

FOCUS ON THE STUDENT: BUILDING A STUDENT-CENTERED CUSTOMER
SERVICE ENVIRONMENT IN GEORGIA'S TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

by

JANET HEARD KELLY

(Under the Direction of Karen Webber)

ABSTRACT

Leaders in higher education enrollment services constantly seek ways to compete more effectively for students and to grow enrollments. Some researchers conclude that one way to achieve these goals is to focus on the student through centralized, student-centered enrollment services that increase satisfaction rates and, thus, commitment to the institution. Qualitative data derived from this study indicate that college leaders at one large technical college in Georgia accomplished their goal to create a true one-stop center that focused on providing efficient and friendly centralized services to students. While both positive and negative effects were felt during the transition, staff members indicated that they found a new comfort zone and appreciated the focus on morale by executive leaders. Efforts during the three-year transition process led to noticeable results with increased retention and graduation rates, and importantly, likely contributing to a double-digit percentage increase in enrollment. By combining research, data-driven results, and a sincere focus on excellent service to students, Gwinnett Technical College was able to build a highly effective, one-stop enrollment services center. While each institution has unique facets that should be considered, findings from this study may be useful to leaders

at other colleges who wish to modify and expand student services to the growing, diverse student body in higher education and do so in ways that increase student satisfaction, as well as organizational efficiency.

INDEX WORDS: Higher education; customer service; technical college; two-year colleges; community colleges; enrollment services; one-stop center; student-centered service; organizational leadership.

FOCUS ON THE STUDENT: BUILDING A STUDENT-CENTERED CUSTOMER
SERVICE ENVIRONMENT IN GEORGIA'S TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

by

JANET HEARD KELLY

ABJ, University of Georgia, 2002

MPA, Valdosta State University, 2009

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

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2018

© 2018

Janet Heard Kelly

All Rights Reserved

FOCUS ON THE STUDENT: BUILDING A STUDENT-CENTERED CUSTOMER
SERVICE ENVIRONMENT IN GEORGIA'S TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

by

JANET HEARD KELLY

Major Professor:	Karen Webber
Committee:	Timothy Cain
	John Dayton

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2018

DEDICATION

*This dissertation is dedicated to
my gracious, loving and supportive husband, Jim Kelly,
my intelligent, kind, and tenacious daughter, Amelia Grace Kelly,
my compassionate, caring, and witty son, Carson Alexander Kelly,
without whom I would not be where or who I am today. Your love, your actions, your
commitment, and your unending support make me a better person,
and for that I am truly thankful.*

*Also, this final work is dedicated to
my mom, who inspired the perseverance and determination to achieve and succeed, and
my supportive dad, who showed me what hard work looks like and has always stood firm
and helped me to achieve my dreams.*

*And to the rest of my family, with the love, encouragement, and support you have shown
me over the years, you, too, have helped make this journey possible.*

*Last, but not least, my work and my life are dedicated to
my Lord and Savior, who has helped me to win the race.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Along this journey to reach the pinnacle of education, so many have offered support, guidance, encouragement, and simply an ear for listening. I want to acknowledge those who have been a part of this experience and have helped make it possible. First and foremost, none of this would have been possible without the unwavering and steadfast support of my incredible husband, Jim. His tender love and generous support has gotten me through the toughest times and helped keep me focused on the end goal. My sweet daughter Amelia has shown quiet and gentle support through listening and giving sage words of encouragement. My loving son, Carson, has helped me keep my eye on the prize and taught me through his wit and carefree nature that there is so much more to life than meets the eye. I hope that my work and determination to finish this chapter of my life can encourage and inspire these two awesome kids to achieve all of their hopes and dreams!

To my major professor, Dr. Karen Webber, and committee members Dr. Tim Cain and Dr. John Dayton, thank you for the guidance, wisdom, and patience as you helped me muddle through this process. I can't tell you how much I appreciate all that you have done to help and encourage me along the way. To cohort 4, you will never know what your advice, wisdom, diverse points of view, and friendship have meant over our two short years together. I am hopeful that as we all continue our journeys, that our paths cross again in the future many times.

It goes without saying that my work family is owed a tremendous debt of gratitude. Dr. Ivan Allen, all I ever needed to know about leadership, I learned from you! Your guidance and inspiration are immeasurable and invaluable to me as I grow in my career. I truly appreciate all you do to motivate, inspire, and lead with a servant's heart. Special heartfelt thanks go to Dr. Bruce Foster, for inspiring motivation and resolve, and for giving me a taste of what it would be like to achieve this milestone. And, to (the future Dr.) Brian Snelgrove, thank you for lighting the spark, for reinvigorating the journey, and for also simply being an ear to lean on at times. Neither of you will ever know how much your friendship and support has meant to me. I will be forever thankful for your patience, understanding, friendship, and advice. So many of my other work family members have supported and encouraged this journey—you know who you are. I could not have made it without you!

To all others who have been a part of this enlightening journey, thank you! Your support and encouragement will always be treasured in my heart. It feels good to finally be able to say I'm a DOUBLE DAWG! Go DAWGS!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Problem Statement and Knowledge Gap	2
Study Significance	4
Purpose of This Study	5
Research Questions	7
Summary and Definition of Terms	9
2 LITERATURE AND THEORY	12
Background on Enrollment Management	12
Marketing and Branding	17
Defining the Student as the Customer	22
One-Stop Centers	25
Organizational Structure	29
Leadership	33
The Technical College System of Georgia	35
Theoretical Framework	38

Summary	46
3 METHODOLOGY	47
Research Design.....	47
The Case Institution	52
Trustworthiness.....	55
Data Collection	56
4 RESULTS	65
Qualitative Interviews.....	66
Environmental Observation and Document Review.....	92
Summary	96
5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	97
Introduction.....	97
Research Questions—Findings.....	97
Limitations	103
Study Conclusions	106
The BOC Framework.....	110
Institutional Isomorphism	114
Significance of the Study	115
Considerations for Other Institutions.....	116
Considerations for Student Satisfaction.....	117
Recommendations for Future Research	117
Summary	119
REFERENCES	121

APPENDICES

A	Case Study Invitation to Participate.....	136
B	Initial Institutional Study Approval	138
C	Institutional Approval to Conduct Study	139
D	Site Participation Thank You Letter	140
E	Invitation Letter—Management and Leaders	141
F	Invitation Letter—Staff Members.....	143
G	Interview Participation Consent Form	145
H	Interview Questions—Senior Leaders	149
I	Interview Questions—Staff Members/Mid-Level Managers	151
J	Document Review.....	153

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Interviewee Demographic Information.....	66
Table 2: Student Satisfaction Surveys	69
Table 3: Student Satisfaction Surveys: Post-Transition	99
Table 4: Institutionally-Provided Data.....	103

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 2.1: Black's (2004) Enrollment Management Organizational Models	16
Figure 2.2: Toma's (2010) BOC Framework Web.....	40
Figure 4.1: Qualitative Interview Themes and Sub-Themes	67
Figure 5.1: Dado, et al. (2012) Causal Relationships Conceptual Model.....	108
Figure 5.2: Applying the BOC Framework: A New Way of Doing Business.....	114

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Putting the focus on the student in higher education institutions is a dubious topic that is increasingly at the center of many debates on the need to increase enrollment in a highly competitive market. Today's higher education leaders are faced with the task of addressing enrollment shortfalls amid this new era of competition. Declining enrollments, a growing number of institutions, and a smaller pool of potential applicants, (Prescott & Bransberger, 2012; Sarkane & Sloka, 2015; Shannon & Smith, 2006; Sharabi, 2013) combined with the pressures of performance measurement, (Guilbault, 2016; Li, 2013; Mark, 2013) have prompted many higher education leaders to look for new and innovative ways to attract and retain students through enhanced services, marketing and branding, and other channels of process improvement, all of which can ultimately lead to a student-centered customer service environment (Bontrager, 2004; Hossler, 1999; Khanna, Jacob, & Yadav, 2014; Martinez, Smith, & Humphreys, 2013).

This innovative leadership is also needed to address other challenges related to enrollment that colleges and universities are currently experiencing (Kouzes & Posner, 2006), including the fluctuation of the health of the economy. Pennington, McGinty, and Williams (2002) found that the economy's health can be attributed as an indicator of community college enrollment. When the economy's health is declining, enrollment in community colleges increases, and when jobs are plentiful, enrollment typically wanes. This trend is true for Georgia's community technical colleges as well. Across Georgia,

these institutions enjoyed an umbrella of enrollment growth as the rain fell on the economy during the Great Recession. As jobs were eliminated and unemployment numbers rose, high numbers of students sought skills for a career transition at technical colleges. Based on TCSG data (TCSG Knowledge Management System, 2016), colleges across the state experienced dramatic enrollment increases from 2008-2011. However, in 2012, trends show a leveling off of enrollment growth, and then a steady decline as the economy improved. This data reveals that it is now more important than ever to develop and use proven and effective measures to recruit, enroll, and retain students in order to manage enrollment levels to meet institutional and state completion goals, to meet workforce demands, and to maintain the financial stability of the college. However, the question remains, what is the best way to do so?

Problem Statement and Knowledge Gap

To address enrollment woes, many college leaders have come to the conclusion that the solution may be as simple as old-fashioned customer service and placing a priority on providing satisfaction and quality service to students (Mark, 2013; Martinez et al., 2013)—the technical college’s customers. Even so, many would argue that the concept of ‘the customer is always right’ is not relevant in higher education, but rather today’s college student is required to be a partner in the enrollment and academic learning process and in many ways, assist in accounting for their own satisfaction (Black, 2004; Guilbault, 2016; Mark, 2013; Wueste & Fishman, 2010). Students and parents may argue that since they are paying for services, the onus lies with institution officials to make sure customers are satisfied. Sharabi (2013) contends that academic institutions can work toward adjusting to this new reality by implementing the principles of customer

centrality and improve services by focusing on the institution's organizational structure as it affects service to students.

When looking at the relationship between service quality, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions in higher education, Dado, Petrovicova, Cuzovic, and Rajic (2012) and Mark (2013) suggest that quality of service and level of satisfaction lead to greater customer loyalty, which conceivably can have a positive impact on enrollment and retention. Tinto's (1993) work asserts that the institution's reaction and service to students are of primary importance to retention, persistence, and completion. While colleges are utilizing marketing and branding to influence a student's initial choice (Khanna et al., 2014; Martinez et al., 2013; Webster & Hammond, 2011), higher education administrators also realize it is more advantageous to keep the customers already on board (i.e., retention), rather than solely relying on recruiting new ones (Guilbault, 2016). While scholarly research shows the connection between service to students and their persistence, what is not clear is the ideal method for achieving levels of service that have the desired impact on enrollment and persistence. Therefore, leaders in institutions of higher learning must postulate what measures will work best to help meet the demands of the student and implement changes in structure, services, and processes that help meet those needs.

One method that is being widely used today to gain and retain the customer in higher education is creating a student-centered customer service environment within the enrollment services unit at the institution. This unit is typically the first point of contact a prospective student has with the college. Quality customer service must be a priority for all college employees, including faculty and support staff, such as security and facilities,

in order for the model to have a positive impact on enrollment numbers. However, this study specifically focuses on customer service as it relates to the enrollment functions as the first point of contact for students at one technical college in Georgia.

Study Significance

In my own workplace, it is evident that customer service has a profound impact on the students' intentions to enroll or persist with the college. When surveying students on why they chose to attend the college where I work, the overwhelming majority report that their decision was based on positive word-of-mouth from currently or previously enrolled students (CGTC Marketing Survey, 2015). Positive word-of-mouth recommendation can be directly related to customer satisfaction in higher education (Li, 2013), which results from the creation of a service culture in higher education (Martinez et al., 2013)

Higher education is a service that requires person-to-person interaction (Oldfield & Baron, 2000; Sultan & Wong, 2012). In order to achieve enrollment goals through quality service, leaders must first implement a culture of service among employees that will translate to a positive perception among students (Sultan & Wong, 2012). A culture of service in higher education must allow students to be at the center of all services (Seeman & O'Hara, 2006), and leaders must recognize and implement the values and beliefs needed for this transition and manage in such a way that all employees trust and take part in the process of providing quality services to the consumer (Martinez et al., 2013). Creating the ideal organizational structure for a student-focused service environment is also a part of this culture of service. To create an organizational climate that lends itself to excellent customer service, leaders must implement strategic

organizational change and positively influence the way subordinates feel about working for their employer to increase retention among staff as well (Buckingham & Coffman, 2014; Martinez et al., 2013).

In the decade preceding the turn of the 21st century, much of the literature focused on service quality in relation to effective course delivery and quality of courses and teachings (Oldfield & Baron, 2000). However, in recent years, the focus of research on service and quality in higher education has shifted to front-line enrollment services where students make their final choice regarding whether or not to attend the institution. Even though an abundance of literature exists regarding customer service and its application in higher education around the world, (Dado, et al., 2012; deMacedo Bergamo, et al., 2012; Li, 2013; Joseph & Joeseeph, 1997; Oluseye, et al., 2014; Pember, et al., 2014; Sarkane & Sloka, 2015; Tapp, et al., 2004) scholarly research on this same topic in American institutions is far less plentiful. When specifically focused on open access technical colleges, the research on customer-service orientation is practically non-existent. Even though the idea of a student-centered customer service environment is not foreign to technical colleges in Georgia, the implementation of such a model has not been studied.

Purpose of This Study

As markets change, public higher education institutions are continually seeking the competitive advantage to ensure that enrollment levels remain satisfactory. New ways of thinking and methods of performance are needed due to increased competition, both locally and globally, increased student mobility, and public funding that is increasingly performance-based (Helgesen, 2008). One approach that is being used by many institutions to combat enrollment declines is focusing on the student in the delivery

of services. Typically, higher education officials have provided enrollment services in a manner that is most convenient for the employee and the institution. However, the challenge of the expectations of today's students prompts change in the organization, management ideologies, and distribution of student services.

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine the forces of change and the effects related to how a large technical college in Georgia has transformed its organizational structure, physical space, and methods of services for enrollment in order to achieve a more student-centric focus. During my research, I examined the efforts of the unit leader in making decisions regarding the move to a more student-centric service environment and the ways in which subordinate staff members perceived and participated in the process of making changes within this institution.

While copious amounts of research exist regarding building a customer-centered service environment in international institutions, the same does not exist for U.S. institutions, particularly technical colleges in Georgia. As open access institutions, the service provided to a potential or admitted student is highly critical, yet the best ways for a technical college in Georgia to achieve an effective student focus has received little scholarly attention.

This study contributes to the literature focused on leadership in organizational and structural change in the context of creating a customer-centered service environment in a Georgia technical college. It is evident that customer service plays a large part in a student's decision about which institution to attend. With more options than ever, higher education institutions continually seek ways to set itself apart from others, constantly looking for the best way to provide ideal customer service to potential students. Some

choose to continue in ‘the way we’ve always done it’ philosophy and do not take into account the changing needs of an evolving customer. This study sought to examine how the changes geared toward a student-centered service environment within the enrollment services office at a technical college can benefit the level of service delivered to the student related to employee productivity, and ultimately, the college’s overall enrollment goals.

Research Questions

As decisions are made regarding changes to structure or processes to implement a more student-focused organizational structure, it is important to keep strategic management in mind to build organizational capacity. Because higher education institutions are vulnerable to isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004), leaders must make the best decisions possible for their own institution and avoid mimicking other institutions solely in the pursuit of enrollment goals. For a higher education institution to thrive, the organization must adapt to the existence of competitors and the pressures associated with this competition (Ashworth, Boyne, & Delbridge, 2009; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Vught, 2008) within their own confines of service.

For the institution at the center of this case study, leaders realized that the college would not be able to sustain or reinvigorate growth under its former model of service to students related to enrollment even before the beginning of the decline of enrollment numbers in 2012. When the economy was at an historical low and enrollment growth rates were at an historical high, leaders noticed the angst and frustration of students and realized they must take action. Too many students were not serviced properly due to high

demand and long processing time. Complaints were abundant and escalated students were accommodated in a separate area to confine the frustration of students whose needs were not met. Therefore, upon the completion of internal research and anecdotal evidence related to customer service, leaders at the college made the decision to invest in a new model of service to the student-customer to help build organizational capacity as evidenced by the findings described in this case study.

Strategic management is useful in implementing and understanding the dynamics associated with organizational changes made with the intention to contribute to the institution's success and ultimate survival in a crowded market. Adaptation to surrounding market forces is essential. By studying other institutions' success and building organizational capacity by identifying areas of weakness within the strategic management framework, the mimetic institutional isomorphism and organizational restructuring to build capacity can be used to create a student-focused service environment. College officials are heeding the call to stray from the long-held norms of higher education to transition to a new type of institution called for by today's students that focuses on quality service and the direct relationship with the student as a customer.

Guided by Toma's (2010) notions of building organizational capacity (BOC) and DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) positions of institutional isomorphism, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What are the internal and external forces that led to the development and implementation of this new student-centered focus in enrollment services? Specifically, what organizational factors did leaders consider

when deciding to focus on and enact a student-centered enrollment services model?

RQ2: What are the positive and/or negative effects of changes in service process, organizational structure, and physical space on employee productivity and morale?

RQ3: Did the organizational structure and physical space changes have an effect on the college's enrollment?

Summary and Definition of Terms

As customers demand more, college leaders must find ways to continually improve to meet demands. Therefore, a focus on the student and high-quality customer service is becoming an increasingly common goal among higher education institution leaders today. For open access technical colleges to be successful in the decidedly competitive higher education marketplace in Georgia, they, too, must be flexible and responsive in the services provided to students.

For clarity throughout this study, I provide the reader with the following definitions of specific terms related to the Technical College System of Georgia and customer service within student affairs.

Customer: for the purposes of this study, the customer is defined as the student, prospective or enrolled, at an institution of higher education; the driving force behind any successful organization; one who requires a good or service from a provider (Maguad, 2007).

Customer Service: verbal and nonverbal behaviors that are attentive, friendly, and sincere interactions, initiated by the service provider; creating an experience for the customers to form an emotional connection.

Open Access Institution: the enrollment policy that influences the admission process by drawing larger numbers of students through a simplified application process, perceived ease of navigation, and non-standard admission scores; critical to the mission of a community/technical college; the policy of two-year community and technical colleges that ensures access for individuals who seek enrollment (Shannon & Smith, 2006).

Retention Rate: Fall semester cohort from the previous fiscal year (first time, regular admitted students) who graduated from, or were still enrolled in, a Georgia technical college or university system college through the subsequent fiscal year (TCSG, 2017)

Student Affairs Division: the organization unit of professional staff members that are responsible for enrollment services that typically include admissions, recruiting, testing, financial aid, student records, special populations services, campus life, and often, new student advisement.

Technical College: higher education institution focused on short-term training and academic programs relevant to the needs of the local workforce. These institutions award associate degrees, diplomas, and technical certificates of credit in a variety of disciplines, including business, information technology, healthcare, transportation, and industrial programs, among others.

Yield: in comparison to the total number of applicants, the number or percentage of applicants who matriculate or enroll in one or more classes offered at the institution.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE AND THEORY

Introduction

The literature included in this chapter provides a description of enrollment management and related areas, such as marketing and branding, as well as an overview of the debate of whether or not the student is considered a customer in academia.

Additionally, this chapter provides a synopsis of one-stop service centers related to enrollment in higher education and how this model can lead to efficiency of service and higher rates of satisfaction among students. Moreover, a summary of research related to leadership, organizational structure, and physical service space is provided for the reader. Lastly, the chapter includes an overview of the Technical College of System of Georgia, as well as information related to the theoretical frameworks guiding this study, Toma's (2010) Building Organizational Capacity and DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) Institutional Isomorphism.

Background on Enrollment Management

Today's interest in enrollment management in higher education grew out of a need for a focused approach on recruiting students to build college enrollments (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014) and much of the evolution of the profession is manifested in structural changes (Black, 2004). Enrollment management activities concern student college choice, transition to college, student attrition and retention, and student outcomes (Hossler & Bean, 1990). Following its origination as a defined concept in the 1970s, the

term enrollment management was defined by Hossler and Bean (1990) as “an organizational concept and a systematic set of activities designed to enable educational institutions to exert more influence over their student enrollment and total net tuition revenue derived from enrolled students” (p. 23). Most certainly, this definition indicates that enrollment management influences organizational structure, and positions the onus of achieving targeted enrollment goals on all offices and administrative functions within the higher education institution.

With its roots in student affairs, enrollment management conflates typical enrollment functions, such as admissions and registrar functions, with marketing and communications efforts, including branding, to effectively recruit and retain students and reinforce the institution’s image (Hossler & Bean, 1990; Hossler & Bontrager, 2014; Stewart, 2004). At the center of the enrollment management concept, the primary focus is on the student, the customer in higher education. Enrollment management administrators seek to ensure a comprehensive approach that builds application yield, enrollment numbers, and that works to retain students until graduation through personalized and effective communication and quality service, often accomplished through the use of technology (Stewart, 2004).

Enrollment management has steadily matured into an area of professional staff expertise, where many senior enrollment officers function at the vice president or associate vice president level (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014). As one of the foremost experts in the field, Don Hossler is continually adamant about the importance of the institution’s senior enrollment officer having a seat in the president’s cabinet (Hossler,

1999, 2007; Hossler & Bontrager, 2014). Not only does this signify the importance of enrollment management, but also keeps it at the forefront of planning and policy-making.

In his article, Bontrager (2004) identifies the core concepts of enrollment management. He also identifies prevailing myths and proclaims what enrollment management is not. Bontrager (2004) states:

Enrollment management is a complex of concepts and processes that enables fulfillment of institutional mission and students' educational goals by:

- Establishing clear goals for the number and types of students needed to fulfill the institutional mission;
- Promoting academic success by improving student access, transition, persistence, and graduation;
- Determining, achieving, and maintaining optimum enrollment;
- Enabling the delivery of effective academic programs;
- Generating added net revenue for the institution;
- Enabling effective financial planning;
- Increasing process and organizational efficiency;
- Improving service levels to all stakeholders (e.g., prospective and current students, other internal departments, institutions, and coordinating agencies);
- Creating a data-rich environment to inform decisions and evaluate strategies;
- Creating and continuously strengthening linkages with functions and activities across the campus (p.12).

Bontrager (2004) continues by noting that enrollment management is not a quick fix to achieve higher enrollment. Additionally, enrollment management has to equal more than restructuring; although organizational structure is a key consideration, it is not the singular piece to solve the puzzle. Enrollment management is also not an enhanced admission and marketing operation, nor an administrative function that operates separately from the academic mission of the institution. All of the aforementioned pieces must work congruently to achieve the institution's goals.

The structural frame of enrollment management. Enrollment management structures are often created to address an institutional problem or crisis (Black, 2004).

With the first enrollment management structures occurring in private institutions (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014), other institutions implemented the same structural changes in response to the crisis of enrollment shortfalls. As a rule, private institutions are flexible and possessed the ability to quickly implement such change within the organization (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014). As other private and public institution leaders took note of rising enrollments, they saw the value of the enrollment management framework. Additionally, today's proprietary, for-profit institutions have implemented this model extensively in order to gain customers by providing superior levels of customer service (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014).

According to Bolman and Deal (1991), the structural frame refers to organizational structure, process, and policies, which can help determine the organization's method of operation. The structural frame of enrollment management, according to Black (2004), affects many facets of the higher education organization including enrollment strategies, student service delivery, staffing patterns, and even the institution's culture itself. As Deming (1986), the father of the Total Quality Management (TQM) movement, noted, 80% of all dissatisfaction among customers is due to faulty structural systems, rather than employee behavior. Based on this assertion, enrollment managers would be unwise not to regularly address the structural systems, process, and policies and look for ways to continuously improve.

In his article, Black (2004) discusses four separate organizational models for enrollment management as shown in Figure 2.1. First outlined by Kemerer, Baldrige, and Green (1982), these models are the committee; the staff coordinator; the matrix system; and the enrollment management division. Each of the models has its own merits,

but for the purposes of this research, the enrollment management division model fits best and is most similar to the institution as the center of this research.

