

OPPORTUNITY BROKERS: COLLEGE ACCESS ORGANIZATIONS' RESOURCES,  
CONSTRAINTS AND INFLUENCE

by

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(Under the Direction of Elizabeth H. DeBray)

ABSTRACT

Although research demonstrates the effectiveness of nonprofit college access organizations (CAOs) for improved college awareness, knowledge, enrollment, and persistence, few studies examine their resources, organizational behaviors, and political influence. This historical qualitative case study evaluates the institutional forces that lead to privatization of nonprofit college access organizations. It extends the college access field by broadening our understanding of these intermediary organizations. Research on college access is important because persistent inequalities in degree attainment continue for minoritized, rural, and underserved youth. The overall aim of this study was to understand CAOs' dominant resource streams and how resource diversification influences or constrains their actions. The growth of the field over the past few decades is outlined along with a discussion of the policy context including disinvestments in K-12 schools and higher education. This research highlights how CAOs are funded, adapt, grow, and influence policy during political disruption of the accountability, reform, and social justice eras. Both categorical and narrative data was collected through extensive document analysis and 25 semi-structured interviews with elite insiders, alumni, and financial supporters. While not generalizable, findings suggest CAOs map and

exploit the environment with mission re-orientation and resource diversification. In doing so, they reproduce the unequal opportunity structures evidenced in all levels of the US educational system based on their orientation towards privatization. Because policy scholars traditionally attend to college access with a focus on either K-12 schools or higher education, these findings are significant because they illuminate the inequality of policy actors across sectors and the unintended consequences of philanthropic and corporate support. Recommendations for research, policy, and practice argue for more nuanced analysis of local contexts. Increased financial transparency, cross-sector collaboration with intentional social justice practices and authentic youth engagement are also called for.

INDEX WORDS: College Access Organizations, Nonprofits, Philanthropy, Intermediary Organizations, Education Policy

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## DEDICATION

For Danielle. This dedication acknowledges the Cayuga Nation whose traditional territory is where Ithaca, New York and Cayuga Lake are now known to be. For thousands of years this has been the traditional land of the Cayuga Nation – members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Today, this place is still home to the Cayuga Nation and Indigenous people from across Turtle Island. I am grateful for the opportunity to live and work on these homelands.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

For more than fifty years after the Higher Education Act of 1965, nonprofit organizations external to schools have pervaded classrooms and communities enticing students to enter the realm of higher education. College access organizations (CAOs) promise guidance in the quest for the elusive American Dream and a degree is the talisman. Supporting this idea of self-determination through higher education is a popular culture littered with tales of personal triumph after an apathetic college counselor tells a high school senior not to bother applying to their dream college. We root for these kids and reproduce the story over and over signifying the belief that if they present the right combination of ability and drive that admission to the perfect college is their ticket for social mobility and personal success. These stories are narratives reminding us that young people want and need help navigating the costly and often traumatic journey to and through higher education. For example, Enoch Jemmott, a Black NYC college student featured in the recent documentary film, *Personal Statement*, chronicles the challenges in the college admissions process writing:

“We knew you had to apply to college, and for financial aid, but didn’t know the necessary or “smart” steps. When you’re 17, and pretty much doing it all on your own, the sight of all the hurdles you have to jump can be demoralizing, even paralyzing... I came to realize that, in every step along the way, we had to do more because we had less” (Jemmott, 2019).

Research supports Jemmott's concerns. According to a 2017 survey by the National Association for College Admissions Counseling (NACAC), only 20% of school counselors time is spent on college counseling. In many schools, counselors serve as academic schedulers, discipline supervisors, and quasi social workers. Using 2015-16 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data, in a report from the Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection program, the A.C.L.U. reports the national student-to-counselor ratio as 1 to 464 and the number of school counselors nationally increased only by 5% from 1999 to 2015. During this same period the number of nonprofit CAOs has grown to the thousands to meet the needs of students like Jemmott.

### **Why Nonprofits**

While scholars continue to examine whether investment and public engagement in K-12 schools and higher education has either increased or declined in recent years, it is easy to observe the growth of the education nonprofit sector over the past few decades. According to the Urban Institute, education nonprofit organizations (excluding higher education) experienced considerable growth in both revenue and expenses between 2003 and 2013. The Nonprofit Sector in Brief 2019 reports a 55% increase in revenue (adjusted for inflation) for education nonprofits during this period (NCCS, 2020). The growth of the nonprofit sector during the 1990's and 2000's is attributed a growth in the economy and to "devolution of federal programs to state and local governments, and outsourcing of the provision of many services to nonprofits...along with a reawakening of the spirit of public service" after events such as Hurricane Katrina and September 11<sup>th</sup> (Worth, 2013, p. 24-25). This growth has led to debates on the best way to classify and understand education nonprofits and serves as one motivation for this research.

According to Frumkin (2012), nonprofits share three fundamental features: (1) the non-coercive nature of participation, (2) the non-distribution of profits, and (3) non-ownership and unclear lines of accountability. Because there are ongoing debates about the extent to which nonprofits share these three features, Frumkin (2012) argues that understanding who the organization serves is a more comprehensive way to identify and understand the diversity of nonprofits. Discussing the “arena between the state and the market where public and private concerns meet and where individual and social efforts are united”, Frumkin (2012) suggests that grouping nonprofits together is difficult – not only because of differences in mission or purpose, but also because of different funding sources, level of professionalism, and legal status.

It is mostly because of these differences in nonprofit college access organizations (CAOs) that I undertake this dissertation research. Understanding more about who these organizations actually serve is a driver. I argue that classifying nonprofit CAOs based on their orientation towards privatization and the degree to which they operate like a business is a productive way to understand their evolution and degree to which they serve public or private interests. This research also extends our understanding of the diversity of the college access organizational field (McDonough, Ventresca, & Outcalt, 2000). I suggest that classifying CAOs as mostly public philanthropic organizations or mostly private commercialized organizations (or on a spectrum somewhere in between) is a more useful way to understand what they are doing and by extension the impact they make on college degree attainment. Scholars have shown how the interdependency of public, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations impact nonprofit behaviors and that these organizations compete for funding to maximize their production and market share (Weisbrod, 1998; Young, 2007). I am not convinced there is one straightforward way to classify CAOs based on either their primary partner, a set of program characteristics, or even outcome

measurements, as has been done in the past (Bailis, Hahn, Aaron, Nahas & Leavitt, 1995; Gándara, 2001).

Because scholars argue that the nonprofit sector is becoming “indistinguishable from the private sector” (Weisbrod, 1998, p. 4) due to the sector’s ongoing growth and size, and similarities in revenue streams, categorizing CAOs across a private versus public resource spectrum seems appropriate given these blurring boundaries. With common origins and similar missions along with perpetual calls for collective action to improve college going and degree attainment for underserved youth, CAOs represent specific values, but may differ with regard to their relationships with government, philanthropy, and business. To not consider the levels of privatization or commercialism of contemporary nonprofit CAOs results in a shallow understanding of the complex and political arena in which they operate. Another impetus for this dissertation is to understand how CAOs function as intermediaries operating as a bridge between the K-12 and higher education sectors (Honig, 2004; 2006). Nonprofit CAOs are mostly thought of as direct service organizations serving the public in pursuit of a social good mission. With this research, I suggest CAOs serve many roles and have multiple masters, while assisting young people in their search for post-secondary education.

### **Why College Access**

In this time of stark disparities between affluent youth with the resources to pursue higher education and underserved youth who do not, along with persistent gaps in educational attainment, research on college access and success is both moral and public concern. While students, policymakers, education reformers, and researchers may disagree on the overarching goals of higher education – either to increase social mobility, improve social efficiency, or as a mechanism to safeguard democracy (Labaree, 1997; 2010), most U.S. high school students



aspire to attend some form of schooling beyond high school (Hoxby & Avery, 2012). Even with these aspirations, the idea that higher education leads to economic prosperity for anyone, regardless of income, race, or geography is challenged by stagnant completion rates, high tuition costs, and large debt burdens (Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Mettler, 2014; Perna & Finney, 2014; Perna & Jones, 2013; Taylor & Cantwell, 2019). Policy scholars traditionally attend to these issues with a focus on K-12 schools or with a lens towards higher education. This research focuses on the actors working in between these two fields. Next, I turn to how others frame the problem of unequal degree attainment before stating the questions this research asks and answers.

### **Problems on Problems on Problems**

#### **Students as the Problem**

Framing the problem of low degree attainment as a national crisis caused by a gap in the supply of educated workers, initial college access research focused on differences in student characteristics (e.g., race, gender, socioeconomic status), academic preparation (e.g., courses taken, standardized test scores), knowledge about college, and the social supports that impact individual college choice and enrollment (Conley, 2010; Perna, 2006; Perna & Kurban, 2013; Tierney, Bailey, Constantine, Finkelstein, & Hurd, 2009). As scholars consistently document the lack of sufficient college counseling in high schools (McDonough, 1997; Hurwitz & Howell, 2013), a growing field CAOs attempt to improve the attainment rates through their partnerships with K-12 schools, colleges, universities, and philanthropic foundations (Gándara, 2001; Honig, 2004). Targeting underserved students with the supposed deficits identified by academics and attracting scores of influential supporters that funnel money into them, CAOs serve as the brokers to a better life.

## Commodification as the Problem

Other scholars point to the commodification of college knowledge and commercialism of higher education as the impetus for the development of the CAO field, including for-profit and non-profit actors (McDonough, Korn, & Yamasaki, 1997; McDonough, Antonio, Walpole, & Perez, 1998; McDonough et al., 2000; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Vargas, 2004). The privatization of academic tutors, application preparation, standardized test coaches, and college consultants creates competition for admission in an already stratified system in which affluent families pay for services to ensure their children gain access to college. This system leaves underserved and minoritized students experiencing poverty with few opportunities to gain admission in the competitive process. Castleman (2014), in an interview with *Inside HigherEd* explains: "...affluent families spend a lot of money to hire college consultants to guide students through the process. Choosing colleges, applying to colleges, and applying for financial aid are very complex processes that require, expert knowledge." Bloom (2007) argues that the decision-making process and transition to college for minoritized and students experiencing poverty is even more complicated due to worries and fears not held by their more affluent peers. Bloom (2008) remarks that college outreach programs should: "attempt to simulate the processes by which advantaged students gain familiarity about the landscape of higher education and develop networks of people that can provide critical knowledge about applying for college and financial aid" (p. 6). Even with the growth in nonprofit CAOs and federally sponsored programs recreating the resources available to rich students, others point to higher education policy as the key to improving U.S. degree attainment rates.

## **Policy as the Problem**

Expanding research beyond student level attributes, other scholars set their sights on understanding how the availability of financial resources and other policies designed to effect college enrollment patterns operate at the state and national level (Perna & Titus, 2004; Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, Thomas, & Li, 2010; McLendon, Heller, & Lee, 2009; St. John, Musoba, Simmons, Chung, Schmit & Peng, 2004). Emphasizing the policy context within which college enrollment outcomes happen, these scholars suggest that policy plays a significant role in signaling what is required of students, K-12 schools, and higher education institutions to positively influence higher education attainment in U.S (Goldrick-Rab, Carter, & Wagner, 2007; Perna & Titus, 2004; Perna & Kurban, 2013; St. John et al., 2004).

These scholars and others explain that political, social, and economic forces have deterred equitable access to higher education but are pragmatic and even a bit optimistic that the passage of the Higher Education Act helped to institutionalize policies and programs promoting college access (Hearn, Jones & Kurban, 2013; Mettler, 2014; Page & Clayton, 2016). Calling for the cross-sector partnerships that were first forged during the height of the college access movement in the 1970's, as Hearn et al. remark: "Many of the programs in the Higher Education Act arose out of the implicit and explicit partnerships between federal and state governments to establish and carry out policies for postsecondary access, with further partnerships with institutions for persistence and completion" (2013, p. 183). Examining these lanes into higher education remains a consistent focus of educational policy research while gaps in degree attainment remain (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009).

## **Inequality as the Problem**

Although the high school graduation rate of public high school students is the highest it has ever been at 94 %, over the past two decades 4-year college degree attainment rates remain relatively flat (Perna & Finney, 2010; Perna et al., 2010; Tierney et al., 2009). As the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2020 update) reports, the overall percentage of U.S. college enrollees has not risen above 70 % and the rate reported in 2020 is not significantly different than in 1990 or 2000 (NCES, 2020). In 2018 the number of high school graduates entering college immediately the following year was 69 % with 44 % enrolling at 4-year colleges and 26 % at 2-year institutions (NCES, 2020). Furthermore, immediate college enrollment is stratified by race and ethnicity, as well as by socioeconomic status, and there are significant gaps for minoritized youth and those experiencing poverty compared to Whites. With respect to income disparities, 68 % of students from families in the top income quartile earn a bachelor's degree by age 26 compared to only 9 % of students from the bottom quartile (NCES, 2016). Recently published attainment rates broken down by race show that the bachelor's degree attainment gap from 2000 and 2019 between Whites and Blacks remains significant at 16 percentage points and the gap for Hispanics is even larger at 25 percent (NCES, 2020).

Gaps in degree attainment are significant because not only does low educational attainment damage individual earning power, but it can also have a negative impact on societies. For example, according to NCES the employment rates of 25 to 34-year-olds with bachelor's degree or higher in 2019 was 82 %, as compared 74 % for those with only a high school diploma or GED. The employment rate is even lower for those not completing high school at 57 % (NCES, 2020). While these rates are not broken down by racial categories in the most recent NCES reporting, it follows that the patterns of degree attainment would follow employment

rates. As Darling-Hammond (2007) remarks, “With a more educationally demanding economy, the effects of dropping out are more negative than they have ever been before...those who do not succeed in school are becoming part of a growing underclass, cut off from productive engagement in society” (p. 320). Also, there is evidence that “living in a society with wide disparities – in health, in wealth, in education – is worse for all the society’s members, even the well-off” (Gudrais, 2008, p. 22). Further explicating class differences and the struggle between affluent families and everyone else in the college admissions process, many scholars suggest that closing the gaps in higher education attainment is vital, not only for national economic competitiveness, but also for social and racial justice reasons, especially since the benefits of higher education are well documented (Swail, 2005; Tierney & Venegas, 2009; Weis, Cipollone, & Jenkins, 2014).

In an age of admissions scandals, where accounts of rich families bribing college officers for spots at the most selective institutions are commonplace, it is not a stretch to think that underserved and minoritized students face significant barriers to college access. For example, a recent study found that scandals affecting undergraduate students were associated with decreases in the admissions cycle following the occurrence (Luca, Rooney & Smith, 2017). Colleges with the most media coverage had larger drops in applications, which impacts the behaviors of both CAOs and higher education institutions in the race to maintain selectivity while pursuing diverse applications. While individuals in this country do not have a legal right to college counseling, the current social unrest and calls for racial justice intensify the need for historically marginalized communities to organize fight for equitable educational opportunities beyond high school. This research is important because nonprofit CAOs claim to provide the roadmap to college or *college knowledge* – information deemed otherwise unknowable to most students

(McDonough, 1997). Defined as “privileged knowledge held by those who have easy access to college by virtue of their position in society”, college knowledge is part of a set of tools required on the quest for higher education (Conley, 2010, p. 13). For individuals without the benefit of family or social networks to guide them CAOs fill a significant void. Because the majority of U.S. public schools fail to provide adequate college counseling, the goal of this research is to understand how nonprofit CAOs operate, fund their missions, and attempt to influence education policy related to college going and degree attainment.

### **Research Purpose, Questions and Contributions**

My goal is to demonstrate and understand the ways nonprofit CAOs form, grow, and sustain themselves – becoming institutionalized within the college access field. While these organizations exist to serve either individual students, classrooms, whole schools, entire districts, communities, or higher education institutions little is known about their financing strategies, organizational behaviors, and influence on educational policy. The overall aim of this research is to understand CAOs’ dominant resource streams and how resource diversification influences or constrains their organizational behaviors. I am also interested in illuminating the intermediary role of CAOs in the policy process and ask the following:

1. What are the dominant resource streams utilized by nonprofit college access organizations?
2. How does resource diversification influence or constrain the organizational behaviors of nonprofit college access organizations?
3. How do nonprofit college access organizations act as intermediaries within the broader college access policy arena?

As the literature on the positive effects of college knowledge and access interventions for underrepresented and low-income students grows (Avery, 2013; Castleman & Long, 2013; Glennie, Dalton, & Knapp, 2014; Hoxby & Turner, 2013; Lopez & Rivera, 2020), this dissertation contributes in several ways. First, I am interested in the funding sources of these nonprofit organizations because their resources inform their values, activities, and goals. Furthermore, understanding how their missions are initially defined and later adapted provides information to challengers or new entrants to the field. Additionally, the outcomes produced by and the research created and disseminated on these organizations can inform state and federal policy decisions and the institutional processes of their partners.

## **Summary and Limitations**

As organizations distinct from K-12 schools and higher education institutions, CAOs mostly take the nonprofit form and are conceptualized or constructed differently depending on the researcher's vantage point. While typologies exist categorizing pre-college outreach programs (Gándara, 2001), and state and federal-level college enrollment programs (Perna et al., 2010), very few scholars have conceptualized college access as a larger field made up of a variety of organizational actors (Lopez & Rivera, 2020; McDonough et al., 2000; Wooten & Hoffman, 2008). The consensus in the college access literature is that college access or college outreach programs employ comparable interventions and have similar goals (Perna, 2001; Perna, 2006; Perna & Kurban, 2013; Tierney, Bailey, Constantine, Finkelstein, & Hurd, 2009). Gándara's (2001) taxonomy, which first classified CAOs based on their origins, program components, and primary funding sources is the basis for this dissertation. I extend this taxonomy and argue these nonprofits serve as policy intermediaries and interact within and across different domains and contexts (e.g., state, federal, colleges/universities, schools and communities) and are subject to the institutional forces operating within each.

Due to U.S. federalism, the states are responsible for education and legislatures approach K-12 schools and higher education as operating in completely different spheres. Consequently, state policies do not hold both equally responsible for college readiness and attainment and efforts to coordinate between the sectors are poorly funded or staffed (e.g., P-20 councils) (Domina & Ruzek, 2012; Rippner, 2014). Taken as a whole, it seems to fully understand the issue of college access, and now success, I must take a broader macro approach that blends the varied political and historical contexts with the perceptions and actions of institutional level actors and organizations (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2007; Carter, & Wagner, 2007; Perna & Finney,



2014; Perna & Kurban, 2013; McDonough, Ventresca & Outcalt, 2000; Rippner, 2014). Instead of simply attempting to predict individual students' college going behaviors, there is a persistent call for a re-thinking of college access models to include the institutional forces and organizational structures that influence college going behaviors, to which this study responds (Hoxby, 2004; Hoxby & Avery, 2012; Hoxby & Turner, 2013; Iloh, 2019; Jones, 2013; Perna & Finney, 2014; Perna & Kurban, 2013; Stampen & Hansen, 1999; Venezia & Kirst, 2005; Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2003).

There are few organizational or field studies on these organizations, so I include varied conceptions and literatures to attend to the growth of the college access field and the perspectives of multiple scholars and disciplines. In the next chapter, I turn to the theoretical frameworks from which this issue can be studied. I first examine how government failure leads to the rise of nonprofits. I then discuss resource dependency and the nonprofit organizational theories that explain institutional and organizational behaviors (Alexander, 1998; Froelich, 1999; Froelich, Knoepfle, & Pollak, 2000). Because policy scholars attend to issues most central to their sphere, this dissertation relies on both conceptual and empirical data. Finally, neo-institutional scholars undergird this study with theories explaining the institutionalism of college going and how legitimacy and norms cement college going into our political and social spheres (Meyer & Rowan, 2006).

A major limitation to this research is the fact that there are thousands of CAOs operating in the U.S. today. As a case study this research does not seek generalizability, instead offers a view of what is happening and seeks to discover what makes a case unique. Rather than attempting to generalize, this research is what Tierney and Clemens (2011) describe as transferable, or "the ability of the author to evoke readers an understanding of the research

project in a manner that enhances understanding and presumably provokes questions regarding similarities and differences” (p. 40). While I present a new way of categorizing and thinking about these organizations within a larger field of education actors, it is impossible to generalize findings across all organizations. Even with this limitation, I believe this study contributes a better understanding of the role of intermediary CAOs in the policy arena.

While 30 years ago cross-sector relationships in education were virtually nonexistent, there are now many local, regional, state, and national efforts to build P-20 pathways. To get closer to closing the economic and educational achievement gaps, I argue, we must address the basic problem equitable access to academic, career, and college advising and understand how organizations enable this access. With social justice and equity as my guides, I want to understand how contemporary CAOs create institutional and structural changes to accommodate new technological advances, reflect new ways of learning, and sustain public support, while meeting the needs of diverse youth and the demands of a knowledge-based economy.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

This research is undergirded by several theories. The foundational perspective is government failure theory, which suggests that due to the failures of the government to work efficiently in providing public goods, nonprofits form and operate to fill in the gaps (Weisbrod, 1991). Because of this unmet need nonprofit organizations can either supplant or complement governmental services because of the constraints on government (Douglas, 1987; Hansmann, 1987). I also rely on the distinctiveness and impulses of the nonprofit sector and nonprofit organizational theories along with neo-institutional theory, where nonprofit organizations are the outcome to be examined. Neo-institutional theory suggests that nonprofit organizations are susceptible to isomorphic pressures, employ different growth strategies, and achieve market differentiation by adapting their missions and operations – as a result of multiple resource streams, the varied interests of their supporters, and the values held by the organization's founders (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; James, 2003, Rowan, 2007). Outlining the organizational tactics that are most widely thought to influence college going, I posit that the nonprofit CAO organizational field developed and is subject to the institutional effects of college going, and is influenced by the broader social, economic, and policy contexts.

Because the salience of a theoretical framework depends on the unit of analysis (Heck, 2004), I situate my thinking about nonprofit college access organizations in a related literature chapter explaining how others have conceptualized college access, college going, nonprofits, and educational policy actors. Because this study threads many strands of thinking together, I first

discuss my theoretical perspectives and then weave together related empirical studies in the related literature review. Because there are scant studies attempting to combine these perspectives, I rely on literature related to college access, nonprofits, and intermediary organizations. Finally, I contend that an interconnected framework combining the contextual influences of accountability policies with institutional theory is an effective way to explain the forms, structures, and behaviors of intermediary nonprofit college access organizations (Schneiberg & Clemens, 2006). Through these theoretical frameworks, I demonstrate how organizational actors' beliefs and actions contribute to the institutional process of college going, which in turn influences the organizations and actions within the policy arena. In support of this interpretation, I then frame the CAO strategic action field to encompass schools, colleges/universities, and other formal organizations promoting higher education within the accountability and standards movement.

### **Government Failure**

Government failure theory predicts that nonprofits are most active when there is a diverse population with minority political groups, which have a propensity for collectiveness (Weisbrod, 1991). Government failure relies on multiple funding sources as an assumption and Weisbrod (1991) posits that if nonprofits are providing public goods because of government failure, then a significant amount of their resources should come from donations or grants, not from sales revenues or membership fees. Weisbrod (1991) proposes that 501 [c](3) organizations with collectiveness indices between 20-40% (the ratio of contributions and grants to total revenue) will provide more public/collective goods. Weisbrod (1998) also argues that nonprofits will produce different types of goods – collective and private and that some goods are preferred over others depending on the demand and competition for each.

## **Nonprofit Organizational Theories**

An understanding of the theories underpinning nonprofit organizations and the nonprofit sector's distinctiveness next provides direction for examining the connections between a nonprofit's mission, values, activities, and resources. I explain the pressures or impulses that emerge when the interests of funders differ from the organization's mission and values with specific examples from the subsectors of arts and culture, healthcare, and education, (Chang & Tuckman, 1994, 1996; Froelich, 1999; Salamon, 2012). I also outline the implications of the linkages between a nonprofits' resources, identity, and function, paying close attention to the organizational life cycle and environmental context, which I suggest contributes to nonprofit performance over time, particularly as the boundaries between nonprofits and for-profits converge (Cordes & Steuerle, 2009; Galaskiewicz, & Sinclair, 2006; Schlesinger, 1998; Young, 2007).

The establishment, funding, and functioning of nonprofit organizations are explained by theorists spanning several disciplines, including economics, sociology, and political science. Political and economic theories explain the existence of nonprofits as the creation of organizations to meet the unmet demands of heterogeneous populations with different values, who have the means and opportunity to express those values through organizing (Frumkin, 2002; Hansmann, 1980, 1987, Weisbrod, 1991). Organizational theories describe the nature of the relationship's nonprofits have with their environment and how nonprofit organizational behaviors are not only due to specific attributes such as age, size and structure, but also to the resource environment (Alexander, 1998; Minkoff & Powell, 2006; Scott, 2014). Finally, social and community theories, explicate both the existence of nonprofits, as well as their

characteristics and activities based on the desires and needs of the communities they are established to serve (Ott & Dicke, 2012; Smith, 2012).

## **Market Failures**

Known as market failure theories, which factor in the conditions that cause economic models to fail, government failure theory and contract theory both use the concepts of production to explain the existence and activities of nonprofits. In these strands of the literature, scholars suggest that nonprofits exist either to meet the unmet demands of the market and government (demand-side – instrumental functions), or to create common goods (supply-side – expressive functions) for utilization by a collective community (Hansmann, 1980, 1987; Weisbrod, 1991). Economic theorists argue that due to human behaviors and the failures of the market or government to work efficiently that nonprofits form and operate to fill in the gaps. Because of this unmet need nonprofit organizations can either supplant or complement governmental services, often in partnership with or funding from government (Douglas, 1987; Salamon, 1995; Smith & Lipsky, 2009; Young & Casey, 2017).

Contract failure theory explains the reasons why nonprofits exist at all in a market economy when competition among for-profit firms should efficiently produce the goods and services demanded by consumers. The market condition for contract failure requires that consumers are incapable of determining the quality or quantity of goods they need, due to a limited amount of knowledge or information asymmetries (Hansmann, 1980, 1987). Research suggests that nonprofits hold the best solution to contract failure due to a higher level of trustworthiness as compared to for-profit firms. Where it is more difficult for consumers to judge trustworthiness, some scholars maintain that nonprofits will exist in that market (Weisbrod, 1991; Young, 2000). An example of contract failure is in the healthcare field, where

both nonprofit and for-profit hospitals provide the same services but have different organizational forms. In a study comparing a "patient's suitability for continued residence" in a nonprofit or a for-profit long-term care facility, controlling for variables that could affect the flow of information to families, Weisbrod (1991) found that family members of residents at for-profit institutions "were less likely to know that facility made periodic reviews of each patient's needs" (p. 148-149), demonstrating a relationship between information and organizational form. Criticisms of the applicability of contract theory, include questioning the presence of both government agencies, for-profits, and nonprofits in some sectors, government's choice of for-profits versus nonprofits in contracting services where information asymmetries exist, and the ability of for-profit firms to disguise themselves as nonprofits.

Like contract failure theory, government failure theory is a demand-side economic theory that argues that because of unmet needs for public goods and services nonprofits form. Government failure theory emphasizes five sources of constraint on government action when explaining the existence of nonprofits – categorical, majoritarian, time horizon, knowledge, and size constraints (Douglas, 1987; Weisbrod, 1991; Young, 2000). Categorical constraints are when individual demands are different from the services supplied by government, while majoritarian constraints stress the various notions citizens or consumers have about what government should be supplying. Time horizon, knowledge and size constraints bring attention to the structure of government, explaining that the short tenure and interests of policymakers, bureaucratic hierarchies, and the unwieldy size of government allows agile nonprofits to fill in the gaps with knowledge generation and innovation. Government failure theory predicts that nonprofits are most active when there is a diverse population with minority political groups, which have a propensity for collectiveness. Government failure also relies on multiple funding

sources as an assumption. Weisbrod (1991) posits that if nonprofits are providing public goods because of government failure, then a significant amount of their resources should come from donations or grants, not from sales revenues or membership fees. By creating a collectiveness index (the ratio of contributions and grants to total revenue), Weisbrod (1991) proposes that 501 [c] [3] organizations with high collectiveness indices (between 20-40%) will provide more public/collective goods. Clemens (2006) supports this institutional explanation of nonprofit supplementing government in her discussion of the political consequences of government failure writing, “If a majority desires some form of social provision, those preferences will support government provision...In cases where a minority desires a service, nonprofit organizations represent alternative vehicle” (p. 214). Other scholars point out that nonprofits supplement government activity only when basic or highly demanded public needs are government’s main focus, leaving nonprofits to focus on other public interests (Ferris, 1998). Overall, the criticisms of economic and political theories argue that the complex interactions in the market and assumptions about the rationality of human behavior can’t always accurately predict economic behavior in the larger sense. These criticisms of the limitations of the economic theories leads to a discussion of resource dependency and its influence on the functioning and distinctiveness of nonprofit organizations, which is grounded in neo-institutional organizational theory.

### **Nonprofit Financing**

Applying government failure to the financing of nonprofits, Young (2000) further suggests that nonprofits offer additional levels of public goods and services that supplement those offered by government. Other scholars point out that nonprofits supplement government activity only when basic or highly demanded public needs are government’s primary focus, leaving nonprofits to focus on other public interests (Ferris, 1998). Clemens (2006) supports this



institutional explanation of nonprofit supplementing government in a discussion of the political consequences of government failure writing, “If a majority desires some form of social provision, those preferences will support government provision...In cases where a minority desires a service, nonprofit organizations represent alternative vehicle” (p. 214).

## **Neo-Institutional Theory**

Neo-institutional theory rests on the assumption that organizations within a specific field will meet the demands of that field through isomorphism. Isomorphism can occur in three distinct ways – coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Neo-institutionalists argue that isomorphic institutionalization produces similar structural processes, such as bureaucratization, but that nonprofit organizations may not align with their contexts in the same way (Alexander, 1998; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Rowan, 2007; Weisbrod, 1998). When external environments are complex, neo-institutionalists also suggest that organizations will emulate or mimic other successful organizations to improve their chances at survival.

Discussing the importance of the environment and the structural arrangements that can occur in a particular context, Scott (2014) argues that organizations are within a distinct field when they provide similar products and services, have the same regulatory and funding sources, and when they are held to the same performance evaluation measures. Focusing on the field level of analysis, Scott (2014) bridges the broader idea of social institutions with organizations by defining a field as “a set of interdependent populations of organizations participating in the same cultural and social sub-systems” (p. 16). A field level approach allows for the idea that college access organizations (those distinct from schools, colleges and universities) often operate in more than one context, although they may originate and dominate one (Gándara, 2001). For example, colleges and universities within the higher education context may influence the school community context through school-university partnerships in combination with other organizations.

## **Institutionalism and College Going**

Neo-institutional organizational analysis is built on the work of Meyer and Rowan (1983), Zucker (1977), DiMaggio and Powell (1983), and Scott and Meyer (1977). While these theorists continue in the sociological tradition by arguing that social action is both enabled and constrained by institutions, they focus their analyses on organizations (Hinings & Tolbert, 2008). Guiding this work is a constructionist epistemology, which implies that individuals socially construct organizational reality through the external enactment and the interpretations of their socially constructed internal reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Meyer and Rowan (1991) stressed the importance of these constructed realities to the formation and reproduction of institutions as the “beliefs that are rationalized – formulated in ways that specify the design of rule-like procedures to attain specific objectives” to (Scott, 2014, p. 50). Neo-institutionalists argue that institutionalization results in a structural homogeneity among organizations due to isomorphic pressures (coercive, mimetic, and normative), but also suggest that organizations may not align with their contexts in the same way. Neo-institutionalists combine rationality with relational networks, the environment, and legitimacy factors to explain organizational institutionalism (Hinings & Tolbert, 2008; Scott, 2014).

In contrast to a purely rational approach in policy studies where the assumption is that rationality and self-interests dictate political action, structural frameworks, such as institutional theory, attempt to connect the policy stages (e.g., design, adoption, and implementation) with the contributing factors that exist in the broader context, such as values, ideologies and culture. Descriptions of policy stages from a rational perspective may offer insight into a particular policy, but they have a hard time explaining policy outcomes in a specific context. Heck clarifies this point when describing the rational approach writing “...the environmental, beliefs

and values, and other types of institutional relationships are not considered with respect to their potential to affect the policy process” (2004, p. 325). While I am not diminishing the importance of frameworks used to describe policy stages or those that rely on identifying inputs and the potential outcomes of a particular policy, I focus primarily on a structural framework because of the complex nature of college access where both micro (e.g., individual actors) and macro elements (e.g., policy context, organizational interactions) are required in the analysis. Institutional theory traces its history back to sociology and the study of organizations within society (Hinings & Tolbert, 2008; Perrow, 1991).

Scott (2014) connects the roots of institutionalism to foremost sociologists, such as Spencer, Durkheim, Marx, and Weber, who focused on understanding the patterns and structural arrangements of collective action by individuals arranged into formal organizations. Following the tradition of these major sociological theorists, Scott (2014) identifies the links sociology makes to institutional theory, namely how social life is divided into spheres or arenas, and these arenas are interlocked by patterns or institutions with distinct functions. The early institutional theorists, according to Scott (2014), relied on rationality and argued that institutionalized spheres (e.g., college going) arise from competitive exchanges by rational individuals pursuing their own interests, but are constrained by some legal authority, which then influences the structure of organizations. Prior to the emergence of neo-institutionalists, organizations were studied primarily using a functionalist approach with contingency theory, which explains organizational structures in terms of efficiency and effectiveness (Hinings & Tolbert, 2008).

Applying institutional theory to policy studies, Heck describes it as an “alternative lens through which to view the behavior of actors in policy situations, as well as the behavior of organizations in adopting policy changes” (2004, p. 150). I am suggesting here that the college

access organizational field has emerged within the institutionalized sphere of *college going*. Others define institutional theory in policy studies as emphasizing the structural features of institutions which are “a set of regularized patterns of human behavior that persist over time and perform some significant social function or activity” (Anderson, 2003, p. 19). Institutional theory focuses the analysis on the policy action resulting from the interpretation and eventual enactment of institutional norms. Institutional theory also recognizes the hierarchies built into the social or policy arena and posits that nations, states, organizations, and individuals are affected by the rules and norms associated with the institution (Heck, 2004). Institutionalism then is a process or as the way in which under different conditions behaviors are normalized through conscious choices based on the actor’s interests, rational or not (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Scott, 2014). Differentiating between the old and new institutionalists, Scott points out that the original institutionalists were attentive to organizational conflict, power and informal structures and values. The new or neo-institutionalists focus more on cultural processes, routines, legitimacy, and formal structures, which happens in the environment at the field level (Deephouse, & Suchman, 2008; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 2014).

### **Legitimacy, Regulation, Norms, and Culture**

According to Scott (2014), institutions have three elements or “pillars” – regulative, normative, and cultural cognitive. He urges researchers studying organizational institutionalism to specify which of these pillars are operating in which context, and what effects they have on organizational behavior. Regulatory pillars include laws and codes of conduct that have a coercive mechanism and require an expedient response on the part of organizations. Examples of a regulatory pillar in college going would be affirmative action laws or sexual assault codes in higher education. Normative pillars are social commitments with binding expectations that are

deemed moral and normal in society. In the case of college going, the normative pillar is the idea that college going is facilitated through accessible and honest means, and if not, the offending parties will be shamed (e.g., for-profit college closures). The cultural cognitive pillars are culturally supported, shared understandings, which lead to mimetic isomorphism of organizations. Legitimacy is a main concern for organizational behavior in that, if a firm adopts an innovation because that adoption provides legitimacy, then that behavior is considered an institutional effect. Efficiency is less of a concern for neo-institutionalists, because adopting the institution and conforming are more important for organizational survival. Scott (2014) further suggests that contemporary institutional theory has evolved to include the socially constructed realities that organizations and their members build to define how the rules about how they should operate and structure themselves.

### **Field Construction**

DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) concept of organizational fields helps further our understanding of how groups of interacting organizations advance the process of institutionalization and they define an organizational field as "those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies and other organizations that produce the services or products" (p. 148). For example, in education, the alignment of K-12 standards with college and career readiness demonstrates an institutional effect related to *college going*. Highlighting the various actors engaged in efforts to build and influence institutional definitions, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) theorize that "organizational actors making rational decisions construct around themselves an environment that constrains their ability to change further in later years" (p. 148). Discussing the importance of the environment and the structural arrangements that can occur in a

particular context, Scott (2014) further suggests that organizations are within a distinct field when they provide similar products and services, have the same regulatory and funding sources, and when they are held to the same performance evaluation measures, similar to the previously discussed accountability and standards movement in education. Focusing on the field level of analysis, Scott (2014) bridges the broader idea of social institutions with organizations by defining a field as “a set of interdependent populations of organizations participating in the same cultural and social sub-systems” (p. 16). Barley (2008) describes how the beliefs and experiences of individuals who are part of the organization creates links between institutions and people.

Although not widely applied, one study highlights the usefulness of institutional theory to policy studies is a study on institutional change in American community colleges (Brint & Karabel, 1991). Supporting the loose-coupling argument made by Weick (1976) and followed by Rowan (1991), Brint and Karabel (1991) suggest that three power centers, four-year colleges, business firms, and governmental bodies were influential in shaping the transformation of the community college system from junior colleges to vocational institutions. Competition with already established four-year colleges and universities for the upper end of “training market” was difficult as linkages with the professions such as medical schools were already made. Instead, community college leaders seized upon an “opportunity field...where a potentially large market existed for their services among students new to higher education” (p. 348). Although Brint and Karabel acknowledge that the opportunity field for two-year colleges varied by state, the field was relatively open and legislators wanted to attract commerce, develop vehicles for community engagement, and provide access to higher education to a broader swath of the population.

## **Legitimacy Pressures**

Organizational theory stemming from the neo-institutionalists (DiMaggio & Anheier, 1990; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Minkoff & Powell, 2006), suggest that nonprofit organizations are susceptible to isomorphic pressures (e.g. coercive, mimetic, and normative), employ different growth strategies, and achieve market differentiation by adapting to demands of funders and other organizations in same the environment. From the neo-institutional perspective, nonprofits rely on external legitimacy for organizational survival and may compromise their original mission if the environmental context presents incentives to shift or abandon their mission (Alexander, 1998; Minkoff & Powell, 2006). This reorientation of mission is in line with what Minkoff and Powell (2006) define as a pathway to organizational change or “shifting priorities as a response to changing external circumstances, while renewing or reorienting the mission to focus on or enhance a core animating belief” (p. 595). Building on the assumptions that nonprofit organizations within a field are “subject to the same institutional expectations and constraints” (Scott, 2014, p. 16), organizational theorists posit that nonprofits will adjust through isomorphic mechanisms to meet the demands of the field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, 1991; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012; Minkoff & Powell, 2006; Scott, 2014). For example, new or small nonprofits may react to the overall nonprofit sector impulse to become more professionalized or bureaucratic because of coercive isomorphic pressures from philanthropic funding organizations. These coercive stresses are often a result of accountability and effectiveness challenges where nonprofits are expected to emphasize effectiveness in order to show that they are meeting performance measures set by their investors or funders. In higher education nonprofits, for example, boards of trustees may take a more active role in organizational governance to exert influence on institutional outcomes and to produce measurable results. DiMaggio and Anheier



remind us that: “urban elites remain prominent in NPO governance, largely as members of boards of trustees and volunteer committees...and permits elites to monitor and control nonprofit policies. Attracting prestigious trustees and corporate support sustains nonprofits legitimacy and revenues” (1990, p. 141). Because of their resource dependency, these higher educational nonprofits are subject to the performance requirements of their donors (e.g. restricted gifts from donors), even though there are unclear measurements of students learning outcomes.

### **Copy the Best**

Mimetic isomorphism, on the other hand, explains why organizations model themselves after other organizations, both in structural characteristics and function. When external environments are ambiguous, neo-institutionalists argue that organizations will emulate or mimic other successful organizations to improve their chances at survival. This emulation impulse explains some of the shared structural characteristics of nonprofits including governing board arrangements, staff roles, and fundraising techniques. Again, as in higher education, nonprofit colleges and universities are accredited by the same bodies, build similar levels of endowment funding, and have the same staffing structures as one another. Similarities exist due to mimetic forces not only in structure, but in function as well. As Crutchfield and Grant (2012) point out for example, if a nonprofit perceives that other more successful nonprofits are pursuing advocacy, then that organization may add this function, thus adapting its original mission.

### **Regulation and Norms**

Organizational theories also contend that normative relationships between organizations within a specific field are shaped by their context and the available resources within that environment. Once sector or field level norms are determined, the relationship to those umbrella organizations who enforce standards or hold nonprofits accountable can have either an

adversarial or partner like quality (Alexander, 1998; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012; Scott, 2014). This idea of an organizational field is similar to population ecology models, which argue that organizations develop in a niche that sustains the organization due to similarities in the social, economic and political conditions. Competition can exist among organizations within the same ecology and different organizational forms can exist in the same organizational field. For example, education organizations providing a supplement to government provided services such as afterschool programs or counseling can take either a nonprofit or for-profit form and will compete for funding or contracts.

Environmental sources of complexity include the operating environment, the legal environment and the funding environment. A nonprofit's response to the environmental complexity according to Alexander (1998) include mapping, deflecting and exploiting. Mapping occurs when nonprofits open themselves up, so their internal structures mirror the complexity, whereas deflecting happens when nonprofits are able to buffer themselves and retain organizational autonomy and control of organizational goals. Exploiting is considered a strategy that enhances organizational performance when nonprofits can innovate to meet the complexity of the environment (Alexander, 1998). Some of these differences that occur at the field level are explained by resource dependency theory, which posits that nonprofits are constrained by external control of their resources (Froelich, 1999; Froelich, Knoepfle & Pollak, 2000; Moulton & Eckerd, 2012). Again, as Weisbrod's study of the healthcare industry (1991) demonstrated nonprofit and for-profit hospitals exist in the same field but operate differently due to the variance in resource streams and interests of their financial supporters.

