offering baccalaureate degrees:

> "If community colleges create hybrid institutions by providing a select set of occupationally ready bachelor degrees, while retaining the community college ideals, then more diversity would result. However, if community colleges add bachelor degrees and fail to retain their core, remedial, vocational, transfer, and community education, then isomorphism will result" (p. 16).

TABLES

Table 4.1 GSC: College-Wide Enrollment

Term	Total	% Growth
Fall 2008	8238	10.19%
Fall 2007	7476	11.23%
Fall 2006	6721	12.32%
Fall 2005	5984	3.53%
Fall 2004	5780	9.47%
Fall 2003	5280	26.95%
Fall 2002	4159	12.80%
Fall 2001	3687	13.31%
Fall 2000	3254	7.15%
Fall 1999	3037	6.64%
Fall 1998	2848	

Table 4.2 GSC: Gainesville Campus Enrollment

Term	Total	% Growth
Fall 2008	6099	12.82%
Fall 2007	5406	23.54%
Fall 2006	4376	12.15%
Fall 2005	3902	.91%
Fall 2004	3867	6.29%
Fall 2003	3638	.97%
Fall 2002	3603	5.81%
Fall 2001	3405	6.77%
Fall 2000	3189	8.10%
Fall 1999	2950	5.24%
Fall 1998	2803	

Table 4.3 GSC: Oconee Campus Enrollment

Term	Total	% Growth
Fall 2008	2162	2.76%
Fall 2007	2104	-14.51%
Fall 2006	2461	13.46%
Fall 2005	2169	8.61%
Fall 2004	1997	13.72%
Fall 2003	1756	180.06%
Fall 2002	627	187.61%
Fall 2001	218	

Table 4.4 GSC: Enrollment by Student Status

Term	Full-Time	% Full-Time	Part-Time	% Part-Time
Fall 2008	5437	66.00%	2801	34.00%
Fall 2007	4839	64.73%	2637	35.27%
Fall 2006	4126	61.39%	2595	38.61%
Fall 2005	3549	59.31%	2435	40.69%
Fall 2004	3511	60.74%	2269	39.26%
Fall 2003	3167	59.98%	2113	40.02%
Fall 2002	2255	54.22%	1904	45.78%
Fall 2001	1926	52.24%	1761	47.76%
Fall 2000	1641	50.43%	1613	49.57%
Fall 1999	1506	49.59%	1531	50.41%
Fall 1998	1429	50.18%	1419	49.82%

Table 4.5 GSC: Enrollment by Student Age

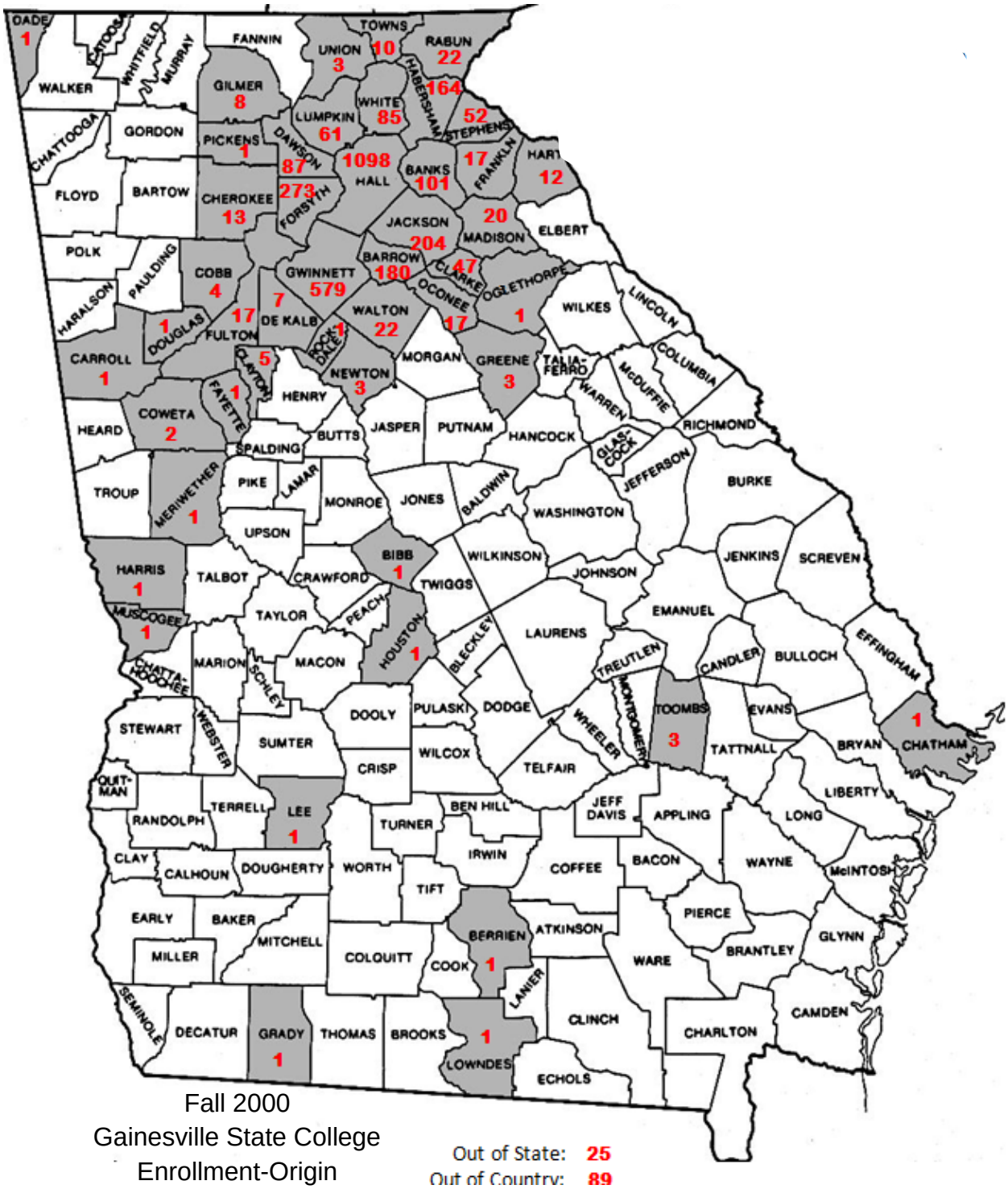
Term	Age >=23	%>=23	*Age >=50	%>=50	Average Age
Fall 2008	18446	22.41%	67	1.23%	22.4
Fall 2007	1654	22.12%	56	1.16%	22.5
Fall 2006	1504	22.38%	61	1.48%	22.6
Fall 2005	1375	22.98%	60	1.69%	22.7
Fall 2004	1323	22.89%	59	1.68%	22.8
Fall 2003	1233	23.35%	49	1.55%	22.9
Fall 2002	1198	28.01%	37	1.64%	23.4
Fall 2001	1081	29.32%	47	2.44%	23.7
Fall 2000	955	29.35%	35	2.13%	23.6
Fall 1999	834	27.46%	31	2.06%	23.2
Fall 1998	814	28.58%	24	1.68%	23.3