Model	Degree of Restructuring Necessary	Authority
Committee	Low	Influence
Staff Coordinator	Some	Networks
Matrix System	Moderate	Cooperation
EM Division	High	Direct

Figure 2.1. Black's (2004) Enrollment Management Organizational Models

The enrollment management division model calls for an institutional commitment to reorganization (Caren & Kemerer, 1979). Typically, for this model, a front-end approach links offices which are directly tied to student recruitment and enrollment, such as admissions and financial aid (Black, 2004; Vander Schee, 2007). With the emphasis placed on marketing and recruitment of students, Caren and Kemerer (1979) originally envisioned that the enrollment management unit would fall under Institutional Advancement in the organizational structure. However, at today's modern institutions, the majority of chief enrollment managers report to either the chief academic officer, the chief student affairs officer, or, as in many private institutions, directly to the president, which can signify the tuition-dependent nature of most privates (Black, 2004; Huddleston & Rumbough, 1997; Vander Schee, 2007).

As Hossler and Bean (1990) emphasized the importance of position level of the enrollment manager, Fram (1975) also argued that if not situated at a certain level within the organization, this leader may not be able to influence significant change. Kemerer, et

al. (1982) indicated that the success of this enrollment management division model depends heavily on the visible support of the institution's CEO and pointed out that major structural changes take time and rarely yield immediate results, even though both proponents and critics often expect a quick fix.

David Kalsbeek (2001) introduced the concept of "de-jobbing." In the field of enrollment management, this term suggests a shift away from silos and rigid organizational structures, toward a more nimble and responsive organization. This allows employee roles and organizational structures to morph and easily address institutional challenges and opportunities. By de-jobbing and achieving nimbleness and fluidity in response, higher education institutions can permeate every aspect of the campus and serve as a catalyst for change (Black, 2004). Enrollment management units can become more market-responsive and manage relationships across the student lifecycle to have a greater and more positive impact on the institution (Black, 2004; Guilbault, 2016).

Marketing and Branding

The scope of marketing expanded decades ago, rising out of the corporate world to include higher education institutions and other non-business organizations (Krachenberg, 1972; Schwartzman, 2013; Webster & Hammond, 2011). Research shows that applying marketing to services offered in higher education is beneficial to gaining a competitive advantage in the marketplace (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006; Hoover, 2016; Sarkane & Sloka, 2015; Webster & Hammond, 2011). Previous research also suggests that higher levels of market orientation result in higher levels of organizational performance (Sharabi, 2013; Webster & Hammond, 2011). In order to maintain

enrollment levels, higher education institutions must learn how to connect with and serve students, often identified customers (Guilbault, 2016; Martinez et al., 2013; Schierenbeck, 2013).

Markets bring together buyers and sellers of goods and services (Jongbloed, 2003). Students have a choice of thousands of higher education institutions and many utilize what they learn from the college's marketing and branding to make their choice. Tapp, Hicks, and Stone (2004) examined what factors drive student choice specifically related to marketing, and how the practice of marketing is driven by factors such as geography, faculty influence, feeder secondary schools, and the like. By doing so, institutions are able to target potential students in a way that is most effective for producing a satisfactory yield (Slaughter & Leslie, 2001). Through targeting, institutions identify students that would be the best fit for, or are the most likely to choose, that particular institution. This way, marketing dollars are spent wisely and the importance of marketing and branding is magnified by making sure the institution's message is portrayed appropriately and emerges from the crowd of competitors.

In order to fully apply the marketing concept, academics must cease to resist the notion that students, and parents, are customers. To do so, many higher education leaders have resorted to ensuring that the culture of the institution and the services provided by employees reflect a student-centered nature (Black, 2004; Maguad, 2007; Seeman & O'Hara, 2006) and put the needs of the students first (Martinez et al., 2013). Some institutions have even gone so far as to study corporate businesses and model their practices based on what is working for these retail and consumer organizations (Gardner, 2016).

In the corporate world, success is often measured through “brand loyalty,” which includes the creation of a repeat customer. However, in the world of higher education, the institution judges success on whether or not one successfully receives the product—an education—the first time as repeating a course, essentially repeating your patronage, is considered a negative result (Wueste & Fishman, 2010). Another variation between the corporate world and the higher education arena is the lack of transfer of a good or service. In corporations, businesses provide a good or a service for which the customer pays money. In education, the customer pays money, but the transfer is an extension of ownership of knowledge (Wueste & Fishman, 2010). Essentially, the educator still ‘owns’ the knowledge, but has shared it with the student for his/her own use. The product can never be fully and successfully delivered without the active participation and engagement of the student. Therefore, Wueste and Fishman (2010) remind the reader that the relationship creates or produces a product (education) rather than transferring something.

Much of the debate regarding implementation of the corporate customer service model in higher education stems from the conflation of educational and business functions, both of which exist in a campus setting (Wueste & Fishman, 2010), and the outdated conceptualization of the customer role (Mark, 2013). To help settle the argument, Wueste and Fishman (2010) propose that education be considered a professional practice, rather than a corporate-style business, while Guilbault (2016) encourages higher education administrators to utilize Mark’s (2013) lens of service dominant logic (SDL), which suggests that the student-as-customer model may have

more success when the customer is thought of as a co-creator of the service. The benefit is customer-determined and relational to the service provider.

Even so, higher education is quickly morphing into more of a corporate-type organization, meaning that many of the services offered and the branding associated with higher education organizations closely resembles the style of corporate organizations. The marketing concept is a philosophy that states an organization's ultimate success is indicative of its focus on the satisfaction of the customer by identifying and meeting the customer's needs and wants (Webster & Hammond, 2011). To successfully implement and utilize the marketing concept, the organization must also have an organizational culture identified as a marketing orientation. This means that all employees must have a 'customer-first' attitude and be committed to customers and adapting to their changing needs. To be effective, this philosophy should be ingrained in the institution's culture (Webster & Hammond, 2011) and value system (Martinez et al., 2013). As service quality becomes more important, higher education institutions will focus on hiring personnel that can deliver the desired level of customer service, which will afford a student-centered service environment at the institution and ultimately increase the quality of service to the customer and positively impact enrollment levels.

Service is defined by Lusch and Vargo (2014) as the application of specialized competencies (knowledge and skills), thorough deeds, processes, and performances. Martinez, et al. (2013) cite the challenges of implementing quality customer service within higher education, noting that without the right tools necessary for implementation, higher education professionals are left with a temporary enthusiasm that fades after a short time. Organizational leaders and team managers are tasked with ensuring this is not

the case by providing and personifying an appropriate mission and vision for quality customer service (Martinez et al., 2013), and ensuring team members have the tools and resources necessary (Oluseye, Tairat, & Emmanuel, 2014) to build and maintain a customer-centered service environment (Seeman & O'Hara, 2006). Ignoring the nature and importance of service quality could be detrimental for colleges and universities (Sultan & Wong, 2012) as service quality and satisfaction are often conflated in relation to value (Woodall, Hiller, & Resnick, 2014).

As competition among higher education institutions rises, the image of a college or university in a global market is essential because it helps determine the marketability of offerings, and affects student attraction, retention, and funding opportunities (Sultan & Wong, 2012). This concept has helped many colleges and universities succeed, and has solidified the marketing department's place on campus (Hoover, 2016).

Even though marketing is often thought of as a standalone department on campus, it is now very common to find the marketing department working closely, or within the same unit, as enrollment services (Hoover, 2016; Hossler & Bontrager, 2014). In today's campus organizational structure, you often find the two closely tied, or at least some incarnation of marketing, within the student affairs or enrollment management unit. By conflating the two, the institution is able to create a form of relationship marketing, allowing the institution to focus on customer loyalty and satisfaction to increase retention, all of which is ultimately linked to the financial performance of the institution (Helgesen, 2008). By locating the marketing department in the same unit that handles the customers, a clearer connection can be drawn between the services and the needs of the customer through branding and marketing.

While the academic environment is not conducive to the notion that the customer is always right, the enrollment management concept does obligate staff to seek out bad policies, simplify them when possible, communicate them effectively, and educate students regarding their responsibilities and related consequences (Black, 2004). Even though the corporate-style customer service mantra is important in this model, students are not excused from the consequences of their actions.

Defining the Student as the Customer

Many researchers and scholars agree that the customer service model has felicitous applications in college and university settings (Black, 2004; Bontrager, 2004; Chen & Popovich, 2003; Guilbault, 2016; Mark, 2013; Martinez et al., 2013; Ostrom, Bitner, & Burkhard, 2011; Schierenbeck, 2013; Seeman & O'Hara, 2006; Sultan & Wong, 2012; Webster & Hammond, 2011; Woodall, Hiller, & Resnick, 2014; Wueste & Fishman, 2010). However, higher education leaders must first concede, or at least come to a consensus on whether or not the student should be defined as a customer (Chen & Popovich, 2003; Guilbault, 2016; Lomas, 2007; Maguad, 2007; Mark, 2013; Ostrom et al., 2011; Schwartzman, 1995; Webster & Hammond, 2011; Woodall et al., 2014; Wueste & Fishman, 2010).

Some contend that the customer service model is applicable in all organizations. For example, Lomas (2007) and Maguad (2007) argue that each person is a customer and that everyone should serve customers. In this line of thinking, these authors maintain that this applies equally as well in higher education as in the business sector. Still, there are some who contend that the customer service model is not applicable in higher education (Mark, 2013; Wueste & Fishman, 2010) because the customer can't always be right. In

other words, the student must be an active participant in one's education. If not, the student does not receive the service that he or she has paid for. Black (2004) argues that the notion of customer service in an academic environment is not that students are always right, nor are they immune to the consequences of their actions; rather, it means enrollment professionals and staff members are tasked with ensuring good and simple policies, adequate communication, and educating students on their role and responsibility in the contract to receive an education. Effective enrollment management requires that institutions take their commitment to top-quality service to a higher level (Bontrager, 2004).

When the customer is considered the driver, both internally and externally (Goetsch & Davis, 2010), it helps define the model of service that is delivered. According to Maguad (2007), higher education institutions have a host of various types of customers, both internal and external, and he noted that customer-driven organizations find success because of their willingness to anticipate customer's needs and enforce a commitment to satisfy those needs. Often dissatisfaction with an institution can be linked to a policy that alienated the student (Black, 2004). This alienation can be combatted by regular policy review, simplification, and appropriate communication of institutional policies.

While higher education certainly serves a customer, in this case the student, the service provided is not identical to that of a corporate business. In education, a customer can be told they cannot purchase the product and that they must qualify to continue purchasing the product. Further, most higher education customers do not pay the full bill

on their own (Maguad, 2007; Mark, 2013). Corporate businesses do not make these demands of their customers.

Franz (1998) stated that society is actually the primary customer of higher education, not the student, as it is considered a public good (Kezar, Chambers, & Burkhardt, 2015; Marginson, 2011; Tilak, 2008). According to Franz (1998), the purpose of education is to help students become critical thinkers and good citizens, therefore contributing to the greater public good. While this is ultimately true, a plurality of research indicates the need for the student to be considered a customer (Guilbault, 2016; Mark, 2013; Martinez et al., 2013; Wueste & Fishman, 2010), or at the very least a co-creator of the service, to provide for satisfaction and word-of-mouth recommendation (Li, 2013), which can translate into increased enrollments and bolstered reputations.

As more institutions choose to adopt the student-customer paradigm, the expectation is that processes will become more efficient at every level of the college (Mark, 2013). However, one drawback to the customer service model is the absence of accountability for the student and the lack of the expectation that the teacher and the learner will be contributing partners in a participatory process (Guilbault, 2016; Wueste & Fishman, 2010). In education, for the service to be delivered, the student must be a fully participating partner. Additionally, when students act as consumers, they may feel they have the right to make certain demands or attempt to take advantage of the relationship with the instructor (Guilbault, 2016). Guilbault (2016) continues in her research to assert that the opposition to viewing students as customers relates to the education and academic process, and not to other services offered by higher education institutions, even though empirical evidence does not support such criticisms.

One-Stop Centers

The student experience is the totality of the student's interaction with the institution and is better understood holistically, rather than through organizational silos (Morgan & Thayer, 2017). Research related to the student experience has shown that improvement is increasingly achieved by personalizing the educational experience for each student. To do so, some institutions have begun looking for best practices to adopt, even from outside higher education, from industries which have long focused on the customer experience (Morgan & Thayer, 2017). One way of improving the student experience that has been identified is the enactment of an intensive redesign process based on the utilization of data and technologies to offer high-touch, personal experiences to students through interaction with the institution (Morgan & Thayer, 2017).

In a college or university setting, a representation of an intensive redesign process is a one-stop service center. A one-stop service center is essentially the centralization of services, or centralized processing department for enrollment, which possesses a student-centered philosophy that increases student engagement and may lead to positive student satisfaction and retention (Raines, 2012). A centralized one-stop enrollment center typically includes admissions, financial aid, and the student records office (Burnett & Oblinger, 2002). Some models even extend to include the advisement process and other student services. Centralization could be a result of cost-cutting measures, or simply the implementation of good business practices which can help to improve the experience and perceptions of the student (Becker, 2012). According to a Gartner report (Morgan & Thayer, 2017), by 2021, more than 50% of higher education institutions will begin redesigning their student experience in order to make it more integrated and personalized.

A centralized service area is essentially a more personalized, high-touch experience for the student that allows a staff member to dedicate quality time to each individual student and serve their need completely.

Collaboration among administrative departments, such as that of a one-stop center, allows work processes to be more effective and improve service delivery, (Becker, 2012) while also streamlining the overall process for the customer and reducing costs (Sanaghan & Napier, 2002). This coupling (Weick, 1976), or pairing of various functions within the organization to achieve goals, helps define centralization of service delivery and can help accomplish cost reductions (Beede & Burnett, 1999) and also satisfy the intention to better serve the student (Nealon, 2005); however, this is now always the case. The findings of several researchers suggest that centralization may be a viable solution, but there is no one size fits all model for different types of institutions (Komives & Woodard, Jr., 2003; Townsley, 2002).

To varying degrees, research has been conducted on several one-stop service centers within institutions of higher education. Some centers include all entry-point services for students, such as admissions, records, financial aid, advising, registration, student accounts, and placement testing (Warmann, 2015). Yet others don't include admissions, which arguably, is the one of the most critical for the student enrollment process. Others believe that a highly centralized, tightly coupled organization is desirable in order to offer high quality service delivery (Nealon, 2005), adding that centralization reduces the cost of redundancy among back office operations and maximizes efficiency (Birnbaum, 1988; Cronander, 1990; Lutz, 1982). Altogether, centralization of service

delivery and decision making among departments helps to foster the one-stop approach to service delivery (Weick, 1976).

Many one-stop service centers employ a generalist model for those in front-service positions. Day and Pitts (2002) pointed out that employees responsible for customer service in a centralized one-stop environment must encompass a wide, general knowledge of most, if not all, areas of the college. These employees must interact frequently with students (Nealon, 2005) and help throughout the enrollment process, from start to finish, educating enrollees on how to navigate the college as they progress through their educational career. As this is a service position, knowledge of counseling skills can be useful as well to assist students and parents unfamiliar with the process in finding resolution to issues in higher education (Anderson, Burnett, & Oblinger, 2002).

The generalist model is not one that is easily accomplished without comprehensive training and continuous professional development. Many colleges who employ the generalist model spend weeks, if not months, training new employees in the varying areas related to the one-stop centers, such as admissions, financial aid, and records (Warmann, 2015). Some colleges use content experts to deliver training and others rely on communication between professional staff members to help disseminate needed training, which in turn helps develop networks to utilize self-management and empowers employees with problem-solving skills and helps create efficiencies and effectiveness in service to the customer (Anderson et al., 2002; Nealon, 2005). This helps to place a greater emphasis on organizational knowledge among employees, leads to improved productivity, and enhances work strategies.

Becker (2012) noted in her research that there is no clear evidence of why student services one-stop centers were established, nor what the rationale was for which functions to include. However, most one-stop centers have resulted from the efforts to increase student satisfaction, service, and retention. Some of the metrics most commonly used to evaluate the performance of a one-stop student services center include satisfaction surveys; data on student enrollment, retention, and graduation; call center data metrics; in-office student activity related to deadlines for registration, graduation, financial aid, billing, and others; staff retention; feedback from staff, faculty, and senior administrators, benchmarking; and strategic management through customer service, internal processes, learning and development, and financial performance (Lonabocker & Wager, 2009). These various metrics can assist with measuring office efficiency and productivity and the level of service provided to the customer.

In their research, Burnett and Oblinger (2002) and Nealon (2005) found that three components most commonly lead to the success of a student services one-stop center. Those three factors were: 1) a focus on the students' needs; 2) empowerment of staff members; and 3) contribution to the overall improvement strategies related to student services. As institutions become high touch/high tech environments, many are creating the opportunity to redefine the service relationship with, and the experience of, the student (Morgan & Thayer, 2017). Core characteristics of a redefined student experience include the smashing of silos within and organization; enabling and utilizing technology; data-driven decision making; and personalization (Morgan & Thayer, 2017). As these ideals are implemented, processes, services, and interactions are being defined from the students' perspective and institutions are ensuring that staff have the tools and training to

do their job to meet the needs of today's student and provide for a personalized, high-touch experience to influence the behavioral intentions of the student (Burnett & Oblinger, 2002; Morgan & Thayer, 2017; Nealon, 2005).

Organizational Structure

Although some research suggests that what consumers find important is often different from what organizational leaders perceive as important, there is currently an inclination to view service quality in higher education from an organizational perspective (Clark, 1983; Oldfield & Baron, 2000; Sharabi, 2013). While administrators may believe the bottom line is dependent upon prestige, branding, or other non-tangibles, employees may be the only way that a service provider can differentiate itself in the marketplace (Oldfield & Baron, 2000). This means that people make the difference. In higher education, the choice of programs and related services are largely the same. Maguad (2007) states that "building good customer relationships depends on the quality of customer-contact personnel" (p. 340). To achieve a majority market share, technical colleges must position themselves by providing quality customer service and building positive relationships with students.

Building these relationships is often dependent upon the employee's ability to communicate and work effectively with the student, as well as with co-workers, which ultimately relies on the structure of the organization. An appropriate structure which lends itself to good internal communication will allow employees to offer quality service and create the culture of service that is needed for a higher education organization to stand out (Martinez et al., 2013). Referring back to Kalsbeek's (2001) concept of "de-jobbing" within the field of enrollment management, shifting away from rigid

organizational structures that tend to decrease interdepartmental communications should help to reduce silos of work. By doing so, employees can work better with each other and ultimately provide superior services to the student customers.

Physical space in relation to customer service. Researchers recognize that while students are enrolled in a higher education institution, their view or perception of the courses or programs may change, but it is largely assumed that the generic elements, such as physical space, environment, and staff ability are perceived similarly by the student for their entire enrollment period (Oldfield & Baron, 2000). Many post-secondary institutions have reengineered processes such as the campus visit, orientation, advising, and registration to ensure student success and satisfaction. While the concept of process reengineering accompanied the Total Quality Management (TQM) movement, Black (2004) states that reengineering can involve a variety of changes, from process mapping, redesigning job functions, organizational restructuring, and even the redesign, or relocation, of physical space.

Physical space associated with services can be designed to complement satisfaction in the interaction between the employee and the student. However, little research has been conducted to make a solid determination on the impact of physical space on customer interaction and satisfaction. Even so, Oldfield and Baron (2000) assert that it is likely that students would be influenced by physical facilities since much of their time is spent in contact with the physical elements of their educational experience. Their research concluded that design of service settings may have a powerful effect on customer feelings and perceptions when decisions are being made regarding enrollment and persistence.

Technology in customer service. As client-serving institutions, technologies must be employed to meet the needs of various participants (Manning, 2013). Many powerful customer service advantages have come about in academia as a result of technology integration (Martinez et al., 2013). Hossler and Bontrager (2014) indicate that the field of strategic enrollment management is one that requires an open systems environment. This can provide for the broad sharing of information and decision-making across campus departments. As enrollment is influenced by all offices, the open systems philosophy helps break down the silos that can be created in an organization where units operate independently of each other.

Baird and Gonzalez-Wertz (2011) noted that leaders should transform the customer experience through developing a fresh customer insight and reducing organizational complexity. Black (2004) referred to this as process reengineering, stating that it has survived in academic circles largely due to the conversion of information systems, which resulted from a renewed focus on improving student services through the migration to web-based services. Those leaders who do work toward a simplified organizational structure are referred to as new era leaders (Baird & Gonzalez-Wertz, 2011), signifying their willingness to combine the best practices of data analysis and harnessing new methods of customer interaction and creation of value in a digital world.

In higher education, the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool provides one avenue for enrollment management leaders to lead the way into and through the digital world. The sophisticated CRM systems available to higher education leaders today allow for comprehensive communication plans with students, sharing of vital information among internal stakeholders, and improved service to students by providing

for the ability to share clear and consistent answers with the student regarding enrollment services (AACRAO, 2015). These communications are of a wider variety (e.g., email, text, mobile app) and better serve customers in today's digital marketplace through personalized and automatically timed communications. These systems also give the student a greater opportunity for self-service.

Chen and Popovich (2003) assert that a CRM can help an organization focus on creating customer loyalty through relationship development and help maximize profitability similar to the corporate world by focusing on customer retention and relationship development through digital interactions. They describe CRM as a combination of people, processes, and technology that seeks to understand a company's customers. In the case of higher education, the customer is the student. Chen and Popovich (2003) stated that utilizing a CRM has helped businesses get to know their customers again by renewing the business-consumer relationship similar to those that existed prior to the industrial revolution. While it was a simpler time and business leaders could personally get to know each customer, today's needs are very different and leaders must employ technology in order to keep up with the numbers and demands of the customer. The same is true for leaders and consumers in higher education. As college enrollments grow, leaders must find ways to communicate en masse, yet maintain a personal connection with each individual student.

Seeman and O'Hara (2006) credit CRM technology with helping institutions create a student-centric focus. The authors found that institutions have access to improved customer data and process management, increased student loyalty, retention, and satisfaction with the college's programs and services. Overall, the system provides

higher education institutions with a powerful tool capable of tracking customers and providing services in a personalized, and much more expedient manner.

By managing the student lifecycle through CRM technology, institutions can have a significant impact on customer loyalty in the form of repeat patronage and by encouraging word-of-mouth recommendation through relationship management with the student and parents of student (Oluseye et al., 2014). Additionally, enrollment management leaders can harness a powerful tool that provides a much-needed data warehouse (Pember, Owens, & Yaghi, 2014). As always though, technology is only as good as its user. One commonality found in the research concerning CRM technology is the admitted under-utilization of its capabilities (AACRAO, 2015; Oluseye et al., 2014; Pember et al., 2014; Seeman & O'Hara, 2006).

The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO, 2015) reported that more than 75 percent of institutions who use a CRM said that institution officials were not using it to its maximum potential. The true intention for a CRM is to aid in communication throughout the entire student lifecycle, from the time of becoming a prospect to graduation and alumni status, or as it has been described, 'cradle to endowment' (Black, 2004). As popularity of the systems grows and implementation becomes more common for institutions, leaders must find effective ways to ensure the full power of the tool is harnessed.

Leadership

In the context of higher education, enrollment management itself is a fairly new concept (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014). Therefore, leadership standards within this field are still being set. Some leaders in this field are continuing to learn, innovate, and

cultivate processes to pave the way for a well-known concept, but one thing is certain—successful enrollment management requires a customer/student focus and good quality of service.

Developing and maintaining a strong customer focus in higher education requires effective leadership (Maguad, 2007). Leadership, as defined by Griffin (2003), “is the use of noncoercive influence to shape the group or organization’s goals, motivate behavior toward the achievement of those goals, and help define group or organizational culture” (p. 313). To facilitate the student-centric environment, leaders must clearly define expectations and inspire great appreciation for quality customer service among all employees.

Effective leaders are affected by the system in which they work (Maguad, 2007) and have an uncanny ability to quickly read and evaluate situations (Bolman & Gallos, 2010). This is true of enrollment management leaders. In this field, leaders must adapt quickly to changing student preferences, determine the most effective recruitment methods, and live and breathe the data and trend analyses that result from their efforts (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014). Even though metrics and data are key to measuring the success of institution, especially as it relates to enrollment, higher education leadership requires much more than simply a regular review of data.

Effective leadership in a college or university requires one to have a vast and encompassing knowledge of the institution and academic ideals, and be able to cater to multiple audiences, (Bolman & Gallos, 2010; Martinez et al., 2013) arguably the most important of which is students. While leaders in higher education must placate many constituents, including faculty, donors, board members, and others (Cohen & March,

1986; Maguad, 2007) students are a primary audience as the main consumers of higher education. Thus, enrollment management leaders must make students their primary focus.