## **Dynamic Field and Collective Action**

Ott and Dicke (2012) provides an alternative organizational theory of voluntary nonprofit organizations, which describes nonprofits as “acting more like atoms than pyramids” (p. 251). Here constituencies or stakeholders circle the central core of an organization in patterned ‘orbiting paths’” with the angle of the path determined by how strong the relationship is at the time (p. 251). Ott and Dicke’s (2012) atom analogy model makes the distinction between voluntary and commercial nonprofits, asserting that the constituencies of voluntary nonprofits are not linear, instead they revolve around the activities of the organization in ways that satisfy their interests and the organization will survive and adapt if the stakeholders “perceive that they are benefiting from its activities” (p. 252). In this sense because of the voluntary nature of the organization, the stakeholders can begin or end their participation if the goals of the organization aren’t in alignment with their desires.

Rather than assuming nonprofits are rational organizations, forming to fill gaps in the market or from government failure, or are in a specific organizational field that influences its behaviors and relationships with other organizations, social and community theories maintain that nonprofits are a manifestation of community and exist to foster a sense of belonging (DiMaggio & Anheier, 1990; Moulton & Eckerd, 2012; Ott & Dicke, 2012). Social and community theories define four main functions of nonprofits – service advocacy, expressive, community building, and value guardians. According to community theorists, by developing organizational and individual social capital, nonprofits act as mediating structures between community and government because megastructures are too alienating for individuals (Coleman, 1988). Community theories explain the existence and behaviors of nonprofits as serving those

individuals who want to belong to organizations like churches, sports and recreation groups and community groups, which then engage in activities that match the desires of the members.

### **Theory of the Commons**

A final alternative explanation for the existence and functioning of nonprofits is the theory of the commons, a political theory that maintains that common goods are produced for members in certain organizations, but are not public goods (Douglas, 1987; DiMaggio & Anheier, 1990). Operating through collective action outside of the market and the state, with mutually agreed upon purposes, the theory of the commons suggests that nonprofit organizations transform economic value into non-economic value (and back again) through effective communication of the non-economic value of the common goods. Maximization is irrelevant in the theory of the commons, instead members construct meaning by communicating the values of the organization and by bringing in resources to the collective membership. Because common goods are simultaneously produced and consumed communally by the organization's members, the theory of the commons assumes that members act rationally to satisfy their shared needs. Unlike contract failure theory, the theory of the commons attempts to account for mixed industries, such as education and health care, where there are instances of nonprofits with collective objectives and common goods.

As discussed, there are differing economic, political, organizational, and community theories that explicate the existence, role, and characteristics of nonprofits. These theories either describe the perceived role of nonprofits in society, as rational, resource dependent organizations created to meet stakeholder needs left unfilled by government and market failure, or as expressive organizations, which offer supporters an opportunity to build community and social capital, while mediating a relationship with government. In either instance, dependency on

external stakeholders for resources can affect both the values and functioning of nonprofits (Chang & Tuckman, 1994, 1996; Froelich, 1999). As Minkoff and Powell (2006) describe in their multiple case analysis of mission “constancy, responsiveness, or deflection” when nonprofits are subject to the demands of various funding sources, interests can diverge. This effect on the activities or mission of the organization in Minkoff and Powell's (2006) cases was most prevalent for nonprofits focused on social movements and political advocacy or those with social justice values attempting to assist members by building social capital (Coleman, 1988).

### **Related Policy Theories**

Next, I turn to a discussion of related policy theories that can explain how nonprofit college access organizations influence different stages of the policy process. For example, policy diffusion, which stems from neo-institutional theory, explains the adoption and diffusion of access policies promoted by CAO's. Lastly, in this section, I discuss how the design of college access policy is influenced by the social construction of the population intended to benefit from the policy (both the organizational population or individual student populations) and how those constructions influence policy implementation.

### **Innovation & Diffusion**

Described by McLendon (2003) as “representing a ‘neo-institutionalist’ approach to the study of American politics and policymaking”, policy innovation and diffusion theories explain the internal and external characteristics and processes that influence policy adoption (p. 100). He suggests that neo-institutionalism offers a new way to understand policymaking in that it moves beyond the individual behaviors of political actors and instead makes the political institutions the focus of analysis. While policy invention is the formation of new policy, policy innovation is the timing of policy adoption by a state (Boehmke & Witmer, 2004; Rogers, 2010). Whereas policy

innovation is the process of adopting a new policy within a state and diffusion as the process of adoption across jurisdictions or states, the goal of both frameworks is the same – to explain the policymaking process. The process of policy innovation is explained by two distinct factors – internal determinants and diffusion explanations. McLendon, Hearn, and Deaton (2006) point to the concept of U.S. federalism, which theorizes each of the 50 states as both individual policy actors and larger societal actors, who are “agents of potential mutual influence within a larger social system”, as the theoretical origin for policy innovation and diffusion theories (p. 3). While political scientists have long argued that policy innovation is due to the either internal state characteristics or specific mechanisms that diffuse policies nationally, Berry and Berry (1990) provided one of the first empirical studies to study non-incremental policy adoption by combining the effects of both internal determinants and diffusion simultaneously in their study of state lotteries. Following Walker (1969), who is cited as “path-breaking”, due to his work on policy diffusion across the United States, policy scholars contend that states both learn from and compete with each other as policies migrate from state to state (Berry & Berry, 1990, 2014; Boehmke & Witmer, 2004; McLendon, 2003; Rodgers, 2010).

Internal determinants are those characteristics within the state that determine the probability of adoption including; political, economic, and sociodemographic characteristics (McLendon et al., 2006). An assumption made regarding the effects of internal determinants is that states do not influence each other in the policy innovation process. Berry and Berry (2014) suggest that organizational theories are helpful in analyzing the probable internal determinants. Citing Lawrence Mohr (1969), they write “the probability that an organization will innovate is inversely related to the strength of obstacles to innovation and directly related to (1) the motivation to innovate and (2) the availability of resources for overcoming obstacles” (Berry &

Berry, 2014, p. 322). Regarding the availability of resources, scholars have found that states with large coffers have higher levels of innovation and that there are spill-over effects tending towards the adoption of new policies even when those policies are less resource dependent (McLendon, 2003). Additionally, organizational theorists suggest that organizations with high levels of ‘slack resources’ are more prone to innovation than smaller organizations with fewer resources (McLendon et al., 2009).

The severity of the problem a policy is designed to address is also hypothesized as representative of the societal group characteristics of a state, which in turn stimulates the demand for policy adoption by state officials. Additionally, the political motivation to innovate stems from the levels of partisanship and legislative professionalism within the state, and the amount of electoral security available for its politicians (McLendon et al., 2005; Berry & Berry, 2014). Put plainly, politicians use policy innovation to solve problems deemed important by their constituents, to garner votes during election cycles, and to compete with opposing party rivals. There is also evidence that states controlled by the same political party “will be more likely to adopt new policies than in which government is divided” (McLendon, 2003, p. 114). Berry and Berry (2014) remind us that the selection of independent variables to explain the adoption of a policy, such as the internal determinants discussed above, are only relevant because “they influence the preferences of policymakers concerning the substantive issues raised by the new policy” (p. 322). Because the complexity and variety of state contexts may influence patterns of intrastate policy innovation, a second approach was developed in order to explain the diffusion of new policies across states.

Policy diffusion models posit that the probability of policy adoption is influenced by the policy selections of other governments, in other words, states follow or emulate other states

through different diffusion mechanisms. Berry and Berry (2014) outline five distinct diffusion mechanisms – learning, imitation, competition, normative pressure, and coercion. The learning diffusion explanation assumes that policymakers are rational and that they have the ability to obtain information about a policy. In the learning scenario a policy diffuses as a result of policymakers learning about the effectiveness of a policy from a state that has already adopted. Imitation happens when policymakers follow early innovators that have shared characteristics, while competition diffusion occurs in order to gain economic advantage over another state. Some note that there is limited research that distinguishes between the social learning and competition motivations for diffusion, although these differences are the focus of Boehmke and Witmer’s (2004) study of Indian gaming where they find that “competition diffusion affects both policy innovation and policy expansion while social learning diffusion affects only policy innovation (p. 47). Competition diffusion can take the form of either location-choice or spillover-induced competition. In location-choice competition states try to impact where individuals or firms choose to acquire a good through policy enactment. On the other hand, spillover-induced competition reduces one state’s motivation for innovation due to another state’s positive or negative externalities, which changes the net effects of the policy adoption on the first state (Berry & Berry, 2014). Normative pressures for diffusion are put into place by experts and professional associations where shared understandings of good policies or best practices are developed and when networks exist to reinforce those norms. Finally, coercion diffusion happens when one government is coerced into adoption by a more dominant government (Berry & Berry, 2014). In the case of the U.S. federal system, the national government can mandate certain policies to the states or larger state governments can vertically coerce local municipalities through state legislation.



While research has not given much attention to distinguishing between the learning and competition diffusion explanations, traditionally these are the two mechanisms most focused on by policy scholars and reflects the progression of diffusion models including; the national interaction model, the regional diffusion model, and the leader-laggard model. Each of these diffusion models use one or more diffusion mechanisms to explain why states emulate other states in the policymaking process. Focusing on social learning as the method of diffusion, the national interaction model treats the states as identical units with officials that learn from their peers through a communication network that reaches across states. National interaction assumes that policymakers from a state that has already adopted a policy will interact with policymakers from another state, who have not adopted, and that this interaction results in diffusion (Berry & Berry, 2014). The role of professional associations that facilitate communication between states is considered an important component to the rationale behind the national interaction model. These organizations act as information brokers across networks of state policymakers, thus increasing the likelihood of diffusion where networks exist. Limitations to the national interaction model include the assumption of randomness in the communication patterns of policymakers, as well as the idea that all potential adopters at a given time have the same probability of adoption during that time period.

The regional diffusion model takes social learning further and posits that the probability that a state will innovate is positively related to the proportion of states bordering it that have already adopted a policy. Regional diffusion assumes that communication among state officials is not random but follows a pattern regionally. Berry and Berry (2014) distinguish between two regional diffusion models; the “neighbor model”, which focuses on communication between states that share a physical border, and the “fixed-region model” where states learn from and

imitate states within their same fixed region (e.g., Southeast, Northeast, Midwest). A weakness of the regional model is that multiple diffusion mechanisms beyond geographic location can be at work.

While the national interaction and regional diffusion models suggest that the spread of policies follows some sort of communication pattern, it is the leader-laggard model that attempts to combine social learning and imitation by arguing that certain states are pioneers and others follow the leader state. Walker (1969) suggests that due to limited time and incomplete information, states will succumb to ‘satisficing’ or adopting a policy that meets some minimum threshold because another state has adopted. Emulating neighbors offers an easy solution to complex decisions for policymakers, especially when competition pressures exist (Boehmke & Witmer, 2004). One limitation to the leader-laggard model is how to identify the predicted order or a priori leaders of innovation.

Due to the limitations discussed in each of the above diffusion models and further testing that “calls into question the empirical evidence” of the “compartmentalized approach” of separate diffusion or internal determinant explanations, Berry and Berry (1990) developed a new unified or integrated model that attempts to predict the effects of both internal and external influences on state policy adoption (Berry & Berry, 2014, p. 330). Employing a “regression-like” technique Event History Analysis (EHA), operationalizes the independent variables as (1) Motivation of public officials, (2) Resources/obstacles to innovation, (3) Other policies present that impact adoption, and (4) External diffusion effects in a state at a specific time, with the dependent variable being the probability of adoption.

McLendon et al. (2005) was among the first empirical studies to combine both internal determinants and diffusion mechanisms by accounting for the state higher education governance

structure along with its socioeconomic and political characteristics, and an emulation diffusion explanation in their longitudinal analysis of postsecondary finance and accountability policies. While McLendon et al. (2006) found a relatively weak positive association with governance structure and adoption of new financing policies, they found no relationship between governance and accountability policies. McLendon et al. (2006) do suggest that interstate competition motivates states to “keep up” because without the same policies states can lose valuable high achieving students to neighboring states with better merit-based scholarship programs. Acknowledging the weak predictive power of their findings, they argue that their study does “identify key conceptual implications” related to innovation and diffusion, and urge future higher education research to continue consider the nature, type, and scope of the policies being studied, as well as the state political climates – which may be better predictors (McLendon et al., 2005, p. 383). With the theoretical constructs of policy innovation and various diffusion models in mind, next, I turn to another policy framework from which to consider college access organizations – construction of target populations.

### **Construction of Target Populations**

Because institutionalism is the way behaviors are normalized through the conscious choices of interested actors, understanding how policy innovation is influenced by the construction of target populations can uncover more about the institutional processes of policy formation. In what is considered the seminal work regarding social construction, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckmann (1966) posit that “reality is socially constructed and that the sociology of knowledge must analyze the processes in which this occurs” (p. 1). In other words, humans construct or build our reality, and in order to understand how we have come to know something as a society, sociologists study the process of this construction. Berger and

Luckmann (1966) are concerned with what they describe as the sociology of knowledge or as they contend “the analysis of the social construction of reality” (p. 3), not with the philosophical debates of what is universally real or true in the world. From their perspective, the common man takes his reality and knowledge for granted and they argue that there are both objective and subjective realities. Individuals externalize being in the social world through some subjective institutional process (e.g. the family structure) and then that knowledge of the world is internalized by the individual as objective reality. In this sense, Berger and Luckmann (1966) urge us to recognize that “all symbolic universes and all legitimizations are human products; their existence has its base in the lives of concrete individuals and has no empirical status apart from these lives” (p. 128). Through processes of institutionalization, legitimization, and internalization in a particular context, what an individual knows as reality is built, both objectively and subjectively.

In their widely cited theory of the social construction of target populations, Schneider and Ingram (1993) posit that some people or groups of people are constructed either positively, or negatively and those “cultural characterizations or popular images...are affected by public policy” (p. 334). Because the policy process involves many different constituencies, there is the possibility that “as individuals and groups invent reality, they may achieve great collective agreement about the precise nature of this reality” (Herman & Renz, 1997, p. 188). But there is also the chance of disagreement and that many individuals will not even be aware of the extent of the disagreement. These concepts are important to policy studies because they explain why some groups are advantaged more than others (independent of actual power) in the enactment of policy. In his historical study of the idea of charity, Loseke (1997) remarks, “Constructions of social problems and social interventions are accompanied by productions of the types of people

involved in those problems or served by those interventions” (p. 428). When Loseke (1997) refers to “types of people” he is reinforcing the idea that cultural characterizations exist (e.g., deserving poor vs. dependent poor), and finds that overtime the idea of charity is constructed differently depending on changes in “political, economic, and social climates” (p. 439). Policies are messages about what government is responsible for, which citizens are worthy, and who can or should bother participating in the policy process (Schneider & Ingram, 1993).

According to social construction theory, the stock of social knowledge is objectified and distributed differently in different cultures and societies through the process of institutionalization. Fay (1996) describes this as structuration, a process that occurs over time, during which patterns of interactions become rules. Agents or individuals then interpret the rules and act accordingly. These interpretations and patterns become the norm or the social structures and institutions in a particular society or culture. One assumption here is that individuals are intelligent agents and aware of their agency. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) explain, “Institutions also, by the very fact of their existence, control human conduct by setting up predefined patterns of conduct, which channel it in one direction as against the many other directions that would theoretically be possible” (p. 55). If an individual is unaware of one’s own agency, that individual is constrained rather than enabled by society.

Taking a more naturalistic approach, Rosenberg (1995) explains the construction of social institutions writing, “They do not exist independent of people’s actions, beliefs, and desires” (p. 134). Citing Searle, who maintains that subjectivity regarding institutions exists because of “observer-relativity” in a world where only physical things are present, Rosenberg (1995) explains that beliefs and desires only obtain status once they become part of a social institution. Institutions in this sense are created through the speech of experts or agents, who

“have the authority to create status functions by their declarations” (p. 133). Constructivists like Searle believe that action is voluntary and that individuals can act collectively to change institutions by violating the rules and norms. A problem with the agent intentionality argument is pointed out by Fay (1996), who brings forward the issue of power. Agents may wish to change the process of structuration, but without power or the authority are unable to win the ‘culture struggle’. The introduction of power differentials creates an issue for the rational agency argument because although agents may act on the basis of reasoning, their actions may be constrained by social structures. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) point out, “The more conduct is institutionalized, the more predictable and thus the more controlled it becomes” (p. 62).

While there are different conceptions of social construction, the generally accepted viewpoint is that social constructionist researchers aim to explore how we have come to understand what we perceive as reality, instead of uncovering some universal truth that can be tested empirically (Weinberg, 2008). Suggesting that there are differing levels of constructionism – weak and strong, Schwandt (2000) posits that “we invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience, and we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience” (p. 197). In doing so, constructionism is not apolitical; instead the constructed reality is embedded with values and ideology that represents the interpretation. Weak or moderate constructionism attempts to preserve some idea of real knowledge or objectivity, while strong constructionism makes meaning and beliefs completely dependent on the particular context, where “different forms of life are incommensurable” (Schwandt, 2000, p. 200).

## **Research Questions and Propositions**

These theoretical perspectives suggest that nonprofit college access organizations map the behaviors of their key partners and funders (e.g. higher education institutions, K-12 districts, foundations and corporations) to legitimize their operations, to diversify their funding sources, and to establish a dominant position based on resource level within the college access field. Using their position, they then act as intermediaries to facilitate the policy process at the problem formation, agenda setting, and implementation stages. Furthermore, I maintain that these nonprofits are exploiting the complexity of the education sector by reorienting their missions and programs to better align with the goals of their partners overtime. With these issues in mind this research asks:

1. What are the dominant resource streams utilized by nonprofit college access organizations?
2. How does resource diversification influence or constrain the organizational behaviors of nonprofit college access organizations?
3. How do nonprofit college access organizations act as intermediaries within the broader college access policy arena?

Differences in resources and organizational behaviors are worth studying because CAOs attempt to affect system level change through the policy process, which involves both financial and political capital. Given that they operate as bridges between the higher education and K-12 systems within an extraordinarily complex environment, I suggest the following:

- Nonprofit CAOs map and exploit the complexity of the higher education and K-12 education systems for resources.
- Nonprofit CAOs reorient their missions and programs as resources diversify.

- Nonprofit CAOs engage in partnerships and coalitions within a networked field to influence the policy process.

My goal is to illuminate organizational behaviors that thread each case together into a narrative explaining the rise of a nonprofit college access organizational field through an iterative process by making theoretical propositions and then comparing the findings of each case against the propositions. Using both narrative and categorical thinking allows for both deductive and inductive reasoning during the research process (Yin, 2104; Freeman, 2017). I contextualize and bound my study within the history of U.S. college access and success efforts in the K-12, higher education, and philanthropy sectors between 1995 and 2020 attending to the multitude of actors interested in the problem of gaps in bachelor's degree attainment.

The next chapter reviews the related literature including the K-12, higher education and nonprofit sectors. I first define college access and explain how various scholars have viewed the issue of degree attainment and college choice models. I position the various sector actors within a broad college access field and contend that nonprofits are distinctive organizations and have institutionalized their behaviors to best align with the intersections of individual student choices and the other institutional actors within the college access field. I also attend to the context in which these organizations arose – the accountability era, the Bush Administration's No Child Left Behind high stakes testing regime, which was carried forward by Obama's Race to the Top. Because no one powerful interest group exists to represent students as they transition from school to college the extent that there is cooperation between sectors, is apt to be motivated by accountability standards and the recent push for college attainment by the Obama administration. With this more concerted effort to institutionalize the relationships across contexts, I suggest that policymakers and scholars include this broader group of intermediary organizations pushing



college access and success in the broader field first conceptualized by McDonough et al. (2001). Finally, I discuss how scholars have positioned strategic action networks as a way to solve complex societal problems like inequality in degree attainment. What is promising is the increased attention by states and national-level organizations, including philanthropic foundations, to develop better linkages between K–12 schools and higher education.

## CHAPTER 3

### RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the college access literature is limited in its use of institutional theory, I include empirical examples from the K-12 and higher education organization literatures. From my viewpoint, a broader understanding of the college access organizational field is significant because inter-organizational relationships and interactions contribute to the ongoing institutionalization of college going. While policymakers and educators may debate about the best way to achieve attainment goals, the belief that higher education and lifelong is necessary for social mobility and economic success permeates all levels of the U.S. education system.

#### **College Access Defined**

This belief also connects education to other fields or sectors (e.g., politics, business, and nonprofits). If *college going* “represents a social order or pattern that has attained a certain state or property and institutionalization denotes the process of such attainment” then institutional theory can explain how formal organizations emerge and behave within the college access field (Jepperson, 1991, p. 143). *College access* is the process in which societal, governmental, and institutional factors (e.g., programs, policies, state appropriations) make college going accessible (McDonough, 1997; 2000). Incorporating both economic and sociological perspectives, researchers have developed varying conceptual models to explain the individual student’s college choice process (Hossler, Braxton, & Coppersmith, 1989; Paulsen, 1990; Perna, 2006). Much of the early college access research focused on predicting college enrollment using human capital theory (Becker, 1962, 1993). Extending beyond economic models, others have used

sociological-cultural theories, to examine how social and cultural capital affects educational attainment. I first turn to the work of economists first focused on college going as the rational investments made in human capital for labor market participation (Bourdieu, 1986; Hossler, Braxton & Coopersmith, 1989; Sewell & Hauser, 1976).

### **Economic Influences on College Going**

Human capital theory connects economic production with the labor force and acknowledges differentiation in the labor market, due to differences in education (Becker, 1962, 1993). In the simplest of terms, human capital theory posits that workers bring a certain set of skills and abilities to the labor market, which are then made available to employers. It follows then that increases in human capital in turn increase economic production and efficiency.

Through investments in education, human capital theory suggests that individuals improve their standing in the labor market and enjoy higher wages and productivity (Becker, 1993). Human capital theory explains why individual demand for higher education exists (DesJardins & Toutkoushian, 2005; Ellwood & Kane, 2000). The demand for higher education is also related to the supply of available resources to pay for it and research points to differences across groups in their ability to access financial aid, loans, and other financial resources (e.g. family contributions) (Ellwood & Kane, 2000).

Economists assume that individuals are rational in their decision making and have some, although not perfect, information related to their choice of educational investment. Studies of college choice using human capital theory have mostly looked at the financial aspects of college enrollment and the choice of institution based on the costs and benefits, the risks, and the individual preferences of students (DesJardins & Toutkoushian, 2005). Access to financial aid information and what has been called the college opportunity structure (McDonough, 1997) is

generally the focus of research on the financial costs and benefits of higher education. For example, Avery and Hoxby (2004) found that college enrollment is impacted by how financial aid is defined, either as “grants” or “scholarships” and the timing of aid. When studying the intersection of academic preparation and financial/economic considerations, Stampen and Hansen (1999) found that lack of adequate preparation and not funding keeps poor students out of college. Others concur that misperceptions of college costs, especially by low-income and minority students, who do not understand financial aid, restricted their access to higher education (Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2003). A recent study on the influence of higher education institutions and their financial aid strategies brings in the institutional actions as encouraging the student search and application because “the supply of spaces (for admission) may also affect a student’s decision to either include an institution in their choice set or...limit their choices based on estimates of where they may be accepted (Toutkoushian & Paulsen, 2016, p. 63). These scholars admit that higher education institutional revenue goals and selectivity striving lead to different outcomes for the same commodified applicant across different institution types. Not surprising in an accountability era that ties funding to student outcomes and performance for the majority of these institutions – especially in the public sector where these institutions maximize in-state student achievement at lower costs while collecting out-of-state tuition from other students with similar characteristics contributing to selectivity and diversity goals.

### **Sociological-Cultural Influences on College Going**

While human capital theory suggests that the decision to enroll in college is based on the demand for higher education and the supply of available resources to pay for it, others argue that economic models do not fully explain the differences in college going between groups, particularly for low-income, minority, non-traditional aged, and other underrepresented groups

(Avery & Hoxby, 2004; Perna, 2006). For a deeper understanding of college going, scholars have turned to the sociological-cultural theories, which emphasize the importance of social capital (social network benefits) and cultural capital (social class knowledge). In this vein, sociologists are interested in the intervening variables such as interpersonal supports, aspirations, and academic performance, as well as the influence of socioeconomic status and gender on educational attainment (Hossler, Schmit & Vesper, 1999).

Considered status attainment models, early sociological-cultural approaches to college going predicted that preparation and encouragement lead to higher levels of aspiration and attainment. These models include the steps taken towards college and characteristics of individual students. As an example, Hossler and Gallagher (1987) conceptualized three stages of college going chronologically: predisposition, search, and choice. The predisposition stage includes the following factors: (1) family socioeconomic status, (2) student academic ability, (3) race and ethnicity, (4) gender, (5) parental level of education, (6) family residence, (7) parental encouragement and support, (8) peer encouragement, (9) encouragement from high school counselors, (10) student educational aspirations, (11) the quality of the high school, and (12) the labor market. Research extending these sociological-cultural theories attempted to specify the specific socioeconomic characteristics that influence college choice. For example, in a study using data from the High School and Beyond Study of 1980 Hearn (1991) found that only the mother's educational level was strongly related to the institutional type enrolled in (cost/selectivity) after controlling for test scores, grades, and curriculum.

Extending the sociological-cultural theories, Bourdieu (1986) argues that the cultural knowledge derived from an individual's social class builds a *habitus* from which individuals absorb the associated cultural norms and attitudes. This *habitus* then influences the future

perceptions and actions of the individuals within it. According to Bourdieu (1986), the amount of cultural and social capital an individual has is based on the size and composition of their networks, particularly the levels of capital possessed by those in their network. Researchers have operationalized cultural capital as parent's education level, number of books in the home, or participation in extracurricular activities (Coleman, 1988; DiMaggio, 1982; DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985; Titus & Perna, 2005). Perna (2000), for example, found using data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) that social and cultural capital measures were more robust in explaining college enrollment than traditional economic models using only gender, race, socioeconomic status, and academic achievement.

While *habitus* informs a student's future orientation, perceptions and actions towards educational attainment, the organizational *habitus* of schooling has also been considered to have a mediating effect on college going (McDonough, 1997). Research demonstrates that high schools are often the source of information about college and financial aid and that disparities exist between schools (organizational *habitus*) and an individual's *habitus* (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999; McDonough, 1997; Perna, 2004; Perna & Titus, 2005; Plank & Jordan, 2001). For example, Hossler, Schmit and Vesper (1999) found that between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students became more active in information gathering about college, but that the primary sources of information were family and peers, who have differing levels of social and cultural capital. A more recent qualitative study of 15 high schools to determine the types of college information high school students have and how they obtained the information found that college and financial aid knowledge gaps are substantial for all grade levels and that low-income students relying on friends and family have less consistent or accurate access to information (Perna et al., 2010).

## **Integrated Approaches to College Going**

Guided by Perna's (2006) conceptual framework that incorporates both the economic/human capital influences on college enrollment with the theories of social and cultural capital, modern college access research acknowledges that individual characteristics (personal *habitus*), the context of schooling and community, and the larger policy environment shapes student's views and information about higher education (Bell, Rowan-Kenyon, & Perna, 2009; Perna & Kurban, 2013; Perna et al., 2008). While not the first to consider the broader context of college going (for example, see McDonough, 1997; McDonough, Korn, & Yamasaki, 1997; Paulsen, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2003), Perna (2006) contextualizes the institutionalism of *college going*. Including the varying contexts and the numerous organizations involved in promoting college access, Perna's integrated model allows for an expanded analysis of the institutional and organizational structures that both enable and constrain *college going*.

The deepest, innermost level of this integrated approach is the student and family habitus where internalized beliefs and perceptions a student has about college are developed and includes the measures known to influence college going such as income, race, and parent's education level. Here the habitus is considered as defining or restricting college choices because the embedded context is shaped by social values, cultural norms, and organizational structures. The school and community layers contain the high school, its resources, processes, and population, as well as the type of community it is located within. As previously noted, the school context including teachers, counselors, and peer groups has an impact on college enrollment. As Stanton-Salazar (1997) argued, schools as institutions can limit some students access to higher education. The higher education context includes the number of institutions

within geographic proximity, their resources and programs focused on access and admissions practices. For instance, higher education institutions actively recruit some students while relying on more passive approaches for others (e.g. recruited athletes vs. local students). Colleges and universities also control which students are selected for admission and how institutional aid is distributed. Lastly, the broader social, economic, and policy layer reflects the economic and workforce conditions, and the federal, state and local policies enacted to support and/or regulate college going, such as college savings plans, academic preparation and curriculum standards, and high school graduation exams.

Expanding Perna's (2006) framework with a closer examination of both the individual and institutional influences on access college going is the dual commodification model of college-going (Hughes, Kimball & Koricich, 2019). Demonstrating that there are institutional forces contributing to student choice, this newest model of college going integrates institutional actions with student choices and the aspects of both student and institutions that constitute differences in the entire college access field and education systems over time. Applying the model to different student groups (e.g. student athletes, students with disabilities, rural students), the dual commodification model recognizes and illuminates the ways in which higher education commodify students into applicants with different opportunity structures within differing contexts. This dual commodification suggests a bi-directional process that influences both the student and the institution in an ongoing negotiation during the college going process. Depending on the resources available to both the student and the institution, the dual commodification model can illuminate how both sides make decisions like segmentation, financing, and choice. This model addresses the way "that individual human beings interact with social organizations in the context of a well-defined process" rather than parsing the process out



to happening in a distinct layer or single context. The actors and institutions within the college access field continually interact throughout in the dual commodification model. While Hughes, et al. (2019) bring us closer to understanding the influence of institutions, they center higher education institutions as the main influencers and do not include other intermediary actors like nonprofit college access organizations. Next, I outline the ways in which scholars define the multiple and relevant actors in education to college going.

### **Organizational Actors in Education**

Before diving into the frameworks that may best represent organizations in the wider college access policy arena, let me first provide some background on how others have conceptualized different organizational actors in education generally. Because education researchers are commonly divided into either those studying schooling at the K-12 level or those in the adult and/or higher education realms, it makes sense to consider educational organizations from these distinct positions. Even more complicating is the fact that education policy is a subfield within each of these sectors. Additionally, peering in from the outside of education research are the public administration scholars, political scientists, and historians, who study some aspect of organizations through their work on education philanthropy, politics, or on the policy process. (Malen, 2001; Mettler, 2014; Tompkins-Stange, 2016; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014). The most acknowledged players in the college access arena, of course, are higher education institutions, but other actors include philanthropic foundations, national associations, think tanks, membership organizations, direct service local nonprofit and community-based organizations, school improvement/educational management organizations, as well as district, state, and federal departments of education, and the business community. It is important here to distinguish between interventions, programs, and formal organizations because the college

access literature concerning each is murky. For the purposes of this dissertation, nonprofit college access organizations refer to those formal organizations, which are distinct from K-12 schools or post-secondary institutions and whose self-identified mission is to promote postsecondary educational attainment.

### **School Level Actors**

Within the K-12 context, organizational scholars have theorized college access organizations as being part of the school improvement industry, which also includes contractors, suppliers, and technical assistance firms (Rowan, 2007). According to Rowan (2007), the school improvement industry is made up of organizational “niches” or populations of organizations structured around the type of resources needed to both form or establish the organization (primary resources), and those needed to survive or maintain a position within the field (transactional resources). Transactional resources are garnered through financial exchanges either with the local districts, individual employees (membership organizations), or grant making entities (foundations, city/state agencies). These transaction types contribute to particular organizational forms either what Rowan calls “capital-based, membership-based, or endowment based” (2007, p. 72). Capital-based organizations are businesses interested in producing products for schooling in order to generate profits and the most well-known of these are textbook manufacturers. Alternatively, membership organizations form to represent their members’ interests in political action and professional development. Apart from the National Education Association (NEA), which has followed a stable school reform agenda over the last five decades, Rowan (2007) suggests that these organizations contribute little to systematic school reform because of the specialized and temporal nature of their member’s interests. Membership

organizations often lack the capital necessary to influence significant change and instead focus on trends and new ideas put forth by their members.

### **School Improvement**

The last organizational form described by Rowan within the school improvement industry is endowment-based. According to Rowan (2007), endowment-based organizations include quasigovernmental technical assistance organizations, nonprofit advocacy groups, think tanks, and universities providing sponsored research. Although Rowan argues that endowment-based organizations can and do have a positive influence on school reform efforts, these organizations face a paradox in that the products or projects they promote are often dependent on grant-funding. Grant-funded projects have low barrier to entry into the school improvement industry but may not be sustained over a period of time because as Rowan notes, “grants-making agencies frequently change priorities, abandoning some areas of interest to move into other areas” (2007, p. 76). Another aspect of endowment-based organizations operating in a grant-funding environment is the fact that because of shifting and numerous priorities, the amount of available funding for each project is not large enough to affect large scale reform. Rowan further argues that school improvement organizations can be thought of both creating and constraining innovation because of these funding constraints.

### **Intermediaries**

K-12 education policy scholars have conceptualized non-governmental organizations, like CAOs, as intermediaries advocating for a particular policy within a policy-issue network or advocacy coalition in order to achieve their goals (Ball & Junemann, 2012; DeBray, Scott, Lubienski, & Jabbar, 2014; Lubienski, Scott, & DeBray 2011; Skok, 1995). Although not specific to college access, in their study of charter school reforms in New Orleans DeBray et al.

(2014) argue that intermediary organizations (IOs) have coalesced into networks (both locally and nationally) to influence policy on charter schools. They suggest that even though the demand for research provided by these intermediaries to policymakers was low in New Orleans, “the case sheds comparatively more light on the phenomenon of IOs...acting as quasi-policymakers; that is, they not only take on the function of advocate for reforms, but they also are counted on to execute semi-formal policy roles” (DeBray et al., 2014, p. 202).

Also, at the school level, Honig (2004) draws on theories of organizational ecology to better define the role and function of IOs in policy implementation. She defines IOs as “organizations that operate between policymakers and policy implementers to enable changes in roles and practices for both parties” (p. 66). As a distinct population of organizations, Honig describes their position and function as occupying “the space between at least two other parties...to mediate or manage change in both parties” (Honig, 2004, p. 67). Her study of intermediaries within the Oakland Unified School District reveals that these organizations vary in the level government where they mediate, in their membership composition (single organization or coalition/partnership), geographic location (in the district or outside), scope (single district or multiple jurisdictions), and funding sources (public or private). Emphasizing that intermediary organizations support the implementation of policy by providing “knowledge, political/social ties, and administrative infrastructure”, Honig (2004), like DeBray et al. (2014) broadens our understanding of intermediaries by illuminating the resources or value they bring to the policy arena, especially for those organizations (e.g., schools) who, alone, are limited in their organizational capacity.

## **Interest Groups**

In addition to conceptualizing organizational actors as being involved in school improvement or as intermediary organizations aiding in the implementation of specific policy, some argue that these actors are part of the constellation of interest groups involved in education politics (Malen, 2001; Hess & Henig, 2015; Tompkins-Stange, 2016). Suggesting that longitudinal studies examining the politics of an issue (e.g., college going) can “produce important data about the relative power of interest groups, their basis of power, their strategies for securing influence, and the conditions under which particular groups may be critical determinants of precedent setting policy decisions” Malen (2001) argues for a larger tent when considering the influence of interest groups. By studying the “obvious and not so obvious interest groups” she posits that researchers can expose how the less obvious organizational actors are connected to and overlap with “policy elites, political parties, the mass media, and broad publics (pp. 171-177). Malen (2001) identifies the less obvious groups as foundations, policy institutes, and think tanks, with unions, school board associations, big business and citizen groups as the more obvious traditional groups acting in the K-12 education politics sphere.

## **Higher Education Actors**

Higher education institutions mostly view themselves as the center of the action arena with other organizations orbiting them to influence or impact their “institutional autonomy and academic freedom” (Harclerod & Eaton, 2011, p. 223). Describing formal organizations as external constituencies’ or the “hidden hand” of higher education, Harclerod and Eaton describe five types of organizations involved in influencing, legitimizing, and funding U.S. higher education. Like those described as involved in school improvement (Rowan, 2007), the hidden hand in higher education includes; (1) private foundations, (2) membership organizations, (3)

voluntary accrediting organizations, (4) voluntary consortia, and (5) regional compacts. While Harclerod and Eaton view these organizations as generally positive and as contributing to the expansion and effectiveness of U.S. higher education, especially in the recent era of increased government involvement (e.g. accountability & standards movement), they caution that the funding aspect “can affect institutional trends and directions by determining what types of academic programs or research efforts are supported” (2011, p. 223).

### **Think Tanks**

Moving from external constituencies to those that deal in the diffusion of ideas, Ness and Gándara’s (2014) study of state-level ideological think tanks identifies college access and completion as one of the shared “19 categories of issues” considered important by think tanks and higher education institutions. Because think tanks provide recommendations to policy makers and can shift priorities or define problems, nonprofit organizations involved in implementation of high priority issues may gain legitimacy and funding support if identified as a program that “works”. While their influence on policymakers is unclear, Ness and Gándara (2014) show that progressive think tanks have more mentions (11) of college access on their websites, versus zero mentions for conservative state-level think tanks.

### **Philanthropy**

Following Malen’s (2001) recommendation and the insights provided by Harclerod and Eaton (2011), a recent focus of education policy scholars is the role of nonprofit foundations in the promotion of college access policy. For example, Reckhow and Snyder (2014) analyze the “shifting policy orientation among top education philanthropies” finding that “most major education foundations increasingly support jurisdictional challengers (p. 186)” (e.g., organizations that offer alternatives to public sector institutions). Reckhow and Snyder (2014)

also show that college access promotion is one of the grant recipient categories defined by the largest donors to K-12 education, which has a direct impact on the growth of nonprofit college access programs.

### **Organizational Tactics for College Access**

Prior research shows four major categories that can determine college choice and enrollment: (1) financial resources, (2) academic preparation, (3) support from significant others, (4) knowledge and information about college and financial aid (Perna & Kurban, 2013). Recognizing that the states have the most control over education policy, others have suggested there are three distinct state-level domains of college access policies: (1) college affordability and financial aid, (2) academic standards, preparation, and admissions, and (3) cross sector P-20 coordination (McLendon, Heller, & Lee, 2009). Organizations may concentrate their efforts on one or more of the above categories or state-level domains rather than using a contextual or layered approach as defined by Perna (2006). I use these categories and domains as a guide, because my primary interest is on how the larger field of nonprofit college access organizations impacts college going.

#### **College Affordability and Financial Aid**

Financial aid has long been identified as influencing college choice and research shows that grant aid and work-study are positively related to enrolling in college (Avery & Hoxby, 2004; Ellwood & Kane, 2000). College access organizations working within this sphere focus their efforts both on supplying information about the sources and types of aid, on creating and implementing policies that reduce the complexity of applying for financial aid, and on advocating for the expansion of financial aid programs (e.g. Pell Grants). Because financial aid information is not standardized across higher education institutional type, access organizations

with this focus may have a mission to simplify how awards are described or to promote standardized tools like the net price calculator, which was required of all colleges and universities in the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act. Using an experimental design, Bettinger, Long, Oreopoulous, and Sanbonmatsu (2013) showed that by assisting low to moderate income students with financial aid applications and simplifying the process, college going for these groups was improved.

An example of a college access organization focused on college affordability and financial aid is The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS). Founded in 2005 and described on their website as a nonprofit organization that “works to make higher education more available and affordable for people of all backgrounds. By conducting and supporting nonpartisan research, analysis, and advocacy, TICAS aims to improve the processes and public policies that can pave the way to successful educational outcomes” (TICAS, 2017), TICAS conducts policy research and creates tools for students and families to better understand college debt and financial aid. TICAS is also credited with crafting the federal Income Based Repayment plan (IBR), which ties loan payments to income level after graduation. While not a traditional college access organization working directly with students one-on-one (the school community context), TICAS’ focus is improvements to affordability and financial aid policy at the policy and higher education context layers, which has an influence across all contexts of the college enrollment model.

### **Academic Preparation and Counseling**

Differences in academic preparation and achievement provide some explanation for differences in college enrollment with less than 20% of Black and Hispanic students taking a college-level or college-prep curriculum (NCES, 2016). Long, and Boatman (2013) describe



how low levels of academic preparation in high school can lead to high rates of remedial or developmental education in college, although of those first-year college students referred, less than half complete the required sequence of remedial courses. Perna (2002) distinguishes between comprehensive programs that attempt whole school reform by changing the organizational structure of schools, and those that are considered supplementary programs, providing services that encourage students to become interested in college.

Organizations that work at the school level have broader goals, including academic enrichment (i.e. improvement on math and language arts test scores) and increased parental involvement (Perna, 2002). High school context matters as McDonough (1997) shows in her comparative qualitative case study of high schools, since high schools differ in terms of availability of courses and the practices used to determine which students take part in demanding programs (e.g. the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma) differ. Research also demonstrates the importance of academic preparation is also considered in the state context. Perna and Thomas' (2009) case study of 15 high schools across 5 states establishes that states with a required high school exit exam steer resources towards improving the exit exam scores, leaving fewer resources for college counseling.

### **College Knowledge and Mentoring**

Even before gaining the academic skills needed to succeed in college, research suggests that many high school students have little college knowledge (Conley, 2010; Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Horvat, 2001). Unfortunately, scholars consistently document the lack of sufficient college counseling in high schools, which limits low-income, minoritized, and first-generation students' ability to build college knowledge (Perna, Li, Anderson, Thomas, Rowan-Kenyon, & Bell, 2007; Perna & Jones, 2013, Hurwitz & Howell, 2013; Venezia & Kirst, 2005).