Table 4.6 GSC: Faculty Data (from IPEDS Reports)

Term	Full-Time	Part-Time
Fall 2008	179	189
Fall 2007	164	191
Fall 2006	145	183
Fall 2005	130	143
Fall 2004	105	159

***Primary function is instruction, excludes executive and managerial**

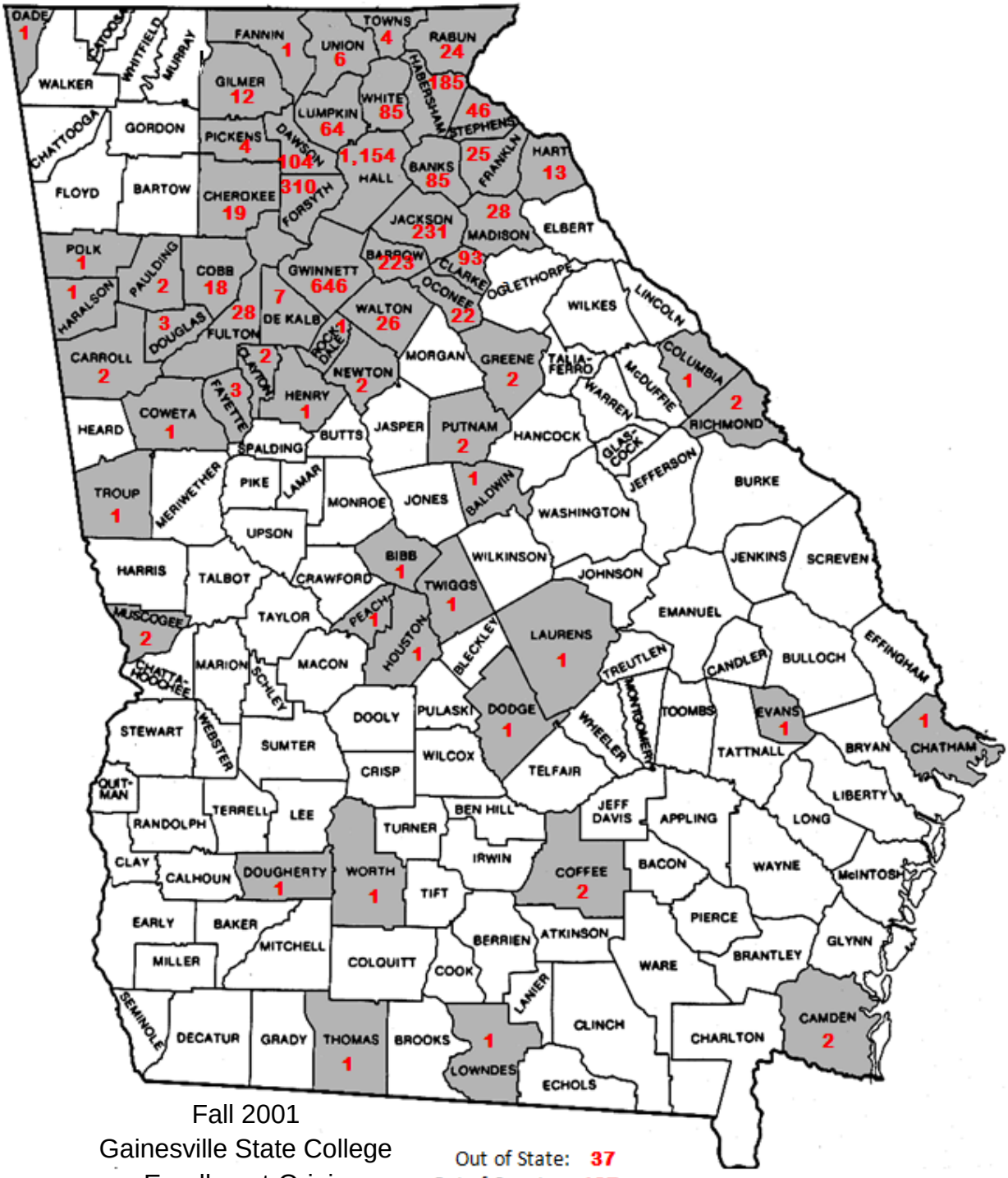
FIGURES



Fall 2000
Gainesville State College
Enrollment-Origin
County Counts
Banner Reports - #13