In higher education, leadership is situational. No one leadership style has emerged that is appropriate for all situations (Daniel, 2011). Therefore, leaders must apply actions in a way that it is fitting of the situation. This is especially true for enrollment management. As an emerging field of practice related to student affairs, leaders must find what works for creating and maintaining a student-centered focus while relying on the methods and lessons learned from past practices (de Macedo Bergamo, Giuliani, de Camargo, Zambaldi, & Ponchio, 2012; Guilbault, 2016).

Daniel (2011) identified three behaviors that are often exhibited by successful student affairs leaders. Those identified behaviors were a clear set of values, a shaped vision, and plans to achieve the vision. All three are critical in creating a student-centered service environment. Trust is also an integral part of effective leadership in higher education. In order to effectively lead for organizational change and positive results, you must have buy-in at all levels (Hossler, 2007). It is a leader's job to help workers do better work with positive reinforcement and opportunity to learn from mistakes (Sharabi, 2013).

The Technical College System of Georgia

Typically, the reader who is concerned with issues in higher education may possess a worldview surrounding how colleges operate within a university system, or possibly a typical community college system. However, TCSG schools are different in ways and face a unique set of challenges when it comes to enrollment and retention.

Open access. TCSG colleges are open access institutions. All applicants are accepted with only the condition of possession of a high school diploma, or equivalent, and the submission of placement test scores (Technical College System of Georgia, 2015). TCSG students are required to submit SAT or ACT test scores or take a placement test (Accuplacer) to determine if the student is ready for college-level courses or if the student needs to enroll in learning support courses for English or math. Even with open access, adequate enrollment and retention is challenging.

TCSG colleges charge students a nominal application fee and students are not necessarily bound by deadlines. Therefore, some may apply with the intention to enroll, but have no backup plan once the time commitment or the obligation of financial resources is realized. The rate of conversion from applicant to registered student (yield) is alarmingly skewed at many of the TCSG colleges, many of which average less than 50% yield (TCSG Knowledge Management System, 2016). This, however, is common across the nation among community colleges.

A report from the Education Advisory Board (2015) shows that applicant conversion rates for two-year colleges over a five-year period from 2009-2014 were on a steady decline. Their data analysis of 45 two-year public community colleges showed a yield of just 44 percent in 2013-2014, resulting in ‘lost applicants.’ If all applicants matriculated, enrollment issues would essentially cease to exist. However, many factors can interfere with enrollment including students choosing another institution, finding a job and deciding to forego education, not qualifying for financial aid and thus not being able to afford tuition, among other reasons.

The relationship between the economy and enrollment. As workforce preparatory institutions, enrollment at TCSG institutions, more so than others, is closely tied to the economic health of the local area and the state. If one compares enrollment data trends (TCSG Knowledge Management System, 2016) with the timeline of the recent Great Recession, one will note that as the health of economy declines, enrollment at TCSG institutions rises. The opposite is also true. In 2010, at the height of TCSG's enrollment growth since the turn of the century, institutions statewide enrolled 197,059 students when unemployment rates were at a high of 10.4 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). As of January 2016, the BLS data shows the unemployment rate has effectively been cut in half to 5.4 percent, which indicates a recovering economy. Correspondingly, enrollment within TCSG currently sits at a record low of 119,655 for AY 2016 (TCSG Knowledge Management System, 2016). This illustrates a connection between the state's employment levels, thus economic health, and the enrollment in technical colleges. In their study, Pennington, et al. (2002) found that the unemployment rate, gross domestic product, personal consumption expenditures, and dollars of disposable income can be considered a good indicators of trends in community college enrollment.

During times of economic prosperity, colleges can experience difficulty in meeting enrollment expectations to receive adequate funding to maintain the same level of operation as during periods of enrollment growth. Since state appropriations in Georgia are largely tied to enrollment and the associated FTE (full time equivalent) hours, a healthy economy can serve as a detriment to enrollment and retention and, thus,

funding. The remaining and largest source of funding, tuition and fees, is also dependent upon enrollment.

Considerations for building the technical college customer base. Each technical college in Georgia serves a specific and unique delivery area. The majority of the 22 colleges serve at least one rural area (TCSG, 2016), which requires a different approach for marketing and varying recruitment methods to influence enrollment compared to the more metropolitan areas they may also serve. Additionally, organizational structure of departments among the colleges can vary. According to published organizational charts on TCSG college websites, some admissions offices are located within the student affairs department, some colleges have an enrollment management department, and yet others have a combined department that houses both academic and student affairs.

The central challenge of how to motivate potential students to enroll and encourage persistence to completion faces each technical college administrator responsible for securing enrollment. An appropriate approach must be utilized in recruiting and retaining students while consideration is given to the characteristics of the college, its organization, and demographics of the service delivery area. Leaders must also be mindful of the role of the relationship with the customer and providing student satisfaction.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is a map for a study, one that gives the researcher rationale for the development of research questions or hypotheses and helps with the operationalization of the study (Green, 2014). LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (2014) stated

that the framework strengthens the study and its relation to the findings can give the researcher confidence in the results. And, Polit and Tatano-Beck (2004) propose that theoretical frameworks make research findings meaningful and generalizable, which results in accessibility and usefulness to others. Essentially, the theoretical framework helps the researcher focus in on the subject and helps to ensure that the research has been coherently framed throughout the overall design (Green, 2014). This study is guided by the strategic management frameworks of building organizational capacity (BOC; Toma, 2010) and institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Haveman, 1993; Tolbert, 1985).

Building organizational capacity. BOC is a framework for building capacity within a higher educational institution and explained in detail by J. Douglas Toma in his 2010 book, *Strategic Management in Higher Education: Building Organizational Capacity*. The BOC framework articulates and considers how to align eight elements intended to address all areas of leading and managing and institution. Shown in Figure 2.2, those eight elements are: purposes, structure, governance, policies, processes, information, infrastructure, and culture (Toma, 2010).

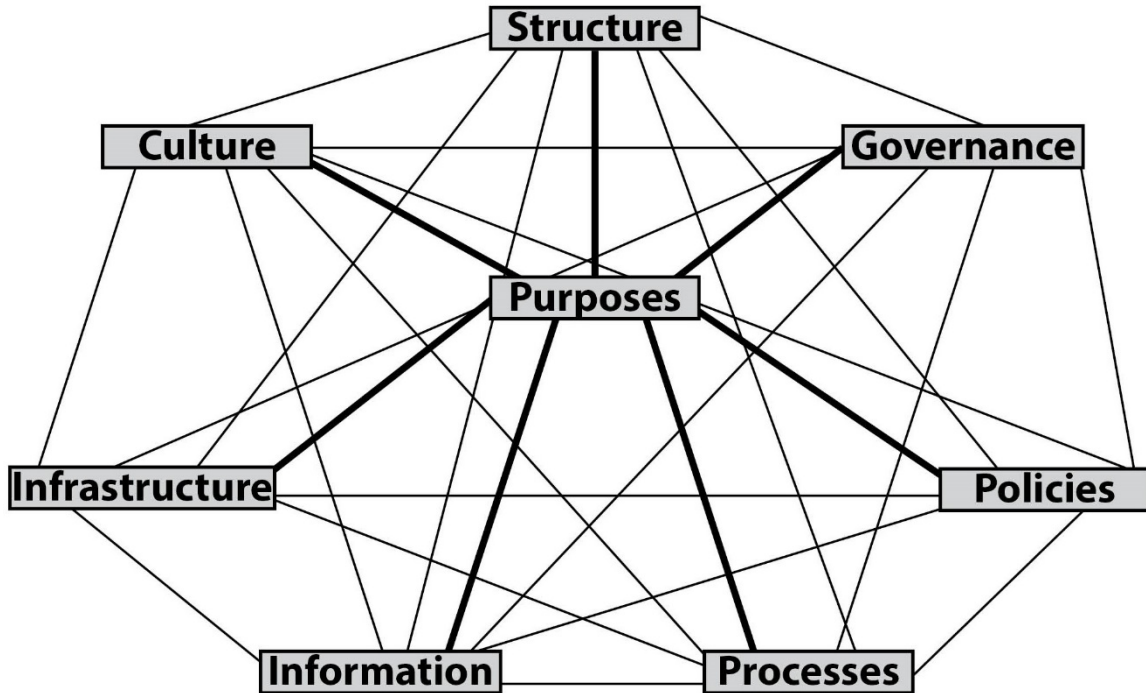


Figure 2.2. Toma's (2010) BOC Framework Web

The eight elements addressed by Toma's (2010) BOC framework are similar to other strategic management frameworks aimed at corporations or non-profit organizations but are specifically geared toward higher education and are meant to address the range of issues associated with leading and managing an institution. The elements considered in this framework provide an instrument panel to help leaders navigate the organization and evaluate where operational deficiencies lie.

Toma (2010, p. 6) uses an interrogative method in his book to describe the purpose and meaning behind each of the elements.

1. **Purposes**—why are we here and where are we headed?
2. **Structure**—how are we configured to do our work?
3. **Governance**—who makes what decisions?
4. **Policies**—under what rules do we proceed?
5. **Processes**—how do we get things done?
6. **Information**—what do we need to inform our decision making?

7. **Infrastructure**—what are our human, physical, technological, and financial assets?
8. **Culture**—what is our essential character?

This framework can be utilized as a diagnostic tool as it addresses how organizational change affects multiple elements; senior leaders must consider how the elements relate and apply systems thinking to strategic management, as the BOC framework suggests. Since multiple elements are affected, a strategic management framework can be represented by a web, as illustrated above, and is thus, non-linear (Toma, 2010). Toma (2010) states that “considering elements without considering their alignment is insufficient” (p.34).

While BOC is considered as a useful tool to help build an administrative foundation necessary to support initiatives desired to advance the ambitions of the institution, Toma (2010) cautions that strategic management may accelerate the commercialization of universities and colleges and cause the managed nature of institutions to rise. Clark (1983) suggests that while higher education institutions can tend to be naturally isomorphic, strategic management, which often is the result of competition or pursuit of prestige, can also exacerbate mission inflation or academic drift.

When building a focus on the student, institutions could conceivably use the BOC framework to assemble the support necessary to implement a student-centered enrollment management model, such as a one-stop shop. One-stop shops provide students with the resources necessary to complete the enrollment process all in one place with the need to visit multiple offices or wait in multiple lines. As the elements of the BOC framework are addressed, leaders can make solid and strategic decisions in establishing a new way of doing business.

Institutional isomorphism. Over time, higher education institutions tend to replicate each other as they attempt to follow the leader in the field. For example, the University System of Georgia (USG) no longer has two-year community colleges within the system; all formerly two-year colleges are currently classified as state colleges and now offer at least one four-year program (USG institutions, 2017). In order to gain the legitimacy and security of remaining in contention with the institutions perceived as leaders, organizations, and even units within them, will tend to grow similar in organizational structure and operational processes over time (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). As they seek institutional efficiencies through such means as strategic management, the institutions tend to look increasingly like one another (Toma, 2010). These isomorphic tendencies provide a camouflage as institutions seek to blend in to avoid risk.

As a second framework that guides this study, institutional isomorphism theory stresses that in order to survive, organizations must adapt to the existence of other organizations within their environment and the pressures exerted by those organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Haveman, 1993; Tolbert, 1985). While this process of adaptation can lead to homogeneity among organizations, transformation is often necessary and thrust upon the organization by influences beyond the institution's control. This can result in changes that can ultimately decrease diversity among institutions.

Within the Technical College System of Georgia, the institutions typically operate in a similar manner based on the System's policies and procedures. However, the institution that is the focus of this study has departed from the norm and created an entirely different type of student-centered service department within in the student affairs unit. While this model is unique in the Technical College System, I proffer that this

organizational change may have been in response to competition and the way enrollment services are provided to students by other non-TCSG institutions in proximity to the case study institution. Haveman (1993) noted that organizations interact, and imitate, those most similar in form or size, operating in the same niche, and those perceived as successful by organizational decision makers. The institution being analyzed for this case study perhaps saw a need to adapt and mimic those who were deemed successful based on enrollment data or the opinion of institutional leaders.

According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), there are three forms of institutional isomorphism, all of which lead to increased similarity in organizational behavior. Organizations that experience one or more forms of institutional isomorphism also witness a decrease in diversity among systems, processes, and structure. Of the three forms described by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), mimetic isomorphism most adequately addresses how changes occur in the higher education enrollment services environment to meet demand and imitate behavior of organizations perceived as successful (Haveman, 1993; Vught, 2008).

According to Vught (2008), mimetic isomorphism stems from the uncertainty caused by poorly understood technologies, ambiguous goals, and the symbolic environment. He states that the argument of memetic isomorphism, as well as the institution's ability to choose its own behavior, is emphasized under the threat of scarce resources and increased competition. Mimetic forces are described as pressures to copy or emulate other organizations' activities, systems, or structures (Ashworth et al., 2009; Haveman, 1993). Substantial changes in organizational size are often accompanied by structural changes (Haveman, 1993). When such innovations lend to the legitimacy of an

organization, those changes are deemed desirable. However, these efforts to mimic another organization are often undertaken without clear evidence of intended performance improvements (Haveman, 1993; Vught, 2008).

Institutional leaders are often faced with the tough choice of knowing how to best adapt and change with the times. As trends progress and the expectation for the level of service within higher education changes, the institution must be willing to transform to meet the demands of change. However, the decision-making process begs the question of which changes would be best for the institution. As mimetic isomorphism suggests, the best options for change are quite possibly those already undertaken by the closest competitors. Haveman (1993) noted that similar organizations in terms of size, structure, and strategy, often rely on the same environmental resources and are affected by similar constraints. It stands to reason that leaders can use the experience of other similar organizations when making decisions for organizational change, which can ultimately lead to *dedifferentiation*.

Dedifferentiation is defined as a process by which structures or behaviors that were specialized for a specific function lose their specializations and become generalized (Ashworth et al., 2009; Vught, 2008). Environmental conditions and organizational characteristics, coupled with perceived uncertainty, can lead to dedifferentiation (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Essentially, based on mitigating factors both internally and externally, services within the institution can lose their specialization and become simplified and more generalized (Haveman, 1993). For the enrollment services unit, this allows the institution to create an organizational structure resulting in what is often referred to as a one-stop shop, providing for a greater focus on the student by offering all

of the necessary information in one place, or generalized services. As a result of this new organizational structure for a student affairs unit, all the singularly specialized areas, such as admissions, student records, financial aid, and advisement, have combined to become one generalized department offering expertise on multiple subjects, rather than just one. This reorganized model also allows the student to build a relationship with a single advisor who can become familiar with his or her case and develop a trustworthy academic relationship.

The tenets of institutional isomorphism apply in this study because higher education institutions, which are naturally competitive, tend to imitate each other when working to recruit students and maintain or grow enrollment. Anecdotally, it is noticeable that when one university builds a state-of-the-art recreation facility, those universities who compete for the same students will work to find a way to build an even better state-of-the-art recreation facility. To an extent, this competitive nature also contributes to isomorphism among two-year institutions. This study focuses on the implementation of a student-centered customer service environment by creating a one-stop shop for enrollment services. Beginning in the early 1990s with the University of Chicago, the popularity of one-stop centers have been a growing trend, often in response to fiscal and other pressures faced by higher education leaders, which require expedient adaptation (Becker, 2012; Komives & Woodard, Jr., 2003; Scott, 2003) One can posit that this institution's adoption of the one-stop model is a response to competition, and also that this solution for one college will be emulated by others within the same system.

Summary

The higher education industry in the U.S. is steadily incorporating the prevailing business philosophy of the corporate world based on the marketing concept, which is focused on long-term profitability through customer service and satisfaction (Helgesen, 2008; Webster & Hammond, 2011). This way of thinking is becoming more prevalent in higher education due to increased competition, both locally and globally, increased student mobility, and public funding that is increasingly performance-based (Helgesen, 2008). As the higher education market shifts from a suppliers' market (less supply, more demand and suppliers dictate quality) to a customers' market (higher supply, less demand and customers dictate quality), the competition among academic institutions continues to increase (Sharabi, 2013). However, technical college staff members in Georgia can work toward winning the loyalty of the customers by focusing on the student and providing quality services within the student affairs and enrollment services unit. By adjusting organizational structures and processes to meet the demands of the students using tools such as the BOC framework in combination with strategic management and with regard to institutional isomorphism and dedifferentiation, higher education institutions can potentially realize positive enrollment gains and institutional goals through creating student-focused services for increased customer satisfaction.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This qualitative single case study examines the factors leading to and the impact of the organizational change process to a student-centered enrollment services model on organizational structure, culture, and employee morale at one college within the Technical College System of Georgia. Yin (2014) defines the case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 27). By conducting the study within the chosen institution, I was able to achieve the real-life context Yin emphasizes. While the results of the study are not intended to be replicable at institutions across the state, the study can provide meaningful insight for leaders at other similar institutions who may be considering the same shift in focus of services to the student as the customer.

A pragmatic worldview is one that “arises out of actions, situations, and consequences” (p. 10) and in which the researcher is concerned with solutions to problems (Creswell, 2013). I consider my own worldview to be characterized as pragmatic, and within that worldview, the context of the situation is emphasized. For enrollment services leaders in open access institutions, it is critical to understand the importance of the context surrounding the student-centered customer service environment.

As this is a qualitative study, I conducted research for the case study in the natural setting. Creswell (2013) noted that qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the environment in which the issue or focus of the study takes place. Also, a qualitative researcher would normally speak directly with the key players in the area being studied and have several instances of face-to-face interaction over time with those involved within the context of their role (Creswell, 2013).

Woodside (2010) proposes that the principle objective of a case study researcher should be “a *deep understanding* (emphasis included) of the actors, interaction, sentiments, and behaviors occurring for a specific process through time,” (p. 6). Deep understanding in case study research includes knowledge of “sensemaking” processes created by individuals and systems, thinking, policy mapping, and systems dynamics modeling, or meta-sensemaking. Sensemaking is how the individual makes sense of the stimuli (Woodside, 2010). Much of sensemaking focuses on what the subject perceives, framing their perceptions, and interpreting actions, including problem solving. This was a necessary step in the research process in order to gain a clear, deep understanding to provide thick, rich detail for the description to the reader.

The natural setting for this study is the selected institution’s enrollment services department. This setting allowed me to perform an up-close, in-person observation of the organizational structure and processes that have been implemented to alter the primary focus to that of quality service to the student. I was also afforded the opportunity to speak with front-line employees and mid-level managers about their experience and perceptions before, during, and after the department’s transition, as well as executive leaders who finalized the decisions for modification of the college’s normal operating

procedures and processes. My goal in interviewing the executive leaders and the mid-level managers was to gain the needed thick, rich descriptions of the experience and consider if and how the findings herein may translate to other institutions who may wish to pursue similar organizational changes to achieve a student-centric focus.

To further clarify my choice of a qualitative case study, I selected this method because I wanted to develop an in-depth analysis of a case (Creswell, 2013). Cases are bound by time and activity and often focus on a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Since my interest lies in identifying the key factors for implementing change to improve a process directly from the perspective of those involved, I chose the qualitative case study method for my analysis.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) state that the unit of analysis, not the topic of investigation, determines a case study. The single-case study is preferred because the subject institution is the first one within the Technical College System of Georgia to have implemented such structural changes within the enrollment services unit. By reviewing this process through the lens of college personnel involved with the change, leaders in other institutions can apply the findings, all or in part, to their institution to improve customer service and develop a more student-centered service environment. While all findings will not be applicable across the entire TCSG system, the results are intended to initialize the conversation of what institutions can do independently to ensure a competitive advantage through quality customer service.

In addition to interviews with key participants, I also performed a simple review of statistical data related to enrollment. I looked at data trends for three years leading up to the organizational structure and process change, and three years following. While this

is a qualitative study, it is important to review the numbers associated with enrollment to better understand the possible impact of such organizational changes on the overall health of the institution.

Therefore, this review examined the factors affecting the decision-making process of leaders and the effects on employees' morale and productivity related to customer service at this TCSG institution, attempting to gauge how this service is affected by the organizational structure and division of responsibilities within the department.

Additionally, through qualitative interviews, I examined how the enrollment professional's perception of decisions made by leaders involving the newly implemented organizational strategies at this TCSG college affected the way services are provided by staff members. Furthermore, I worked to determine how streamlining and refining the enrollment process to renew the focus on the customer through organizational and physical space changes positively influenced enrollment by inspiring loyalty through service and, thus, increasing the perception of quality and satisfaction among students (Dado et al., 2012; de Macedo Bergamo, Giuliani, de Camargo, Zambaldi, & Ponchio, 2012; Li, 2013; Joseph & Joseph, 1997; Seeman & O'Hara, 2006).

Site selection criteria. Merriam (1998) states that a case could be selected by a researcher simply because it is intrinsically interesting and that the researcher's aim may be to fully understand the phenomenon being researched. In this case study, the institution was purposefully selected to satisfy a personal intrinsic interest in this particular institution's processes, structure, and philosophy of service. Stake (1995) states that intrinsic case studies are relevant when the intent is to better understand the case. The purpose is not to understand or construct a phenomenon, but rather simply

because the case is of interest to the investigator. Creswell (2013) states that purposeful selection allows the researcher to select the site that will best help him or her to better understand the case. Random sampling nor large numbers of participants or sites is necessary. Through purposeful selection, I selected this case study because of an intrinsic interest and was able to specifically review the practices of this particular TCSG college which has taken steps to fully embrace the student-centered service environment.

Within the past year, I have had the opportunity to begin working in a leadership position within the student affairs department at the second largest technical college in Georgia. Of course, enrollment is a top priority. However, without quality service, students are apt to choose one of the many other higher education options in the local area. Therefore, I have a deep interest in studying the improvements of customer service at technical colleges and how ideas in place at other institutions could possibly be implemented within my own institution to allow for enrollment growth through building a student-centered service environment.

Even so, my current position and specific interest in this institution did not impede my research efforts. I am acutely aware of the possibility for bias; however, even though I am cognizant of the institution and its newly implemented focus on the student customer, I am not intimately familiar with any of the employees at this institution, nor do I have any professional interest in this organization. My interest is purely research-based and exists for the scholarly benefit that such investigation brings. My full effort was given to ensure that my potential for bias did not influence my interpretation of the data analyzed for this study.

The Case Institution

Gwinnett Technical College. Gwinnett Technical College (GTC) is a unit of the Technical College System of Georgia and is one of the largest in the system. Consistently, this college is in the top three within TCSG in terms of annual enrollment across its two campuses in Lawrenceville and Alpharetta (TCSG Knowledge Management System, 2017). For the most recently completed academic year, AY2017, the college's unduplicated total enrollment was 11,147 students. This represented a more than 10% growth over the previous academic year. Overall, the college employs 389 people full time and utilizes many part time staff and adjunct faculty to supplement operations to provide for a growing enrollment (Gwinnett Technical College, 2017).

In addition to typical credit academic programs, the college also offers adult education courses, English as a Second Language courses, and economic development services within the counties that have been designated as the college's service delivery area by TCSG. While GTC has one of the smallest state-assigned service areas consisting of just Gwinnett County and North Fulton County, it is one of the most populous because of its location within the Atlanta metropolitan area.

GTC was established in 1984 as Gwinnett Area Technical School. Originally, part of the local school board system, GTC was the last in the state to transition to the state system of technical institutes in the 1980s. In 2000, Georgia's technical institutes all underwent a name change to be designated as technical colleges, made possible by Georgia's A+ Education Reform Act of 2000. GTC's name changed in July 2000 and the college now offers more than 140 associate degree, diploma, and certificate programs (Gwinnett Technical College, 2017).

Organizational change. The first step in the process of change often relates to organization structure. In this case, that change affected the student affairs unit. Organizationally, change is difficult to manage, especially if it is compounded by organizational variables such as institutional mission, external environment, organizational culture, existing practices, individual skill set, and people's ability to understand and accept change (Walters, 2003). Administrators at GTC were certainly up against a set culture that had been in place for decades. Employees had to be prepared for change and upheaval, not only in the way they did their jobs, but also in where they performed their daily duties.

Physical space for enrollment services. Gwinnett Technical College's campus is a former high school. When originally retrofitted to house a college, offices that affect the enrollment process were not designed with growth and the changing needs of the student in mind. Offices were siloed and were not student-centric in design and functionality; the space was also certainly not planned to accommodate growth.