As Venezia and Kirst (2005) note, school counselors are overloaded and have limited time to work with students on postsecondary issues – even though they may be “the only source of information about college preparation” (p. 287). Venezia and Kirst (2005) also point out that within schools, counselors may not feel they have the authority to discuss sensitive college knowledge with disadvantaged students whose college prospects are limited. College access organizations promise to improve the attainment rates for low-income and minority students filling the gaps through their partnerships with schools and communities (Perna, 2002; Perna & Kurban, 2013) and research demonstrates the importance of providing personalized guidance and information about college application processes (Bettinger et al. 2013; Hoxby & Turner, 2013). For example, Perna (2002) completed a survey of outreach programs, which found that “about one third of all colleges and universities offer at least one program to increase access for educationally or economically disadvantaged pre-collegiate students” (p. 67).

Evaluations of nonprofit college access organizations show consistent evidence that students in these programs are more likely to apply to college and apply for financial aid, but challenges occur when tracking the student’s enrollment and persistence in college. Because analysis of college enrollment data requires following students for years after high school, very few studies with college enrollment exist. To further the research on school-wide programs, Domina (2009) conducted a quasi-experimental school-wide study testing the effects of college outreach programs finding very little effect on educational attainment for participants, although there were some spillover effects to non-participants in the same high school. Although there are very few empirically based studies of nonprofit college access programs, Avery (2013) shows through a random control trial that one nonprofit program did succeed in enrolling participants in the sponsoring university compared to the control group. In response to the mixed findings in

the literature, Glennie et al. (2014) use a nationally represented data set to identify high school students who participated in precollege access programs and to evaluate the differences in high school achievement, the college application process, and enrollment in postsecondary institutions as compared to a matched comparison group, who did not participate in college access programs. Glennie et al. (2014) show that precollege access participants were more likely to learn about college opportunities but had similar academic preparation in high school and persisted in college at the same rates as the comparison group.

### **Nonprofit Sector Distinctiveness**

The nonprofit sector is an expansive and diverse sector with over a thousand estimated types of nonprofit organizations. With distinct functions including public service, advocacy, expressive, and community building activities, nonprofit organizations span more than 25 different subsectors (Salamon, 2012; Worth, 2013). Most nonprofit scholars argue that this organizational diversity is part of what makes the sector distinct and contributes to its overall impact. The growth of the nonprofit sector during the 1990's and 2000's is attributed to the "devolution of federal programs to state and local governments, and outsourcing of the provision of many services to nonprofits" and to a "reawakening of the spirit of public service" (Worth, 2013, p. 24-25). According to Frumkin (2002), there are three fundamental features which are shared by nonprofits including, (1) the non-coercive nature of participation, (2) the non-distribution of profits, and (3) non-ownership and unclear lines of accountability (p. 3). Because there are ongoing debates about the extent to which nonprofits share these three features, Frumkin (2002) argues that the most comprehensive way to identify and understand the diversity of nonprofits is to understand who the organization serves and why. Hansmann (1987) surmises that the primary factor distinguishing nonprofit organizations from their for-profit counterparts is

the non-distribution constraint, which mandates that any organizational “profits” must not inure to a nonprofit’s stakeholders. This distinction is echoed by Cordes and Steuerle (2009), who suggest that the non-distribution constraint signals to donors that the activities of nonprofits organizations will be focused on social good, but that the non-distribution constraint also creates resource dependency and limits the ability of the organization to build equity.

### **Nonprofit Impulses**

In addition to the three fundamental features of the sector, there are four common forces or impulses that span across the nonprofit sector including; pressures to maintain a voluntarism ideology, to become specialized professional organizations, to be vehicles for civic activism, and finally, to emphasize commercialism (Frumkin, 2002; Moulton & Eckerd, 2012; Salamon; 2012; Smith, 2012; Worth, 2013). These impulses are linked to the benefits theory of nonprofits, first suggested by Weisbrod (1991), who argues that the proportion of a nonprofit's revenues from charitable contributions is a gauge of the organization's commitment the public good. As a result of these impulses, nonprofits face several challenges in the pursuit of their missions including; fiscal constraints, competition from for-profit competitors, accountability pressures, technology advancements, legitimacy maintenance, and human resource concerns (Salamon, 2012).

### **Public Goods or Private Goods**

As the sector grows, nonprofits are susceptible to whichever impulses are most central at that time, with some tendencies reinforcing others. The complexity of both the influence of impulses and the associated challenges can be seen in the subfield of education where there is continued debate over whether education is a public or private good (Labaree, 1997). As a public good, primary and secondary education is seen as contributing to the overall success of the country, but higher education is viewed as a private good, due to its high costs and the

individual benefits associated with investments in human capital where individuals improve their standing in the labor market. Scholars further contend that the impact of the nonprofit sector is found by examining the ways in which the nonprofit sector is different from business and government, particularly when nonprofit organizations involve “primarily voluntary action” and make different contributions including innovation, social integration, embodiment of the sacred in religious organizations, social movements, and individual self-actualization (Smith, 2012, p.71). These differences are aptly described by Worth (2013) who writes that the nonprofit sector; “is unique because nonprofit organizations are different from businesses and government entities and are often reliant on the support of donors and the work of volunteers, pursuing missions derived from values and principles about which there may be disagreement, and engendering a sense of ownership and a desire for influence among multiple constituencies both inside and outside the walls of the organization itself” (p. 7). While the volunteerism category is well understood, nonprofits can also serve economic function or as policy instruments.

### **Multiple Categories and Functions**

While researchers have used different classification systems to delineate nonprofits into specific categories based on a demand-side, supply-side, instrumental or expressive functions, some scholars suggest that it is the grouping of unique functions and contributions to society that “gives the nonprofit sector its real distinctiveness” (Moulton & Eckerd, 2012, p. 661). Frumkin (2002) also notes that nonprofits “have also acted as practical vehicles for the delivery of a broad spectrum of community services...that encourage political engagement and produce services” (p. 17). Many nonprofits have multiple roles that represent specific values but may differ in their relationships with government and business (Cordes & Steurle, 2009). While one nonprofit organization can have multiple roles, some roles may be overlooked or can change depending the

relationships with external stakeholders (e.g. funders, volunteers, government, and corporate ties). For example, voluntary nonprofit organizations that rely primarily on volunteer support and charitable donations, such as human services organizations, are different from more commercial nonprofit organizations like nonprofit colleges and universities that rely on earned income from tuition revenue and may compete with for-profit firms (Froelich, 1999; Frumkin, 2002; Weisbrod, 1998; Young, 2007). Most nonprofits fall on a continuum but, when organizations fulfill a public need not being met government, and are being used to deliver public services, it is consistent to classify them as nonprofit organizations – based on their social mission of providing a public good (Weisbrod, 1998).

### **Resource Dependency**

Nonprofits produce diverse types of goods – collective and private and that some goods are preferred over others depending on the demand and competition for each as well as funding for those goods (Kingma, 1997; Young, 2007). Because nonprofits rely on external legitimacy, they may compromise their original mission if external environmental pressures, including funding sources present incentives to shift or abandon the social good mission (Alexander, 1998; Froelich, 1999; Weisbrod, 1998). Froelich (1999) examines the interaction effects of resource dependency, which stems from the overarching goal of all nonprofits – organizational survival and suggests that revenue seeking behaviors lead to mission dilution or mission creep and goal displacement as there are linkages between a nonprofit's context, its lifecycle, and revenue strategy. Froelich (1999) contends that resource diversification can have different effects depending on the type of revenue source. For example, individual private contributions can lead to revenue volatility and goal displacement. The instability of individual contributions overtime leads to staff resources focused solely on fundraising, versus the primary organizational

functions and can embolden nonprofits to select board members exclusively on the basis of resource networks. Corporate contributions carry similar constraints in that targeted giving with funds for specific programs leads to mission creep. Froelich (1999) also points out that corporate contributions are associated with the professionalism of the sector writing, “statements of mission and measures of efficiency and effectiveness, created reciprocal pressures for more formalized procedures directed by specialized managerial staff” (p. 253).

Foundation grants operate similarly to corporate contributions, with an emphasis on professionalism and volatility, although foundations also tend to extend their reach with restrictions for matching funds. While government funding is categorized as more stable than private, corporate or foundation sources, it is linked to requirements on service delivery and clientele. Commercial activity has less of an impact on organizational processes and revenue volatility, but can lead to the formation of for-profit subsidiaries associated with the core nonprofit organization (e.g. museum gift shops) and concerns over the loss of the “values distinctive to the nonprofit sector” (Froelich, 1999, p. 258). Wilsker and Young (2010) point out that “the research literature is ambivalent on the direction of causality between revenues and services” and further develop Kingma's (1997) argument that donors or revenue sources are attracted to particular services writing, “we accept that nonprofits’ programs are essentially determined by their missions and that revenue sources are dependent on the kinds of benefits and beneficiaries resulting from these services” (p. 197). For example, in a study of Jewish Community Centers, Wilsker and Young (2010), found significant relationships between the types of services and the sources of funding, with the funding of private goods (e.g. youth activities) associated with earned income versus those more public services, like Jewish life and learning programs associated with charitable giving.

## **Blurring Boundaries**

Although the growth of the nonprofit sector is attributed to an increased demand for services, improvements in technology, better visibility and salience to policymakers, and the emergence of social entrepreneurs and new venture philanthropy, this growth has also led to debates on the best way to classify nonprofits as there are blurring boundaries between nonprofits, government, and for-profit organizations (Galaskiewicz, & Sinclair, 2006; Schlesinger, 1998; Young, 2007). Salamon's Anatomy Classification (1995) of nonprofits distinguishes between public-serving or member-serving organizations and shares some features of the IRS classification system in that each has a different IRS designation. Public-serving organizations, classified as 501 (c)(3) by the IRS, include social service agencies, independent colleges and universities, community health clinics and hospitals, museums, and international aid groups. The primary difference between the IRS classification and Salamon's Anatomy is that the latter organizes nonprofits by "who receives the principal benefit" (Worth, 2013, p. 35).

Member-serving or mutual-benefit/social welfare organizations exist to advance the interests of their members and include groups such as labor unions, trade associations, and other advocacy groups. Member serving organizations primarily provide benefits to their members, but can also benefit society indirectly, they are tax-exempt but do not receive tax-deductible gifts. One problem with Salamon's (1995) categories is that some organizations like churches do not fall neatly within one of the two groups. For example, churches serve the general public through their values-based missions, but their members may also directly benefit. While these classification schemes are harder in some instances to use because determining the exact function of each and who an organization may or may serve can be debated, using a broader classification scheme that accounts for hybrid organizations may be the most effective way to



understand the mix of motives, goals, and characteristics of nonprofit organizations. As Worth (2013) points out, “Many nonprofits today are said to be hybrids. They are not purely philanthropic or purely commercial but fall somewhere between those two extreme cases” (p. 41). Cordes and Steurle (2009) also take this stance asserting that “some nonprofits may form hybrid organizations to exploit economic commercialization” (p. 16), although not as likely in small nonprofits, larger organizations may create for-profit subsidiaries as a part of its mission-related activities.

### **Advocacy, Professionalism and Commercialism**

Discussing the “arena between the state and the market where public and private concerns meet and where individual and social efforts are united” Frumkin (2002) suggests that grouping nonprofits together into one sector is difficult not only because of differences in mission or purpose, but also because of different funding sources, level of professionalism, and legal status. Frumkin (2002) further argues that “The sector can thus be conceived as a tent covering public-serving charities, member-serving organizations, and a range of informal organizations, including voluntary and grassroots organizations” (p. 21). Scholars also suggest the interdependency of public, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations impact their behavior and that each of these organizations competes for funding resources to maximize their production and market share (Weisbrod, 1998). Because some argue that the nonprofit sector is becoming “indistinguishable from the private sector” (Weisbrod, 1998, p. 4) due to the growth and size of the sector and similarities in revenue streams, classifying organizations across a spectrum based on their dedication to a philanthropic mission and level of commercialism seems appropriate given the blurring of the nonprofit sector boundaries (Galaskiewicz, & Sinclair, 2006; Schlesinger, 1998; Young, 2000; Young & Casey, 2017).

As nonprofits work to balance these competing tensions, most frequently those between voluntarism, professionalism and commercialism, they face specific challenges, which have implications for resource diversification strategies (Minkoff & Powell, 2006; Moulton & Eckerd, 2012; Smith, 2012). For example, the tendency towards professionalism happens when the expertise provided by paid professionals with formal education helps to improve nonprofit effectiveness. The nonprofit subsectors with a strong impulse towards professionalism include foundations, housing and community development, and nonprofit infrastructure organizations, which all exist to maximize the effectiveness of philanthropic work of smaller local nonprofit organizations. For instance, foundations collect money from donors and then provide grants to other nonprofits, while infrastructure organizations provide professional development, research, and financial support. As government policy has changed over time (e.g. devolution of funding, tax reform policy) these subsectors have responded with an inclination towards professionalism in order to demonstrate their effectiveness and value within the larger nonprofit sector (Salamon, 1995).

### **Information Asymmetry**

Other subsectors including education, health care, and social services also bend towards the professionalism impulse due to calls for accountability and effectiveness measures. These sectors are also sensitive to changes in public policy but have the added component of the public trust to satisfy. Because there is a high level of information asymmetry within these subsectors, they must embody a sense professionalism to build trust with consumers. Education and healthcare are also subject to calls for accountability to justify their tax-exempt status and are tightly linked to government funding. These subsectors also have pressure from for-profit competitors, and are highly regulated, both factors that influence their propensity to

professionalism and commercialism. For example, changes in the government's methods to fund these subsectors (e.g. loans and vouchers vs. direct payments to higher education) have forced these subsectors to focus on earned income strategies and other funding sources, like athletic conference participation and specialized health care centers. This focus on earned income may result in conflicting messages for the public, as these types of nonprofits are forced to bring in other revenue sources.

Because the measurement of outcomes is difficult, these nonprofits rely on professionals to improve capacity, clearly define goals, and determine organizational effectiveness (Sowa, Selden, & Sandfort, 2004). Sowa et al. (2004) suggest that more effective nonprofits will have similar practices, structures, and process – seen as best practices in their field, which can be modeled using sophisticated quantitative modeling techniques (Multilevel SEM). Resource stability is measure of effectiveness in this sense, which in turn can influence a nonprofit to shift its priorities to maintain a resource stream. These scholars caution the application of any model of effectiveness writing, “A model of organizational effectiveness will be most effective to scholars and practitioners when it reflects an understanding of effectiveness as multidimensional, integrated, and at least partially socially constructed” (Sowa et al., 2004, p. 724).

In contrast, while the arts subsector does have a group of highly professionalized organizations that rely on experts to meet their funding and audience development goals (e.g. the Smithsonian), this subsector also has many smaller and community-based nonprofits that focus less on professionalism and effectiveness. Because measuring their success is valued differently by each of their external stakeholders (e.g. government, peer groups, general public), calculating effectiveness for arts organizations is complicated. Arts and culture nonprofits straddle between the professional, commercial, and civic activism impulses due to criticisms about the public

aspect of the arts. Responsiveness to the public and serving members is a priority in the arts and culture subsector, rather than government ties. With most of their funding coming from earned income (50%), the arts and culture subsector cannot ignore commercial activities or private philanthropy (Salamon, 2012). Overall, the arts/culture subsector is less professionally oriented – especially in mid/small-size organizations (DiMaggio, 1991).

Religious congregations form another subsector not as focused on professionalism. Because religious congregations are not closely linked to government funding and do not have the same effectiveness or accountability pressures, the impulse towards professionalism is weaker. Although the impulse for professionalism is weaker for religious congregations and smaller arts organizations, the tendency to promote volunteerism is high. The volunteerism impulse stems from the desire for nonprofits to serve an expressive function across a range of social and cultural values. This ideological stance is a strong impulse across the entire sector but is stronger in those subsectors that have less involvement with government and are mostly supported through charitable giving. Linked with human resource challenges, such as high turnover and difficulty in recruitment and retention of staff, the volunteerism impulse places religious congregations and smaller arts nonprofits at a significant disadvantage as compared to professionalized subsectors like health care and education.

While the entire nonprofit sector is influenced by similar impulses, I suggest here that the tendencies towards professionalism and commercialism are linked to the challenge of measuring effectiveness for college access organizations (CAOs) – especially when the subsector has close ties to government for funding or through regulation, as in the education subsector (Smith & Lipsky, 2009). In contrast, volunteerism as an ideology is more prevalent in those subsectors that rely more on individual charitable donations and in organizations created to meet the needs

of their members, as in religious congregations and some smaller arts and culture nonprofits. One challenge associated with volunteerism is related to human resources, in that volunteers are difficult to recruit, manage, and retain (Tschirhart & Bielefeld, 2012, Vaughan & Arsneault, 2013; Worth, 2013). Because there is variety between subsectors, the impact of impulses and the associated challenges are not uniform – with the exception of faith based religious nonprofits. In the case of CAOs, I maintain that the relationship to government is the most influential factor for the college access field. As Frumkin (2012) explains, clearly delineating the logic behind of each of the four functions of nonprofits – service delivery, civic engagement, social entrepreneurship, and faith expression is a “critical step toward defining an integrated vision of how nonprofit and voluntary organizations might operate most successfully” (p. 164). In the case of the demand-side of service delivery, there is increased vendorism with less autonomy and isomorphism when nonprofits are dependent on government funding. Political engagement when government funding is prominent leads to polarization and blurring boundaries between lobbying and public service delivery. On the supply-side, social entrepreneurship allows for the expansion of commercialism and potential abandonment of original social good mission, while faith-based nonprofits see the proliferation of exclusion and particularism.

### **Instrumental and Expressive Goals**

As previously discussed, both the instrumental and expressive goals represented by the diversity of missions and values across the nonprofit sector have the potential to drift or be displaced due to resource dependency. This shift is less common as nonprofits age with older organizations behaving in a less reactive manner, especially if they are connected to government resources. I argue that CAOs further along in the organizational lifecycle will have a more proactive approach to revenue generation even though most suggest that older organizations are

more difficult to change due to legitimacy, scalability, and accountability concerns. With narrowly defined missions, new and often more radical organizations are harder to adjust. According to Minkoff and Powell (2006), older nonprofits trade social activism for vendorism when they are aligned with government funding but are also more inclined towards innovation due to the strength of their resources. As younger organizations develop and identity, they may resort to goal adaptation or mission creep to just survive, especially since they are dependent on volatile resources.

### **Cross Sector Networks**

In the current educational accountability reform environment, there are incentives for K-12 districts and higher education to coordinate across sectors to improve student outcomes (Domina & Ruzek, 2012). Even though high schools and colleges generally develop curricula and assessments separately, and K-12 and higher education governance, policy making, and financing are not coordinated, scholars suggest increased collaboration is a priority, due to persistently low attainment rates nationwide. College access organizations utilizing a cross sector approach represent an evolution of institutional values and behaviors.

The progression into well-connected, action-orientated entities, from traditional silos competing for scarce resources, is a benefit of cross sector coordination and some states show evidence of success with the implementation of integrated student data systems, dual enrollment policies, and improved teacher preparation programs (McLendon, et al., 2009; Venezia et al., 2005). Research is positive on the effects of cross sector collaboration. Domina and Ruzek (2012) assess the effects of K-16 district-level partnerships on the California public school student achievement in high school. Their analysis shows positive effects on student performance in high school and student access to higher education. Rippner's (2014) study of P-

20 councils in three states suggests the value of relational or network outcomes from cross-sector collaboration is often considered higher than any measurable policy-oriented results.

Other scholars argue that the establishment and maintenance of P-20 councils is a policy mechanism with a lasting impact on the structural challenges embedded in the K-12 and higher education sectors, if the appropriate resources are allocated, relationships between organizations are fostered and the role of state leaders in implementation are considered (Perna & Armijo, 2014; Venezia & Kirst, 2005). Expanding the traditional conception of P-20 councils, Lawson (2013) suggests that P-20 initiatives have three distinct generations with different key stakeholders, partnership priorities, school improvement models, outcome priorities, theoretical frameworks, leadership, and resource needs. First generation models focus on student achievement, while the second generation focuses on whole child and community development. Third generation systems align both K-12 and higher education systems along with workforce preparation and economic development agendas that include the private sector to effect policy change. The programmatic P-20 initiatives, first pursued by many state councils, have evolved to emphasize relationship building, particularly at the local level where regional councils are a mechanism for connecting state agendas to local communities (Rochford, 2007).

Although member-serving umbrella college access organizations such as NCAN promote the development of college access networks, one size fits all configuration of P-20 policy is unrealistic given the “configuration and governance of state education systems, history of education reform across the states, the political culture, and other social economic and demographic characteristics”, (Perna and Finney, 2014, p. 213). When considering the development of state-level college access networks or P-20 councils, policymakers must differentiate between collaboration and cooperation. Partnerships that involve joint goals and

identify an identical mission (e.g. providing access to college knowledge) are considered successful collaborations (Rippner, 2014). Cooperation on the other hand simply involve coordination where partners share information and networks. Collaborative partnerships have a deeper level of commitment and have reciprocal relationships that share in power and planning roles (Kezar, Lester, Yang, 2010; Rippner, 2014). Now I move to an understanding of how the oft discussed accountability standards movement has impacted the identification of problems and the evaluation measures for nonprofit CAOs.

### **Accountability and Standards**

An important aspect of the rise of CAO networks is the influence of the accountability and standards movement. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was developed with the idea that testing and accountability in schools is the optimal way to improve student performance and to close the achievement gap. Debates surrounding the accountability-based policy include accusations that NCLB and the subsequent Race to the Top (RTT) has led to a gaming of the system by removing undesirable students from the testing pool, cheating, and other unintended consequences – including higher teacher and principal turnover. For example, Hanushek and Raymond (2005) conducted a study to examine if accountability pressures force teachers to teach to the test, incentivizes cheating, and prompts administrators to exclude certain students from testing to improve test scores. Their findings show that even though accountability systems may lead to gains in achievement, the strength in accountability is from the consequences associated with the policy (e.g., school takeover).

Elmore (2004) discusses the weaknesses in accountability policies from a theoretical perspective and defines the issue as both technical and organizational. Technically speaking, test results are not the only good metric of success. This issue is generally ignored by policymakers



and Elmore (2004) believes that high-stakes decisions such as preventing grade progress, graduation, or school closure should not be based exclusively on tests. Organizationally, schools without the instructional capacity to impact student achievement are and will always be at a disadvantage when attempting to address higher education attainment. Because students and teachers are linked together in the instructional core, he concludes that accountability policies with incentives that consider this relationship will be the most successful (Elmore, 2004). Following Elmore's argument, McNeil, Coppola, Radigan, and Vasquez-Heilig (2008) studied the effects of high-stakes accountability on Hispanic students in an urban district. Their analysis found that the decisions made by principals and school leaders, in response to the external accountability policies, kept thousands of students from progressing through high school. One of the major findings of the McNeil et al. (2008) study is that the disaggregation of test scores by ethnicity "marks those students as potential liabilities to the system and to each school's successful ratings" (2008, p. 37). Although the schools in their study showed improvement in test scores, the policy resulted in increases in dropouts.

In higher education the accountability and standards movement calls not only for increased access to higher education, but also for the overall success of students (e.g. academic preparation for college, retention, and completion). Accountability proponents in higher education believe improvements in attainment rates will be made by linking institutional performance with success indicators. Evaluating performance goals in higher education is the task of national report cards such as *Measuring Up*, which scores states on specific indicators. By measuring and monitoring the performance of different groups within a state, advocates of accountability argue that states would then have the data needed to improve (Perna & Finney, 2014). For example, Richardson and Martinez's (2009) case studies of five states identify 23

distinct rules and norms in play within a specific state context to promote access and achievement. Their findings demonstrate the use of both formal “rules in use” (e.g., statutes and policies), as well as informal values and norms, that encourage distinct organizational behaviors related to higher education performance (Richardson & Martinez, 2009).

A recent example of the influence of accountability movement in higher education is the Complete College America (CCA) initiative. Established as a national program with nonprofit foundation funding, CCA promotes performance funding models by linking performance targets with specific indicators. Critiques of this approach suggest that CCA does not show how policy and performance are related and ignores other aspects in the educational pipeline outside of higher education (Perna & Finney, 2014). Venezia and Kirst (2005) underscore the lack of accountability policy or mechanisms at the state level that encourage cross sector coordination, due to a separation between the K-12 and postsecondary systems, writing – “K-12 relationships are almost never a part of the accountability measures for postsecondary education...and there are few stakes or mandates regarding K-16 reform.” (p. 288). CAO networks are dynamic and everchanging and I contend that their level of resource dependency and the density of organizations within a region or state influences the impulses or tendencies towards professionalism, commercialism, and political advocacy – to which I turn to next in a discussion of the position of CAOs within the policy arena.

### **Policy and Politics**

With sufficient background on the college access issue and a broader framework from which to position nonprofit college access programs, I now turn to the larger political context and the multiple roles these organizations can have within the policy landscape . Arguing that institutional analysts examine not only direct service organizations, but also the political

landscape within which they operate, Rowan (2007) contends that politics are central to the control and behavior of organizations writing, “The political control of education, its provision as a public good, and the large place education assumes in public budgets makes educational organizations a frequent target of government policy” (p. 17). Nonprofit scholars argue that the sector has three contributions in the policy sphere: (1) nonprofits can implement new ideas that the public and private sector are unwilling or unable to do, (2) nonprofits develop leaders in public policy, and (3) nonprofits decrease feelings of powerlessness by citizens (Herman & Renz, 1987; Ott & Dicke, 2012). In policy terms, these contributions translate into policy implementation, agenda setting or problem identification, and policy entrepreneurship, which has been explained by various policy scholars and is where I turn to next.

### **Multiple Streams**

Policy development is explained by Kingdon’s (2011) multiple streams model as the problem, politics, and policy streams. Policy outputs happen when any two of these streams merge or couple, and a policy window opens due to the efforts of a policy entrepreneur. Policy entrepreneurs are the motivators who drive their preferred solution to the policy window, or the “black box” of the policy making process. The “revised multiple streams” framework (Ness, 2008) extends Kingdon’s theory with the inclusion of the policy milieu, or the structural elements of state and higher education governance systems, and the policy field into which the politics and problem streams flow. Identifying policy entrepreneurs can uncover more about the institutional processes of policy innovation. As McLendon, Hearn, and Deaton (2006) remark, “Entrepreneurs facilitate change by redefining problems, refashioning policy images, developing potential solutions, and mobilizing the previously disinterested (p. 20). Because of the multiple constituencies involved in college access as described in Perna’s (2006) conceptual framework,

nonprofit college access programs are forced to navigate their environments (or the policy milieu) in a way that will serve all stakeholders' interests – including funders, educational institutions, and student, as well as their own. The next potential role for nonprofit CAOs is as direct service implementors for policymakers and concerned stakeholders at the individual, institutional, city, state, and national levels.

## **Implementation**

As policy implementers, nonprofit college access programs fall within the definition of intermediary organizations defined as “organizations that operate independently of two parties and provide distinct value beyond what the parties alone would be able to develop or to amass by themselves. At the same time, intermediary organizations depend on those parties to perform their essential functions.” (Honig, 2004, p. 67). They can also be thought of as a subset of nontraditional or less obvious policy actors spanning the K-12 and higher education policy landscape with distinct interests depending on the context (Malen, 2001). McLaughlin (2006) acknowledges that the growth of intermediary organizations has “in part reflected a view of local adaptation of policy goals” (p. 220) and cautions that intermediary organizations face unique challenges due to the politics of implementation.

Although intermediary organizations provide valuable resources and promote sector collaboration, questions remain regarding how organizations can work together if they have “different or rival institutional logics, sources of authority, funding, legitimacy, pressures, and standards of accountability” (McLaughlin, 2006, p. 221). Because of their dependency on multiple funding streams and the pressures to align with the priorities of their supporters within the policy community with multiple actors “who interact with each other, exchange ideas, and formulate and reformulate policy alternatives” (Young, Shepley & Song, 2010, p. 4), I argue that

leaders of nonprofit college access programs must be politically skilled. Scholars advocate for the integration of politics into research on implementation due to the differences in interpretation by “street-level practitioners” (McDonnell & Weatherford, 2016, p. 239).

One example of an integrated approach to funding college access initiatives is the federal program Investing in Innovation Fund (i3). Administered by the Department of Education and established under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the purpose of the i3 fund is to both generate new programs and support existing nonprofit organizations working to improve educational outcomes for underserved students, through partnerships between nonprofits and local educational agencies (U.S. Federal Register, 2015). Grant applicants must obtain matching funds or in-kind donations from the private sector equal to at least 15% of the grant award. While the impact of the ARRA is widely debated, the i3 fund enjoys support from both conservatives and liberals. As discussed by Ott and Dicke (2012), liberals respect and identify with the values espoused by nonprofit workers that are generally low-wage or volunteer. Liberals also support the bottom-up or grassroots approaches used by nonprofits as progressive solutions to social problems, such as those in education.

In the case of partnerships with K-12 schools, liberals see nonprofits as a way to improve and legitimize school services that are often seen as failing. Furthermore, programs such as the i3 fund are designed to address social problems, which align with the social transformation political movements supported by liberals. Viewing nonprofits as agile organizations that advocate for underserved and poor, liberals believe that nonprofits work more effectively for social justice than government alone. An example of this liberal support is shown by Senator Al Franken (D), member of the Senate Education Committee, who publicly praised a recent i3 award winner for its efforts to close the attainment gap in Minnesota. Liberals view nonprofit

recipients of i3 grants as change agents and advocates for underrepresented and low-income students. Paradoxically, conservatives support i3 grants for different reasons. With privatization and small government serving as one of their main rallying points, conservatives support programs that are alternatives to direct spending on social issues. Also, i3 grant recipients can include not only nonprofit organizations, but also local education agencies like charter schools. The nonprofit sector is also viewed by conservatives as a way to promote their moral or faith-based values. Finally, as Ott and Dicke (2012) point out, conservatives understand nonprofits to be innovators at the local level, providing the states an opportunity to solve their own problems through local organizations. On its face, i3 is a nod to the conservative viewpoint that innovative solutions to social problems can, as Ott and Dicke (2012) write, “percolate up from communities” (p. 24). Because prior research suggests that nonprofit organizations are considered disempowered political partners due to their lack of knowledge about higher education, the next section reviews the related college access, broader nonprofit theories, and related policy theories that impact collaboration.

### **Related Literature Summary**

By extending the college choice model to include specific actors and their behaviors within the broader college access organizational field, I am amplifying the connections between formal organizations and the reproduction of college going as an institution. My framework extends previous research on college access programs that has focused primarily on student outcomes, program components, and partnership types. By considering a larger field of college access organizations, I argue that policy linkages are not unidirectional and can influence behavior beyond the original policy target, so the actions of college access programs, including their funding strategies, organizational behavior choices, and the networks they participate in

reflects the back and forth dynamic that happens within the policy arena at the field level, rather than direct one-way links as previously conceptualized (e.g. K-12 standards connect to higher education context and school context). I argue that their leaders must consider the political culture of both to be successful. Louis, Thomas, Gordon, and Febey (2008) argue that political culture is built through relationships between groups that share the same values and are “enduring political attitudes and behaviors associated with groups that live in a defined geographical context” (p. 566). To define a particular culture within a state or district, analysts can utilize several dimensions of political culture including; openness, decentralism, rationalism, egalitarianism, efficiency, and quality – in order to determine which of these show up in the policies enacted overtime. Differences in culture or values can lead to different implementation strategies of the same policy (Heck, Lam, & Thomas, 2014). Understanding that nonprofit collaborations can have a broader impact beyond the micro-level of each organization will shed light on the role that these programs have in the development and execution of educational reform efforts. Alignment or misalignment of their mission and values with those of partners and other intermediary organizations (e.g. grant-making foundations, think tanks) could influence the financial support and subsequent behaviors of college access organizations.

I also suggest that understanding the research disseminated by and conducted on CAOs, which may impact state and federal policy decisions is also of importance for future research. According to some scholars, the politics of interest groups and role that these nonprofit organizations play in meeting state level college attainment goals (e.g. as service providers and research partners) is an understudied area of research (McLendon, Heller, & Lee, 2009) and deserves attention. I also suggest that CAOs programs have a role to play in the change process within schools, specifically their ability to build the organizational capacity of schools. Scholars

argue that systemic school improvement – including changes to the way college knowledge is universally disseminated, requires a community of learners (Fullan, 2007). The extent to which schools have the capacity to change is critical, because many schools that serve low-income and underrepresented students are at a disadvantage. Schools without the organizational capacity to improve academic achievement are and will always be at a disadvantage when attempting to address college access. Students who attend low-quality schools receive low-quality instruction and are “adversely affected by that instruction” (Elmore, 2004, p. 282). To ignore this ethical dilemma is ignoring who is actually responsible for student failure, according to Elmore (2004). CAO’s are building schools’ organizational capacity through their partnerships. Research on the types of collaboration with these intermediaries could further the theory of partnership logic, which asserts that individual sectors are enhanced by learning from and borrowing from organizations in other sectors, and that some sectors are more adept at forming partnerships than others to solve societal problems (Rippner, 2014; Selsky & Parker, 2005). Going beyond the traditional charity logic by collaborating across sectors, CAOs are exhibiting what scholars describe as a “culture of collaboration” that encompasses the demands and needs of all partners (Rippner, 2014, p. 251). Because prior research suggests that nonprofit organizations are considered disempowered partners due to their lack of knowledge about higher education, this research is warranted (Kezar et al., 2010). Overall, this research posits that leaders from each sector must align their political priorities and build a broader conception of the college access field structuration during which networks of organizations can span across contexts and have dynamic influences on policy.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study seeks to explore the dominant resources streams of nonprofit CAOs and to understand the implication of those funding sources on their organizational behaviors and interactions with other organizations within the organizational field. The prior two chapters provided an overview of the theoretical perspectives and current literature related to this study. This chapter offers the rationale for a qualitative study, outlines the research design and methodology then details the analytical process. Finally, this chapter bounds the cases to be examined and offers a description of each.

This qualitative research employs a comparative multiple-case design to examine eight (8) nonprofit college access organizations (CAOs). Qualitative research describes the lived experience through the assumption that people can articulate experiences, explaining how and why something is happening. By studying organizations in action through the beliefs and experiences of individuals who are part of the organization, interactionism helps to illuminate how legitimization, social construction of fields, and social action takes place by creating links between institutions and people (Barley, 2008). As Haverkamp and Young (2007) write: “In qualitative research, the direct experience of one’s participants is examined to learn if there is something of interest happening and interpretations of that direct experience become models that may or may not be applicable in other contexts” (p. 272). I suggest that if institutionalization is the acceptance and diffusion of practices by individuals within organizations, which then creates a networked organizational field, then a comparative case study design with in-depth field work

and document analysis is an appropriate approach for describing and explaining how CAOs form, function, and contribute to the institutionalization of these organizations.

### **Rationale for Qualitative Research**

As a research method, case studies contribute to knowledge about individuals, groups, organizations, and other contemporary phenomena (Yin, 2014). Case study methods have academic roots in several disciplines including, history, anthropology, sociology, and psychology (Maxwell, 2013). A qualitative case study is appropriate when the phenomenon of interest and level of complexity requires multiple data sources and methods to gain an in-depth understanding (Yin, 2014). Several key scholars are attributed to advancing the use of case studies in qualitative research, including Sharan Merriam, Robert Stake and Robert Yin, who I am drawing primarily on for this research. Case study design according to Yin (2014) refers to “the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions” (p. 20). While Merriam and Stake share my constructivist epistemology, Yin (2014) acknowledges that he takes a “realist” epistemological orientation versus a relativist or interpretivist approach writing: “a case study allows investigators to focus on a “case” and retain a holistic and real-world perspective – such as in studying individual life cycles, small group behavior, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, school performance, international relations, and the maturation of industries” (p. 4). Because the boundaries among CAOs, K-12 schools, and the higher education sectors are blurred with respect to college going, in-depth empirical investigation within the real-world context of the cases is necessary (Yin, 2014).

Limitations to case study research designs according to Yin (2014) include questions of rigor, which can be addressed with systematic procedures. Generalizing to populations from

single cases is not possible although case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions, and substantial amounts of data – as is the data available on CAOs during the time period examined here, because case study research does not have to align with a specific method of data collection. I address construct validity in the data collection by using multiple sources of data and with a case database with explicit chain of evidence. My use of multiple sources of data including interviews, observations, and documents enforces the overall credibility of this qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Tracy, 2010). One limitation to this method is the fact that the documents and messaging created by CAOs are created for a specific purpose and audience, which could bias their interpretation. The use of multiple cases, in contrast to a solitary case study design, allows for the use of replication logic and addresses the issue of external validity (Yin, 2014). Cases that pattern each other and confirm behaviors increase confidence in the internal validity of my findings (Yin, 2014).

### **Research Questions Connection with Methodology**

As mentioned in the rationale for qualitative methods, case study is used because complex systems like those studied here require a holistic approach to analysis. The three research questions asked came from gaps in the related literature review and are supported by theoretical propositions. Relevant case study research questions ask about the how or why of contemporary events and the purpose of the study can be exploratory, descriptive or explanatory (Maxwell, 2013). This research was ambitious in its aims to do all three.

The first research question asks the “what”: “What are the dominant resources streams of nonprofit college access programs?” “What” questions demonstrate the exploratory nature of this study. Since there are few studies examining the resources of these types of nonprofit organizations, financial document analysis provided the answers to the first question. The

second and third research questions delve into the “how” and ask first: “How does resource diversification influence or constrain the organizational behaviors of nonprofit college access organizations?” and secondly: “How do nonprofit college access organizations act as intermediaries within the broader college access policy arena?” The semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix A) incorporated questions to uncover how CAOs are operating but allowed for new themes beyond the original propositions.

### **Research Design**

Document analysis is the main data collection method and is supplemented with data from semi-structured interviews conducted with either participants representing a case as insiders or with other college access field actors as outsiders with counter narratives. I also observed the online social media (see Appendix D) and virtual world behaviors of the CAOs due to increased use of virtual platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because all of the CAOs studied here have robust online presences and archival financial records are within the public domain, I primarily conducted internet research, but used secondary sources as supplementary contextual information (e.g. popular press, blogs and books). The rationale for document analysis as Bowen (2009) explains “lies in its role in methodological and data triangulation...documents can provide data on the context within which research participants operate” (p. 29). According to Bowen (2009), efficiency, availability, cost-effectiveness, lack of obtrusiveness, stability, exactness, and coverage (documents provide broad coverage) are the advantages of document analysis.

To establish a chain of evidence, I created a case database in an Excel Workbook with separate worksheets for each organization. On each worksheet I detailed the CAOs formal IRS determination, NTEE code(s), EIN number, fiscal reporting year, and key words describing the

organization. I then saved a pdf document of each website page with a unique name associated with the section of the website (i.e. Campus Program\_The Posse Foundation). I kept detailed search records along with PDF documents, the URL and date that the websites were accessed in the case database. Following my institution's IRB requirements, my protocol is well documented and includes specifics related to data storage and security. After completing the collection of documents from each organization's website, I conducted a searches of the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS), the GuideStar/Candid, and IRS databases, which provide IRS financial data, financial audits, and detailed profiles of each CAO. Because NCCS underwent a major redesign of their website and improved functionality through increased digitization and the collection of IRS 990 data during this study, I mostly utilized the GuideStar/Candid and IRS databases (McKeever, 2018). I downloaded and saved copies of the IRS 990 Forms from a 15-year period ranging from 2003 to 2018. If IRS 990 forms were available before 2003, those were downloaded and saved to complete the case records for those CAOs operating before 2003. The digitization and improved collection methods of IRS 990 data indicates a broader interest in and increased quality of this data.

To facilitate the analysis, I created Word documents for tables and appendices to show each unit of analysis from the IRS 990 forms, with the following categories – 1.) Mission statement, 2.) Program accomplishments, 3.) Total revenue (Contributions, grants, program service fees, investment income, and other revenue), 4.) Revenue (Contributions, gifts, and grants), 5.) Revenue (Government contributions/grants), 6.) Revenue (Program service), 7.) Compensation expense (Total Salaries, other compensation, and employee benefits), 8.) Number of individuals employed (Calendar year), 9.) Endowment (End of year balance), 10.) Investments (End of year balance).

Additionally, I queried the GuideStar Pro database, which is part of the Candid database platform for financial and other summative data available on each case. Additionally, I searched for evidence of foundation support, otherwise known as benefactor support in 2018. To strengthen the construct validity, I also collected mission statements from annual reports and CAO grant applications (e.g. Federal I3 Innovation Grants) where available. Due to changes in the IRS 990 forms over time, the units of analysis are found on differing lines and sections of the forms. For example, the 2003 IRS 990 forms separate the contributions, gifts, grants revenue categories from part 1 into sub-categories – (a.) direct public support, (b.) indirect public support, (c.) government contributions. These subcategories are eliminated in part 1 of the form in future years and are found in part VIII of the form. Then, select websites of either a corporation, foundation, university, or school district partner were searched for evidence of their partnerships. I selected the corporate partners to review based on the level of support (\$100,000 or more if known), and the first recorded education partner – either a university or K-12 school. For example, The Posse Foundation’s first university partner was Vanderbilt University, and the first partner school district in the case of PeerForward, New York City Schools. This protocol strengthens the reliability of the collected data across cases.

After the document collection process, I conducted 25 semi-structured interviews following a pre-determined interview protocol with individuals representing each organization in differing roles (Appendix B). My interview guide (Appendix A) including questions about organizational mission, funding sources, program services, and partners. In some cases, the interviewees were former employees and in others the current CEO or President. I also interviewed partners associated with the CAO and student participants. The organizational roles represented in the interviews included program manager, university president, alumni,

admissions officers, administrative assistants, fundraisers, faculty, national association leader, and current students. Initially, I recruited interview participants through personal contacts. These informants then assisted in recruiting additional participants. This type of interview participant selection is referred to as network selection. In addition to fitting the selection criterion of working with or a participant in a college access program, network selection occurs when one participant, who fits the selection criteria, refers other participants who also fit (deMarrais, 2004). The interview questions were open-ended, although standardized with probes allowing participants to elaborate and explain their answers, which improved reliability (Roulston, 2010). With the participant's consent, I recorded each interview and took notes. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and transcriptions average 20-30 pages in length. Member checking increases the reliability of qualitative research, so I offered study participants the opportunity to review their interview transcripts and to make corrections and verify findings. Pseudonyms were created for each participant, but specific CAO identifiers remained.