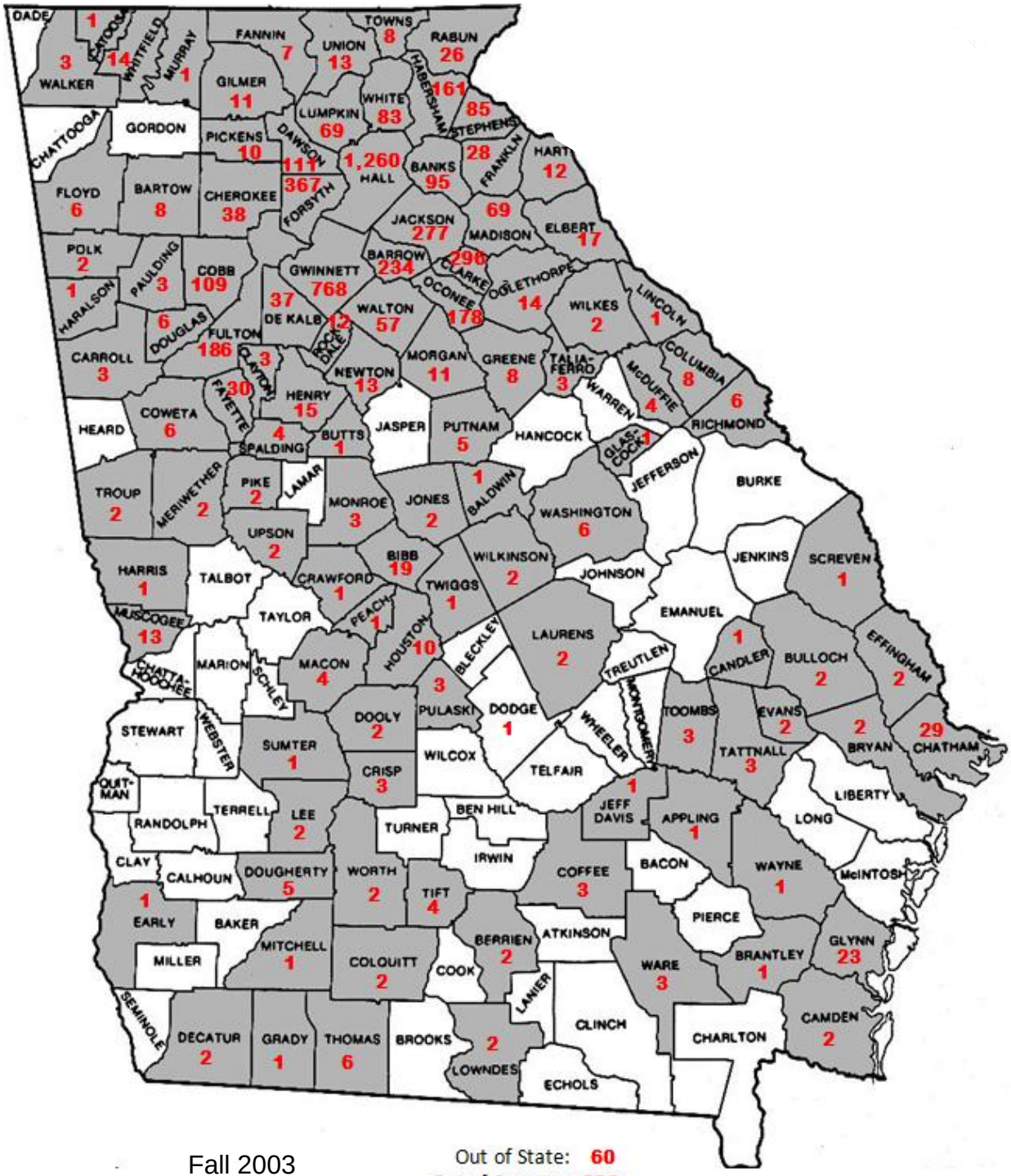
Out of State: 25
Out of Country: 89

Figure 4.1



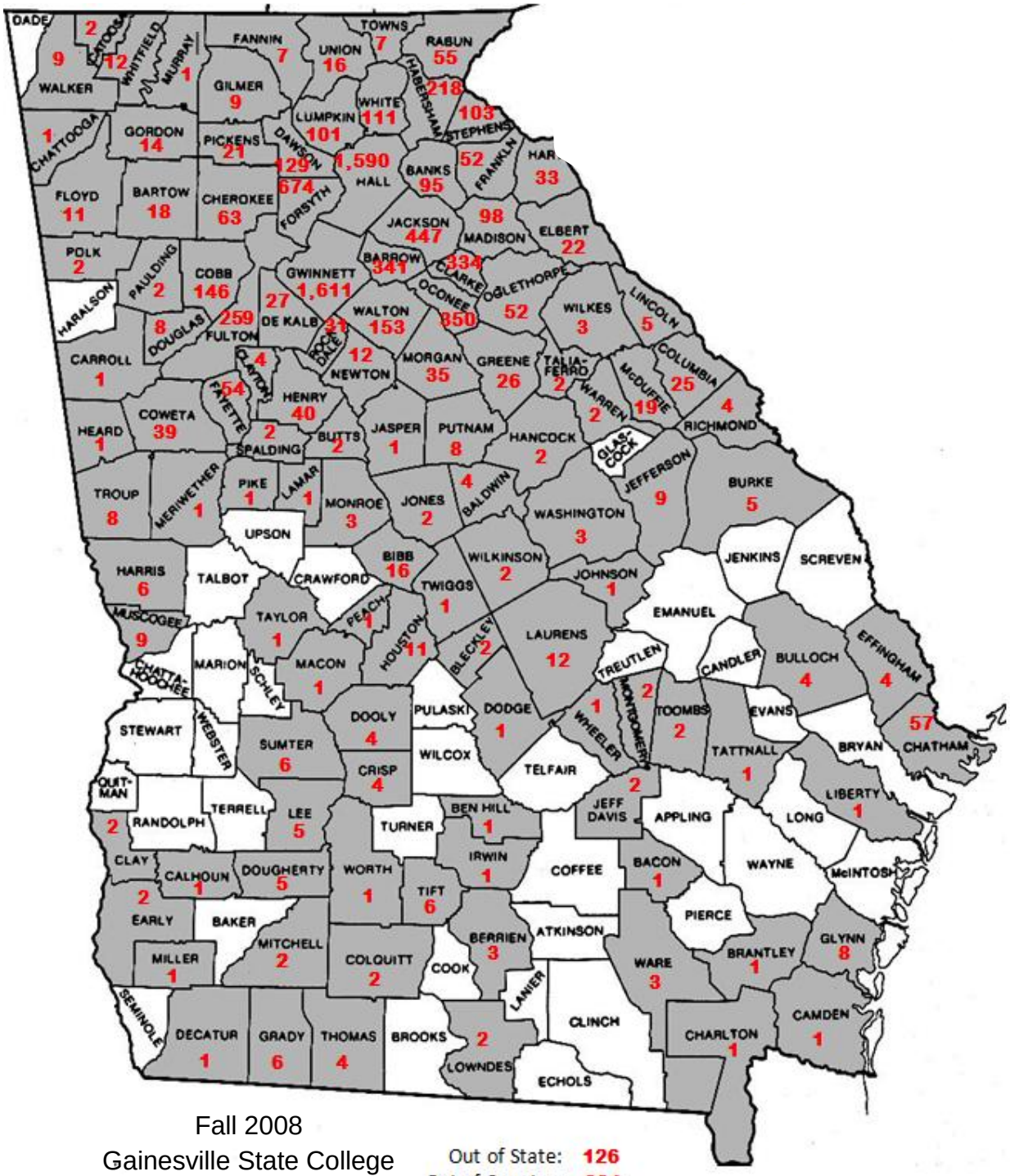
Fall 2001
Gainesville State College
Enrollment-Origin
County Counts
Banner Reports - #13

Figure 4.2



Fall 2003
Gainesville State College
Enrollment-Origin
County Counts
Banner Reports - #13