During the interview process, several GTC employees who have worked with the institution for many years likened the former physical space to that of a 'DMV office' with small and uncomfortable waiting areas. And, while the enrollment services area was billed as a one-stop for many years, long-time employees referred to the former space as a 'five-stop, one-stop.' In other words, students still had to visit multiple offices and wait in multiple lines to receive needed services, even though they were closely co-located in the same area.

The small and uninviting space did not accommodate the growth of the college well, neither for employee numbers or student enrollment numbers. As the college

continued to grow, unit leaders realized that in order to serve students and continually reach enrollment goals, physical changes would have to be instituted with service to the student in mind. To do this, college leaders set their sights on finding a model that would work to improve service, internal cooperation among related units, and ultimately affect enrollment positively. In order to be effective in their efforts, physical space changes were critically necessary. The ways in which the college leaders and staff worked to achieve these goals and the ramifications of the physical space changes area described later in this study.

Enrollment growth. As noted above, Gwinnett Technical College is currently the third largest technical college in terms of enrollment in the state. Annual year, unduplicated enrollment is now over 11,000 students. While enrollment growth remained relatively flat from AY2013 to AY2016, the College saw a 10% surge in enrollment for AY2017 (TCSG Knowledge Management System, 2017). By all initial indications, it appears the college will experience another year of substantial growth in AY2018. With that being the case, many other colleges within TCSG began to look at what GTC may be doing differently to spur growth. Aside from one anomaly, no other college in the state's Technical College System has even come close to matching the growth rate experienced by GTC in AY2017. While an anecdotal connection based on satisfaction surveys and retention and enrollment data can be drawn between the organizational and physical space changes and the enrollment growth, there is no correlation yet proven between the two.

Participants. Participants for this study included three executive leaders, two mid-level managers, and five staff members, for a total of 10 interviews. After gaining

the approval of the Institutional Review Board to pursue this study, I was able to speak directly with those involved in leading the change in the enrollment services processes at the selected college. I performed semi-structured interviews with the vice president for student affairs, two executive directors who manage the processes and services of the front office and back office processing center. I also interviewed key middle managers and front-line employees within the department. Other interviews were sought, but unfortunately, due to scheduling conflicts, could not be completed.

As interviews were conducted with key employees in the organization, the data collected through the semi-structured interviews provided a deeper insight into the organizational restructuring process and the efforts of leaders to attain the goals set for the college of building a student-focused service environment. The results provided context for the decisions made during the process to transform GTC's enrollment services, and ultimately provide guidance for institutions considering the same transition.

Trustworthiness

To ensure validity, I used the method of triangulation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) to compare data from face-to-face interviews and in-person observations with the messages being conveyed by published materials, including print, electronic, and audiovisual. Triangulation is an important step in achieving a deep understanding of the case being studied and often includes direct observation within the environment being studied, probing case participants, asking for explanations and interpretations, and analyses of written documents in the natural environment (Woodside, 2010). In a case study, the researcher's interpretation of the subject presents an etic representation of reality, while the mental model of the interviewee presents the emic view. Emic and etic

representations are important building pieces for triangulation in case study research (Woodside, 2010).

Data used in this study came from four sources: face-to-face interviews; unobtrusive observations of staff members at work including interactions with students and coworkers; document review of printed enrollment-related materials, publicly available websites and social media pages, and audiovisual videos; and enrollment data. During the analysis of data, I compared the observations of the actual service provided to students with what is being advertised and with what I learned in the qualitative interviews. Additionally, I compared the timeline of the changes in processes and physical space with that of enrollment data history. By employing these methods, I was able to achieve triangulation that aided in the validity and reliability of the study.

Data Collection

Interviews. This research study was centered around qualitative, in-person, semi-structured interviews at a single institution. To begin, I contacted the college's vice president of student affairs to request GTC's participation in the study. After gaining permission (see Appendix C), I was asked to work with GTC's Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Research (DIER) for recommendations and recruitment of participants, and to organize any other needs such as interview times and space.

I conducted 10 individual, semi-structured interviews for this study. As the interviewer, I used the questions listed at the end of this chapter to guide the majority of the interviews and probe the interviewees further as warranted by the answers that were given. In addition to the questions below, I also collected demographic data for each interviewee, including gender, race, years of experience, and years of service with the

case study institution. Once the study was initialized with the institution, the interview questions were slightly modified from the original version to ensure the terms and descriptions used coincided with those used at the institution.

Initially, interview participants were selected at random based on position on the college's organizational chart. I selected only full-time staff members serving in various capacities in order to gain the perspective of both front-line and back-office processing staff members. Those categorized as executive leaders (three participants) were purposefully selected to ensure that their perspective on the implementation of organizational change was included. However, after consultation with college leaders, the list of selectees to solicit for interviews was refined.

Along with the vice president, the DIER provided me with feedback based on my initial list. They indicated some employees initially selected were no longer with the institution and suggested alternates. They also provided brief statements about each employee such as length of service or background. These comments were helpful in selecting the final list of employees to contact for interviews.

Through the office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research, I was able to gain the needed proof of institutional permission to conduct the study and the contact information needed to move forward with scheduling interviews with individual participants. Ultimately, those who participated in interviews were purposefully selected based on potential viewpoints and their extent of experience at the institution.

Based on the information I received from the DIER, I contacted each selected participant by email. If needed, a follow-up phone call was conducted to gain the participants initial agreement to participate. An appointment for an interview was

confirmed with the participant either via email or the follow-up phone call. Following the setting of the appointment, I coordinated time with the DIER to secure a quiet space for interviews if the employee's workspace was not conducive to the requirements for a recorded interview.

Once the time and date were confirmed with the participant, I shared the consent form via email. This allowed time to fully review the form prior to my arrival for the interview. I also took printed copies of the consent form to the face-to-face interviews for the participants' signatures. Each 60-minute interview was audio recorded with the interviewees permission and was conducted at the institution in a conference room, or in the participant's office.

Two separate sets of interview questions were used for this study. The first set of questions below, employee interview questions, was used for interviews with front-line and back-office processing staff members. The purpose for these questions was to gain the employees' personal perspectives on the decisions of executive leaders and the impact they feel that the changes have had on the institution and students. The second set of questions, executive leader interview questions, was used for employees identified as leadership team members, including mid-level managers and executive leaders. The purpose of these questions was to gain the leader's perspective on decision-making, the prompts for the decisions that were made, and the perception of the impact those decisions have had on students. In some instances, questions from both lists were used for employees identified as mid-level managers. This type of employee may or may not have had influence in the decision-making process; therefore, questions were adjusted appropriately.

Since my case study involved interviews with multiple levels of employees, I began with those considered executive leadership. In this category, I reached out to four employees and secured interviews with three. For mid-level managers, I reached out to three employees and interviewed two. The number of employees considered mid-level managers was limited as there were only three in the enrollment services unit that I categorized in this way. Other positions that would have been classified as mid-level managers were vacant during the research period and one other was on maternity leave.

To complete the final category of interviews, I solicited eight staff members and interviewed five. Once again, I set a date and secured interview space at the Lawrenceville campus through DIER. Interviewees were asked to select an interview time on a Doodle poll that was included in the solicitation email. To do so, employees simply had to click a link to access the poll and select the time and day that worked best for their schedule. This allowed for less back and forth between interviewees as once a slot was selected, another person could see that it was not available. These interviews were conducted over a two-day period and were guided by the employee interview questions below. Again, the semi-structured format of the interviews allowed for some variation in the questions and additional probing on certain topics for clarity.

During the initial interview solicitation process, those who agreed responded promptly and set an interview time. For the first round of interviews, I was able to schedule the three executive leaders in one day. I traveled to the Lawrenceville campus and interviewed each leader in their respective offices. Each interviewee signed a consent form, the interview was recorded, and I took notes throughout the conversation. Additionally, following each interview, I compiled field notes to assist me in

remembering details, thoughts, and connections regarding each interviewee. The executive leader interview questions included below provided a guide for these interviews. Because the interviews were semi-structured, additional questions may have been asked or topics probed further as needed so that I could gain a clear and full understanding of responses during the interview.

The interview process for mid-level managers occurred in much the same way. Interview times and locations were set for each interviewee. Again, consent forms were signed, interviews were recorded, and notes were taken during each interview. The interview questions included below served as the primary guide for interviews with employees in this category. However, questions were adjusted as needed based on the longevity of service to the organization and their experience with the organizational changes that served as the focus of this study.

Once interviews were completed, all audio files were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist and reviewed for accuracy by the interviewer. Once the transcription files were received, I loaded the interviews into a professional software program, NVIVO, specifically designed to analyze qualitative data. By doing so, I was able to evaluate the responses of the interviewees to discover themes and sub-theme within the data.

Employee interview questions:

1. Please describe your current primary role and responsibilities within the college. In what position did you serve prior to the organizational change in 2012?

2. What changes have you seen and experienced in the way your department interacts with students over the past five years?
3. In your opinion, what prompted the college to undertake changes to the enrollment and advisement process? Describe both internal and external factors that may have led to the decision to create a one-stop shop for enrollment services.
4. The customer service area for enrollment services was remodeled during the organizational transition. What affect do you think the changes in the physical space had on customers' perceptions of service, employees, and interaction between the two? Please share some examples.
5. What role did you play in the transition of your college's student affairs unit from a separated service environment to a unit where students have a single point of contact for all enrollment services?
6. How would you characterize the changes at your institution and the effect they've had on a) students, b) enrollment, and c) staff/morale?
7. Prior to the transition of the enrollment services to a student-focused customer service environment, how would characterize the opinions, attitudes, and actions of the staff when serving students? What would your current characterization be of these points today?
8. As a leader/staff member in enrollment services, what do you value most about your job?
9. What do you perceive the institution's priorities/goals to be related to enrollment and customer service and is there a connection between the two?

10. Do you feel supported (i.e., do you have the resources you need; are expectations clear; can you have open discussion with leadership) by immediate and upper level leaders? If so, what is the most important part of this support?
11. Are there enhancements that you believe could improve the customer service in the enrollment services department at your institution?

Executive leader interview questions:

1. Please describe your current primary role and responsibilities within the college. In what position did you serve prior to the organizational change in 2012?
2. Please describe your career in higher education. (starting point, positions held, longevity, etc.)
3. In what ways did you participate in the decision-making process to orchestrate the change in the way students are served in the student affairs unit? Describe both internal and external factors that may have influenced your decision in this process.
4. Briefly describe the timeline from idea to fruition. Did the implementation meet your expectations and what barriers had to be overcome during the process?
5. What were your primary concerns when making decisions related to this service process?
6. How did you address HR issues in the organizational restructure?

7. The customer service area for enrollment services was remodeled during the organizational transition. What affect do you think the changes in the physical space had on customers' perceptions of service, employees, and interaction between the two?
8. How would you characterize the changes at your institution and the effect they've had on a) students, b) enrollment, and c) staff/morale?
9. Prior to the transition of the enrollment services to a student-focused customer service environment, how would characterize the opinions, attitudes, and actions of the staff when serving students? What would your current characterization be of these points today?
10. As an executive leader at this institution, what do you value most about your job?
11. What do you perceive the institution's priorities/goals to be related to enrollment and customer service and is there a connection between the two?
12. Are there enhancements that you believe could improve the customer service in the enrollment services department at your institution?

After completing the interviews and compiling field notes with summary statements from each interviewee, I followed up via email to ensure that my interpretation of the interview matched what the interviewee intended to convey. I shared my notes and asked for feedback if there was disagreement. If a response was not received, I assumed the interviewee did not have corrections to my interpretation of the conversation.

Environmental observation. To complement the data derived from the interview process, I also conducted environmental observation at the case study site. Departmental leaders provided a tour through the service area, including the front-facing service space, as well as the back-office processing area. With permission, I spent an hour on each of two visits observing the interactions between employees and students in enrollment services area. This allowed me to compare the interview responses with what was actually happening in the service area.

While it was not conducive to spend quite as long in the processing area, I was able to conduct multiple, shorter observations of this area to compare with the interview responses of those who work in this environment. By conducting the environmental observation, I was able to take another step in the effort to triangulate the data for this case study.

Document review. To finalize the triangulation process, I conducted a review of publicly available documents related to enrollment services at GTC. This included web pages, audio/visual resources, and printed materials, including applications, admission letters, brochures, flyers, and static and digital signage at the campus. I examined the documents in an effort to conclude whether or not the same focus on the customer existed on paper and in other promotional materials as it does in person through the service provided to students. The review of digital and print documents allowed me to analyze how the customer-focused service philosophy translated to the documentation and recruitment materials provided by the institution.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This single-site case study focused on discovering the internal and external forces that led to college leaders' decisions in the development and implementation of a student-centered service environment at Gwinnett Technical College and the effect these changes had on employee productivity and morale. Leaders realized that students were not satisfied and that enrollment services could be provided much more efficiently. With this realization, leaders took steps toward drastic organizational and physical space changes within the institution. This study sought to explore the impact of these changes on productivity and employee morale, and ultimately, the college's enrollment.

Results indicated a relationship between the organizational and physical space changes and the college's enrollment. The thematic categories of customer service, physical space, and leadership illustrate the strong opinions of interviewees regarding student satisfaction, efficiency and effectiveness, inviting and welcoming physical space, staff comfort and cooperation, and building an effective team to use data-driven decision-making to achieve enrollment goals. Based on information received in interviews and my observations, it is abundantly clear that leaders had specific goals and results in mind for this project. In the end, based on the information gathered for this study, it appears that the majority of the goals were achieved and the effect on enrollment at the college has been positive. It is also clear that leaders did not have intentions for processes or physical space changes that indicated isomorphism, and this was not a major factor in the

decisions of leadership in implementing the changes in process, physical space, and overall customer service at this technical college. However, through these changes, it appears that leaders were able to build organizational capacity.

Qualitative Interviews

Demographics of participants. During the random selection process for interviewees, I attempted to ensure a fairly equal mix of gender, as well as position within the institution’s student affairs unit. As I reviewed the institution’s published organizational chart, I made notes about desired interviewees and submitted a list to my contact at GTC as requested. Based on my list, I was given feedback on some who had left the college or changed positions, and brief descriptions of why each interviewee may be able to benefit the study. Table 1 below includes a list of interviewees recognized by aliases. I made the decision to use aliases for participants to eliminate the possibility of any negative consequences. Overall, I conducted interviews with three males and seven females during this case study.

Table 1

Interviewee Demographic Information

Alias	Position	Years of Service at GTC
Bob	Mid-Level Manager	5
Bonnie	Executive Leadership	8
Carrie	Staff Member	18
Janice	Staff Member	10
Jamie	Mid-Level Manager	2
Jeff	Staff Member	1
Jennifer	Executive Leadership	12
Keith	Executive Leadership	2
Lacy	Staff Member	2
Rita	Staff Member	4

Interview themes and sub-themes. As is the case with qualitative research, interview data was analyzed to develop themes and sub-themes to discover the findings of the research. The results of this analysis revealed themes and subthemes that led to the findings for the research questions included in this case study. As shown in Figure 4.1, themes were related to customer service, physical space, and leadership. Each theme and subtheme are discussed below.

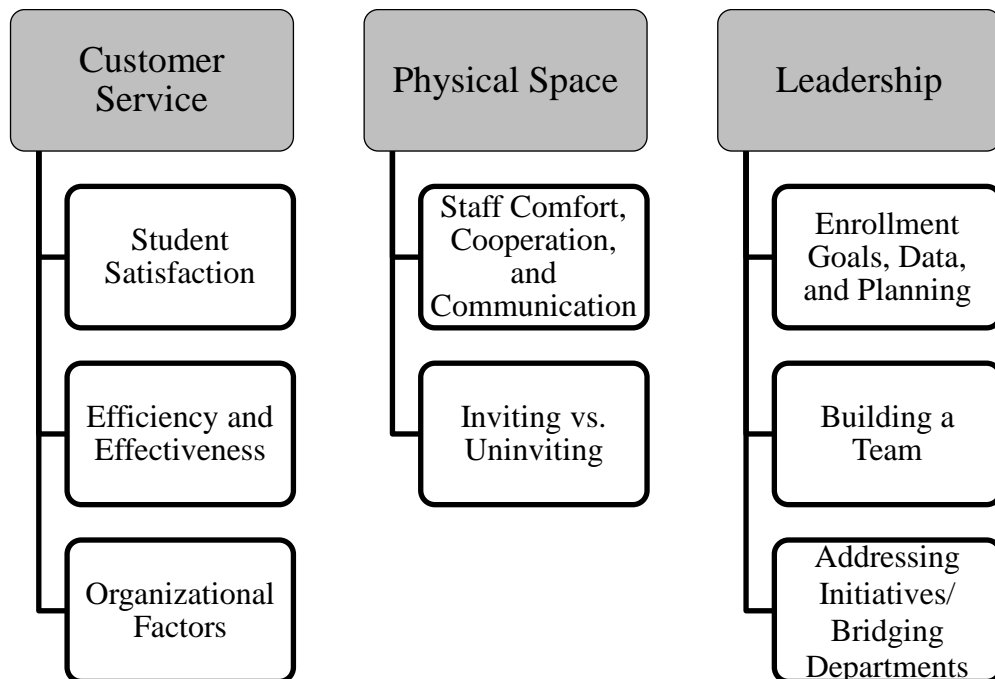


Figure 4.1—Qualitative Interview Themes and Sub-Themes

Customer service—student satisfaction. Student satisfaction, or lack thereof, was the major catalyst that helped set the changes in motion for GTC. Initially, to address customer dissatisfaction, the college implemented a customer care center, referred to as C3, to serve disgruntled or escalated students. If a student became upset while receiving services in the student affairs unit, they would be taken to the C3 to receive personalized attention from someone who could help them with any issue related to student affairs.

The promise of such a model was recognized and leadership members began exploring ways to expand on this concept.

In his interview, Bob, a mid-level manager discussed his perceptions of what lead to the process for change:

I would say probably our students' satisfaction surveys [prompted the change]. They were mediocre and I think that's kind of what led to it. I think our vice president is very much a go-getter. She does a lot of research on making improvements and finding best practices and the best methods to use for education. It was basically her idea.

Bonnie is an executive leader who has served with the college for eight years. She played a major role in helping to plan and lead the organizational and structural changes. During Bonnie's interview, she touched on the student frustration and the influence it had via surveys that eventually lead to the current service model:

So that [decentralized services] was the frustration for students. But the percentage of students we were seeing were telling us they wanted a centralized place to go to get their questions answered. We were also looking at the survey results that we had from end of course surveys that were distributed to students at the end of semester and we would also do surveys of our students who visited the advising center. The comments we gathered [indicated] our students were frustrated about having to be ping ponged from one office to another to get their questions answered, or they'd be frustrated that we couldn't fully help them with what they needed, but of course that wasn't our model at the time.

Comments like these highlighted the need for changes in the way students received services. Based on comments throughout the interviews with leaders and staff members, it became clear that student satisfaction was a primary force in prompting change within this organization. Each of the three executive leaders cited student satisfaction rates resulting from the surveys and surmised that the increases in enrollment that the institution is currently experiencing are, at least partly, due to the organizational and structural changes that took place.

College officials regularly conduct surveys through the internal Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research to receive student feedback on services provided in areas across the college, not just student affairs. College-provided data indicates that rates were consistently in the 70th and 80th percentiles as separate offices prior to the changes. Some even fell in the 60th percentile.

Table 2

Student Satisfaction Rates (data provided by GTC)

	Number of Responses	Registrar's Office	Financial Aid	Admissions Office	Program Advisement	Business Office
AY 2013	18,403	79%	68%	80%	83%	80%
AY 2014	16,916	80%	73%	82%	83%	73%
AY 2015	14,914	82%	81%	85%	86%	84%

Following the centralization of services into the current one-stop model, satisfaction rates increased for each semester after it was fully implemented in fall 2015. According to this data, it appears that the centralization of services impacted the satisfaction rates of students related to enrollment services. Table 3 in chapter 5 shows additional data related to the satisfaction rates of students following the transformation of the student services area.

When discussing student satisfaction rates, several employees related the increase with the transformation in the services provided to students. Keith, an executive leader interviewee, has worked in higher education for several years, but only two of which have been at GTC. He cited the success the college has witnessed in the increase in

student satisfaction rates. “I mean, now we’re in the high 80s, mid 90s as far as satisfaction rates which, you know, three or four years ago was not like that.” Jennifer also offered similar comments:

I’m sure [increased focus on customer service] plays a part. It’s harder now because those who experienced it before and then experienced it after were like, “Oh my gosh, this is the greatest thing in the world!” But that levels off because now this is all they know. We are now seeing the levelling off in our satisfaction surveys for the one-stop. Where we once had this huge high – now, we stay around 90 percent. I mean, before, there was only one group that was ever at 80 percent; some were even 69 percent. Nobody was happy in terms of students, but I think that the operational model has contributed [to student satisfaction] significantly.

Carrie, a current staff member who has been employed with GTC for more than 18 years, also noted the importance of the student satisfaction surveys in prompting the organizational and structure changes at the college. “A lot of it was prompted by surveys; leadership is good about getting feedback from students, to see what’s working and not.” She went on to credit the current vice president of the unit with being the catalyst for the changes. “She had a vision and took the time to ask questions and, I assume, brainstorm. She had the intent of creating a true one-stop, which has been the mission since I’ve been here.”

In the restructuring of the student affairs unit, manner and appearance of employees also played a part in ensuring student satisfaction. Staff members indicated that the vice president and unit leaders addressed this factor in the redesign. Carrie offered this explanation:

For the staff, we’re always on. When you’re out there on the front lines, you’re always on the front lines. It’s always there. We’re representing the school 40 hours a week. You can’t be snacking at your desk and silly things like that. You have to be fully aware of your presence at every minute of the day. And again, just the volume; there’s sometimes a lot of volume when we’re having these conversations with the students. We have to be very mindful of that.

In the redesign, student satisfaction was not only addressed in the front-facing service environment, but also by a back-office processing center. By separating the processing of applications and other paperwork from the face-to-face service, employees who work in the front-facing service environment indicated they could provide a greater focus on the student in front of them and not worry about missing a phone call or processing the paperwork submitted by the students. Jeff, a staff member who works in the back-office processing center, addressed how he thinks the separation of customer service and processing has affected satisfaction rates related to the way the student is served by the college:

Over the past years, customer satisfaction was very, very low. But that's different now. The customer satisfaction has dramatically increased and, I don't have the data in front of me to necessarily say without a doubt that there's a correlation between customer service satisfaction with financial aid and enrollment, but it's pretty hard to ignore that enrollment has gone up at the same time that satisfaction has gone up. I think it was in the mid-60s percentage-wise for satisfaction, and now it's about 90.

According to Jeff, this model has allowed the college to find a balance in serving the students. Satisfaction has increased, but leadership members have worked to avoid the possibility of too much separation. He noted the danger of a rift in the office when you have employees who only do processing and those who only serve customers and the contributions of each set of employees is not fully appreciated in relation to the whole picture. However, because of constant communication and collaboration between the two sets of employees, GTC has so far avoided possible issues related to the new model.

Throughout the interview process, it became clear that student dissatisfaction was a primary motivator for the college to undertake the changes to create a true one-stop center. And, according to the data derived from student satisfaction surveys, the

investment is paying off. While all interviewees touched on student satisfaction related to surveys, it is important to recognize other themes that helped the institution reach its goals related to student satisfaction and enrollment.

Customer service—efficiency and effectiveness. Oldfield and Baron (2000) indicate that service quality is comprised of three significant dimensions: service process, interpersonal factors, and physical evidence. Service process concerns the system of policies adopted by the service provider (Oldfield & Baron, 2000). In the model adopted by GTC, service processes are addressed by separating them into a back-office function, away from the interpersonal factors and physical evidence of the front-facing customer service area.

If an organization is too rigid and is unable to provide good service to a customer, dissatisfaction will occur. GTC has sought to address this by separating the processing of enrollment documents from the front-facing student interaction. The intention is to allow processors to do their jobs efficiently and effectively. Jeff, a staff member working in the processing center, said “We process so much more now because we can dedicate that time to processing.”