### **Analytical Process**

My analysis uses both an inductive and deductive approach based on existing literature on nonprofit and neo-institutional theory. To create a narrative describing the evolution and structuration of the college access field, my analytical process relies on both categorical and narrative thinking as described by Freeman (2017). Yin (2014) suggests “playing” with your data during analysis to search for “patterns, insights, or concepts that seem promising”, and using matrices, tables, flowcharts, or chronological order to manipulate your data and then use memos to write about what you observe in your data (p. 135). Following the nonprofit and organizational literatures, my analysis first uses a deductive approach for explanation building (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) describes explanation building as a type of pattern matching with an

iterative process used to “explain a phenomenon...“how” or “why” something happened” (p. 147). I created a list of a priori codes or hypothesis codes (Saldaña, 2013) based on theoretical propositions from the nonprofit literature. Hypothesis coding is used to evaluate a hypothesis or proposition generated by the researcher and is developed from a theory about what will be discovered in the data (Saldaña, 2013). As discussed, my theoretical propositions focus on nonprofit environmental complexity, mission alignment, resource dependency and partnership logics. For example, my pre-determined codebook (Appendix A) included codes explaining the funder or partner exchange type (CORP, PARTN), the organization’s mission (MISSN), and the field or sector environment (ENVIR). I also designated codes to describe organizational behaviors and resource strategies behaviors or characteristics such as: growth (GRW), change (CHNG), autonomy (AUTMY), and foundations (FOUND) and added codes as the iterative process continued. Deductive codes added during the coding and first round of analysis included (POLTC), politics and (MEASR), measurement. Appendix A lists a complete list of both code types.

My theoretical propositions suggest that nonprofit college access programs mirror or map the behaviors of their partner organizations (e.g. higher education institutions, K-12 districts, and corporations) to legitimize their operations, and to diversify to their funding sources (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Young, 2007). Furthermore, I maintain that these nonprofits are exploiting the complexity of the education sector by reorienting their missions to better align with the goals of their partners (Alexander, 1998; Schelsinger, 1998). My goal is to build a general explanation of organizational behavior that fits each case through an iterative process by first making a theoretical proposition and then comparing the findings of one initial case against that



proposition (Yin, 2014). After doing an initial review of the data from one case, I then compared the findings from the second case and so forth to see similarities or patterns in all eight cases.

To begin my analysis, I first read and re-read the data collected from each organization's website and IRS 990 forms, reviewing the mission statements and program accomplishments over a fifteen-year period in chronological order. I recorded in table format the units of analysis as discussed from 2003 through 2018. Because I began this research as a pilot study in 2015 on a smaller subset of organizations, I retrieved some IRS 990 forms from earlier years (1996-2003) that I did not initially access for the larger group. The earlier cases with additional data in the case database are The Posse Foundation, PeerForward, and College Possible. In addition to the total revenue, I broke the type of revenue into the distinct components to reveal which were dominant in each organization. It is important to note that each organization or case may follow a different financial reporting year when filing IRS 990 forms. Some organizations utilize a calendar year reporting time frame, while others report on the tax year beginning May 1 and ending April 30. Because the main unit of analysis is the distribution of total revenue across revenue types, differences in reporting time frame is not troublesome to my analysis of the dominant resource streams. Where I do make comparisons across years, I utilize the CPI to adjust for inflation.

To examine the interview data, the interview audio files were transcribed verbatim and then I studied and coded the transcripts using the constant comparative method to identify themes (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). I utilized the coding method outlined by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) in which the raw transcription text is analyzed for relevant text, repeating ideas, and themes. Keeping my research questions, theoretical propositions and study purpose in mind, I first read through each transcript, highlighting the relevant text and then assigning

descriptive or theoretical proposition codes. I allowed for deductive codes to emerge as I did not want to limit the analysis to the a priori codes initially established. Of the thirty-four codes initially generated, I utilized only half during the first round of coding.

I then created another document of relevant interview text and re-coded each passage of relevant text. This final round of coding of the interview data, allowed for comparison to the themes defined during the first round and helps with data reduction (Maxwell & Miller, 2008). As a categorizing strategy, thematic analysis reveals connected structures and relationships between propositions and the overall narrative (Maxwell, & Miller, 2008). After reducing to the relevant text, I created five themes: (1) diverse resources impact nonprofit impulses, (2) origin stories attract and retain resources, (3) data equals legitimacy, (4) resource competition constrains and enables collaboration, (5) network ties and relationships enable resource growth. Four themes align with my initial theoretical propositions, while a fifth, the importance of founding and origin stories was revealed as a new rival explanation for organizational behavior. Rival or alternative explanations can be used to generate new hypotheses for future study (Yin, 2014).

### **Case Selection and Public Profiles**

Eight cases were purposefully chosen because of their operational and programmatic focus on college knowledge as a function of college readiness, and the partnerships they have with colleges and universities, and K-12 districts or individual schools. As discussed, multiple cases allow for comparison and replication logic. These cases each have a national presence, have operated for at least 15 years, and are similarly classified as 501(c)(3) organizations. Each have comparable founding principles and a social good mission to increase degree attainment for minoritized and youth experiencing poverty. Their programs focus on increasing college

knowledge and personal skills (e.g. college awareness, leadership), as opposed to addressing specific academic deficiencies (e.g. math or literacy skills). Several of the CAOs studied here received national exposure through donations made to them by President Obama from his Nobel Peace prize winnings and were identified as exemplars in the field (Office of the Press Secretary, the White House, 2014). Additionally, some CAO founders and CEOs hold national honors and awards including, United States Social Entrepreneur of the Year (World Economic Forum, 2008) and the MacArthur Fellowship (MacArthur Foundation, 2007). While some focus on partnerships with highly selective private colleges or flagship public universities, others concentrate on partnerships with urban school districts or specific high schools. Finally, most cases have maintained partnerships for over 20 years. Finally, with similar classifications as defined by Gándara (2001) as privately funded nonprofits and similar “reasons for being,” each has multiple sources of funding including government grants, program user fees, corporate support, private contributions, and/or revenues from commercial endeavors.

Following Crutchfield and Grant’s (2012) case study methodology, case profiles were established for each CAO adhering to the same dimensions including: stated mission, leadership and board composition, publicly stated or published research and evaluation outcomes, organizational structure, programs offered, IRS ruling year, and annual budget. These case profiles provide the public facing information easily found on a website, social media feed or printed brochure. For consistency and case study rigor (Yin, 2014) I copied the summary data retrieved from published GuideStar Pro Reports ([www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org)), which are the 2019 self-reported CAO data. This standardized procedure allows for replication and addresses a limitation to case study methodology.

**The Posse Foundation – New York, NY**

**[www.possefoundation.org](http://www.possefoundation.org)**

**Ruling Year:** 1996 (1989 Founding)

**EIN:** 13-3840394

**Mission:** The Posse model works for both students and college campuses and is rooted in the belief that a small, diverse group of talented students—a Posse—carefully selected and trained, can serve as a catalyst for increased individual and community development. As the United States becomes an increasingly multicultural society, Posse believes that the leaders of this new century should reflect the country's rich demographic mix and that the key to a promising future for our nation rests on the ability of strong leaders from diverse backgrounds to develop consensus solutions to complex social problems. **The primary aim of the Posse program is to train these leaders of tomorrow.**

**Leadership:** Deborah Bial, Ed.D, President/Founder; Brad Singer, Partner, ValueAct Capital, Board Chair (45 members).

**Outcomes:** 90% graduation rate over 5-year program. 3,700 current participants and 4,800 alumni. Identified and trained 8,500 scholars over the last 30 years.

**Structure:** Free standing locations offered in 10 major cities nationwide; Atlanta, Bay Area, Boston, Chicago, D.C., Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans and New York.

**Programs:** Full-tuition scholarships merit scholarship awarded by partner institutions to enrolling participants. Dynamic Assessment Process admits cohorts of (10) students to partner colleges and universities; Posse Access (2009) is an online recruitment database of nominees for partner colleges; **Pre-Collegiate Training Program; Year-round campus retention and**

**success program in partnership with 57 elite schools.** Distinct programs for priority populations including military veterans and STEM majors.

**Annual Budget/Annual Revenue:** \$23,445,774 with zero (0) negative assets in past five years.

**PeerForward – Washington, D.C.**

**[www.peerforward.org](http://www.peerforward.org)**

**Ruling Year:** 1997 (1996 Founding).

**EIN:** 52-2007028

**Mission:** PeerForward transforms the lives of low-income youth by connecting them to college and career through our innovative peer to peer program. The PeerForward Method guides students to make postsecondary education plans by tapping a resource found in every single high school in the nation: *influential students*. It is informed and validated by research on the key actions essential for postsecondary degree attainment. **We train teams of influential students to run campaigns in their schools driving actions that research shows are the leading indicators to eventual postsecondary enrollment and success: filing for financial aid, applying to at least three institutions, and connecting career aspirations with academic decisions made in high school.**

**Leadership:** Gary Linnen, CEO; Owen Ryan, AEGIS Insurance, Board Chair (14 members).

**Outcomes:** 20% increase postsecondary enrollment in low-income and economically disadvantaged high schools. Participants attain postsecondary degrees at same rate as students from all incomes. 54% of participants in partner schools complete FAFSA. 26% higher FAFSA completion rate than comparable schools without PeerForward. **Over 20 years, placed more than 350,000 on the path to college with increases of postsecondary enrollment of 20% on average.**

**Structure:** National office with school-based services.

**Programs:** PeerForward partners with high schools in low SES areas nationally to select influential students, train them during transformational summer workshops, coach them as to execute campaigns in their schools, and support them as they gather data and analyze results.

**Annual Budget/Annual Revenue:** \$8,000,000 with zero (0) negative assets in past five years.

**QuestBridge – Palo Alto, CA**

**<http://www.questbridge.org>**

**Ruling Year:** 2000 (1994 Founding).

**EIN:** 94-3348336

**Mission:** QuestBridge aims to create a single place where exceptionally talented low-income students can discover and navigate educational and life opportunities. We recruit, develop, and support motivated low-income students – beginning in high school through college to their first job – **to be successful at America's best colleges, graduate schools, and companies.**

**Leadership and Board Composition:** Ana McCullough, CEO & Board Chair (7 members).

**Outcomes:** 2000 students served annually. 90% graduate from partner colleges within 6 years. Alumni network of 7,000 undergraduates and 2,500 recent alumni.

**Structure:** National office with technology platform connects students to regional admissions conferences and other QuestBridge access and success programs.

**Programs:** *College Prep Scholars Program* recruits nationwide starting with high school juniors. Applicants with demonstrated financial need and rigorous academics are selected and secure an invitation to a regional College Admissions Conferences featuring partner admissions officers. *National College Match* data platform and free online application collects data and includes customized sections that highlight low-income students' unique attributes. QB application is accepted by 39 college partners and is tied to full or nearly full scholarships. *QuestBridge Scholars Network* supports students at partner colleges with peer student-led advising, leadership development and peer mentorship. *Quest for Excellence* model is a magnet to attract new populations of students with **historically underrepresented backgrounds and interests and is designed to increase awareness of QuestBridge among talented low-income**



**students and create a bridge between them and America's top colleges and universities.**

The model provides tangible awards, such as scholarships to experiential summer programs and laptops, as encouragement for students to reach for a higher education through QuestBridge. The *Quest for Excellence* platform includes: the STEM Award, Arts Award, Fein Fellows Award for Jewish youth, NYC Award, and regional awards for students from underserved U.S.

geographies. *QuestBridge Scholars Network* supports students through college graduation and into their early career. Student-led, on-campus chapters at each of 39 college partners. With program guidance, leadership development, and funding from the QuestBridge headquarters, **the Scholars Network provides peer mentorship and a safe community in college and beyond.**

**Annual Budget/Annual Revenue:** \$5,911,026 with zero (0) negative assets in past five years.

## College Track – Boston, MA

[www.collegetrack.org](http://www.collegetrack.org)

**Ruling Year:** 1997 (1997 Founding).

**EIN:** 94-3279613

**Mission:** College Track’s mission is to empower students from underserved communities to graduate from college. A college education is crucial for both economic success and civic engagement: college graduates are 2.2 times more likely to be employed, will earn 1.7 times more income than high school graduates, are twice as likely to volunteer, and nearly twice as likely to vote. **A comprehensive 10-year program empowers students from ninth grade through college graduation, equipping students to unlock their potential through academic, financial, and social supports** including 1:1 mentoring, experiential/service learning, college advising through graduation, scholarships, and more.

**Leadership and Board Composition:** Elissa Salas, CEO; Laurene Powell, Principal The Emerson Collective – Social Impact Investment LLC, Board Chair (16 members).

**Outcomes:** 494 college graduates to date, on track to have 750 graduates by the end of 2020. Nationwide, 98% of participants matriculate to two or four-year colleges and universities. More than twice the rate of their low-income and first-generation peers. Five years out of college, graduates are employed full time, and 85% report earning more than their parents (that’s 30 points higher than the average for children born in 1980). **Salesforce** database monitors progress through high school and college with meticulous data practices and quality infrastructure. Success indicators include GPA, school credits, ACT score, math and English readiness, program attendance, college applications, scholarship opportunities, community service, and extracurricular activities. Tracks postsecondary data with **College Advising Term (CAT)**

system, which captures each student's historical persistence, GPA, and credit accumulation data over the course of their college careers. Collects data on measures of social mobility such as employment, income, and economic security after college graduation. **Surveys older alumni later in their careers to get a sense of long-term outcomes.**

**Structure:** Free standing locations offered in 10 communities: East Palo Alto, Oakland, San Francisco, Sacramento, Boyle Heights, Watts, Aurora, Denver, Washington D.C. and New Orleans. High school students spend the first four years at College Track centers where they prepare for the academic, financial, and social-emotional demands of college. Once in college participants have supportive community to guide them through college graduation.

**Programs:** College Completion Advisors strengthen students' ability to cope with the issues that inevitably surface during college, so they are prepared to succeed in today's workforce. No other program offers this **seamless pipeline of support for low-income, first-generation college students.**

**Annual Budget/Annual Revenue:** \$46,116,568 with zero (0) negative assets in past five years.

**Bottom Line - Boston, MA**

**<https://www.bottomline.org/>**

**Ruling Year:** 1997 (1997 Founding).

**EIN:** 04-3351427

**Mission:** Bottom Line was founded in 1997 to address the low college graduation rates among disadvantaged urban youth. Our services help low-income and first-generation students get into college, graduate from college, and go far in life. We achieve this mission by providing students with consistent, one-on-one counselor support from college applications until college graduation.

**Leadership and Board Composition:** Steve Colón, CEO; Kevin Connolly, Senior VP, State Street Corporation, Board Chair (12 members).

**Outcomes:** 81 % of students earn a college degree in six years or less in 2016. 83% in 2014 and 2015. Long-term and annual goals include: 100% of BL high school students (in the Access Program) accepted into at least one 4-year college; 95% persisting and return for a 2nd year of college; **75% recent college graduates employed in a full-time job or in graduate school within 90 days of graduating college.**

**Structure:** National office providing strategic leadership of the organization, program development and evaluation, functional training and professional development, and centralize support services to regions in the areas of finance, human resources and technology/operations. The National Team leads our growth efforts and thought-leadership work. Regional Executive Directors in Massachusetts, New York City, and Chicago report into National leadership and are responsible for the local implementation of our program model, fundraising, and community engagement. Bottom Line serves 7,000 students. Expansions sites in major urban areas doubled our footprint to 11,000. 78% of students have graduated college, more than double the national

average for low-income students. Bottom Line provides industry-leading college support and guidance to low-income and first-generation college students by implementing a relationship-based one-on-one advising model. Counselors are trained, experienced adults, who are advocates and mentors across the four key areas that are most likely to lead to college success: Degree, Employability, Aid, and Life. **Bottom Line breaks first-generation cycles-of-poverty and builds a talent pipeline for communities in cities to thrive.**

**Programs:** *College Access Program* – high school juniors or seniors meet with Bottom Line Counselors to discuss their interests, aspirations, academic history, and family circumstances. Once students commit to our program, counselors help them navigate every step of the college application process. Services differ to suit individual needs and counselors typically help students in five areas: college lists, essays, applications, financial aid, and making a college choice. Counselors review acceptance and financial aid award letters with students to select a college that best suits their academic, financial, and personal needs.

*College Success Program:* Students, elect to attend a target school, which is one of 54 colleges in MA, NY and IL that a large percentage of Bottom Line students attend. Students participate in transitional programming during the summer before their freshman year. Counselors work with students in groups and individually to prepare them for the academic rigor and cultural shock of college. Bottom Line becomes a financial aid advocate, academic advisor, career counselor, and mentor. We offer consistent support to students in four areas: Degree, Employability, Aid, and Life (DEAL). Assisting our students in earning a degree means helping them select a suitable major, monitor their academic progress, develop strategies to improve their performance, and connect with tutors, advisors, and on-campus resources. We assist students in renewing financial aid annually, but also help year-round to resolve problems with tuition bills, determine how to

pay balances, and encourage appropriate decisions that will allow students to avoid excessive debt. Bottom Line helps students secure internships and part-time jobs, create and update their resumes, and build a unique brand that will allow them to leave college employable. Lastly, Bottom Line offers **parentlike** guidance and mentoring. The strong relationships counselors maintain with students enable our organization to offer consistent support and help students through unexpected obstacles, such as illness, pregnancy, debt, a death in the family, academic probation, or transferring to another college. This comprehensive support is provided for up to six years or until a student graduates.

Challenges with scale requires focus on work culture and programmatic knowledge and investing in leadership training and talent development. Philanthropically diversifying our funding base and exploring earned income solutions for sustainability. Strengthening the brand as a national Thought-Leader and utilizing social media across regions to raise awareness in our communities. Published results of our RCT Evaluation, which can impact similar programs throughout the country and serve to influence public policy.

**Annual Budget/Annual Revenue:** \$7,444,198 / \$13,107,604 with zero (0) negative assets in past five years.

## **College Horizons – Pena Blanca, NM**

**[www.collegehorizons.org](http://www.collegehorizons.org)**

**Ruling Year:** 2005 (1998 Founding Year).

**EIN:** 20-1730126

**Mission:** College Horizons encourages and facilitates the higher education of Native American young people. The goals are to: 1) increase the higher education rate of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian high school and college students by providing pre-college

**Leadership and Board Composition:** Carmen Lopez, Ed.D, Executive Director; Peter Aranda, The Consortium for Graduate Study in Management, Board Chair (6 members).

**Outcomes:** Not self-reported on GuideStar Profile.

**Structure:** Carmen Lopez is a citizen of the Navajo Nation and is from the Forest Lake area of Black Mesa, Arizona and she also grew up in Farmington, New Mexico. Carmen is of the Bitter Water Clan born for the Anglo clan; her maternal grandfather's clan is Many Goats and her paternal grandfather's clan is Anglo. Dr. Lopez assumed the directorship in 2009 after having served for five years as the Executive Director of the Harvard University Native American Program (HUNAP) located in Cambridge, Massachusetts. At HUNAP she oversaw the operation of the university-wide Interfaculty Initiative which focused on American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian recruitment and student support; interdisciplinary teaching and research projects on Native issues; and community outreach. Dr. Lopez also served as a member of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Committee on Ethnic Studies, The Harvard Foundation for Intercultural and Race Relations, Admissions Reader for the Harvard Kennedy School's master's in public policy program, and a Reader and Site Visitor for the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development's Honoring Nations Program. She also has

teaching experience at the secondary school level having taught Cushing Academy located in Ashburnham, MA and the Native American Preparatory School located in Rowe, NM. Dr. Lopez volunteers her time on the Advisory Council of the Gates Millennium Scholars Program, Indian Dispute and Resolution Services, Inc., and on the Dartmouth Native American Alumni Association. Dr. Lopez received her B.A. in History modified with Native American Studies from Dartmouth College and her Ed.M. from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

**Programs:** College Horizons undergraduate and pre-graduate Graduate Horizons admission counseling programs to Native American students to increase their college completion rate through an Alumni College Success program.

**Annual Budget/Annual Revenue:** \$1,042,432 with zero (0) negative assets in past five years.



**College Possible – St. Paul, MN**

**[www.CollegePossible.org](http://www.CollegePossible.org)**

**Ruling Year:** 2000 (2000 Founding Year).

**EIN:** 41-1968798

**Mission:** College Possible makes college admission and success possible for low-income students through an intensive curriculum of coaching and support.

**Leadership and Board Composition:** Jim McCorkell, CEO (retired); Stephen Smith, Board Chair (15 members).

**Outcomes:** College Possible makes college graduation possible for capable, low-income students. **We envision a day when the future of America’s children is determined solely by talent, motivation and effort.** Our model harnesses the power of national service, resulting in a cost-efficient and results driven program. Due to the complexities of the higher education system, low-income, first-generation, and students of color are the demographic groups least likely to attend college, which are the student demographics. The program model has been extensively independently evaluated, and our positive impact has been confirmed. The first college access organization conduct a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT); a rigorous evaluation of the highest standard. A 2013 RCT was conducted by Harvard Kennedy School professor Dr. Christopher Avery. Results indicated a significant positive effect on college application behavior and on enrollment at four-year colleges, especially selective colleges. HOPE Lab (2018), an externally-led comparison group study with regression discontinuity a significant impact on four-year college enrollment (18 percentage points higher than the control group) and 40 percentage points more likely to submit 5 or more college applications and 30 percentage points more likely to submit 3 or more scholarship applications. 97% of students earn admission

to college and are four times more likely to graduate from college than their low-income peers. Students graduate at a higher rate than the national average for all college students, **indicating that we're truly leveling the playing field for low-income students in pursuit of a college degree.** More than 3,000 students have earned a college degree since 2002.

**Structure:** National Office with flagship high school-based programming in six locations across the country: Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN; Milwaukee, WI; Omaha, NE; Portland, OR; Philadelphia, PA; and Chicago, IL.

**Programs:** Intensive program provides students from low-income backgrounds with the tools to earn admission to and succeed in college. AmeriCorps members, supervised by full-time members of our leadership team, provide intensive one-on-one and group guidance to students through every stage of the college process: from preparation to application and persistence to graduation. The application of the AmeriCorps national service model to the issue of college access and success is one of the key innovations of College Possible's solution, and the organization became the **first in the nation** to use and prove its effectiveness.

*College Possible Flagship High School Program* starts at the beginning of students' junior year. AmeriCorps service members, called coaches, serve full-time at the high school. Coaches serve as student mentors, resources and advocates. Coaches lead multiple small group sessions per week, with 10-20 high school students and support 35- 40 students throughout the year. Over the course of two years, students commit to participating in after-school sessions, college fairs and college campus visits. Afterschool sessions are two hours each, twice per week, giving students a consistent meeting schedule that allows them to build a supportive peer group, a key factor to student academic success. Each student can receive a total of 320 hours of direct instruction.

*College Possible Flagship College Program:* College coaches provide proactive support to foster college enrollment, persistence and graduation by addressing common academic, financial and cultural barriers to students' college success. College coaches provide individualized support and troubleshooting using smart technology, texting, smart phone tools, one-on-one assistance (in-person and by-phone) and in some cases group workshops and on-campus support. Coaches continue to work with students through college graduation.

*College Possible Navigate:* In response to the needs of rural students a tech-connected model focused on improving achievement of students from low-income backgrounds, in geographically underserved areas. In rural Minnesota, we have implemented a purely tech-connected coaching model, in which coaches engage selected students through email, text, social media, discussion boards and virtual workshops. In rural Oregon and Wisconsin, each site has developed a specific blend of strategies for student engagement, utilizing both traditional in-person, near-peer coaching method and tech-connected approaches. Coaches travel to each partner school to meet in-person with a cohort of students and also meet virtually with each student.

*CollegePoint* is a partnership convened by Bloomberg Philanthropies to address the mismatch challenge for low-income students. The CollegePoint tech-connected coaching model was launched in 2014 to increase the number of high achieving, low-and moderate-income students, who apply to rigorous, selective schools. CollegePoint has rapidly expanded, serving 5,000 students yearly via this innovative program.

*College Possible Catalyze Young Adults (20-25 years)* Catalyze builds the capacity of colleges and universities to adopt and integrate the college coaching model into their own infrastructure to better support every low-income and first-generation college student on campus, from matriculation through graduation. A Catalyze partnership allows colleges and universities to

tailor the model to meet their unique needs. By partnering, campuses can enhance their support services for students from low-income backgrounds and close the opportunity gap.

**Annual Budget/Annual Revenue:** \$21,411,591 with zero (0) negative assets in past five years.

## College Advising Corps – Chapel Hill, NC

<https://advisingcorps.org>

**Ruling Year:** 2013 (2005 Founding Year)

**EIN:** 46-1192687

**Mission:** College Advising Corps works to increase the number of low-income, first-generation college, and underrepresented high school students who enter and complete higher education.

**Leadership and Board Composition:** Nicole Hurd, Ph.D., CEO/Founder; Peter Grauer, Board President, (7 Members).

**Outcomes:** College Advising Corps maintains a robust Research & Evaluation (external and internal) team of experienced applied researchers. The team designs and implements a multi-year research agenda assessing how advising activities influence college enrollment. Key statistics help program leaders diagnose areas for improvement or reprioritization, using a common Data Protocol to guide data interpretation. “Goal 2025” is to activate the next generation of leaders to inspire **one million low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented high school students to enroll in college by 2025**. Students persist to second year of college at 76%. And 66% of CAC Advisors pursue college counseling as a career following service.

**Structure:** National Office in partnership with 31-and-growing universities trains recent college graduates and places them as full-time college advisers in high schools across the United States. Advisers work closely with teachers and administrators to tie **college-going into the culture of the school, and help students and families navigate the complexities of college admissions processes that are critical to postsecondary education**. Students receive close attention to apply for and enroll in college. College Advising Corps diligently operates and upholds the

following core values: grace and humility, grit and tenacity, learning and innovation, and data driven – and these are prevalent and emphasized in all aspects of the work.

**Programs:** College Advising Corps works to increase the number of low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students entering and completing higher education. College Advising Corps partners with colleges and universities throughout the country to build a network of recent college graduates who become “near-peer” advisers for high school students. As a result, advisers from College Advising Corps’ 31-and-growing partner institutions are employed as full-time college advisers in high schools. By implementing a whole-school model that provides additional college advising in high-need high schools, College Advising Corps aims to systemically nurture a **college going culture throughout entire schools**. During the 2019-20 school year, 829 advisers are serving 240,000 students in 782 high schools throughout the United States.

**Annual Budget/Annual Revenue:** \$9,513,923 with zero (0) negative assets in past five years.

## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this research was to analyze the dominant resource streams of nonprofit college access organizations, to discover the ways these resources constrain or influence their organizational behaviors, and to illustrate how these organizations act within the policy arena. Conventional wisdom suggests that money plays an influential role in the policy process so uncovering CAOs funding sources demonstrates attempts to effect educational policy. Additionally, exchanges with other intermediary organizations – financial or otherwise – including foundations, corporations, and professional or membership associations show how CAOs coalesce for action. After an exhaustive examination of IRS 990 data, CAO websites, annual reports, financial audits, social media sites, and conducting 25 semi-structured interviews, this chapter offers responses and evidence to the following research questions:

1. What are the dominant resource streams utilized by nonprofit college access organizations?
2. How does resource diversification influence or constrain the organizational behaviors of nonprofit college access organizations?
3. How do nonprofit college access organizations act as intermediaries within the broader college access policy arena?

I first found the CAOs studied here rely primarily on private philanthropy and program service revenues to fund their social driven missions. As a result, the majority of cases invest heavily in fundraising, program development, and revenue seeking activities to diversify and

sustain their funding sources. The data revealed five themes connecting dominant resources to CAO organizational behavior as follows: (1) diverse resources influence impulses towards commercialization and privatization, (2) elite origin stories attract and retain resources, (3) rigorous external data equals legitimacy, (4) resource competition both constrains and enables collaboration, (5) network ties and relationships foster resource growth. I show how overtime CAOs reorient their missions and programming to better align with funding sources and partners. Furthermore, the CAOs studied here participate in membership organizations, coalitions, and build partnerships to maintain their position within a strategic action network; with national and state-level college access intermediaries, philanthropic foundations, and higher education institutions serving as the connecting forces. Strong interlocks between CAOs, higher level intermediaries, such as the College Board, and private capital suggest networks similar to the tight connections found by K-12, higher education, and philanthropy scholars (DeBray et al., 2014; McClure, Barringer & Brown, 2020; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Tompkins-Stange, 2016).

Surprises in the data revealed that established resource rich CAOs have consistent and significant investment income tied to social investment funds and corporate interests. Unsurprisingly, I documented overlap in foundation support, but show that smaller state, city and community-level foundations are direct benefactors to these CAOs, while national level philanthropy serves a seeding function for new entrants and innovative collaboration. With interview data from CEOs, founders, presidents, enrollment professionals, program staff, alumni, and students, I illustrated how resources are associated with specific nonprofit sector impulses and encouraged some CAOs to become specialized professional and privatized organizations, while others maintained a volunteerism ideology and persisted as vehicles for civic activism.



Finally, through an expanded typology of CAOs, differences in organizational origins, IRS determinations and NTEE codes, and varying public sector support percentages revealed the extent to which CAOs are straddling the line between nonprofit and for-profit status. This straddling or blurring of boundaries between their stakeholder's interests and the CAO missions exposed an unequal field of organizations reproducing the educational inequality prevalent in all education sectors and institutions.

These findings are important because understanding these organizational behaviors and the networks CAOs are connected with can inform leaders of K-12 school districts and higher education institutions, especially if allocating scarce resources to CAOs aligns with these institutions' interests. The results of this research can also advise interested investors such as foundation program officers, corporate diversity officers, and investment fund managers of the CAO financial health and existing resource diversification and network ties. Additionally, as the issue of unequal college access and success resurfaces as a priority, during this time of social and political unrest, understanding CAOs' actions can enlighten all levels of policymakers regarding the role of CAOs in the policy process and their effect on broader educational reform efforts, which extend past college access in all of the cases studied here.

## **Categorical Analysis**

Before delving into the specific CAO financing strategies and the diversity of resource streams, it is important to demonstrate just how much money these organizations are working with and the growth in those resources over time. Addressing my initial research question, which asks what CAO dominant resource streams are, I first show their total revenues. It is significant to remember from the research design that I first position CAOs here using categorical thinking, which as Freeman (2017) explains is the natural human tendency to classify something as belonging to a group and a way to make sense of the social order and world. In practice Freeman explains: “the primary purpose of categorizing is to identify the criteria for determining what something is, is made of, or is a part of...The most common procedure...is to compare items and note their similarities” (2017, p. 19). Following this type of categorical analysis, I first order the CAOs by self-reported founding date and then document their total revenues (contributions, grants, program service, investment income, and other revenue) over a 15-year period ranging from 2003-2018 in Table 5.1. For cases with no data listed under a specific year, IRS 990 data is not available.

### **Total Revenues**

In 2018 these CAOs took in close to \$125 million in total revenue compared to just over \$10 million in 2003, which according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index inflation calculator equates to \$14 million in today’s dollars. Adjusting for inflation, investments in these eight (8) CAOs increased by more than \$100 million since 2003. Variations in total revenue are noticeable with significant increases from 2003 to 2008 in all cases where data is available. For example, over the span of five years, the Posse Foundation raised more than five times its total in 2003 and others, including PeerForward, QuestBridge, College Track, Bottom

Line, and College Possible all tripled their revenue totals. This period demonstrates the emergence of dominance orders within the field based on revenue. As the years progress some CAOs have consistent revenue growth at a moderate pace, while others show declines. For example, while PeerForward maintained its position after the great recession with total revenues of over \$15 million in 2013, it had a significant drop in 2018 reverting back to its 2003 level. QuestBridge, Bottom Line, College Horizons, and College Possible each share similar trajectories doubling their revenue totals from 2013 to 2018 and maintaining steady growth overtime. Also, notable is College Track, which has a substantial increase in 2018 due to a one-time contribution of \$20 million.

**Table 5.1**

*Total Revenue: Contributions, Grants, Program Service, Investment Income*

Organization	Annual Revenue			
	2003	2008	2013	2018
Posse Foundation	\$3,734,449	\$18,918,095	\$37,563,410	\$25,574,140
PeerForward	\$4,012,813	\$14,030,984	\$15,673,589	\$3,974,455
QuestBridge	\$840,479	\$2,579,315	\$3,095,723	\$5,911,026
College Track	\$1,098,580	\$3,272,357	\$16,312,722	\$45,970,608
Bottom Line	\$391,862	\$2,037,297	\$6,159,743	\$13,107,604
College Horizons	–	\$334,595	\$247,011	\$782,438
College Possible	\$825,731	\$3,111,281	\$9,886,615	\$19,573,825
College Advising Corps	–	–	\$14,189,562	\$9,508,236

Note. Data from IRS 990 form (Part I, line 12) or (Part VIII, column A).

In this section of findings, I primarily rely on categorizing but do weave interview data into the analysis to demonstrate how differences in funding streams impact CAO behaviors as they navigate the complex environments of their K-12, higher education, philanthropic and corporate partners. To craft the larger historical narrative of these organizations, I transition

back and forth between these different analytical approaches, which problematizes my ability to anonymize individual interview respondents and CAO officials. For example, public financial data taken from IRS 990 forms is linked to specific organizations, but interview quotes are not. By adapting their names, missions or programs, contracting with partners, and collecting data to support their operations, CAOs here not only survive but thrive – to use the language often used to describe the underserved students they support. I argue through effective and diverse resource streams, the CAOs here have become institutionalized within in an ever-changing landscape of college access.

### **Diverse Resources: Government Professionalism vs. Commercialism**

Now that we have a clear view of the varying levels of money invested in CAOs, next I turn to the diversity of those resources. I first broke total resources down by category into the following tables: Table 5.2 Revenue: Contributions, Gifts, and Grants, Table 5.3 Revenue: Government Contributions (grants), Table 5.4 Revenue: Program Service Fees, Table 5.5 Endowment (end of year balance), Table 5.6 Net Assets or Fund Balance (end of year) in order to demonstrate the differences in each resource category over time. I then aligned themes gleaned from the data to the different funding strategies to show how resource composition influences organizational behavior – connecting the data on dominant resources to the second research question of how resource diversification influences or constrains organizational behaviors. I also summarized these differences in Figure 5.1 and through an expanded taxonomy of nonprofit CAO's in Table 5.9 at the end of the chapter.

This connecting analytic strategy helps to craft the larger narrative of the CAO field and is a practice often used in qualitative research combining categorical and narrative thinking. For example, in the case of College Horizons, it is surprising that no 2003 financial data is available

although it self-reports a founding date of 1998 during multiple interviews with alumni and staff. As show in Table 5.9, five of the CAOs here have discrepancies between its founding date and IRS determination date, which is the official filing with the Treasury Department, showing that CAOs can and do operate and solicit funds prior to obtaining 501 (c)(3) status. In the case of College Advising Corps, I did not expect to have 2003 financial data as the self-reported founding date from the organization's website and history is 2005. Again, surprisingly, the College Advising Corps IRS determination as a public charity was not granted until 2013 – a lag of eight years between the time of initial programming, discussed during an interview with the current CEO, and the official nonprofit status. IRS 990 forms confirm this lag time with the date of initial returns recorded on each CAO's first filing year. The smallest CAO in terms of staffing levels and revenue, College Horizons has the largest lag time between its founding and IRS determination. These differences illustrate a principle theme – diverse resources influence nonprofit impulses. In these two cases the impulse towards commercialization and professionalism in the sense that CAOs without official 501 (c)(3) status are not perceived as legitimate or business like in the same way as those with the determination. Because corporate and philanthropic foundations will not benefit from the tax-exempt status if a CAO does not have the official 501 (c)(3) ruling, this form of legitimacy is a key behavior for institutionalizing within the college access field.

Removing investment income, program service fees, and other revenue, Table 5.2 begins to express the differing financing strategies of CAOs. For example, QuestBridge relies heavily on Program Service Fees – lowering the revenue collected from contributions, gifts, and grants. Alternatively, College Advising Corps has little investment income, program service fees, and other revenue – showing slight changes from the total revenue or gross receipts.

**Table 5.2***Revenue: Contributions, Gifts, and Grants*

Organization	Annual Revenue			
	2003	2008	2013	2018
Posse Foundation	\$3,210,608	\$15,813,049	\$29,120,431	\$19,407,533
PeerForward	\$3,995,977	\$11,488,642	\$11,336,568	\$3,242,809
QuestBridge	\$833,472	\$1,060,069	\$777,286	\$618,200
College Track	\$1,103,526	\$3,233,784	\$16,233,694	\$42,130,502
Bottom Line	\$385,251	\$1,995,890	\$6,035,833	\$12,295,655
College Horizons	–	\$280,136	\$54,366	\$363,533
College Possible	\$822,236	\$2,980,615	\$9,747,298	\$19,167,435
College Advising Corps	–	–	\$14,002,696	\$9,294,627

Note. Data from IRS 990 form (Part I, line 1, line 1d, line 8) or (Part VIII, line 1h). Includes membership dues, fundraising events, government grants, all other contributions, and noncash contributions.

Differing resource paths are shown in Tables 5.3 and 5.4. Delineating government grants in Table 5.3 from program service fees in Table 5.4, I show which CAOs focus primarily on support from the government versus those that charge a fee for their services. Depending on their primary exchange partner, K-12 schools, or colleges and universities, the amount of program service revenues varies and fluctuates greatly. For example, PeerForward receives program service fees from K-12 districts. In 2013 PeerForward received over \$4 million in service fees. That number decreased to only \$1 million in 2018. On another resource path, QuestBridge receives mostly fees from colleges and universities with over \$5 million in 2018 and has zero government grants. Bottom Line and College Horizons follow QuestBridge recording no government contributions during this time period.

A major challenge for the nonprofit sector is the competitive nature and complexity of the government grant process contributes to this strategy and the instability of those resources. For

example, PeerForward significantly increases its government grants in 2013, but loses those resources only five years later. These differences illustrate the principal theme that diverse resources influence nonprofit impulses. With a focus towards commercialism the Posse Foundation maintained its strategy on program service revenue while College Track consistently deflects against this impulse and remains tied to government with increasing government contributions. College Possible and College Advising Corps straddle the path between government contributions and program service fees with increasing or fluctuating amounts in each over time. Table 5.3 displays the differences in government contributions, while table 5.4 further illustrates differing levels of program service revenue during this same time period.

### **Diverse Resources: Privatization vs. Voluntarism**

Differences in CAO funding strategies are most apparent in the establishment of endowments and investments. For example, the Posse Foundation is the only CAO with an existing endowment. Endowments are restricted funds but are established to secure an ongoing revenue stream for operating costs and are the gold standard in nonprofit financing. Table 5.5 demonstrates Posse's dominance in this elite strategy by growing their end of year balance from \$18 million to over \$50 million in 2018. Similarly, net assets of CAO provide a snapshot of overall financial health of the organization and cements the organization's position within the field. As Table 5.6 shows, the time value of money and initial investment strategies position CAOs as financially secure or not. For example, Posse Foundation, College Track, QuestBridge, significantly increased their net assets from 2003 to 2018, while PeerForward has fluctuated. Others, like Bottom Line and College Possible maintain a steady resource strategy with net assets gradually increasing during the same period. Reiterating the main theme that different or diverse resources influence nonprofit impulses, CAOs aligned with the volunteerism impulse

such as College Horizons have lower net assets, while those with a commercialism or managerialism have larger coffers. A [CAO] development officer explained this further when asked how the mission is funded:

...that's such a simple answer, unfortunately, philanthropy. We receive a very small allocation from the Massachusetts state budget, and we receive a very small portion of our funding through deeper service relationships, but those are all with nonprofits that pay for us, for that deeper service through philanthropy, so at this point in our life, it is philanthropy, and it is primarily competitive grants from foundations who care about the work, and even within that it's primarily foundations who have interest in the specific geographies where we work (interview, name withheld, 04/12/20).

A CEO/Founder respondent explains further describing where [CAO] money comes from:

...our revenue over the years has been pretty diverse...the way we thought of them is the philanthropic and then there's non-philanthropic, and in the non-philanthropic it's pretty much either government or earned revenue. So, in the philanthropic side, we would think of several streams there, you think of private foundations, as distinct from corporate foundations, and then individuals...where does philanthropic money come from in America, almost all of it comes from individuals, so that's the under-developed portion. Our stream of money from individuals has always been around ten percent and peaks some years at like 13 percent...a pretty small percentage from individuals, for our size (interview, name withheld, 07/17/20).

Another CEO/Founder respondent explains the links between resource diversification and the impulses towards professionalism, which is nurtured by relationships with government exclaiming:



So we believe in a cost-sharing model, in that you (CAO) have to put some type of money into it, so put your stake in the ground, because we've seen that if you give something free to somebody, there's...the incentive of being able to want to be purposeful and actually engage in it, unless you have a stake in the game, some people (K-12 school leaders) are like, I don't care, it's free, it means nothing. So, we...historically our model was set up so that schools would pay 20 percent of the cost of the program, and then we would raise the other 80 percent that's needed (interview, name withheld, 08/05/20).