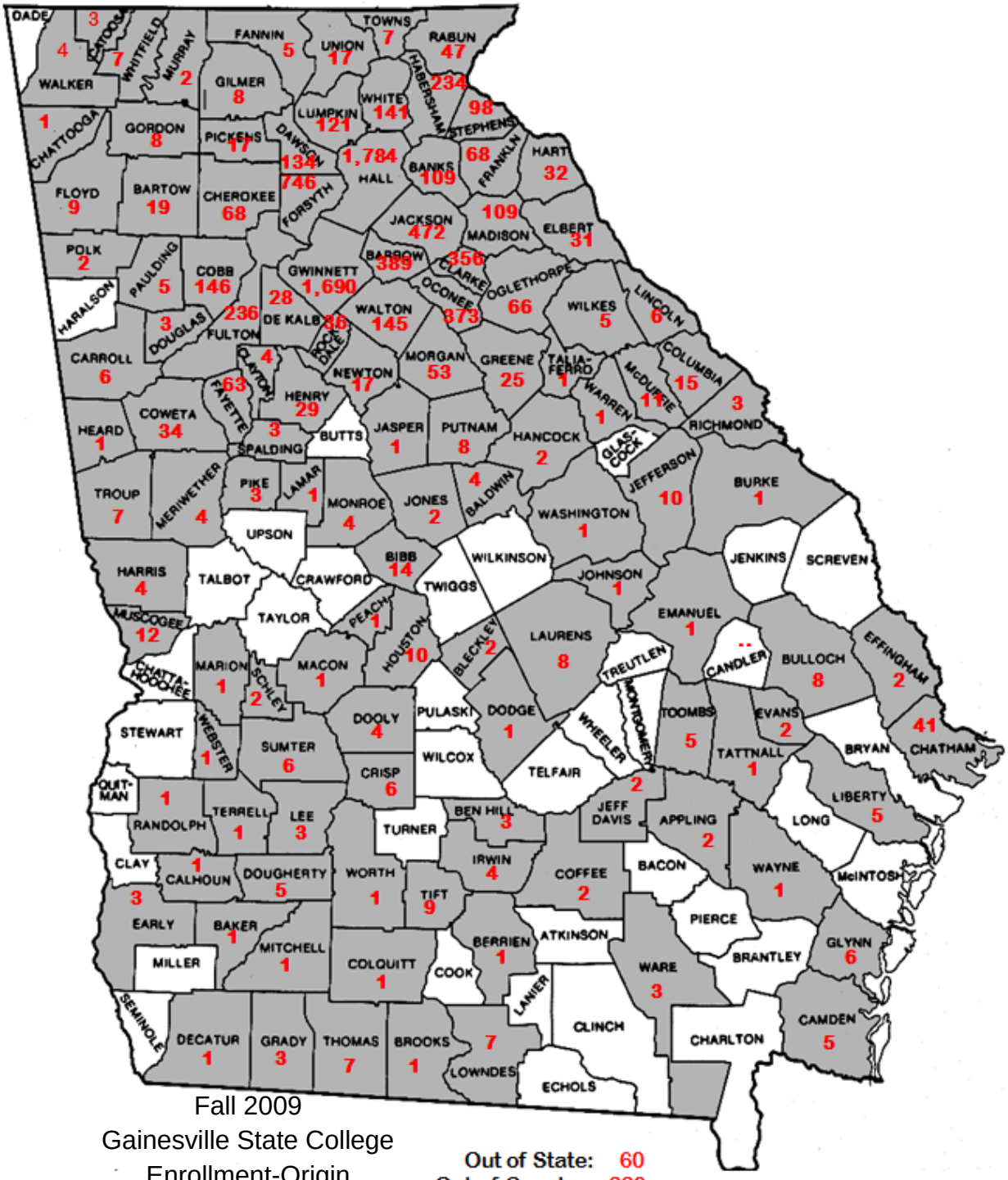
Figure 4.3



Out of State: 126
Out of Country: 334

Fall 2008
Gainesville State College
Enrollment-Origin
County Counts
Banner Reports - #13

Figure 4.4



Fall 2009
Gainesville State College
Enrollment-Origin
County Counts
Banner Reports - #13

Out of State: 60
Out of Country: 220

Figure 4.5

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The purpose of this case study was to examine the position of Gainesville College, particularly as it applied to the institutional decision to launched a branch campus as well as what can be learned from the experience to improve practice. While not explicitly launching a campus to realize increased revenues and largely considered an opportunity, isomorphic forces precipitated institutional behavior, resulting in GSC capitalizing with another location, a location favorable to student market demands. The staggering enrollment at the branch campus clearly positioned the institution to garner increased market revenues. Subsequently, increased revenues associated with the market niche allowed GSC to pursue other ambitious initiatives such as adding additional baccalaureate degrees, positioning the institution for greater prestige with state college status.

Historically linked to the purpose of increasing access, branch campuses have become a trend of academic entrepreneurship within a market-oriented era of higher education. Prolonged economic downturns favor environmental conditions ripe for increased neoliberal policies, prompting entrepreneurial responses as institutions increasingly turn to revenue streams beyond state allocations. For two-year and state colleges, sectors traditionally most dependent upon state appropriations, enrollment strategy remains critical. Beyond state allocation, these institutional types look to student tuition and fees as a revenue source. Branch campuses, strategically located, allow colleges and universities to target student markets, contributing to financial

viability significant to institutional aspirations. However, as this case study suggests, the challenge for higher education institutions is to balance market forces with public purpose. The case of Gainesville State College demonstrates how traditional missions can be shaped by institutional ambitions and initiatives relevant to the entrepreneurial economy. In responding to the opportunity to expand with a branch campus, GSC's intention was to provide access to underserved populations. However, market conditions peculiar to the branch campus location in Oconee County, with its close proximity to Athens and The University of Georgia, presented challenges to its institutional values and traditional access mission.

Based on my case study of Gainesville State College, I conclude with the following implications for practice related to launching a branch campus. The following recommendations correspond to themes suggested by the majority of participants at GSC. Other institutions may find these recommendations relevant to strategy and management peculiar to launching a branch campus.