The separation from the constant interruption of students has allowed processors to work efficiently and effectively in a back-office environment, but this staff still frequently interacts with the enrollment advisors who work in the front-office environment. Even so, the student interaction is minimal. Jeff commented on how the new model affected the work of the processors:

So, it has changed everything really as far as how we interact with students to the point to where we just don't miss much. We interact with the people who interact with students. We're kind of like the help for the advisers when they have

questions about financial aid; they ask us and then we tell them what to tell the students and they go back up.

Jeff offered further assessment of the organizational capacity of back office staff members relating to serving customers:

So, on the customer service side, we still do it but we really do focus on processing. So, I definitely think it's been an improvement as far as office efficiency. The only thing we have to watch is our interactions on the phone because we don't interact with students as much. We have to really make sure that our staff members are staying professional and being student-focused and not seeing phone calls as an interruption to their work.

Bob, who is a mid-level manager in student affairs at GTC, indicated that he thought separation of front-office and back-office operations definitely makes the employees more productive and efficient. However, he also offered that, at times, a change of pace and scenery is welcomed:

Even though I said I hate working on the front counter, I do like working in new student orientation. It is nice to have that break and that change of pace so we have that dedicated day or two that we know we're going to be helping students. I enjoy that part as well. I look forward to those days because it is variety in our job and what we do. I just didn't really like going out each day to the front counter.

Keith also works with the enrollment processing center staff. He noted that the focus of the center is the turnaround time of items. He stated that leadership has allowed for the resources needed to improve processing time. "We've been able to improve processing of many admissions documents from five days down to three days." He cited support from college leadership for more automated or online processes. One he noted specifically was the recent switchover to online-only transcript requests. By taking these requests off the plate of the records staff, Keith stated that processors now have even more time to help students in other ways.

By admitting students more quickly, Keith pointed out that the student has more time to make decisions about financial aid and orientation. At GTC, orientation is mandatory. Without participation in orientation, students cannot receive the time ticket needed for registration. Keith said, "If we don't get them admitted [in a timely manner], they don't enroll because of financial aid. We need to be more systematic to ensure they're admitted and funded, if they're eligible, so they can register."

The processing center at GTC reviews and analyzes hundreds of documents per day. Keith noted that while some of the automated or batch processes they've implemented, such as assigning an advisor or adding an admission code, only save 10-20 seconds per student, that can make a huge difference when your processing so many documents per day.

Another change implemented by student affairs leaders related to processing was moving to the alpha model. Previously, the processing of one student's enrollment documents was handled by multiple employees. One employee would enter application data and decisions, one would evaluate transcripts, one would determine residency status, and so on. Now with the alpha model, employees are responsible for last names beginning with their part of the alphabet. This means information is more easily trackable as well. Jennifer gave an explanation for this change in processing:

We switched to an alpha model in admissions, whereas before we were part of a process model group. This person did this part. Now, they own this part of the alphabet and they feel ownership in it and they want to ensure that they're getting through their parts and making sure the enrollment advisers know if this person's last name starts with an O, it's going to this [employee]. I know who the go to person is when the student comes back [for more information].

Because of this process change, if a student asks a question regarding the status of the application, an enrollment advisor in the front office knows exactly who should have

the answer. GTC also uses share drives to track information. Processing is done according to the date submitted. By tracking it on the share drive, the enrollment advisor can give accurate information to the student regarding when the documentation he or she has submitted will be processed for a decision. This can be accomplished without interruption to coworkers, thus increasing the efficiency of service.

Customer service—organizational factors. To change the organizational structure, leaders first strategized and researched what methods may work best to achieve GTC's goals. After visiting other institutions, leaders at GTC took the best practices they found, combined them with some processes unique to GTC, made a plan, and introduced the concept to GTC staff members. This concept called for combining several offices into one to create a true one-stop for students. Offices to be included in this one-stop were admissions, financial aid, student records, academic advisement, and the bursar's office. In order to combine these offices, leaders knew that cross training and consistent professional development were essential to the success of this endeavor.

Due to the fact that cooperation among departments, such as financial aid, admissions, and advisement, was low, students faced great difficulty in getting the services needed. Janice noted, "We would hear from students, 'Are you kidding me? I have to go wait in another line?' We'd have to apologize and say I just can't answer those questions." Bonnie referred to students being "ping-ponged" from one office to the next to receive answers to questions. Janice, Bonnie, and other interviewees alluded to the fact that issues such as this led to the low satisfaction rates. The silos that were created among offices were not conducive for students to view the customer service provided by GTC's student affairs unit positively.

Jennifer gave an explanation of what the past organizational structure looked like and how it affected employees and the service they were able to provide to students:

In the past, the culture was that you do everything because that's the way that we've done it and you don't ask questions. So, we spent that time really trying to work with the staff [letting them know] we care about your opinion or what would you do differently. And so, it took a long time for them to come out of their shell and say, "You know, I don't understand why they do this. Why do I have to do this every time I process an application; that doesn't make sense?" The other thing is that the staffs were very quarantined, so there were three to four separate offices for admissions staff and three or four for financial aid and one never spoke to the other. They closed their doors and all they did was speculate what the other person didn't do.

Keith also noted that the silos prohibited effective communication between departments and thus, affected the student's perceptions of service:

I know from the processing side everything was siloed in that people didn't communicate, even within the same department. You had your three or four walls and doors and it was something that you could have collaborated on, maybe you could've solved the problem just by talking it out, and it just wasn't a lot of that going on.

Janice and Carrie both mentioned the taboo of going beyond your own specialty. If a student asked a question, staff members were either not empowered with the needed information or were fearful of giving the wrong answer. Carrie expounded further:

There were definitely lines drawn between what we could answer and what we knew we probably shouldn't touch because we just didn't have the most updated information. If a student asks about financial aid, you know, you're going to have to talk to the financial aid office. I wasn't trained on those screens. I didn't know how to read them. I didn't have the most updated information.

In the old model, each function was its own department. Admissions had a mid-level manager with staff members dedicated to their own processes. The same was true for student records and financial aid. The staff members within each department had their own focus and specialization and did not necessarily stray from their assigned tasks.

Without much cooperation between managers, the staff members really did not interact except when necessary.

Organizational barriers such as this helped GTC leaders make decisions about how the new model would work and how departments would interact with each other. In the redesign, leaders cited the need for an organizational model that would force coworkers to communicate with each other, but also provided for the appropriate training for staff members to stay up-to-date and informed in order to assist and serve students holistically. Additionally, the college has used technology where it makes sense to increase the knowledge base and tools for communication among employees.

When the process began to implement the new organizational structure, admissions and financial aid employees were co-located in temporary quarters. This move was cited by the vice president as the catalyst of one of the best results from the reorganization of employees, but was completely unforeseen:

We had to move everyone in [enrollment services] over into this giant room and set that up temporarily. We called it cubicle city because we had cubicles for advisers, admissions, registrar, they were all just in desks right next to each other and then financial aid was in a separate room right across the hall from them and that's how we operated.

As staff members began to get to know each other and their roles and responsibilities better, employees began to realize the importance of cooperation and how each function performed in each department was critical to the student experience. After a transition period that involved discomfort for some, employees began to communicate about how they processed paperwork and why things were done a certain way and how that affected the other processes. They learned from each other and began to communicate and this is how leaders were able to successfully build a new, consolidated

one-stop center. Jennifer said, “I couldn’t have planned this! People started talking to each other and it broke down a lot of barriers and walls. I can take no credit for that; this was truly just circumstances that did that.” This served as the beginning of improvements for staff communication related to physical space.

Physical space—staff comfort, cooperation, and communication. During the interview process, several employees commented on the positive and negative attributes of the physical space changes and how it affected the comfort level of staff members and the cooperation and communication among those charged with servicing students for enrollment. While the comments were overall positive and complimentary of the redesign, some staff members did indicate some additional changes they would now make after having worked in the redesigned physical space for several years.

In designing the space, Bonnie pointed out that many employees moved from private office space with doors to now working in glassed-in, cubicle-type spaces without a way to close off their office space. In the front-facing service area, privacy concerns alone pose a challenge. Janice noted the need to watch the volume when speaking with a student. Sometimes conversations relating to financial aid can become sensitive in nature; therefore, employees are always conscientious of ensuring as much privacy as possible for students. However, student privacy was not the only concern. Staff members also lost quite a bit of their own privacy in the redesign. Carrie offered her thoughts on the lack of privacy:

For me personally, it took me two years probably to adjust to that. [I got to the point] where I could create these invisible walls to feel a sense of myself and my personal space. This does affect employee morale because you feel like I have no control over this. Yes, I’m happy [about the change], this is a good vision, but at the same time it’s just a major adjustment.

To help with privacy concerns, those involved in the design of the new space even considered the details of the carpet. Bonnie said in her interview that the carpet helps to create a border to indicate the difference between the waiting area and office area. A dark, wide border in the carpet around the perimeter of the large room helps to signal to the student the exit from the waiting area and entry into the office space area. She indicated the purpose of this design is to help create a sense of office space and deter the temptation of eavesdropping. This is helpful to employees as they must be mindful of the conversations with the student being served.

One aspect of the office space that was cited as both a privacy concern and as an advantage for employee communication was the space between the cubicle glass walls and the structural wall. Bonnie talked about this space as a positive aspect. She said the approximately twelve-inch separation between the structural wall and the cubical wall provides a way for the employees to easily communicate with each other. If a quick answer is needed, or one employee needs to step away for a moment, this space provides easy access to the coworker for communicating without the necessity to come around the desk or talk over the customer for the answer. Additionally, coworkers can recognize when additional assistance or intervention may be needed and can advocate on behalf of their fellow staff member. However, some employees pointed out that it is also a privacy concern when talking with students about sensitive matters.

Even though care was taken to create as much privacy as possible for employees in the front service area, such as frosted glass, some still express concerns related to physical space in which they work as there is no isolation in this area or complete privacy. Carrie pointed out the challenges of working in such an open environment:

Now as far as our offices go, it's a little bit interesting because it's right out in the open. Our offices are just there and we've got students staring at us all day long and so we constantly have to really be careful about how we're perceived in that area. We don't eat at our desk. We're not on our cellphone; we've got to be really, really careful about [the fact that] students are watching all the time.

While the customer service area is open and inviting, the area for processing offers privacy and seclusion from students. However, privacy from coworkers is minimal for these employees. The back-office processing center is a large room with an open floor plan. In other words, there are no walls. The desks could best be described as a half-hexagon. They are three sided with a hutch that does provide for some privacy. However, there is no enclosure or 'back' to the desk.

Jennifer pointed out the desire the leadership team had for not re-creating the silos in the newly redesigned space. "I didn't want to go back to silos and I didn't want to go back to people not talking. [Now] people roll up next to each other all day long now and they're all one big, happy family." The openness of the space and the design of the desks allow for constant cooperation and communication between those working in the back-processing area. Bonnie cited the fact that admissions and financial aid staff are now easily accessible to each other and questions can be asked and issues sorted out quickly when they arise.

One mid-level manager who works in the processing center pointed out that while the open space has its merits, it also comes with drawbacks. When the staff moved into the space, he said some were initially shocked and morale suffered a bit because "they lost their spaces that they were used to having." Bob went on to say that many staff members who have come on after the change do not have the experience of the previous

set up, so it is now not a concern to many. He estimated that “probably 45 percent of the staff we have now” came on board following the physical space changes.

Even so, Bob stated that working in the open environment poses a challenge simply due to the volume. “You can hear everyone talking. It is a loud noisy environment and it’s sometimes difficult to concentrate on your work because there’s other people talking and that kind of thing.” Employees, he says, are resilient though and have figured out ways to flourish in the new work environment. Some wait to make phone calls until noise levels lower, and others have found solace in their own space by using ear buds to drown out too much background noise.

While separation is needed in order to accomplish efficient processing, one staff member gave this explanation when asked about his perception of the separation from direct interaction with the student:

It goes both ways. I think most of it is positive from an efficiency standpoint for the office because it’s always been a tricky thing in financial aid to balance the processing with the customer service duties. It’s somewhat dangerous to separate that in the financial aid department because then you’ll end up with people who only do customer service and you end up with people who only do processing and before you know it, there’s a riff in the office where they don’t appreciate each other’s contributions to the whole picture.

Even so, steps have been taken to ensure communication and cooperation between those serving the students in the front and those processing in the back. Janice pointed out there is still communication and cooperation among employees in both areas. “We’re not in any way isolated [from our coworkers]. This whole entire department works together. I probably talk to everybody in the back every day asking different questions [to assist students].”

Technology has been helpful in making sure effective communication between employees occurs. Share drives provide all employees access to the same information and the ability to find answers on their own. GTC also uses a communication tool called Jabber. This is basically an internal electronic instant messaging service. Employees keep this software open on their computers throughout the day and can see when a coworker has a question or concern. The immediateness of this service greatly increases the efficiency of the service to the student, and also to the coworker. Many interviewees cited to the advantages to the communications tools put in place by the leadership team in helping ensure accurate and efficient service to the students.

Keith feels that the redesign of the physical space related to the back-office processing has been positive in making sure collaboration occurs:

I know from the processing side everything was siloed; people didn't communicate, even within the same department. You had your three or four walls and door and [the issue] was something that you could have collaborated on, maybe you could've solved the problem just by talking it out, and it just wasn't a lot of that going on. And so, with the new model, they wanted something that forced people to communicate. Now [the back-office staff] are in clusters based on their group, so the registrar staff have their space together; Admissions is right beside them. Financial aid is right behind them and then along with back wall is free space for the enrollment support advisers who come to the back periodically throughout the week and answer emails and so they're all collaborating. It's not uncommon to walk back there and an admissions processor will be talking to an articulation person from the records office. That wasn't happening as often before and I think part of it was just the physical space location.

While there are both draw backs and positive aspects of the redesign in both the front and back office areas, employees have worked with the challenges and unit leaders indicate they are continuously looking for ways to improve. One interviewee put it best when noting that "you can't always get it right on the first try." As time and budget

allows, the intention is to continuously improve to make sure and that employees have the opportunity to collaborate to ensure that students are served and satisfied.

Physical space—inviting vs. uninviting. In multiple interviews with GTC employees, the former customer service area for student affairs was compared to the DMV, or Department of Motor Vehicles. Anecdotally, most people would tell you that a DMV waiting room and service area are terribly uninviting, uncomfortable, and it takes an incredible amount of time to accomplish the task for which you have visited the DMV. A comparison to the DMV is certainly not considered as flattering.

In her interview, Jennifer addressed the difficulties that college staff members faced in serving students in an environment that was not designed to serve post-secondary students. As previously mentioned, the facility itself was part of a former high school so adapting space to the services required by a college population was difficult:

This was a former high school and it looked like that. It was a big, ugly front desk and you went through double doors to get to this office with three offices in it. We didn't have anything inviting about what was here before.

Student frustration was evident, according to the employees who participated in interviews. Bonnie pointed out that the small waiting area with hard chairs served four offices—admissions, financial aid, student records, and the bursar—and it was standing room only on busy days. She noted that stress and tension could be felt just walking through on busy days. Janice described a typical day during the peak time for enrollment at the college prior to the change in physical space:

Before, students were crammed into a very tiny, little waiting area and it was not comfortable at all. You know, they've got to check on their financial aid, check on their admissions, and check on their withdrawal from class or whatever. And so, when they would come and sit in those tiny little areas, that didn't make for a good situation. I think students were really uncomfortable in there.

Janice continued to describe the former area and noted that students would sometimes overflow into hallways and the lobby on busy days. Staff would attempt to accommodate more students by bringing in extra chairs, but they could only do so much in the confines of the space they were in. “When students come in to see us, this is not why they’re here at the college. They’re here to learn and get an education and so this is sometimes irritating [to them].”

In the redesign of the physical space, the vice president indicated she put a lot of time and effort into ensuring the space was adequate and was representative of what a post-secondary environment should look like:

So, we just went through the planning process. I got to hire an executive director and then she and I worked very closely together and then we put out our bid, met with the architect, and picked one. I got to design what the facility would look like. I started with the gigantic Post-It note from home and it has turned out very similar to that, believe it or not. It’s pretty cool!

Based on my observations, I would now characterize the new space as open, comfortable, and inviting to students. Bonnie noted that many students will hang out in the enrollment services area between classes. “We wanted it to feel like a lounge, hotel lobby kind of feel. Sometimes we have to even discourage napping!” Janice also cited the inviting nature of the enrollment services area:

I think it’s a lot more comfortable; there are couches, there are bigger chairs, and there’s a place where they can sit and do their homework. I know students come in even when they’re not waiting to see an adviser and they just sit in that area and wait for their next class or study or do homework or whatever so it’s just a more comfortable place.

Jennifer indicated the space now seats 96 people comfortably and called it an ‘inviting environment.’ Bonnie also pointed out that while the customer was much of the focus for the re-design, employees were also a primary consideration when finalizing the

concept for the space. She noted that glass walls, half-way covered with frosting, were utilized in the enrollment advisor area to provide privacy, but also to make sure employees did not feel closed in. Additionally, bright colors were purposefully selected for welcoming environment.

Leadership—Enrollment goals, data, and planning. Throughout the interview process, participants were reluctant to attribute enrollment growth specifically to the organizational and physical space changes in the student affairs unit. However, several pointed out that growing enrollment was certainly an associated goal in the redesign process and they would like to think that the efforts made to improve the physical space and the efforts of the organizational change in redefining the roles of employees are making a difference. One interviewee credited the unit's vice president for her visionary leadership in working toward accomplishing the enrollment goals through this initiative:

I mean, she came up with the whole concept of it. I don't know a lot of the details on how that came about, but I know that that was her vision from very early on. I was here before she was hired as VP of student affairs and [a one-stop center] wasn't discussed. I didn't hear anything about it until she came on board. It is probably within two months after she started when she began preaching the concept to everyone.

In Jeff's comments during his interview, he stated, "it's hard to ignore that enrollment has gone up at the same time that satisfaction has gone up." The changes that were implemented in both the organizational structure and the physical space were done so that the capacity to serve and satisfy students could be increased. In doing so, it would be safe to posit that the increased satisfaction has led to increased enrollment.

Bob, a mid-level manager, noted that the relationships that can now be built between the student and the enrollment advisor may also play a role in the increased enrollment. "Now they're forming a bond with their advisor. They'll come in, and

advisor teams are setup by major, so a student sees the same advisors and they get used to those advisors. I think it's really helpful as far as retention.”

Jennifer pointed out that word-of-mouth perhaps has played a role in the enrollment growth as well:

I do believe a positive experience [makes a difference]. One person will tell 12 if they a good or bad experience, but no one in the middle is going to tell you anything. So, I'm sure that plays a part in it.

From my observations, GTC also placed great focus on analyzing and using data. This is a common practice among all units within the student affairs division. The vice president for student affairs has a background in institutional research, and in fact, she also oversees the college's office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research as well. This emphasis on data collection and mining allows the college to continually review strategies to ensure they are working. Keith revealed his thoughts on how using the data has influenced enrollment at the college:

From an enrollment perspective, we're collaborating with other departments like retention support and still partnering with our colleagues out at the North Fulton Campus to work with students who may have registration issues. Maybe they've been admitted and maybe they have financial aid but they don't know how to register, they're getting an error. So, we're constantly mining information trying to figure out why a student is not enrolling, trying to either improve something that maybe we're not doing well, or just a simple email or phone call saying, “Hey, you're going to take an anatomy lecture. You got to have the lab, too.” Those kinds of things.

Jennifer also indicated that data is used to discover which applicants have completed 90 percent of the enrollment process. In other words, a student could just need to submit one document, or pay an application fee to be admitted. Students who fall in this category are contacted and encouraged to apply for the college's Term C, a short

session within the full term, or to get their documents in for the next semester. Efforts like this have certainly influenced in the enrollment growth at the college.

The organizational and physical changes within the college, coupled with word-of-mouth and the careful attention to the resulting data, have allowed leaders at the college to witness increases in enrollment. Most recently, the semester-to-semester comparison for fall 2016 and fall 2017 have shown double-digit growth. The college is now faced with the good problem of high growth and how to accommodate more students.

Leadership—building a team. The ability of an organization to compete in any business climate requires effective leadership (Jones, 2012). College leaders, and their recognition of the need for change, provided the foundation of this college's efforts to implement change and build the team that would work to achieve the goals set for improvement. While much of the planning and implementation of the organizational and physical space change was managed by executive leaders, input was sought from mid-level managers. Those managers would be the ones to give ideas and input on how the resulting one-stop center would look, how it would function, and who would do what job.

Bonnie provided some background information as to how the unit's leaders built the team that now is responsible for the one-stop center services to student:

[The vice president] met with the director, manager, or coordinator of each area and asked them to meet with their staff with their teams and say, "Okay, this is a concept we're thinking about. What are your thoughts?" And so those discussions were talked about as a leadership team and the managers already had a sense of where their staff would want to be assigned. Our retention has been very, very good on the frontlines.

In this organizational change, employees did have the opportunity to give input on where they may like to serve in relation to the front office or back office. This provided

for buy-in from the employees and executive leaders indicated that the turnover rates for employees in both settings, front office and back office, have been very low. Both Bonnie and Keith indicated the loss of a few employees due to different circumstances, but that overall, employees have adapted well to the new model.

During an initial conversation with the vice president responsible for the student affairs unit, she also indicated that employee turnover for the department being analyzed was extremely low following the organizational change. The majority of interview participants worked at the institution in enrollment services before and throughout the change process, which further confirms this assertion.

Even though they were consulted on their roles, most staff members who participated in interviews indicated they had little opportunity to participate in the planning process for the actual organizational and physical space changes. One of the longer-standing staff members interviewed, Janice, offered her recollection of the planning process when asked about her role in the transition.

Not a lot, to be honest. I want to say that there were opportunities for us to give a little bit of feedback. One opportunity was when we switched to having advisers that worked up front and processors that worked in the back. We were sort of given the opportunity to say, you know, do I see myself more out front talking to people all day long or do I see myself more in the processing back area. I definitely wanted to be up front working with students, and so that's the direction I went in. Other people wanted to just process and work on paperwork all day. But as far as the physical layout for the one-stop, I didn't personally have any say.

In building the team, most everyone had changes to endure. Some of the mid-level managers lost team members to other areas. Nearly everyone had to adjust to new office space. New job responsibilities were added and training was constant. In the transition, the student affairs unit took on the advisement for all students at the college; this meant faculty no longer had to sit with students for advisement for a class schedule.

However, college leaders effectively led the staff members through these constant changes, and some benefitted with a higher salary. Jennifer said, “I didn’t increase my entire division by three people, but I increased the change in salary range. We have to pay people accordingly and hold them to the expectation that they’re going to do the work for that amount of money.”

With all the challenges of a major transition, leaders within the unit have worked hard to boost and maintain employee morale and have continued those efforts today. All interviewees categorized as leaders indicated the importance of constantly focusing on morale to ensure employees are satisfied, which translates to the customer satisfaction rates (Jones, 2012). Keith noted several recent efforts by the leadership team to shore up employee morale:

We have theme weeks for prizes, we serve food on Fridays, we have board games in the break rooms, and other similar events. We try to make a difference every day. We know the staff members are slammed; we want to get their mind off of what they’ve been doing, even if just for a moment, so they can have a break and we’re not burning them out.

One of the most recent morale boosting efforts included providing the opportunity for employees and their family members to attend a minor league baseball game as a group. Group events such as this not only boost morale, but also help employees develop relationships with each other, which translate into the office environment. Even with all of the efforts by unit leaders to support the employees on the front lines, the unit’s vice president still recognizes that hardships involved. “We do have challenges. But the hardest one is keeping their spirits up during those heavy times.”

Both Bonnie and Keith pointed out that in the busy times, they will jump in the thick of it with their employees. Bonnie said, “[The vice president] has really facilitated

that sense of ‘we’re all in it together’ and really feels strongly about we’re all a team. The staff in the back will even come out to help get the stuff done so that [front office staff] can get out on time.” As executive leaders, Bonnie and Keith indicated they work to help process documents or serve students in the front office. Efforts such as this help increase the department’s efficiency, maintain student satisfaction rates, and simply just to remind their staff members they are all one team and the leaders care. Bonnie also pointed out that efforts like this reassure employees and solidifies retention in the workplace.

Leadership—addressing initiatives and bridging departments. Any higher education institution today may indicate suffering from initiative fatigue. As enrollments decline and the everchanging student body has grown to require different types of attention and services, initiatives are now at the heart of many of the changes that take place on college campuses. GTC was no different. As an Achieving the Dream institution (www.achievingthedream.org) and intently focused on achieving Complete College Georgia goals, the staff and administrative leaders at GTC were beginning to burn out from their own initiative fatigue. However, the ideas and related improvements in the one-stop center can be attributed in part to these initiatives, which also put an emphasis on focusing on the student. Jennifer offered the following assessment of the initiatives related to enrollment:

My staff came up with 98 enrollment initiatives two years ago. We have implemented all but five, and those five are out of our control. It might a marketing thing or it involves somebody else and you get to a point where you just can't.

With so many initiatives and tasks to accomplish, it was easy for staff members to become fatigued and disillusioned with their workplace; leaders struggled to keep up, not

only with the multiple initiatives, but also with supporting and motivating staff members. Jennifer said, “It wasn’t all good. We had amazing data results, but it just got to that point where people were getting weary and stressed out.”

This organizational restructure also helped to bridge departments. Often in institutions, an ‘us vs. them’ mentality can develop in relation to the student affairs staff vs. the academic faculty. It is a common theme among institutions that one unit does not understand the other and the challenges they each face. However, in their efforts, GTC leaders sought to tear down the wall between those two units and work together to better meet the needs of the students. As a result, student affairs staff members now regularly communicate with academic faculty to stay up-to-date on curriculum and program offerings and to ensure the correct information is being relayed to students. Enrollment advisors are assigned to a team that focuses on one division of the college. The advisors meet with the deans and the program chairs regularly to stay current on the academic requirements and advisement best practices.

In this re-design, faculty members were able to take advisement off of their plate. Prior to this project of redesigning the enrollment services for students, Jennifer noted the separation between academic and student affairs. “I took our vice president of Academic Affairs at the time with me [to visit other one-stop institutions.] We went together because we were wanted to talk about [how to make this work] because these two divisions were just never married.”

Jennifer indicated that she and academic affairs leaders realized that implementing a one-stop center was not only an enrollment initiative, but also a retention initiative. Both serve as benchmark measures statewide for TCSG institutions. In their

research before embarking on the changes, they discussed success rates and how the new advisement model could help program directors and faculty. By taking the everyday advisement task away from program faculty, they are now better able to dig deeper with students and really give them the info needed regarding their career choices. Instructors now also have more planning time and can dedicate time to improving curriculum and pedagogy. However, getting to that point took some work:

Under the academic affairs vice president [during the redesign], program directors were required to develop a template for everyone in their programs. Now our enrollment advisors have a template they can use with anyone in that particular program. They can adjust it to whether the student is full-time or part-time, or based on additional courses or special circumstances. They can manipulate these templates and make them work for most any situation. Now, that is off the program director's plate and a student has complete access to it all along. Not only can the enrollment advisors see it, but students and program directors can also see this template and be aware of what courses the student may need. We try to really work hard to build those relationships [between departments].

Throughout the process, some employees gained additional duties and some lost. However, the careful approach of executive leaders helped smooth the transition and allay fears that may arise from giving up ownership over something as big as advisement for students. Because of the cooperation among leaders, the two departments have developed a productive working relationship with a primary focus on student success.

Environmental Observation and Document Review

To achieve triangulation, I compared findings from the interviews with my observations of the working environment at GTC's one-stop center as well as with publicly available publications, both print and digital. I sought to ensure commonalities between the three elements and translation of the ideas expressed in the interviews into the documents provided to students and the observation of the services received by the students.

Environmental observation. It is very evident, based on unobtrusive observation, that staff members were interested in serving students in a friendly and efficient manner. The ideas expressed in the interviews were evident with this real-time observation. Executive leaders expressed their desire to fully support staff members and ensure morale and reduce the possibility of exhaustion and burnout, as evidenced by their regular walk-throughs of the area which included deliberate conversations with employees. During three separate observations, I noticed unit and department leaders walk through the enrollment advisor's area and engage with staff members and students. These leaders expressed sincere interest in the employees with whom they interacted and students were greeted with friendly smiles.

Additionally, the constant flow of communication between the front office and back office was noticeable. At two different times, I observed a back-office processing staff member assist a front-office enrollment advisor with a particular student situation. The customer service professional who sat at the front information desk also reflected the ideals represented in the interviews. Her services were timely and helpful and seemed to be genuinely appreciated by the students who interacted with her.

In regard to physical space, ideas expressed in interviews certainly convey the reality of the environment. The remodeled area encompasses 22,000 square feet space in the main administration building on the campus. Offices for administrators are located alongside the processing center, all of which is directly behind the front-facing student service area. Even though the processing and office area is only accessible by key card to eliminate student entry, administrators can easily access either space to assist with customers or answer employees' questions related to processing.

The one-stop service area is inviting and open. The bright, warm colors and large, comfortable seating are in direct contrast to the description of the old service space. Clear, and partially frosted, walls define workspace, yet also allow for open communication and provision of assistance if a coworker notes the need. Also, students do really use the space for more than just advisement appointments. At each observation, students were seen lounging, waiting for their next class, or studying in the waiting area. The new space truly became the welcoming and open space that was envisioned by leaders during the planning phase of the physical space transition.

The interaction of employees with students or other visitors is true to the picture presented during interviews. Each visitor is greeted by an associate at the information desk and is then put into the queue for an appointment based on the visitors' needs. This system works efficiently and eliminates the possibility of skipping a customer or losing track of the order in which visitors arrive. Once the student's turn comes, a friendly enrollment advisor invites the student to his or her desk to discuss the issue for which the student is seeking help.

The observation of the processing center I conducted also matches with the picture presented by the interviewees. While it is somewhat noisy due to the nature of the work, employees seem satisfied and many have found their own comfort zone to deal with the decrease in private space and the added sound. Some employees were using headphones to focus on the task at hand, and yet others were conversing with a coworker to find a solution to an issue. Overall, it seems the physical space changes have achieved the vision and goals relayed in the interviews of those involved in the planning process for the changes to achieve the student-centered service environment.

Document review. The documents reviewed for this case study included publicly available print, digital, and audiovisual documents produced by GTC. A full list of documents analyzed is included in Appendix J. Each of the documents relate to recruitment, enrollment services, and on-campus promotion. Additionally, digital and audiovisual documents served promotional purposes for on-campus events or initiatives or were companions to print pieces.

While the documents available for review all seemed to imply ease of use by students and attempted to provide clear and relevant information, one interesting observation was the inclusion of the term ‘customer focus’ in the values statement related to the college’s mission. Specifically, this values statement reads:

Customer Focus: We believe that the students and businesses we serve are our customers and we strive to consistently meet or exceed their expectations.

This statement can be found on the GTC webpage (www.gwinnettech.edu) stating the Mission and Vision under the About Us section. This finding during the document analysis directly reflects the sentiment of the interviewees in establishing and maintaining a sharp focus on the student customer. By including this in the mission/vision statement of the college, it signifies that GTC is serious in their commitment to student satisfaction and enforce this philosophy with all college employees.

In the review of a promotional video focusing on the college’s commencement ceremony, I noted a gonfalon on the graduation stage that read ‘customer focused.’ As with the inclusion in the values statement, this also signifies a deep commitment to customer service. These examples are just a few noted during the document analysis that coincide with the sentiments of those interviewed

Overall, the environmental observations and the document analysis verified interviewee's statements and provided triangulation for this study as no inconsistencies or anomalies were noted in either process. It appears that Gwinnett Technical College is especially interested in relaying information to the student in a user-friendly and consistent way in all mediums so as to achieve a superior level of customer service within technical higher education in Georgia.

Summary

Qualitative data derived from interviews and observations for this study indicate that college leaders accomplished the goal of creating a true one-stop center focused on providing efficient and friendly services to students. While both positive and negative effects were felt during the transition, staff members indicated that they found their new comfort zone and appreciate the focus on morale by executive leaders. All of the efforts during the three-year transition process have led to noticeable results with increased retention and graduation rates, and perhaps most importantly, a double-digit percentage increase in enrollment. By combining research, data-driven results, and a sincere focus on excellent service to students, GTC has been able to build one of the first, and a highly effective, one-stop enrollment services center within the Technical College System of Georgia.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

As an in-field professional, it was especially enlightening to complete this study. In conversations with interviewees, not only did I learn more about the institution in the study, but through self-reflection, I learned a lot about my views on student satisfaction and service, my own institution, and methods that may work for improvement in organizational capacity in the student affairs enrollment services unit within the college at which I work. Because of my familiarity with the institution and the topic of research, the findings did not reveal any great surprises as to why such changes were pursued; however, I discovered several commonalities among employees' comments regarding what worked and what did not work, and what changes those impacted would have voted to leave out. Additionally, it was the prevailing opinion that structural changes signaling institutional isomorphism were not clearly evident, nor were they considered a prompt for the organizational changes. These findings can provide a basis for other similar institutions to institute changes to build organizational capacity to improve customer service to students and the internal cooperation among units.

Research Questions—Findings

RQ1: *What are the internal and external forces, and what factors did leaders consider, that led to the development and implementation of this new student-centered focus in enrollment services?* This question sought to discover the internal and external

forces that may have led to the development and implementation of a new student-centered focus in enrollment services at GTC. As the researcher, I specifically sought to identify what factors leaders considered when deciding to invest in expensive physical changes to the service space and disruption of employee's comfort zones related to their daily job duties. After conducting a study on the establishment of one-stop service centers at three four-year, masters-level post-secondary institutions, Becker (2012) proffered that additional research is needed to analyze the decision-making process related to current implementations of similar models. While this single case study only looks at that process related to one institution, this is step forward in strengthening the literature related to decisions of leaders when implementing changes to the student service model.

In relation to external factors such as competition, there were no positive responses among interviewees to conclude that any external influence had a part in prompting the processes for change. Overwhelmingly, data collected for this case study indicate that the primary driving forces prompting the organizational and physical space changes at GTC were predominantly internal and related to student satisfaction. Table 3 below shows a comparison of the previously listed satisfaction rates by separate department with that of the rates based on annual surveys following the changes to form the combined Enrollment Support Center. This evidence indicates satisfaction rates are much higher now than in previous years under the old service model. In reviewing the chart, the reader will see that the rates are consistently higher over the past two academic years when compared with previous years. When digging in deeper and breaking the

data down even further to terms rather than years, the college saw its highest satisfaction rates yet in spring semester 2017 with a 92% satisfaction rate.

Table 3

Student Satisfaction Rates Post-Transition (Data provided by GTC)

	Number of Respondents	Registrar's Office	Financial Aid	Admissions Office	Program Advisement	Business Office	Enrollment Support Center
AY 2013	18,403	79%	68%	80%	83%	80%	
AY 2014	16,916	80%	73%	82%	83%	73%	
AY 2015	14,914	82%	81%	85%	86%	84%	
AY 2016	11,381	85%	82%	87%	86%	85%	87%
AY 2017 *	9,832	89%	86%	89%	89%	89%	87%

Note. *Final data for AY17 not available

While external research was conducted to determine which centralized services model may work best for GTC, elements such as competition and isomorphism do not seem to be in play at this institution. As one of 22 colleges within the Technical College System, GTC is not behaving in an isomorphic way in relation to its sister colleges. In fact, as pioneers in creating a one-stop enrollment services environment within TCSG, leaders at other institutions may create some facets of institutional isomorphism for others as colleges look to emulate GTC's recent success in boosting enrollment and retention and graduation rates. None of the interviewees associated the changes at GTC with any external force or competitor.

RQ2: *What are the positive and/or negative effects of changes in service process, organizational structure, and physical space on employee productivity and morale?* As a result of the second research question, I hoped to discover the effects, both positive and negative, of process improvements and structural changes on employee morale and productivity. As with any major change, employee reaction is of major concern. The frontline workforce can make all of the difference when servicing customers (Martinez et al., 2013) and therefore when leaders make decisions for change, they must first be mindful of the impact on staff (Hambrick, Finkelstein, & Mooney, 2005).

Leaders at GTC were mindful of staff member's reactions and feelings during their efforts to implement organizational and physical changes at the college. Nealon (2005) pointed out that service centers, such as GTC's, with tightly coupled functions allows for an interactive network of collaboration where employees are able to creatively counter burnout and garner a sense of ownership and empowerment, which in turn, provides quality service to the student. During the interviews, based on the frequency of number of times mentioned by each interviewee, it was very evident that employee morale and possible burnout was a primary concern of executive leaders. That concern translated to the staff members. Several staff member interviews revealed that they were aware of the efforts of senior leaders to ensure that morale is maintained and that all employees know they are appreciated and their contributions to the college are valued. This implied that the support and collaboration afforded to the employees at GTC translated to the quality of service provided to the students.

The physical changes to the workspace also indicated the importance of employee satisfaction. Within the backroom processing area, a large breakroom was available

specifically for enrollment services employees. This breakroom included typical furnishings, but also boasts plush, comfortable seating for break time. The walls were adorned with inspirational quotes and a wall is dedicated to employee sticky notes which serves as a personal form of motivation.

While the overall consensus now, three years following full implementation of the physical space changes, seems to be satisfaction, it is apparent that it was not always that way. Staff members did indicate an adjustment period and the challenges of 'getting used' to the new space. Privacy was lost, jobs changed, and for some, they were assigned to serve under new leadership. So many changes at once can be trying and could have proven disastrous. However, the slow and planned approach taken by leaders helped to lessen anxiety and ill effects associated with change. Months of training were provided to ensure everyone was prepared for their new role, which resulted in low turnover for employees. While both positive and negative effects on morale occurred, productivity has only increased. By all accounts, I observed there were no negative effects on productivity related to the organizational and physical space changes.

RQ3: *Did the organizational structure and physical space change have an effect on the college's enrollment?* As with any major change, the focus is to have a positive result based on those changes. In this case, the desired result would be to experience enrollment growth. Therefore, in this study, the third research question attempted to explore the bottom line as it relates to enrollment and growth at the college. Enrollment growth cannot be directly attributed only to the perceived improvements in service to the student; it is likely that external forces such as the economy and current labor market demands also contributed to the changes in enrollment. However, in the eyes of college

administrators, the changes implemented in the student affairs unit are considered a factor in the growth of enrollment.

Over the past few decades, substantial growth in enrollment in technical colleges has often been related to change in the economy. Typically, as the state or local economy suffers, enrollments grow as people seek out options for a career change or a better job through retraining at a technical college. Another factor affecting enrollment growth is the addition of new programs or course offerings. In this particular study, we can rule this out as GTC has not experienced any major changes their program offerings within the timeframe under study. Additionally, as the economy in the state of Georgia has remained in a positive state over the last few years, recent economic conditions would imply an insignificant effect on enrollment since job growth is on the rise and unemployment rates continue to decrease.

From AY 2013 to AY 2017, GTC enrollment grew by more than 11%. The retention rate increased by 2.3 % and the graduation rate increased by an impressive 12.5%. The number of graduates almost doubled, increasing by more than 46%. Other measures such as number of awards conferred and the college's placement rate also increased. Although enrollment changes may be due to a variety of forces in addition to the one-stop center, the chart below illustrates the positive growth and increases that occurred during the same period that the changes associated with the creation of the one-stop took place.

Table 4

Institutionally-Provided Data

	AY 2013	AY 2017	Change
Enrollment	10,013	11,147	11.33%
Retention (Year-to-Year)	64.30%	66.60%	2.30%
Graduation Rate	63.80%	76.30%	12.50%
Graduates	1,402	2,058	46.79%
Awards Conferred	3,357	3,401	1.31%
Placement Rate	98.55%	99.60%	1.05%

Source: Gwinnett Technical College, 2017

Limitations

With any student in educational research, some limitations may be in order. Case studies are limited for their lack of generalizability (Merriam, 1998). While some scholars fault this type of research for this and its lack of representativeness and rigor (Hamel, Dufour, & Fortin, 1993), these perceived limitations can be addressed thorough, thick, rich descriptions of the researcher’s observations and dedication to the integrity of the overall research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Guba and Lincoln (1981) cited another major limitation of qualitative case study research stating that case studies can lead the reader to an erroneous conclusion about the actual state of affairs by oversimplifying or exaggerating a situation. They warn that case studies do not present the whole, but rather a slice of the total situation. In addition to this obvious limitation, qualitative research is also limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator, as this person is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1998). The investigator must rely upon his or her own instincts and abilities during the majority of the research effort. Also, the researcher must be keenly aware of biases that can affect the completed report, and must duly inform the reader of all potential biases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

To inform of possible bias, I have offered the reader an awareness of my affiliation with TCSG, my familiarity with the institution under focus in the case study, and my interest in creating a student-centered service environment within my college's own student affairs unit. As a leader within a student affairs unit at a technical college in Georgia, I see the importance of studying the changes implemented at GTC. This study helped me to discover the process behind such changes and glean best practices that will be useful for my home institution.

Further, the reader should also note my own perceptions and worldview as it relates to the topic of the case study. While my own personal interests and affiliation with this topic may cause the reader to take issue with the results of my study, the research, data, and findings have been presented as accurately as possible so that other institutions may benefit from the information gathered through the research. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggest that ensuring validity, credibility, trustworthiness, and reliability in qualitative research is dependent upon the researcher conducting the investigation in an ethical manner. As the primary investigator in this study, I saw it as my ultimate duty to ensure that the highest ethics are used when conducting research, compiling data, and reporting results. To manage the possible perception of bias, I offer to the reader that while I work in the same system, no close affiliation or relationship existed between me as the researcher and the employees at the participating case institution. Additionally, there is no professional interest in the institution beyond the possibility of how the efforts undertaken at GTC could possibly benefit the enrollment services unit at the institution at which I work.

Another consideration of this study is its limited focus. Enrollment management is a wide field that includes a number of different specialty processes. This study focused on the front-line services a student receives when inquiring about application, enrollment, and financial aid, and the follow up to help lead the student prospect to conversion as an enrolled student registered in courses at a technical college in Georgia. This also involves the back-office processing of documentation. While this study did not specifically evaluate the entire student lifecycle with reference to retention and graduation, data provided by the institution has been included to give the reader insight into the impact of the changes that were implemented.

Another limitation in this study is the student perspective. Due to the nature of this study, the student perspective was not included. Since the changes and alterations to the organization and physical environment were made with the student in mind, it could be helpful to gain this perspective. For the broader perspective on the changes, one would need to discuss perceptions with students who were present at the college before, during, and after the changes to the enrollment services process were made. Therefore, a student enrolled from 2012-2014 could most likely give valuable feedback. Regrettably, time limitations precluded efforts to include a student perspective, but this is certainly an area for future research. For the purposes of this study, I relied on the institution's leaders to give thorough feedback on their perceptions of the changes in processes and the physical environment as it relates to the staff's ability to serve students effectively and efficiently prior to and following the organizational shift and physical space alterations.

Further, face-to-face interviews could pose a possible limitation. While I granted anonymity, I acknowledge that I may not have gained full candor from the interviewees. Even though the TCSG has 22 institutions, it is still a small system where many staff members across the state know each other. The fact that I am a TCSG employee could be a mitigating factor in whether or not I gained the full trust of the interviewee and received honest and forthright feedback for both the good and the bad involved in the change process. Additionally, mid-level managers and front-line staff may perceive the possibility of retaliation from supervisors if they chose to express negative feelings about the changes.

Study Conclusions

This case study focused on the efforts of a single institution to improve customer service and grow enrollment through several extraordinary measures. Through the reorganization of departments, shuffling of staff members, and a presumably costly and time-consuming facility remodel, the college is now reaping the rewards of a more than three-year process to form a more customer-centric service environment for enrollment services. While realizing double-digit enrollment growth in the most recent academic year, AY17, student satisfaction appears higher, and overall efforts seem to have been reasonable and worth it.

Review of existing literature supported the steps taken by GTC's leaders to improve their focus on customer service. Kalsbeek's (2001) research suggested shifting the focus from rigid and siloed departments to a more generalist work environment. By "de-jobbing" the current staff and redefining their roles as enrollment advisors or as back-office processors, GTC employees did as Kalsbeek (2001) and Morgan and Thayer

(2017) suggested and shifted away from silos, which often prohibit effective interdepartmental communication.

Additionally, GTC's leaders recognized the importance of putting the right people in the right seat. During this organizational transition, the decision was made to use mid-level management recommendations to decide which staff members fit best in which seat. As Maguad (2007) noted, the ability of staff members of an organization to build and maintain good customer relationships is dependent upon the quality of personnel who come in contact with those customers and Nealon (2005) emphasized the need for extensive training for those quality staff members. GTC leaders made sure that those selected for the front-line positions had the needed training, along with a desire to work face-to-face with customers, were passionate about helping students succeed in their educational goals, and also possessed the ability to work cooperatively with multiple departments.

A structure that supports internal communication, as noted by Martinez et al. (2013), is essential for creating a culture of service and allows employees the ability to offer exemplary customer service. Leaders at GTC built such a structure within the organization. The dual executive directors work closely to manage the front line and back office processing functions. Not only do the two executive directors constantly communicate and ensure current processes are conducted according to policy, but they also continually seek methods of improvement. The college is innovative in seeking ways to communicate with students through specialized texting software and customer relationship management (CRM) software. By using these tools, students are better able to receive needed information and staff members are alleviated of calls and visits, to an

extent. Additionally, college enrollment advisors utilize appointment, or sign in, software called QLess. This allows students to make an appointment with an advisor or sign in to get in line while they are traveling to the college. This cuts down on frustration by essentially eliminating wait times and wasted hours.

One topic addressed by multiple interviewees was the satisfaction of students based on the customer service provided by the college. Dado et al. (2012) investigated the relationships between service quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty and created two models through their research. While their findings regarding the order of the causal relationship were inconclusive, they determined that one model fit the data better than the other. This model suggests that service quality must come first since it influences customer satisfaction, and therefore affects behavioral intentions.



Figure 5.1 Dado, et al., (2012) Causal Relationships Conceptual Model

In implementing the customer service model, GTC has attempted to improve the service quality through the changes in organizational structure and physical space and increase customer satisfaction rates as evidenced by internal surveys. These surveys indicated that satisfaction rates climbed steadily, even reaching above 90 percent with the last academic year, AY2017. According to Dado et al.'s (2012) causal relationships conceptual model shown in Figure 5.1, GTC should reach the point where students behavioral intentions are influenced by the changes in service quality. The ideal result

will be that student enrollment and retention rates increase, and that word-of-mouth becomes a positive influence in recruitment to the college.

Wueste and Fishman (2010), while cautioning of limitations, stated that higher education institutions should be responsive to student needs in much the same way that businesses respond to customer's needs to edge out the competition. Colleges and universities, however, must find the balance to adequately serve and satisfy student customers while still maintaining academic integrity and enforcing the roles and responsibilities of the students related to their educational goals. GTC has been able to find such a balance. While enrollment advisors play a major role in a student's success, the student still largely responsible for achieving his or her own academic and educational goals.

In their research, Sultan and Wong (2012) found that customers often look for clues before making a purchase. In the case of higher education attendance, clues about the organization's capabilities and quality in terms of provision service (Sultan & Wong, 2012) would be sought before enrolling. These clues include advertisements and word-of-mouth. As customer service and efficiency improved at GTC, word-of-mouth may have also had an influence on the rise in enrollment numbers. In several interviews, word-of-mouth was cited as a key to helping build reputation, and thus, enrollment.

Jones (2012) found that leadership's efforts to increase employee morale and commitment to organizational effectiveness weigh on the satisfaction of the organization's customers. When a greater focus is placed on the customer, this subsequently can lead to greater profits. In terms of higher education, this usually equates to greater enrollment. Jones (2012) specified that an institution's effectiveness

can be enhanced through greater customer focus, resulting from increased employee satisfaction and empowerment (p. 21). GTC attempted to do just this. By de-jobbing and allowing employees to focus in one area, either face-to-face interaction for enrollment and advisement or back-office processing, employees indicated they are now able to find greater satisfaction in their jobs and, therefore, it translates to their service with the students. Additionally, executive leaders work to maintain employee morale by providing fun outings, words of encouragement, and even board games in the employee breakroom. Based on observation and feedback in interviews from staff members, it truly seems that the leaders care for the employees and have their best interest at heart. By focusing on morale and employee support, the members of the leadership team are able to realize and achieve goals while students enjoy greater rates of satisfaction.

The BOC Framework

Throughout the research, findings revealed that GTC's changes and the path taken to achieve the changes modeled that of Toma's (2010) BOC framework. Leaders first looked at their *purposes* of the enrollment services unit and made data-driven decisions to arrive at their goal of better service, which resulted in the one-stop model. Next, leaders worked to change the *structure* to fit the desired model; employee positions were altered and some job duties changed. Services to students were centralized in one place to facilitate efficiency and increase satisfaction rates. Becker (2012) pointed out that centralized services provided an innovative approach to deal with the associated fiscal realities of declining student populations and reductions in retention rates across the nation. GTC used this centralization approach to overcome similar challenges and implemented an effort supported by Kalsbeek's (2001) theory of de-jobbing that removed

work silos and afforded many employees a generalist role that eliminated limiting parameters on service to students.

Next, consistent with Toma's BOC model, *governance* and *policies* had to be adapted to the new model. Levels of leadership, such as the dual executive directors were added. More mid-level managers were put in place to share the load of policy change and implementation. Once units were combined (admissions, financial aid, student records, and advisement), policies had to coincide and complement each other so as to ensure a smooth workflow. The workflow, or *processes*, were refined to match the ideal one-stop model as researched by GTC leaders. A front-end, back-end office approach was implemented and these two had to balance each other to ensure all processes were accommodated to enroll, advise, and register students. This mandated an adequate flow of *information* so that student inquiries are satisfied in a timely manner and to ensure the process is completed accurately.

The *infrastructure* had to support changes in the policies and processes. Previously, walls and offices created silos with small, uninviting, and uncomfortable areas for serving students. With the complete redesign and remodel of 22,000 sq. ft. of physical space where enrollment services are located, leaders were able to ensure the physical infrastructure supported the overall goal of a one-stop service center.

Infrastructure within the BOC framework also includes human, financial, and technological assets. Oldfield and Baron (2000) stated that people who deliver the service are of key importance and that the employee's ability and willingness to satisfy and his or her manner and appearance, all play a part in determining how satisfied the customer will be with the encounter (Berry, Zeithaml, & Parasuraman, 1990). While the

number of staff members did not greatly increase in this re-design, the budget for salary did increase. Hambrick, et al., (2005) proposed that increases in job demands cause workers to perform better and experience increased satisfaction with their jobs; however, there comes a point when both performance and satisfaction begin to decrease as demands continue to increase. Leaders have to be careful not to cross that mark. In her interview, the vice president noted the need to pay people for the work they do and the talents employees bring to the organization, but she also sets the expectation that the wage delivered will be well earned.

Technological infrastructure included the addition of several software programs that helped provide for better service to the student. Among others, staff members use Degree Works, Jabber, GTC Sharepoint, Mongoose (texting service), Ellucian Recruit CRM, and QLess, an appointment-setting software that allows customers to place themselves in line virtually so as to decrease in-person wait times. The investment in technological resources has allowed better service to students and has helped employees with internal communication and processing efficiencies.

Finally, leaders had to address *culture* and influence change in the “that’s the way we’ve always done it” mantra that existed. The long-existing culture perhaps posed one of the biggest challenges during the change process. Leaders admitted hesitancy in mixing groups of employees and reassigning job duties. Many employees lost their private, closed offices. There was apprehension with every major decision to make changes. Knowing that any disruption to comfort zones could backfire, leaders at GTC made bold, yet calculated moves to slowly phase in the intended changes and gain buy-in from employees who had become ingrained in the past culture of the institution.

After consultation, current employees were selected for their best suited ‘seat on the bus.’ Staff members also had a small say in their new role. Some expressed the desire to continue work with students in a face-to-face service environment, and others balked at the daily interaction with customers. Instead, these employees preferred to work in a back-office environment processing paperwork and ensuring accuracy of records. By working closely with mid-level managers and front-line staff members, leaders were able to gain buy-in and motivation among employees through a focus on morale and collaboration and extensive cross-training (Anderson et al., 2002; Burnett & Oblinger, 2002; Day & Pitts, 2002) to acquiesce to the changes and work toward the common goal of creating a functioning and effective one-stop to achieve the vision of the unit’s leaders.

All of these steps combined to build organizational capacity through strategic management. The careful planning and analysis performed by college leaders helped determine what would work best as they marked off the steps to a new way of doing business and servicing the student-customers at Gwinnett Technical College. And now, after almost three years of full implementation of the centralized services one-stop model, the College is reaping the benefit of double-digit enrollment growth and increase student satisfaction rates.

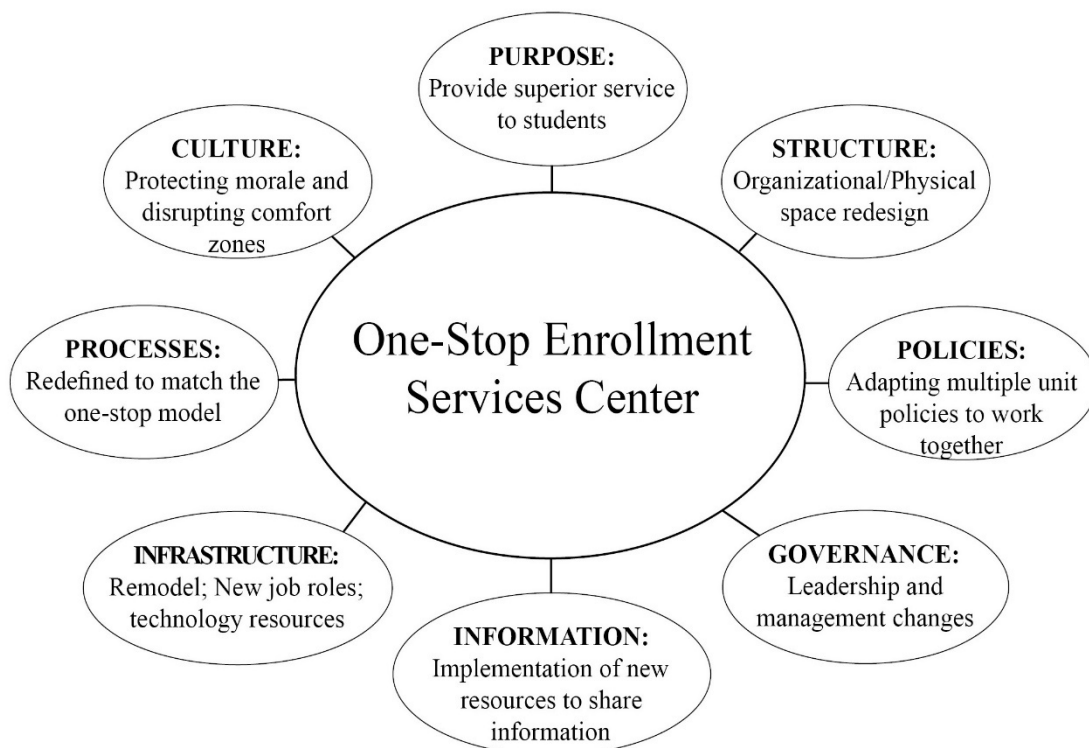


Figure 5.2 Applying the BOC Framework: Building a New Way of Doing Business

Institutional Isomorphism

Upon completion of the research for this case study, findings indicated that institutional isomorphism did not necessarily factor into the decision of GTC leaders to pursue the one-stop service center model. In their interviews, leaders were specifically asked about external influences and what effect they may have had on the somewhat drastic decision to completely remodel and redesign enrollment services at GTC. The response to this question from all parties indicated that external influences were a non-factor in the decision-making process that was ultimately guided by the desire to increase student satisfaction rates. However, the one-stop model is becoming increasingly common at higher education institutions of all sizes across the nation (Scott, 2003). In fact, in her interview, the vice president mentioned visiting four out-of-state institutions

to review one-stop models and garner ideas for what would work best at GTC. While the resulting one-stop at GTC involved more pieces than the institutions and was not an exact model of those she reviewed, the vice president did confirm through this statement that isomorphism may have factored into this process at some level.

However, locally, isomorphism is not a factor when considering GTC's sister institutions. In fact, in reviewing the 21 other TCSG institutions in Georgia, none of them rely on a true one-stop service model. It is not evident that any other non-TCSG institutions closely located to GTC operate on this model. In her interview, the vice president stated she did not look at any other institutions in Georgia when planning for the current model at GTC. Therefore, the need for this one-stop model did not grow out of a need to best local competitors or to look like other sister institutions; instead, it grew out of the need to increase the College's organizational capacity to serve students more efficiently and effectively, with the ultimate intention of increasing student satisfaction and enrollment.

Significance of the Study

This case study is significant for practitioners in the field of enrollment management across a spectrum of higher education institutions. However, it would be considered to be most applicable to those within the Technical College System of Georgia. By analyzing the actions taken by the case study institution, others could possibly learn lessons about improvement in organizational structure, customer service models, and physical space best practices that support improvements.

GTC was not unlike other technical colleges in Georgia in looking for a solution to its enrollment problems. The TCSG strategic plan (2017) points out the decline in

numbers system-wide, as well as the expectation that college leaders across the state work to reverse the downward trend. Even so, GTC was the first TCSG institution to act in such a way to work toward solving the problem. Out of the 22 current institutions in the system, no other has taken the steps that Gwinnett Technical College has. After several years of research and planning, GTC leaders took action, which drastically changed workflow models, job descriptions and duties, and even the physical appearance of the space in which the students are served. It has been a tremendous undertaking for the institution, but based on information captured for this study, it is one which leaders believe has been worth it.

With regard to academic leadership, Bolman and Gallos (2010) pointed out the need for a quick and nimble response from leaders in higher education institutions when faced with a challenge. They also noted that college leaders must know how to relate to and cater to multiple audiences simultaneously and possess an all-encompassing knowledge of the institution. This is exactly what leaders at GTC were able to do. Those leading the charge in the redesign and reorganization process studied the college and its customers and devised a plan that would positively influence satisfaction. While the entire process took several years, the initial changes in response to dissatisfied customers were quick and responsive to the most immediate needs but also protected the academic ideals of the institution.

Considerations for Other Institutions Seeking a Similar Model of Service

The solution to dropping enrollments and service workflow issues may not be the same for every institution. Gwinnett Technical College had the good fortune to have a leadership group and a budget that would support the changes that were implemented.

Many colleges with smaller enrollments may not have the same luxury related to available funding. However, colleges with smaller enrollments can still take lessons from GTC's one-stop execution and implement them on their own scale. While a physical space remodel may be out of reach for some other institutions, the focus on customer service and reengineering of workflow models can be accomplished at most any institution without great increases, or decreases, in staff numbers or radical changes to the working environment. Such redesign may result in welcomed enrollment increases and/or staff morale.

Considerations for Student Satisfaction

While this study has important implications for higher education institutions and leaders of those colleges and universities, it is also important to students. Students were the primary beneficiary of the organizational structure and physical space changes implemented by GTC. Whether fully realized or not, institutional satisfaction rates alone indicate the major impact these changes have had for students. The time it takes for enrollment and advisement has been lessened and the hassle of waiting in multiple lines has been eliminated. When students are not discouraged during the enrollment process, they can more easily find educational success and reach their goal of earning a credential, which greatly increases the likelihood of gainful employment. Also, as Li (2013) pointed out, the resulting word-of-mouth recommendations from satisfied students can positively influence other potential students to enroll and bolster continued growth.

Recommendations for Future Research

This case study provides a basis for future researchers interested in the quantitative implications behind such changes within a higher education institution.

While it was not the specific focus of this study, some quantitative data, provided by the institution, was reviewed. This data included satisfaction rates derived from internal surveys, and enrollment data via the official data system for TCSG, which is known as KMS. While it is assumed a relationship exists between the organizational and physical space changes at GTC, a study to more deeply analyze that relationship would be prudent.

A deeper investigation into quantitative data for future research could include an exploration of the detailed relationship between the organizational structure and physical space changes as it relates to the rise in enrollment numbers. Data shows double-digit growth in enrollment numbers. However, interviewees were hesitant to solely or specifically attribute enrollment growth to organizational changes, including that of the physical space, organizational structure, and service models and processes that have occurred within the organization. However, there is not currently evidence to rule out the fact that the changes may have been a factor for the growth. As considerations for future research is pondered, it should be asked what other factors may have influenced enrollment growth? Were economic conditions a factor, or was there some other external influence that helped the college reach such large growth in a matter of just over a year? Future studies may wish to explore these factors. Without the answers to such questions, a connection cannot be drawn between the growth in enrollment and the changes that took place within student affairs at GTC.

Another area for deeper exploration would be student opinion. Of course, this major change at GTC was focused on the student and making the enrollment and advisement process easier for them. However, student opinion has not factored into this

case study. Therefore, a topic for future research could be a qualitative focus on student opinion of the impact of the changes in service flow and physical space specifically for students. As a result of internal satisfaction surveys, we know that overall, students were more pleased with the services provided by GTC following the changes. However, there is no qualitative data to truly reflect the before and after opinions of students. To accomplish this, a researcher would need to speak with a number of students who were enrolled before the change occurred and persisted in courses throughout the change process for student services. The approximate timeframe would be 2012-2014.

Summary

Today's technical colleges in Georgia must climb an uphill challenge to find success in enrollment management. Colleges must arm themselves with appropriate planning, strategy, and leadership. To do so, it is important for leaders to develop and implement the right organizational structure and capacity to carry out the processes and services intended to focus on the needs of the customer. This also requires adequate physical space and employees with a passion for customer service. Even though the case is often made that higher education is not a customer service industry (Chen & Popovich, 2003; Guilbault, 2016; Lomas, 2007; Maguad, 2007; Mark, 2013; Ostrom et al., 2011; Schwartzman, 1995; Webster & Hammond, 2011; Woodall et al., 2014; Wueste & Fishman, 2010), an increasing number of studies show that focusing on the student as a customer is the right strategy in the constant battle to grow enrollment (Black, 2004; Lomas, 2007; Maguad, 2007; Mark, 2013; Wueste & Fishman, 2010).

This case study adds to the literature in support of student-centric service within higher education. Since the turn of the new millennium, Georgia's technical colleges

have worked to survive the ebbs and flows of enrollment. Several institutions, including Gwinnett Technical College, the college at the center of this case study, are evidence of success when the focus is placed on the customer. By listening to the needs of the students and utilizing institutional data, it became clear to GTC that organizational and physical space changes would be necessary in order to thrive in the recovering economy following the Great Recession.

REFERENCES

- AACRAO. (2015). *2014-2015 State of CRM use in higher education report*. American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO). Retrieved from <http://proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED557074&site=eds-live>
- Anderson, L. M., Burnett, D., & Oblinger, D. (2002). Five years later: Maintaining a strategic focus. In *Innovation in student services: planning for models blending high touch/high tech* (pp. 141–152). Ann Arbor, MI: Society for College and University Planning.
- Ashworth, R., Boyne, G., & Delbridge, R. (2009). Escape from the iron cage? Organizational change and isomorphic pressures in the public sector. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *19*(1), 165–187.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mum038>
- Baird, C. H., & Gonzalez-Wertz, C. (2011). How top performers achieve customer-focused market leadership. *Strategy & Leadership*, *39*(1), 16–23.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/10878571111095385>

- Becker, J. M. (2012). *Student services/one-stop centers: A qualitative examination of implementation at three post-secondary institutions* (Doctoral dissertation). Marywood University, Pennsylvania. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/docview/1283390926/abstract/CC5014ADD71E44D6PQ/1>
- Beede, M., & Burnett, D. (Eds.). (1999). *Planning for student services: Best practices for the 21st century*. Society for College and University Planning.
- Berry, L. L., Zeithaml, V. A., & Parasuraman, A. (1990). Five imperatives for improving service quality. *Sloan Management Review; Cambridge*, 31(4), 29–38.
- Birnbaum, R. (1988). *How colleges work: The cybernetics of academic organization and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Black, J. (2004). Defining enrollment management: The structural frame. *College & University*, 79(4), 37–39.
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (1991). *Reframing organizations*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Bolman, L., & Gallos, J. V. (2010). *Reframing academic leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Bontrager, B. (2004). Enrollment management: An introduction to concepts and structures. *College and University*, 79(3), 11–16.
- Buckingham, M., & Coffman, C. (2014). *First, break all the rules: What the world's greatest managers do differently*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2016). Local area unemployment statistics. Retrieved March 20, 2016, from <http://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LASST1300000000000003>

- Burnett, D., & Oblinger, D. (Eds.). (2002). *Innovation in student services: Planning for models blending high touch/high tech*. Ann Arbor, MI: Society for College and University Planning.
- Caren, W. L., & Kemerer, F. R. (1979). Internal dimensions of institutional marketing. *College and University*, 54(3), 173–188.
- Chen, I. J., & Popovich, K. (2003). Understanding customer relationship management (CRM): People, process and technology. *Business Process Management Journal*, 9(5), 672–688. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14637150310496758>
- Clark, B. R. (1983). *The higher education system: Academic organization in cross-national perspective*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Cohen, M. D., & March, J. G. (1986). *Leadership and ambiguity: The American college president* (2nd ed.). Harvard Business School Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Cronander, J. (1990). Centralization versus Decentralization: What to do with back office operations. *Texas Banking*, 79(10), 29–33.
- Dado, J., Petrovicova, J. T., Cuzovic, S., & Rajic, T. (2012). An empirical examination of the relationships between service quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions in higher education setting. *Serbian Journal of Management*, 7(2), 203–218.
- Daniel, E. (2011). *Perceived leadership practices of student affairs professionals: An analysis of demographic factors*. (Doctoral dissertation). University of South Florida, Tampa, FL. Retrieved from <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/3060>

- Day, D. V., & Pitts, J. (2002). Generalists in cooperation with specialists: A working model. In D. Burnett & D. Oblinger (Eds.), *Innovation in student services: planning for models blending high touch/high tech* (pp. 71–78). Ann Arbor, MI: Society for College and University Planning.
- de Macedo Bergamo, F. V., Giuliani, A. C., de Camargo, S. H. C. R. V., Zambaldi, F., & Ponchio, M. C. (2012). Student loyalty based on relationship quality: An analysis on higher education institutions. *Brazilian Business Review (English Edition)*, 9(2), 26–46.
- Deming, W. E. (1986). *Out of the crisis*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), 147–160. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095101>
- Education Advisory Board. (2015). *Putting student success first: Delivering personalized guidance, early, often, and at scale*. Washington, DC.
- Fram, E. (1975). Organizing the marketing focus in higher education. *Information for Decisions in Postsecondary Education*, 224–226.
- Franz, R. S. (1998). Whatever you do, don't treat your students like customers! *Journal of Management Education*, 22, 63–69.
- Frumkin, P., & Galaskiewicz, J. (2004). Institutional isomorphism and public-sector organizations. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 14(3), 283–307. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muh028>

- Gardner, L. (2016, July 24). What a university can learn from Wegmans. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/What-a-University-Can-Learn/>
- Goetsch, D. L., & Davis, S. (2010). *Quality management for organizational excellence*. Presented at the Pearson, Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- Green, H. E. (2014). Use of theoretical and conceptual frameworks in qualitative research. *Nurse Researcher*, 21(6), 34.
- Griffin, R. W. (2003). *Fundamentals of management: Core concepts and applications*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1981). *Effective evaluation: Improving the usefulness of evaluation results through responsive and naturalistic approaches*. San Francisco, CA, US: Jossey-Bass.
- Guilbault, M. (2016). Students as customers in higher education: reframing the debate. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 26(2), 132–142.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2016.1245234>
- Gwinnett Technical College. (2017). Gwinnett Technical College at a glance [d]. Retrieved December 2, 2017, from <http://www.gwinnetttech.edu/about/glance/>
- Hambrick, D. C., Finkelstein, S., & Mooney, A. C. (2005). Executive job demands: New insights for explaining strategic decisions and leader behavior. *Academy of Management Review*, 30(3), 472–491.
- Hamel, J., Dufour, S., & Fortin, D. (1993). *Case study methods* (Vol. 32). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Haveman, H. A. (1993). Follow the leader: Mimetic isomorphism and entry into new markets. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38(4), 593–627.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2393338>
- Helgesen, O. (2008). Marketing for higher education: A relationship marketing approach. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 18(1), 50–78.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08841240802100188>
- Hemsley-Brown, J., & Oplatka, I. (2006). Universities in a competitive global marketplace: A systematic review of the literature on higher education marketing. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 19(4), 316–338.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/09513550610669176>
- Hoover, E. (2016, February 29). Marketing finds its place on the campus. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/Marketing-Finds-Its-Place-on/235461?cid=cp32>
- Hossler, D. (1999). Effective admissions recruitment. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 1999(108), 15.
- Hossler, D. (2007). Enrollment management relies on buy-in, data. *Enrollment Management Report*, 11(1), 12–12.
- Hossler, D., & Bean, J. P. (1990). *The strategic management of college enrollments*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Hossler, D., & Bontrager, B. (2014). *Handbook of strategic enrollment management*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Huddleston, T., & Rumbough, L. P. (1997). Evaluating the enrollment management organization. *College and University*, 72(4), 2–5.

- Jones, D. (2012). Does servant leadership lead to greater customer focus and employee satisfaction? *Business Studies Journal*, 4(2), 21–35.
- Jongbloed, B. (2003). Marketisation in higher education, Clark's triangle and the essential ingredients of markets. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 57(2), 110–135.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2273.00238>
- Joseph, M., & Joseph, B. (1997). Service quality in education: A student perspective. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 5(1), 15–21.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/09684889710156549>
- Kalsbeek, D. H. (2001). Tomorrow's SEM organization. In *Strategic Enrollment Management Revolution* (pp. 223–246). American Association of Collegiate Registrars & Admissions Officials.
- Kemerer, F. R., Baldrige, J. V., & Green, K. C. (1982). *Strategies for effective enrollment management*. Washington, DC: American Association of State Colleges and Universities.
- Kezar, A., Chambers, A. C., & Burkhardt, J. C. (2015). *Higher education for the public good: Emerging voices from a national movement*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Khanna, M., Jacob, I., & Yadav, N. (2014). Identifying and analyzing touchpoints for building a higher education brand. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 24(1), 122–143. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2014.920460>

- Komives, S. R., & Woodard, Jr., D. (2003). *Student services: A handbook for the profession*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers. Retrieved from <http://proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat06564a&AN=uga.9929204753902959&site=eds-live>
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2006). *The leadership challenge*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Krachenberg, A. R. (1972). Bringing the concept of marketing to higher education. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 43(5), 369–380. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1980714>
- Li, S.-C. (2013). Exploring the relationships among service quality, customer loyalty, and word-of-mouth for private higher education in Taiwan. *Asia Pacific Management Review*, 18(4), 375–389.
- LoBiondo-Wood, G., & Haber, J. (2014). *Nursing research: Methods and critical appraisal for evidence-based practice*. New York, NY: Elsevier Health Sciences.
- Lomas, L. (2007). Are students customers? Perceptions of academic staff. *Quality in Higher Education*, 13(1), 31–44.
- Lonabocker, L. M., & Wager, J. J. (2009). Connecting one-stop student services. In G. L. Kramer (Ed.), *Fostering Student Success in the Campus Community* (pp. 120–144). John Wiley & Sons.
- Lusch, R. F., & Vargo, S. L. (2014). *The service-dominant logic of marketing: Dialog, debate, and directions*. London, UK: Routledge.

- Lutz, F. W. (1982). Tightening up loose coupling in organizations of higher education. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 27(4), 653–669.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2392536>
- Maguad, B. A. (2007). Identifying the needs of customers in higher education. *Education*, 127(3), 332–343.
- Manning, K. (2013). *Organizational theory in higher education*. New York: Routledge.
- Marginson, S. (2011). Higher education and public good. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 65(4), 411–433. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2273.2011.00496.x>
- Mark, E. (2013). Student satisfaction and the customer focus in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 35(1), 2–10.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2012.727703>
- Martinez, M. C., Smith, B., & Humphreys, K. (2013). *Creating a service culture in higher education administration*. Herndon, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Morgan, G., & Thayer, T.-L. B. (2017). *Gartner: The future of the student experience is personal*. Stamford, CT: Gartner, Inc.

- Nealon, J. L. (2005). *College and university responsiveness to students -as -customers: The reorganization of service delivery in the enrollment service arena* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Pennsylvania, United States -- Pennsylvania.
Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/docview/305457865/abstract/797EAD0E0727424FPQ/1>
- Oldfield, B. M., & Baron, S. (2000). Student perceptions of service quality in a UK university business and management faculty. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 8(2), 85–95.
- Oluseye, O. O., Tairat, B. T., & Emmanuel, J. O. (2014). Customer relationship management approach and student satisfaction in higher education marketing. *Journal of Competitiveness*, 6(3), 49–62.
- Ostrom, A. L., Bitner, M. J., & Burkhard, K. A. (2011). *Leveraging service blueprinting to rethink higher education: When students become “valued customers,” everybody wins*. Center for American Progress. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED535642>
- Pember, E. R., Owens, A., & Yaghi, S. (2014). Customer relationship management: A case study from a metropolitan campus of a regional university. *Journal of Higher Education Policy & Management*, 36(2), 117–128.
- Pennington, K. L., McGinty, D., & Williams, M. R. (2002). Community college enrollment as a function of economic indicators. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 26(5), 431–437.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02776770290041783>

- Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2004). *Nursing research: Principles and methods*. Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Prescott, B. T., & Bransberger, P. (2012). *Knocking at the college door: Projections of high school graduates*. Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED540129>
- Raines, L. (2012). *The influence of enrollment management transition strategies on college student success* (Doctoral dissertation). Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA.
- Sanaghan, P., & Napier, R. (2002). *Intentional design and the process of change: Strategies for successful change*. National Association of College and University Business Officers. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED469344>
- Sarkane, G., & Sloka, B. (2015). Factors influencing the choice of higher education establishment for marketing strategies of higher education. *Economics and Business*, 27(1), 76–80. <https://doi.org/10.1515/eb-2015-0012>
- Schierenbeck, C. (2013). The customer-focused institution of higher education. *Fixing Higher Education*, 119–129.
- Schwartzman, R. (1995). *Students as customers: A mangled managerial metaphor*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED383022>
- Schwartzman, R. (2013). Consequences of commodifying education. *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, 17(3), 41–46.
- Scott, G. (2003). Effective Change Management in Higher Education. *Educause Review*, (6), 64.

- Seeman, E. D., & O'Hara, M. (2006). Customer relationship management in higher education: Using information systems to improve the student-school relationship. *Campus-Wide Information Systems*, 23(1), 24–34.
- Shannon, H. D., & Smith, R. C. (2006). A case for the community college's open access mission. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, (136), 15–21.
- Sharabi, M. (2013). Managing and improving service quality in higher education. *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, 5(3), 309–320.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJQSS-03-2013-0016>
- Stake, B. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stewart, G. (2004). Defining the enrollment manager: Visionary, facilitator and collaborator. *Journal of College Admission*, (183), 21–25.
- Sultan, P., & Wong, H. Y. (2012). Service quality in a higher education context: an integrated model. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 24(5), 755–784. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13555851211278196>
- Tapp, A., Hicks, K., & Stone, M. (2004). Direct and database marketing and customer relationship management in recruiting students for higher education. *International Journal of Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 9(4), 335.
- TCSG. (2016). TCSG Georgia's technical colleges map. Retrieved May 1, 2016, from https://tcsge.edu/tech_map.php
- TCSG. (2017). TCSG FY 2018 strategic plan. Retrieved March 10, 2018, from <https://tcsge.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/FY2018-TCSG-Plan-Update.pdf>

- TCSG Knowledge Management System. (2016). *DC229 FTE*. Atlanta, GA. Retrieved from https://kms.tcsg.edu/Reporting/Statewide/DC229EnrollFTE.aspx?org=835&campus=&org2=CENTRAL_GEORGIA&dw=CENTRAL_GEORGIA_DW&term=&endterm=&classtype=&plan=&sdate=&edate=&ssn=&reportcode=&reportid=998
- TCSG Knowledge Management System. (2017). Annual year 2017 enrollment statewide. Retrieved October 29, 2017, from <https://kms.tcsg.edu/DPR/ReportsResearch/SystemSum.aspx>
- Technical College System of Georgia. (2015). Policy V. B. 1. Admissions Requirements. Retrieved May 1, 2016, from https://tcsg.edu/tcsgpolicy/docs/V.B.1.Admissions_Requirements.html
- Tilak, J. B. G. (2008). Higher education: a public good or a commodity for trade? *Prospects*, 38(4), 449–466. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-009-9093-2>
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Tolbert, P. S. (1985). Institutional environments and resource dependence: Sources of administrative structure in institutions of higher education. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 30(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2392808>
- Toma, J. D. (2010). *Building organizational capacity: Strategic management in higher education*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- Townsley, M. K. (2002). *The small college guide to financial health: Beating the odds*. Washington, DC: NACUBO.
- USG institutions. (2017). Retrieved September 17, 2017, from www.usg.edu/institutions

- Vander Schee, B. A. (2007). Organizational models for enrollment management at small colleges. *College and University*, 82(3), 13–18.
- Vught, F. van. (2008). Mission diversity and reputation in higher education. *Higher Education Policy*, 21(2), 151–174. <https://doi.org/10.1057/hep.2008.5>
- Walters, E. W. (2003). Becoming student centered via the one-stop shop initiative: a case study of Onondaga Community College. *Community College Review*, 31(3), 40–54. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009155210303100303>
- Warmann, C. S. (2015). *How generalists function as a community of practice in a community college one-stop student service center* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: Illinois. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/pqdt/docview/1746692705/abstract/5F037EC7A65042EBPQ/2>
- Webster, R. L., & Hammond, K. L. (2011). Are students and their parents viewed as customers by AACSB-International member schools? Survey results and implications for university business school leaders. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal*, 15(2), 1–17.
- Weick, K. E. (1976). Educational organizations as loosely coupled systems. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2391875>
- Woodall, T., Hiller, A., & Resnick, S. (2014). Making sense of higher education: students as consumers and the value of the university experience. *Studies in Higher Education*, 39(1), 48–67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.648373>

- Woodside, A. G. (2010). *Case study research: Theory, methods and practice*. United Kingdom: Emerald Group Publishing Limited. Retrieved from http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/eds/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzMtOTA4Ni9fQU41?s_id=a3d6a3ae-038c-4569-914b-2fa1ffb033a2@sessionmgr4010&vid=10&format=EB&rid=11
- Wueste, D. E., & Fishman, T. (2010). The customer isn't always right: Limitations of "customer service" approaches to education or why higher ed is not Burger King. *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, 6(1), 3–12.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

APPENDIX A

CASE STUDY INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE



April 10, 2017

Dr. Julie Post
Vice President for Student Affairs
Gwinnett Technical College
5150 Sugarloaf Parkway
Lawrenceville, GA 30043

Dear Dr. Post:

I am a doctoral student Institute of Higher Education with a research interest in customer service within enrollment services at technical colleges. I am writing to request your participation in a qualitative case study focused on the creation of a student-centered customer service environment in a Georgia technical college.

I am currently employed with Central Georgia Technical College as the Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Services. In this role, I recently had the pleasure of visiting your institution and learning more about the reorganization to create a one-stop enrollment services solution for students at Gwinnett Technical College. As a technical college at the forefront of innovation within student affairs, I am very interested in conducting a single qualitative case study at your institution to determine how and why decisions were made regarding organizational structure and the internal and external influences that led to this significant shift within the student affairs unit to create a student-centered customer service environment.

The purpose of this study is to explore decision-making in organizational change related to customer service. Your participation will involve face-to-face interviews with selected student affairs team members and leadership staff. Interviews can be scheduled at a time and location convenient to you and your institution. I will also request the opportunity to review documents related to enrollment and will review enrollment data available in TCSG's KMS data system.

This letter is an effort to receive an informal commitment from Gwinnett Technical College for participation in the study. As the Vice President for Student Affairs, you can provide valuable insight for this case study. I am most interested in capturing your perspective on the leadership role in creating this change. I believe that other selected staff members can provide critical points of view for consideration as well when such institutional change occurs.

Any person's involvement in the study is voluntary. If the College agrees to participate, any employee who is asked to interview may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty. As with any qualitative case study, triangulation will be utilized following transcription of interviews to ensure trustworthiness and accuracy. This offers your institution the opportunity to confirm the validity of the information provided. If preferred, this case study can maintain the anonymity of the institution and/or participants.

If your institution agrees to participate, I will send a formal letter that details the study and risks and benefits associated with participation. The timeline for this case study requires that all interviews and research be completed by July 1, 2017.

If you should have any questions about this research study, please feel free to contact me by email at janet.kelly@uga.edu or by phone at 229.938.7877.

Thank you for your consideration to participate in this research study. By participating, your institution will lead the way in providing additional scholar certainly realize that time is limited, but I hope that this research topic proves to be worthy of the time required. Again, thank you for your consideration. Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janet H. Kelly".

Janet H. Kelly
Doctoral Student
UGA Institute for Higher Education

APPENDIX B

INITIAL INSTITUTIONAL STUDY APPROVAL

Re: Research Study: Invitation to participate

Post, Julie <jpost@gwinnettech.edu>

Fri 4/14/2017 7:42 PM

To: Janet Leigh Heard <janet.kelly@uga.edu>;

Cc: Morelon, Carla <cmorelon@gwinnettech.edu>;

Hi Janet,

Thank you for thinking of Gwinnett Tech!

I waited to respond to see if we caught up at the TCSG summit, but unfortunately that didn't happen. I/we would be honored to participate in your study. As you probably can imagine, I will need additional info on who you propose to interview, what questions you plan to ask, and the data you'll want; as well as specific documentation on your proposal specifics and its approval at UGA. Also, I have already spoken to Dr. Cannon about this.

I'm copying Dr. Carla Morelon, our Director of IR&E, who vets and approves dissertation studies at UGA. She will collect your documentation and provide you with the letter you need to move forward when that time comes.

Look forward to speaking to you soon, Julie

Dr. Julie Post
Vice President of Student Affairs
Gwinnett Technical College
Sent from my iPad

On Apr 10, 2017, at 10:56 AM, Janet Leigh Heard <janet.kelly@uga.edu> wrote:

Dr. Post:

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Janet Kelly and I am a doctoral student at the University of Georgia's Institute for Higher Education. I also work at Central Georgia Technical College as the Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Services. It is in this role that I have had the opportunity to learn about the significant organizational changes at Gwinnett Technical College with regard to how students are served in the enrollment services/student affairs department. Because of my current position and other related factors, I am innately interested in research related to this service focus shift.

I am writing today to request your institution's participation in a single qualitative research case study. I have attached a letter which provides more details in relation to this request. Of course, if you have further questions, please feel free to contact me.

I realize that I may need to solicit the permission of of the college's president, Dr. Glen Cannon, and possibly obtain institutional IRB approval. However, I wanted to start with you to make an informal request since your department would play the significant role in this study. I will be heading to the TCSG Summit in Atlanta today; hopefully, I will have be able to introduce myself to you if you, too, will be at the conference.

Please take time to review the attached letter. I truly appreciate your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL APPROVAL TO CONDUCT STUDY



August 22, 2017

Janet H. Kelly
Executive Ed.D. Candidate
Institute for Higher Education
University of Georgia

Dear Mrs. Kelly,

I am writing regarding your study, "Focus on the Student: Building a Student-Centered Customer Service Environment in Georgia's Technical College System."

This letter confirms that Gwinnett Technical College (GTC) grants permission for you to conduct a study with the leadership team, mid-level managers, and front-line employees.

Please remain in contact with Dr. Carla Morelon, Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, via email (cmorelon@gwinnettech.edu) if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Post". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "J" and "P".

Dr. Julie Post
Vice President of Student Affairs

APPENDIX D

SITE PARTICIPATION THANK YOU LETTER

August 31, 2017

Dr. Julie Post
Gwinnett Technical College
5150 Sugarloaf Parkway
Lawrenceville, GA 30043

Dear Dr. Post,

First off, thank you for agreeing to participate in my case study. To give you a bit more information about myself, I have worked in the Technical College System for more than 15 years. I currently serve as the Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Services at Central Georgia Technical College. During my time working with TCSG, I have developed a keen interest in improving the way we serve students.

As part of my doctoral work at the University of Georgia, I am conducting a case study on building a student-centered customer service environment at a Georgia technical college. As noted in my introductory email, I am most interested in decision-making by leadership, what prompted decisions for change, and what factored into the decisions that were ultimately made. In addition, I am interested to speak with staff members to identify perceptions of changes and how they were affected by the decisions for change.

My work is guided by research literature related to customer service in higher education, leadership decisions for organizational change, and enrollment management. My theoretical framework is based on building organizational capacity through strategic management and also touches on institutional isomorphism.

Based on your schedule and at the institution's convenience, I would like to schedule a campus visit, preferably later this fall, to interview 10-15 leadership, management, and staff members at Gwinnett Technical College. Interviews can be conducted over several days, if necessary. My research will be completed at the end of 2017, and my dissertation will be submitted during spring semester 2018.

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this case study. I am very excited to interview and learn from you. I look forward to discussing this further with you.

Sincerely,
Janet H. Kelly

APPENDIX E

INVITATION LETTER – MANAGEMENT AND LEADERS



<<insert date>>

<<insert name>>

<<insert title>>

Gwinnett Technical College
5150 Sugarloaf Parkway
Lawrenceville, GA 30043

Dear <<insert name>>:

I am a doctoral student under the guidance of Dr. Karen Webber at the Institute of Higher Education at the University of Georgia with a research interest in customer service within enrollment services at technical colleges. I am writing to request your participation in a qualitative case study focused on the creation of a student-centered customer service environment in a Georgia technical college.

Your participation will involve up to a 60-minute face-to-face, recorded interview with me at a location of your choice. The purpose of this study is to explore decision-making in organizational change related to customer service and prompts that influenced decision for change. Specifically, this study seeks to identify internal or external events that affected decisions by leadership and what staff perceptions were of the changes implemented in regard to organizational structure, processes, and physical space with the intention to create a more student-centric service environment.

As [formal title here], you can provide valuable insights for my analysis. I am most interested in capturing your perspective on student affairs leadership and the decision-making process during a major organizational change. If you are willing to participate and your schedule permits, I would like to interview you during September 2017.

With your permission, the conversation will be recorded to help remember what was said. The audio files will be destroyed once the study is complete. While conducting the study, I, and possibly a professional transcriptionist, will be the only person(s) with access to the

audio files and transcripts. All information will be stored in a locked file or password-protected computer in my office. The results of the case study may be published, but your name or any identifiers will be removed. Published results will be presented in summary form only.

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information. No foreseeable risks or discomforts are expected. There may also be no potential benefits for you personally from this study. However, the potential benefits may include a better understanding of decision-making as it relates to customer service and enrollment.

If you should have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me by email at janet.kelly@uga.edu or by phone at 229.938.7877.

Thank you for your consideration to participate in this case study. I would be truly grateful if you would be willing to make the time to participate, as I know your perspective will add value to the study. I will contact you soon to schedule a time for us to talk if you are willing and available. I will also be able to offer further explanations if you have questions about the study. Again, thank you for your consideration. Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janet H. Kelly".

Janet H. Kelly
Doctoral Student
UGA Institute for Higher Education

APPENDIX F

INVITATION LETTER – STAFF MEMBERS



<<insert date>>

<<insert name>>

<<insert title>>

Gwinnett Technical College
5150 Sugarloaf Parkway
Lawrenceville, GA 30043

Dear <<insert name>>:

I am a doctoral student under the guidance of Dr. Karen Webber at the Institute of Higher Education at the University of Georgia with a research interest in customer service within enrollment services at technical colleges. I am writing to request your participation in a qualitative case study focused on the creation of a student-centered customer service environment in a Georgia technical college.

Your participation will involve up to a 60-minute face-to-face, recorded interview with me at a location of your choice. The purpose of this study is to explore decision-making in organizational change related to customer service and prompts that influenced decision for change. Specifically, this study seeks to identify internal or external events that affected decisions by leadership and what staff perceptions were of the changes implemented in regard to organizational structure, processes, and physical space with the intention to create a more student-centric service environment.

As a key staff member, you can provide valuable insight for my analysis. I am most interested in capturing your perspective on leadership within student affairs and the impact of the organizational change. If you are willing to participate and your schedule permits, **I would like to interview you on either October 26 or 27, 2017.** If you are

available, please select the time most convenient for you by clicking the Doodle poll link within the body of the email.

With your permission, the conversation will be recorded to help remember what was said. The audio files will be destroyed once the study is complete. While conducting the study, I, and possibly a professional transcriptionist, will be the only person(s) with access to the audio files and transcripts. All information will be stored in a locked file or password-protected computer. The results of the case study may be published, but your name or any identifiers will be removed. Published results will be presented in summary form only.

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information. No foreseeable risks or discomforts are expected. There may also be no potential benefits for you personally from this study. However, the potential benefits may include a better understanding of decision-making as it relates to customer service and enrollment for other leaders in technical colleges.

If you should have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me by email at janet.kelly@uga.edu or by phone at 229.938.7877.

Thank you for your consideration to participate in this case study. I know your perspective will add great value to the study. I am glad to offer further explanations if you have questions about the study before scheduling an interview. Again, thank you for your consideration. Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janet H. Kelly".

Janet H. Kelly

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM



CONSENT FORM

Focus on the Student: Building a Student-Centered Customer Service Environment in Georgia's Technical College System

Researcher's Statement

I am asking you to take part in a case study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the case study is being performed and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to participate or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you.

Co-Principal Investigator: *Janet H. Kelly*
Graduate Student, Institute of Higher Education,
University of Georgia
janet.kelly@uga.edu or 229.938.7877

Principal Investigator: *Dr. Karen Webber*
Institute of Higher Education, University of Georgia
kwebber@uga.edu or 706.542.6831

Purpose of the Study

This study is being conducted to find out how leadership decisions were made related to organizational change at your institution within the enrollment services department, what prompted those decisions, and the perceptions of staff members throughout the changes in processes, physical space, and organizational structure. You are being asked to

participate because you are an employee of the institution involved in the study and your contributions will be valuable for this research. Based on your position and length of service at the institution, you have been identified as an ideal candidate to participate.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to ...

- Participate in one 60-minute (approximately) face-to-face interview
- Answer questions related to your opinions and experience related to enrollment services at your institution
- Questions will not be personal in nature; rather all questions will relate to duties of your job, perceptions of leadership decisions, and your opinions thereof
- All responses will remain anonymous and confidential; data will be published in summary form only
- Outside of the 60-minute interview, the researcher may follow up with questions via a phone call to gain clarity
- An opportunity will be given to interviewees to review results of data analysis in an effort to verify the researcher's findings

Risks and discomforts

- No risks or discomforts are expected or foreseeable from participation in this case study
- Multiple interviewees will be asked similar questions and no data will be attributed to any one source
- Respondents will not be identifiable in the written research

Benefits

- No specific benefits to the person are expected
- The Technical College System and those who work in enrollment services in two-year institutions will benefit from the results of this research by gaining insight on best practices for building a student-centered customer service environment

Incentives for participation

Aside from contributing to the overall body of knowledge related to the topic, there are no incentives, financial or otherwise, for participating in this study.

Audio/Video Recording

A digital device will be used to record interviews. Recordings are necessary to obtain full transcripts of interviews for coding purposes. Coding allows the research to discover themes, which leads to findings. All interviews will be kept on a password protected computer for the duration of the research study. Upon completion of the study, all digital

audio files of recorded interviews will be destroyed. The researcher, and possibly a professional transcriptionist, will be the only parties with access to the audio files.

Please provide initials below if you agree to have this interview audio recorded or not. You may still participate in this study even if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

_____ I do not want to have this interview recorded.

_____ I am willing to have this interview recorded.

Privacy/Confidentiality

Direct identifiers will not be used in the presentation of data. In other words, respondents will be kept anonymous and not specific information will be directly attributed to one person. All results will be published in summary form or attributed to ‘an employee.’

During the interview process, a coding system will be used to identify interviewees. The researcher will be the only party with access to the key code for identifying interviewees. The researcher will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent, unless required by law. Once the interviews have been transcribed, coded, and analyzed, the file identifying interviewees will be destroyed.

Taking part is voluntary

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate at any time without penalty. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

If you have questions

The main researcher conducting this study is Dr. Karen Webber, an associate professor with the Institute of Higher Education at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Janet Kelly at janet.kelly@uga.edu or 229.938.7877; or, Dr. Karen Webber at kwebber@uga.edu or 706.542.6831.

Institutional Approval

Gwinnett Technical College has approved this research in support of the student’s doctoral research. GTC, however, is not affiliated with the student and has had no involvement with the questions or administering of the questions involved in the study. Should you, as a GTC student or employee, have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact the student’s dissertation chair (see the contact information above) or the GTC contact (Dr. Carla Morelon, cmorelon@gwinnettech.edu).

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form and have had all of your questions answered.

_____ Name of Researcher	_____ Signature	_____ Date
_____ Co-Principal Investigator	_____ Signature	_____ Date
_____ Name of Participant	_____ Signature	_____ Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – SENIOR LEADERS

Senior leader interview questions (president, vice president)

1. Please describe your current primary role and responsibilities within the college. In what position did you serve prior to the organizational change in 2012?
2. What do you perceive the institution's priorities/goals to be related to enrollment and customer service and is there a connection between the two?
3. In what ways did you participate in the decision-making process to orchestrate the change in the way students are served in the student affairs unit? Describe both internal and external factors that may have influenced your decision in this process.
4. What changes were made in the student affairs unit?
5. In what ways did you help lead the decision-making process to orchestrate the change in the way students are served in the student affairs unit? Describe internal factors, within the college, and those outside of, or external, to the college that may have influenced your decision in this process.
6. Briefly describe the timeline from idea to fruition. Did the implementation meet your expectations and what barriers had to be overcome during the process?

7. What were your primary concerns when making decisions related to this service process?
8. The customer service area for enrollment services was physically remodeled during the change in the way services were performed. What affect do you think the changes in the physical space had on customers' perceptions of service, employees, and interaction between the two?
9. How would you characterize the changes at your institution and the effect they've had on a) students, b) enrollment, and c) staff/morale?
10. Prior to the transition of the enrollment services to a student-focused customer service environment, how would characterize the opinions, attitudes, and actions of the staff when serving students? What would your current characterization be of these points today?
11. Prior to the transition of the enrollment services to a student-focused customer service environment, how would characterize the opinions, attitudes, and actions of the staff behind closed doors? What would your current characterization be of these points today?
12. Are there enhancements that you believe could improve the customer service in the enrollment services department at your institution?

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – STAFF MEMBERS/MID-LEVEL MANAGERS

Staff member/mid-level manager interview questions

1. Please describe your current primary role and responsibilities at the college.
In what position did you serve prior to the organizational change in 2012?
2. How did you learn of the impending changes that were coming to the student services division?
3. Have you seen any changes in the way your department interacts with students over the past five years? If yes, describe the changes you have witnessed.
4. In your opinion, what prompted the college to undertake changes to the enrollment and advisement process? Describe internal factors, within the college, and those outside of, or external, to the college that may have led to the decision to create a one-stop shop for enrollment services.
5. The customer service area for enrollment services was physically remodeled during the change in the way services were performed. Do you think the change in the physical space had an impact on customers' perceptions of service, employees, and interaction between the two? If so, please share some examples.
6. What role did you play in the transition of your college's student affairs unit from a separated service environment to a unit where students have a single point of contact for all enrollment services?

7. How would you characterize the changes at your institution and the effect they've had on a) students, b) enrollment, and c) staff/morale?
8. Prior to the transition of the enrollment services to a student-focused customer service environment, how would characterize the opinions, attitudes, and actions of the staff when serving students? What would your current characterization today?
9. Prior to the transition of the enrollment services to a student-focused customer service environment, how would characterize the opinions, attitudes, and actions of the staff behind closed doors? What would your current characterization be today?
10. As a staff member in enrollment services, what do you value most about your job?
11. What do you perceive as the most important aspects of service students in higher education?
12. What do you perceive the institution's priorities/goals to be related to enrollment and customer service and is there a connection between the two?
13. Do you feel supported (i.e., do you have the resources you need; are expectations clear; can you have open discussion with leadership) by immediate and upper level leaders? If so, what is the most important part of this support in completing your tasks?
14. Are there enhancements that you believe could improve the customer service in the enrollment services department at your institution?

APPENDIX J

DOCUMENT REVIEW

Print:

- Application packet
- Admissions acceptance letter
- Campus flyers
- Brochures
- Campus hallway posters
- Student resource information flyers
- Postcards

Digital or Audio/Visual

- Enrollment One-Stop Center digital signage
- Website pages related to enrollment
- Videos and commercials posted to YouTube
- Online admissions application