Further illustrating the tension between volunteerism and commercialism, a program officer from a CAO mostly resourced by volunteers explains: "we are funded by colleges paying a fee to come to our program, every partner school pays \$3500 per site, so if they participate at two sites, it's \$7,000, and then grants from different organizations, foundations." While this CAO has few net financial assets, it is rich in volunteer people power with board members, former participants, and faculty mentors each emphasizing the importance of community and the volunteerism ideology. Again, this same [CAO] program coordinator remarks:

And so, it's always just been two of us who were paid, and everyone else is a volunteer. The people who come and work with the summer program, the college counselors, the volunteers, it's all volunteers, no one is paid, so they give of their time and energy. I have to say energy because it is a really tiring way to participate in our program, it's a 24-hour program, it's not like an 8-hour gig, or 10-hour gig, it's like you're up 'til...you're up maybe 12-14 hours in a day. But everyone's volunteer. And then the people who come as college reps from the universities, they, of course, are paid by their own institutions for participating (interview, name withheld, 08/17/20).

Emphasizing the how voluntarism is the vehicle for expression of cultural, religious, or social values for CAOs this participant continues:

What we value it's like reciprocity, so a lot of what we do within our own traditions is you don't do things to get paid, you do things from the goodness of your heart, and know that you're not going to get paid for it, but it will come back to you at some point, and it will be like...in my words, [Translation of Native language] someday, some place, somewhere, somehow, you're going to be repaid for what you do as volunteering (interview, name withheld, 08/17/20).

### **Diverse Resources: Program Shifts**

Other CAOs straddle this notion and impulse towards volunteerism versus professionalism and commercialism with program models relying heavily on peer-to-peer or near peer college advising. For example, on its 2017 IRS 990 form, one CAO changed its official doing business as or DBA from College Summit to Peer Forward. The College Summit mission statement changed from a focus on college application and standardized test-prep for underrepresented low-income students to a peer-to-peer model focused on leadership development. This shift is shown in the CAO mission statements. For example, in 1997 College Summit's initial filing year the mission was to: "Provide economically disadvantaged students with quality college admissions support and promote college enrollment of economically disadvantaged students throughout the United States" compared to the current mission to: "Unleash the power of positive peer influence to transform the lives of youth living in low-income communities by connecting to college and career" (PeerForward, 2020). This mission shift emphasized the role of peers in achieving their whole school approach to college access and success, but that change was also an indicator of the type of resources flowing to the

organization and how they could most effectively utilize them. Pressures for efficiency and scalability and transiting to a lower cost peer-to-peer model is an example of how CAOs scan and exploit the environment and use research to justify these shifts, all while maintaining a volunteerism ideology. A CAOs struggle to maintain its contracting relationship with the largest school district in the country, New York City Schools is evidenced by this comment from the current CEO:

When we shifted, we dissolved all of our local offices, considered the brick and mortar ones...we made the organization flat, so it didn't matter whether school partnership managers were in Miami, New York or LA. As time grew, the market got really saturated, so we needed to figure out what made us unique and sustainable. In our heyday we had 140, 150 people in the organization....and we had a large budget. We grew quickly but we hit a ceiling and we were like this is not the best way of running an organization so it's scalable, sustainable...we just started doing everything that everyone asked us to do...we had to make a strategic effort of re-shifting...while our personnel numbers went down, our assets moved to the actual peer leaders. So now we only have 31 staff, we train and mobilize 800 juniors and seniors considering them our external staff ...we didn't need to keep hiring internally...it helps us from a cost-savings perspective (interview, name withheld, 08/05/20).

Both College Possible and College Advising Corps rely heavily on AmeriCorps funding, a government grant, and aligns them with a volunteerism ideology, which I examine further in the next section as I dig deeper into specific organizational behaviors in the narrative analysis. For now, end-of-year fund balances portray a field attracting diverse networks of money and volunteer

relationships. Overall, the growth in assets demonstrates the evolution and institutionalization of the field and the challenges and impulses each CAO faces in sustaining resources overtime.

**Table 5.6**

*Net Assets or Fund Balance (End of Year)*

Organization	End of Year Fund Balance			
	2003	2008	2013	2018
Posse Foundation	\$4,770,476	\$35,242,536	\$80,861,828	\$80,020,742
PeerForward	\$3,350,536	\$9,318,958	\$8,098,514	\$2,850,487
QuestBridge	\$467,833	\$1,540,309	\$3,134,940	\$16,161,213
College Track	\$363,492	\$2,299,211	\$19,660,859	\$49,161,022
Bottom Line	\$368,912	\$1,962,237	\$6,199,336	\$9,010,422
College Horizons	–	\$49,209	\$73,518	\$678,386
College Possible	\$733,706	\$4,727,338	\$9,645,456	\$13,035,086
College Advising Corps	–	–	\$6,013,146	\$5,424,336

Note. Data from IRS 990 form (Part I, line 21 or line 22).

My theoretical propositions suggested that CAOs exploit the complexity of the environment for resources. As discussed, several CAOs with program service fees have financial stability and more assets than those relying on funding from K-12 or government sources – with the exception of one that remains committed to the voluntarism ideology. While all CAOs utilize foundation grants (both philanthropic and corporate) and individual contributions, newer emergent CAOs rely less on program service fees as those resources are already captured by the dominant players. For example, College Advising Corps has little program services revenue although it partners with colleges and universities compared to QuestBridge and College Horizons, who also partner primarily with higher education institutions. One respondent summarizes this saying:

it's not just enough to get the kind of the small kind of, a thousand here and a thousand here, we need a enough money to sustain having advisors that stay at schools for two years and hopefully stay in the schools for a long period of time, so we need to do large asks from big corporations and foundations...the foundation that's providing the money that kind of limits or controls what institutions you're going to end up in. Sometimes they are supporting a sole, or a certain set of schools, or sometimes we are able to use that money as we see fit...might be going towards, training, towards salary, it's very complex – that's the perfect word, our budget is a little bit of a nightmare because there's so many different funding streams. We have gone to where the money tells us to go, I don't know how else to put it (interview, name withheld, 06/10/15).

As Figure 5.1 summarizes, CAOs with more government grants show very little revenue from program service fees and only a few CAOs have investment income streams or other revenue like endowment payouts. The majority of funding comes from grants and contributions but those often have strings attached. Even with similar missions and programs, diverse resource streams lead CAOs to differing financing, programming, and growth or scale strategies.

### **Diverse Resources: Volunteer Power or Human Capital**

As previously discussed, the pull towards commercialism and managerialism is strong for these CAOs. In all but one case, these CAOs have built large corporate like organizations. All but one have medium to large national offices staffed with multiple layers of management. Their staff and leadership listings have position titles similar to their corporate and higher education partners including; National and Regional Directors or Vice Presidents of Development, Finance and Administration (CFO), Human Resources, Technology, and Chief Strategy Officer. Table 5.7 displays the human capital investments of CAOS showing the growth in the number of

individuals employed over time. For example, when comparing total revenue to number of employees in 2013 and 2018, Posse and College Track maintain a personnel expense percentage between 50-60% of total expenses. Compared to College Possible and Bottom Line, which have personnel expenses totaling 75% or more. Utilizing technology for its scholarship programming, QuestBridge has the smallest percentage of 48%. PeerForward shows the most volatility with restructuring and layoffs between 2013 and 2018 recording a significant decrease in compensation totals for those years. Conversely, College Track and College Possible have impressive increases in compensation expense, more than doubling the totals during this same period as summarized in Table 5.8. Even after accounting for inflation using Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI inflation calculator, the total amount spent in 2018 across all eight (8) organizations nearly doubled from over \$30 million in 2013 to nearly \$60 million in 2018.

**Table 5.8**

*Compensation Expense (Total Salaries, other compensation, and employee benefits)*

Organization	Annual Expense			
	2003	2008	2013	2018
Posse Foundation	\$1,922,816	\$5,395,696	\$8,381,254	\$12,673,095
PeerForward	\$1,696,109	\$8,364,502	\$6,191,553	\$2,883,320
QuestBridge	\$390,460	\$669,843	\$1,230,177	\$2,703,622
College Track	\$611,575	\$2,209,786	\$5,605,385	\$12,440,398
Bottom Line	\$213,208	\$883,053	\$3,982,607	\$9,156,395
College Horizons	–	\$195,825	\$184,913	\$332,815
College Possible	\$450,831	\$1,742,179	\$5,453,859	\$13,763,533
College Advising Corps	–	–	\$1,018,137	\$4,052,872

Note. Data from IRS 990 form (Part I, line 15) or (Part II, lines 25-28).

Another example illustrating the effect of partner relationships on staffing strategies and associated personnel costs is evidenced in the unique staffing model of the College Advising

Corps. In this case, Advising Corps partner colleges and universities carry the brunt of their personnel costs. While the CAC national office provides centralized services such as training, fundraising, and marketing, each regional or state level Advising Corps are employees of the host universities and colleges. One state-level Program Director explains this relationship:

The national organization provides a percentage of money per each institution, so, and then we are expected to do the remaining percentage, I'm not sure what that breakdown is or if it's different for institutions, and then so we probably have a handful of gifters right now, so it's not, you know Woodruff gives money to these schools, and Kresge gives money so it's different pots, and sometimes it's for x amount of years, but it's lots of different sources of money interview, name withheld, (interview, name withheld, 06/10/20).

The use of AmeriCorps funding mitigates the personnel costs of CAOs. AmeriCorps is a federally sponsored national service grant program started in 1994 that places AmeriCorps members in participating nonprofits for national service positions. The funding allows CAOs to employ recent college graduates as college advisors or coaches in schools, community centers, or in virtual environments. In 2019, the program offered a living allowance of \$13,095 and an education award totaling \$6,095 to be used for student loan repayment or future education expenses for graduate school. The compensation and term of service is normally a 10-month requirement similar to that of a graduate assistantship thus modeling the system higher education. AmeriCorps and by extension their CAO grantees allows service members to pursue part-time employment during their service term, acknowledging that the total compensation and benefits of \$19,190 does not provide a living wage. As College Possible explains in its frequently asked questions for AmeriCorps applicants; "Outside commitments must not interfere with the obligations of a College Possible term of service and are generally limited to part-time

employment” (College Possible, 2020). Even though I did not interview current advisors or coaches, I did observe their social media and YouTube videos presenting the “new 2020 cohort of college coaches” on many of the CAO social media sites (Appendix D). One advisor chronicled their day from the car explaining that they were in between jobs and that their time coaching was more rewarding than their hosting duties at the local pizza joint – especially with the added pressures of COVID-19 precautions. This example further illustrates the normative or exploitive nature of CAOs hiring practices. CAOs are not immune to the influence of the gig economy like their higher education partners.

It is well known in higher education that the use of adjunct or contingent faculty has significantly increased over the past 20 years. CAOs mimic this practice with AmeriCorps service members serving in similar roles as adjuncts. Advising is a form of instruction and while it is core to the mission of CAOs it is done by the lowest paid employees. The way in which CAOs socialize their new employees to accept these employment arrangements is revealed by a former CAO advisor and program coordinator who in building their professional identity remarks:

So, within my first couple weeks of getting the position, I was meeting with the principal, and department heads, you know, several in a week, so I was meeting with a lot more people probably in the first week than I had in the last 6 months, and just getting to where I was in charge of something, I was in charge of processes and the authority on figuring it out was very exciting to me (interview, name withheld, 05/22/15).

This statement demonstrates how CAO staffers and AmeriCorps members negotiate the social realities they are constructing in everyday interactions within the school. The ongoing negotiation with these interactions builds an identity with the CAO and school through group



membership and reflects of the attitudes of others towards the new counselors (Reichers, 1987). From this data, it is evident that new CAO counselors and peer educators are adopting the attitudes of their partner administrators and making sense of their own actions by seeking out interactions to build on their understandings of the work and their nascent professional identities. Although this example is at the micro level of organizations, understanding an individual's occupational choice provides a glimpse into the societal implications as a whole. Accepting their identity and role within the CAO allows for an acceptance of the disparities between these lowest paid employees and those at the highest levels.

Continuing with the theme of the effect of partner relationships on labor costs and staffing decisions, CAOs mimic or map the practices of higher education with significant gaps between the advisors providing direct service and those in leadership positions. For example, the ranges of CEO level compensation for CAOs ranges from \$90,500 to \$500,000 which is similar to the high salaries commanded by top college and university administrators. High paid administrative positions are justified for strategic positioning as in the case of PeerForward where the Chief Innovation Officer is charged with advancing the strategic goals of the organization, important to their survival. Described by one CAO CEO, "we're in an environment where it's innovate or die." This emphasis on innovation is aptly described by Wallace (2012) who writes, "At large nonprofits with lots of chapters, chief innovation officers look for new ideas...figuring out how to use the latest research to improve services" (p. 2). Opening up to the same behaviors of their higher education partners increases CAOs' legitimacy and even deflects against the labor policies set by competitors or other intermediaries within the field.

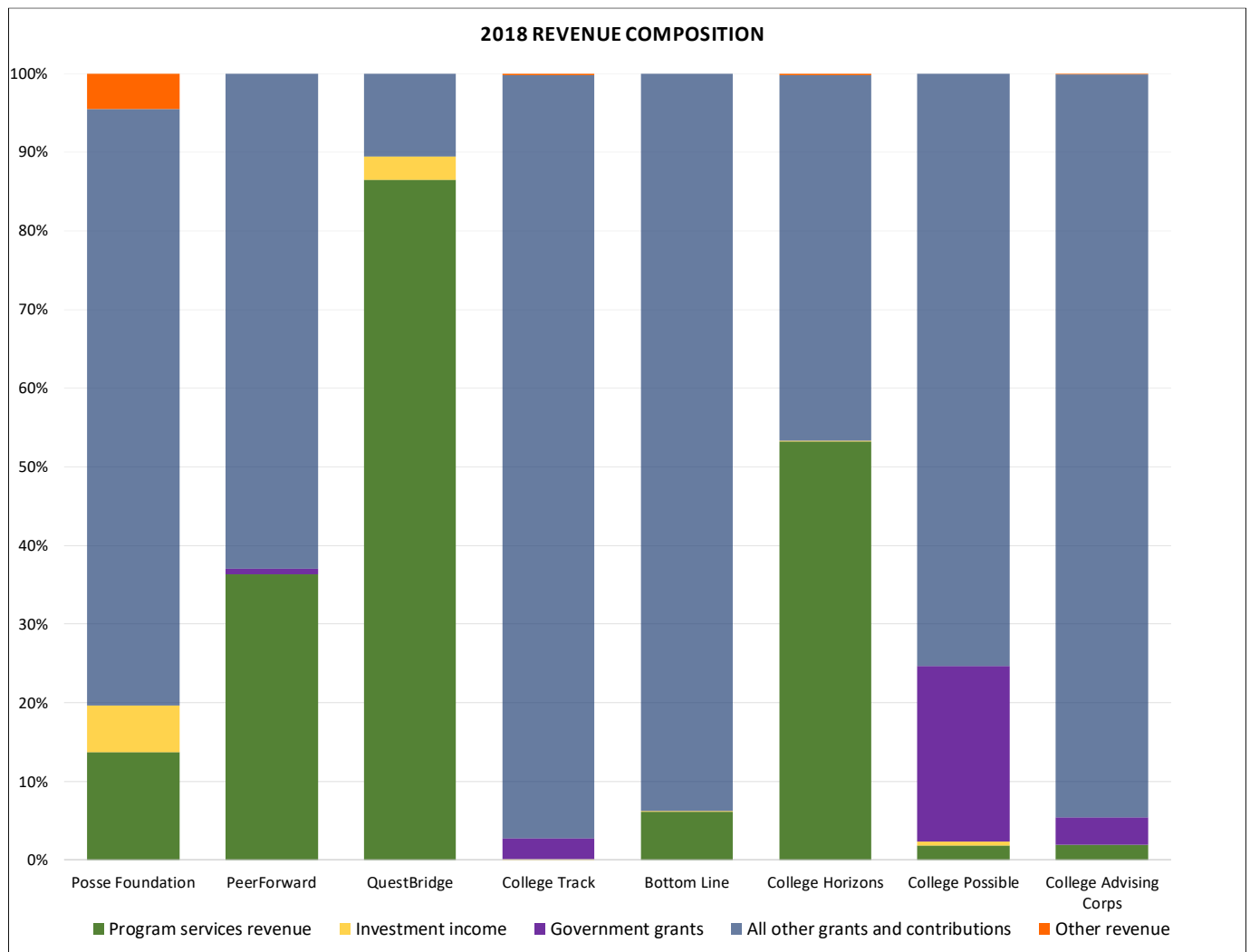
As a counter to this idea of exploiting recent graduates who become CAO advisors is the key role young people play in the sustainability of CAOs. Not only do they contribute their individual talents as participants, but as “near peer” advisors, they serve as critical ambassadors for the CAOs. As one CEO reminded me:

...you know, when you and I applied to college 20-something years ago, it’s different... if we’re not learning from the folks that are the consumers, then we’re missing entire opportunity to make sure that it’s sustainable. We have to utilize the folks...it’s what we call youth activation. When you are leveraging authentic adult and youth relationships, you’re honoring their space, you’re honoring their knowledge, you’re honoring the fact that they bring to the table a number of qualities and assets that we may not have and/or have been accustomed to...with the student in the driver’s seat, and the adult in the passenger seat to assist, that is the power of peer leadership, that’s the power of youth activation, that’s the power of scale for individuals to level the playing field (interview, name withheld, 08/5/20).

These youth serve as what Crutchfield and Grant (2012) term evangelists for CAOs. After observing the social media feeds of each CAO for more than 6 months, the level of engagement with these organizations is astonishing. Love, likes, and tags abound in this virtual marketing world. I argue that the success of CAOs is very much reliant on uplifting the voices of young people who demonstrate their support daily – especially during the emotionally draining admissions decision periods. CAO youth, both participants and advisors engage in affirming volleys of exchange that further proselytize the mission. When asked if social media platforms were a source of information, a student interview respondent replied: “Nah, it’s just a place for [CAO] to show how great they are...my grandmother told me about [CAO]...ha ha” (07/21/20,

interview, name withheld). CAOs pursuit of resources impacts specific organizational behaviors and associated nonprofit impulses as I have shown. Summarized Figure 5.1 is the revenue composition breakdown for each of the CAOs studied here.

**Figure 5.1 Annual 2018 Revenue Composition**



Now that the dominant resource streams are known, I pivot to my second research question which asks: how does resource diversification influence or constrain the organizational behaviors of nonprofit college access organizations (CAOs). In the previous section, using mostly categorical thinking, I outlined the dominant resource streams placing CAOs on a

spectrum somewhere between mostly public funding versus mostly private resources. These categorical findings align with my theoretical propositions suggesting CAOs map or open up to the behaviors of their partner organizations to grow and gain dominance. Furthermore, to increase viability and sustain their position, some CAOs nimbly exploit opportunities and continually scan the environment for more resources, while others steadily maintain their position with limited changes. I also demonstrated with these resource categories or funding strategies how other CAOs deflect or buffer against nonprofit impulses toward professionalism and commercialism by relying on volunteer resources. Next, I turn to a narrative analysis to further our understanding of how CAOs maintain these diverse funding streams and connect with other intermediaries and each other to further their missions and their overarching goals of increasing college degree attainment among underserved youth.

## **Narrative Analysis**

Narrative thinking allowed me uncover CAO organizational behaviors stemming from CAO origin stories, funding strategies, and the long-term effects of these decisions overtime. Narrative thinking assisted in weaving together a larger narrative of the CAO field in answering a “how” question by threading together case examples in support of each theme, while concurrently offering counter narratives. As DiMaggio and Anheier (1990, p. #) remind us, “initial choices of form, which may be subject to large stochastic elements, exert long-term effects” on nonprofit organizations. Using data from 25 semi-structured interviews; copious CAO documents and secondary sources; observations of social media, online videos, and virtual meetings; and publicly available financial data, I exposed multiple themes related to CAO organizational behaviors.

I first argue the most important finding is the use of founding origin stories to attract and retain resources. CAO founders carefully craft narratives explaining their visions that include compelling personal stories of themselves or youth participants. Second – rigorous research and high-quality data collection provides legitimacy to CAO programs and offers routes to more resources of all kinds. Third – competition for resources mostly constrains collaboration – although a few counter narratives exist where collaboration attracts resources. Fourth – there is a strong pull to managerialism/commercialism and behaviors linked to professionalism for most CAOs. Focused on efficiency, innovation and cost containment, CAOs increasingly use technology for program delivery and not surprisingly, for selling student data to their partners for recruitment purposes. In addition, I found the limited the practice of e-commerce to sell branded merchandise in online shops – similar to most higher education institutions, in an effort to build brand loyalty. Finally, I found that strong interlocks or network ties enable resource growth,

which links to my third research question on the broader policy roles CAOs play. I now turn to the role of origin stories and then weave together a larger narrative providing examples in support of each theme along with examples of counter narratives in the larger story of this diverse field of college access and now success organizations.

### **Origin Stories Attract and Retain Resources**

An astounding finding is that seven of the eight CAOs here have elite institutional origins. I define elite origins as having a founder or CEO who attended a highly selective private college or university either before they founded the CAO or became CEO during its evolution. Nonprofit scholars have long attended to membership in elite status groups as the impetus for the growth of nonprofit organizations. As differences in funding sources change during periods of government disinvestment (as in the case of K-12 schools and public higher education) to periods of increased corporate control, the role of elites has shifted from localized upper classes to national-level corporate profitters. My findings demonstrate the strength of these elite forces and the resulting interlocks with corporate interests. The majority of the current (and former) CAO CEOs and founders represent six very selective private institutions including: Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Brown, Cornell and Stanford University. Diversity around the notion of elitism is also shown with one founder representing Morehouse College, recognized as the most elite of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The remaining CAO leader attended the public version of these elite institutions – the University of Virginia and has selective undergraduate degree ties to the University of Notre Dame. These elite connections craft personal narratives to strengthen the resource position of CAOs and I argue that remaining connected to these higher education institutions is another way in which institutional forces direct the behaviors of CAOs. Let me start with the first and most well-known higher education

player, Harvard University, and three personal narratives these alumni/CEOs utilized to fortify the position of their organizations.

Three CAO founders examined here attended Harvard University, either as undergraduates or as graduate students in Divinity, the Graduate School for Education, or at the Kennedy School in public policy. These individuals, considered trailblazers, started their organizations in the early years of the CAO field from 1989, to 1993, and then in 1999. For some, the idea germinated during their time at Harvard, for others the idea came first, and their Harvard education and connections helped to legitimize it. When asked why he founded the organization, one former CAO CEO explains how he explicitly used the Harvard connection to attract resources:

It was part personal, and part policy...the personal part, is that I grew up in a low-income family, and my own parents didn't finish high school, but managed to raise five of us who got to college, and that gave me a...powerful perspective. Part of it was, I'd like to help students who were like I once was. But the other part was the more academic part, the policy part, was when I got to the Kennedy School, I wanted to start an organization, I had some desire to be...what we now describe as a social entrepreneur. I ended up developing a story to tell that was really appealing to funders, which was the combination of me having been a low-income student myself...sort of the symbolism of my own life. So, I grew up in a low-income family, made it to college, eventually went to Harvard, and now here I was starting a nonprofit, as opposed to going and making a lot of money doing something that most Harvard graduates...most would have gone and done something else, where they'd make more money. So, I think that story, that narrative, was very attractive (interview, name withheld, 07/17/20).

Going on and describing how the organization's mission was originally funded, this former CAO CEO remarks:

...either the first or second gifts to [CAO] were...each \$5000...were people I had known ...a former professor of mine who'd become a US Senator, Paul Wellstone, he used to be a senator from Minnesota. Some of my original funders were people who had been supporters of his who I knew, and they had some money, they were some of his financial supporters. And then we got funding from General Mills...it grew from there. I think part of the initial fundraising success had to do with...I had a really clear sense that nothing would be possible if we couldn't raise money. I had learned enough to tell people who want to go start a nonprofit, and they're all about the mission and they all are about programs, but either you are gonna need to raise money, or you could partner with somebody who likes to raise money, it's really hard to just hire it out, you have to have somebody who wants to do it (interview, name withheld, 07/17/20).

While I did not interview them, the next Harvard alumnus and CAO founder is widely written about in several books including; *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas* (Bornstein, 2007); *The Power of Social Innovation: How Civic Entrepreneurs Ignite Community Networks for Good* (Goldsmith, 2010); and *The American Way to Change: How National Service and Volunteers are Transforming America* (Sagawa, 2010). This elite CAO founder has been acknowledged with prestigious awards including one of ten organizations designated by President Obama to receive a portion of his Nobel Peace Prize, selected as the U.S. Social Entrepreneur of the Year at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, and was elected to the Ashoka Fellowship in collaboration with the Skoll



Foundation for innovation in social enterprise in 2000. Their personal origin narrative is prominently told in the history section of CAO website explaining:

In the 1990s, [CAO Founder] started running a teen education center in the basement of a low-income housing project in Washington, D.C. He worked with students who had the intelligence, resiliency and grit to succeed in college and careers, but they'd get derailed. [CAO Founder] saw first-hand how the influence of one student could push friends off the path to higher education while other students might inspire their friends to join them and reach for college. From that modest experience and critical insight, [CAO] has grown over the past two decades into a national movement harnessing the power of peer influence to transform the lives of low-income youth (name withheld, CAO, 2020).

The Ashoka Fellowship website (2020) offers even more insight to this origin story describing personal events that led to the CAO founding:

[CAO Founder] attended an inner-city public high school and grew to appreciate the diversity that was missing from his *suburban home life*. He met Tiny, a talented basketball player, student council member, and school leader. The two were in honors classes together. Although [CAO Founder] received A's while Tiny got B's and C's, [CAO Founder] never thought of Tiny as anything other than equal. Senior year, with the help of his parents, who had gone to college, [Founder] applied to Yale University, and was accepted. He still remembers Tiny—whose parents had not gone to college—told him that a school counselor had advised him to apply only to the local community colleges. [CAO Founder] thought a lot about Tiny when he served as Academic Advisor to freshmen at Harvard where he was attending the Divinity School...he learned that admissions officers were hungry for low-income talent.

As [CAO Founder] watched talent leave the teen center and just hang out on the streets, he realized, drawing from his experience of high school, Harvard Admissions, and the teen center, that the system was broken. He launched [CAO] to fix it.

This Ashoka profile describes the varied resources and connections this founding CEO used to grow and replicate the program nationwide. Connections and supporters in this case include First Lady Michelle Obama, who once served on this [CAO] Board of Directors and CEOs like Barry Salzberg, Global CEO of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, who is a former chairman of the board. The elite networks for this CAO continue today with the announcement of its new CEO, a Cornell graduate, and the first non-founder and person of color to lead the organization. In a 2019 press release this new CEO is described as “reflecting the organization’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion”, while links to the former founders remain as they continue on in paid advisory and fundraising roles on the [CAO] board of directors.

Another powerful origin story is that of the dominant CAO – in terms of current resource strength. The current president and founder attended Harvard but when asked about this connection during our interview deflected and claimed that connection was not as interesting as the organization’s mission to create a new type of leadership in America. I suggest that this founder indirectly supports the notion of the importance of elite networks by working for 30 years to “change the face of leadership in America” through the elite connections made through the CAO. Similar to other elite founders, this individual has numerous accolades and honors including the MacArthur Fellowship, which awards unrestricted fellowships of \$625,000 paid over five years to “talented individuals who have shown extraordinary originality and dedication in their creative pursuits and a marked capacity for self-direction” ([www.macfound.org](http://www.macfound.org)). When asked about why they founded [CAO] this CEO remarked:

...I was 23 years old; I was working at a youth organization in New York city, with really smart great kids...they were going off to college, and a lot of them were dropping out, six months later they'd be home...the story, obviously, was when one student said, I never would have dropped out if I had my posse...recognizing a good idea is part of how you start a good organization. You know, it's not like I thought of the idea, a student thought of the idea that you can send a cohort of students, a team, a posse, together to college was brilliant, brilliant. And an important thing...is that there isn't really a founder, there are multiple people who make something happen...students, funders, and board members (interview, name withheld, 09/03/20).

This resource dominant [CAO] boasts the number of alumni earning prestigious fellowships and scholarships, which launch them into successful and potentially lucrative careers in all fields – government, science, and the arts. This [CAO's] annual alumni brochures – like those of all elite Ivy-league schools and their highly selective public peers, are filled with success stories including one interview respondent who is now a College President. My observations of one 2020 [CAO] alumni conference support my suggestion that elite origins and links to elite institutions attract and retain resources. During this observation, a former [CAO] board president, presented a \$10,000 “no strings attached” check to a young alumna for “incredible leadership and success while giving back to the world...who continue a legacy of leadership...and who exemplify the values of the [CAO] foundation.”

In the introduction to their remarks, the [CAO] founder and President remarks:

...[Board President] and I have known each other for 25 years. You cannot imagine how influential [ CAO Board President] has been...and still continues to be today...I was so lucky to have him as a partner...he taught me that I think is important for everybody when

we are talking about leadership. And it's about building networks. I didn't know [CAO Board President]...he's from Nashville, Tennessee. I grew up in Teaneck, New Jersey. He went to Vanderbilt; I went to Brandeis. But look what happened. We joined our skills and our friends, and we built the beginnings of what today is a national movement. [CAO] is a national movement. You cannot mess with [CAO]— we are not going down! (name withheld, 08/01/20)

The former [CAO] board President and retired Sotheby's Director re-told the origin story during his remarks responding to [CAO] President:

One of the goals from day one, and there are great many great things about the [CAO Founders] vision, but one was to really change the face of leadership....the day I went off the Vanderbilt board, [CAO Alumni] went on the Vanderbilt board as a full board member. She's now secretary of that board and she just was on the search committee to find the new chancellor...so out of 25 board members, two of them are [CAO] alums. And that is powerful. That's what we need to be working toward, is getting all of you involved in organizations, in leadership, in boards, in senior roles so that you can do the same thing, is carry it forward and change the way decisions get made (name withheld, 08/01/20).

This strategy is continued in the dominant [CAO]'s board recruitment. According to the GuideStar Pro Report, the [CAO] board is plagued with corporate ties. The current board president is a partner in ValueAct Capital and succeeded the former board chair, who served for ten years from 2007-2016 and is a managing partner at the same firm. This individual is recognized by [CAO] as “helped bring on 47 new college and university partnerships, double the size of [CAO] cities, and build assets to \$80 million.” Additionally, this individual, Managing Partner, ValueAct Capital, and [Board Chair Emeritus] is quoted describing the dominant

[CAO's] purpose: "America's future relies on developing pathways to leadership positions for talented young people from every background, young people who truly represent the diversity of this country." These statements and links to the origin story of the dominant [CAO] are strong evidence of importance of these elite ties to CAOs.

A counter narrative to the importance of elite networks is the CAO least resourced in terms of total 2018 revenues. Even after deflecting direct corporate connections, the lower resourced [CAO] could not resist the pull of elite institutions. Its current and only the second Executive Director in over 20 years is an alumnus from Dartmouth and Harvard. Three newly acquired staff members, who joined the lower resourced [CAO] in recent years are all graduates of the CAO and have degrees from Yale, Dartmouth, and Harvard. Even so, lower resourced [CAO] maintains its focus as a culturally centered volunteer-based organization with the challenges to maintaining resource strength. After operating with only two staff for most of its existence, the lower resourced [CAO's] elite connections and strategies to garner additional resources are flouted by one interview respondent – who attended Dartmouth College themselves:

I'm proud to say I was the vice president of the board of directors when we hired [CAO] Executive Director, who took it to the next level from an indigenous perspective, and that really helped the health of the program. But what we struggled to do is expand it beyond just typical university folk and trying to get people from corporations or other nonprofits. Because one area that we needed help with was fundraising, and we weren't the kind of board that drew out our own pockets. We needed to rely on other people to help support the board's mission. I think the real struggle is finding the right people, who had an indigenous perspective, that could bring kind of that cultural awareness and understanding, as well as their own professional skill set to the board (interview, name withheld, 07/01/20).

Further describing these elite connections and their importance to the lower resourced [CAO] this respondent remembers:

...so when I was at Dartmouth College doing Native American recruitment, [CAO Executive Director], was one of my students, I can't take credit for recruiting them, they were already a student there, but of the first group of Native students to graduate and I got to know her pretty well. Fast-forward around 15 years later, I went to Harvard Graduate School, and [CAO Executive Director] was the director of the American Indian Program and thus I became her student at Harvard. A couple more years later I'm on the board and we are interviewing for [CAO Executive Director]. So, it's this really funny full circle, flipped a few times, of our connections over the years (interview, name withheld, 07/01/20).

And when discussing the need for ongoing funding streams this respondent exclaims:

it's an ongoing thing, it's not as if [CAO Executive Director] gets a grant that's gonna cover them for ten years, they have constantly been writing grants to get the funding to help support their own staff. There was a small staff when I first started, only two people, and now it's more like four or five people (interview, name withheld, 07/01/20).

As many social network scholars remind us – drawing from the foundational work of Merton (1968), advantage begets advantage. This lower resourced [CAO] is a classic case of Merton's long cited notion that "...cumulative advantage produces the same result: the rich get richer at a rate that makes the poor relatively poorer" (p. 62). Through these elite network examples, I have shown how CAOs work to establish and maintain key connections for resources. This is true whether they be connections made through formal educational actors like K-12 schools and higher education institutions, or corporate interests like those represented by

board chairs and members; or whether intentionally designed as in the case of the resource dominant organization, whose founder has remained at the helm for most of the last 30 years – building an army of 10,000 devotees, many of whom now work for the CAO, which employs over 230 individuals. Or, as in another case of a high to moderately resourced CAO, where only two individuals have held the top organizational spot and one family’s foundation leaders have served on the board for more than 20 years. To the final case of the lower resourced [CAO] where a top recruit for the current leadership role was unwittingly groomed by the CAO from even before enrolling in college. For attracting resources – both financial and people, the elite ties strategy and unique origin stories positioning allows one case to remain the dominant player, like its partners in their respective sectors – reproducing the inequality their mission purports to break down. Because many of the CAOs here follow and mimic this organizational behavior, I argue CAOs are now coalesced into a distinct sub-field within the larger college access field and have dominant orders based on resource strength. Next, I turn to the use of data to gain legitimacy for resource sustainability and growth.

### **Data Equals Legitimacy**

As a policy scholar, it is not surprising to me that CAOs rely on data to legitimize their programs and attract resources. In this era of accountability, trustworthiness is symbolized through the use and creation of data to justify your position and operations. As my expanded taxonomy of CAOs shows in Table 5.9, each of these organizations conduct internal research, participate in experiments, or contract external evaluators. They each spend resources building robust data systems that track student progress and the report widely on their outcomes. For example, to satisfy the outcome reporting requirements of their corporate partners, CAOs register with GuideStar and have varying levels of transparency designations – Platinum, Gold, Silver,

and Bronze, depending on how many variables the CAO submits for the GuideStar Pro reporting. GuideStar financial trends analyses are created in partnership with the Nonprofit Finance Fund, a private investment consulting firm “with nearly 40 years of national and hyperlocal experience” assisting in lending and nonprofit business consulting.

Other data partners include external organizations like New Profit, a social investment firm contracted to study and evaluate CAOs for potential investment. The New Profit board includes dominant CAO founder and former CEO. A new phenomenon in the last 20 years is the idea of social impact investing. Firms like New Profit advise wealthy individuals and corporations on which nonprofits to invest significant funds. I consider them external data sources that support CAO legitimacy because investors have an ROI calculation. Sought after CAOs are achieving their stated mission and purpose in this calculation. These external organizations include other nonprofits, like The BridgeSpan Group a 501(c)(3) spun out of Bain and Company – a major for-profit consulting firm, which does social investment consulting and touts on its website: “We help you create the social change you seek. 20 years of social impact...the leading social impact consultant and advisor to nonprofits and NGOs, philanthropists, and investor.” BridgeSpan received contracting fees of over \$300,000 from one CAO studied here and lists as its donors several foundations contributing directly and indirectly to the dominant and some middling CAOs here. The importance of these data consultants is described by one CEO:

When we partnered with BridgeSpan, we did a whole organizational re-thinking, what’s the one thing that makes us unique to the field. We could always have class, we could always train educators, we can have a technology platform...we were like, what’s the one unique proposition that we have, that everybody says, that’s why I come back to [CAO]...it



was our workshops, it was the fact that we trained and mobilized young adults, who are the most influential in their communities. No other organization was doing that (interview, name withheld, 08/05/20).

Another external education specific evaluator connected to the CAO field is Bellwether Education Partners. Bellwether published a study of nonprofit college access programs in 2019 which profiles 3 of the CAOs included in this research and makes recommendations to K-12 districts and higher education to promote cross sector collaboration. Connections to external institutions like these helps blur the boundaries between CAOs and for-profit consultants and investors because CAO data systems are proprietary and mostly inaccessible to outside organizations.

Relationships with their friends in the academy help CAOs produce data to further catalogue their performance. For example, Bottom Line and College Possible participated in random control trials (RCT) to prove their program interventions produce better outcomes for students than students who do not participate in the program (Avery, 2013; Barr & Castleman, 2016). For the educational policy makers, the gold standard in research design, RCTs are rare. Here Bottom Line and College Possible are flexing their resources and fighting for dominance in the crowded middle of the CAO field. In contrast, College Horizon's also relies on relationships with academics to further its mission but takes a decidedly different approach.

As previously discussed, College Horizons impulse towards voluntarism and civic activism garners support from a wide community of American Indian, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian scholars who serve as volunteer faculty mentors and researchers. Adrienne Keene, an Assistant Professor at Brown University, Harvard alumna and graduate of each level of College Horizons programming has done consistent research with the CAO since 2011. Their

historical portrait of the organization is a foundational text and serves as published archival material guaranteeing College Horizons' traditions and mission to educate and uplift American Indian, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian through nation building in Indigenous communities are carried forward in perpetuity. One important tradition is the introduction of Indigenous research methods to College Horizons' students. When asked about their participation in College Horizons, faculty mentors suggested it was not optional for them with one remarking: "All in all...I've been to over twenty College Horizons programs in the last decade and been involved as a student, employee, advisory board, faculty member and now researcher." These academics not only create legitimate data to attract funding but also connect CAOs to funding through the academic grantmaking process. In this case, the current leadership is quoted as saying to the Mellon Foundation when approached for collaboration, "That doesn't fit with our goals, but here's something you can do." The interview respondent and faculty member further remarks:

If you want more Native students, you have to fund things earlier on, so Mellon Foundation funded the summer bridge program because Native students mature slowly and need more time to develop into scholars who will pursue graduate degrees. Mellon opened up the funding so that it was available to Native students, who may or may not attend Mellon Mays Undergraduate institutions (08/17/20, interview, name withheld).

This interview data shows how CAO's create knowledge for sale, the knowledge that Native students mature slowly but have potential for graduate study. The funding streams operate in both directions in a significant way here, but the question remains if this type of college knowledge attracts direct pecuniary payment. Interestingly, a 2017 study done by Cornell University's Center for Higher Education Institute (CHERI) found no evidence that participation

in the Mellon Mays program causes a statistically significant increase the PhD production rate of unrepresented students or that an increase in the number of Mellon Mays fellows increases the PhD production rate. This outcomes-based evidence does not change the behavior of CAOs in pursuing Mellon Foundation funding or the even the unsolicited funding stream flowing from Mellon to the CAOs. Program service fees are another route to resources pursued by CAO.

One CAO with a dominant program service fees position is QuestBridge. Transforming their model from a college knowledge workshop to an online scholarship portal and application coaching platform. First populated by data from the College Board, the QuestBridge data system then captures multiple screens worth of student data from applicants vying for a “match” or full-ride scholarship to one of QuestBridge’s nearly 50 partner schools – including five of the eight Ivy League schools and many other elite institutions: Brown, Columbia, Dartmouth, Princeton, University of Pennsylvania, Yale, MIT, Cal Tech, and Stanford. After these higher education partners select which QuestBridge applicants they will admit in Early Decision, the remaining applicants’ data are sold to interested institutions who are official QuestBridge college partners. This model is one of the highest forms of CAO student commodification. One university admissions professional with both Posse and QuestBridge responsibilities during their 15-year career explains:

...[CAO Partner Institution] is a member of QuestBridge, what it is, is a separate application process where students apply ED, and if an institution picks them, we call it a matching process, they get a full ride...it’s not full tuition, but it’s actually room and board included, [CAO Partner Institution] matches only five students, but then QuestBridge scholars can go through regular decision, [CAO Partner Institution] is actually the number

one school for QuestBridge students. Each year we take about 70 students from QuestBridge, but we match five (07/16/20, interview, name withheld).

All but one of the CAO's examined here demonstrate the ability to attract resources by valuing all forms of data associated with their organizations and programming – formative, outcome, and summative. From volunteer people power, academic research collaborations and the creation of intellectual property, to direct funds through program service fees (see Table 5.4) including: application fees, partnership contracts or MOUs (see Appendix C), and small online retail shops (see Appendix E). These findings show that because different stakeholders respond to diverse data types, CAOs form relationships to attract and retain resources. The pursuit of these relationships causes competition, which I turn to next.

### **Resource Competition: Constrains and Enables**

Understanding the notion of scarce resources constraining nonprofit organizations is at the core of this research. Nonprofit organizations strive to increase available resources for survival and growth. Here, in the case of nonprofit CAOs, what is interesting is the extent to which funding streams facilitate or enable collaboration and sharing of resources. The following findings demonstrate how CAO leaders make decisions when presented with funding opportunities and their perceptions of resource competition as constraining or enabling. For example, the newest entrant studied here, College Advising Corps is breaking down the scarcity model in pursuit of resources and acting nimbly during the COVID era to serve all interested stakeholders including; K-12 schools, higher education actors, and foundations. During a recent webinar, moderated by the former Chancellor of DC Public Schools and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the idea of cross-sector collaboration entitled – *No Dream Deferred: Supporting Students During COVID-19*, the Gates Foundation leader explained the purpose:

Now more than ever, students at risk of falling off the path, changing plans due to the pandemic need enhanced support and with our No Dream Deferred campaign, we want to not only call out this monumental challenge but also highlight organizations whose innovative solutions helping to curve the impact of COVID-19. Across the strategies in early learning, K-12, post-secondary and economic mobility, we are focused on how we alongside our partners need to adapt our work in response to this new landscape and make sure that this pandemic does not result in a generation of students losing momentum (12:35:01).