Emphasizing Mission

A paramount implication for practice associated with an institutional strategy of a branch campus is to reasonably align the branch with the institutional mission. Institutions should strive to maintain the traditional mission. As institutions increasingly value branches to capture a particular student market for financial viability, discussions are warranted to balance values associated with the institutional mission. For GSC, tension resulted when the value of access was threatened. While the institution made key commitments to maintaining small class sizes and communicated with local high schools regarding priority enrollment, additional strategies are needed to address the

underserved populations in the Northeast Georgia area. Increasing access to historically underserved populations, such as minority students, underprepared students, and non-traditional populations restricted to local service areas warrants strategic enrollment management priorities. Strategies such as writing grants to provide financial incentives or emphasizing communication and partnerships with local communities offer potential to increase access for traditionally underserved student populations. Traditional-aged students from far outside the Northeast Georgia area seeking admission to GSC, originating from cities such as Savannah or Columbus or even another state, typically come from families with higher socioeconomic status. Because of the likelihood that their parents went to college, students from families with higher socioeconomic status are more apt to be familiar with procedures involved in enrolling for college. On the other hand, a significant number of students from counties contiguous to the Oconee Campus typically are from families with lower socioeconomic status, likely unfamiliar with enrollment requirements, especially timing associated with the enrollment context at the Oconee Campus. Strategies that mitigate those inequities need to be further developed and refined. Ensuring that a branch campus situation "fits" with campus and institutional norms and values is essential.

Building Resources

"I think we would be well advised to have more resources available in hand prior to starting anything as opposed to trying to build from behind." Each GSC participant stressed the magnitude of securing resources prior to launching a branch campus. One participant stressed that guaranteed resources up front from the System central office are essential. "Make sure you have the resources before you move in. The biggest

lesson is to not do something like that until you have the resources to do it properly—to not go on a wing and a prayer and a hope for future revenue."

On June 21, 2002, University System of Georgia Chancellor Dr. Thomas Meredith sent a letter to GC President Nesbitt, "I am pleased to inform you that Gainesville College has been awarded $200,000 in FY03 funding to expand the availability of academic offerings in its Athens program under the RFP to increase access for non-traditional students to the University System of Georgia." Due to the budget crisis, the award was reduced to $188,000 for 2003-2004. GC documented that

> "funds from this initiative were used to partially support the following items on the Oconee Campus: Leasing of campus from UGA Real Estate Foundation, hiring of faculty to deliver instruction, hiring of staff to operate campus, acquiring resources to support instruction, and acquiring resources to support student access to campus…It should be noted that the head count in the Fall of 2003 on the Oconee Campus increased 186% over the head count at Gainesville College's previous location in Athens. In addition there was a corresponding FTE increase of 208% and a Non-Traditional Student increase of 73% over the Fall of 2002."

Participants emphasized adequate resources and financial support in areas ranging from faculty and professional staff, support staff, library collections, technology, and space. Space would permit the branch to continue growing, aligning with the access mission; furthermore, space constraints limit developing a campus culture essential for building community and student engagement.

Unfortunately, Gainesville State College's access mission implies higher resource demands related to remediation and academic support. Branch campuses typically are beneficial for being lean and efficient, yet instructional and support needs based on mission require consideration.

> "The difficulty in being an access mission institution is that you have to go and offer a lot of Learning Support (remedial) classes which means expensive classes, classes that would be smaller; those should be taught by some of our best faculty because we're trying to help students that don't have the background than other students…have to try and help them to build the skills to be successful in college-level classes. We're admitting people who have lots of limitations and need skill development, and it takes a lot of resources to do that."

Committing to Planning

An institution launching a branch campus necessitates comprehensive planning. Establishing demand for a branch in a particular location is critical. Environmental scans, market analyses, and surveys within the community of the branch locations should suggest a sustainable demand to warrant a branch campus. "You've got to have demand, period, for it." Prior to launching a branch campus, the initial step would be to begin offering classes as an off-campus teaching center. Institutional personnel can monitor, investigate and study relevant data while functioning as an off-campus center prior to making an informed decision to expand to a full branch campus.

Responses referenced the need to "be more far-sighted and anticipatory instead of reacting." Launching a branch campus requires planning aligned with strategic enrollment management, addressing questions regarding funding, staffing, and program

offerings. Ponder (2009) asserts the necessity of strategic planning for branch campuses, “Few enterprises are more vital to the viability and vitality of a college campus than the development of a strategic plan…To fall short on either developing or communicating these identity markers is to risk losing the students and faculty who are most likely to thrive on our campuses” (p. 29).

Opening another campus requires planning to address short-term and long-term objectives with an institutional commitment to reviewing and updating plans as the campus emerges.

> “I think we underestimated the enrollment growth…we have to be very careful about, and I think do more surveys in the community, both the smaller community and then the larger community that we anticipate serving. We need to have a better idea of that, because I think we were taken by surprise and were overwhelmed at times by the number of students we were trying to serve.”

Finally, planning prior to a branch should involve people from across the institution as well as other important stakeholders. Planning committees should then gather on a regular basis, continuing to address issues together (Sodano, 1998).

Valuing Culture

Institutions expanding with a branch need to be attuned to campus culture. In order to maintain collegiality between the main campus and the branch, “getting more buy-in” from the start with those based at the main campus was suggested. Launching a branch with personnel from the main campus is advisable. Selecting generalists from among main campus personnel who have “broad knowledge of the entire college and have good institutional perspective” is recommended.