After being introduced, summarizing the [CAO] model and emphasizing how their organization responded to the COVID environment, the [CAO Founder] brings a current AmeriCorps CAC advisor into the conversation:

I would love for [CAC Advisor] to talk about how whether in classroom, on athletic field, now in virtual space...anything a student deserves, they have earned, and we will meet them whenever they are. Whether 35 emails in a minute or texting or chatting like right now. I would say the good news we had been doing some virtual advising and then really nimble, within a weekend increased service size, start writing a manual and now available on our website, anybody can upload the manual and see it and the content comes from great advisors like [CAC Advisor]...he's back in the community he is from, went to Deer Valley High School and good Oakland boy and now representing all of his students (12:54:16).

The CAC Advisor responds:

What we have been trying to do at Berkeley is ask ourselves, we are just now learning these things...what worked in the spring and how can we build off of that? The pandemic has been to hurtful in so many ways but maybe opened eyes to new strategies we can use after

the pandemic, whether social media engagement, whether finding new ways to engage with parents, I think that's been one of the greatest success to build on...before it was very hard –parents are a huge stakeholder in college going so we're able to engage with parents because Zoom has become normalized. Instead of saying after work we need parents to come into school, after you are tired and need to feed the kids, we can hold a Zoom session... we are actually creating best practices as we are advising in real time (12:55:33).

This exchange helps illuminate the importance of the CAO advisors and the reliance on them to not only solve complex problems but to provide competitive strategies from on-the-groundwork as policy implementers in a collaborative yet competitive environment. These advisors also assist in creating micro-level organization policies regarding parent involvement and strategies. Interestingly, the COVID era training manual available online is the only internal training document this CAO makes publicly available. Other CAC training documents are considered proprietary – demonstrating the tensions between collaboration and competition among CAOs. Highlighting the competition for resources between education sectors during COVID, one Gates Foundation representative remarks during the webinar:

...we see a lot of discussion focused on what is happening for younger students and families or whether college students will be able to go to campus but not a lot on what is happening for high school students, particularly juniors and seniors, facing challenges to get the support they need to apply and enroll and transition into college so we have looked at ways we can continue to focus supports on making the kind of opportunities available to young people that our three panelists do today so many more students can stay on the path to education and normal times that path complicated and in these times really challenging for students to do this remotely and a lot of risk many students won't get the support they

need. But excited about the opportunities we see in supporting these organizations who are figuring out how to pivot (12:41:21).

Another example of the tension between collaboration and competition for resources is a 2015 Bloomberg Philanthropies funded virtual advising platform, CollegePoint. According to its website, is: “a virtual advising program that helps top students apply to colleges, find scholarships, navigate the financial aid process, and make college decisions” (CollegePoint, 2020). CollegePoint’s initial 2015 IRS 990 return shows year one revenues of \$460,020 with over 90% of functional expenses listed as salary, other compensation and benefits. CollegePoint advisors are current college students, recent grads or experienced counselors from top colleges (e.g. Stanford, Yale, UNC Chapel Hill, University of Michigan, Amherst) and come from partner organizations: College Advising Corps, College Possible, Matriculate, and ScholarMatch. To be eligible, students must have 3.5 GPA, 90<sup>th</sup> percentile on PSAT/NMSQT/SAT/ACT, and an annual family income of less than \$80,000. And if you don’t qualify, CollegePoint advises students to check out other online college resources “we’ve created with Khan Academy instead” (College Point, 2020). CollegePoint combines the services, systems, and partners of other nonprofit direct services organizations that are normally thought of as competitors.

New entrants to the CAO field demonstrate the ability to quickly establish an organization, copy program models and delivery methods, while also garnering financial resources and networks. For example, Matriculate, founded in 2015 by the College Board – the same year as CollegePoint, has Board of Directors from corporations and colleges connected to the dominant and middling CAOs studied in this research, including ValueAct Capital, Boston Consulting Group, and overlapping University Trustees. Like College Possible and College Advising Corps, Matriculate boasts being a “founding member” of the Bloomberg initiative

along with ScholarMatch, founded in 2011 with initial year IRS 990 forms showing an investment of \$460,020 in contributions and grants. Conversely, ScholarMatch shows an initial year investment of \$53,543. But in lightning speed, by 2015, ScholarMatch's revenue total comes close its rivals at over \$3 million with a simple mission to: "To help students prepare for, pursue, and succeed in getting a college education." ScholarMatch's Executive Director has ties to the same university partners as the CAOs here and roots in one controversial yet elite education nonprofit, Teach for America (TFA). ScholarMatch's unprecedented growth and cost saving efficiency strategy is noted in their self-reported platinum rated GuideStar Profile:

In 10 years, ScholarMatch has grown exponentially: serving 39 students...to supporting 11,000+ students through a virtual crowdfunding scholarship and college search tool. ...strong and consistent partnerships with organizations such as Bloomberg Philanthropies, which provide operating and scholarship support, and leverage volunteers... we keep our operating costs low and are a nimble 32-person organization that engages 500 volunteers...we are looking to expand...serving students across the country through our virtual advising programs (GuideStar, 2020).

The influence of Bloomberg Philanthropies and the competitive environment is explained by a former CEO and Founder:

...a lot of our funders, the very stakeholders in and around the constellation of organizations will say, why don't you guys collaborate more. And that's odd...it seems obvious to nonprofit people, no one would ever say to Coca Cola, why don't you collaborate more with Pepsi. They just don't think of it that way. But in the nonprofit sector everybody wants us to collaborate, and it is a competitive environment, in terms of, to try to get the funding, try to get the attention, and if you try to collaborate, there's rarely



the funding that you need to make the collaboration work...the one really good example of a collaboration that solved all of that is a major effort that Bloomberg Philanthropy funds called CollegePoint, which is a little different than [CAO] mission, they're focused more on higher achieving kids that are both low-income and moderate income....we're focused on kids in the academic middle, not the higher achieving kids, and we're only focused on low-income kids, not moderate-income kids...there's a couple of differences, but because they put all the money into it, and there are some other funders involved, but it's probably at least 90 or 95 percent funded by Bloomberg...they create the conditions for collaborators because they put the money out there...fostered the collaboration (07/17/20, interview, name withheld).

Another interview respondent [CAO development officer] with connections to CollegePoint through an advisory board role takes a more pragmatic approach to the competition for resources explaining how to decide who to partner with for resources:

it's challenging to work with colleges, especially when you think about who our target colleges are, because they're resource-strapped, so it's not that they're bad schools, but they have 40% graduation rates for a reason, and one of those reasons is because they aren't funded enough to do all of the things that they want to do (04/17/20, interview, name withheld).

As shown with these examples, the struggle for resources is real in an ever-changing complex environment, where new entrants rise quickly, and the influence of foundations is strong. Competition both enables and constrains nonprofit CAOs as their stakeholder networks expand and have differing priorities. With established college access and success intermediaries, like the

College Board re-entering the direct service game, I now turn to evidence further explicating how the CAOs here act as intermediaries in the broader college access policy sphere.

### **Network Ties Enable Resources**

Whom do CAOs serve? On the face of it they exist to serve students, but this research shows that in addition to brokering opportunities for young people to enter higher education, these organizations also serve the interests of their supporters: education philanthropy, corporate donations, higher education institutions, government, and individuals. As contractors, they are accountable to government and in most cases studied here are less likely to rely on this funding source. As previously discussed, CAOs demonstrate the efficacy of their programs, through benchmarking and participating in policy advocacy with connections to professional associations and membership organizations. These higher-level intermediaries in the college access field offer both financial and “people power” resources as they set policy agendas and offer small grants to participate in conferences and advocacy work. Corporate and industry ties enable CAO resource diversification through corporate giving, both financial and in-kind support. Finally, CAOs direct ties to policymakers provides state and local support to their efforts. In this section, I provide examples of these connections and how these ties enable and constrain the behaviors of CAOs. These examples link to the final research question and findings on how CAOs utilize these networks and resources for influence in the broader policy sphere.

As my theoretical propositions suggested, CAOs fill the gaps left by inadequate high school counseling with funding from a variety of sources. The extent to which the government funds their efforts is limited, although through partnerships with public higher education institutions, the case could be made that the public is indirectly supporting CAOs if not directly through the state grantmaking process. Also, depending on the primary partner of a CAO, those

who win at the contracting and foundation grantmaking game makes a difference in the amount of government support in total revenue composition. For example, College Possible earns more state-level higher education grants as compared to College Track and Peer Forward with primary partners located in the K-12 sector and small percentages of total government grant funding.

The CAOs with a combined approach are attracting a large amount of resources, including foundation support. For example, College Advising Corps follows the College Possible path in securing varied sources of funding but relies on the foundations to push higher education investments into college counseling, rather than from the cash strapped K-12 sector. As one [CAO Founder] remarked:

...I helped the foundation pick ten universities to give \$1 million expansion grants. So, 2007 we went national with ten other universities, so from 2007 to 2011 every university had some Jack Kent Cooke money, and then they had to go raise some other money, and then I started raising money for all of the universities together to keep this going after the Jack Kent Cooke gift was gone (06/30/20, interview, name withheld).

The foundations continually monitor the environment for collaborators or co-conspirators. In most cases, CAOs are not completing lengthy funding applications. The foundations rely on personal relationships to find places to park money. For example, this same [CAO Founder/CEO] described how one influential grant from the Gates Foundation combined philanthropy funds with corporate in-kind expertise to analyze which states needed what – making sure to account for state budget volatility:

It's divvied up differently in different states because we have public funding, and the different philanthropic support...when Bridge Span came in was helpful in how much should a university have to commit, so they have skin the game, and they really value it,

and to contribute to it...how much does the university need, but not so much that when a budget cut happened, or a recession hit, or a COVID crisis happens, that the program wouldn't get cut, or would be in jeopardy...which means the whole national budget is \$48-49 million, \$24-25 coming from us, and the remainder from our university partners matching our dollars...we've got a state investment in Texas, we've got some state money in Michigan, we've got DOE money in New York City, we also have AmeriCorps and back in the Obama administration, we scaled a lot with Social Innovation funding (06/30/20 interview, name withheld).

As demonstrated, relationships and their associated networks both enable and constrain CAOs. In the next section, I point to the specific ways in which these networks are developed and highlight the linkages to the education philanthropy foundation players – both large and small -- to illustrate the potential CAOs have in influencing policy.

### **Networks and Influence**

Having outlined the dominant resources of CAOs and shown how differences in funding impacts organizational behavior, I now turn to the third and final research question, which asks – how do nonprofit college access organizations act as intermediaries in the broader college access policy arena? Determining the influence CAO intermediaries have on both policy development and implementation requires examining their behaviors over a significant time period, as McDonnell and Weatherford (2016) point out, “Allowing sufficient time for implementers to make necessary changes in practice often requires from several years to a decade or more” (p. 235). Findings here reveal three manifestations of how CAOs act as intermediaries in the policy sphere. First, they are the on the ground implementers of college access and success policy, as shown through their varied programs and links to students, families and their communities.

Those linkages have been discussed previously when describing the impacts of resource diversification.

The second way CAOs act as intermediaries is through their participation in membership organizations or other associations. It is notable that most CAOs here are active members in two of the largest and most well-established associations. The most frequently mentioned was the National College Attainment Network or NCAN – previously known as the National College Access Network. This name change demonstrates the entire field’s shift to include degree completion not simply access. Since its inception in 1995, NCAN’s mission has strived to “build, strengthen, and empower communities and stakeholders to close equity gaps in postsecondary attainment for all students.” While NCAN was not granted its 501(c)(3) IRS ruling until 2002, it has an impressive 2018 annual revenue of over \$8 million with 85% coming from grants and contributions and the remaining made up of program services revenue (membership fees). NCAN serves as hub for CAOs to share resources, benchmark, and coordinate advocacy and in New York alone has over 30 recorded members. NCAN experienced the same growth as CAOs in the last 10 years, nearly tripling its 2015 revenue of only \$3 million to its current level. Salary and other compensation make up close to 40% of NCANs expenses with another 40% used for pass-through expenses – funding direct service CAO advocacy efforts.

According to their current GuideStar Profile and website, “NCAN creates and supports community-based college access programs...offering members professional development, policy updates, technology tools, and technical assistance.” With only nine founding members in 1995, for the past 25 years NCAN has attempted “to share best practices and spread college access and success services around the country” and held its first national conference in 1997. NCAN now

considers itself as speaking for its members’ “two million students from low-income backgrounds, students of color, and students who are first in their family to attend college by centering their experiences in our policy priorities to make college affordable for our students and to simplify the financial aid process to increase access” (NCAN, 2020).

With both federal and state level policy priorities, mostly concerning financial aid, affordability, and strengthening federal DACA policy, NCAN consolidates resources (e.g. white papers, reports, briefs) to assist members in “elevating the initiatives that drive equity in degree attainment” including data from other associations like the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association annual report on State Education Finance (NCAN, 2020). In this way, NCAN acts as a hub between CAOs and other intermediaries including: the National Conference of State Legislatures, Education Commission of the States, National Association of the State Student Grant & Aid Programs, National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, Institute for Higher Education Policy, Institute for College Access & Success and the Association for the Study of Higher Education. As a membership organization, NCAN strategies include capacity building for its members, collective representation of access organizations, and policy advocacy at the state and federal levels.

Another nonprofit membership organization mentioned by interview respondents as an important player in setting the national college access policy agenda is the National Association of College Admissions Counseling (NACAC). Founded over 80 years ago, NACAC is a membership organization with 15,000 members and 23 affiliate organizations. It serves a broader constituency than NCAN by including individual school counselors, independent counselors, and admissions professionals. With total 2018 annual revenues of \$17 million and a net asset/fund balance of over \$10 million, NACAC surpasses NCAN in both its financial and

people power resources. NACAC's stated mission is to "support and advance the work of counseling and enrollment professionals as they help all students realize their full education potential, with particular emphasis on the transition to post-secondary education" (NACAC, 2018 IRS Form 990). NACAC is another case of initiating its current 501(c)(3) status many years after its founding with its initial IRS 990 return filed in 2009. Following the CAOs examined here, NACAC's expenses are primarily on salary and benefits and revenues are from contributions and grants and program service revenues stemming from their showcase national college fair and national conference of thousands of college admissions counselors, schools, and associated vendors. NACAC also operates in the E-commerce space with an online merchandise store. NACAC fosters a sense of belonging for thousands of individuals working towards increasing diversity and social justice through educational opportunities.

Differing from NCAN in the way it views CAOs, NACAC considers them to be community-based organizations or CBOs that primarily provide direct service to students and families. While several CAOs here mentioned NACAC as an important player within the field, the benefit to CAOs was not as apparent as compared to membership in NCAN, particularly when related to the policy sphere. This demonstrates the privilege position organizations linked to higher education have versus those including K-12 schools and the differences in policy agendas. For example, NACAC's policy agenda, as previously discussed, includes increasing funding for school counselors as well as funding to increase Pell Grants. This cross-sector advocacy is unique to NACAC, unlike other associations and organizations working on the distinct interests of their sector. Research reports available from NACAC show this broader focus and include topics on school safety, student mobility, student protections, rigorous

curriculum standards, student-to-counselor ratios, and predicative validity studies to inform admissions practices.

NACAC has established code of Ethics and Professional Practices that reflects its “long-standing commitment to principled conduct among professionals who support students in the college transition process from secondary school to postsecondary education and in the transfer process between postsecondary institutions.” This emphasis on ethics is not explicitly evident on NCANs website. NACAC documents its 80 years “serving the profession” in a fascinating archive of NACAC bulletins over the decades. Current service to the profession now includes resources on counseling for “workforce readiness and agents for international student recruitment” (NACAC, 2020). This difference intermediary roles and perceptions of CAOs is explained by an association leader and interview respondent:

CBO’s very much function in a policy arena...a CBO that’s very powerful is the College Advising Corps. You know, many people wouldn’t necessarily think of them as the traditional CBO, but they are really preparing the next generation of college counselors in public schools in this country...they have taken on the role of not just preparing those students, but then being advocates at the local and federal level around advocating for more public school counselors and making sure that the students to counselor ratio is adequate, and which we know is not, and we’re far off from the goal. We have a legislative conference in DC, where we actually take CBO’s and secondary school counselors to the Hill, to lobby all of their congressmen. But that’s a perfect example of how a community-based organization doing the work direct service, can also take on policy initiatives (08/04/20, interview, name withheld).



Because other research on CAOs focuses chiefly on student outcomes and program components these findings are significant because they show the institutional, environmental (e.g. financing), and political factors that contribute understanding the CAO role in the policy process.

NACAC identifies “three policy priorities focused on college access and success: (1) access to quality counseling, (2) need based financial aid, and (3) rigorous curriculum for all students” (NACAC, College Access Agenda 2020). Arguing for more ESSA Title IV funds for school districts and states to “provide mentoring and school counseling” NACACs policy agenda could be interpreted to be in opposition to the CAOs use of federal AmeriCorps funds for college counseling in that if Title IV funds provided more counselors then CAOs would need to offer other services to survive. During an interview, a top NACAC official explains this tension:

...why I think there’s a lot of CBO’s (community based organizations) at risk because their model was: we know where the talent is, we are in the local communities, let us find you the talent, place them on your campus, you pay us a fee, and you pay for students to go to your school. I think years ago that worked, one, because school was cheaper, fees were cheaper, but also there were...there was less of an awareness of a college-going culture, which has fundamentally shifted (08/04/20, interview, name withheld).

On the other side of the coin, one CAO CEO describes their mission and program offerings as a supplement to existing school counseling and an effort to grow the number of talented young counselors in the college access field while not replacing school counselors:

I’ve got all these amazing students, and they’re applying to Teach for America, who only takes like 15 percent of their applicants, and they’re applying to the Peace Corps, which is only taking 11 percent of their applicants, surely if we can send our best and brightest to teach in Los Angeles or to do water purification, you know, in Ecuador, we can keep

them here to do college advising, like who better than students who look like, talk like, just went through this process themselves, and are from some of the same communities that need these resources... we are going to be budget neutral, nobody's gonna lose a job because of us, we're not gonna take real lines (06/30/20, interview, name withheld).

While NACAC does not outline a policy agenda in support of CAOs specifically, CAOs are aware of their encroachment into the school counseling environment and the potential consequences of changes to the current model on all sides.

One interesting development in NCAN's evolution is the use of a Rapid Response Policy Team (RRPT). The volunteer group serves as the intermediary or broker between "those working with students in the field and the NCAN office to represent students at the national level." RRPT volunteers can respond to a range of issues determined as timely by the NCAN policy council and will be called upon to add their voice. All but one of the CAOs studied here noted their participation in NCAN, which relocated to Washington, D.C. in 2001 to "raise its national profile and add policy change to its strategies" (NCAN, 2020). As one lower-resourced CAO program coordinator mentioned:

...we've gotten more involved in NCAN. Maybe two or three years ago we obtained an advocacy grant through NCAN, and have been doing some advocacy work at the national level, and also at the state level...we actually just before the pandemic had gone out to DC and were visiting our state representatives, congress, senators, about doubling the Pell, and how important that is (08/17/20, interview, name withheld).

After probing more about what this CAO considers its policy priorities, this same respondent noted:

...one of the senators, it was actually Senator Udall, who sits on the Indian Affairs committee, he's the chair, and he's actually stepping down and his seat is going up for re-election. His staffer asked why aren't we working with the National Indian Education Association, and why aren't we working with the National Congress of American Indians, why aren't they telling us this? I'm like, I don't know, because that's not one of their priorities, I don't know. They want us to work to tell them, like why aren't you guys [CAO] also pushing...it's funny, it's like, why can't you guys [CAO] do it. I'm like, I don't know, that's our priority, but I don't know what they [NIEA/NCAI] are prioritizing in education (08/17/20, interview, name withheld).

This comment highlights the tension some CAOs have in attempting to influence policy. As implementers they are busy serving students and do not see themselves as primarily responsible for enlightening policymakers or assisting in agenda setting.

The third and final way CAOs influence the policy arena, beyond their direct service, labor market advocate, and agenda setting roles, are the linkages they have with foundations. In 2018, the eight CAOs here recorded grants from over 150 foundations and there is little overlap, only five foundations appearing on more than one 2018 CAO benefactor list. While some of the big foundations are present, the majority of these smaller foundations are operating at the state or local level. For example, only the Gates Foundation shows up on multiple CAO grantor lists in 2018. This surprising finding offers another way to understand the influence of CAOs on policy. With funding ties to local foundations, state coffers, and both local private and public institutions it appears that most of the CAOs here work to change policy at the state and local level, leaving the dominant players to exchange with national level philanthropy along with state and local. The dominant CAO as measured by total revenues has 58 nonprofit patrons in 2018 with the

largest (measured in total net assets) being: The United Way Worldwide, The San Francisco Foundation, The Boston Foundation, The Chicago Community Trust, The Greater New Orleans Foundation, The Network for Good, The American Endowment Foundation, Silicon Valley Foundation, Morgan Stanley Global Impact Funding Trust Inc, Robert McCormick Foundation, Goldman Sachs Philanthropy Fund, Bain Capital Children's Charity Ltd, The Red Sox Foundation, Inc., Thdf II Inc, Ernst & Young Foundation, Schwab Charitable Fund, Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund, Pricewaterhouse Coopers Charitable Foundation, and the Ecmc Foundation. This finding demonstrates the privatization of CAOs in that their contributions and grants come from individuals, social investment firms, as well as other nonprofits, including both corporate and philanthropic foundations interested in scalable and systemic solutions to gaps in college degree attainment. One CAO development officer confirms this remarking:

... we have meaningful conversations with our funders, Dell Foundation, ECMC Foundation, A Better Chicago, Robin Hood, Foundation for Children...the Boston Wins program. That was such a large investment in Boston, and it was trying to figure out how do we build an ecosystem and how does [CAO] fit within that, and we're continuing to work with the other organizations, which are probably somewhere on your list, College Advising Corps, You Aspire, You're Up, and Boston Pick (04/17/20, interview, name withheld).

On the opposite end of the CAO spectrum is the least resourced organization's ties to philanthropy. With only three 2018 foundation supporters – the New Mexico Community Foundation, The Santa Fe Preparatory School, and the National College Attainment Network, this CAO relies on volunteers and their nonprofit higher education partners to get the work done.

The findings from interview data and an analysis of 2018 philanthropic foundation support show the pressures CAO face in maintaining a voluntarism and activism ideologies, while developing into specialized nationally recognized professional organizations with the ability to influence the policy process. As college access and success remains prominent in our national education policy discourse, these findings illuminate how some CAOs navigate treacherous political environments to secure resources and advocate for students with little economic and social capital, while others hoard resources and take a long game approach to changing college access and success.

The following section continues my narrative thinking approach by expanding the CAO profiles initially gathered directly from the GuideStar professional profiles during the document analysis. These expanded profiles capture each case's essence beyond the preliminary categorical analysis of dominant resources, diverse resource streams, and extends their official mission statements and social media posts – going beyond these public narratives. This expansion takes a discursive approach intended to expand the narrative for greater understanding among youth participants, using hip-hop pedagogy (Barker, 1991; Rice 2001). In this form of pedagogy, rap music is “a contemporary stage for the theater of the powerless” and for CAO participants with limited power I adapt these discourses for our mutual understanding. As a boundary-spanner scholar myself, with ties to the same elite institutions as the founders and contemporary CAO leaders, I use hip hop pedagogy and my own personal experiences to tie a rap song and specific lyric to each case facilitating a broader community understanding with youth culture as my guide (Sandmann, 2104). Like CAO resource and network ties, the playlist lyrics (see APPENDIX F) build a broader understanding of these nonprofit college access organizations. Described by Rice (2003) and employed by curriculum and instruction scholars

to: “confront these types of power relations, it must alter the ways discourse is formed...in this way, hip-hop pedagogy performs an extremist act by arguing that the “reality” of academic writing is in fact an ideological form” (p. 466). These expanded profiles also provide a window into modern youth culture, which for many policy makers and CAO leaders is far removed – the NCAA being one exception to this suggestion. With the highest income return on investment in higher education, recruited athletic youth talent (random) and those institutions tied to these individual actors within the college access field have no worry or misunderstanding of the youth culture. The NCAA has dominated that sphere since many youth were enrolled in elementary education. For those interested in reforming the educational experience and outcomes of traditionally underserved youth, these songs connect us in a deeper way.

### **Expanded Case Profiles**

**The Posse Foundation**, founded in 1989, describes itself as a national leadership movement, working to build more diverse student bodies at the nation’s top-tier universities. Its goals are to expand the pool of diverse candidates for admission and then to help both the institutions and the students. The theory of change is that as institutions are diversified the Posse scholars/students are supported to persist and become leaders in the workforce and the nation. This follows other elite narratives in the educational reform sphere, like Teach for America (TFA). Based in New York city, Posse forms teams of 10 students from 10 cities across the country (Atlanta, San Francisco, Boston, Chicago, D.C. Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York) and those students are admitted as a cohort of “Posse Scholars” to selective colleges and universities and meet full demonstrated financial need with 100% full tuition (and room and board) financial aid packages and personal supports while in college. Currently, there are over 50 Posse partner colleges and universities, and most are traditional selective four-year

liberal arts institutions. Admissions and financial aid policies vary at these institutions, but most have similar institutional level policy, while they operate across state contexts. Vanderbilt University was the first partner school and has maintained an over 20-year partnership with the organization.

Posse scholars enroll together at their selected college and have a Posse program coordinator for ongoing campus support. Acknowledging the importance of peer support in leadership development, Posse believes that their scholars become campus and workplace leaders that broadly promote diversity and inclusion in the institutions they join. This belief is represented in the 2014 Posse Annual report where Debbie Bial, founder and president writes, “Posse’s partner colleges and universities...work with Posse to support the development of a new kind of leadership network in the United States, one that better reflects the diversity of the nation...” (Posse Annual Report, 2014, p. 4). After a rigorous selection process including several rounds of interviews and interrogation by admission staff from partner schools, Posse selects cohorts from each city to attend a specific college. When choosing their Posse, universities decide where within the country they lack diverse students and then the students from that city are admitted. For example, if a liberal arts college in the northeast identifies Atlanta as a city ripe for recruitment, Posse Atlanta can provide a cohort. With four program components, Posse is designed to enroll, graduate, and place diverse students into prestigious careers and firms. Posse’s “*Dynamic Assessment Process* (DAP) uses a holistic admissions model to evaluate students beyond the traditional measurements of grades and test scores. Fee paying partner colleges can access an online database (*Posse Access*) where hundreds of finalists, who were not selected for a Posse scholarship are identified and available for admission – bypassing the normally time and resource intensive admissions selection process for the

institution. After admission to a cohort, Posse Scholars participate in pre-college training from January to August of their senior year that acculturates students with workshops addressing academics, team building, cross-cultural communication, and leadership development. Again, this function provided by Posse reduces the both real and perceived costs of admitting this cohort of students. The cohort becomes a higher education institution calculation between costs of recruitment, selection, and campus integration through a partnership with Posse or done on their own. Once on campus, Posse staff visit with scholars four times annually and for the first two years, scholars meet weekly with a campus-based mentor. Finally, Posse's career program links students and alumni to industry and graduate schools through internships, career coaching, and alumni development opportunities. These student services or on-campus services align with the traditional services offered by these campuses but act as a supplement, like that offered to their K-12 compatriots when partnered with K-12 based CAOs. Again, Posse offers student support that may be considered a supplement to government provision or as a substitute with a higher value for both students and institutions. This research did not pursue that question fully.

For 30 years, Posse has used a near peer model to recruit and masterfully engage underrepresented minority, first-generation, and immigrants and retains them after graduation as Posse alumni. The alumni network is at the heart of the Posse Foundation's mission to insert diverse leaders within the top institutions across the country. During the 2020 alumni conference, the keynote speaker and former managing director of Sotheby's, Michael Ainslie discussed the strength of the network and how he and founder Debbie Bial cultivated connections to infiltrate the boards of several universities with Posse devotees and alumni. As Posse's first board chair, Ainslie developed the board and expanded the number of partner colleges. After 13 years as national board president, Ainslie retired and then established a one



(1) million-dollar endowment for the alumni program and the annual Ainslie Alumni Achievement Award of \$10,000 for one outstanding alumna/us each year. With 6000 alumni working in diverse fields such as education, business, and politics, Posse is known as an elite organization offering coveted full-ride scholarships to many of the best colleges in the country. Today, Posse's president declares, “ (the mission) is to build a network of leaders committed to realizing a truly just democracy” (Posse Foundation President's Message, 2020). These investments in alumni development and social justice align with the missions of Posse's partner institutions. With this approach Posse established itself as the dominant CAO player at the direct service and policy implementer level. Posse relies more on its powerful interlocks to influence the broader system – the long game facilitated by ongoing accumulation of financial resources, real estate, and sophisticated financial investment products. It models itself after other resource strong intermediaries like the College Board and NCAA that both had over \$1 billion in annual revenues in 2018. The playlist lyric from the well-known global artist Rhianna best representing the Posse Foundation is:

*Moo-la-lah...y'all should know me well enough...please don't call me on my bluff. Pay me what you owe me. Kamikaze if you think you gon' knock me off the top...don't act like you forgot, I call the shots, shots, shots. Where ya'll at? (APPENDIX F).*

This selection encapsulates Posse's actions within the college access field but are represented by most of the songs included in APPENDIX F. According to Ben A. Ortiz, Assistant Curator of the Cornell University Hip-Hop Archives, a division of the Rare and Manuscript Collections, when discussing the playlist:“...it's definitely got a lot of discussion potential across many topics

and should certainly feel accessible for people from any generation” (B. Ortiz, personal communication, September, 2020).

A mere four years later, **PeerForward’s** programming began in 1993 as an extended four-day college application workshop for 50 high school juniors, held on partner university campuses. The goal of PeerForward’s (then operating as College Summit) first workshop in Washington D.C. was simple to “increase the number of low-income students attending college” (College Summit Annual Report, 2015). In the early 2000’s, after recognizing the need for college going culture in high schools, PeerForward developed and sold proprietary college knowledge curriculums *Launch & Navigator*, then taught to more than 30,000 high school students. The curriculum was designed to help teachers guide students through the college application process. Because students and families focus on university and college counselors as the experts, by diffusing the knowledge to teachers and peer leaders in high schools, Peer Forward’s college knowledge curriculum brought expert knowledge to the masses at a lower price than would decreasing the ratio of students per school counselor, which is far higher than what is reasonable as many scholars have shown (see McDonough, 1997; and McDonough et al. 1997). Appendix C offers a glimpse of the brokering role of CAOs offering support to K-12 schools (p. 11). The total cost per peer leader advising team is much lower than the cost of a unionized school employee by at least a factor of two in some urban districts.

In today’s college going context, PeerForward has a narrower mission to provide peer support to underserved youth in college and beyond. The stated mission is to “unleash the power of positive peer influence to transform the lives of youth living in low-income communities connecting them to college and careers” (PeerForward, 2019). In May 2020, PeerForward announced its new CEO Gary Z. Linnen, the first person of color and first non-founder to lead

the national organization, reflecting the organization's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. According to the organization, "of the 85,000 students in partner schools PeerForward serves annually, 94% are minority students and 70% are low-income. One of PeerForward's founders, Dr. Keith Fromme acknowledged the importance of this leadership change writing, "Gary embodies who we are, whom we serve, and where we are going" (PeerForward, 2019). The playlist lyric from the 1990's hard-core rap group (not to be confused with gangsta rap, which is a contested style), considered pioneers of the genre, Wu-Tang Clan best representing PeerForward is:

*I inspect view through the future see millennium...play my position in the game of life standing firm...tell your story walking, run for your brother kid, run for your team...so I can squeeze the advantage...the saga continues* (APPENDIX F).

Moving to the west coast, **QuestBridge** started one year later as the Quest Scholars Program in 1994. First envisioned as a summer outreach program of Stanford Medical School for high school juniors to improve the number of low-income and minority students interested in attending the university in Palo Alto, California. QuestBridge or simply *Quest* as co-founder, Michael McCullough, M.D. writes recalling the origins of the program, "provided five years of academic and personal support to our students" (QuestBridge, 2020). In a detailed online history of the program, the co-founder describes how the first Quest students wanted to pursue college majors in medicine and science but didn't have access to the experiences and mentors that would guide them to college due to the high poverty rates in East Palo Alto. Eight low-income minority students traveled to the campus each day for college lectures and clinical experiences and were mentored by undergraduates, Michael and his co-founder Marc Lawrence.

After ten years of the Quest Scholars program operating as a residential summer bridge program at both Stanford and Harvard universities, the founders and several alumni of the program wanted to expand beyond the residential capacity, which was limited to 50 students. With supportive university leadership and labor from recent Quest graduates, QuestBridge as it is known today was officially incorporated as 501(c)(3) organization in 2000 – 6 years after its initial programming, with a mission of connecting low-income students with colleges and universities through a competitive scholarship and college match program. The proliferation of the internet and financial support of the Mellon Foundation, Goldman Sachs, Packard, and Hewlett Foundations, helped QuestBridge form what they called a national clearinghouse or a structured opportunity meeting place online by “bringing together others who wanted to help talented low-income students (prep-schools, colleges, universities, mentors of all kinds, companies, enrichment programs, scholarships and professional and graduate schools” and partner colleges could pay for QuestBridge to broker this meeting place with desirable low-income students. Today, QuestBridge’s mission “aims to increase the percentage of talented low-income students attending the nation’s best universities and the ranks of national leadership itself” (QuestBridge, 2020). Innovating through the technology advancements of the past two decades in partnership with its founding institution Stanford University – the birth-place of silicon valley, it’s no surprise QuestBridge would become the leader of CAO technology monetizing the platform while brokering opportunities for higher education institutions to find students and for students to offer themselves for sale. One QuestBridge participant explains this brokering process from their perspective on the QuestBridge website:

QuestBridge let me dream of the best schools. By removing the financial burden of college applications, and hopefully (if matched ) the entire college experience, I was able to see

for myself where I was capable of studying. Unlike many of my friends, my mother (born and raised in Panama) didn't have the first-hand experience of applying to American universities...the process seemed even more impossible when I wasn't matched at one of my top-eight schools, but without (financial) restrictions, I clicked on the Brown University logo. It now seems impossible that I could have considered anywhere other than my dear Brunonia for my undergraduate (and eventually graduate) years!

Even though I did not have direct communication with current QuestBridge leaders, through observations and engagement with its virtual QuestCasts the impact of technology was clear, especially considering the five- year average of \$150,000 technology expenses according to its 990 Form. This level of investment is shared by only one if its rivals. In addition to live webinars offering student's assistance with the QuestBridge application portal, its portfolio of YouTube and social media channels for different audiences demonstrates and ability to employ technology for an even lower cost solution for its partners (Appendix D).

The phenomena of technology to deliver all types of education is well documented. Within the college access and success sphere, it is often looked to for solutions to rising labor costs and accountability standards. The Washington Post (2019) recently reported that "at least 44 public and private universities in the United States work with outside consulting companies to collect and analyze data on prospective students, by tracking their Web activity or formulating predictive scores to measure each student's likelihood of enrolling." After an examination of this reporting and considering recent scholarship highlighting the unequal status of many U.S. institutions, it is not shocking that varied institutions (both public and private) such as Vanderbilt University, Cooper Union, and Mississippi State University utilize website tracking software to track prospective students using cookies, or other predictive data models to score students, or do

both in the competitive and high stakes financial world of higher education enrollment management (Taylor & Cantwell, 2019). The playlist lyric from 2019 artist, Rich Roddy encapsulates QuestBridge’s overall technology strategy to broker opportunities for diverse underserved students by referencing our ubiquitous ‘App’ culture:

*I got the mojo deals, we been trappin like the ‘80s...got the cash app...and I really wanna to know, where you at, at? Gotta move smarter, gotta move harder* (APPENDIX F).

QuestBridge may have had the biggest transformation from a single residential program to a national data platform brokering resources for many stakeholders – including resources for educators and parents available on its website. QuestBridge continues to press for resources with a return to its roots with college success programming and diversified scholarship types for specific demographic categories desired by college and universities. For example, the Quest for Excellence platform includes scholarship for students in STEM, the Arts, for Jewish youth, regional awards for students from underserved U.S. geographies.

Another California based college access organization is **College Track**. Started in 1997 in Oakland, College Track takes longer approach to improving college attainment rates with a “10-Year Promise” to support first-generation and low-income students to and through a 4-year college, and beyond. Now operating in twelve communities nationwide, College Track serves 3500 students annually mostly urban areas, although is expanding to consider geographic diversity. Described as a holistic program model working in local communities, physical “state-of-the-art” College Track student centers offer academic, financial, and socio-emotional counseling to students beginning in the ninth grade. According to College Track, their academic

counseling includes choosing courses and a major, financial advising will assist with FAFSA completion and applying for scholarships.

With the only explicit socio-emotional programming to support self-efficacy and resilience, College Track is unique in its approach. During high school coaches work with students to develop a *college going mind-set* in a safe and supportive environment outside of high school. According to their website, a key component of College Track advising model is to encourage students to apply to and enroll in a “*Best-Fit College*, institutions that: minimize student loan debt to less than or equal to \$30,000; have a strong track record of graduating first-generation students; limit the need for low-income students to work while in college; offer resources for Dreamers and DACA recipients” (College Track, 2020). While in college, College Track advisors continue to coach students – helping them to navigate the resources offered and to build on the resiliency created while in high school. Advisors are available as often as students need support through daily or weekly calls and texts and if students attend local colleges they can continue with in-person advising at the centers. College Track advisors visit their 35 partner colleges at least once a term and some hold weekly in-person office hours. This follows the models of other CAOs with one significant exception. College proactively attends to the structural barriers facing their youth participants like incarceration, deportation and addiction. While not explicitly said by other CAOs in this research, colleges partnering with College Track outsource mental health support services required for most underserved college students. Screenshot infographics in Appendix F demonstrate College Track’s Student Wellness flyer describes the trauma informed supports more frequently seen in social service youth development as:

fostering an environment at our centers that is optimized for learning and healing through trauma-informed practices and by providing evidence-based wellness education and

counseling to students who need it. We administer the CoVitality Assessment (CoVi) annually, which measures key psychological mindsets associated with students' positive, thriving development (Appendix G).

Post-graduation, College Track facilitates networking and internship opportunities to connect student's academics to future careers with a Corporate Residency Program. The program offers alumni and corporate partners the opportunity to "give back and take ownership of their legacy as College Track alumni...because real transformation requires real commitment" (College Track, 2020). Linking students to College Track board members and corporate partners offers mentorship to guide them and guarantees at least one internship per year during college, like all the CAOs studied. A member-only portal allows alumni to search jobs and connect within the College Track Alumni Association. College Track also offers both need-based financial aid and merit-based scholarships between \$6000-\$7000 to support students who have a gap in financial aid offered by their *Best-Fit College* over four-years. Like other CAOs, College Track college and university partners offer what they describe as "priority admission, enhanced on-campus academic advising, stronger financial-aid packages, and connections to campus groups" (College Track, 2020). With these partnerships College Track maintains its goal of supporting students in the same way they do in their centers and brokering enhanced opportunities for youth participants. The playlist collaboration lyric from Oakland based rapper , G-Eazy ft. Yo Gotti, YBN Nahmir brings to mind College Track's 10 year promise – a social and racial justice attuned youth centered collaborative model not explicitly seen in other CAOs studied here:

*I don't follow rules...they don't like how talk that...I'ma get the bag, you can put some trust on it...everything is new, so it's never rust on it. Yeah, I'm on then I'm off that*  
(APPENDIX F).



Crossing the country to the East coast, for 25 years, **Bottom Line** has provided low-income and first-generation high school with college guidance and advising. Operating from Jamaica Plains, MA – a suburb of Boston, Bottom Line’s programs assist students apply to, enroll in, and graduate from four-year colleges. Its *College Access* components focus on the college application process, while its *College Success* program supports students as they transition to and enroll in college. A priority of Bottom Line is reducing the amount of debt that low-income, first generation, and underrepresented students take on to complete a four-year degree. With this added goal, Bottom Line differentiates itself from other college access programs providing similar advising and financial aid brokering. Initially located primarily in the Boston and Worcester metro areas, Bottom Line has expanded to serve students in New York City and Chicago. Bottom Line’s model remains simple – improve college attainment rates at a city and regional level through long-term partnership and collaborations. Advisors provide high touch/intensive college advising to thousands of high school students each year. This model is highly personalized with advisors engaging with students several times a month. Assisting with right fit college choices, applications, financial aid, and enrollment decisions, Bottom Line advisors are there every step of the way. Once enrolled, Bottom Line advisors support students with course and major selection, campus resource utilization, and social belonging. Again, supplementing the on-campus supports offered by their target best fit colleges. Bottom Line maintains a database of all its participants and aggressively tracks its participants beginning as high school juniors through their college graduation and beyond. The program operations of Bottom Line’s College Access and Success programs are designed to provide students with the critical supports and resources that they need to enroll in and graduate from college. Founded the same year as several of their peers, Bottom Line’s commitment to a region is evidenced with

its slow growth outside of the northeast and by its public support percentage – the highest of any CAO here. Pressures to change the model to garner more program service fees will challenge the new CEO and first person of color to lead the organization, but with prior professional connections to the College Board, Mr. Colon is positioned to succeed. The playlist artist representing Bottom Line is a Worcester born rapper, Joyner Lucas, known for his loyalty to the original American gangsters in the Boston metro area with a nod to their Philadelphia brothers by collaborating with one of the most mainstream rap artists know, Will Smith:

*I'm feeling like Will (hey), I feel like a prince, I'm feelin' myself. I'm loaded with bills cause I wasn't blessed with No Uncle Phil. Don't know how it feels I wanted to flex...On top of my dreams, Joyner, I know you inspired by me. I just wanted the respect first, I still ain't ever let the fame change me. Pushing limits and make it cool. Brick by brick, building a wall that one can break (APPENDIX F).*

As a national organization focused on serving Native American students, who are enrolled members of federally or state-recognized tribes, **College Horizons** is a unique case. Founded in 1998 and located in Pena Blanca, New Mexico, College Horizons is dedicated to increasing the college attainment rates for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian people. With a strong cultural foundation and mission to serve Native communities, College Horizons offers its partners the opportunity to connect with students from communities that are often unseen or overlooked by selective institutions including rural reservation schools and large urban schools with large Native populations. Its founder, a non-Native college counselor Dr. Whitney Laughlin first partnered with the Native American Preparatory School (NAPS) and the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) to provide college counseling and

advocacy for the most academically talented Native students from around the country. For the first two years, the College Horizons college application workshops were hosted at NAPS and representatives from 20 partner schools attended along with nearly 50 Native students – many more than any one college or university would find in traditional recruiting practices of college fairs and high school visits. Dr. Laughlin’s connections provided the entrée for admissions counselors and university faculty to meet students and their high school counselors, and for the students to be introduced to the colleges and the selective admissions process through the extended week-long admissions workshop. The faculty and staff were and continue to be volunteers consisting of high school counselors, teachers, Tribal education staff, and other educators serving Native students.