Launching a branch campus with a pool of full-time faculty members who have experience with the institution is also preferred. Full-time faculty members are needed who embrace involvement with the development of the branch campus, recognizing the importance of building campus norms and values and encouraging cohesion. Each branch develops its own distinctive culture and full-time faculty members assist with developing positive relationships beneficial to institutional culture.

> "All kinds of things were tried to find faculty to teach there but the bottom line was, we had very few faculty lines to assign to the Oconee Campus, and so the vast majority of the teaching had to be part-time faculty; had to be adjunct faculty…now we're getting to the point where we've been able to assign some faculty lines to the Oconee Campus. We're getting better in terms of the faculty resources that we place there on a full-time basis. In the beginning we wanted to—mostly I remember, I remember that there was an effort to mostly have faculty who started out here (Gainesville campus) teaching there because there was an effort to try and continue the core environment and the culture of Gainesville State College that had established Gainesville College, the environment that was established here—to extend that to that campus. What the SACS visiting committee dubbed as the student-focused and learning-centered environment of Gainesville State College, we wanted to have that on that campus as well."

Faculty members hired to teach at the branch and are new to the College need to be trained and mentored, allowing for new members to be assimilated into the campus and institutional culture. Full-time faculty members are also vital to serve as club and

organization advisors and to provide academic advisement, keys to student engagement and student success.

Development of the campus culture for students should also be addressed as a priority. Students require spaces where they can socialize, study, work on group projects, talk with faculty and staff outside of class, receive help from academic support, and participate in student clubs and organizations. These are important to the life of a student, creating a sense of belonging, supportive of an environment embracing student engagement. Oconee Campus Strategic Planning minutes (October 18, 2004) listed a number of concerns about shortages in this area—"advisement; lack of student space; food service; tutors; and student governance." One participant responded this way, "I don't think it's ethical really to open a new campus and to not be able to offer proper services to the students." Tinto (2008) asserts that access without providing support is really not considered an opportunity. Branch campuses must strive to build a campus culture comprising of resources demonstrated empirically to support retention and student success.

Sodano (1998) emphasized attention to developing campus culture when launching a branch campus. While conflict naturally occurs with institutional change involving the launch of a branch campus, Sodano underscored the importance of leadership to quickly address and mitigate conflict. The President intentionally incorporated strategies to encourage institutional culture to emerge from values and principles held by campus constituents and the surrounding community. Key executive leaders should schedule regular visits to an emerging branch campus, ensuring positive institutional developments, visibly indicating support to branch campus personnel.

Clarifying Organizational Relationships and Branch Mission

Institutions must clarify relationships and structure to the greatest extent possible prior to expanding to another site. Institutions need to establish a governing structure that allows for significant decisions to be made at the campus level. An executive officer housed on-site is vital for branch campus operations and culture. "That goes along with helping the employees of the new campus to know they have a voice—they're heard; they're thought about; they're part of the big plan." The executive officer provides that critical voice along with supervision to managers in crucial areas such as academic affairs, business affairs, student affairs, and institutional technology. Dr. Ronnie Booth, who was to be the Oconee Campus Chief Executive Officer (CEO), left Gainesville College in late spring 2003 to become President at an institution in another state. His move unfortunately resulted in a lack of continuity at a critical time for the life of the branch campus. Finally, participants expressed the importance of launching a branch campus with leaders in targeted areas. Leaders in each area, including all academic divisions and institutional technology, should be identified, recognized, and clearly vested with authority. Branch campus organizational structure and roles should be communicated clearly to all campus constituents.

On April 25, 2003, prior to GC occupying the Oconee Campus, President Nesbitt sent out a memo to the Administrative Council entitled "Suggested organization of Oconee Campus." Included for review was "a vision statement regarding the Oconee Campus and the rationale for the type of organization that the Executive Council has drafted. Please share with everyone in your area and ask for feedback, either through the appropriate member on the Executive Council or to me." The vision stated, "To

serve primarily students of Northeast Georgia with the excellent quality of academic programs and support services within the student centered and learning focused environment that has distinguished Gainesville College." Directly below the vision statement, the memo outlined an organizational structure:

> "The suggested organization and supervisor responsibilities are based on fulfilling this vision…In this organizational draft, each person on the Oconee Campus would report to two people: to their appropriate administrator on the Gainesville Campus so that the Oconee Campus will be an extension of the GC operation; the other reporting line will be to the appropriate administrator on the Oconee Campus to assure smooth day-to-day operations…While business organization theory calls for only one reporting line, we feel that this dual reporting is very important to assure that we do create "one college" in policies, procedures, and culture, and such an approach has been successfully implemented in other colleges. This organization will be supported with regular communication between the two campuses and a functioning college 'team' with members in two locations."

The organizational structure suggested by the Executive Council was adopted. Participants acknowledged frustrations with communication, ambiguities in who was authorized to make certain decisions, and decision-making that did not take into account the differences in campuses. One participant, responding to the structure, said,

> "There's some things there that have worked well in terms of the organizational structure for a separate Oconee Campus and some things that have not worked well. There's some things that have been done inconsistently…the plan was to

> have a multiple reporting structure for all the administrative structure on the Oconee Campus where there would be supervision of the day-to-day operation from this [Gainesville Campus]. It's a nice concept, but how that gets operationalized, I don't know—it's varied from day to day it seems like and probably from department to department. It's been something that frankly I've been a little uncomfortable with at times."

Another participant stressed,

> "I think we would need to consider the interactions of all the campuses, and what should be centralized services and what should be de-centralized services—to not necessarily give an appearance of more important or higher priority campus just because of size or just because of years delivering instruction so that there's equal footing."

Minutes from an Oconee Campus Strategic Planning Meeting on October 18, 2004 highlighted the need to continue clarification of roles.

Other empirical research draws attention to the frustrations of organizational structure for branch campuses (Bailey, 2002; Hill, 1995; Stahley, 2002) where there seems to be no ideal arrangement; however, each stresses the importance of regular communication between the main/branch campus administrators and a relationship built on respect. Merzer (2008) and Hermanson (1995) acknowledged that lack of communication is a pressing problem between main campuses and branch campuses. Merzer cited that Hermanson found that there were some main campus administrators who "lacked an understanding and commitment to serve the branch campus" (p. 81).

Minutes from an Oconee Campus Strategic Planning Meeting held on October 18, 2004 noted that communication was a continuing issue.

"Probably the most important thing would be for people to understand how the new campus fits into the mission of the full College so that the employees and the students and everybody at the new campus would understand what their life was supposed to be like." Perhaps overlapping with clarification of roles, this participant was referring to the difference, particularly for faculty members, now that the College offers four-year programs. In large part, faculty members at the Oconee Campus have not been a part of program development of four-year degrees.

> "What I think, we have not had the opportunity to do at Oconee is to be involved in the baccalaureate program offerings and those programs. I think that, at this point—I know there are faculty on the Oconee Campus who would like to be involved in that and feel a bit frustrated because they're continuing to do the core curriculum in the freshman and sophomore classes and that's it, and I think that we may lose faculty from the Oconee Campus if we can't allow the Oconee Campus to be a part of the overall college vision to expand our baccalaureate offerings."

Other participants also pointed out that there are a number of ambiguities for those faculty based at the Oconee Campus as the College looks to restructure soon from Divisions to Colleges. These concerns resonate with the findings of Bird (2007) and Wolfe (1995), noting that branch campus faculty members are often frustrated when left out of important faculty matters such as curriculum and tenure. Minutes from the Oconee Campus Strategic Planning meeting (October 14, 2004) listed concerns

such as “lack of campus identity,” and “better define mission.” Institutions need to clarify these not only for the employees, but for the students as well. Norby (2006) found that, in determining how best to serve students as a branch campus, institutions need a clearly developed mission to help students meet their educational goals such as completing the associate’s degree and understanding expectations of transferring.

Addressing Needs Peculiar to the Branch

“Forty-three miles (the distance between the Oconee Campus and the main campus) is a cultural shift in thoughts and in deeds….what’s going on there looks different, acts different, sounds different.” Relating the GSC branch experience to previous experience in another state,

> “You knew the minute you walked on the campus, it was a different place, but that was okay. That was respected. The communities operated differently; they had different expectations, different needs, and the College worked to figure out how to support each of these different groups and the students.”

From course offerings according to the number of majors found at the branch to having procedures match with the needs of the student body, branch campuses need to be able to respond accordingly. The student population at the Oconee Campus emerged with its own needs and concerns. Collectively, students enrolled at the branch were more traditional in age, desiring full-time status, and less diverse than students enrolled at the Gainesville Campus. Furthermore, a number of students enrolled at the Oconee Campus were living in apartments in nearby Athens. The differences in student body characteristics warrant different priorities in regards to academic support, student

services, and student life programming. “Campuses need to be able to address the critical mass which may have different needs.”

Beyond differences in student characteristics, institutional procedures such as advising and registration, including promotion of events and communications through the College website, all required additional thoughts and adaptation. “The recognition that processes may need to be handled differently at the branch than they are at the main campus must be acknowledged and dealt with continually.”

Establishing Community Support

Branch campuses are largely the result of political support from the community and state level (de Give, 1995; Doherty, 1991; Gibson-Benninger, 1998; McCullaugh, 1992; Morris, 1997). Participants suggested the importance of establishing support across a number of areas when launching a branch campus. Community support is essential. One participant conveyed this perspective regarding input from the community:

> “Get into the community and allow the community to shape the college just as the college will be able to shape the community.” Another interviewee added, “there needs to be human resources to become integrated with the greater communities that are being served, so to have that influence within those communities and that credibility within those communities. Certainly would need to at some juncture to go after financial support of the community because we are in a position where we can decreasingly rely on tuition and money from the state. We’ve got to have outside funding for scholarships and things like that.”

Political and financial support influence branch campus development. Institutions should commit time and resources to establishing networks and relationships, continually educating those within the community and the System regarding the interests of the branch campus. One participant summarized it this way, “Politically, if you’ve got a vast community support, it’s a whole lot easier to overcome political considerations.”

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