In the early 2000’s the original college admissions workshop program grew beyond students at NAPS and moved to its current model of being hosted by a college partner with students from across the nation. The competitive workshop requires high school juniors and seniors to apply, have a minimum 3.0 GPA and letters of recommendation from teachers and counselors. No income requirements exist and to show their commitment students and families pay \$450 to attend the summer workshop, although financial aid is available for tuition and travel costs. At the end of the workshop the students have completed the Common Application, polished their admissions essays for the ten schools that best fit their abilities and interests, a resume, and completed Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) (Keene, 2016). The first two college hosts were St. John’s College in Santa Fe and Washington University in St. Louis. Now, College Horizons is known as the premier college access/retention organization for Native students and has expanded its programming to include *Graduate Horizons* supporting College Horizon alumni applying to graduate schools and the *Scholars Pathway Program*, a

four-year retention model and curriculum focused on improving the academic and leadership outcomes for Native students while enrolled in college.

Started in 2016 the College Horizons *Scholars Pathway Program* is an intensive 4-year success program with touch points along the continuum of the college experience. First constructed as a 3-week summer bridge program to prepare incoming first-year students for the transition to college, it now consists of a 1-week summer bridge or *Transition to College* program for incoming first-year students, a 1-week *Introduction to Indigenous Research Methodologies* for rising sophomores, a 3-day *Pre-Graduate & Research Institute* for rising juniors, and finally a 3-day *Graduate Horizons* for rising seniors, the *Scholars Pathway Program* extends the original college admissions and graduate school application workshops to serve Native scholars “at different points in their college journey (College Horizons, 2020). With programs scheduled concurrently each summer, College Horizons staff, faculty, and volunteers can serve and connect with students at multiple programs each year. While College Horizon’s stated mission is to “support the higher education of native American youth” (College Horizons, 2018, 990 Form), it goes further and reframes Native students from as students with challenges and deficits to a strengths-based frame celebrating the cultural contributions and power that Native communities bring to higher education. With 99 percent of students enrolling directly into college after the workshop and 95 percent of those attending four-year institutions, the College Horizons model builds a community of scholars who go on to graduate college and pursue graduate school at a much higher rate than other underrepresented groups – 85 percent of participants graduate from college in five years (College Horizons, 2020). With a handful of staff and very few financial resources, College Horizons stays true to its core values of reciprocity and community while building a nation of indigenous scholars and leaders. It is with

this in mind that I chose a lyric from “Deep Reverence” by Big Sean ft. Nipsey Hustle, born Ermias Joseph Asghedom, a former gang member turned community activist known for his community engagement, who was tragically killed in 2019 by gun violence:

*This time is for the money, I don't need credit...I'm the don 'cause the streets said it. Block love me with a deep reverence...Energy crazy, I realized that's it a two-way street...Should be a billionaire based off the time off I'm not takin'...You don't know how deep your roots is or what your ancestors had done...Who knew they history so they knew where to take it farther...So I can't give you everything that you want for free though...I take care of my family and beat the odds that were deadly (APPENDIX F).*

**College Possible** has a regional approach to enacting their mission. Founded in 2000 in Minneapolis, Minnesota the College Possible mission is to serve low-income students who have college potential but are overlooked by most colleges. College Possible's affable founder and most recent CEO until his retirement this year readily acknowledges his first-generation college roots and recalls the support, he received writing:

When I was growing up, my parents dreamed that my siblings and I would one day have something they never had the opportunity to earn: a college diploma. I worked hard toward this goal, but there was no way for me to do it on my own. As a low-income, first-generation student, I know I would never be where I am today without the caring support of dozens of family members, friends, teachers and mentors (College Possible, 2020).

Combining near-peer with a cohort model of coaching, College Possible was the first to employ AmeriCorps service members to provide college knowledge and support not offered by high

schools. College Possible hires recent college graduates to serve as college coaches to work with groups of ten students, as event coordinators, and as grant writers for one year through the AmeriCorps service program. Operating in the mid-west with expansions planned to Omaha, NE, Milwaukee, WI, Portland, OR, Chicago, IL, and Philadelphia, PA, College Possible targets cities overlooked by other college access programs operating on the major coasts or in the south. Using this regional approach to *college going*, College Possible worked with the Citizen's League of Minnesota and calculated the return on investment to the region by showing the potential decline in the number of Minnesota college graduates over the next two decades and then showed how an investment in college going would significantly increase the state's tax base by increasing the lifetime earnings of its program's graduates – all while reminding investors that their budget is mostly funded by philanthropy.

The organization describes itself as “a growing nonprofit coaching students from low-income backgrounds to and through college to break the cycle of poverty and empower the next generation of leaders” (College Possible, 2020). According its own research – a rigorous random control trial, the program more than doubles the chance of enrolling in a four-year college and quadruples the likelihood that enrolled students graduate compared to their low-income peers. In 2020, College Possible has an annual budget of \$25 million with more than 140 full-time employees and 270 AmeriCorps and VISTA service members. Continuing its legacy of innovation, it merged with another nonprofit college access organization based in Seattle to create **College Possible Washington** and renamed its Portland location to **College Possible Oregon** to serve both urban and rural areas. With this seventh location, College Possible follows their state level approach to scale up the number of schools and students it serves. With its *Catalyze* campus support program, new partnerships with Morgan State University and Vaughn

College of Aeronautics and Technology, they are expanding the reach to HBCUs and career and technical colleges – a segment of higher education not frequently targeted by CAOs until now. Also surveying its alumni for the first time in 2020 – it’s twentieth year, College Possible shows its success with graduates earning middle-class or higher incomes.

Further expanding its reach through technology, College Possible projects that during the 2019-20 school year, they will coach 25,000 students in all 50 states through their partnership with College Point, a virtual coaching platform collaboration with Bloomberg Philanthropies and the College Board’s CAO, Matriculate. Modestly boasting its strengths with the 2019-2020 AmeriCorps member of the year, Omaha College Coach – Maddie Pooley, and more than 100 partner high schools and 400 partner colleges to enact its vision of a “richer, stronger, America where a student’s socioeconomic status does not prevent them from achieving their dreams”, College Possible’s song choice is from Eminem, a rare White global rap artist with humble mid-west Detroit roots, featuring Joyner Lucas, “Lucky You” and the lyric:

*I’m about to risk it all, I ain’t got too much to lose...Y’all gotta move, (yeah) y’all gotta move...They’ve invented a level off in the ghetto to ghetto lookin’ for somethin’ I prolly can never find now...keep all of the money, I never wanted the lifestyle...when I die, I’m goin’ out as the underdog who never lost hope...I’m that cracker...and actually come from humble beginnings...nobody could ever take away the legacy (APPENDIX F).*

Like the previous cases, **College Advising Corps (CAC)** describes its mission simply as “working to increase college access for under-represented high school students” (CAC 990 Form, 2017). Founded in 2005 with a grant from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation and financial sponsorship from the University of Virginia, CAC partners with both universities and high

schools by placing college advisors in specific cities identified as places where degree attainment is prioritized by local districts and even states. Utilizing the AmeriCorps grant program, CAC national leadership trains local CAC corps advisors to work in under-resourced high schools as a supplement to the existing college guidance counselor and advise high school students on two and four-year col. The CAC advisors serve a 2-year term, like the Teach for America program and are employees of the university or college partner in that state or locality. For example, the Georgia College Advising Corps is its own organization in partnership with the University of Georgia. The Georgia CAC advisors are UGA employees grant funded with Ameri-Corps but have full UGA employee status with associated benefits. Each Corps site is managed locally with support from the national office housed at the University of Virginia. In 2018 the national corps was gifted 20 million dollars with the goal of expanding the corps to more rural high schools. The donors describe their gift as “needed because many high school guidance counselors are overworked...the (CAC) counselors are sending an implicit message to the students. Additionally, the Advising Corps leadership believes CAC advisors are potential national leaders who, after their service in the Corps, go on to lead organizations and serve in varying capacities.

As a relative newcomer to the field, College Advising Corps is picking up elements from all its predecessors – field building with an eye on service to the space in its entirety, not just the Corps. Setting a research agenda each year, College Advising Corps leadership knows the other players well, even calling out another newcomer, Beyond Twelve and touting its organizational prowess. From its beginning, with support from BridgeSpan, Jack Kent Cooke, a New Profit portfolio, federal social innovation grants, and the Gates Foundation, CAC is not a clandestine organization. Its funding model requires participation from the institutional and regional levels.



Organizing itself from the start with higher-level policy intermediaries like Achieve Atlanta and Boston Wins, Advising Corps serves the field with grace and humility things its founder, Nicole Hurd is known for saying passion for creating opportunity structures shines. With two theories of change, it goes further than its older established field mates, double the bottom line numbers and double the dignity of underserved populations. College Advising Corps takes an anti-deficit stance by not stigmatizing students in either direction, representing its founder's moral obligation to serve. With this essence in mind, the song chosen to represent CAC is fittingly, "Started from the Bottom" by film, TV, and music industry superstar Drake singing:

*Started from the bottom now we're here, started from the bottom, now the whole team here...we don't like to do too much explaining, story stays the same I never changed it....story stay the same through the money and the fame...there ain't really much I here that's poppin without us. Started from the bottom now we're here...(APPENDIX F).*

## **Expanded Taxonomy of Nonprofit College Access Organizations**

While each CAO studied here are similar in their nonprofit organizational form with comparable origins, missions and varied programs to assist young people in the transition to and through higher education, the expanded taxonomy shown in Table 5.9 strengthens our understanding of these organizations by detailing not only their origins and primary founding type, but also the core purpose code types and public support funding percentage as required by the IRS. The following categories were added to the expanded taxonomy: NTEE Code(s), IRS Type and Determination Date, Public Support Percentage, Service Fees, Non-Foundation Exchange types. Another surprising finding of this research are the links between the 2001 taxonomy and the links between its authors, the government, intermediary organizations, and higher education. For example, this report is among the first to establish a way to value and categorize “what works” in nonprofit college access programs. Published as an evaluative report sponsored by the NCES, the forward and acknowledgements sections explain the purpose of the agency and the National Postsecondary Education Committee, first authorized by congress in 1994. The committee’s mission according to the report was to “explore a relatively uncharted set of concerns in the area of access...the working group also recognized the heavy burden this lack of data placed on policymakers interested in funding early intervention programs” (p. 5). Along with this tie to government, there is a note indicating that the report was co-authored with the founder of the dominant resourced CAO studied here and funded in part by the Ford Foundation. Members of the working group include a wide cross section of higher education scholars, association representatives, State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), university administrators, and NPEC staff. Included in this group is a Vice President of the for-profit institution DeVry, Inc. and an associate of the College Board.

An important addition to this expanded taxonomy is the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities – Core Codes (NTEE-CC). NTEE core codes classify nonprofit organizations to facilitate data collection and analysis of nonprofits and their activities. This classification system is also used by the Foundation Center to track grants and grant recipients. Originally developed in the 1980, the purpose is to encourage uniformity and comparability of statistical data and to provide quality data for public policy decision making (Jones, 2019; Sumariwalla, 1986). The first NTEE system used 645 categories, which were collapsed into 400 Core Codes in 1999. NTEE – Core Codes replaced the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes to better align with the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).

NTEE-CC 3-5-digit alphanumeric codes classify each nonprofit organization by their primary purpose (Jones, 2019). Each digit of the NTEE code represents an increasing level of specificity. IRS determination specialists classify organizations based on descriptive information self-reported in the initial application for tax-exempt status (IRS form 1023 and 1024). NTEE-CC has 26 major groups under 10 major categories as shown in Table 5.10. Within the major groupings (Alphabetic), organizations are then broken down according to decile level codes (2nd Digit) and centile level codes (3rd Digit). Major groups represent broad subsectors while decile codes subdivide organizations into specific activities. Centile codes subdivide further into specific types of organizations. For example, community colleges and undergraduate colleges have distinct centile codes within the broader Higher Education code (B40). Common Codes represent activities of organizations, such as research, fundraising, and technical assistance and allow for a fourth and fifth digit. For example, B114 designates college and university fundraising under B11 Monetary Support with (4) added from decile level B40 Higher Education Institutions.

When IRS coders know the appropriate major group category but are not sure of the decile or centile designation, decile and centile codes of (99) are assigned. See Table 5.10 for Common Code definitions.

This expanded taxonomy also includes the diverse institutional types with which the CAO exchanges or in other words, with who do they partner or receive resources from. Because each of the CAOs studied here have connections to philanthropic foundations, that category of exchange is omitted. Individual person exchanges are also not listed as an exchange type because all CAO's by virtue of their nonprofit form have individual contributors, either for financial support or for people power, in the form of volunteers – to their boards, alumni mentors, and peer leaders. By expanding our view of nonprofit CAOs, I argue we can better understand their commonalities and differences. The additional categories not linked to formal reporting as required by the IRS and Treasury departments were derived from extensive reviews of the CAOs self-reported histories, annual reports, GuideStar profiles, and semi-structured interviews with CAO stakeholders. It is important to note here that CAO resources include in-kind donations of time, intellectual property, and communities of individual actors mostly interested in network ties for collecting political power to influence the policy process.

Next, I offer four empirical indicators of field structuration in college access that takes a broader conception of the field to include the nonprofit college access organizations (CAO) studied in this research. These findings extend McDonough et al.'s (2001) transformational analysis of the college access field where: “fields are post hoc and empirical descriptions of realms of activity...struggles over the definitional rules and classifications that help to define scarcity” (p. 378). This research details the historical struggles over differences in scarcity definitions that happened with the CAO field, which now reproduces unequal opportunity

structures mirroring their K-12 and higher education partners. This brings forward another question. How has privatization influenced scarce opportunity structures both within the college access field and outside in broader policy arenas?

### **Summary: Empirical Evidence of Field Structuration**

The development of the college access organizational field is a process. Theoretical propositions and considerations with empirical evidence focus our attention to the processes and features of fields defined by rules and classifications. Utilizing the foundational work of institutionalists, we know there are four dimensions of field structuration embodied by social processes then enacted by individual social practices that give rise to organizations with common identities, patterns of interactions, stratification and dominance orders (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983):

1. Increased information load
2. Rhetorics of common identity and purpose
3. Increased interorganizational communication
4. Emergence of dominance orders based on centrality to the field

The answers to the research questions asked in this dissertation provide further evidence to McDonough et al.'s conception of the college access field made up of six spheres: (1.) students, (2.) high schools, (3.) colleges, (4.) grad schools and employers – connected by the (5.) Courts, professional associations, and (6.) the entrepreneurial admissions sector. I extend this field boundary to include the nonprofit college access sphere which is undergoing its own sub-field process of structuration with students at the center. As illustrated by McDonough, et al. (2001), “the taken-for-granted-actors in college access, we not only look at the dynamic interaction between and among these actors, but we also direct additional and simultaneous

attention to state and regulatory agencies, and the entrepreneurial admissions sector” (see p. 387 Figure 1). Based on my central finding that the CAOs here are well financed and connected organizations with varying levels of financial assets, it is prudent to ask ourselves if nonprofit college access programs are their own sphere or are they just a different conception of “entrepreneurial” given the level of privatization and the many multiple manifestations of this privatization – including academic programs built to reinforce and advance “social entrepreneurship” where we use capital to further our mutual ideologies in concert with state regulatory power. In the original conception, for-profit and nonprofit organizations are grouped together in the entrepreneurial sphere – is it fair to now consider splitting this sphere based on organizational form? Surely there are differences between the for-profit test prep industry and the not-for-profit community based “non-school-based counseling providers” (p. 388)?

These findings are important because understanding these organizational behaviors and the networks CAOs are connected with can inform leaders of higher education institutions and K-12 school districts, especially if allocating scarce resources to CAOs aligns with these institutions’ interests. The results of this research can also advise interested investors such as foundation program officers, corporate diversity officers, and investment fund managers of the CAO financial health and existing resource diversification and network ties. Additionally, as the issue of college access and success resurfaces as a priority, during this time of social and political unrest, understanding CAOs actions can enlighten all levels of policymakers regarding the role of CAOs in the policy process and their effect on broader educational reform efforts of which CAOs act as intermediaries. Now that I’ve presented these findings, it brings a question to the fore. How have nonprofit college access organizations privatized since structuring within the college access field conceptualized by earlier scholars?

**Table 5.3***Revenue: Government Contributions (Grants)*

Organization	Annual Revenue			
	2003	2008	2013	2018
Posse Foundation	–	–	–	\$6,200
PeerForward	\$51,474	\$56,405	\$1,227,912	\$18,008
QuestBridge	–	–	–	–
College Track	–	\$205,945	\$278,773	\$1,185,816
Bottom Line	–	–	–	–
College Horizons	–	–	–	–
College Possible	\$288,151	\$635,734	\$995,199	\$4,384,547
College Advising Corps	–	–	\$464,059	\$337,431

Note. Data from IRS 990 form (Part I, line 1c) or (Part VIII, line 1e).

**Table 5.4***Revenue: Program Service Fees*

Organization	Annual Revenue			
	2003	2008	2013	2018
Posse Foundation	\$535,000	\$1,217,159	\$2,399,672	\$3,496,204
PeerForward	–	\$2,505,768	\$4,314,177	\$1,054,781
QuestBridge	–	\$1,511,000	\$2,316,000	\$5,111,100
College Track	–	–	–	–
Bottom Line	\$5,476	\$27,500	\$123,400	\$797,190
College Horizons	–	\$53,571	\$192,645	\$416,986
College Possible	–	\$75,000	\$92,521	\$345,225
College Advising Corps	–	–	\$184,142	\$207,780

Note. Data from IRS 990 form (Part I, line 9), (Part VII, line 105) or (Part VIII, line 2g).

**Table 5.5***Endowment (End of Year Balance)*

Organization	Endowment Balance			
	2003	2008	2013	2018
Posse Foundation	—	\$18,918,095	\$40,133,220	\$51,898,082

Note. Data from IRS 990 form (Schedule D, Part V, line g).

**Table 5.7***Number of Individuals Employed (Calendar Year)*

Organization	Number of Employees			
	2003	2008	2013	2018
Posse Foundation	35	111	130	237
PeerForward	32	172	109	37
QuestBridge	1	10	48	47
College Track	18	140	236	344
Bottom Line		25	93	201
College Horizons	—	3	3	5
College Possible	29	99	235	594
College Advising Corps	—	—	7	85

Note. Data from IRS 990 form (Part I, line 5, Part V, line 2a).



**Table 5.9***Expanded Taxonomy of Nonprofit College Access Organizations\**

<b>Name – Founding/Ruling Year(s)</b>	<b>Origin</b>	<b>NTEE Code (s) NP Type</b>	<b>Evaluation/ RCT</b>	<b>Public Support %</b>	<b>Service Fees</b>	<b>Non - Foundation Exchanges</b>
<b>Posse Foundation</b> New York, NY 1989/1996	<b>Private Foundation</b> • Harvard Founder	• B82, O50 Scholarships & Financial Aid • Public Charity	Yes – (Bial, 2004)	2018: <b>86%</b> 2017: <b>73%</b> 2016: <b>69%</b> 2015: <b>69%</b>	Yes	• Universities • Corporate • K-12 • Associations
<b>PeerForward</b> Washington, D.C. 1993/1997	<b>K-12</b> • Yale & Harvard Founder • Cornell CEO	• B99 N.E.C. • Public Charity	Yes – (BridgeSpan, 2019)	2018: <b>70%</b> 2017: <b>74%</b> 2016: <b>76%</b> 2015: <b>77%</b>	Yes	• K-12 • Corporate • Universities • Associations
<b>QuestBridge</b> Palo Alto, CA 1994/2000	<b>University</b> • Stanford Founders	• B25, B42, O99 Secondary & H.S. UG Colleges • Public Charity	Unknown	2018: <b>73%</b> 2017: <b>77%</b> 2016: <b>80%</b> 2015: <b>62%</b>	Yes	• Universities • K-12 • Corporate • Associations
<b>College Track</b> Oakland, CA 1997/1997	<b>CBO</b> • Morehouse Founder • Harvard CEO	• B90 • Public Charity	Yes – Impact Genome Project	2018: <b>85%</b> 2017: <b>85%</b> 2016: <b>73%</b> 2015: <b>99%</b>	No	• K-12 • Corporate • Universities • Associations
<b>Bottom Line</b> Boston, MA 1997/1997	<b>CBO</b> • Brown CEO	• B80, O99 • Public Charity	Yes – RCT (Barr & Castleman, 2016)	2018: <b>99%</b> 2017: <b>99%</b> 2016: <b>99%</b> 2015: <b>99%</b>	Yes	• K-12 • Corporate • Universities • Associations
<b>College Horizons</b> Pena Blanca, NM 1998/2005	<b>CBO</b> • Tribal H.S. • Harvard CEO	• B25, B42, B50 Secondary & H.S. UG Colleges Graduate Schools • Public Charity	Yes – (Keene, 2016)	2018: <b>81%</b> 2017: <b>83%</b> 2016: <b>83%</b> 2015: <b>95%</b>	Yes	• Tribes • Universities • K-12 • Associations
<b>College Possible</b> Saint Paul, MN 2000/2000	<b>CBO</b> • Harvard Founder • Harvard CEO	• B25, B40, B42 Secondary & H.S. Higher Education • Public Charity	Yes – RCT (Avery, 2013)	2018: <b>90%</b> 2017: <b>91%</b> 2016: <b>78%</b> 2015: <b>75%</b>	Yes	• K-12 • Universities • Corporate • Associations
<b>College Advising Corps</b> Chapel Hill, NC 2005/2013	<b>University</b> • Jack Cooke • Kent	• B42 UG Colleges • Public Charity	Yes – RCT (Bettinger, et al., 2012)	2018: <b>50%</b> 2017: <b>48%</b> 2016: <b>n/a</b> 2015: <b>n/a</b>	Yes	• K-12 • Universities • Corporate • Associations

Note: Data from IRS form 990 (schedule A part II lines 14, 15 ), GuideStarPro, and CAO websites.

\*Adapted from: Gándara, P. (2001). Paving the way to postsecondary education: K-12 intervention programs for underrepresented youth. *Report of the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative working group on access to postsecondary education*. National Center for Education Statistics.

**Table 5.10**

*National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities – Core Codes (NTEE-CC)*

Core Code	Subsector
<b>A</b>	Arts, Culture & Humanities
<b>B</b>	Education
<b>C, D</b>	Environment & Animals
<b>E, F, G, H</b>	Health
<b>I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P</b>	Human Services
<b>Q</b>	International, Foreign Affairs
<b>R, S, T, U, V, W</b>	Public & Societal Benefit
<b>X</b>	Religion Related
<b>Y</b>	Mutual Membership Benefit
<b>Z</b>	Unknown, Unclassified

*Source: NCCS 501(c)(3) IRS Business Master File 2016*

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION

The past three decades have been a period of tremendous change for the entire U.S. educational system battered by conflicting and competing demands of diverse organizations. These are loosely coupled in some contexts and are tightly interlocked networks in others with various clusters of investors and stakeholders. The neoliberal narrative of social mobility through higher education has manifested itself in each sector intent on reproducing inequality in its institutions. Actions of individuals within those institutions acted out this story by building college access organizations tied to corporations interested in the commodification of *college going* and the categorization of students into workers – including the elites responsible for educational sorting. This discussion section examines the evolution of the college access field and interrogates the methods used to study CAOs. I conclude with policy, practice and research implications. The evidence presented shows established nonprofit college access organizations mapping and embracing the complexity of the higher education and K-12 education systems. Professionally structured, well-funded, and mature CAOs are thriving. By adapting their operations to meet the needs of multiple stakeholders and effectively communicating their missions, CAOs remained relevant with the potential to influence access policy development.

These findings suggest the rise of a nonprofit college access sphere born from elite social entrepreneurs acting as the intermediaries for powerful corporate interests with shared rhetorics and communication networks. Shown through the four empirical indicators of field construction, this evidence brings forward questions of how to further understand the privatization process.

McClure, Barringer, and Brown (2020) offer a new way of conceptualizing privatization within higher education institutions and provides further insight into CAOs, due to their strong interlocks with higher education. This new way defines four conceptions or levels of privatization: (a) national, (b) state, (c) institutional, (d) sub-institutional. These levels allow for research that “clearly explicates the mechanisms by which privatization is impacting policies like financial aid, selectivity criteria, student recruitment, the availability of educational offerings, as well as their delivery and quality would allow us to ascertain the effects of privatization on one of the key stakeholders of higher education institutions, students” (McClure et al., 2000, p. 61). For example, using Perna et al.’s (2008) typology of federal and state programs for college enrollment, a state-level social network analysis exploring the centrality of nonprofit CAOs could identify the foundations operating in that political sphere – as Ness and Gándara (2014) and Hammond et al. (2019) remind us the strategies and rhetorics operating in different states show us where there is opportunity or a structural hole for the competition for scarce resources.

If students are thought of as commodities created by demand-side stakeholders as a way to “maximize control over output in the face of informational asymmetries” (Hansmann, 1987), then this more nuanced study is warranted. Using this privatization model beyond the higher education sphere of the college access field, one could also study the implications to the sub-institutional or CAO level. For example, a qualitative ethnographic study of the new college access workforce – proudly serving their CAO and their higher education family. These studies can ask about working conditions, wages, and other organizational processes, similar to studies of their sister governmental organizations like Teach for America and AmeriCorps. Continuing my cultural dialogue, I can best describe the birth of modern CAOs through the song by rap legend turned mainstream public figure, Ice-T – *Don’t hate the playa...hate the game* (1990).

Readers may think the title of this dissertation implies a negative characterization of CAOs. As my advisor instilled, most research begins with a basic question. In this case, I started this research after wondering why leadership – the President in fact, at the highly selective private university where I worked decided to partner with a CAO to recruit 10 students per year from a large midwestern urban city. From my experiences as an alumnus, recruiter, admissions officer and academic advisor, I believed our university could easily enroll 10 students from this city without the CAO. After concluding this study, I now understand the institutional complexity of the college access field. Even though I have shown how these organizations recreate the disparity they purport to change, the benefits of their actions outweigh that cost. The incremental gains made by the field demonstrates the slow process of policy diffusion. Collectively, the CAOs draw attention to the problems in degree attainment for policy makers and illuminate where government has failed, even if imperfectly done (Weiss, 1977). This enlightenment function is arguably worth the price of privatization. I caution and encourage the CAO field to acknowledge this unintended consequence before young people recognize it and *cancel* them. We can easily identify organizations left to wither or die after corporate and philanthropic interests move on to the next best thing. Like Tyack and Cuban (1990) remind us, until there is an entirely different system, CAOs serve as tinkering instruments for access policy.

This dissertation answered the call for disparate research approaches, traditions, and methods with different questions for an interdisciplinary analysis of the college access field. I first offered a detailed analysis of the financial data of eight CAOs including their most prevalent funding sources. I then extended the typology crafted by Gándara (2001) beyond missions and outcomes to include public funding support percentages and specialized IRS determination years and codes. By including 25 semi-structured interviews with CAO founders, academics, staff,

student, and alumni, I follow Lopez and Rivera's (2020) calls for more qualitative reflective research designs. My findings offer pieces to the larger puzzle and problematize the institutional inequities manifested in differing levels of resources for nonprofit college access organizations. McDonough et al. (2001) conceptualize this process of structuration as "that puzzle over the shifting boundaries of the field, as well as the struggles over authoritative standards, criteria, and rhetorics that animate action" (p. 389). I suggest because this is an arena where the struggle over capital prevails and where the players with the largest coffers set the standards and dominate both rhetorics and policy.

### **Nonprofit College Access Organization Field Evolution**

Organized into nonprofits – a form that allows for blurry boundaries and little oversight compared to government institutions held accountable to the public – CAO's diverse revenue streams illuminated manifestations of privatization from the beginning. For example, the origins of each case show linkages to the most elite educational institutions through major foundations – Mellon and Ford, along with founding stories deeply enmeshed with the wealthiest philanthropic and corporate organizations in the country. Also connected to government, the corporate and private interests in the CAOs here represent varying levels of privatization and thus their position as opportunity brokers and sorters across the system. Within this framework, governments expect that public money is spent effectively, the public demands that schools engage and teach students to serve the corporatized public good and meet the labor needs of the 21st century knowledge economy. Tangled within this system are young people trained to find the educational path with the highest return on investment possible, considering the astronomical costs of post-secondary education.

My findings also demonstrate that CAOs have some limited power within the policy arena. Acting mostly as intermediary implementers that unify through membership organizations and associations. Because of competing interests between sectors, few public resources flow directly to CAOs, but corporate, individual, and philanthropic resources abound. Some CAOs deflect these interests by maintaining their volunteerism ideology but remain dedicated to the neoliberal narrative of meritocracy and social mobility through higher education – even when cultural differences are strong, as in the case of College Horizons. The tight interlocks here make relying on Young’s (2000) analysis tying resource type and purpose difficult (e.g. earned income is private vs. government funding is public), because it is impossible to untangle the strong college access institutional ties.

This research broadens the prior conceptualization of the college access field beginning in 1965 after the passage of the Higher Education Act. In their chapter, McDonough et al. (2001) approach the field from a higher education perspective and remind us that “field analyses are post hoc and empirical descriptions of realms of activity” (pp. 371-372). I bring their analysis forward by incorporating nonprofit CAOs and document the introduction of these intermediaries into the field through their philanthropic benefactors – providing legitimacy to organizations like The Posse Foundation, which after 30 years has arrived at the dominant resource position with an estimated \$80 million endowment and connections to the most elite institutions. Sorting students in the middle of the field are earnest CAOs like College Possible and Bottom Line. Connecting youth to opportunities in a more regional strategy focused on workforce and economic development collaboration with cities and states, again including all stakeholders, but having little influence in the broader policy process. Those CAOs closest to breaking down what Bowles and Gintis (2011) describe as the “basic structure of property and

power in economic life...(p. 14)” are College Track , College Advising Corps, and College Horizons, which arm youth participants with ideas of collective responsibility and reciprocity. After this study, I implore CAO leaders and alumni to consider this broader collective action strategy and begin drawing CAOs together into bigger, stronger, and faster organizations ready to advance the next round of policy entrepreneurs.



## **Implications for College Access and Future Research**

Differences in the organizational behavior of these CAOs are worth studying. As intermediary organizations, they operate to affect system level change by identifying often overlooked students for admission, providing direct services to students and families (e.g. financial aid and leadership workshops), developing tools for their partners, and by connecting the private sector to the college access field. Nonprofit values of voluntarism and civic activism are what make them and American democracy special (Skocpol, Ganz & Munson, 2000). Belonging helps us forget about the vulnerability experienced by many of our nation's undeserved, minoritized, and marginalized youth – especially those most susceptible to exploitation are those with systems involvement and confront many structural barriers to opportunity like incarceration, deportation, homelessness, and addiction. I argue for future research that attends to these systems and barriers. Next, I provide a few directions for future research and practice across the distinct fields influencing this research, K-12 schools, higher education, and the nonprofit sector. I leave the for-profit work for them to decide.

### **K-12 Schools**

With the increase in funding for school policing after many decades of mass school shootings and other school-based traumas, the past does not indicate future support for college counseling in the near future. Secondary schools will continue to rely on CAOs, but we can redesign schools – removing tracking in order to prepare youth for work and life-long learning at the same time (Deil-Amen & DeLuca, 2010). Bottom Line's collaborations with JFF is an example of this type of model where employment is integrated with a life skills curriculum during school. Technology is an issue that spans all sectors. Use this COVID era to build on bi-partisan interest for infrastructure improvements now that technology gap is intolerable.

## Higher Education

Most scholars predict further privatization and new forms of stratification and institutional mergers. Since community colleges and online learning will be the next targets of education philanthropy, CAOs like Posse, College Track and College Possible have the opportunity to diversify their brands and reach further to community colleges. Using the strategy might lead to double counting of youth participants as they span across sectors and boundaries, like Troy Simon, a Teach for America student participating in the Urban League College Track program and now a Bard College alumnus of Posse New Orleans, who was honored as a guest of President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama in 2014. Troy reminds us that we do not own students – they have their own agency and this manifestation of privatization may only be an implementation misinterpretation. In a more practical sense, higher education researchers can conduct extensive state level analysis of the intersectoral division of labor using Burt’s structural hole argument that a dense network is inefficient because of increased information and follows Ness & Gándara’s (2014) findings of differences in state-level intermediaries with more robust education policy activity in states with dense ties. Explore states where CAO networks are less dense for opportunities while you continue to amass resources for when the political will to reinvest in equitable opportunity structures.

CAOs are bridging gap between K-12 and higher education by partnering and building the capacity of schools and postsecondary institutions to identify students and develop college going behaviors. I argue that these organizations can move beyond simply providing services and take a larger role in state and federal policy development and implementation. One way is through the use of P-20 councils. Reformers have urged the formation of state P-20 councils to find solutions for the gaps in education attainment. P-20 initiatives are generally defined as

formalized state efforts that connect the structurally disparate preschool, K-12, and postsecondary education sectors with the goal of improving college readiness and degree attainment rates. In Georgia, for example, the University of Georgia has dedicated funds from a National Science Foundation grant to create partnerships between multiple universities and school districts across the state (Whitla, Howard, Tuitt, Reddick, & Flanagan, 2005). As Harkavy (2006) points out, “the radical reform of higher education will most likely occur in the crucible of significant, sustained engagement with public schools and their communities” (p. 33). I maintain that P-20 councils could include representatives from these nonprofit college access programs, who can advise policymakers on college access initiatives.

### **Social Justice Philanthropy**

One reoccurring problem for policymakers is how to fund their efforts. As evidenced here, the well-established CAOs with deep and diverse funding sources could connect organizational resources to the formation of state-level networks or P-20 councils or to whichever policy target they and the foundations deem is a priority. These mature organizations are not the disempowered nonprofits described by some scholars (Kezar et al., 2010). Funding unconventional policy approaches is also evident in the literature. Reckhow and Snyder (2014) find that the major education philanthropies are funding organizations that offer alternatives to public sector institutions. My findings suggest that nonprofit college access programs provide an alternative to business as usual, which attracts donors. Reckhow and Snyder (2014) show that college access promotion is one of the most prevalent grant recipient categories used by the largest donors to K-12 education, which has a direct impact on the growth of these nonprofits. Further study of nonprofit college access programs is necessary to reveal state and regional level connections between their funding sources including individual philanthropists, foundations, and

corporate donors. As Reckhow and Snyder (2014) point out, “successful education-reform advocacy involves donor coordinating their charitable, lobbying and political donations in an integrated effort to improve the public policies affecting schools” (p. 189). Social justice philanthropy can transform giving relationships by supporting changes to the federal tax code. I argue for collective action by CAOs and their networks for an increase to the required foundation endowment pay out from 5% to 10%. This recommendation includes apologizing and investing all our resources to building equitable opportunity structures at all education levels to advance racial justice. Philanthropy can learn from the Indigenous research community and partner for sustainability (Minthorn, Shotton, 2018; Villaneuva, 2018). This is one way to infuse decolonizing strategies in philanthropy and to address inequality.

### **Why Do we Care**

CAOs with any percentage of public money directly invested or indirectly through favorable corporate tax policies are accountable to the public (see Table 5.9). Smith and Lipsky (2009) remind us of the need for accountability of privatization remarking: “when we relinquish government duty to private interests, we lose measure of accountability” (Smith & Lipsky, p. 13). CAOs can consider this research a warning because students will organize and cut out organizations – youth organizers – new entrants from glut of newly trained advisors with more technology and better relationships – more authentic youth voice (Chajet, 2012). COVID-19 has changed the game – the assault on the College Board has already started with the newly expanded test optional landscape. Students reject markers of neoliberalism and are organizing for social change (Urciuoli, 2016). If lobbyists pay corporations but corporate values do not align with current context, young people will not support participation in CAOs the same way. Unions are on the rise again because of the failures of the gig economy to protect workers during

this COVID era. I suggest broadening our goals again towards P-20 efforts and reconstituting CTE into the larger access policy agenda with supports for systems involved youth and wrap around services – modeled after opportunity centers studied here but to be careful of the racialization of space that Ball, Maguire and MaCrae (1998) warned us about as CAOs continue to invest in real estate to scale out their operations. Look for learners at all stages from early college programs to corporate credentialing. Researchers can also reflect on counter narratives and research critiquing CAO models for further directions and methodologies to understand the CAO universe, which is not fully represented here. Representation matters. With CEO turnover in recent years, five of eight CAOs here now have a leader of color at the helm.

### **Merge and Diffusion for Enlightenment**

I am optimistic that CAO values can survive this battle over meritocracy to win the larger war against inequality, but they must combine efforts, accept the consequences of past decisions, and move ahead with race and class-conscious policies until opportunity structures are more equal. We may never see full equality, but optimistic fiddling is our *modus operandum*. Continue to build up the resources and social ties that bind sectors together and transform the field by expanding the existing opportunity structures while we wait for the next regime change. Enable or activate the youth to teach and instruct with direction and mentorship from caring adult mentors. Resource dominant CAOs are playing the long game but youth development nonprofits like JFF have more resources and links (Bond, 2019; Jaschik, 2020). I suggest they explore collaboration and not ignore the strong recommendations of recent scholars attending to social justice and racial equality. To ignore these continuing structural problems, we will find ourselves asking these same questions twenty-five years from now (Alexander, 2012; Byrd, 2007; Carter & Weiner; Jack, 2019; Karabel, 2005; Price & Wohlford, 2005). I conclude by

identifying the limitations of this research directions for future scholars and argue for more resources to flow to CAOs, while cautioning that unbridled growth without attention to inclusive youth voice in organizational strategy will limit the effectiveness of CAOs in the future.

Exploring CAO resource diversification their organizational behaviors and cataloguing the multiple public support percentages along with any other program changes during a specific time frame shows us which of these organizations, if any, are blurring the boundaries towards privatization. Even though I have not developed a specific measure for the impulse towards civic activism here, I recommend CAOs begin to explicitly state how the organization seeks to change structures of power and inequality. From this research, only one CAO clearly states its intention to address the generational effects of institutional inequities, for example incarceration, deportation, higher death rates, and systemic racism. Because young people are calling for this type of action from corporations, if CAOs continue to partner with corporations without a measure of accountability, the CAO primary product – young people – may choose a different opportunity broker or even organize themselves into something entirely different.

As nonprofit organizations, CAOs are signaling to their supporters and partners that they have ability to sustain themselves by emulating the successful behaviors of their partners and other organizations in their field. They do risk confusing or alienating their funders if for-profit behaviors become the norm. Maintaining a balance of behaviors is crucial for these nonprofits, especially as they continue to grow their revenues and partnerships. Alignment or misalignment of their mission and values with partners and other intermediary organizations (e.g. grant-making foundations, member associations) could influence their financial support and behaviors. Due to the limitations of the case study, I am not generalizing these findings to any larger population. I am only uncovering the behaviors and attributes of the organizations studied here.

Finally, it has been estimated that the one hundred most selective colleges and universities in America turn out only about 4% of the approximately 100,000 bachelors' degrees obtained by Blacks in the United States annually, the remaining 2,500+ four-year colleges turning out the other 96%. Continuing to focus battling for racial preferences in admissions, which will always be a contested point in the policy arena, I suggest that because the vast majority of Black college students attend institutions where racial preferences are either very small or don't exist at all, we can focus on building college access networks in areas where structural holes exist; and be explicit about serving youth impacted by systemic institutional problems as a proxy for diversity. Youth are leaders and resilient for aspiring to college and goals for this world that are beyond our ability to construct. COVID era requires collaboration – like the PeerForward LinkForward virtual platform and other types of learning hubs, group recruiting policies and states collaborating in absence of federal support.

Questions remain regarding the ability of college and universities and K-12 districts to partner with these organizations. First, it is unclear from this research how many and what types of higher education institutions and K-12 schools have the necessary resources. Gándara (2001) found that one in three higher education institutions have some type of college access program, so further research is suggested to examine the differences in capacity. Related is the capacity of K-12 districts to pay for these services and the types of schools identified for participation. The question of how many students are available in the geographic regions currently targeted by these access programs is also important to study. Are the current program sites reaching equilibrium or are there more students than colleges and universities demand? If other program sites are identified, how so? While research shows that the aspirations of minoritized and underserved students match those of their high-income peers (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson,

2009), if the numbers of students don't match the demand or vice versa, the continued growth of nonprofit college access programs is questionable. We should bring into the arena organizations already working with the most underserved youth and value their expertise – youth in foster care, youth in alternative schools, youth suffering from the opiate addition epidemic, mental health experts. These are issues very few in any sector are attending to.

Future research at the state level like the recent study of State Higher Education Executive Officers and CAO's role in enlightening the state policy agenda is another route for the study of higher education intermediaries (Ness, Hearn & Rubin, 2018). Overall, I am optimistic because I know we can build anything in this country, especially since the College Board has more than \$1 billion to work with and organize with NACAC, NCAN and other intermediaries as they surface to enlighten policymakers and participate in as many policy processes as possible – diffusion is our goal. Take what CAOs have built and build it out bringing together organizations with varying resource strength – potentially transforming some CAOs into grantors and higher level intermediaries. I suggest that the youth and alumni will eventually hold the field responsible for the unequal opportunity structures and force CAOs to earn their loyalty to as Bob Moses reminded us in a recent NPR interview: “harness this energy from the protests but now earn it by organizing against these structures and build new ones” (On Point Radio, 2020). Youth leaders will conceptualize something we cannot and use their networks to bring others on board. Remember what the corporate investors can teach CAOs and plan for failures, like when the virtual NACAC fair crashed, the SAT tests were canceled, re-opening plans changed, and Wi-Fi failed. The COVID Era is testing the field but they can pull together putting diverse ideas work – in other words, walk like you talk it.



## **Concluding Thoughts**

A major conclusion from this study is that 21<sup>st</sup> century nonprofit college access organizations are more similar to their corporate partners than they are to the community-based organizations of the past. Growing out of the church basements and onto Wall Street, CAOs have structured themselves into an action field attempting to improve the college going and completion rates of underserved students. While not a monolith, as this research shows, these CAOs have similar funding sources and missions. Where they differ is in their ties or exchanges and in their divergent intermediary roles in the policy arena. Through these networks, CAOs build up the organizational capacity of their K-12 and higher education partners either by offering college advising services not available in schools or by brokering admission and financial support for individuals or groups of students. Going beyond the traditional charity logic, these complex and well-resourced nonprofits are encompassing the needs and demands of their stakeholders across multiple sectors. I argue for school officials, college presidents, and access leaders to focus on learning partnerships but to also attend to unequal opportunity structures, while keeping close to their youth supporters especially since history tells us that reaching educational parity is impossible.

### **Self-Authorship and Agency**

The problem of access and degree attainment for individuals like Jemmott and myself persist and remain pertinent today. As a Black person and once first-generation student this research on college access, persistence and completion is personal. My perspectives on industry, the labor force and higher education stem from experiences at a rural high school, a community college, and then finally highly selective private universities. These experiences effect my thinking around the equitable dissemination of college knowledge and differences in degree

attainment. Even now, thirty years later, like most who ruminate about the college application process, I recall feeling unsupported and applied only to the local college – where most students begin their higher education journey. While I conquered the obstacles, feelings of frustration and anxiety still haunt me today. After underperforming on standardized tests, mindlessly thumbing through the *Barron's Guide to Colleges* – now in its 35<sup>th</sup> edition, enrolling and transferring from community college, completing bachelors and master's degrees at an Ivy League institution, and then becoming a PhD candidate at a flagship public institution, I am nearing the end of my own personal quest for self-authorship and ultimately self-definition (Magolda, 2014; Dillard, 2012; Okello, 2018).

Before beginning my PhD, I worked as an academic advisor and admissions counselor. I reached a turning point and began questioning why many prospective students had so little knowledge about the way the college admissions and financial aid processes worked. After years of satisfaction with my work, I became disillusioned with my institution's efforts to sustain college outreach and access programs and wondered if partnerships among higher education, K-12 schools, community organizations, and industry could not only provide access to education, but also help students find their purpose. Because I served in a professional capacity to develop and managed an institutional access and diversity program, I have insider status, which is beneficial to understanding the purpose and role of nonprofit college access programs. However, due to this status, I may be biased in my evaluation of higher education institutions – especially the powerful status they have in relation to their partner organizations and to most youth in our country.

My interviews with organizational and institutional decision makers flowed easily due to my intimate knowledge of the field, but my identification as an advocate for students can bias

my interpretations of who benefits from partnerships between colleges, high schools, and access organizations. I believe that there are barriers embedded in educational institutions that can work against the dissemination of college knowledge and this belief may be a limitation to the way I framed this research. I recognize that my privileged experiences and subsequent achievements are only in part due to my individual effort. Many people, some never known to me, supported and contributed to my successes, and because of this, I feel a sense of responsibility to do the same for others. I also acknowledge that my experiences have allowed me to improve my social class status, which benefits the relationships I build with future colleagues and research participants. Reflecting on my personal experiences is often painful but leaves me hopeful that this research will further the development of educational policy to improve college access and persistence for all students.

None of the CAOs I studied are positioned for the type of transformation called for by Bowles and Gintis (2011) where “the key to reform is the democratization of economic relationships: social ownership, democratic and participatory control of the production process by workers’ equal sharing of socially necessary labor by all, and progressive equalization of incomes and destruction of hierarchal economic relationships” (p. 14). CAOs are reproducing inequality that is well documented but in our ongoing quest to make sense of what has been constructed, this research encourages us to center the students – the kids, and to be vulnerable. Call out to each other and acknowledge mistakes, forgive, listen, and let each other know I got you – heart emoji. Fall back in love with the students – they give us an opportunity to love but remind us that we are not here for only symbolism, we have to earn it. Meet up at our normal spots, my crew is at the library. We stay ready for the battle and the talent is the call.

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## APPENDIX A

### Interview Guide & Codebook

Thank you again for agreeing to be interviewed today. As you may remember from my e-mail, my name is Neoma Mullens and I'm PhD candidate in Educational Administration and Policy at the University of Georgia. I'm conducting a study on the organizational behaviors of nonprofit college access programs like yours.

Before we start, I'd like to revisit the consent process that we discussed when you completed the consent form – do you have any questions about confidentiality? I won't use your name or any other identifying information that can identify you personally in this study. Also, you are free to not answer any questions and can end the interview at any point. The interview should take about 1 hour and if you have any questions during the interview – please ask. I will be recording the interview and taking notes. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Let's start with a question to help me get to know you better...

1. How did you come to work with [CAO or associated IO]?

#### **Research Question (1)**

How does resource diversification influence or constrain the organizational behaviors of nonprofit college access programs?

2. Tell me about [CAO]'s mission as you understand it.

*Possible probes:*

- *How has the mission changed over time?*
- *Have there been struggles or barriers to mission*
- *How is the mission communicated to other organizations?*
- *How is the mission communicated internally?*

#### **Research Question (2)**

What are the dominant resource streams utilized by nonprofit college access programs?

3. How is the mission primarily funded?

*Possible probes:*

- *Do funders include individuals, corporate, foundations, and/or government sources?*

4. Tell me about [CAO]'s programs.

5. How does funding influence programs?

*Possible probes:*

- *How have the programs changed over time?*
- *What are the goals of your programs?*

6. Tell me about your key partners.

*Possible probes:*

- *How have your partners changed over time?*
- *What criteria are used to select partners?*

7. How do key partners influence your program goals?

*Possible probes:*

- *How does partnering with corporations, foundations, K-12 schools or universities (any apply) influence the goals of the organization?*

8. Tell me about your work with foundations?

*Possible probes:*

- *What criteria are used to select foundation supporters?*
- *How has your organization's work with foundations changed over time?*
- *How does your organization's work with foundations influence decisions made about the organization's goals?*

*Transition:* O.k., now that we've discussed the organization's mission and external environment, let's switch gears and discuss how [CAO] uses research and creates college knowledge.

### **Research Question (3)**

How do nonprofit college access organizations act as intermediaries within the broader college access policy arena?

9. Is [CAO] a member of any coalitions or professional organizations?

10. How does [CAO] work with or influence these spheres or coalitions?

11. Tell me about [CAO]'s evaluation methods and use of research?

*Possible probes:*

- *How does your organization evaluate its outcomes?*
- *What kinds of data do you collect?*
- *How has your organization's use of research changed over time?*

12. What haven't I asked that you want to add?

*Summary Statement:* To summarize some of the themes that came up during our discussion, you mentioned [insert major themes].

Is this an accurate summary? Are there any others that I didn't include that are important to you to include?

*Wrap up:* Thank you again for agreeing to be interviewed and sharing your insights on college access programs with me today. If I have any additional questions, may I contact you again to follow-up?



# INTERVIEW CODE BOOK

<b>ABRV</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>a priori</b>
ACCS	College Access	yes
ACCNT	Accountability	yes
ALIGN	Alignment	yes
AUTMY	Autonomy	yes
BYIN	Buy in	yes
BRD	Board	no
CAFLD	College Access Field	yes
CHNG	Change	yes
CULT	Culture	yes
COMPLT	College Completion	no
COMPETE	Competition	yes
COLLAB	Collaboration	yes
COMPLX	Complexity	yes
CORP	Corporate	yes
DATA	Data	yes
DEBT	Debt	no
FIRSTG	First Generation	yes
FOUND	Foundations	yes
FORPRT	For-Profit	yes
FUND	Funding	yes
FUNDRS	Fundraising	yes
GOAL	Goals	yes
GOV	Government	yes
GRW	Grow	yes
IMPCT	Impact	yes
IMPRV	Improvement	yes
INFLN	Influence	yes
INTRMD	Intermediary Role	yes
KNLDGCR	Knowledge Creation	yes
LWINC	Low Income	no
MISSN	External Mission	yes
MEASR	Measurement	no
MNY	Money	no
NTWK	Network	no
NP	Nonprofit	yes
OPPRT	Opportunity	no
ORIGN	Founding Origin	no
PARTN	Partnerships	yes

<b>ABRV</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>a priori</b>
PRIV	Private	no
POLY	Policy	yes
POLIENV	Policy Environment	yes
POLTC	Politics	no
RELATN	Relationships	yes
RSRCH	Research	yes
RPRT	Report	yes
RSTRC	Restrictions	yes
SOCIGOOD	Social Good	no
SCALE	Scale	yes
SSPPT	Student Support	no
STRM	Streams	yes
SYSTEM	Systems	yes
STND	Standards or standardized	yes
URM	Underrepresented	yes
VAL	Values	yes
VISN	Vision	yes

Note: ‘yes’ a priori codes created before interviews with ‘no’ codes emerging during analysis.

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Respondents

Organization	Number of Interviews	Sample Position Titles*
Posse Foundation	5	Board Member
PeerForward	1	President
QuestBridge	2	Student
College Track	1	CEO/Founder
Bottom Line	1	Program Coordinator
College Horizons	4	VP Programs & Evaluation
College Possible	3	VP Fundraising & Development
College Advising Corps	5	VP Enrollment Management
		Senior Associate Director
		Administrative Coordinator
		Faculty Volunteer
		Academic Researcher
		Graduate Assistant
		Director
		Alumnus
Membership Associations	1	
Enrollment Management Professionals	2	
<b>Total Interviews</b>	<b>25</b>	

\*Note: To protect confidentiality, details connecting positions to organization are omitted.

## APPENDIX C

### Memorandum of Understanding Example

Contract # XX2020-21-0XX

**PEERFORWARD AND NAME OF DISTRICT IF DISTRICT SALE  
OR NAME OF SCHOOL IF DIRECT SALE TO SCHOOL**

**PARTNERSHIP CONTRACT**

**ACADEMIC YEAR:**  
**2020-2021**

**Recitals**

**THIS AGREEMENT**, entered into by and between **SAME DISTRICT OR SCHOOL NAME AS IN TITLE ABOVE** hereafter known as “School/District”, located at School or District Address, and **PEERFORWARD**, an Internal Revenue Service Code Section 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation, incorporated in the District of Columbia with principal offices located at 1140 3<sup>rd</sup> Street NE, Suite 320, Washington, DC 20002 hereafter known as “PeerForward”, confirms that PeerForward commits to the provisions of, and School/District commits to the implementation of, PeerForward’s college access program in service to School/District students during the above-referenced academic year(s).

**WHEREAS**, Based on proven research and extensive experience, PeerForward provides services intended to train, deploy, and coach teams of high school students to boost college preparation and enrollment across the entire school through the implementation of student-led postsecondary planning campaigns; and

**WHEREAS**, PeerForward offers access to an optional Digital Curriculum for educators to use with all students in the school, which is a downloadable set of lesson plans and activities that can be implemented in a variety of ways to engage and support students in postsecondary planning;

**WHEREAS**, School/District has a need to offer these services to schools which it operates; and

**WHEREAS**, School/District and PeerForward agree that PeerForward reserves the right based on tested best practices to make enhancements or modifications to the offering and delivery of its services in accordance with the current PeerForward system and fee structures.

**WHEREAS**, School/District and PeerForward have agreed that the results from the implementation of services under this Agreement will be impaired significantly if parties do not adhere to the mandatory requirements outlined herein.

**WHEREAS**, School/District and PeerForward have agreed to fully implement PeerForward, upon the terms and conditions set forth herein.

**NOW THEREFORE**, in consideration of the foregoing and the mutual covenants contained herein, and for other good and valuable consideration, the receipt and sufficiency of which are hereby acknowledged, School/District and PeerForward agree as follows:

*Agreement*

- 1. INCORPORATION OF RECITALS.** The matters recited above are hereby incorporated into and made a part of this Agreement.
- 2. TERM.** Pending School District's budget approval each fiscal year and agreement to adhere to specific mandatory implementation requirements, School/District and PeerForward agree to proceed with implementation of PeerForward to boost college preparation and enrollment of School/District's graduating seniors, beginning as of July 1, 2020 and continuing through the end of the 2020-21 Academic Year (June 30, 2021) for a total of twelve months hereafter known as the "Term", unless terminated sooner as provided herein.
- 3. CONTRACT MODIFICATION.** Notwithstanding any such enhancements or modifications, the fees outlined in this Agreement and any of the terms of the Agreement shall not be modified during the term of this Agreement without the written agreement of both parties. All modifications will be confirmed through a contract amendment form signed by both parties within 30 days of all anticipated changes.
- 4. EVENTS OF DEFAULT AND REMEDIES.**

**Events of Default.** Events of default include, but are not limited to, the following:

- i. Any material misrepresentation by School/District or PeerForward in the inducement of this Agreement or the performance of services;
- ii. Breach of any agreement, representation, or warranty made by School/District or PeerForward in this Agreement; or
- iii. Failure of School/District or PeerForward to perform requirements in accordance with or comply with the terms and conditions of this Agreement.

**Remedies.** In the event that School/District or PeerForward defaults under this Agreement, the non-defaulting Party will provide written notification via registered overnight mail to the defaulting Party specifying the areas of default. The remedies stated herein are not intended to be exclusive, and the Parties may pursue any and all other remedies available at law or in equity.

- 5. PEERFORWARD DELIVERABLES.** Contingent upon School/District's funding the amounts as set forth in Exhibit A ("Pricing and Schools") and implementing its contract

requirements, PeerForward agrees to deliver during the Term the products and services below, hereafter known collectively as the “PeerForward Program.”

- A. Provide criteria for the identification and engagement of the following:
  - i. For each school listed in Exhibit A, at least one (1) PeerForward Advisor from the school to support implementation of the PeerForward Program in their school. If purchasing multiple teams, each school can elect to either have one PeerForward Advisor per team or support multiple teams with a single PeerForward Advisor.
  - ii. For each Peer Leader Team enumerated in Exhibit A, four (4) 12th graders and four (4) 11th graders from the school who will serve as the Peer Leader Team throughout the 2020-21 Academic Year. If the program is renewed for subsequent academic years, four (4) 11th graders each year would continue on the Peer Leader Team as 12th graders the next year, and four (4) new 11th graders would be identified to join them.
- B. PeerForward Program Staff conduct an on-boarding meeting (in-person or videoconference) with the Principal or administrative lead and the PeerForward Advisor of each school listed in Exhibit A.
- C. Prior to Training Workshop for which school has been scheduled, PeerForward Program Staff conduct an on-boarding meeting (in-person, or by video conference or teleconference) with the PeerForward Advisor(s) identified for each school and the four (4) 12<sup>th</sup> grade members of each Peer Leader Team enumerated in Exhibit A.
- D. Design, organize, and run a PeerForward Training Workshop (the “Training Workshop”) to be attended by the four (4) 12th graders per Peer Leader Team for each school listed in Exhibit A and at least one (1) PeerForward Advisor per school identified using the criteria referenced above for the purpose of training these students and their PeerForward Advisor(s) to implement the PeerForward Program in their school.
- E. Provide to the PeerForward Advisor(s) program implementation resources and signaling materials to be distributed to the Peer Leaders at the start of the academic year, which can be used to promote program activities and goals throughout the entire school. These resources include a campaign playbook for the Advisor(s) and Peer Leaders to guide them to develop and execute successful postsecondary planning campaigns. Signaling materials may include posters, shirts, or other branded items that promote college and career planning.
- F. If Exhibit A indicates that the School/District has purchased the Digital Curriculum, by September 15, provide each school with access to the Digital Curriculum for educators to use with all students in the school, regardless of the number of Peer Leader Teams. Access expires June 30, 2021.
- G. Conduct a one-day Fall Training Camp and a one-day Spring Training Camp for all Peer Leaders and the PeerForward Advisor(s). These sessions may be delivered in a joint

event including Advisors and Peer Leaders from nearby participating high schools, depending on their geographic proximity.

- H. Provide support and resources for the Peer Leader Team(s) and PeerForward Advisor(s) to collect data needed to monitor progress toward program goals.
- I. During the Term, PeerForward Program Staff conducts regularly scheduled check-ins by videoconference or teleconference to share best practices, motivate, and coach the PeerForward Advisor(s) and Peer Leader Team(s) in the pursuit of their campaign goals.

**6. SCHOOL/DISTRICT REQUIREMENTS.** School/District agrees to perform the following mandatory activities associated with the PeerForward Program during the Term.

- A. Identify the following:
  - i. For each school listed in Exhibit A, at least one (1) PeerForward Advisor from the school to support implementation of the PeerForward Program in the school. If purchasing multiple teams, each school can elect to either have one PeerForward Advisor per team or support multiple teams with a single PeerForward Advisor.
  - ii. For each Peer Leader Team enumerated in Exhibit A, identify four (4) 12th graders and four (4) 11th graders from the school who will serve as a Peer Leader Team throughout the 2020-21 Academic Year. If the program is renewed for subsequent academic years, the four (4) 11th graders each year would continue on the Peer Leader Team as 12th graders the next year, and four (4) new 11th graders would be identified to join them.
- B. After the PeerForward Advisor(s) and (8) Peer Leader Team members have been identified each Academic Year, they will complete a registration process which includes providing basic demographics, contact information, health emergency information, and parental consent (where appropriate).
- C. Ensure that the appropriate technology is available for video conference check in calls with PeerForward Program Staff.
- D. Ensure that Principal or administrative lead of each school listed in Exhibit A participates in an on-boarding meeting (in-person or via videoconference or teleconference) with PeerForward Program Staff.
- E. Collaborate with PeerForward Program Staff to set up a schedule for resource and material distribution (to support program implementation), regular check-ins, and make every effort to adhere to the schedule or give PeerForward as much notice as possible if rescheduling is necessary.
- F. Adhere to the data submission deadlines for postsecondary planning milestone data, such as the number of students completing three (3) or more applications, the number

of students filing early for financial aid, and the number of students completing postsecondary plans).

- G. Prior to Training Workshop for which school has been scheduled, ensure that the PeerForward Advisor(s) identified for each school listed in Exhibit A and the four (4) 12<sup>th</sup> graders of each Peer Leader Team enumerated in Exhibit A participate in an on-boarding video conference or teleconference with PeerForward Program Staff.
- H. Ensure that the four (4) 12th graders identified for each Peer Leader Team enumerated in Exhibit A and the PeerForward Advisor(s) identified for each school listed in Exhibit A attend the Training Workshop for which school has been scheduled.
- I. Schedule and pay for transportation to and from the Training Workshop for the PeerForward Advisor(s) and 12th graders for each Peer Leader Team participating from each school.
- J. Within the first 30 days of the start of the 2020-21 Academic Year, ensure that the PeerForward Advisor(s) distribute materials to support and promote program implementation activities and goals to all eight (8) members of each Peer Leader Team.
- K. Ensure that the PeerForward Advisor(s) and all eight (8) members of each Peer Leader Team participate in a one-day Fall Training Camp and a one-day Spring Training Camp with PeerForward Program Staff, to be scheduled during the school week, on a date to be jointly determined by the PeerForward Advisor(s) and PeerForward Program Staff.
- L. Schedule and pay for transportation to and from the one-day Fall Training Camp and the one-day Spring Training Camp for the PeerForward Advisor(s) and all eight (8) members of each Peer Leader Team enumerated in Exhibit A. These Camps, which are typically local and accessible by bus or public transportation, will be scheduled during the school week, on dates to be jointly determined by the PeerForward Advisor(s) and PeerForward Program Staff. At Training Camps, multiple Peer Leader teams come together to receive additional training on how to succeed in their campaigns and to build the momentum around the movement toward college going.
- M. Transportation costs for the Training Workshop and the Fall and Spring Training Camps may include airfare/train for students and educators traveling to training events outside their immediate area. For schools and districts requiring air or train transportation, PeerForward may, at its discretion, book and pay for that travel. Any stipends the school is required to pay educators to participate in these training events are the responsibility of the school or district.
- N. If Exhibit A indicates that the School/District has purchased the Digital Curriculum, ensure it is available for educators to use with all students in the school easily and flexibly without the ongoing support of PeerForward. A school's Digital Curriculum access may not be shared with any students or educators outside of their school.



- O. Throughout the 2020-21 Academic Year, ensure that the PeerForward Advisor(s) and all eight (8) members of each Peer Leader Team participate in regularly-scheduled coaching sessions with PeerForward Program Staff.
  - P. Throughout the 2020-21 Academic Year, gather data for the purpose of tracking progress toward achieving program goals.
  - Q. Ensure that the principal or administrative lead meets with the PeerForward Advisor(s) and Peer Leader Team(s) regularly during the school year to learn about the progress of the school's program activities.
  - R. Work with PeerForward to ensure Agreement compliance during Term.
- 7. PAYMENT TERMS.** In consideration for products and services delivered during the Term, immediately following the signing of this Agreement PeerForward will invoice School/District for the "Net Price Total for All Peer Leader Teams for Contract Term" listed in Exhibit A, according to the instructions in Exhibit B. Payment is due Net 30 Days from invoice date. To help support program costs, PeerForward sometimes receives government funding (e.g., federal Social Innovation Fund grants and i3 grants; state grants; local grants). Some of these funding streams have matching requirements. PeerForward may use the fees collected from School/District to fulfill these matching requirements.
- 8. GOVERNING LAW JURISDICTION.** This Agreement shall be governed, construed and interpreted under the laws of the State of State Name (the "State") and shall be deemed to be executed and performed in the State, without regard to any conflict of law or choice of law principles. Any legal action arising out of or relating to this Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State, and the parties agree to the exclusive exercise of jurisdiction and venue over them by a court of competent jurisdiction located in the State. The parties agree that no action concerning this Agreement may be commenced anywhere but the State.
- 9. REPORTING.** During the term of this Agreement, the following persons or designees have been designated by PeerForward and School/District to receive all notices required under this Agreement, confer with on a regular basis, and as may be reasonably requested, concerning the services performed under this Agreement, student data and issues related to the services. Parties also agree to meet and confer with other School/District and PeerForward administrators, officers and employees as directed or deemed necessary or appropriate.

**School/District's Designated Contact Person for Agreement (please print)**

Name	
Title	
Email	
Phone	

**PeerForward's Designated Contact Person for Agreement (please print)**

Name	
Title	
Email	
Phone	

**10. PEERFORWARD BACKGROUND CHECKS.** PeerForward hereby certifies to the School/District that it conducts background checks on all staff and volunteers that may come in contact with School/District students in accordance with all district, local, state and federal regulations and laws.

**11. DISTRICT/SCHOOL BACKGROUND CHECKS.** School/District hereby certifies that it will be solely responsible for conducting background checks on all adult School/District staff and volunteers, associated with this contract, in accordance with all district, local, state and federal regulations and laws.

**12. ASSIGNMENT.** This Agreement will be binding on the Parties and their respective successors and assigns, provided, however, School/District and PeerForward may not assign this Agreement or any obligations imposed hereunder without the prior written consent of the other Party.

**13. NONDISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION.**

- A. Obligation of Confidentiality - In performing services under this Agreement, PeerForward and School/District may be exposed to and will be required to use certain "Confidential Information". PeerForward and School/District along with their employees, agents or representatives will not, use, directly or indirectly, such Confidential Information for purposes other than the purposes outlined in this Agreement.
- B. Definition - "Confidential Information" means information, not generally known, and proprietary to the PeerForward or School/District or to a third party for whom the PeerForward or School/District is performing work, including, without limitation, information concerning any patents or trade secrets, confidential or secret designs, processes, formulae, source codes, plans, devices or material, research and development, proprietary software, analysis, techniques, materials or designs (whether or not patented or patentable), directly or indirectly useful in any aspect of the business of the PeerForward or School/District. All information which PeerForward or School/District acquires or becomes acquainted with during the period of this Agreement, whether developed by PeerForward, School/District or others, which PeerForward or School/District has a reasonable basis to believe to be Confidential.

**14. ENTIRE AGREEMENT AND AMENDMENTS.** This Agreement and the documents referred to herein, as amended from time to time, represent the entire 2019-20 school year agreement between the parties and supersede any and all prior agreements.

- 15. WAIVER.** No failure on the part of either party at any time to require the performance by the other party of any term hereof shall be taken or held to be a waiver of such term or in any way affect such party's right to enforce such term, and no waiver on the part of either party of any term hereof shall be taken or held to be a waiver of any other term hereof or a breach thereof.
- 16. SEVERABILITY.** If any clause or provision of this Agreement is illegal, invalid or unenforceable under present or future laws effective during the term of this Agreement, then and in that event, it is the intention of the parties hereto that the remainder of this Agreement shall not be affected thereby.
- 17. HEADINGS.** All paragraph headings contained in this Agreement are for convenience of reference only, do not form a part of this Agreement and shall not affect in any way the meaning or interpretation of this Agreement.
- 18. COUNTERPARTS.** This Agreement may be executed in two or more counterparts, each of which shall be deemed to be an original.
- 19. BINDING EFFECT.** This Agreement shall not be binding and effective unless and until it is duly and fully executed by both parties. This Agreement shall inure to the benefit of and be binding upon the successors and permitted assigns of the respective parties.
- 20. INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR.** The School/District and PeerForward agree that PeerForward will act for all purposes as an independent contractor and not as an employee, in the performance of PeerForward's duties under this Agreement. Accordingly, PeerForward shall be responsible for payment of all taxes, including federal, state and local taxes arising out of PeerForward's services, including by way of illustration but not limitation, federal and state income tax, Social Security tax, Unemployment Insurance taxes, and any other taxes. In addition, PeerForward and PeerForward's employees shall not be entitled to any vacation, insurance, health, welfare, or other fringe benefits provided by the School/District. PeerForward shall have no authority to assume or incur any obligation or responsibility, nor make any warranty for or on behalf of the School/District or to attempt to bind the School/District. PeerForward hereby represents that PeerForward's valid taxpayer identification number, as defined by the United States Internal Revenue Code (social security number or federal employer identification number), is 52-2007028.
- 21. INSURANCE.** PeerForward shall purchase and maintain throughout the term of this Agreement insurance or indemnity protection that is co-equal with its indemnity obligations. This shall include, but not necessarily be limited to (1) broad form commercial general liability insurance and (2) personal/commercial automobile liability insurance. The limit of liability for such coverage shall be no less than \$1 million per claim/occurrence, and the School/District and its directors, officers, and employees, to the extent of the owed indemnity obligations, shall be named as "additional insureds" under such policies. PeerForward shall also maintain workers' compensation insurance.
- 22. TERMINATION.** Both Parties shall have the right to terminate this Agreement, the services or any portion of the services:

- A. upon a Party's failure to cure (if curable) any breach of any provision of this Agreement within thirty (30) days after written notice is given to the breaching Party setting forth the pertinent facts constituting breach;
- B. if either Party has breached any of its representations and warranties;
- C. if a Party becomes insolvent, makes a general assignment for the benefit of creditors, files a voluntary petition of bankruptcy, suffers or permits the appointment of a receiver for its business or assets, or becomes subject to any proceeding under any bankruptcy or insolvency law, whether domestic or foreign, or has wound up or liquidated, voluntary or otherwise;
- D. immediately, upon School's failure to pay for PeerForward's system in accordance with Agreement;
- E. for convenience, at any time, upon thirty (30) days prior written notice with the following payment schedule in place for services already rendered prior to early termination:
  - a. If School/District terminates Agreement before or on 7/1/19, School/District will incur no penalty.
  - b. If School/District terminates Agreement after 7/1/19 and before or on 9/15/19, School/District agrees to pay PeerForward 75% of the "Net Price Total for all Peer Leader Teams for Contract Term" listed in Exhibit A. Payment is due Net 30 Days from invoice date.
  - c. If School/District terminates Agreement after 9/15/19, whether or not Peer Leaders and educators from School/District's high school(s) have attend Training Workshop, School/District agrees to pay PeerForward in full for the "Net Price Total for all Peer Leader Teams for Contract Term" listed in Exhibit A. Payment is due Net 30 Days from invoice date.

Upon receipt of the written notice of termination, the non-terminating Party shall deliver immediately to the terminating Party all required reports, plans, drawings, specifications, data, estimates, summaries, or other material and information, whether completed or in process, accumulated by the non-terminating Party in the performance of services herein up to the point of termination. The rights and remedies of the terminating Party provided in this Agreement shall be cumulative with and in addition to the rights and remedies otherwise available at law or elsewhere provided for herein.

## **23. INDEMNIFICATION.**

- A. PeerForward agrees to indemnify and hold harmless School/District, and its members, trustees, employees, agents, officers, and officials, from and against any and all liabilities, taxes, tax penalties, interest, losses, penalties, damages, and expenses of

any kind, nature, or character, including costs and attorney fees, arising out of or relating to any and all claims, liens, damages, obligations, actions, suits, judgments, settlements, or causes of action of every kind, nature, or character, in connection with or arising out of the acts or omissions of either Party or its employees, subcontractors, or agents under this Agreement. This provision expressly applies to, but is not limited in application to, matters and circumstances involving or implicating the unauthorized use of any trade secrets, or United States patent or copyright infringement. The indemnities set forth herein will survive the expiration or termination of this Agreement.

- B. School/District agrees to indemnify and hold harmless PeerForward, and its members, trustees, employees, agents, officers, and officials, from and against any and all liabilities, taxes, tax penalties, interest, losses, penalties, damages, and expenses of any kind, nature, or character, including costs and attorney fees, arising out of or relating to any and all claims, liens, damages, obligations, actions, suits, judgments, settlements, or causes of action of every kind, nature, or character, arising out of the intentional or malicious acts of School/District or its employees, subcontractors, or agents under this Agreement. This provision expressly applies to, but is not limited in application to, matters and circumstances involving or implicating the unauthorized use of any trade secrets, or United States patent or copyright infringement. The indemnities set forth herein will survive the expiration or termination of this Agreement.

**24. COUNTERPARTS FORM ONE AGREEMENT.** This Agreement may be executed in multiple counterparts, each of which will be deemed to be an original, and together the counterparts will form one fully-executed, fully-enforceable Agreement.

***AGREED TO***, on behalf of PeerForward and School/District, respectively, by their representatives:

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature(s)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Print Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Print Title**

## PRICING AND SCHOOLS

XX2020-21-XXX

Total Fees for Period 07/01/20- 06/30/21		
Public School System		
PeerForward Program Implementation for 2020-21 School Year		
Total Number of Peer Leader Teams for Contract Term		1
	Per Peer Leader Team Per Year	Total for Contract Term
PeerForward Program Implementation 2020-21 School Year	\$13,500	\$13,500
<i>Standard Price for Program Implementation</i>	<b>\$13,500</b>	<b>\$13,500</b>
Digital Curriculum for 2020-21 School Year		
Total Number of Schools Purchasing Digital Curriculum with PeerForward Program Implementation		1
	Per School Per Year	Total for Contract Term
Digital Curriculum	\$1,000	\$1,000
<i>Standard Price for Digital Curriculum</i>	<b>\$1,000</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>
GRAND TOTAL NET PRICE		<b>\$14,500</b>

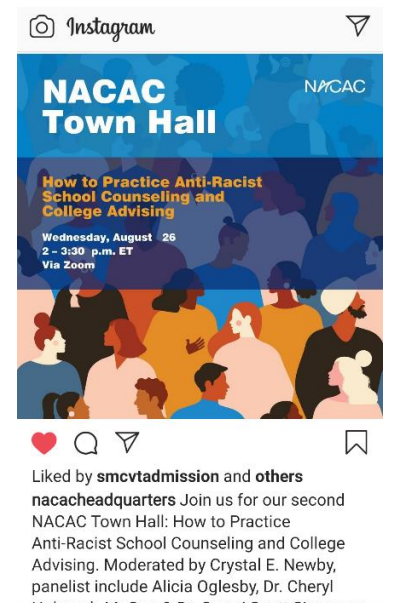
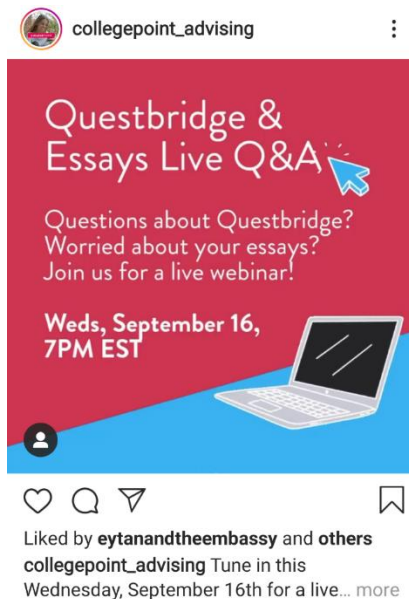
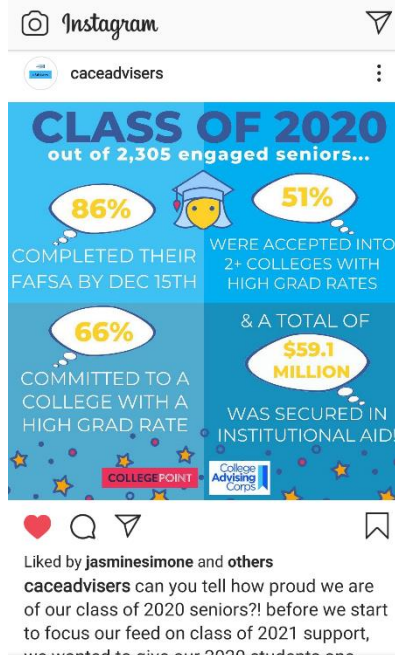
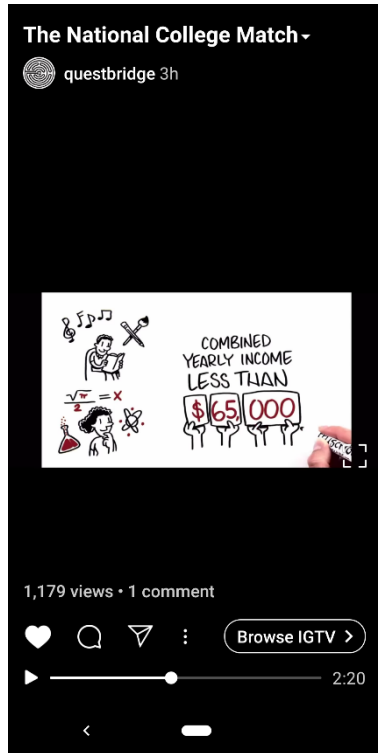
High School	Number of Peer Leader Teams
School A	1

Total High Schools = 1

Grand Total Peer Leader Teams = 1

## APPENDIX D

### Social Media Examples



## APPENDIX E

### Ecommerce Examples

Posse's 30th anniversary full-zip hoody: \$39.99



Posse's 30th anniversary, the 1989 Snapback sports the classic style: \$24.99





## APPENDIX F

### Opportunity Brokers' Playlist

**Intro:** Meek Mill, (2020). The Other Side of America [Song]. Maybach Music Group LLC/Atlantic Recording Corporation.

**Intro:** Drake, (2020). War [Song]. OVO, Republic Records; UMG Recordings, Inc.

**Intro:** J. Cole, (2019). Middle Child [Song]. Dreamville, Inc. Roc Nation Records.

**Intro:** Childish Gambino, (2018). This is America [Song]. mcDJ; RCA.

**Intro:** Cardi B ft. Bad Bunny & J Balvin, (2018). I Like It [Song]. Atlantic Recording Corporation; Warner Music Group Company.

**Intro:** Khalid (2017). Young Dumb and Broke [Song]. RCA Records; Sony Music Entertainment.

**Intro:** Fat Joe, Remy Ma, Jay Z ft. French Montana & Infared, (2016). All the Way Up (Remix). [Song]. RNG; EMPIRE.

**Intro:** Logic, (2014). Till the End [Song]. Def Jam Recordings; UMG Recordings, Inc.

**Intro:** Lupe Fiasco, (2012). Around My Way (Freedom Ain't Free) [Song]. Atlantic Recording Corporation.

1. **Posse Foundation:** Rhianna, (2015). Bitch Better Have My Money [Song]. Westbury Road Entertainment. Roc Nation Records.

*Moo-la-lah...y'all should know me well enough...please don't call me on my bluff. Pay me what you owe me. Kamikaze if you think you gon' knock me off the top...don't act like you forgot, I call the shots, shots, shots. Where ya'll at?*

2. **PeerFoward:** Wu-Tang Clan, (1997). Triumph [Song]. RCA Records. Sony Music Entertainment.

*I inspect view through the future see millennium...play my position in the game of life standing firm...tell your story walking, run for your brother kid, run for your team...so I can squeeze the advantage...the saga continues.*

3. **QuestBridge:** Roddy Rich, (2019). The Box [Song]. Atlantic Recording Corporation. Warner Music Group Company.

*I got the mojo deals, we been trappin like the '80s...got the cash app...and I really wanna to know, where you at, at? Gotta move smarter, gotta move harder.*

4. **College Track:** G-Eazy ft. Yo Gotti, YBN Nahmir, (2018). 1942 [Song]. RCA Records, Sony Music Entertainment.

*I don't follow rules...they don't like how talk that...I'ma get the bag, you can put some trust on it...everything is new, so it's never rust on it. Yeah, I'm on then I'm off that.*

5. **Bottom Line:** Joyner Lucas & Will Smith, (2020). Will (Remix) [Song]. Twenty-Nine Music Group, Distributed by Tully.

*I'm feeling like Will (hey), I feel like a prince, I'm feelin' myself. I'm loaded with bills cause I wasn't blessed with No Uncle Phil. Don't know how it feels I wanted to flex...On top of my dreams, Joyner, I know you inspired by me. I just wanted the respect first, I still ain't ever let the fame change me. Pushing limits and make it cool. Brick by brick, building a wall that one can break.*

6. **College Horizons:** Big Sean ft. Nipsy Hustle, (2020). Deep Reverence [Song]. Getting Out Our Dreams, Inc./Def Jam Recordings, UMG Recordings, Inc.

*This time is for the money, I don't need credit...I'm the don 'cause the streets said it. Block love me with a deep reverence...Energy crazy, I realized that's it a two-way street...Should be a billionaire based off the time off I'm not takin'...You don't know how deep your roots is or what your ancestors had done...Who knew they history so they knew where to take it farther...So I*

*can't give you everything that you want for free though...I take care of my family and beat the odds that were deadly.*

**College Horizons** pick: Tribe Called Red, (2013). Sisters [Song]. Tribal Spirit Music.

7. **College Possible:** Eminem ft. Joyner Lucas, (2018). Lucky You [Song]. An Aftermath/Shady/Interscope Records release; Aftermath Records.

*I'm about to risk it all, I ain't got too much to lose...Y'all gotta move, (yeah)  
y'all gotta move...They've invented a level off in the ghetto to ghetto lookin'  
for somethin' I prolly can never find now...keep all of the money, I never  
wanted the lifestyle...when I die, I'm goin' out as the underdog who never  
lost hope...I'm that cracker...and actually come from humble  
beginnings...nobody could ever take away the legacy.*

8. **College Advising Corps:** Drake, (2013). [Song]. Started from the Bottom. Cash Money Records Inc.

*Started from the bottom now we're here, started from the bottom, now the  
whole team here...we don't like to do too much explaining, story stays the  
same I never changed it...story stay the same through the money and the  
fame...there ain't really much I here that's poppin without us. Started from  
the bottom now we're here...*

**Outro:** 2Tupac ft. Talent (1998). Changes. [Song]. Death Row Records/Interscope Records.

**Outro:** Nas, ft. Lauryn Hill (1996), If I Ruled the World (Imagine That). [Song]. Columbia Records; Sony Music Entertainment.

**Outro:** Public Enemy(1990), Fight the Power. [Song]. Def Jam Recordings.

**Outro:** Marvin Gay (1971), Inner-City Blues – Make me Want to Holler. [Song]. Motown Records; UMG Recordings, Inc.

## APPENDIX G

### Socio-Emotional Supports Example

#### Intervention by CoVitality Social-Emotional Health Survey Scores

College Track's Wellness Program is committed to supporting our students' social-emotional wellness needs on their path to and through college. We do so by fostering an environment at our centers that is optimized for learning and healing through trauma-informed practices and by providing evidence-based wellness education and counseling to students who need it. We administer the CoVitality Assessment (CoVi) annually, which measures key psychological mindsets associated with students' positive, thriving development. CoVi tells us which students would benefit from wellness services to support their college completion journey and in what ways. We then intervene with students to bolster their social-emotional well-being assets and/or work to decrease their levels of psychological distress through evidence-based interventions. The chart below outlines our current College Track student body CoVi results along with the wellness interventions that our students receive:

