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# Disrupting the Deficit Discourse on Historically Black Colleges and Universities: An Organizational Identity Case Study of Philander Smith College

## Abstract

The federal Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, defines a historically Black institution of higher education as "any historically Black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principle mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans." Today, there are approximately 105 HBCUs, more than half private, the rest public, and a few two-year institutions (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007). While currently only 14 percent of Black college students attend HBCUs, 70 percent of all Black doctors and dentists, 50 percent of all Black engineers and public school teachers, and 35 percent of all Black attorneys received their bachelor's degrees at an HBCU (Avery, 2009). Despite these notable statistics, leaders associated with HBCUs have felt insecure about their future since the 1950s for a variety of issues; namely low enrollments, low endowments, loss of accreditation, and severe decreases in fiscal resources (Avery, 2009).

However, missing from the discourse is a discussion of which HBCUs are currently staying ahead of the national and higher education economic crises by implementing effective leadership and financial management strategies. The academic literature fails to explicitly highlight HBCUs that are not only surviving in these times of economic difficulty, but actually thriving and remaining credible and supportive institutions in the respective community.

In an effort to go against the trend of only highlighting the myriad financial and accreditation issues plaguing HBCUs, this doctoral dissertation study will illuminate the ways in which these institutions are efficiently addressing such problems, and typically doing so with less fiscal resources than other institutions of higher education (Gates, 2010). Philander Smith College has consistently been referenced in the journalistic literature as one HBCU that is successfully navigating historical and current problems stemming from a lack of fiscal resources. An organizational identity case study of this institution will shed light on the effective leadership and fiscal management strategies being executed by HBCUs in the 21st century. The findings of this study result in the construction of a model of best operational and leadership practices. It is the author's hope that both models will be adaptable and useful for other HBCUs.

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DISRUPTING THE DEFICIT DISCOURSE ON HISTORICALLY BLACK  
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES: AN ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY CASE  
STUDY OF PHILANDER SMITH COLLEGE

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A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the Morgridge College of Education

University of Denver

---

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

---

By

Shametrice Davis

June 2012

Advisor: Dr. Lori Patton

Author: Shametrice Davis

Title: SUCCESS IN THE FACE OF DEFICIT MEDIA FOR BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES: AN ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY CASE STUDY OF PHILANDER SMITH COLLEGE

Advisor: Dr. Lori D. Patton

Degree Date: June 2012

### **Abstract**

The federal Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, defines a historically Black institution of higher education as “any historically Black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principle mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans.” Today, there are approximately 105 HBCUs, more than half private, the rest public, and a few two-year institutions (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007). While currently only 14 percent of Black college students attend HBCUs, 70 percent of all Black doctors and dentists, 50 percent of all Black engineers and public school teachers, and 35 percent of all Black attorneys received their bachelor’s degrees at an HBCU (Avery, 2009). Despite these notable statistics, leaders associated with HBCUs have felt insecure about their future since the 1950s for a variety of issues; namely low enrollments, low endowments, loss of accreditation, and severe decreases in fiscal resources (Avery, 2009).

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## **Acknowledgments**

“Believe in wind when you can’t feel it; believe in love when you aren’t beloved; find answers in absurdity; blessings in blackness; inspiration in spite of injustice.”

This quote is borrowed from a church service I attended at Philander Smith College (PSC) while conducting the research for this dissertation. Although I am not particularly religious, I thought the quote was beautiful and exemplary of so many things, but particularly reflective of the students, administrators, faculty, alumni, and president of PSC with whom I interacted. I dedicate this dissertation to you, for without your support and wonderful contributions, it would have been impossible to complete.

In addition to the PSC community, I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved family: my mother Patsy, my father and stepmother Shelby and Helen; my siblings, Renae, Shelby, Jeremy, Chris, and Amanda; my beautiful, vibrant nieces, Mikki, Adanna, and Nya; my newest and first nephew Luis; and my fabulous Aunt Mary. As my family, you are my world, my heartbeat, my true inspiration.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Introduction**

The federal Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, defines a historically Black institution of higher education as “any historically Black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principle mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans. Usually referred to as HBCUs, these institutions originated in the 19 Southern and Border States after the Civil War” (Avery, 2009, p. 327). However, today there are approximately 105 HBCUs, with the majority being private and the rest operating as public and two-year institutions (Avery, 2009). Together they have graduated 70% of all Blacks who have received a college degree since the nation’s founding (Richardson & Harris, 2004). Additionally, while currently only 14% of Black college students attend HBCUs, 70% of all Black doctors and dentists, 50% of all Black engineers and public school teachers, and 35% of all Black attorneys received their bachelor’s degrees at an HBCU (Avery, 2009). Despite these notable statistics, leaders associated with HBCUs have “felt insecure about their future since the 1950s” for a variety of issues; namely low enrollments, low endowments, loss of accreditation, and severe decreases in fiscal resources (Avery, 2009, p. 328).

Although HBCUs may have been viewed by some critics (i.e., Riley, 2010) contributing to the discourse regarding current education issues as inferior educational

institutions, these schools have consistently shown that they “are indispensable members of American higher education” (Nichols, 2004, p. 219). Looking beyond education, “HBCUs play important roles in the perpetuation of Black culture, the improvement of Black community life, and the preparation of the next generation of the Black leadership” (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007, p. 263). It is essential to understand the historical development of these institutions, as HBCUs have been significantly impacted by the historical, economic, political, and cultural circumstances integral to Black communities in America. Faced with the heavy charge to “preserve a culture, prosper a community, and equip a new generation of leaders”, this unique group of institutions deserves significant scholarly research and investigation (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007, p. 264).

### **Statement of Problem**

Are historically Black colleges and universities obsolete? This question has been “raised or implied over the entire history of these institutions”, particularly since the 1950s when integration became mandatory (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007, p. 274). In a hypothetical world in which colorblind belief systems can prevail due to the increasing social and economic progress of African Americans, many are prompted to ask whether HBCUs are no longer needed (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007; Gasman, 2009; Minor, 2008; ). Furthermore, with the recent election of an African American president in the United States, terms such as “post-racial America” have surfaced, suggesting that racial inequality no longer exists (Reed, 2010).



In addition to the progress experienced by African Americans, the current state of several HBCUs arguably provides further rationale for discourse on their discontinuation (Gasman, 2009), as a number of these institutions are in trouble because of low endowments, low enrollments, administrative and financial mismanagement, heavy debt, and/or loss of accreditation (Avery, 2009). Over the six-year time period from 1996 to 2002, almost half of private HBCUs have received sanctions from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, which is the regional accrediting agency for HBCUs since 1931 (Avery, 2009). Since so many HBCUs are dealing with such difficult circumstances, some higher education scholars may argue that the simple solution is to dissolve these institutions all together (Kelderman, 2010).

Furthermore, with the current economic downturn plaguing much of the nation, it is not surprising that many higher education institutions find themselves in financial peril (Galuszka, 2010). Current financial strains are facing many institution types, including predominately White institutions; both public and private (Galuszka, 2010). However, the financial strains from the recession are acute at HBCUs, as these institutions are typically dependent on tuitions, and do not have sizeable endowments (Galuszka, 2010). "It's a triple whammy," says William F. Jarvis, managing director of the Commonfund Institute, which houses the education and research activities of Commonfund -- a Connecticut-based investment group that manages approximately \$25.5 billion for about 1,600 nonprofit institutions. University debt builds because students "can't pay tuition so they come asking for financial aid, which is down because of (declining revenue from) endowments" (Galuszka, 2010, p. 24).

## **Purpose and Significance of Proposed Study**

Currently, there is not research addressing or creating a discussion on which HBCUs are currently staying ahead of the national and higher education economic crises by implementing effective leadership and financial management strategies. The academic literature fails to explicitly highlight HBCUs that are not only surviving in these times of economic difficulty, but actually thriving and remaining credible and supportive institutions in the respective community. In an effort to go against the trend of only highlighting the myriad financial and accreditation issues plaguing HBCUs, this study proposes to illuminate the ways in which these institutions are efficiently addressing such problems, and typically doing so with less fiscal resources than other institutions of higher education (Gates, 2010).

Philander Smith College has consistently been referenced in the journalistic literature as one HBCU that is successfully navigating historical and current problems stemming from a lack of fiscal resources (Gasman, 2009; Masterson, 2010). An organizational identity case study of this institution will shed light on the effective leadership and fiscal management strategies being executed by HBCUs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, thereby providing rationale for their continued need and existence.

## Research Question

In this doctoral dissertation, I will to answer the following research questions:

1. What role, if any, has the organizational identity of Philander Smith College played in the institutional ability to continue successfully operating in the context of what has been deemed a financial crisis?
  - a. How does the campus community (i.e., students, faculty, administrators and alumni) define the institution's organizational identity?
  - b. What aspects of Philander Smith College's organizational identity were essential in the institution's ability to reverse the campus deficit in 2004, while also effectively staving off potential detrimental effects stemming from the current economic downturn?
  - c. What tactics has the leadership (i.e., administration and faculty) employed to effectively handle the economic crisis upon Philander Smith College from the late 1990s through the early 2000s?
    - i. How did these tactics align with or disassociate from Philander Smith's organizational identity?
    - ii. How did these tactics enhance or detract from Philander Smith's organizational identity?

For the purposes of this study, the term “successfully operate” is defined by Philander Smith College's ability to maintain accreditation, increase/maintain student enrollment, and remain fiscally stable. The foundation of this research is initiated by a discussion of the historical evolution of HBCUs, including analyses of social, political,

and economic events that further inform the development of these institutions. Following the historical discussion, a literature review of current issues faced by these institutions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is critically presented and analyzed through the conceptual lens of Organizational Identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985). A model of best practices associated with Philander Smith College is developed through case study research methodology, and a thorough discussion of how the methodology is specifically applied to my research is discussed in chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Lastly, and most importantly, it is through this research that I strive to provide evidence toward the need and justification for the continual presence of these institutions. The history and current issues associated with HBCUs is presented through a critical lens that takes the past fiscal discriminatory practices into account during such discussions. Although predominately White institutions (PWIs) often suffer from similar issues of financial and accreditation management (Galuszka, 2010), there is not significant amounts of discourse in which critics, academics, and journalists are questioning their existence or survival. To wholly eradicate historically Black colleges and universities would be to assume that the historical and current forms of racism and discrimination that led to the development of these institutions are no longer present today, which is clearly not the case (Richardson & Harris, 2004). By shedding light on the effective tactics one HBCU is implementing to best address financial problems, I hope to provide an argument not just for the support of their continuation, but also for their ability to successfully continue operating in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Historical Evolution of HBCUs**

HBCUs were established to educate Black students who were banned from attending other institutions of higher learning (Nichols, 2004). Nichols (2004) provocatively argues that these institutions were founded, for the most part, as a result of racism. The notion that HBCUs were not designed to succeed; rather, they were established as “holding institutions” so that Black students would not matriculate into primarily White institutions further supports the argument that racism is largely the dominant motivation for the creation of these institutions (Evans, Evans, & Evans, as cited Nichols, 2004, p. 219). However, considering the previously mentioned statistics regarding the number of Black students holding degrees from HBCUs, it is clear that these institutions have managed to far exceed their initial expectations.

A small number of HBCUs were created prior to the Civil War, namely Lincoln and Cheyney universities in Pennsylvania and Wilberforce University in Ohio (Gasman & Tudico, 2008). However, as America emerged from the Civil War into Reconstruction; opportunities for Blacks to obtain an education began to increase rapidly when the Northern victory freed all enslaved African Americans (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007). Before Emancipation, Blacks were forbidden by state law from learning to read and write (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007). However, after Emancipation, the “newly freed slaves were considered a liability” to the country because they could no longer be legally controlled by the confinements of slavery (Anderson, 1988 as cited in Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007, p. 267). Due to this threatened thinking states began to institute new laws allowing for the education of illiterate African Americans;

establishing HBCUs as the primary resource for Black education prior to integration (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007).

The early HBCUs were established as a result of two pieces of legislation, namely the first and second Morrill Land Grant Acts in 1862 and 1890 (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). The first Morrill act in 1862 provided funds and 30,000 acres of land for the creation of public agricultural and mechanical arts institutions in every state. However, it would take ten years after the initial passage of this act before Alcorn College; the first public land-grant HBCU was established (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). This first Morrill act would go on to produce 54 land-grant HBCUs, until 1890 when the second Morrill act was passed during which 17 additional Black colleges were established (Rudolph, 1990). However, this second act legalized the segregation of Black and White education, while also underscoring a curriculum focused on the industrial arts. Additionally, the second Morrill act mandated equal funding distribution between HBCUs and PWIs (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). However, the extent to which this act accomplished equal funding mandates and the resulting consequences of this act on the curriculum (Jenkins, 1991; Wennersten, 1991) are examined further in the remaining sections of this paper.

### **Role of the church and Freedman's Bureau.**

Essentially, African Americans saw the opportunity for education as “the ultimate emancipator, enabling them to distance themselves from slavery, move past their subordinate status in society, and achieve social mobility” (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007, p. 267). With this frame of mind, African Americans and their allies

embarked on the task of building schools. The inundating task of educating over four million formerly enslaved African Americans was initially completed by the federal government through the Freedman's Bureau and also by the private sector through several church missionaries (Gasman & Tudico, 2008). The Freedman's Bureau, originally created under the name Bureau of Refugees, Freedman, and Abandoned Lands, was established by congress in 1865 to: (a) provide food and medical care to freedmen, (b) to help the freedmen resettle, (c) to ensure justice for the freedmen, (d) to manage abandoned or confiscated property, (e) to regulate labor, and (f) to establish schools. In many cases, it also provided aid for destitute Whites ([www.freedmansbureau.com](http://www.freedmansbureau.com)). The ways in which the Freedmen's Bureau influenced the development of HBCUs are numerous and discussed in the following section.

Soon after the Civil War, nearly 100 institutions of higher learning were created to educate freed African Americans, primarily in the Southern United States (Jewell, 2007). As early as 1865, the Freedman's Bureau began creating HBCUs, which resulted in a large number of staff and teachers with military backgrounds as the foundational employees of these institutions (Gasman & Tudico, 2008). The majority of institutions established by Blacks themselves were funded by churches, specifically the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (Jewell, 2007). Philander Smith College has a strong tie to its Methodist affiliation, and this will be discussed at length in the findings chapters of this dissertation.

These churches, in addition to White religious and philanthropic organizations (i.e., the American Baptist Home Mission Society and the American Missionary

Association) actively worked with the Freedman's Bureau to continue developing Black colleges from the mid 1860s through the late 1880s (Gasman & Tudico, 2008). Under the direction and sponsorship of the Bureau, from approximately 1866 until its termination in 1872, an estimated 25 HBCUs were established, many of which remain in operation today including St. Augustine's College, Fisk University, Johnson C. Smith University, Clark Atlanta University, Dillard University, Shaw University, and Tougaloo College ([www.freedmansbureau.com](http://www.freedmansbureau.com)).

Unfortunately, early HBCUs received little to no state or federal support beyond the amount provided through the Freedman's Bureau and many suffered from a shortage of financial resources and sufficiently trained staff (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007). Consequently, White philanthropic organizations and missionaries were often the main source of funding for these institutions (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007). White mission societies founded a number of HBCUs, including Fisk University and Spelman College (Gasman & Tudico, 2008).

While funding from the White missionaries allowed Black colleges and universities to keep their doors open, these benefactors also had considerable control over administrative functions, such as the curriculum and educational goals (Jones, 2008). Gasman and Tudico (2008) argue that "the benevolence of the [White] missionaries was tinged with self-interest and racism" (p. 2). Anderson (1988) concurs with this argument, as he asserts that missionaries were characterized by wanting to Christianize the freedmen by converting former slaves to their particular brand of Christianity and relieving the country of the "menace" of uneducated African Americans. Conversely,



Morris Brown College, Paul Quinn College and Allen University were founded solely by the Black church denomination; a fact that enables Anderson (1988) to describe these three institutions as “founded by African Americans for African Americans” (as cited in Gasman & Tudico, 2008, p. 2). While these HBCUs relied less upon Whites for funding and support and consequently had more control to design their own curricula, they were also more susceptible to fiscal instability due to a lack of sustained funding from the government (Gasman & Tudico, 2008).

### **White Northern Philanthropists.**

An additional form of fiscal support for the early HBCUs came from the White Northern industrial philanthropists, namely John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, Julius Rosenwald, and John Slater (Gasman & Tudico, 2008). Anderson (1988) and Watkins (2001) argue that these industrial leaders were motivated to provide funding to HBCUs because of a desire to control all forms of industry, in addition to satisfying Christian compassion. The General Education Board, which comprised a combination of several Northern White philanthropists, is an organization that made a contribution to HBCUs totaling \$63,000,000 between 1903 and 1964. Although this initially seems like an impressive number, it is just a “fraction of what [the organization] gave to White institutions (Gasman & Tudico, 2008, p. 2).

Furthermore, these funds were primarily granted to Black land grant colleges, as these industrial philanthropists showed a strong desire to control Black education to their benefit, thereby providing funds for graduates who were skilled in trades that served their own industrial enterprises (Gasman, 2007). What’s more troubling is the fact that the

educational institutions supported by the White philanthropists exercised extreme caution in not disrupting the prevailing segregationist power structures in the South at this time (1890s). Clearly, the White philanthropist motivations of control and maintaining systems of oppression are underlying factors contributing to the willingness to allocate funds to HBCUs.

Students at Black land grant colleges funded by the General Education Board therefore became skilled in industrial trades such as shoeing horses, making dresses, cooking, and cleaning. However, the industrial philanthropists' support of trade education was in direct conflict with Black intellectuals advocating for a liberal arts curriculum (Lewis, 1994). The divergences between different focuses of education lead to a binary division of HBCUs characterized by industrial versus liberal arts education.

### **Division of Curricula**

Despite the disagreements among Black intellectuals with regards to the curriculum implemented at HBCUs, the majority of these intuitions embraced the technical curricula that focused on basic skill development, including instruction on social skills, manual trades, and religious education (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007). Although prominent Black intellectual Booker T. Washington was in congruence with the benefits of industrial education, Wennersten (1991) argues that initial curriculum difficulties experienced by the first HBCUs is “largely the result of Black resistance to White attempts to foist a curriculum of higher education on southern Blacks that would perpetuate their inferior status and provide them with skills rapidly becoming obsolete in a sophisticated industrial society” (p. 55). Alternatively, Anderson (1988) astutely

argued that an industrial curriculum “was the logical extension of an ideology that rejected Black political power while recognizing that the South’s agricultural economy rested on the backs of Black agricultural workers” (p. 44). While institutions such as Tuskegee University and Hampton University were examples of industrial education, private HBCUs including Fisk University, Dillard University, Howard University, Spelman College, and Morehouse College focused on the liberal arts curriculum (Gasman & Tudico, 2008).

The vocational/industrial model was largely embodied through the work and vision of Booker T. Washington, who believed that “an education allowing African Americans to develop practical skills would contribute to their economic development and self-reliance” (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007, p. 268). The liberal arts model is mostly associated with W.E.B. Dubois, who denounced the industrial curriculum in favor of one with heavy emphasis on liberal arts (Provenzo, 2002). Dubois urgently cited the need to train an intellectually elite population of African Americans who could then lead the race as a whole toward self-determination (Lewis, 1994).

Despite the philosophical disagreements between these two intellectuals, both Washington and Du Bois shared the ultimate goal of educating African Americans and uplifting the race (Gasman & Tudico, 2008). Anderson (1988) posits that this division of curricula philosophies essentially ended once philanthropist organizations realized that liberal arts and industrial curricula could coexist, and consequently began providing fiscal support to a variety of HBCUs. Although the integration of industrial philanthropists philosophy was not always welcomed by HBCUs that traditionally embraced a liberal

arts curriculum (i.e., Fisk University), these organizations provided major support for private HBCUs until the late 1930s (Gasman & Tudico, 2008).

### **Significant Increases in Student Enrollment at HBCUs**

As HBCUs moved toward a fusion of both vocational and liberal arts curricula, the number of students attending these institutions grew significantly throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007). Furthermore, “historical accounts also reveal that students being educated at HBCUs, due to the open admissions policy, were quite diverse, particularly in terms of academic ability and socioeconomic class” (Allen & Jewell, 2002, as cited in Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007, p. 268). Therefore, Allen, Jewell, Griffin, and Wolf (2007) posit that “most HBCUs did not only function as colleges; they also enrolled students seeking a secondary and college preparatory education, meeting the broad educational needs of Black students denied equal access to quality public schooling” (p. 268).

In addition to being diverse in terms of educational background and social class, early HBCU campuses were also surprisingly ethnically diverse. HBCUs opened their doors to everyone regardless of gender, race, creed, or color (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007). Therefore, in addition to the predominately Black population, HBCUs also educated the children of the White missionaries who helped establish these institutions, including Native Americans, poor Whites, and international students from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. According to Jewell (2002), also in attendance at HBCUs were White female and Jewish students who studied professional programs offered by these institutions.

This growth in the school-bound population with diverse ethnic backgrounds and educational needs resulted in expansion among public land grant HBCUs funded under the Second Morrill Act of 1890, and from expansion among private HBCUs supported by churches and foundations (Evans, Evans, & Evans, 2003). Consequently, dramatic enrollment increases were experienced among HBCUs from 1900 to 1935. However, despite significant increases in student enrollment during this period, federal and state funding resources did not acknowledge the need for or provide increased allocations of fiscal resources to these institutions.

### **Historical Federal and State Underfunding**

Throughout this dissertation, references to the historic underfunding of HBCUs will continually occur. This section of the introduction serves to provide the argument and rationale for such references, as explicit acts of disproportionate allocations of government funds between HBCUs and PWIs are consistently cited in the literature focusing on these institutions. Specifically, the trajectory of funding practices executed by federal and state governments from 1890 through the 1920s will provide evidence and justification for this notion of disparate fiscal resources for HBCUs.

#### **Second Morrill Act of 1890.**

The congressional passage of the second Morrill Act in 1890 expanded the concept of land-grant colleges and further extended its benefits to African-Americans in the segregated Southern states (Jenkins, 1991). Particularly, the language of this act stipulated that Morrill funds were to be equitably distributed between the Black and White colleges in states upholding racial segregation practices in education. However,

distribution of Morrill funds was not equitably distributed, and instead “reflected the inequality of races” in the region by the lack of monies appropriated to Black colleges and the surplus of fiscal resources readily provided to PWIs (Jenkins, 1991, p.66). Legislatures justified the disproportionate allocation of funds to HBCUs by arguing that Blacks needed a less complex and less expensive form of education than Whites (Wennersten, 1991). Additionally, the major concern of state officials centered on meeting the legal requirement of allocating monies to HBCUs so as not to jeopardize federal funding for the PWIs. As a result, while a portion of funds did go to HBCUs, the PWIs still received the majority of monies (Wennersten, 1991).

Furthermore, while the Morrill Act constituted the federal portion of fiscal resources, state funding to HBCUs was “virtually nonexistent” in the 1890s, despite this being a critical fiscal decade during which several new HBCUs were established (Jenkins, 1991, p.65). For example, the state of Florida executed a common practice in the legislature of reducing state appropriations to the Black Agricultural and Mechanical (A&M) colleges as these institutions moved closer to maximizing fiscal benefits from the second Morrill act (Neyland & Riley, 1963). Delaware State University, the Black land grant college in Delaware, did not receive any state appropriations in the first ten years of its existence (Neyland & Riley, 1963). Although the state of Delaware eventually provided funds to this HBCU, a total of \$5,000 from the state in one fiscal year was granted only once in 17 years (from 1900-1917), in comparison to as much as \$15,000 annually granted to the PWIs (Jenkins, 1991).

Similarly to Florida and Delaware, the states of Alabama and Georgia also engaged in disproportionate allocation of funding to their respective HBCUs. State funding for Alabama's land grant HBCUs remained constant at an annual amount of \$4,000, compared to the PWI counterparts that received an average of \$65,000 every year between 1900 and 1916 (Jenkins, 1991). Despite the fact that HBCUs in Alabama needed to address increasing fiscal requirements due to the growth of enrollment and increasing cost of building maintenance in this time period (early 1900s), there were no special state appropriations granted to these schools for such reasons (Jenkins, 1991). Similarly to Alabama, Georgia's Black land grant colleges only received state appropriations in excess of \$8,000 once from 1900-1915. Only upon threats of withdrawal of Morrill funds from the federal government, did the Georgia state appropriations to the land grant HBCUs begin to improve (Range, 1951).

The more expensive the needs of land grant HBCUs in the early 1900s, the more likely these institutions would be neglected by federal and state governing bodies. In 1900, North Carolina Agricultural and Technology University closed its doors to females due to a lack of necessary state funds needed to accommodate these students (Jenkins, 1991). Female students were not admitted to and enrolled in the institution again until 1924 (Jenkins, 1991). The cases of Florida, Delaware, Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina comprise just a few states in which this explicit lack of compliance with the second Morrill Act occurred, as similar stories of discriminate funding practices happened across several Southern states upholding segregation laws, including (but not limited to) Mississippi, Louisiana, and Maryland (Jenkins, 1991). It is thus clear that this

trend of states allocating the (below) minimum amount of funds to HBCUs in order to remain eligible for Morrill (and other government-supported) funds became set in stone as early as the legislation itself was enacted.

## **Conclusion**

Despite humble beginnings with regards to fiscal resources, historically Black colleges and universities have clearly achieved a remarkable degree of success in addressing the educational and professional needs of the people and communities served by these institutions. Early HBCUs were “dynamic institutions that met many needs, serving as a critical component of the liberation and education for newly emancipated and freeborn African Americans” (Jones, 2008, as cited in Avery, 2009, p. 329). African Americans’ drive for group advancement and need to represent their interests within the White power structure made HBCUs critical institutions, especially in the production of community leaders (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007). The education offered by HBCUs also created a foundation for an educated middle class of lawyers, doctors, teachers, and leaders to serve the Black community (Anderson, 1988). Prior to integration, “the training of these professionals was the nearly exclusive role of HBCUs until 1954 when the Supreme Court deemed segregation in the context of education illegal via the Brown vs. Board of education case” (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007, p. 270).

### **Organizational identity.**

Due to the unique role HBCUs have played in the educational, personal, and professional development of African Americans in the U.S., concepts of organizational



identity are explored in relation to these institutions. According to Albert and Whetten (1985) organizational identity constitutes the central and enduring characteristics associated with an organization that serve to distinguish it from other organizations. Chapter 2 presents an abridged literature review of organizational identity, and its related concepts including organizational image, reputation, culture, and identification. This discussion serves as a backdrop of information that will be woven in and throughout the remaining chapters of this dissertation. Through the use of organizational identity in two conceptual frameworks, the unique characteristics of HBCUs as institutions, in addition to their distinctive organizational practices and processes will be illuminated as these institutions take the helm through various issues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The literature review in chapter 3 provides an overview of the legal cases, laws, and policies that have further shaped the current standing of HBCUs. Furthermore, it will clarify current challenges faced by these institutions, in the context of what has been deemed a financial crisis (Gasman, 2009). The case study methodology used for this research is discussed in chapter 4, followed by an analysis of data that provide evidence and justification for a proposed model of best leadership and operation practices implemented by Philander Smith College. Chapter 5 provides an overview of data collection and analysis procedures, while chapters 6, 7, and 8 culminate in a discussion of final themes, limitations, and areas for future research in regards to historically Black colleges and universities.

## **Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework**

### **Introduction**

Concepts of organizational identity are used as an analytical framework with which to critically discuss the review of literature following in chapter 3. Examining the unique attributes associated with HBCUs is useful in a discussion of what issues these institutions face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the processes used to tackle such circumstances. Aspects of organizational identity will illuminate essential factors including the history, development, and mission of HBCUs as these concepts relate to how Black colleges are managing to survive in national and higher education economic downturns.

Specifically, Philander Smith College's ability to effectively reverse a budget deficit in 2004 while simultaneously continuing to successfully operate during the current economic downturn will be substantively illuminated through the lens of organizational identity. The unique organizational characteristics associated with Philander Smith will assist in the carving out of essential management and leadership tactics that may serve to guide other HBCUs experiencing difficulty as a result of less than optimal fiscal situations. However, due to the copious amounts of and various opinions related to

organizational identity concepts, a concise yet acute literature review of its components are presented in this discussion. Several scholars (Whetten, 2006; Brunninge, 2005; Pratt, 2003) purport that uses of organizational identity in scholarship is typically characterized as inconsistent, inaccurate, and incompatible with final research findings.

Most troubling in scholarly applications of organizational identity is the inability of researchers to accurately distinguish it from its related components, namely organizational culture and organizational image or reputation (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). Organizational identification is another term frequently woven into application of organizational identity and though they are two distinct terms, one often gets confused with the other or are even used interchangeably (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Clear definitions and applications of organizational identity and its related concepts are described as they are presented in the literature from a variety of notable scholars in this subject (Czarniawska, 1997; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Hogg & Terry, 2001; Whetten & Albert, 1985).

Thus, a brief literature review of this concept will serve to acknowledge the various usages of organizational identity and its related properties. Following the abridged literature review, an explanation of how the concept will be used as an analytic framework throughout the review of literature in chapter 3 is outlined and discussed.

### **Organizational Identity**

One definition of organizational identity that is seemingly agreed upon by multiple scholars was developed by Albert and Whetten (1985) and is specified as “the central and enduring attributes of an organization that distinguish it from other

organizations” (p 7.). Whetten (2006) later further clarified these attributes as “*organizational identity claims*, or referents signifying an organization’s self-determined unique social space” (p. 220). Practically speaking, organizational identity characteristics function as claims made by members when they are acting or speaking on behalf of their organization (Whetten, 2006). However, while this is a generally agreed upon definition of organization identity, the heart of contradiction between scholars resides in the distinguishing of “identity-as-shared perceptions among members versus identity-as-institutionalized claims available to members” (Whetten & Mackey, 2002, p. 395).

The former conceptualization defines organizational identity as shared beliefs between members of the organization; yet this is problematic when questioning which individuals matter in the construction of the definition and meaning of the identity. Conversely, the latter definition institutionalizes organizational identity; essentially allowing organizations themselves to exist as “social actors – authorized to engage in social intercourse as a collectivity and possessing rights and responsibilities as if the collectivity were a single individual” (Whetten & Mackey, 2002, p. 395).

This last conceptualization of organizational identity is important, because the adoption of this perspective allows researchers to propose functional equivalence in the application of organizational identity as one holistic entity (i.e., a collective individual), and thus organizations and their outcomes are treated as collective individuals rather than the exclusive selection of elite members who develop its identity. Simply put, viewing organizations as social actors allows scholars to examine aspects of organizational identity with regard to the organization itself, and not just the members associated with

the organization. However, there is room for both interpretations of organizational identity in Albert and Whetten's (1985) description of the term.

Albert and Whetten's (1985) explanation of organizational identity contains three principle components. The *ideational* component parallels organizational identity with members' shared beliefs regarding the question "Who are we as an organization?" The second component is *definitional* and simply outlines organizational identity as the central and enduring features of an organization, while the third, *phenomenological* component proposes that identity-related discourse is frequently observed simultaneously with significant organizational experiences. Looking at aspects of organizational identity for HBCUs is consistent with this third component, as the financial environments at several of these institutions are causing profound experiences related to budget cuts, accreditation revocation, and lower enrollments (Gasman, 2009).

Misuses of organizational identity in research has mostly centered on failing to acknowledge all three components of this concept, and instead only focusing on the ideational aspect (Whetten, 2006). However, recognition and examination of all three components allows scholars to reliably distinguish "bona fide organizational identity claims from a larger set of claims about an organization" (Whetten, 2006, p.220). The confluence of all three components is eloquently captured in Rao, Davis, and Ward's (2000) assertion that "organizations require social identity from the industry to which they belong, the organizational form they use, and through membership in accrediting bodies" (p. 270).

### **Accurate identity claims.**

The definitional component of organizational identity posits that the characteristics associated with identity must have continually demonstrated their value as *distinguishing organizational features* (Whetten, 2006). Essentially, these identity claims classify how an organization both resembles and differs from other organizations (Scott, 2001). Brewer's (2003) principle of optimal distinctiveness in application to organizations emphasizes the equally compelling needs for assimilation and uniqueness. In the field of organizational studies, this tension is referred to as "strategic balance" which is described by Deephouse (1999) as the process of organizations striving to be "as different as legitimately possible" (p. 223). Deephouse (1999) further explains this process by positing that by being different, organizations face less competition, and by being similar, organizations are considered legitimate. However, identity claims are only those attributes focusing on the distinction of the organization as compared to others; otherwise there is no theoretical value in referring to such characteristics as identity claims (Barney & Stewart, 2000).

### **The central and enduring component of identity claims.**

In addition to distinguishing, identity claims must be central and enduring if they are to be capable of being easily recognizable among a variety of interested parties (Whetten, 2006). Explicitly, if the claim or referent is not a central and enduring aspect of an organization, then it is not likely to be used as a distinguishing feature and thus cannot be referred to as an identity claim. The main point to highlight with identity claims is their ability to convey an organization's deepest commitments (what they continually

commit to be and do) through time and across different circumstances (Whetten, 2006).

Whetten (2006) argues that based on the concepts of organizational identity claims, organizing and identifying are parallel procedures that are possibly even identical.

Whetten (2006) further postulates that:

“An organization’s identity denotes the kind of organization that has to this point been formed; organizing is the process by which organizations make themselves known as a particular type of social actor. Thus, organizational identity claims can be thought of as the institutionalized reminders of significant organizing choices” (p. 224).

This quote exemplifies the notion that identity claims drive the reputation and image management initiatives, and not the other way around. Whetten and Mackey (2002) argue against declarations in the literature that organizational identity claims are the product of after-the-fact efforts to construct an attractive appearance. Thus, these referents are central and enduring because of their ability to garner enough confidence from all relevant parties to develop an image or reputation associated with organization.

An identity claim is central if it is what members consider to be indispensable knowledge about their organization (Whetten, 2006). While organizations may contain several distinct features, there is a hierarchy within these characteristics allowing the separation of central characteristics to contain a causal role. Attributes of an organization considered central are those that cause, explain, and/or account for less central features (Reger & Huff, 1993). Another way to conceptualize the central aspect of identity claims is to consider whether an organization can still function without it. In other words,

centrality refers to those claims that essentially make the organization what it is, and without it, the organization will either have to redefine itself or shut down completely. In relating this idea to HBCUs, one might question whether these institutions can still be classified as HBCUs if they no longer serve a majority of African American students. I would argue that they could, however, heavy reevaluations of the mission, purpose, and organizational identity would need to occur.

The enduring factor of proper identity claims emphasizes their ability to withstand the test of time (Whetten, 2006). Fundamentally, organizations try to “preserve for tomorrow what has made them what and/or who they are today” (Whetten, 2006, p. 224). Preserving identity claims is what allows organizations to decide over time which attributes are more important than others and ultimately trump commitments associated with lower, or less endured claims. Furthermore, enduring identity claims are typically conveyed as morals derived from frequently –told stories of the defining moments throughout an organization’s history (Kimberly, 1987).

Members of Black colleges and universities would likely invoke stories of the civil war, reconstruction era, and various legislations concerning segregation and educational funding to describe organizational identity claims. Such stories highlight the central themes in an organization’s autobiographical accounts and/or a distinctive set of organizing concepts developed by instrumental organizational leaders (Buenstorf & Murmann, 2005). Enduring identity claims are often adopted early in the history of an organization and continually perpetuate throughout the entirety of its future (Whetten, 2006).



However, it is important to recognize that the enduring factor of identity claims does not necessarily mean that only old, historical characteristics will be experienced by current members as central and distinct features (Whetten, 2006). In other words, organizations are capable of making new commitments endure. Selznick (1957) asserts that an organization's commitments are potentially "irreversible" by the extent to which the commitments are made central to an organization's policies, procedures, and practices. In relation to higher education, this is demonstrated by a study conducted by Brunninge (2005) of the Jonkoping International Business School in Sweden. In the first year of the university's operations, students reported that the school's enduring commitment to international education was made clear through its degree requirements, faculty demographics, and study abroad requirements (Brunninge, 2005). It can thus be recognized that new central organizational features are commonly viewed (retrospectively) as enduring organizational characteristics in the future (von Rekom & Whetten, 2005).

### **Hierarchical order of identity claims.**

To best understand an organization's identity, one must consider a hierarchically-ordered set of identity claims that includes three levels (Whetten, 2006). The highest level includes adopted social forms, social categories, and comparable group memberships, while the middle level encompasses established relationships with organizations and institutions. The last, lower level includes distinct organizational practices, competencies, and traits that describe "organization-specific attributes of members, products, and services" (Whetten, 2006, p. 225). Higher level claims both

construct and give meaning to lower level claims; while lower level claims “elaborate, extend, and clarify higher level claims” (Whetten, 2006, p. 225).

It is therefore evident that higher level organizational identities are comprised of the logical, prioritized claims (most central) as well as the chronologically antecedent claims (most enduring). Whetten (2006) essentially argues that scholars endeavoring to understand an organization’s identity must begin at the top of an organization’s hierarchical arrangement of features and commitments. Conversely, attempting to understand identity claims is more difficult when scholars focus on lower level practices or processes in isolation. This is a common mistake in the application of organizational identity to research and should be duly observed and avoided in efforts to accurately capture the central, enduring, and distinguishing claims of an organization. The following model depicts the hierarchy of identity claims:

### **Hierarchy of Organizational Identity Claims**

**Highest Level:** These elements have a *causal* role (explaining; account for) in the next two levels of claims:

- Social forms (i.e., mission, clientele, central and enduring claims of organization)
- Social Categories (i.e., university, bank, hybrid organization, etc.)
- Comparable Group Memberships (what organizations are similar to ours?)

**Middle Level:** These elements provide further *clarification* of the Highest Level claims:

- Established Ties with Organizations and Institutions (deeper explanation of how “Highest Level” claims have fostered connections with other organizations)

**Lower Level:** These elements provide *elaboration upon and explanation* of the Highest and Middle Level claims:

- Distinguishing Organizational Practices
- Organization-specific attributes of members, products, and services

### **Appropriate use of organizational identity in discourse.**

While there are a number of reasons and ways in which to apply concepts of organizational identity in literature, discourse, or research, the most frequent applications occur during profound organizational situations (Whetten, 2006). Albert and Whetten (1985) argue that organizational identity discourse is most often observed during times of organizational chaos. Examples of such circumstances include life-cycle transitions, such

as the retirement of an organization's founder or the merging of two enterprises wherein one has to significantly alter its original mission (Whetten, 2006). Use of organizational identity for HBCUs is appropriate during this current period often characterized as a financial crisis for these institutions (Gasman, 2007). Furthermore, public HBCUs are facing external pressures from state officials to merge with other predominately White institutions as a means of addressing grave fiscal resources.

However, leaders of HBCUs are cautious of how merging will impact the original mission of these institutions, which is to serve and educate African American students (Gates, 2010). The previously mentioned shaky circumstances will likely cause members of organizations to embark on a series of decision making processes. Simon (1997) purports that decision makers in organizations typically invoke identity claims in the process of figuring out how the organization should proceed though difficult circumstances. To this end, organizational identity is largely "a decision aid – it is of little value in making routine or incremental decisions, but it is indispensable for most fork-in-the-road choices, especially when a contemplated course of action might be considered out-of-character by a legitimating audience" (Whetten, 2006, p. 226). Whetten (2006) outlines three settings where identity referencing will, and should be particularly visible, namely application of identity claims, threats to identity claims, and incongruence in identity claims.

#### **Application of identity claims.**

Situations in which decision makers of organizations realize that nothing other than relevant identity claims will work as effective decision guides are often

characterized as exceptionally difficult strategic challenges. In Dutton and Dukerich's (1991) study of the New York City Port Authority's response to a homeless person's crisis reveal that the underlying premise guiding their decision to remove the homeless person was that they were a transportation organization, and not a social welfare agency. Furthermore, Ravasi and Schultz (2006) report that when a Danish audio electronics firm was pressured to develop a more varied product line due to the success of other competitors like SONY, the senior management commissioned an internal task force. The task force was assigned to conduct a historical investigation of the firm's core principles and values, and the final report was used to construct appropriate responses to the external pressures of creating additional products (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Such circumstances constitute an appropriate use of organizational identity in decision making processes.

#### **Threats to identity claims.**

Proposed changes to the qualifying requirements for nonprofit organizations or minority-owned businesses, or the threatened loss of mission-central relationships are examples of circumstances faced by organizations that have potentially detrimental effects to its identity claims (Whetten, 2006). In such cases, the pressing need to resolve an identity crisis is the first priority for decision makers in organizations (Bouchikhi & Kimberly, 2003). Corely and Gioia (2004) conducted a case study in which the challenges facing a business unit that separated from the overarching company are described as it struggled to establish an independent identity. The authors explain how the new organization had to change their identity labels and the meanings associated with

them. Similarly, as previously mentioned with HBCUs, ceasing to serve a majority of Black students would require these institutions to substantially revise their mission, values, and vision (Minor, 2004).

Brunninge's (2005) study of a Swedish bank that historically emphasized decentralized banking operations reveals that threats to identity claims surfaced when competitors began offering internet banking services that economically centralized core banking functions. Employees of the Swedish bank found themselves torn between staying true to their identity claims and satisfying the changing needs of their customers. After extensive discussion and collaboration, a creative identity-consistent approach was constructed, including a seamless network of branch bank websites that were personalized with local pictures, announcements, and news (Brunninge, 2005). This study points to the important notion that it is possible to retain historical identity claims, even when technological advances are changing the needs of an organization's core customer base.

### **Incongruence in identity claims.**

Due to their structure, some organizations inherently violate the identity prerequisite for effective self-governance (Whetten, 2006). Hybrid organizations (i.e., family-businesses, church-universities, professional arts organizations) commonly face this issue, because they are governed by more than one entity. Specifically, Meyer and Scott (1983) accurately describe the identity complex that hybrid organizations constantly struggle to resolve: "The legitimacy of a given organization is negatively affected by the number of different authorities sovereign over it and by the diversity or inconsistency of

their accounts as to how it is to function” (p. 202). While most organizations can rely on their principal identity claims to address conflicting commitments, hybrid organizations are required to consult two or more systems encompassing different (and possibly incompatible) beliefs, values, and functions (Whetten, 2006). More scholarly investigation into how hybrid organizations reconcile such issues is needed.

Understanding the different contexts in which organizational identity is operationalized and referenced in the literature is imperative to gaining a comprehensive sense of identity claims and attributes. Whetten (2006) articulately notes that “the premise underlying this phenomenological treatment of organizational identity discourse is that too often what organizations claim to be when nothing is on the line is not how they act when everything is on the line” (p. 227). Thus, the tripartite (ideational, definitional, and phenomenological) aspects of organizational identity must be thoroughly examined and discussed in efforts to contribute rigorous, accurate information to the literature. An historical investigation of an organization’s identity will shed light on any inconsistencies of how identity claims are actualized in both turbulent and typical circumstances. Only describing organizational identity in the context of a chaotic time period fails to comprehensively depict the organization’s central and enduring characteristics. Now that a detailed discussion of organizational identity has been presented, the following sections will examine some of the related concepts, specifically organizational culture, image, reputation, and identification.

### **Organizational Culture**

According to Hatch and Schultz (1997) “organizational culture involves all organizational members, originates and develops at all hierarchical levels, and is founded on a broad-based history that is realized in the material aspects (artifacts) of the organization (e.g. its name, products, buildings, logos, and other symbols)” (p. 359). This conceptualization of organizational culture emphasizes the material and human aspects central to depicting an organization’s identity. The authors further specify that while studies of organizational identity focus on how the aspects of culture represent the core commitments of the organization to external stakeholders, studies of organizational culture address how such commitments are realized and interpreted by organizational members (1997).

Whetten (2006) describes two different interpretations of culture frequently used in organizational identity scholarship. One interpretation entails scholars who view the world through a cultural lens and thus tend to describe organizations as cultures with organizational identity as one property of organizational culture. A second interpretation treats culture as one of several properties of organizations, and it is typically a distinguishing property (i.e., Harvard University culture). I primarily agree with the second interpretation, as organizational identity has been previously described in this paper as the overarching, all-encompassing term used to describe several, multilevel concepts of organizations. For example, when members of organizations use specific cultural elements to describe the central and enduring features of their organization, it makes sense to view culture as one aspect of organizational identity. Relatedly, Hatch and Shultz’s (1997) definition of organizational culture as artifacts, people, and print



materials also falls in line with this interpretation of culture being an aspect associated with the larger picture of organizational identity.

Culture, however, is an essential component of organizational identity in that it pervades the environments in which the construction, implementation, and continuity of organizational identity is realized. To this end, Hatch and Schultz (1997) opt to view organizational culture as a context within which understandings of organizational identity and intentions to influence organizational reputation are formed. It is impossible to separate culture from organizational initiatives and commitments. It is therefore essential to incorporate discussions of culture in explanations of the development and retention of organizational identity (Hatch, 2000).

## **Organizational Image and Reputation**

### **Organizational image.**

Within the body of literature related to organizational identity, the concept of *organizational image* generally refers to “shared cognitive representations or views of an organization” (Whetten, 2006, p. 228). Whetten and Mackey (2002) outline three principle definitions of organizational image. The first definition situates organizational image from the internal perspective of what members think about their organization (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). Secondly, image can be viewed from an external perspective of what outsiders think about an organization (Berg, 1985); lastly, organizational image has been conceptualized as what members present or project about their organization to influence how others think about the organization (Bromley, 2000). Although some literature equates image with identity and reputation (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail,

1994), others (Whetten, 2006; Whetten & Mackey, 2002) view it as a distinct property of organizational identity. This literature review will focus on definitions of organizational image as a subset of features associated with identity.

The literature reveals a tendency to describe organizational image in a way that mostly aligns with the “projection” perspective. For example, Whetten and Mackey (2002) provide the following formal definition of organizational image: “Organizational image is what organizational agents want their external stakeholders to understand is most central, enduring, and distinctive about their organization” (p. 401). Additionally, Whetten et al. (1992) outlines organizational image as what organizational elites would like outsiders to think of the organization. Hatch and Schulz (2000) suggest that executive managers endeavor to project an image of an organization that is based on its identity. The common aspect linking all of these definitions together is transparency; image is based on a transparent process wherein members try their best to honestly present to external stakeholders what they consider to be the organization’s most central, enduring, and distinctive attributes (Whetten & Mackey, 2002).

### **Organizational reputation.**

Although closely linked, image and reputation are two distinct properties of organizational identity. Whetten and Mackey (2002) define organizational reputation as a “particular type of feedback received by an organization from its stakeholders, concerning the credibility of the organization’s identity claims” (p. 401). Similarly, Fombrun (2002) defines reputation as a collection of a company’s past actions and future prospects that describe how key stakeholders evaluate a company’s ability to deliver

valued outcomes. Waddock (2000) purports organizational reputation as an external assessment of an organization held by external stakeholders of its capacity to meet stakeholders' expectations. Sandberg (2002) specifies corporate reputation as being about "the predictability of behavior, and the likelihood that a company will meet expectations" (p. 3).

Thus, while organizational identity claims are autobiographical, organizational reputation accounts are biographical (Czarniawska, 1997). Image is distinguished as what members hope external stakeholder's see as the organization's distinguishing features. The core reason underlying a clear distinction between image and reputation is the notion that there is an inherent possibility of inconsistency with these two terms. While members of an organization are hoping to project a certain image, the reputation of the organization may very well be the opposite of what is projected. Said differently, projections (image) of an organization can be quite different from actual experiences and subsequent perceptions (reputation) (Whetten, 2006).

In the same vein, Whetten and Mackey (2002) assert that "whereas the factual nature of organizational identities is taken for granted by organizational members, organization reputation assessments rendered by outsiders are clearly viewed by members as judgments based on limited information" (p. 401). The authors further argue that organizational reputation is conceptually linked to an organization's core characteristics by the extent to which said characteristics satisfy identity needs of centrality and duration (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Examining reputation this way mitigates a significant

portion of the confusion and mishandling of organizational identity and its components in the literature (Whetten & Mackey, 2002).

### **Organizational Identification**

Organizational identification is a process during which “organizational goals and the goals of individuals become increasingly integrated and congruent, a particularly desirable outcome for any organization” (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2004, p. 18). Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994) posit that organizational image and reputation highly influence the connections created by internal and external members of an organization, in addition to subsequent behaviors and interactions. When constituents identify with an organization, they are more willing to be involved with collaborations in service of the organization’s mission, vision, and goals (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2004).

For example, one study of a university that implemented a new curriculum centering on civic responsibility revealed that the faculty became more engaged with the university due to a perceived increase in the institution’s distinctive, central, and enduring characteristics (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2004). Similarly, organizational culture is essential in building connections that result in organization identification. Collins and Porras (1996) argue that strong ideologies entrenched in strong cultures lead to enduring organizations that are highly regarded by both internal and external members.

The probability of organizational identification is a direct result of the degree to which congruence is observed between organizational values and characteristics and the values and characteristics of people associated with the organization (Dutton, Dukerich,

& Harquail, 1994). When the fit between organizations and individuals is strongest (i.e., when it remains strong over time and across different situations) the organizational identification is also at its strongest (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2004). This same relationship holds true for organizational culture; when people interpret an organization's culture as one that best represents societal values and practices similar to their own, they are more likely to construct an identification status with the organization (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994).

In addition to strong culture, a greater perceived distinctiveness associated with an organization leads to greater probability of identification (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Culture is further intertwined in the identification process, because "a robust culture is all about underscoring distinctiveness, both in substance and in form (ASHE Report, 2004, p. 19). Although organizational prestige is helpful in increasing identification, a strong culture emphasizing distinguishing characteristics can transcend prestige (despite the fact that prestigious organizations tend to also have strong cultures). But the former (prestige) is not required for the latter (strong culture) to exist (ASHE Report, 2004). Lastly, another important factor in determining identification eligibility is an organization's ability to increase an individual's self esteem. Bergami and Bagozzi (2000) posit that identifying with organizations that are perceived to be "the best" or top-notch, will increase an individual's self esteem and thus increase their willingness to more outwardly identify with the organization.

At first glance, it appears that reputation and organizational identification are fairly similar since both are: (a) evaluations (i.e., what is expected versus what is

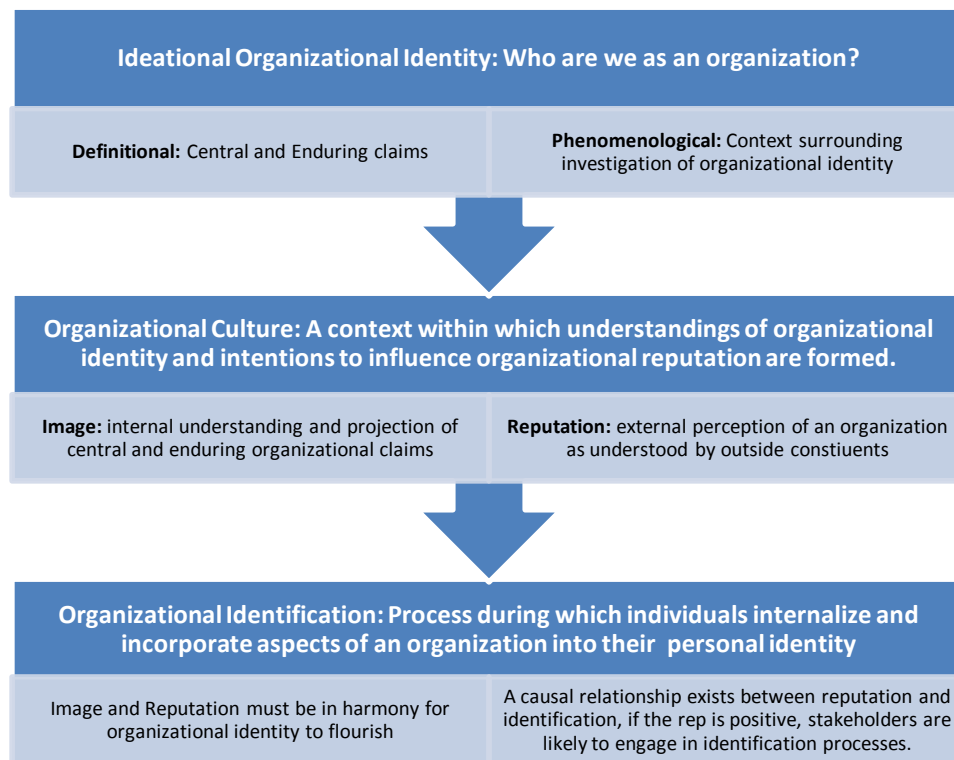
experienced), (b) linked to an organization's identity claims, and (c) rendered by key internal and external organization holders (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). However, deeper examination of both terms illustrates explicit differences between these two constructs of organizational identity. Distinctively, reputation is a property of an organization, while identification is the property of individuals (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Even though it is not rare for scholars to declare that a certain group of stakeholders hold a high level of identification with an organization, these aggregated data are a property of individual respondents (Pratt, 2000).

Whetten and Mackey (2002) assert that another significant difference between identification and reputation is that identification involves a process of internalization by stakeholders that is not present in the concept of reputation. While external people can provide an account of their experiences with an organization, and in effect contribute to its reputation, these individuals do not necessarily have to internally identify with or relate to the organization in any personal way. Conversely, stakeholders who identify with an organization consider themselves as part of the entity, rather than as an individual who had a series of rather superficial, fleeting interactions with the organization.

### **Brief Summary of Information**

Thus far, I have described the three different components of organizational identity. Through discussing the ideational, definitional, and phenomenological aspects of organizational identity, the distinct hierarchies of concepts related to identity are revealed. An examination of various situations in which application of organizational identity concepts is appropriate was presented in an effort to set the platform for using it

in relation to historically Black colleges and universities. Subsequent analyses of the literature both outline and discern the similarities and differences between related aspects of organizational identity, including culture, image, reputation and identification. It was widely demonstrated that due to the complexity of organizational identity, its application is commonly misused in literature and research. The purpose of providing this deep examination is to avoid such mistakes in my usage of this concept. The figure below provides a brief snapshot of the terms associated with organizational identity:



The following sections of this paper will present two conceptual frameworks to be used in the review of HBCU literature. The frameworks will discuss how all of the previously mentioned components of organizational identity will be constructed and used in relation to one another. Prior to a discussion of the frameworks, a case will be made

for the application of organizational identity in literature associated with Black colleges and universities.

### **Application of organizational identity to HBCUs.**

Current journalistic and academic coverage of HBCUs tend to focus on the unstable environments in which these institutions are operating. A number of HBCUs are considering closing their doors for good, due to severe budget cuts, low enrollments, low endowments, and issues with accreditation status (Gasman, 2009). Although some HBCUs (i.e., Spelman College, Howard University, and Philander Smith College) are taking strategic steps to address such predicaments, there is not current scholarship that delves into the organizational processes undertaken by these institutions to effectively remain open, while also staying true to their historical missions.

Organizational identity is clearly an appropriate framework with which to explore operations of HBCUs in the context of the national and higher education financial crises (Minor, 2008). Whetten (2006) contends that concepts of organizational identity most commonly surface in the literature when threats to an entity's survival are continuously arising. Understanding and exploring concepts of organizational identity in relation to how HBCUs are managing the aforementioned problems will illuminate ways in which these institutions are experiencing such difficulties uniquely, as compared to other higher education institutions. Because the use of organizational identity is highly varied, and its related concepts take on a number of definitions, the following list of terms illustrates how I have chosen to conceptualize organizational identity, culture, image, reputation,



and identification. References to each of these concepts will be made in relation to the definitions below, which are also located in the glossary of terms:

- ***Organizational Identity***: the central and enduring attributes of an organization that distinguish it from other organizations. These attributes are institutionalized claims; essentially allowing organizations themselves to exist as “social actors – authorized to engage in social intercourse as a collectivity and possessing rights and responsibilities as if the collectivity were a single individual” (Whetten & Mackey, 2002, p. 395). There are three components of organizational identity, and examination of all three is essential to gain a comprehensive understanding of an organization’s identity:
  - *Ideational component*: parallels organizational identity with members’ shared beliefs regarding the question “Who are we as an organization?”
  - *Definitional component* : outlines organizational identity as the central and enduring features of an organization.
  - *Phenomenological component* : this component proposes that identity-related discourse is frequently observed simultaneously with significant organizational experiences. Scholars must recognize that studying organizational identity during turbulent situations may not reflect the identity in its entirety.
- ***Organizational Culture***: a distinct property of organizational identity, Hatch and Schultz (1997) provide the following definition: “organizational culture involves all organizational members, originates and develops at all hierarchical levels, and

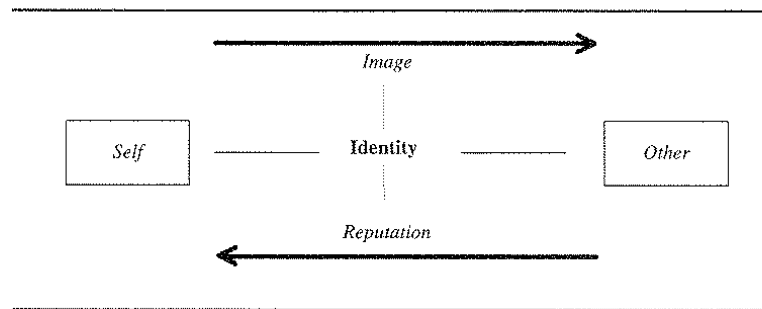
is founded on a broad-based history that is realized in the material aspects (artifacts) of the organization (e.g. its name, products, buildings, logos, and other symbols)” (p. 359).

- ***Organizational Image:*** a distinct property of organizational identity, Whetten and Mackey (2002) provide the following formal definition of organizational image: “Organizational image is what organizational agents want their external stakeholders to understand is most central, enduring, and distinctive about their organization” (p. 401).
- ***Organizational reputation:*** a distinct property of organizational identity, Whetten and Mackey (2002) define organizational reputation as a “particular type of feedback received by an organization from its stakeholders, concerning the credibility of the organization’s identity claims” (p. 401).
- ***Organizational identification:*** a distinct property of organizational identity, organizational identification is a process during which “organizational goals and the goals of individuals become increasingly integrated and congruent, a particularly desirable outcome for any organization” (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2004, p. 18).

### **Organizational identity frameworks.**

The following depiction, labeled Figure 1 illustrates the connections between and among concepts of organizational identity, image, and reputation. Specifically, this framework is useful for distinguishing organizations from one another, and it is also helpful in proposing compatible, yet distinct definitions of image and reputation for

specific organizations. Broadly speaking, identity, image, and reputation are essential components of an organization's ability to be successful as social actors (Whetten & Mackey, 2002).

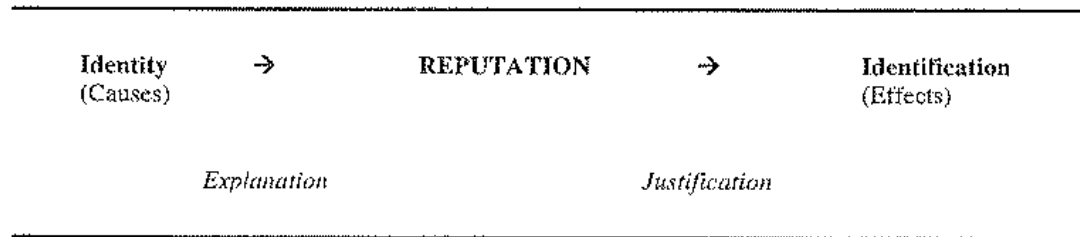


**Figure 1:** Relationships Between and Among Organizational Image, Identity, and Reputation

Within this framework, image and reputation are treated as components of a symmetrical, co-occurring communications process between the organization and its relevant constituents (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). This two-way communications exchange is used as a regulatory device to preserve an optimal level of congruence between organizational commitments and organizational identity claims. Barney & Hansen (1994) posit that when these processes operate as shown in the model, unity within organizations is cultivated and predictability-based trust among external stakeholders is engendered.

This framework (Figure 1) will effectively illustrate the repercussions of the fiscal crisis on the images and reputations associated with HBCUs. It will allow for a demonstration of what occurs when organizational activities and identity claims are not working in unison, in addition to the tangible disadvantages, such as loss of trust and appeal among internal and external constituents. However, using this framework alone will not adequately capture the resulting effects of disharmony on organizational

identification. The following framework conveys the relationships among and between organizational identity, reputation, and identification.



**Figure 2:** Causes and Effects of Organizational Identity, Reputation, and Identification

This framework (Figure 2) distinguishes organizational identity as a “cause” of organizational reputation, while organizational member’s identification is an “effect” of organizational identity and reputation. To explain this process in a different way, aspects of an organization’s identity cause a reputation to be constructed of that organization by external stakeholders. The effect of this resulting reputation is the increase or decrease in constituents’ (internal and/or external) decisions to personally identify with the organization.

The cause and effect relationship of identity, reputation, and identification will provide a useful framework conducive to examining some of the lower enrollments and lower fundraising ability issues plaguing a significant number of HBCUs today (Gasman, 2009). Specifically, I will delve into a critical examination of how external forces, such as historical underfunding from the government (Jenkins, 1991) have contributed to the damages of reputations associated with these institutions. Additionally, elements of how HBCUs have managed to sustain prestigious reputations, strong cultures, and effective

connections with external stakeholders will also be highlighted within the constructs of this framework.

Although organizational culture is not included in either framework, Whetten (2006) argues that due to the pervasive nature of culture in organizations, it should be conceptually linked to discussions of organizational identity throughout an entire analysis. For the purposes of my literature review and proposed research study, organizational culture will serve as the context in which aspects of identity, image, reputation, and identification are shaped, effected and implemented (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). Just as culture is pervasive in organizations, discussions of culture will pervasively surface throughout my analyses as it relates to and sets the context for examination of identity, image, reputation, and identification in relation to HBCUs.

Throughout the literature review, I continually refer to the organizational identity claims associated with HBCUs as collective social actors. It should be noted that these claims are not in reference to specific HBCUs, but rather the larger, unifying mission of these institutions to (a) provide racial uplift for African Americans, (b) provide opportunities for higher education for those traditionally and historically excluded from PWIs, and (c) emphasize teaching and establishment of collaborative leadership opportunities to effectively prepare African Americans to succeed in personal, intellectual, and professional growth and prosperity (Gasman, 2007; Minor, 2004; Minor, 2008). Discussions of organizational image, reputation, and identification elaborate on the interrelationships associated with these concepts as they relate to current issues facing HBCUs.

## **Conclusion**

The common misuse of organizational identity in literature and scholarly research constitutes the justification underlying the abridged literature review of this concept and its related terms. Although historically Black colleges and universities are unique institutions of higher education, they are constantly held to the same standards as PWIs in relation to fiscal stability, accreditation status, graduate rates, and other benchmarks of success associated with higher education (Gates, 2010). Weaving in aspects of organizational identity during examination of the literature on HBCUs will demonstrate the unique factors effecting how these institutions are attempting to address some of the situations they currently face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The following literature review is thus a critical analysis of the issues consistently linked to HBCUs, and organizational identity frameworks (see appendices D & E) are used to both synthesize and contextualize this information.

## Chapter 3: Literature Review

### Introduction

For nearly 150 years, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have educated the leadership of the Black community, graduating many of the nation's African American teachers, doctors, lawyers, scientists, and college faculty (Gasman & Tudico, 2008). Regardless of this reality, these institutions have faced great scrutiny since their inception and throughout most of their histories (Jackson & Nunn, 2003). Alternatively, many prominent scholars, such as Mary Beth Gasman and James Minor, have conducted extensive research on these institutions and in doing so, illustrate the numerous positive effects HBCUs can have on the African American community. The academic discourse on HBCUs is therefore robust and spans a wide range of critical reviews, perspectives, and opinions regarding their continued relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This literature review investigates the critical discourse surrounding HBCUs while highlighting empirical and qualitative research studies that provide useful insight into these institutions. First I provide an overview of the federal, state, and legal policies that contributed to the evolution of historically Black colleges and universities. A critical analysis of the landmark legislations (including *Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954) is examined in the context of the resulting impact for enrollments at HBCUs. Next, I delve into five topics the literature reveals as most pressing for HBCUs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: (a)

student experiences, (b) fiscal circumstances, (c) governance, (d) accreditation, and (e) leadership. For each topic, a number of research studies and opinion pieces are explored in an effort to discuss a range of perspectives regarding these institutional characteristics. I use an organizational identity standpoint to reexamine the five pressing issues. Following this discussion, I summarize the literature and identify areas that are in need of additional research. Lastly, my literature review illuminates current challenges faced by HBCUs, in the context of the recent financial crisis (Gasman, 2009).

### **Conceptual Frameworks**

Due to the extensive amount of information and scholarly research on HBCUs, two conceptual frameworks are used in an effort to organize and ground the information sought for this literature review. The first conceptual framework is adopted from Wagener and Smith's (1993) case study of HBCUs that implemented strategic planning. This framework is conducive to grounding the literature in the five previously mentioned issues. The second framework centers on aspects of organizational identity, including organizational culture, image, reputation, and identification. As previously discussed in chapter 2 ) this framework provides the structure with which the literature will be synthesized from an organizational identity standpoint (see Appendices D and E). A brief discussion of Wagener and Smith's (1993) organizing framework follows.

#### **Conceptual framework adopted from Wagener and Smith (1993).**

In light of the various strains of discourse regarding the many issues faced by HBCUs, such as declining enrollments and dire fiscal situations, existing literature suggests a number of ways these institutions can improve their current standing and



future outlook. Minor (2004), suggests that HBCUs will be best served by continually defining their position and effectively communicating their purpose to all relevant constituents. Because he also suggests that HBCUs will continue to play a valuable role in public higher education (as referenced earlier in the numbers of doctors, lawyers, and dentists these institutions have produced) a multidimensional examination of how the institutions might be improved is worthwhile.

Wagener and Smith's (1993) case study of three HBCUs reveal four major themes around strategic planning: (1) HBCUs must build upon their strengths; (2) HBCUs need bold leadership; (3) fiscal stability is needed for long-term academic health; and (4) HBCUs must involve their faculty in strategic planning. In relation to the first theme, one institution in the study began to rebuild relations within the local business community that had been negatively impacted by civil rights activities in the 1960s (Nichols, 2004). The community-oriented focus, both on campus and in the surrounding areas, is a consistent strength associated with HBCUs (Adebayo, Adekoya, & Ayadi, 2001; Kim & Conrad, 2006). Research has documented the benefit for students in such an institutional environment because of engagement opportunities in leadership and other avenues for campus and community involvement (Kim & Conrad, 2006). The theme of HBCUs needing bold leadership points to the fact that senior level administrators need to reduce expenditures and increase revenues. The third theme reveals the relationship between fiscal stability and long-term academic health. Nichols (2004) found that "without fiscal stability, buildings decay, morale is low, and the capacity to attract first-rate faculty and students is limited" (p. 227). The fourth theme, faculty involvement in strategic planning,

is crucial but difficult. Historically Black Colleges and Universities should consider involving faculty on committees established to deal with restructuring.

With a host of rich suggestions for improvements, numerous opportunities await scholars and practitioners who are associated with historically Black colleges and universities. The above four themes are used as a conceptual framework to organize information related to how HBCUs can build upon their strengths, maximize bold leadership, seek fiscal stability for long-term academic health, and involve their faculty in strategic planning.

A discussion regarding the legal cases, laws, and policies associated with HBCUs follows. Delving into the relevant legal history of these institutions provides a springboard for discussing these institutions in the current legal context. Legal cases and policies regarding HBCUs have undoubtedly played a significant role in their current standing, and so it is essential to thoroughly explore the impact of past legislations. Taylor (1999) asserts that thorough examination and understanding of the “historical/legal analysis of racially segregated education and the litigation that challenged it, is critical to understanding systemic racism” (p.182). Thus, legal cases, laws, and policies associated with HBCUs shed light on the pervasive nature of racism in society. While these issues of systemic racism and historical underfunding will primarily guide the following discussion, the organizational identity and Wagener and Smith (1993) conceptual frameworks are used throughout the examination of HBCUs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Legal Cases, Laws, and Policies Associated with HBCUs**

Prior to 1954, over 90% of Black university students were educated at historically Black colleges and universities (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) established a doctrine of “separate but equal” conditions, therefore approving racial segregation which barred Blacks from public spaces, including public higher education (as cited in Allen & Jewell, 2002). This time period of “legalized apartheid produced increasingly pervasive social separation and acts of lawless violence that eventually led to protests and legal action by African Americans” (Taylor, 1999, p. 186). Furthermore, Nichols (2004) argues that HBCUs were largely founded as a result of racism, and goes on to provide a common perspective that HBCUs were not designed to succeed; rather they were established as holding institutions so that black students would not matriculate into primarily white institutions (PWIs).

The interests of Whites in maintaining an elite, separate existence from Blacks was upheld by the creation of HBCUs. Additionally, the initial development of HBCUs was founded upon a pervasive fear held by Whites, as the newly freed African American slaves were considered a significant liability to the country. Due to this vulnerability, it was “widely recognized that illiterate African Americans must be educated” (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007, p. 267), therefore fueling motivation for the creation of these institutions. The segregation era also contributed to the unique organizational identity associated with these institutions, because their missions were specifically directed toward African American people. As new opportunities for work and education developed, HBCUs became distinctive organizations that took on a “social actor” role in

the commitment to educating Black communities for whom education was historically withheld (Whetten & Mackey, 2002).

The tide significantly changed in 1954, when the U.S. Supreme Court declared the “separate but equal” edict unconstitutional, ordering the integration of the American public education system through their ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas* (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). Consequently, this case resulted in the expanded number of institutions to which Black students had access and also increased the number of Black students matriculating (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007). Harris (1993) argues that both the *Brown* and *Plessy* cases represent an important transition from old to new forms of structural racism. Although the cases take opposite stances on legally segregated education, the interests of Whites in the United States were upheld as a result of this legislation. For example, the *Brown v. Board* (1954) decision furthered the United States in its endeavor to minimize the spread of communism to other countries (Ladson-Billings, 1999). The credibility of the United States was damaged as a result of the global coverage of the inequitable social conditions in the 1950s. This led lawyers to argue that the *Brown* decision would legitimize the American political and economic philosophies while increasing its political power with other countries (Bell, 1980). “Despite the ideological shift post-*Brown v. Board of Education* toward the idea of Blacks as deserving of quality education, resistance and defiance by Southern Whites would thwart the positive effects of this case until the 1960s” (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007, p. 269), civil rights legal mandates have a limited ability to produce tangible results in a timely manner (Crenshaw, 1988).

While the *Brown v. Board* legislation took place in 1954, it would take ten more years for tangible changes to materialize, as evidenced in the *Meredith v. Fair* (1962?) case. In 1961, James Meredith, a student at Black Jackson State College (now Jackson State University), applied to the University of Mississippi in an attempt to become that institution's first African American student (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007). After being denied admission twice, he filed a lawsuit claiming his constitutional rights had been violated. In 1962, the Fifth Circuit Court honored Meredith's request. Following major resistance from the governor, the dispatching of National Guardsmen, and a riot that left two people dead and more than 150 injured, Meredith successfully enrolled (*Meredith v. Fair*, 1962). Despite having to be escorted to campus by 16,000 federal troops, Meredith graduated with a history degree from the University of Mississippi in 1964 (Avery, 2009). This case became a civil rights and legal landmark, as Meredith was the first Black student to attend and graduate from the University of Mississippi (Avery, 2009).

The *Meredith v. Fair* (date) case instigated Black student enrollment in both HBCUs and PWIs (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007). Black enrollments increased 110% in the four years after 1964. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 further encouraged desegregation by acting on the federal commitment to desegregate public education. Title IV of the Civil Rights Act requires that all colleges that receive public funds or are operated by the state must take significant action to desegregate (source?). Furthermore, Title VI makes it illegal for institutions receiving federal aid to discriminate against students on the basis of race, color, or national origin (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf,

2007). Such legal proceedings fueled what is often called the “Great Migration,” to the migration in enrollments from HBCUs to primarily White institutions (Minor, 2008).

In the mid 1960s, the federal government acknowledged a long history of neglect and disparate treatment of HBCUs, particularly compared to PWIs (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007). Monies allocated by the Higher Education Act of 1965 provided fleeting relief for HBCUs to begin addressing issues regarding their infrastructure and fiscal instability (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007). However, as described by Jenkins (1991) and Wennersten (1991) the distribution of financial aid during this era was still disproportionately routed to PWIs.

The consistent lack of funding for HBCUs further demonstrated the structural and systemic issues of racism in the government. For example, legislatures justified the disproportionate allocation of funds to HBCUs by arguing that Blacks required a less complex and less expensive form of education than Whites (Wennersten, 1991). Additionally, the major concern of state officials was meeting the legal requirement of financial allocation to HBCUs so as not to jeopardize federal funding for PWIs. Consequently, while a portion of funds did go to HBCUs, PWIs still received the majority of federal funding (Wennersten, 1991).

In addition to insufficient funding, declining enrollments in HBCUs greatly affected the quality of these institutions. In the early 1960s, more than 70% of all Black students attended HBCUs; by 1968 that number dropped to 36% and by 1976 to just 18% (Avery, 2009). Furthermore, in the late 1970s, several HBCUs were afflicted with administrative mismanagement, aging facilities, and accreditation problems (Avery,

2009). A number of legal cases brought against the state of Mississippi (eventually evolving into one case, *United States v. Fordice*) helped to shed light on these issues (see Appendix A for a comprehensive list of legal cases and federal policies impacting HBCUs).

### **Evolution of *United States v. Fordice* (1992).**

According to Avery (2009), “in 1969 the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) notified 10 southern and eastern states that they were still in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and called for each to submit desegregation plans” (p. 332). However, the 10 states could ignore this request since the current president, Richard Nixon, eliminated the mandated suspension of funds to states not in compliance. In 1970, when the Legal Defense and Education Fund (LDF), a branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), sued HEW for being complicit with states that failed to enforce Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, the issue could no longer be ignored. The LDF lawsuit led to *Adams v. Richardson* (1970-1973), a class action suit against HEW for allowing the existence of a “dual racial system of higher education in the states” (Avery, 2009, p. 333). The *Adams* case prompted the joining of the LDF and the National Association for Equal Educational Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO) in their efforts to sue HEW.

NAFEO was formed in 1969 “by Black public and private college presidents working together for the first time to lobby for greater state and federal funding for HBCUs” (Avery, 2009, p. 333). Although the *Adams* case did not resolve the legal issues brought against HEW, it contained two important implications. First, “it revealed deep

differences about integration within the Black community” (Avery, 2009, p. 333). The LDF and NAACP advocated for comprehensive integration while the NAFEO wanted to protect the unique student composition of HBCUs and safeguard these institutions’ primary purpose to uplift the Black community. From an organizational identity standpoint, the NAFEO was working to achieve the “strategic balance” of assimilation and differentiation for Black colleges as compared to PWIs (Deephouse, 1999). While the NAFEO wanted similar academic and financial success rates at PWIs, members of this organization were afraid that integration laws were deteriorating the unique organizational culture found in HBCUs as a result of serving a majority of Black students.

Without this organizational culture and specific mission, integration legislation threatened the demise of HBCUs. On the other hand, the LDF/NAACP leadership did not believe HBCUs would receive the funding necessary to compete with White colleges in enrollment numbers, academic offerings, and employee benefits (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007). Put simply, the NAFEO was concerned with preserving the distinguishing characteristics associated with HBCUs, while the LDF/NAACP fought for equal funding allocations in an effort to attain an optimal degree of assimilation to PWIs. Despite a late-1890s surge in development, HBCUs continued their legal fight for equal resources and funding through the 1970s, and even still fight for this universal right today (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007).

The second important finding derived from the *Adams* case is the fact that the federal courts were “clearly treating desegregation in higher education differently from



elementary and secondary schools; partly because a student's choice of school was more a factor in higher education" (Avery, 2009, p. 333). The *Adams* case was dismissed when the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ordered the states to submit desegregation plans to HEW. Although HEW accepted most of the submitted plans in 1974, a group of Black Mississippians discontented with the limited reforms of the state and filed a class action suit, *Ayers v. Waller* (1975), against the Office of Civil Rights of the federal Department of Education (Avery, 2009). According to Avery (2009), "the plaintiffs in *Ayers* were concerned with two legal issues raised by *Brown v. Board of Education*, yet not resolved in the federal courts: were Mississippi's HBCUs legal and, if so, could they demand major financial enhancements from the state and federal government to catch up with PWIs?" (p. 334). Over time, the *Adams* and *Ayers* cases evolved into *United States v. Fordice*, a landmark case in desegregating higher education that took more than two decades to be resolved. This case illustrated the slow, incremental progress of legal legislation centering on issues of racial equity (Crenshaw, 1988; Gasman & Tudico, 2008). In 1992, the "Rehnquist Supreme Court overturned the Appeals Court and ruled that Mississippi had not taken adequate measures to desegregate higher education in the state and sent the case back to the federal district court with suggestions for what had to be done to be in compliance" (Avery, 2009, p. 335). In 1994 the district judge ordered Mississippi to create new programs for Jackson State and Alcorn State (both HBCUs) and provide both with five million dollars for educational advancement and racial diversity (Avery, 2009; Minor, 2008; Richardson & Harris, 2004).

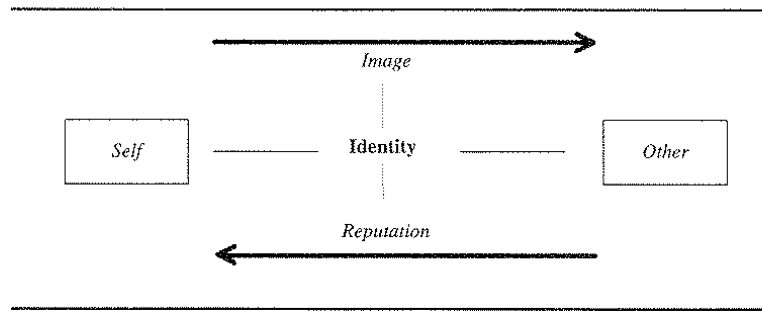
The Black plaintiffs appealed this decision to the Fifth Circuit, claiming the money was insufficient and that without an open admissions policy 40% of academically disadvantaged Black applicants would be denied access to higher education (Avery, 2009). The appeals court upheld the district lower court's plan but it was not until 2002 that a financial settlement was reached and more than \$500 million over 17 years in financial enhancements were provided to the three HBCUs in Mississippi (Richardson & Harris, 2004). The monies were directed toward new programs, new facilities, endowments, and scholarship funds for low-income families (Avery, 2009).

Despite the financial settlements and the continued recognition of HBCUs, Richardson and Harris (2004) argue that the *Fordice* case presents the most direct assault upon HBCUs. Because the court ruled program duplication in Mississippi HBCU and PWI campuses to be wasteful and eliminated purposeful, culturally sensitive admissions practices, the *Fordice* case presents a significant threat to the existence of HBCUs (Richardson & Harris, 2004). If HBCUs are no longer able to recruit and educate Black students who are typically denied acceptance to PWIs as a result of *Fordice*, then how does this case further the historic missions of these institutions? Organizationally, the *Fordice* ruling imposed serious threats to the central and enduring identity claims of HBCUs who as collective organizations strive to educate a majority of African American students. If HBCUs are now required to change their image in order to attract a wider population of students, their reputations may be negatively affected by such a significant shift in priorities. The result is a decrease in the function of HBCUs as unique organizations as they function in greater congruence with PWIs.

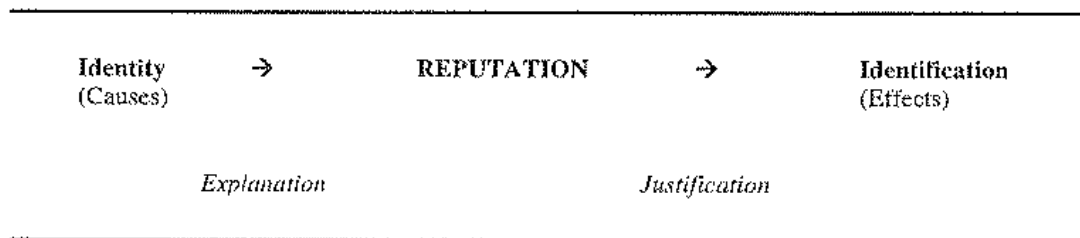
The justification for eliminating program duplication between HBCUs and PWIs assumes there is an equal playing field for access to higher education - which is clearly not the case in the United States (Richardson & Harris, 2004). Additionally, the eradication of culturally sensitive admission practices continues the cycle of structural racism in society because it is assumed that past civil rights legislations have permanently removed all issues of inequity in education. Lastly, in a paradoxical scheme, many of the legal cases, laws, and policies associated with desegregation and civil rights, have unfortunately contributed to the financial, administrative, and enrollment challenges facing many HBCUs today. For example, the significant decrease in student enrollments at HBCUs after integration laws became enacted in 1954 vividly illustrates the impact of such legislation upon institutions.

As the discussion continues into the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, I use the conceptual framework developed from Wagener and Smith's (1993) study of HBCUs to organize the information by four categories: (a) HBCUs must build upon their strengths, (b) faculty must be a part of strategic planning, (c) HBCUS need bold leadership, and (d) fiscal stability is essential to the success of HBCUs. Following are depictions of two organizational frameworks (see Chapter 2 and appendices D and E) that explain how HBCUs are addressing the five aforementioned concerns in relation to their organizational identity effecting these institutions.

**Figure 1:** Relationships Between and Among Organizational Image, Identity, and Reputation



**Figure 2:** Causes and Effects of Organizational Identity, Reputation, and Identification



Throughout the literature review, I continually refer to the organizational identity claims associated with HBCUs as collective social actors. It should be noted that these claims are not in reference to specific HBCUs, but rather the larger, unifying mission of these institutions to (a) provide racial uplift for African Americans, (b) provide opportunities for higher education for those traditionally and historically excluded from PWIs, and (c) emphasize teaching and establish collaborative leadership opportunities to effectively prepare African Americans to succeed in personal, intellectual, and professional growth and prosperity (Gasman, 2007; Minor, 2004; Minor, 2008). From a definitional standpoint, these claims can be viewed as the central and enduring characteristics associated with HBCUs that make these institutions distinct from PWIs and other institution types (Whetten, 2006).

The aforementioned identity claims represent the shared perceptions of what internal members of HBCUs believe to be the distinguishing characteristics about these institutions (Albert & Whetten, 1985). The phenomenological component of these identity claims is manifested in the context of the national and higher education economic downturns, as Whetten (2006) states that discourse around identity claims most frequently surface during situations deemed as unstable or extremely difficult for an organization. These identity claims are in line with what the literature consistently reports as unique characteristics associated with HBCUs; however they are general, rather than specific and by no means represent a comprehensive list. Discussions of organizational image, reputation, and identification elaborate on the interrelationships associated with these concepts as they relate to pressing topics currently faced by these institutions.

It is also important to highlight that while the following discussion examines current issues associated with HBCUs, I do not intend to take a deficit-approach to the analysis of information regarding these institutions. Although the literature emphasizes the challenges HBCUs are facing due to fiscal crises, I discuss a number of strengths linked to these institutions, and frequently underscore their ability to maintain these strengths despite the financial challenges discussed in the literature. Additionally, I take conscious steps to illuminate issues of (a) structural racism; (b) historical underfunding; (c) significantly less physical resources compared to PWIs while highlighting unique organizational attributes that are often forgotten in discussions of the current plight of HBCUs. It is essential to constantly consider these factors in the review of information regarding these institutions.

## **Student Experiences at HBCUs**

In the United States, higher education often provides additional opportunities for political, social, and economic empowerment (Wilson, 2008). Since their inception Historically Black Colleges and Universities have played an integral role in developing such opportunities for African Americans (Gasman, Baez, Drezner, & Sedgwick, 2007). A number of studies have documented the student experience as a major strength of HBCUs, as it is typically characterized as positive, uplifting, and conducive to building life-long relationships (Kim & Conrad, 2006). This experience is measured by several factors, including academic success, persistence, sense of community, and identity development opportunities (Camp, Barden, Sloan, & Clarke, 2009). Opportunities to delve into issues of race and identity development were distinguishing features of early HBCUs; as such discussions were desired in the context of the reconstruction era after the Civil War. With an understanding of African American identity in the context of new rights to education and access (albeit limited) to the workforce underlies the justification for charging HBCUs with the unique mission to not only educate, but to also inspire racial uplift in Black communities (Gasman & Tudico, 2008). While consistently operating with limited resources as compared to PWIs, HBCUs have managed to educate 75% of African American Ph.D.s, 46% of African American business executives, 50% of African American engineers, and 65% of African American doctors (Wilson, 2008).

In a time of increasing financial and accreditation issues, it is not common to find contemporary research that illustrates the positive aspects of the student experience at HBCUs. However it has been demonstrated that the quality of the faculty, facilities,

academic programs, and opportunities for advanced study is often unequal at HBCUs compared to PWIs (Allen, Epps, & Haniff, 1991). Another strength associated with HBCUs is their ability to make up for what they lack in physical resources by providing a more collegial and supportive learning environment for students and faculty (Kim & Conrad, 2006). This positive atmosphere stems from the organizational culture associated with these institutions, which is commonly described as collaborative and uplifting (Gasman & Tudico, 2008), and underscores the notion that a strong organizational culture can increase an individual's willingness to identify with an organization, despite lower perceptions of prestige and availability of resources (ASHE Report, 2004). Kim (2004) states that Black students at HBCUs are more actively and deeply involved in the academic community than Blacks at PWIs.

Yet for every study documenting the positive effects of attending an HBCU, there is another study countering that argument by showing no statistical difference in academic success (success being defined in terms of grade point averages and graduate rates) between Black students attending HBCUs and PWIs (Ashley, 2007). If success is only defined by GPA and graduation rates, then how are students' understanding of who they are as Black individuals functioning in a structurally racist society assessed? Clearly, aspects of organizational identity associated with HBCUs are not accounted for in discussions about the student experience at these institutions. It is thus important to examine the literature in an effort to understand the multiple dimensions of the student experience at HBCUs.

### **Academic success.**

Kim and Conrad (2006) find that African American students are more likely to be involved in faculty's research projects at HBCUs than they are at PWIs. This is an important finding, as faculty-student involvement is a positive predictor for degree completion (Kim & Conrad, 2006). Stahl (2005) also supports the notion that HBCUs are "extraordinarily successful in preparing African Americans for doctoral work and careers in science" (p. 85). Data from an Educational Testing Service study (Wenglinsky, 1997) confirms past reports that Black students who attend HBCUs are more likely to pursue graduate degrees in science related fields than African American students who attend PWIs. A significant factor contributing to this statistic is that many faculty members at HBCUs welcome students into their laboratories thus exposing them to research and scholarship early in their academic careers (Stahl, 2005). HBCUs are lauded for their efforts to increase women and minority representation in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields (Perna, et al., 2009; Stahl, 2005).

Further evidence for HBCUs' contribution to women and minorities in STEM, fields are provided by studies documenting how these institutions are increasing underrepresented populations in these fields. Spelman College and Bennett College for Women have produced a significant number of Black women who have Ph.D.s or are currently pursuing their Ph.D. in science or mathematics (Gary, 2008). These two institutions are responsible for 50% of Black women pursuing doctoral degrees in STEM fields (Gary, 2008). These aspects of organizational culture associated with HBCUs



should continue to be cultivated and preserved in an effort to stay aligned with unique organizational identity claims linked to these institutions.

### **Social environments.**

In addition to preparing students academically, HBCUs are often noted for their ability to foster social environments that are positive and nurturing for students (Betsey, 2008). In a study looking at how HBCUs prepare undergraduates to obtain advanced degrees, Thompson (2008) states that the opportunities for spiritual development can help students attain personal goals he refers to as “a calling” (p. 32). Students are able to connect with other individuals who hold similar aspirations and use spirituality as a means of grounding their development (Thompson, 2008). Thus, the spiritual traditions at many HBCUs may assist students with achieving their personal, academic, and professional goals.

Step shows, marching band performances, and other opportunities available through various Black student groups illustrate the capacity of HBCUs to create social and cultural environments that are welcoming to students (Nealy, 2009). As “incubators and disseminators of African American culture”, HBCUs offer a variety of student leadership and involvement opportunities (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007, p. 269). Studies have shown that Black students attending HBCUs are more likely to become involved in student organizations than their counterparts at PWIs (Fleming, 1984; Kim & Conrad, 2006; Stahl, 2005). It is clear that campus involvement is a major strength of the student experience at HBCUs. Such aspects of organizational culture associated with HBCUs should continue to be cultivated and preserved in an effort to stay aligned the

unique organizational identity claim of providing Black students with leadership and development opportunities that are significantly less available at PWIs.

As media portrayals of HBCUs as conservative, traditional institutions rise, the social environment is in danger of being lost as an effective marketing tool for these institutions. For example, Morehouse College recently announced 11 new rules for how students should dress, and rule number nine forbids students at this all-male college from donning women's clothes, including dresses, tunics, and pumps (Bartlett, 2009). Moreover, many HBCUs continue to impose conservative politics that have long lost their appeal, such as setting curfews, micromanaging student media, and limiting support for academic freedom (Nealy, 2009). Nealy (2009) argues that the value of thoughtful reviews of HBCU campus climates for students and faculty cannot be underestimated, as wholesome and welcoming environments at HBCUs are major selling points in attracting students and faculty. According to a study by Hutto and Fenwick (2002), such "student services" factors are also positively correlated to student retention.

Scholarly opinions demonstrate that there may be incongruence between what HBCUs are attempting to promote as their image and what external stakeholders' (i.e., students, alumni, etc) perceptions are of these institutions (i.e., organizational reputation). With the increasing espousal of values that are more conservative and potentially exclusive of certain orientations and identities (Harper & Gasman, 2008; Patton, 2011), HBCUs run the risk of decreasing stakeholders' willingness to proudly identify with these institutions. Additionally, the central and enduring identity claim of providing a sense of social and professional mobility in the Black community is threatened if aspects

of the projected image result in the alienation of some constituents associated with HBCUs.

These arguments are consistent with the conceptual framework developed from Wagener & Smith (1991), specifically the notion that HBCUs must build upon their strengths. As the student experience is consistently hailed as a prominent strength of these institutions, it is imperative that this strength is upheld and expanded upon, particularly during a time when HBCUs are receiving a significant amount of negative coverage in the media (Gasman, 2009; Patterson, 2009). Additionally, refocusing on and recommitting to incorporating such strengths back into the organizational culture will undoubtedly play an effective role in increasing the positivity associated with the organizational image and reputation of these institutions.

According to the organizational identity framework as depicted in Figure 1, organizational image and reputation work in unison to establish an optimal level of congruence between organizational actions and identity claims (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Thus, the identity claim of a prevailing positive student experience will work best when HBCUs continue to orchestrate an image touting elements of openness, inclusion, and student leadership development, so as to simultaneously develop or maintain a reputation among external stakeholders that genuinely reflects such positive claims. Furthermore, constituents associated with HBCUs will be more willing to identify with these institutions, as an effect of their positive reputation being reaffirmed in the larger higher education community. This “cause and effect” process between reputation and

identification is conveyed in the organizational identity framework depicted in Figure 2 (Appendix E).

### **Fiscal Circumstances**

Fiscal stability is one of the most talked-about issues for HBCUs today. For a host of reasons, such as historical governmental underfunding, HBCUs are challenged to deliver the required outcomes in a changing and more demanding society (Gates, 2010). Gates (2010) argues that, given their century and a half of underfunding and having to do more with less, HBCUs should be leaders in institutional efficiency, cost-sharing, and fiscal partnerships. Additionally, given their reliance on public funding, HBCUs should be experts at garnering federal support for their initiatives (Gates, 2010). However, currently there are several HBCUs that are struggling financially, to the point of being in danger of losing accreditation and having to permanently close their doors to students, faculty, and staff (see Appendix C). There are a number of specific institutions that have made significant budget cuts in an effort to remain credible in the wake of a financial crisis (Gasman, 2009). Such budget cuts often have a significant impact on the quality of students' educational experience.

#### **Quality of education.**

Lower financial resources at HBCUs have led to larger classes and lower-paid faculty, which often result in an unsatisfactory educational experience for students (Clark, 2009). Having to do more with less continually arises in these discussions; faculty at HBCUs, on average, are paid lower salaries than faculty at PWIs, despite having larger classes and heavier workloads. Buck (1999) reported that the mean salary for all faculty

ranks at HBCUs is \$45,300 compared to \$56,300 at all institutions. Additionally, full professors at HBCUs make \$56,900 while full professors at all institutions make \$72,700 (Nichols, 2004). Such disparities must be taken into account when discussing literature that makes assertions regarding the quality of instruction at these institutions. For example, in the fall of 2008, various forms of media surfaced reporting that Howard University nursing students picketed the campus to draw attention to concerns about the quality of instruction (Clark, 2009). What structural issues are possible causes for such student protests? Disparate allocations of funding and other educational resources, despite increasing student populations, have been an ongoing issue at HBCUs since the early 1900s (Jenkins, 1991).

Other literature points to the fact that as HBCUs lose their accreditation status, students are not able to transfer credits earned at that respective institution, which makes the time to degree completion even longer (Baylor, 2010). Additionally, scholarly media asserts that graduation rates are also an issue, as a 2006 *Ed Sector* report declared that just 37.9% of Black students attending HBCUs earn an undergraduate degree within six years (Nealy, 2009). This is four percentage points lower than the national college graduation rate for Black students and seven points lower than the overall graduation rates of PWIs (Nealy, 2009).

Given the organizational identity of HBCUs and the fact that their identity claims center on providing access to higher education for those students traditionally excluded from PWIs, these institutions have contributed to the vast majority of higher degrees for African American students (75%) (Nichols, 2004). Relatedly, in light of the fact that

students at HBCUs typically enter college with lower GPAs and standardized test scores (Kim & Conrad, 2006) than students at PWIs, I argue that Black colleges and universities are more effective at academic preparation than what the literature credits. Despite this reasoning, the organizational reputations associated with HBCUs continues to be a negative when traditional methods of academic success (i.e., GPA and graduation rates) are used to assess quality of academic opportunity at these institutions. Wagener and Smith's (1991) theme of building fiscal stability for long term academic health is intensely demonstrated in this discussion regarding the effects of less financial being resources readily available to HBCUs.

As previously mentioned, I argue that these issues stem from historical underfunding and that the government has contributed substantially to the contemporary issues at HBCUs by continually providing less money and resources for these institutions, especially when compared to PWIs. And while the government attempts at correcting the historical fiscal discrimination against these institutions should not be ignored; the effects are still being experienced today. The inability of legal legislation to effectively address larger, cyclical systems of inequity holds true, despite making slight progress that typically addresses the symptoms, rather than the root cause of pervasive racism.

### **Endowments.**

It can be inferred that when “predominately White institutions (PWIs) catch a cold, HBCUs will catch pneumonia” (Nealy, 2009, p. 18). This is demonstrated by the contagious economic virus plaguing all of higher education. Because HBCUs typically

rely on student tuition programs, government funds, and donations to sustain their institutions, the increasing need for a stable income source typically found in a sustainable endowment continues to be a problem (Galuszka, 2010). Out of 105 HBCUs, there only three with endowments in the top three hundred (nationwide, across all institutions): Howard University, Spelman College, and Hampton University (ASHE Report, 2009).

Additional information regarding endowment values at HBCUs is difficult to locate, as only five HBCUs responded to the National Association of College and University Business Officers Endowment Survey (Nealy, 2010). For those five schools, the average endowment market value was \$244.7 million, compared with an average of \$521.9 million for all non-Black institutions (Nealy, 2010). Further illustrating the detriment of low endowments at HBCUs, Fisk University recently considered selling portions of its renowned art collections donated by Georgia O’Keefe to raise much needed fiscal resources (Nealy, 2010). The issue of low endowments is significant because low endowments mean that less money is available for operating costs and institutional financial aid (ASHE Report, 2009).

### **Fundraising.**

Despite research findings demonstrating hardship in asking for donations of any philanthropic cause regardless of an organization’s ethnic makeup and orientation (Walton & Gasman, 2008), development professionals at HBCUs constantly face “a distinctive set of challenges that are often taken for granted at other mainstream institutions of higher learning” (ASHE Report, 2009, p. 55). One challenge in fundraising

at HBCUs is the much smaller pool of alumni and affluent individuals from which to garner donations. This situation leads to difficulty in securing donations throughout institutions, thus leaving some programs and offices solely dependent on institutionally provided funds (ASHE Report, 2009). Gasman and Anderson-Thompkins (2003) argue that this situation does not occur as frequently at PWIs because these institutions are typically larger and graduate a higher number of students from affluent families and who therefore may be historically inclined to the notion of philanthropy. Additionally, the historic and inherent value of Whiteness has allowed White people to continually and disproportionately reap economic and social benefits that allow for increased giving (Gasman & Sedgwick, 2005).

Another challenge that illuminates the disparity between fundraising at PWIs and HBCUs stems from a lack of resources needed to develop a successful and ongoing development campaign (Gasman & Anderson-Thompkins, 2003). Such resources include key personnel, continuous education and professional development opportunities, and technical assistance (ASHE Report, 2009). While many PWIs have these resources as a result of large endowments that have long produced allocated funds for fundraising infrastructures, most HBCUs do not (ASHE Report, 2009). Staff at HBCUs are typically smaller, and fundraising responsibilities may be given as “other duties as assigned” to administrators who are fairly inexperienced with formal fundraising techniques (Gasman & Anderson-Thompkins, 2003). Thus, comparisons of fundraising abilities at HBCUs versus PWIs fail to acknowledge that HBCUs have historically been, and still are



expected to perform at the same level as PWIs, despite decades of disparity in fiscal and operational resources (Gates, 2010).

Though difficult for many HBCUs, others such as Howard University are successful in developing and executing effective fundraising campaigns (Galuszka, 2008). In 1995, only four to five percent of Howard alumni donated funds to the institution, which motivated the acting president, H. Patrick Swygert to initiate an innovative and multifaceted campaign that raised over \$250 million in five years (Galuszka, 2008). Integral to the success of this campaign was direct, personal, community outreach in the form of meet-and-greet sessions and formal events. Also essential in Swygert's ability to secure donations was the collaboration between and hiring of fundraising experts who were able to design and execute a number of effective strategies. The employment of such strategies is undoubtedly the reason Howard now boasts the largest endowment of any other HBCU with an estimated worth of \$532 million. More studies, such as one conducted by Drezner (2009) investigating the organization identification theories in the promotion of HBCUs donations are needed.

The range of difficulties with fundraising among HBCUs varies. Even though Howard maintains the highest endowment due to successful fundraising efforts, it still falls far below one of its neighboring institutions, Georgetown University, which boasts an endowment of one billion dollars (Galuszka, 2008). It is obvious just how hard HBCUs have to work in order to remain fiscally competitive, and this is largely due to a game of "catch-up" after years of unequal funding between these institutions (Gasman and Anderson-Thompkins, 2003).

The notion of “racial uplift” being the central and enduring claim for most HBCUs heavily influences these institutions’ approach to fundraising. Gasman and Anderson-Thompkins (2003) assert that HBCUs do not aggressively solicit donations from alumni due to a historical organizational identity claim that focuses on enrolling, nurturing, and guiding students from matriculation to graduation. For years, nothing more than a final transaction to ensure a zero balance on student accounts was requested in return for this investment in Black students’ higher education. It is understandable that fundraising percentages are lower at HBCUs, given that they have historically attempted to portray an organizational image of investing in the student, with no expectations of fiscal reciprocity. Fields (2001) appropriately asserts that “many HBCUs have only begun to tap the potential of annual giving among alumni, faculty, and even students” (p. 39).

HBCUs may hold back from such aggressive fundraising endeavors because of the possibility of damaged reputations. (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). In line with this thinking, the organizational identity framework in Figure 1 demonstrates the importance of an organization’s image and reputation working in unison to maintain harmony between commitments and identity claims. However, examples such as Howard University exemplify the notion that seeking financial gifts can be structured in a way that aligns with critical components of an HBCU’s organizational identity. For example, Howard University former President Swygert initiated fundraising raising efforts by strengthening connections in the surrounding community and partnering with the United Negro College Fund directly correlates with the unique identity claim of providing

upward mobility for African American communities. Implementing fundraising efforts in this way ensured coherence with the institution's image and reputation, thus resulting in the desired effect of maintaining its distinctiveness as an HBCU.

### **Budget cuts.**

A survey of 500 African American professionals conducted by Black Enterprise magazine lists the top five HBCUs providing academic and social environments as: Spelman College, Morehouse College, Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University, Clark Atlanta University, and Howard University (as cited in Gasman, 2009). However, several of these institutions have experienced significant decreases in funding in recent years, placing them in an economic crisis (Gasman, 2009). At Spelman College, President Beverly Tatum "anticipated future shortfalls in funding and, as a result, phased out the institution's education department, choosing to have students participate in a shared teacher-certification program hosted by nearby Clark Atlanta University" (Gasman, 2009, p. 27). In further acknowledgment of budget cuts, Tatum also removed 35 staff positions as well. While Spelman has a sizeable endowment compared to most other HBCUs, "40% of its students are supported by Pell Grants, a higher percentage than at any other highly selective liberal arts college in the nation" (Gasman, 2009, p. 27).

Morehouse College obtains approximately 80% of its revenue from tuition and fees (Gasman, 2009). However, after a \$40 million dollar decrease of the endowment this year, "the college cut 25 adjunct professors, which is roughly a third of the institution's part-time instructors" (Gasman, 2009, p. 28). Furthermore, Clark Atlanta University laid off 70 full-time faculty members, regardless of whether they had tenure or

not (Gasman, 2009). Despite the faculty senate offering to take comprehensive pay cuts, the faculty members were still laid off and constituted a “30% loss in faculty at Clark” (Gasman, 2009, p. 28). Thus, while these institutions are lauded for their academic and social environments, more research into the campus climate and administrative policies in light of the recent financial troubles is warranted.

A potential frame for understanding such elaborate budget cuts resides within how aspects of these institution’s respective organizational identities impacted the decision making processes. . Specifically, did the central and enduring identity claims play a role in deciding which academic programs to cut? For example, did Black studies programs remain safe from the chopping block in order to maintain the identity claim of HBCUs providing the space for African Americans to develop personally, intellectually, and professionally in relation to their race? The literature fails to describe whether or not administrators at HBCUs considered the possible detrimental effects to their organizational images and reputations in light of the extensive budget cuts, and whether final cuts were made with these concepts in mind. Understanding budget cuts from an organizational identity perspective would provide significant insight into the policies and practices behind the ultimate decisions (Whetten, 2006).

### **Student enrollments.**

There are some HBCUs, such as Harris-Stowe State and Prairie View A&M, at which applications skyrocket in 2009, partly due to being low-cost public institutions (Clark, 2009). Other HBCUs, like Xavier University, recruit based on their track records; Xavier boasts that it sends more African Americans to medical school than any other

college in the nation (Clark, 2009). However, while recruiting students to apply to HBCUs is relatively successful for these institutions, actually enrolling said students has proven to be more difficult. From a big picture perspective, enrollments in HBCUs have been declining since legislation passed in the 1950s and 60s requiring desegregation (Nichols, 2004). As previously mentioned, in the early 1960s, more than 70% of all Black students attended HBCUs; by 1968 that number dropped to 36% and by 1976 to just 18% (Avery, 2009).

Because the declining enrollments in HBCUs combined with the increased enrollment numbers at PWIs are a direct result of the aforementioned desegregation legislation, many scholars (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Harris, 1993; Taylor, 1999;) argue that Whites are the primary beneficiaries of civil rights laws, policies, and acts. Ironically, the *Brown* decision ultimately increased enrollments, and therefore increased resources and funds, to PWIs at a much higher rate and possibly to the detriment of enrollments and funding at HBCUs (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007). PWIs that historically executed admissions policies exclusive to Black student matriculation suddenly altered those policies in an attempt to secure more fiscal resources and to avoid sanctions and budget cuts (Wennersten, 1991). Such policy revisions at PWIs served to satisfy their need to remain fiscally and academically superior to HBCUs, which have continuously suffered from declining enrollments since the 1950s.

Declining enrollments are a significant issue for many HBCUs today. In addition to government legislation mandating desegregation in education, there are a number of other reasons for the decreasing enrollments of students at HBCUs. For example,

according to a study conducted by Carnegie Communications African American high school students are not as interested in attending HBCUs as they once were, (Townes, 2009). While the number of African-American students enrolled at the nation's colleges and universities has increased by approximately 40% in the past decade, the number of students enrolled at HBCUs has only increased by 13% during the same period (Townes, 2009). According to the Carnegie Communications report, prospective college students cited the "strength of academic programs," "better overall campus life," and "successful graduates" as the key reasons for opting to attend public and private institutions of higher education (Townes, 2009).

In addition to PWIs, HBCUs must recognize the new competition stemming from for-profit institutions, as these schools are also a factor in the declining enrollments at HBCUs (Nealy, 2009). For-profit institutions have become destination colleges for many Black and Hispanic students (Nealy, 2009). A disproportionate number of degrees from proprietary colleges go to Black and Hispanic graduates: the University of Phoenix "online campus" has replaced Florida A&M and Howard universities as the number one producer of bachelor's degrees awarded to African Americans (Nealy, 2009). Furthermore, while Black students earned 8.9% of all bachelor's degrees in the United States in 2005, they accounted for 15% of the degrees conferred by proprietary institutions, according to data in the National Education Statistics report, "Postsecondary Institutions in the United States" (Nealy, 2009).

Although decreasing enrollments pose a significant issue for HBCUs, there are a number of strategies these institutions can employ to address this problem. For example,

to mitigate the findings of the Carnegie Communications study, HBCUs can publicize the numerous studies that have shown the overall campus life experience to be more positive for Black students at HBCUs compared to PWIs (Kim & Conrad, 2006; Patterson, 2009). These institutions can also effectively market the significant number of notable HBCU graduates, including W.E.B. Du Bois, Oprah Winfrey, Langston Hughes, and Toni Morrison (Nichols, 2004).

The authors of the Carnegie Communications study state that HBCUs have a tremendous opportunity to use messaging to build on strengths and reframe hesitations in order to boost student enrollment in the coming years (Townes, 2009). This suggestion is consistent with the “HBCUs must build upon their strengths” component of the conceptual framework adapted from Wagener and Smith’s (1993) case study of HBCUs. These marketing and messaging initiatives can be adopted by HBCUs to address the continuing decrease in enrollment numbers. All of these initiatives will contribute substantially to an attractive organizational image of HBCUs which will in turn cause the reputation associated with these institutions to be more favorable to external constituents. In line with the organizational identity framework (figure 2), the desire for students, alumni, faculty, or staff to identify with HBCUs will effectively increase, further illuminating the unique organizational identity attributes of these institutions.

### **Governance**

In addition to criticisms stemming from financial issues and declining enrollments, HBCUs are also scrutinized for questionable governance structures and decision making processes (Minor, 2004). These criticisms are not to be taken lightly, as

the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) considers “faculty involvement in institutional governance crucial to the vitality of academic freedom” (Gasman, Baez, Drezner, & Sedgwick, 2007, p. 71). However, the organizational identity and plight of HBCUs places them in a context that potentially affects campus decision-making and leadership practices (Drewry & Doermann, 2001). Minor (2004) argues that decision-making contexts can be affected by structural, cultural, or situational distinctions that leaders of these institutions must consider. While the distinctiveness of HBCUs (compared to other institution types, such as PWIs) is easily recognized, defining the contextual aspects that may affect governance issues at these institutions has not been adequately researched or understood by the greater academic community. Issues of governance at HBCUs are grounded in, and clearly represent the “faculty as part of strategic planning” component of the adapted conceptual framework from Wagener and Smith’s (1993) case study of HBCUs.

To fully understand the issues associated with governance and decision making, it is necessary to define both terms in the context of higher education. The term “shared governance” typically suggests joint management higher education institutions (Ramo, 1998). However, the phrase can indicate a number of contradictory ideas about how a campus should make decisions (Minor, 2004). In a recent national study, Tierney and Minor (2003) found that campus constituents define shared governance in three ways:

1. Collaborative-university constituents collectively make decisions about the direction of the campus.



2. Stratified systems of governance where certain constituents make decisions according to decision type (e.g., faculty decide on curriculum and the administration determines policy and budgetary issues).
3. Consultative governance structures in which the president reserves decision-making authority with the expectation that they consult with university constituents before making decisions (as cited in Minor, 2004, p. 41).

For his study on governance structures at HBCUs, Minor (2004) defines governance as the configuration of decision-making bodies (i.e., the structure that grants authority). Decision making is then defined as the process by which those granted authority make determinations on issues under consideration. Minor (2004) asserts that “also important to understanding governance is the context (i.e., organizational culture) in which decisions are made (e.g., the political, academic, financial, social, cultural, and situational circumstances that can influence decision making)” (p. 41).

Much of the criticism allocated to the governance structures at HBCUs is made in without understanding the contextual aspects that contribute to decision-making processes at these institutions (Minor, 2004). In 2004 and 2005, the AAUP censured the administrations of three HBCUs (Meharry Medical College, Philander Smith College, and Virginia State University) because an investigation revealed “a complete disregard for principles of shared governance and an overwhelming use of unilateral decision making” (Gasman, Baez, Drezner, & Sedgwick, 2007, p. 71). Furthermore, according to

Wagener and Smith (1993) HBCUs are often known for autocratic leadership, whereby presidents have sole decision making authority. However, missing from such critiques is consideration of the fact that HBCUs cannot be “diassociated from the history of state sanctioned discrimination in the United States” (Gasman et al., 2007, p. 71). Gasman and Tudico (2008) further argue that this idea of autocratic leadership evolved from Black presidents having to interact with the White Northern philanthropic organizations that provided significant funding to some HBCUs established in the early 1900s.

The initial identity claims associated with HBCUs focused on “helping the newly freed slaves gain employment, rather than to disseminate knowledge for its own sake, which arguably was a purpose for traditionally White institutions” (Gasman, Baez, Drezner, & Sedgwick, 2007, p. 71). Thus, faculty members at HBCUs have concentrated more on racial uplift than professional concerns and may not have constructed a place for themselves in institutional governance (Minor, 2004). Such racialized contexts and the resulting effects on governance and organizational identity parallel the argument made by Taylor (1999), as he advocates for a substantial historical legal analysis when attempting to understand the structural issues at HBCUs.

Why was there a historic and now current need to focus on racial uplift at HBCUs and not at PWIs? Arguably, the answer to this question rests in the entrenched racism and oppression that define contextual aspects of HBCUs, especially when they were first created. If this is true, then why are HBCUs constantly compared to and expected to perform at the same levels and in the same ways as PWIs? At what point can success

with regard to governance and leadership be solely defined in the context that situates HBCUs, as opposed to a standard set by PWIs and external accreditation bodies?

The example of faculty concentrating on teaching and mentoring of students at the expense of governance involvement can be described as “faculty traditions” that have endured over the entire history of these institutions (Minor, 2004). In Minor’s (2004) study of governance structures of HBCUs he also identified the “paradox of mission” and “a racialized climate” as contextual aspects believed to influence decision making at these institutions. With regard to faculty traditions being heavily ingrained in the organizational culture of these institutions, the majority of faculty members at HBCUs are more dedicated to teaching than research (Minor, 2004). The nature of faculty work at HBCUs is characterized as heavy teaching loads, leaving little to no room for effective involvement in governance. Gasman, Baez, Drezner, and Sedgwick (2007), suggest that the AAUP work with faculty at HBCUs to help them learn how to value and protect shared governance. Workshops that provide practical strategies to HBCU faculty members are one way to begin addressing this issue.

However, in consideration of the unique attributes of organizational identity for HBCUs, such collaborations should be guided with identity claims (i.e., cultivating a student-centered atmosphere) of these institutions in mind. For example, some leaders at HBCUs may fear that involving faculty in governance will impose a significant threat upon the enduring identity claim of faculty cultivating student-centered environments that are characterized by mentor-like relationships that are personally nurturing and academically purposeful (Gasman, Baez, Drezner, & Sedgwick, 2007; Whetten, 2006;).

Because this identity claim has historically distinguished HBCUs from other institutions, involving faculty in governance may cause HBCUs to lose that unique attribute, thereby becoming more like “other” institutions as shown in Figure 1. Consideration of identity claims cannot be underestimated in initiatives to involve faculty in strategic planning processes.

**Mission paradox.**

Traditionally, HBCUs have maintained their mission of providing access to higher education for African Americans who might not gain admittance to predominately White four-year colleges (Minor, 2004). However, in light of the many issues previously highlighted in this literature review, many HBCUs seek to improve their academic reputation, and recruiting students of diverse (including White) backgrounds is often at the forefront of this movement to revamp and advance the academic perception of these institutions. Minor (2004) argues that as “HBCUs seek to improve their academic reputations, maintaining fidelity to their mission presents a paradox” (p. 48). In efforts to enhance their academic reputation, processes are undertaken to raise admission standards and tuition costs, but these changes come with a cost of decreasing access, especially to African Americans and thus cause these institutions to lose the features setting them apart from PWIs (Minor, 2004). Furthermore, the pressure to increase graduate and professional programs will attract an increasing number of students who do not identify as African American.

This mission paradox is also evident through administrative changes to tenure and promotion policies that place more emphasis on research and less on teaching, as faculty

at HBCUs have historically valued teaching and assisting students more heavily than research and publication (Irvine & Fenwick, 2011; Minor, 2004; Stevenson, 2008). Stevenson (2008) suggests that HBCUs modify their mission and place research at the center of all mission statements in an effort to recruit highly sought after faculty and increase the academic reputation of these institutions. However, a significant number of campus constituents within HBCUs (students, faculty, and administrators, specifically) feel as though improving the reputations of these institutions simultaneously compromises their unique organizational identity and historical missions (Minor, 2004).

The longtime mission of HBCUs and the current direction in which many are being encouraged to move (i.e.; raising admission standards, recruiting more students of diverse backgrounds) are not necessarily in synchronicity. Consequently, decision making on issues perceived to compromise the mission of the institution is characterized by difficult conversations (Minor, 2004). This is even the case for decisions that could improve the campus, thus further complicating governance and decision making processes at HBCUs. Whetten (2006) argues that these situations are so strategically difficult that such changes must be guided by the institution's organizational identity claims, particularly when modifying the original mission is not an option.

#### **Racialized climates.**

Finally, a racialized climate is a significant trait of organizational culture that influences the decision-making environment at many HBCUs (Minor, 2004). Gasman, Baez, Drezner, and Sedgwick (2007) assert that "taboos may exist among Black faculty against speaking out publicly in opposition to the respective college's president and other

administrators, which is attributable to the hypervisibility” at these institutions (p. 72). Some African Americans associated with HBCUs fear that publicly voicing their complaints may justify pervasive (and negative) stereotypes of Black leaders, instead of adding to rich conversations regarding current issues facing these institutions (Gasman et al., 2007). The infusion of race further complicates the context of governance due to racial dynamics that influence internal and external decisions (Minor, 2004). As one president of an HBCU explains, there are some gifts and partnerships that must be turned down because of being a Black institution, while the flipside is that there are also a number of doors that have been opened because of being a Black institution (Minor, 2004, p. 48). Thus, “to assume that race does not affect decision making about the campus is naïve. This notion is especially important when considering external decision making at the local, state, and federal levels” (Minor, 2004, p. 48).

#### **Vision and mission statements of HBCUs.**

Abelman and Dalessandro (2007) assert that the absence of clear, compelling vision statements also contributes to issues of governance at HBCUs. According to Pekarsky (1998) a “well-conceived vision [is]an informing idea that is shared, clear, and compelling” (p. 280). It is shared by the critical stakeholders – students, faculty, and staff – and unifies their vision of the institution with that of the upper administration (Pekarsky, 1998). Furthermore, a vision must be clear and concrete enough to offer genuine guidance in making decisions and setting priorities at all levels of the institution (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2007). While information from Abelman and Dalessandro’s (2007) study will be discussed, I argue that if mission and vision statements are

adequately captured in written form for HBCUs, the previously-mentioned evidence regarding the positive student environment and the unifying goal of racial uplift will be clearly understood among stakeholders associated with these institutions. Although some credibility may be woven into Abelman and Dalessandro's (2007) study, it is important to consider who has decided what constitutes a strong vision and/or mission statement, and whether or not such benchmarks hold true for HBCUs. The decision to include a discussion of this article is based on the fact that other notable scholars who have conducted extensive research on HBCUs (Minor, 2004; Minor, 2008; Fields, 2001) have posited arguments similar to those presented in this study.

At a time when HBCUs are under intense criticism and HBCU leadership suggests that "these colleges must find a way to articulate consistent, meaningful, and relevant visions" (Fields, 2001, p. 32), it is essential to provide clear definitions and valid points of comparison for institutional vision. Abelman and Dalessandro (2007) conducted a study in which content analysis is used to analyze the clarity and effectiveness of visions associated with HBCUs. The investigation reveals that the institutional visions that currently guide HBCUs lack clear vision (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2007). Compared with the general population of colleges and universities across the country, fewer HBCUs have clearly defined vision statements. In addition to under-developed visions, the mission statements of HBCUs lack many of the linguistic components that make them effective foundations for internal and external communication (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2007). Mission and vision statements unify student, faculty, and staff perceptions of the institution.

Furthermore, mission statements should present the desired outcomes of the institutions as solid and concrete declarations. However, Abelman and Dalessandro's (2007) content analysis of several HBCU mission statements reveals that these outcomes are neither presented in shared language, nor sufficiently compelling. It is boldly stated in this study, that the missions of HBCUs do not have the capacity to inspire and motivate those within an institution to communicate their characteristics to key constituents inside or outside the institutions (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2007). However, if the mission statements do not lend well accomplishing such tasks, then other aspects of organizational identity (i.e., organizational culture and/or reputation) must account for these institutions' ability to motivate internal members to communicate the central, enduring, distinguishing attributes that are unique to HBCUs.

To address the articulated issues associated with HBCU vision and mission statements, Abelman and Dalessandro (2007) recommend that these institutions develop visions that are central to the day-to-day operation of the institution. While this information is found in the additional information (i.e., brochures) provided by HBCUs, it should be transferred to the primary mission statement document. Bolstering the clarity and compelling components of mission statements will increase their ability to penetrate the academic community (Hartley, 2006). One way to effectively address the onslaught of criticism within the higher education community is for leaders at HBCUs to heed Minor's (2005) observation that the very survival of HBCUs is heavily dependent on "rejuvenated institutional commitment and new-found vision" (p.37).



## **Accreditation**

The importance of accreditation cannot be overlooked, as schools that have lost accreditation do not receive funding from the federal government and their credits can not transfer to other institutions (Clark, 2009). Further indicating the importance of accreditation is the fact that the Department of Education tracks school accreditation and two accrediting agencies – the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education – post notices on their respective websites (Clark, 2009). The increasing accreditation issues at several HCBUs (including Morris Brown, Paul Quinn, and several others) provides additional ammunition for critics to suggest that HBCUs are no longer needed in American education (Baylor, 2010). In addition to federal funding, unaccredited institutions are not eligible for state student aid, veterans' benefits, loans, and grants (Gasman, Baez, Drezner, & Sedgwick, 2007). Accreditation status is undoubtedly linked to the organizational reputation constructed by external stakeholders for higher education institutions, thus further proving accreditation to be one of the more pressing concerns for HBCUs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.**

The accreditation process is governed by six regional associations, namely Middle States Associations of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and Western Association of Schools and Colleges (Gasman, Baez, Drezner, & Sedgwick, 2007). Since the majority of Black colleges are located in the South and lower eastern states, most

HBCUs are governed by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) for official compliance (Gasman, Baez, Drezner, & Sedgwick, 2007). Most reprimands and revocations of accreditation are a result of financial deficits, but a number of other factors also play a role in the certification process, including (but not limited to): (a) faculty quality (level of degrees), (b) campus infrastructure, (c) student enrollments, and even (d) library holdings (Gasman, Baez, Drezner, & Sedgwick, 2007).

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools has “recently been the most active of the regional associations in its public sanctioning of institutions, and consequently has also been criticized for its disproportionate attention to HBCUs” (Gasman, Baez, Drezner, & Sedgwick, 2007, p. 72). According to Donahoo and Lee (as cited in Gasman, et al., 2007), “25% of SACS’s sanctions pertained to HBCUs, while these institutions make up only 13% of the SACS institutional membership” (p. 72). This disparity presents an opportunity to convey the tendency for predominately White organizations to engage in implicit, systemic, racist practices of disproportionately punishing people of color for acts that are commonly committed by Whites as well. While this HBCU-heavy sanctioning may be due to their hyper visibility in the SACS schools, it illustrates the notion that problems at PWIs are considered to be normal while these issues at HBCUs are highlighted (Gasman et al., 2007).

Further demonstrating this point is the fact that, since 1989, nearly half of the 20 institutions that lost their accreditation from SACS are HBCUs (Baylor, 2010). The loss of accreditation can have a snowball effect, making it impossible for an institution to distribute financial aid, leading to a loss of student applicants. Since unaccredited Black

colleges cannot be members of the United Negro College Fund, these institutions lose access to an additional source of funding that is often needed to maintain their operating budgets (Gasman & Tudico, 2008). The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools thus plays an integral role in the funding eligibility for HBCUs. As I discuss issues of accreditation at multiple HBCUs, it is essential to concurrently consider the proven acts of historical underfunding and inequitable allocation of educational resources that HBCUs have dealt with since their inception (Jenkins, 1991; Wennersten, 1991).

Of particular attention in the literature are accreditation issues at Morris Brown College (Atlanta, GA), Barber-Scotia College (Concord, N.C.) and Paul Quinn College (Dallas, TX) (Baylor, 2010). The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools rescinded Morris Brown College's accreditation in 2003 for the following reasons: "mounting debt, institutional effectiveness, poor record keeping, and difficulties with processing financial aid" (Baylor, 2010, p. 30). The school appealed the decision, but the appeal was rejected, resulting in 1,500 students transferring to different institutions (Baylor, 2010).

In addition to the aforementioned reasons for the loss of accreditation, Morris Brown College's former president, Dr. Delores Cross, was accused of embezzling five million dollars from the U.S. Department of Education by obtaining student loans using the names of former students and students who never attended the college (Baylor, 2010). Purportedly, these funds were used to hire extra staffers, administrators, and housekeepers for personal, rather than professional reasons (Gasman, Baez, Drezner, & Sedgwick, 2007). Dr. Cross pleaded guilty to embezzling funds and was consequently

sentenced to five years probation. However, despite student enrollment decreasing significantly after these events, Morris Brown continued to operate and in the fall of 2008 offered only 48 courses to 60 students (Baylor, 2010).

Barber Scotia College had its accreditation rescinded in 2004, largely because of academic and financial problems. Essential among its academic problems was the granting of degrees to 28 students who had not completed course requirements for graduation (Gasman, Baez, Drezner, & Sedgwick, 2007). The school also had financial issues with \$75,000 owed for unpaid utilities, while several professors complained to the state that they were not being paid on time (Kelderman, 2009). Barber Scotia also “failed to collect tuition and other fees from students, creating cash flow problems” (Powell, 2004, as cited in Baylor, 2010, p. 31). Despite receiving a seven million dollar loan from the U.S. Department of Education to account for the significant increase in student enrollment between 1997 and 2003, Barber Scotia could not resolve its financial problems which ultimately led to the school’s temporary closing in January 2005 (Baylor, 2010). According to Kelderman (2009), in 2009, the school was “operating with 20 full-time employees and 12 students with less than \$200,000 in cash” (as cited in Baylor, 2010, p. 32).

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools retracted Paul Quinn College’s accreditation on June 26, 2009 due to inadequate financial resources and ineffective academic performance (Appleton, 2009). Student complaints surfaced regarding the unsanitary, hazardous conditions on the school’s campus, such as not having hot water in residence halls (Baylor, 2010). Paul Quinn is associated with the African-Methodist

Church and preachers are the primary leaders of the college (Appleton, 2009). This, combined with the fact that Paul Quinn has received little assistance from the external community makes this institution's alumni giving dangerously low (Baylor, 2010).

Paul Quinn received an injunction that required SACS to temporarily reinstate the school's accreditation; however, little information is known regarding efforts to sustain this reinstatement (Baylor, 2010). As previously discussed in the context of declining enrollments and historic underfunding, issues of accreditation can be at least partly associated with systemic racism because accreditation is a process governed by SACS, a mostly White organization. It often goes unacknowledged that HBCUs have had to consistently do more with less, yet these institutions are held to the same standard as PWIs. This may partly explain the overrepresentation of sanctions against HBCUs. The fact that Paul Quinn is a hybrid HBCU/church-affiliated organization (Whetten, 2006), further complicates this institution's ability to use aspects of organizational identity to resolve accreditation and financial predicaments. The requirements instated by and loyalties to the church-affiliated governing body may supplant the ideational (i.e., shared member's perceptions), HBCU organizational identity claims associated with the internal constituents (students, faculty, and staff), thus making it more difficult to let organizational identity drive decision making processes with regard to funding, fundraising, and fiscal allocations.

In addition to the three previous examples of schools suffering from loss of accreditation, there are several other HBCUs in danger of losing their accreditation (Gasman, 2009). Savannah State University and Albany State University are struggling to

remain open (Baylor, 2010). Furthermore, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools has issued a warning status to Tougaloo College and Florida Memorial University (Jaschik, 2009). Grambling State University, Texas College, Wilberforce University, Fisk University and Central State University are other HBCUs currently facing significant financial problems (Hawkins, 2004) (see Appendix C).

Constituents in the higher education community are asking if HBCUs that have lost accreditation should close (Baylor, 2010). Baylor (2010) argues that it must depend on the individual circumstances of the college. The leaders at HBCUs dealing with accreditation issues are forced to consider a number of resolutions; namely closing altogether, merging with other universities in close proximity, or developing and implementing aggressive fundraising programs to control the mounting debts associated with these institutions. All three resolutions have potentially significant impacts on the organizational identity of these institutions.

Surprisingly, in the case of Barber Scotia College, some higher education scholars suggest that this HBCU close its doors permanently and consider selling its property (Kelderman, 2009). Because Barber Scotia is operating with 12 students and as little as 20 full time employees, some scholars argue that the university is depriving those students of the actual collegiate experience; as college students need multiple interactions with many professors and students to gain a spectrum of perspectives (Baylor, 2010). Furthermore, because this institution does not have accreditation, it cannot provide the financial aid upon which its students depend, which is a direct contradiction to the college's mission (Kelderman, 2009). In the specific case of Barber Scotia, the loss of the

central and enduring identity claims makes it complicated for this institution to continue distinguishing itself as an HBCU. Furthermore, the loss of trust and predictability associated with the institution may permanently damage its reputation (Keldermann, 2009; Lee, 2009). Substantial changes to Barber Scotia's organizational image need to occur if this institution hopes to keep its doors open.

Mergers are most commonly suggested as a means by which to solve accreditation issues at HBCUs. Georgia Senator, Seth Harp, proposes that the two HBCUs merge with the local, PWIs to reduce costs (Baylor, 2010). However, Black educators, politicians, and alumni heavily oppose this proposal (Herrmann, 2009). Baylor (2010) suggests that Morris Brown College merge with Clark Atlanta University and the Atlanta City University as a two-year college that provides clear transition pathways to neighboring Clark Atlanta University, Spelman College, and Morehouse College. Other states are reacting to pressures from the government to merge the HBCUs; as demonstrated by the Governor of Mississippi, Haley Barbour, who proposed to merge Alcorn State and Mississippi Valley State Universities into Jackson State University (Pettus, 2010). Similarly to Georgia, the reaction towards merging the HBCUs in Mississippi has been met with significant opposition from supporters of these institutions (Pettus, 2010).

Even though they are the most common suggested resolution, mergers continue to be criticized by many advocates of HBCUs due to the threat mergers pose on aspects of organizational identity. Whetten (2006) posits that common fears associated with mergers include a loss of voice and loss of organizational identity. Such fears are characterized by

the following complaints: “This organization doesn’t value our minds anymore,” or “We’ve lost our customer focus” (Whetten, 2006, p. 225). The higher level organizational identity claims, such as adopted social forms and organizing logistics, “can be considered structural analogues of inherent individual attributes, such as gender and ethnicity, on the grounds that the perceived switching costs associated with the replacement of core identifying features are so high that the prospect of doing so is, practically speaking, unthinkable” (Whetten, 2006, p. 226). Arguably, proposing HBCUs to merge with neighboring PWIs is similar to Yale University adopting the University of Phoenix model of education, or Notre Dame disapproving their affiliation with the Catholic Church (Whetten, 2006). The vast chaos associated with merging two distinctly different organizations should be critically considered before such suggestions can be taken seriously.

Unwilling to consider either option of closing or merging, other HBCUs are diligently working to secure significant amounts of funding from the government, alumni, and philanthropic organizations (Gasman & Tudico, 2008). Despite the fact that by fall 2008, Morris Brown offered only 48 courses to 60 students, president Stanley J. Pritchett developed a number of aggressive initiatives to stabilize the college. As a result of those initiatives, Morris Brown has since increased its student population to 240 students (Baylor, 2010). Barber Scotia has embarked on a diligent fundraising plan with a goal of raising ten million dollars by June 30, 2011 (Groover, 2009). The school has also considered renting out facilities such as its Olympic-sized pool as a source of income, but the school currently cannot afford its maintenance (Kelderman, 2009). These initiatives



demonstrate that HBCUs are attempting to revamp one aspect of their current reputation as nonaggressive pursuers of donors and fundraising opportunities (Gasman & Anderson-Thompkins, 2003) Thus, HBCUs struggling with accreditation status are employing a number of tactics to address this problem.

A total of nine historically Black colleges and Universities are currently facing serious financial problems: Savannah State University, Albany State University, Tougaloo College, Florida Memorial University, Grambling State University, Texas College, Wilberforce University, Fisk University, and Central State University (Hawkins, 2004). Tantamount to the importance of addressing the accreditation and financial issues associated with these institutions is the development of an effective collaborative relationship with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (Gasman, Baez, Drezner, & Sedgwick, 2007). For example, in 2004, the Southern Education Fund established a three-year HBCU leadership program which provides grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$20,000 for special projects that will help institutions secure their accreditation status (Gasman, et al., 2007). The Southern Education Fund also supplies money to institutional leaders to attend SACS conferences and educational programs with the hope that Black college administrators will establish working relationships with accreditors. Such relationships enable HBCU leaders to “feel comfortable asking questions if an issue arises in the future, as attention to these matters on a regular basis will hopefully alleviate the need for official sanctions” (Gasman et al., 2007, p. 73).

The Association for American University Professors (AAUP) can also play a vital role in working with these institutions to instill academic strategies that align with the

accreditation requirements (Gasman, Baez, Drezner, & Sedgwick, 2007). The AAUP should go a step further by committing time and resources to understanding the problems plaguing these institutions as well as their ample future opportunities (Gasman et al., 2007). Combined with individual efforts put forth by the institution's leaders, developing such relationships will serve as a springboard for these institutions to keep their doors open and operate in an academically and fiscally effective fashion that remains aligned with their unique organizational identity attributes.

### **Leadership**

There is a wealth of information in the literature regarding HBCUs in the area of leadership. Due to the financial, governance, and accreditation issues previously discussed, researchers have also found it important to examine the leadership practices at these institutions (Gordon, 2010). This information highlights the "HBCUs need bold leadership" component of the adapted conceptual framework from Wagener and Smith's (1993) study. Additionally, given the increasing attention HBCUs have received in the media, both positive and negative, it is important to explore and understand the leadership styles and management of these institutions (Nichols, 2004).

As previously mentioned in the section pertaining to issues of governance, presidents at HBCUs undeservingly suffer from an overwhelming stereotype as autocrats who "ride around in limousines and live in mansions while their colleges verge on the brink of fiscal disaster" (Wagener & Smith, 1993, p. 40). Yet such conceptions ignore the fact that an influx of Black presidents at HBCUs did not occur until the 1940's (Anderson, 1988), thus raising the question of whom these stereotypes are built upon.

However, current literature does cite breaks in communication between executive-level leadership and the rest of the campus community as one detrimental factor of leadership at HBCUs (Gasman, Baez, Drezner, & Sedgwick, 2007). Evans, Evans, and Evans (2002) argue that college leaders must remember that they are, most importantly, educators and that they must be willing to communicate effectively with faculty, students, administrative staff, support staff, community organizations, alumni, and other interested parties. Even in the face of the recent barrage of critical and sometimes negative criticism, it is essential for HBCU leaders to be effective communicators with a variety of campus constituents.

#### **Leadership regarding funding opportunities.**

Wormley (2010) suggests a number of steps for HBCUs to take in an effort to address leadership issues within these institutions. The first suggestion encompasses the prominent issue of board members, and Wormley (2010) states that these members should be appointed based on their affluence and influence. Board members have a primary responsibility to provide for the long-term financial well-being of the institution. Wormley (2010) asserts that a requirement of board membership should continue to be “to give, get or get off” (p. 20). Additionally, it is suggested that boards select presidents of HBCUs with high intellectual and emotional intelligence. There is a surplus of institutional leaders who are intelligent but unable to relate to their constituencies and/or stakeholders; and on the flip side, there are also leaders who have effective interpersonal skills yet lack the intellectual ability to deal with the challenges of leading a complex institution. Such skills are imperative in constructing an effective organizational image to

be communicated to external stakeholders (Wormley, 2010). Additionally, presidential leadership that strengthens and further distinguishes the central and enduring characteristics associated with an HBCU will eventually lead to an attractive reputation associated with the institution, further resulting in increased identification with internal and external members of the institution (Whetten & Mackey, 2002).

It is therefore imperative that leaders of HBCUs do more than climb the faculty ranks or participate in a short-term management development program. Finally, Wormley (2010) suggests that smart presidents of HBCUs will surround themselves with intelligent, trustworthy, dedicated professionals. Presidents should work hard to recruit and retain such individuals and fairly compensate them for their work, rather than allowing these individuals to be overworked and underpaid. While these suggestions are indeed bold, they are also difficult to implement in a time when financial crises plague so many HBCUs (Gasman, 2009).

Funding continually resurfaces as the most significant issue of leadership at HBCUs. Fields (2001) interviewed presidents who were stepping down from their posts as presidents or chancellors to pursue retirement or other opportunities. They were asked what the next generation of college or university leaders should do to continue to provide educational opportunities for African Americans and all students (Fields, 2001). One theme that surfaced in all six interviews involved some notion of funding. It is perhaps best captured in the response provided by Dr. Leonard Dawson, former President of Voorhees College: “The overriding imperative for presidents of historically Black colleges and universities to be establishing a sound and reliable funding base for the

programs and services that the institution provides for their students” (Fields, 2001, p. 40). Another significant theme that emerged from this was technology. HBCUs must stop being fearful of technology and begin to understand the benefits associated with technology. Access to technology can no longer be limited to business schools, but must be offered across all curricula (Fields, 2001).

### **Leadership regarding political power.**

Evans, Evans, and Evans (2002) argue that political power has always been an important and necessary advantage to higher education institutions. For example, alumni from institutions such as Harvard, Yale, and John Hopkins use the political system to assist the growth of their institutions (Nichols, 2004). Historically Black Colleges and Universities now have graduates in the state legislator and Congress who can influence laws benefiting HBCUs. For example, Florida A&M University used political relations to reestablish its law school which had been transferred to Florida State University in 1968 (Nichols, 2004). Furthermore, with President Obama’s declaration to invest \$850 million in HBCUs over the next decade, the leaders of these institutions have even more political capital now than possibly ever before (Riley, 2010). As a result of this declaration, presidents and other leaders of HBCUs are invited by the White House, Congress, National Science Institute, and other politically-oriented organizations to present their needs (Nichols, 2004). The development, maintenance, and continued use of political power cannot be underestimated by those who lead these institutions in the development of HBCUs as universities.

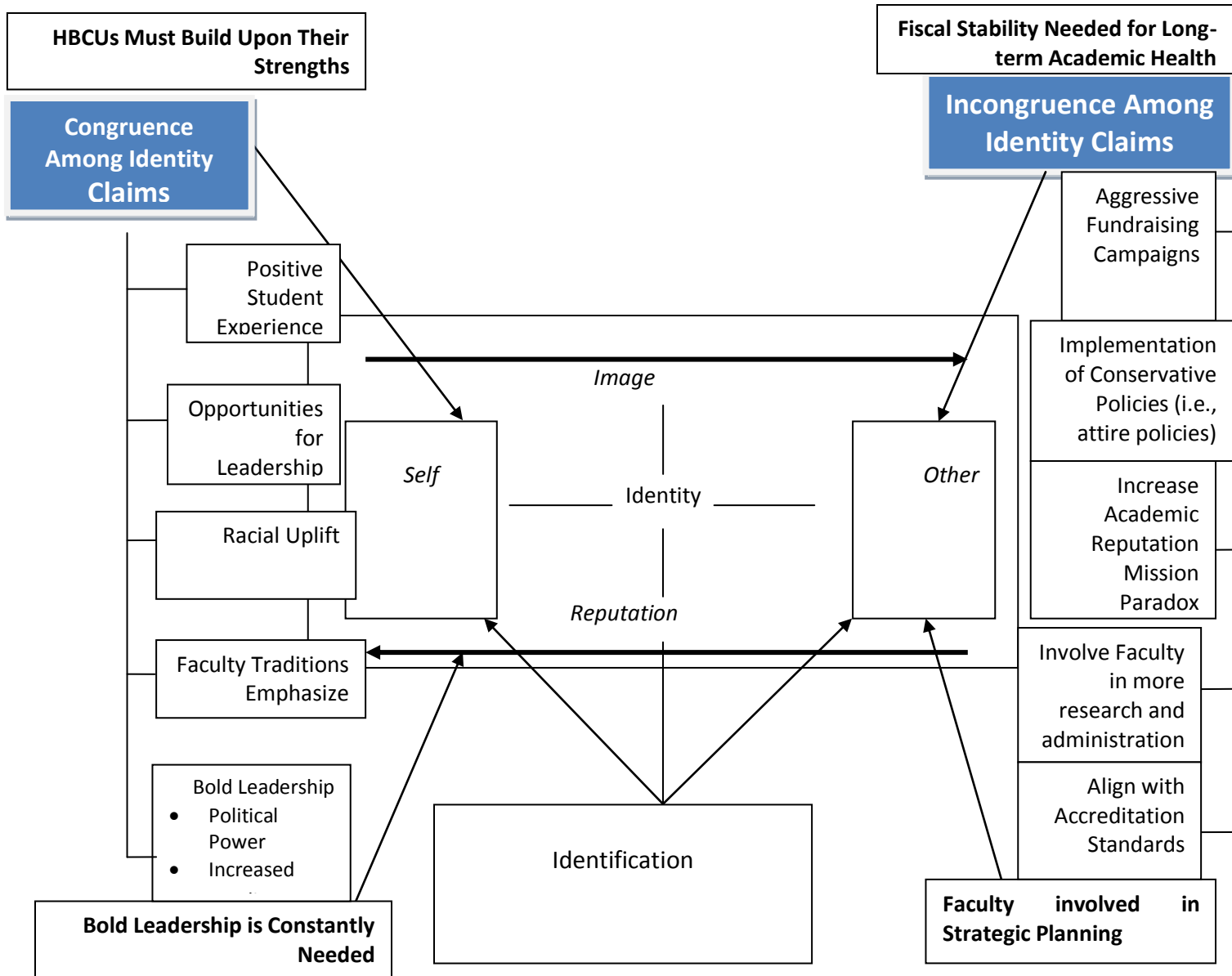
Current and future leaders of Black colleges must take advantage of every opportunity to ensure that HBCUs not only survive, but prosper (Mbajekwe, 2005). Presidents of HBCUs have to adjust their leadership styles to deal with the changing environment in which they exist (Nichols, 2004). Tasks of effective and successful leaders of colleges and universities include: (a) envisioning goals, (b) motivating and affirming values among constituents, and (c) fostering unity within the campus and surrounding community. All three of these tactics are also conducive to sharpening the unique organizational identity claims associated with HBCUs. Current and future Black college leaders should be incorporating these functions into current leadership styles in an effort to ensure success at these institutions (Nichols, 2004).

### **Model of Literature Review Findings and Organizational Identity**

In an effort to visually situate the findings of the literature review within the two conceptual frameworks of organizational identity and the Wagener and Smith (1993) case study, I constructed a model that represents a “cause and effect” relationship between the findings and the conceptual frameworks. Outlined by Wagener and Smith’s (1993) four themes derived from their case study, this model demonstrates how the findings of the literature review are contextualized within an organizational identity framework. The findings that are in congruence with identity claims of HBCUs are listed on the left side of the model and the arrows pointing to the “Self” box indicate that such topics result in the distinguishing of HBCUs as unique institutions as compared to other organizations. Conversely, the findings listed on the right side of this model are found to be incongruent with HBCU identity claims and are thus framed by arrows pointing to the “Other” box,

suggesting that these topics may cause HBCUs to lose the characteristics that differentiate them from other institutions.

Finally, the “Identification” box illustrates the cause and effect relationship of image, reputation and identification (Whetten and Mackey, 2002); with one arrow pointing to the “Self” box when commitments are in congruence with identity claims and the other arrow pointing to the “Other” box when commitments are incongruent with identity claims. Put simply, when image, reputation, and commitments are congruent with identity claims, then individuals will be more likely to identify with the organization, as opposed to when incongruence occurs and individuals choose to identify with other institutions. While the model depicted below is largely the result of the literature review, it will be used as a guiding framework for the proposed investigation discussed in Chapter 4, and will likely be updated and modified throughout the research process.





## **Conclusion**

Through the conceptual lens of organizational identity, I have provided a discussion and analysis of a significant amount of information pertaining to historically Black colleges and universities. Throughout the literature, the presence race is a clear factor in the history, evolution, and contemporary standing of these institutions, especially in issues of finance, governance, and accreditation. Being a Black college can both limit access to certain resources while increasing access to other means of resources (Minor, 2004). Also present are the four main findings from the Wagener and Smith (1993) study including: (1) HBCUs must build upon strengths; (2) HBCUs need bold leadership; (3) fiscal stability is highly needed and (4) faculty must be involved in strategic planning. The model on the previous page demonstrates how these four themes are woven throughout the literature.

The organizational identity is evident in the strengths, areas for improvement, and potential problems in these institutions. The ideational component of organizational identity is manifested in member's shared perceptions in regards to the question, "Who are we as an organization?" (Whetten, 2006). Ideationally, organizational identity is weaved throughout the literature in relation to the changing, fluid nature of society and how HBCUs are surviving in the 21<sup>st</sup> century while remaining in line with the central and enduring identity claims that have laid the foundation for these institutions.

The definitional component of organizational identity is constantly in flux with regards to HBCUs, because as the ideational component adjusts to 21<sup>st</sup> century needs, the central and enduring identity claims may change in the process. Whetten (2006) clarifies

the definitional component of organizational identity as the central and enduring features of an organization. For example, if HBCUs begin serving a majority of non-Black students, then the historical identity claim of serving mostly African American students will need to be revised, thus changing the definitional aspect of their organizational identity. The definitional component of organizational identity for HBCUs considering a merger with other nearby institutions is considerably at stake during such processes

Finally, the phenomenological component of organizational identity acknowledges that identity-related discourse most frequently surfaces when profound circumstances \ that significantly impact or threaten an organization's survival occur. The financial crises in the nation and within higher education specifically have placed HBCUs in a position to be critically examined, and have brought into question the need for their existence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Riley, 2010). From a phenomenological standpoint, it is common for scholars to examine organizational identity claims of HBCUs in the current context, but Whetten (2006) stresses the importance of considering organizational identity from a historical-to-present perspective, as the historical piece often goes unexamined. By failing to address the entire organizational identity since an organization's inception results in a less than comprehensive understanding of identity claims and related concepts such as image, reputation, culture, and identification. This is why I have continually referred back to the original identity claims these institutions developed as a result of the segregated, racist society in which HBCUs were created.

The literature provides ample information regarding HBCUs, and the current situations faced by these institutions in light of the financial crises. In the introduction of this literature review, it was stated that despite having educated 70% of all degree-holding African Americans in the United States, HBCUs must constantly justify their worth and relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While this is upsetting, there are a number of research studies that point to evidence showing these institutions as worthy of not only more research, but also as credible considerations for an enriching academic and personal collegiate experience. It is therefore imperative that research continue to address the successful operations employed by these institutions. This argument serves as the undergirding rationale for my organizational identity case study research at Philander Smith College, which is discussed in Chapter 4.

## **Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Design**

### **Introduction**

While a plethora of studies (Anderson, 1988; Drewry & Doermann, 2001; Fields, 2001; Gary, 2008; Gasman & Anderson-Thompkins, 2003; Gasman & Tudico, 2008; Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009; Jenkins, 1991; Jewell, 2002; Minor, 2004; Minor, 2008; Patton, 2011; Roebuck & Murty, 1993; Wennersten, 1991) have been conducted with regard to HBCUs and their historical evolution, students' experiences, and academic culture, there is not current research that addresses the ways in which the difficult financial and accreditation (among other) issues are effectively handled by these institutions. The proposed research study will examine how Philander Smith College has used a number of resources and strategies to remain a credible institution of choice in the community while also reversing a severe financial deficit. Specifically, aspects of the institution's organizational identity will be examined in an effort to illuminate best practices of leadership and financial management strategies. Qualitative research methods will be used in an effort to understand the "what" and "how" behind the strategies embraced by this institution to stay afloat of the many negative criticisms HBCUs are receiving in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a result of declining enrollments, low endowments, and high revocation of accreditation (Gasman, 2009). Specifically, case study methodology

(Yin, 2009) is used to flesh out the nuances of this institution and the leadership that has enabled the school to continue thriving during a time often deemed as a financial crisis for all higher education institutions, and for historically Black colleges and universities especially (Galuszka, 2010).

This chapter will include a discussion regarding the rationale for the qualitative research methods used in addition to a description of the main components of case study methodology. Further discussion will include how case study methodology will be designed for this specific research, and the requirements for data collection and analysis. The development and use of research tools are explained in an effort to specifically capture how I will use a variety of methods to obtain a robust collection of data and information in relation to this research. The research questions guiding the study are as follows:

1. What role, if any, has the organizational identity of Philander Smith College played in the institutional ability to continue successfully operating in the context of what has been deemed a financial crisis?
  - a. How does the campus community (i.e., students, faculty, administrators and alumni) define the institution's organizational identity?
  - b. What aspects of Philander Smith College's organizational identity were essential in the institution's ability to reverse the campus deficit in 2004, while also effectively staving off potential detrimental effects stemming from the current economic downturn?

- c. What tactics has the leadership (i.e., administration and faculty) employed to effectively handle the economic crisis upon Philander Smith College from the late 1990s through the early 2000s?
  - i. How did these tactics align with or disassociate from Philander Smith's organizational identity?
  - ii. How did these tactics enhance or reduce Philander Smith's organizational identity?

### **Rationale for Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research can be described as an “umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible” (Merriam, 1998, p. 5). Furthermore, qualitative inquiry seeks to explore, describe, and explain phenomena broadly, which is the purpose of this research (Patton, 2002). The primary research question in this study seeks to investigate how the organizational identity of Philander Smith College allows the school to continue surviving and thriving in a time of national and higher education economic downturns. Qualitative research (and case study methodology specifically), contains the methods to effectively address the specifics and generalities of this question. Yin (2003) asserts that qualitative and case study research is best suited for studies that ask “how” and “why” questions. Qualitative methods focus on the kind of evidence that enable the researcher to understand the *meaning of*, in addition to *what* is going on (Gillham, 2000). Researchers who conduct qualitative studies seek to “discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews

of the people involved” (Merriam, 1998, p. 11). It is thus evident that, due to the nature of my research questions, qualitative research is best suited for this proposed study.

Additionally, Crabtree and Miller (1992) assert that “Qualitative description, using qualitative methods, explores the meanings, variations, and perceptual experiences of phenomena” (p. 6). Teasing out these nuances of experience allows qualitative research to effectively align with a constructivist philosophy which argues that truth is constructed; therefore multiple realities are in existence (Crotty, 1998; Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research is exploratory, emerging, and inductive, as it begins with questions, rather than a hypothesis (Borg & Gall, 1992). Further illustrating this point, qualitative researchers collect and analyze data inductively and intuitively in an effort to understand the complexities of a phenomenon from the research participants’ perspective (Creswell, 2005). Case study methodology and qualitative research methods highly complement one another due to the congruence of philosophical ideologies shared between the two.

### **Case Study Methodology**

In its most basic definition, case study research involves the “study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a context)” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). While Stake (2005) asserts that case study research is not a methodology, but rather a selection of what will be studied, other scholars (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003) define it as a method of inquiry or a comprehensive research strategy. I embrace the latter definition of case study methodology, as a variety of data collection methods (i.e., interviews, observations, focus

groups, etc.) will be conducted in an effort to gather an extensive, rich understanding of the phenomena associated with Philander Smith College and its leadership.

**Procedures for conducting a case study.**

Several scholars (Yin, 2003; Stake, 1995) have outlined procedural steps for researchers to conduct in case study inquiry. Engaging in these consecutive procedures will ensure that the case study is scientifically rigorous, systematic, and accurately interpretive of the data collected (Creswell, 2005). The following steps that have been developed by Creswell (2007) will be taken by the investigator to ensure the aforementioned characteristics are entrenched in this research:

1. Determine whether a case study approach is appropriate to the research problem. Creswell (2007) argues that a case study is appropriate if the researcher has clearly defined cases with boundaries and wishes to present a deep understanding of the case.
2. Researchers should next identify their case or cases. It is recommended that researchers first identify what kind of case study (i.e., intrinsic, instrumental, single, or collective). Creswell (2005) stresses the importance and usefulness of purposeful sampling in case study research. Patton (2002) defines purposeful sampling as a process undertaken by a researcher to identify a case or cases that are information-rich and will ultimately best serve to answer the proposed research questions.



3. Data collection is extensive in case study research, as information is typically collected in a variety of methods including “observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials” (Creswell, 2007, p. 75).
4. Data analysis in single case studies can be holistic or embedded in nature (Creswell, 2007). Holistic analysis entails looking at information regarding the entire case, whereas embedded analysis involves specific information from one an aspect of the case (Yin, 2003).
5. Finally, the last interpretive stage of case study research is one which the researcher reports the meaning and implications of the case. Creswell (2007) posits that this phase “constitutes the lessons learned from the case” (p. 75).

The following sections of this chapter will provide discussion and explanation of the general use of case study research, as it relates to the five procedures mentioned above in addition to demonstrating why the case study method is most appropriate for the proposed research questions. Additionally, specific procedures for data collection methods associated with case study research will be outlined.

### **Case study types.**

The diverse types of qualitative case studies are differentiated by the size of the study and the intent of the analysis (Creswell, 2007). For example, a case can involve the study of one individual, a group, program, or activity. Regarding intent of case study analysis, there are three different types: instrumental, intrinsic, and collective case studies (Creswell, 2007). A single instrumental case study is one in which the researcher centers on an issue or concern, and then selects one bounded case to exemplify the issue (Stake,

2005). Intrinsic case studies tend to focus on the case itself (an institution, program, or activity) because the case represents an unusual or unique situation, while collective case studies select multiple cases to focus on an issue or concern (Yin, 2003). However, in order to remain distinct from other types of qualitative research (as intrinsic cases are similar to narratives), all three types must adhere to the case study analytic procedures of a “detailed description of the case, set within its context or surroundings” (Creswell, 2007, p.74).

### **Case study designs.**

There are three types of case study designs, including exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive (Yin, 2009). Exploratory designs typically “define research questions of subsequent study and/or determine the feasibility of research procedures” (Yin, 2009, p. 33). Exploratory designs are useful when researchers are still seeking to understand what specifically needs to be studied in order to understand a phenomenon associated with a case. Explanatory designs are characterized by a cause-and-effect relationship that results from the research conducted (Creswell, 2007). Research seeking reasons, processes, and implemented procedures explaining or creating a certain phenomenon typically use explanatory designs. Lastly, descriptive designs “attempt to present a complete description of a phenomenon within its context (Yin, 2009, p. 33). Descriptive designs are holistic in nature, as these case studies conduct analysis of the entire case, rather than focusing one or two themes emerging from the data.

### **Embedded versus holistic design.**

Case studies may involve more than one unit of analysis (Yin, 2009). For example, a case study may investigate an organization, but the analysis might include outcomes regarding the staff employed by the organization. Such designs are *embedded* in nature, because subunits (i.e., staff) are being examined in addition to the overarching unit (the organization) (Yin, 2009). Conversely, case studies only looking at the global nature of an organization are described as *holistic* designs. Case studies embracing a holistic design may be a result of no logical subunits being readily identified or “when the relevant theory underlying the case is itself of a holistic nature” (Yin, 2009, p. 50).

### **Data Collection**

Yin (2009) articulates the notion that case study evidence is derived from six different methods: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts. However, researchers are not required to use all six methods while conducting a case study, but rather should select those methods best suited for the nature of the project (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). It is also suggested that the various methods are highly complementary to one another and “a good case study will therefore use many as possible” (Yin, 2009, p. 101). This section will outline the data collection methods that will be used for this study, which include documentation, archival records, interviews, focus groups, direct observation, and participant-observation. A discussion of the strengths and limitations of each method will be discussed and can also be viewed in appendix F.

### **Documentation.**

It is argued that documentation is highly relevant to nearly all case studies (Yin, 2009). Document information can take many different forms, including but not limited to: letters, agendas, announcements, administrative documents (i.e., progress reports, proposals, and other internal records), and journalistic articles in newspapers and/or magazines (Gillham, 2000). Yin (2009) argues that documents are useful despite the possibility of inaccuracy and bias, which present two limitations associated with this method. The researcher must be cautious not to accept documents as truthful recordings of events that take place. However reviewing relevant documents is useful as a means of corroboration and augmentation to evidence from other sources (Yin, 2009).

### **Archival records.**

Archival information is typically characterized as organizational records – such as budget or personnel records (Yin, 2009). This information will also be useful in unearthing the details of where funds were allocated before, during, and after the financial crisis experienced by Philander Smith College. Additionally, reviewing any changes in organizational structure from a personnel standpoint may illuminate ways in which the institution sought to more effectively function. Archival records may also include “survey data, such as data previously collected about a site’s employees, residents or participants” and such records can provide extensive description of demographics associated with the organization (Yin, 2009, p. 105). Similarly to documentation, archival records may contain flaws or inaccurate information. Yin (2009) asserts that typical archival records are produced for a certain purpose and a specific audience, and

acknowledging such conditions is imperative for the accurate and truthful use of the records. If used cautiously and correctly, the information retrieved from these documents can be highly influential to case study research (Yin, 2009).

### **Focus groups.**

Although focus groups are not mentioned in Yin's (2003) six methods of data collection for case studies, they are highly regarded as a method of garnering information that results in both a variety of perspectives and increase in confidence to whatever patterns emerge from a study (Patton, 2002). Focus groups are defined as an interview with six to ten people with similar backgrounds who participate in the interview for one to two hours (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007). This technique was developed in acknowledgment of the fact that many decisions are made in a "social context, often growing out of discussions with other people" (Patton, 2002, p. 385). Furthermore, interviewing groups, as opposed to individuals, may be advantageous, as Morgan (1986) argues that focus groups are an effective method for data collection since personal inhibitions and/or fears can be released through validation from others in a group setting. The topic of financial stress is sensitive in nature, and therefore may be more appropriately discussed in group settings where one individual does feel singled out in his or her feelings, perceptions, and attitudes toward this topic. A combination of focus groups and individual interviews will allow for variation of individual preferences when speaking about a topic that may induce stress and anxiety.

Patton (2002) suggests that to most effectively implement focus groups, the researcher should develop a prepared guide with questions in addition to an introductory

script. The script will remind the researcher to explicitly state her role as more of a listener, rather than a discussant during the focus group. To increase the level of conversational depth throughout a focus group, Stewart, Shamdasani, and Rook (2007) suggest asking a restricted amount of questions. One of the limitations associated with focus groups is largely due to the researcher posing several questions which consequently leads to breadth, rather than depth in the resulting discussion. It is therefore advisable for researchers to limit the number of questions per focus group to 10 to 12 (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007) while also allowing for flexibility to follow where the discussion leads so long as it remains pertinent to the topic of interest.

### **Interviews.**

Interviews are one of the most significant sources of case study information (Merriam, 1998). Rubin and Rubin (2005) state that case study interviews are more likely to be conducted in guided conversations rather than structured queries. Researchers conducting case studies must remember two things throughout the interview process: (a) to follow the line of inquiry developed in the case study protocol, and (b) ask conversational questions in an unbiased manner (Yin, 2009). Therefore, case study interviews require the research to both satisfy the needs of the interview protocol while also executing friendly and nonthreatening questions in guided conversational interviews (Yin, 2003). A guided interview approach is one in which a list of questions is prepared to ensure that basic principles of inquiry are asked of each interviewee (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, the interview guide provides topics that the interviewer is free to explore and probe in an effort to gain insight into that particular subject (Patton, 2002).

Yin (2009) describes two kinds of case study interviews: in-depth and focused. In-depth interviews are those in which respondents are asked about “the facts of a matter as well as their opinions about events” (p. 107). Opinions, attitudes, and judgments of interviewees may serve as the basis for further inquiry (Yin, 2009). Focused interviews are those in which a person is interviewed for a period of time (i.e., an hour) and are more likely to follow a list of questions developed from the case study protocol (Yin, 2009). The purpose of a focused interview is to confirm certain facts or patterns that may have been established throughout the study.

Use of guided, in-depth, and focused interviews does contain some limitations. There is the possibility of respondents answering questions in a manner that seems to satisfy the researcher; or in other words, the interviewee may simply say what he or she thinks the researcher wants to hear, rather than provide honest answers (Patton, 2002). Exercising the discipline to maintain a neutral demeanor is essential in garnering truthful responses from interviewees (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In addition to dishonesty, interviewees’ responses may be plagued by bias, poor recall, and inaccurate articulation. Yin (2009) asserts that a reasonable way to address such issues is to substantiate interview data with information from other sources.

### **Direct observation.**

Due to the notion that a case study should take place in the natural setting of the “case,” there is ample opportunity to for direct observations (Yin, 2009). This source of evidence can involve observing behaviors or events, including meetings, classrooms, or activities in a specific setting, such as a school cafeteria (Patton, 2002). Less formal

observations are those that may occur simultaneously with other data collection methods, such as interviews (Yin, 2009). For example, observing the condition and location of buildings and work spaces may indicate something about the climate or status of an organization (Yin, 2009). Such observations are valuable to case study research and should be captured by an observational instrument developed as part of the case study protocol (Yin, 2003). However, in reporting these observations, researchers must be mindful of the limitations associated with this data collection procedure. Events such as meetings and class lectures may proceed differently than normal due to my presence. Furthermore, observations will be recorded and interpreted through my subjective lens, which is unique to my personal beliefs and values. Acknowledging such issues in the reporting of observational data is essential to create and maintain a sense of credibility in the final case study report.

### **Participant observation.**

Participate observation is a unique form of observation during which the researcher is not a passive observer, but actually participates in the events being studied (Patton, 2002). Although not without limitations, participant observation may be one of the strongest ways to construct a contextual analysis of Philander Smith College, as going to campus programs will provide insight into the institution from multiple contexts (i.e., sport competition or alumni event) and a variety of perspectives (i.e., students, faculty, staff, and alumni).

There are a number of pitfalls to avoid with participant observation, and perhaps the most important is the potential biases that may be produced (Yin, 2009). It is argued



that participant-observers are “likely to follow a commonly known phenomenon and become a supporter of the group or organization being studied, if such a support did not already exist” (Yin, 2009, p. 113). It is thus important that the opportunities and disadvantages of participant observation are carefully considered, because the credibility of an entire case study project may be threatened as a result of utilizing this method of data collection. As previously mentioned, one way to address the limitations of participant observation is to corroborate findings garnered from this data collection method with others, such as interviews and focus groups (Yin, 2009). Additionally, making a concerted effort to maintain an objective perspective lends well to a researcher’s ability to observe events that are both expected and unanticipated (Creswell, 2007).

### **Principles of Data Collection**

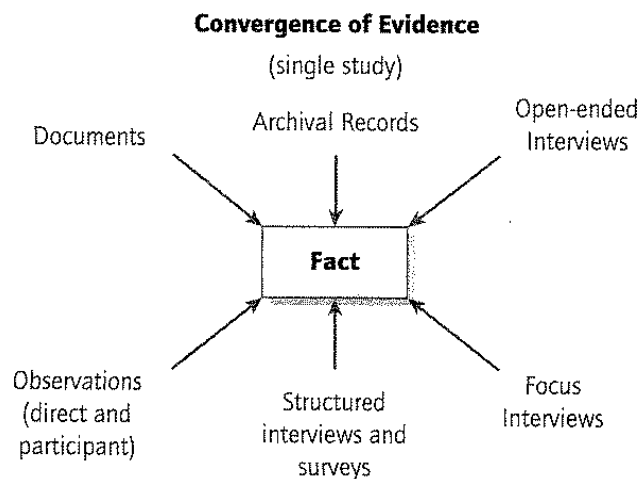
The following section outlines three essential principles related to data collection in case study research. Yin (2009) argues that maximal benefits of data collection methods used can be retrieved through adherence to the following three principles: (a) use multiple sources of evidence, (b) create a case study database, and (c) maintain a chain of evidence.

#### **Multiple sources of evidence.**

The extent to which a case study is considered to be rigorous, comprehensive, and accurate rests on the variety and number of sources of evidence used to make the final report (Yin, 2006). Triangulation is considered one of the most important concepts in regards to this principle of using multiple sources of evidence and the credibility of case

study research findings. Creswell (2007) states that triangulation is a type of validity for qualitative research, as it allows for cross-checking across different data sources. For example, a finding is bound to have more credibility if it is validated across interviews, focus groups, observation, and document review. The following depiction as cited in Yin (2009) illustrates the concept of triangulation in case study research:

#### COLLECTING CASE STUDY EVIDENCE



#### **Create a case study database.**

Since it is recommended that case study researchers use multiple sources of information, inevitably a large amount of data will be collected and later analyzed. To make sure the plethora of data stays organized, it is essential to construct a detailed, systematic database that efficiently contains all of the information that is continually collected throughout case study research. The database should include the following sections and/or files: (a) case study notes, (b) case study documents, and (c) narratives.

### **Case study notes.**

The essential characteristics of case study notes “are that they are organized, categorized, complete, and available for later access” (Yin, 2009, p. 120). These notes will materialize from interviews, observation, document analysis, and other forms of data collection methods throughout the case study, particularly in the absence of technology or in a situation where technology fails to work properly. The notes should be categorized according to the major subjects outlined by the case study protocol and the devised system should be usable by an outside party. The discipline to ensure note taking that is as accurate as possible is essential for case studies because of the wealth of data collection methods and subsequent information gathered associated with this research.

### **Case study documents.**

The abundance of articles, newspaper clippings, and archival records can become overwhelming to maintain in an organized manner. Yin (2009) suggests keeping an annotated bibliography of such documents in an effort to easily store and retrieve information from them as needed. It is also important to prioritize the documents, as they will vary in levels of saliency to the case study. Establishing primary and secondary files will help to distinguish the copious documents, while also ensuring organization and efficiency for later usage, if needed (Yin, 2009).

### **Narratives.**

Yin (2009) argues that “the narrative reflects a special practice that should be used more frequently: to have case study investigators compose open-ended answers to the questions in the case study protocol” (p. 121). This practice represents the

researcher's attempt to integrate the compiled evidence and converge the data into an interpretation in the form of a narrative. This process begins during the data analysis stage, and is "analogous to that of a comprehensive "take-home" exam, used in academic courses" (Yin, 2009, p. 121). The goal of this procedure is to cite the relevant sources of information – be it from interviews, focus groups, documents, or archival evidence – in articulating an answer or finding in direct relation to the research questions. An additional purpose of creating narratives in case study research is to demonstrate the triangulation between specific pieces of documented evidence and presented findings in the final case study report.

**Maintain a chain of evidence.**

To increase the reliability, or the extent to which a case study can be replicated by a different researcher (Gillham, 2000), it is encouraged that case study researchers maintain a chain of evidence. The purpose of this principle is to allow an external observer to easily follow the trail of derived evidence to the ultimate case study conclusions (Yin, 2009). Furthermore, it should be fairly simple for an external observer (i.e., someone reading the case study) to trace the consequential steps in either direction, from conclusions back to initial research questions, or from questions to conclusions (Yin, 2009). The process of conducting a case study should be specific enough that two things are accomplished: (1) the evidence presented in the final case study report is clearly the same evidence that was gathered during the process of data collection, and (2) no original evidence is lost or fails to receive proper consideration through bias or carelessness (Yin, 2009). Many procedures associated with maintaining a chain of

evidence are directly related to the case study database, and how the database should effectively outline procedures, circumstances, and analyses back to the original case study protocol. This process is demonstrated by a depiction developed by Yin (2009) (see appendix C).

Thus far I have outlined and discussed the general components of case study research, including the multiple types, designs, units of analysis, and data collection methods. The next section details each of these components as they relate to my specific case study of Philander Smith College.

### **Application of Case Study Research to Proposed Study of Philander Smith College**

The type of case study selected for my research is intrinsic; due to the unique characteristics associated with Philander Smith College, I have chosen to solely study this institution as it has continuously been singled out as an HBCU that is managing to effectively remain financially and academically strong in the context of an economic downturn (Masterson, 2010). Yin (2006) further asserts that intrinsic case studies allow the researcher to learn more about a particular individual and/or organization, and to also “examine in depth the contexts, processes, and interactions” that shape the unique characteristics of the phenomenon being studied (p. 34). Furthermore, the descriptive design is most relevant and ultimately the selected design for my research study, as I will construct a thorough explanation of the characteristics associated with Philander Smith College that make this institution stand out so uniquely as compared to other similar schools.

Because I will be studying Philander Smith College as an organization, in addition to the subunits of students, alumni, faculty, and staff associated with the institution, this case study will take the form of an embedded design. Yin (2009) states that embedded case studies are appropriate when the investigator seeks to explore specific phenomena that provide additional insight into the major processes associated with an organization. Interviewing different constituents of Philander Smith College will bolster my understanding of the institution as a comprehensive organization. However, taking caution to balance the attention given to the subunits and the organization is critical, as a common mistake in embedded case studies is failing to return to the larger unit of analysis (Yin, 2009). It is thus essential to ask questions of the subunits that directly relate back to the functionality of Philander Smith College as an institution.

**Rationale for single case study and purposeful sampling.**

The proposed research is therefore characterized as an intrinsic, descriptive, single case study that is embedded in nature and employs the use of purposeful sampling (Yin, 2006). Although case study experts (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2005) espouse the value in conducting multiple case studies for variation in perspectives on the problem, process, or event, there are also scholars (Patton, 2002) who provide extensive rationale for single case studies. The sense and power of purposefully selecting a single case study lie in the ability of the researcher to utilize an information-rich case for in-depth study. Furthermore, studying single, unusual cases “yields insights and deep understanding” to the underlying processes informing the phenomena being studied (Patton, 2002, p. 230).

Due to the unique standing of Philander Smith College, an institution that almost closed its doors in 2004 due to a dire financial situation, it is purposefully selected as an unusual case that will illuminate the strategies, processes, and leadership tactics attributable to the institution's current standing as a distinguished, financially stable HBCU. Philander Smith was specifically selected for this case study because it met the following criteria: (a) the institution must be a historically Black college or university, (b) the institution recently (within five years) suffered an extreme financial burden (i.e., budget cuts, declining enrollment), (c) the institution maintained the same presidential leadership throughout the financial crisis, and (d) the institution is referenced in the literature as one that is effectively handling the aforementioned financial burdens (Gasman, 2007; Masterson, 2010).

While Philander Smith is not unusual in that it has experienced severe financial burdens within the last five years, it is unique in the way the leadership associated with the institution chose to tackle this problem, which resulted in lower student enrollments and higher quality of education and resources. Other HBCUs, namely Spelman College, Howard University, and Morehouse College, have also taken steps to stay abreast of the financial issues plaguing higher education, but those steps have centered on increases in enrollment and budget cuts (Gasman, 2007). This case study seeks to understand how Philander Smith used aspects of its organizational identity to spring back from near closure by decreasing student enrollment. This institution is atypical in a variety of ways (i.e., lowering student enrollments to address the dearth of fiscal resources), and

understanding the complexity of such strategies may be useful to leaders at other HBCUs trying to manage difficult financial situations.

### **Access to Philander Smith College.**

Gaining entry into an organization or institution to conduct case study research is one of the first difficulties encountered by investigators (Yin, 2009). To mitigate this possible problem, I have initiated contact with the institution's president, informing him of my research ideas. I have also inquired as to what the Philander Smith College institutional review board (IRB) process entails and subsequently garnered information about how to best navigate those procedures. Developing relationships with the president of Philander Smith College, in addition to maintaining communication with this institution's IRB will serve to make the transition of gaining access to the college a collaborative, efficient process.

### **Setting.**

Philander Smith College is nestled across 25 acres of land in the heart of downtown Little Rock, Arkansas. This institution is a private, residential, co-educational, four-year undergraduate liberal arts college affiliated with the United Methodist church and a founding member of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). Philander is classified as a baccalaureate (liberal arts) college by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, Association for Collegiate and Business Schools and Programs, and the Council on Social Work Education. Currently four degrees are offered from this institution: the



Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Business Administration, and the Bachelor of Social Work. The website states that the college “has the ability to nurture students who have been overlooked by other colleges. Many of our students come from low-income families and it is not uncommon that they are the first in their family to attend college. Some may also enter the college as average high school students, but emerge later with the capacity and motivation to pursue graduate and professional degrees and excel in their fields” (<http://www.philander.edu/about/>). Currently, approximately 700 undergraduate students attend Philander Smith College.

According to the institution’s website, Philander Smith College was founded in 1877, as the result of the first attempt west of the Mississippi River to make education available to former African American slaves. The institution’s initial name was Walden Seminary, in honor of Dr. J.M. Walden, one of the originators and the first corresponding secretary of the Freedmen’s Aid Society.

In 1882, Dr. G.W. Gray, President of Little Rock University, the institution for the Arkansas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, met Mrs. Adeline Smith, widow of Mr. Philander Smith of Oak Park, Ill., while soliciting funds. The late Philander Smith was a generous donor to Asiatic Missions and had developed an interest in the work of the church in the South. In making her gift to Dr. Gray, Mrs. Smith provided \$10,500 to Walden Seminary. The trustees welcomed the gift and gave it special recognition by changing the name of the Walden Seminary to Philander Smith College. A new site for the school had already been purchased close to the downtown

area of Little Rock. The gift made by Mrs. Smith was a significant contribution contributing to the construction of Budlong Hall, the first brick building on the new site.

Philander Smith College was chartered as a four-year college on March 3, 1883, and the first baccalaureate degree was awarded in 1888. The first president, the Reverend Thomas Mason, resigned in 1896. He was succeeded by a member of the faculty of the college, the Rev. James Monroe Cox, professor of ancient languages. Dr. Cox retired from the presidency of the college in 1924, and was succeeded by the Rev. George Collins Taylor, a graduate of the college. Dr. Taylor served as president from 1924 to 1936. A series of other presidents served terms ranging from five to ten years during which the school worked to improve its programs and academic reputation, while also increasing student enrollment.

In October 2004, the Board announced the selection of Dr. Walter M. Kimbrough as the 12th president and he took office on Dec. 13, 2004. At the age of 37 at the time, he was recognized as one of the first presidents from the hip-hop generation (Masterson, 2010). He is known for his youthful, yet assertive nature and his ability to lead the campus through a reversal of a major campus budget deficit while also preserving the institutional identity as an HBCU. Masterson (2010) states that a series of hands on, personalized marketing strategies conducted by Dr. Kimbrough has “helped attract a stronger student body, raised retention and graduation rates, and created a buzz about the 668-student campus that it hadn't had in years” (p. A1). Last year, 103 students graduated, which is 30 more than the previous year in 2009. Researching the strategies undertaken by President Kimbrough, as well as other constituents (students, faculty,

alumni, and staff) associated with Philander Smith will elucidate the role of organizational identity and leadership/management tactics attributive to this school's continuing successful operation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Data Collection Procedures to be utilized for Proposed Study**

The following data collection methods will be used in this case study: (a) documentation, (b) archival records, (c) focus groups, (d) interviews, (e) direct observation, and (f) participant-observation. The next section provides detailed description of how each of these methods will be used in my proposed case study. I will also demonstrate how each data collection procedure will contribute essential information to this dissertation research. A snapshot of each collection method and how it will contribute to the proposed study is captured in the table below.

<b>Data Collection Strategy</b>	<b>Research Question Addressed</b>	<b>Population/Setting/Documents</b>	<b>Sampling Plan</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Protocol</b>
<b>Documentation Review</b>	What tactics are employed to effectively handle the economic crisis upon Philander Smith College from the late 1990s through the early 2000s?	Newspaper articles Blogs Magazine articles Peer-reviewed journals Meeting minutes & agendas (from various groups/committees) Progress reports/accreditation reports/strategic planning docs	Any accessible, relevant documents dating from 2000-present	As many as possible that are salient to the research questions	Appendix T
<b>Archival Records Review</b>	What tactics are employed to effectively handle the economic crisis upon Philander Smith College from the late 1990s through the early 2000s?	Organizational charts for all departments on campus Budgets illuminating funding allocations dating back from 2000	Any accessible, relevant records dating from 2000-present	As many as possible that are salient to the research questions	Appendix T
<b>Focus Groups</b>	How does the campus community perceive the institution's organizational identity?	Administrators Current Students Faculty Alumni	Purposeful	4 total focus groups each comprised of 6-10 people	Appendix L
<b>Interviews</b>	How does the campus community perceive the institution's organizational identity?	President Administrators Current Students Faculty Alumni	Purposeful	President - 3 Administrators - 3-5 Current Students - 3-5 Faculty - 3-5 Alumni - 3-5	Appendices (in respective order): N O P Q & R
<b>Observation</b>	How are aspects of organizational identity	Meetings Structure, location, and ambiance of physical spaces	N/A	Employee offices Cafeteria Financial	Appendix S

	operationalized at Philander Smith?			Aid Office (4-6 total)	
<b>Participant Observation</b>	Same as above for observation	Athletic competitions Alumni Association events Student organization events Cultural events (i.e., concert)	N/A	3-5 total	Appendix S

### **Documentation.**

Specifically, journalistic documents (newspaper articles, peer and non-peer reviewed articles, blogs, etc) will be reviewed for my research, as I want to examine the trajectory of how Philander Smith College is portrayed in the media from 2004 when the institution nearly shut down to present day articles that praise the institution's current standing and its effective leadership. Other documents that will be helpful to review include meeting agendas and minutes, particularly from meetings which the president and other senior level administrators attended, as they will provide insight into the leadership styles employed and exuded. However, it may be difficult to gain access to such materials, as they are often considered open only to those who attended the meeting; but if I am able to obtain access to such documents they will certainly be reviewed. Therefore, the documents I will review for this case study currently include mass media articles referencing Philander Smith College from the last decade. Once I have been granted the permission, review of meeting agendas and minutes and other internally written documents, such as progress reports, accreditation reports, strategic planning reports, and grant proposals will be conducted as well (see Appendix T for document review protocols).

### **Archival records.**

Review of Philander Smith College organizational charts and past and current budget information will be reviewed in an effort to get a sense of any major changes with regard to these two institutional aspects occurred since 2000. The year 2000 is selected specifically because it is within the millennium and provides a wide-range (11 year) continuum with which to observe organizational and fiscal changes. I will review the organizational charts to determine if any major or minor changes in employment structures were made after 2004 when new leadership executed a number of strategies to reverse the campus deficit. Additionally, I will review the changes in the allocations of monies with regard to the similar timeline from 2000 to the present. Specific changes soon after 2004 will be noted (see Appendix T for archival record review protocols).

### **Focus groups.**

The focus groups will follow a protocol (see Appendix L) that seeks to understand the organizational identity of Philander Smith College, and how aspects of this organizational identity impacts the experiences of students, faculty, administrators, and alumni in managing and dealing with the consequences of the financial crisis at Philander Smith College. A total of four focus groups will be conducted for: (1) administrators, (2) current students, (3) alumni, and (4) faculty. Each focus group will be comprised of six to ten participants and will be scheduled for two hours (see focus group recruitment email in Appendix F). While six to ten participants is the goal, there may be an event in which too many individuals agree to participate. If this happens, I will use the following criteria for

selecting administrators, current students, alumni, and faculty to participate in the focus groups:

- The administrator, student, alumni, and/or faculty member has been at Philander Smith College for over two years;
- The administrator, student, alumni, and/or faculty member was associated with Philander Smith in 2004, when the campus nearly closed its doors to the community; and
- The administrator, student, alumni, and/or faculty member has worked directly with the president or other senior level administrators on a project specifically designed to address campus budgets

These criteria will allow me to conduct focus groups with individuals who will elicit rich information that is directly related to the leadership and fiscal strategy aspects of this investigation. Constituents that have been at Philander Smith College for over two years will have a deep level of immersion into the culture and context of this institution as they relate to leadership and financial issues. Members of the Philander Smith College community (i.e., student, employee, etc) who were associated with the institution in 2004 will allow for a historical discussion that compares the workings of the institution when it was near closure to its current operations. Lastly, those who have worked directly with the institutions senior level leadership will provide deep insight into the processes behind addressing the fiscal deficit faced by the institution.

The focus groups will be conducted on campus during various hours to accommodate diverse schedules. Stewart, Shamdasani, and Rook (2007) suggest holding

focus groups in familiar locations in an effort to prevent participants from travel inconveniences, making the Philander Smith College campus an effective place to hold the focus group interviews. The focus groups will be digitally audio recorded, and will specifically explore how the administrators, students, alumni, and faculty perceive the institution's organizational identity as it relates to processes and leadership tactics at Philander Smith College. A focus group guide (see Appendix L) includes an introductory script and a list of possible questions (Sulick, 2011). Not all of the questions may be asked however, as Stewart, Shamdasani, and Rook (2007) assert that a lack of depth in focus group interviews is often attributable to the fact that too many questions are asked by the facilitator. It is further argued that asking too many questions turns the in depth focus group process into an in-person survey (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007; Sulick, 2011). I have therefore outlined five questions in the focus group interview guide that will keep the discussion related to the organizational identity as it relates to leadership and financial management strategies associated with Philander Smith College.

Each focus group participant will complete an informational sheet (see Appendix M) in addition to their informed consent document (Sulick, 2011). Along with asking participants to select a pseudonym to which they will be referred throughout the final case study report, this informational sheet will provide descriptive characteristics about the various focus participants, including the number of years they have attended, worked at, or been associated with Philander Smith College, specific position, gender, employment status (i.e., entry, midlevel, or senior level administrator), alumni status (year of graduation, level of involvement with institution) and student status (i.e.,



freshman, sophomore, graduate student). Obtaining such demographic information will enable me to provide a rich description of the focus group sample (Sulick, 2011). Lastly, the purpose of the focus groups is to initially identify and clarify the critical components of Philander Smith College's organizational identity, so that these concepts can be further elaborated upon and confirmed through individual interviews.

### **Interviews.**

All three forms (guided, in-depth, and focused) of interviews will be conducted throughout the proposed case study at Philander Smith College. Additionally, any initial categories that surfaced from the focus groups in relation to the specifics of leadership and financial strategies associated with this institution will also be affirmed through these interviews. The guided, in depth, and focused interviews will allow me to further elaborate and develop these initial categories into conceptualized patterns and themes (Saldana, 2009). Initial interviews will be conducted with the president, and snowball sampling will be undertaken in an effort to identify additional individuals to interview. Patton (2002) defines snowball sampling in a qualitative context as a process that begins by asking well-situated, knowledgeable individuals (i.e., key informants) who the researcher should interview to best obtain the information being sought after.

Key informants identified through the focus groups interviews will be consulted as a means by which to discover additional individuals deemed most appropriate to further clarify initial findings derived from the focus groups. Specifically, I will conduct three to five interviews for each respective population associated with campus including, administrators, current students, alumni, and faculty members for a total of 12 to 20 (see

Appendices N, O, P, Q, & R for interview guides specific to these populations).

Interviewing individuals from each distinctive population allows me to obtain a variety of perspectives regarding aspects of organizational identity, in addition to tactics of leadership and fiscal management in relation to Philander Smith College. Moreover, the credibility of the described central and enduring identity claims will be strengthened by corroboration across all four campus populations.

**Direct observation.**

Observational evidence is useful in providing additional contextual information in case study research, and I will engage in both formal and informal methods of direct observation. When permitted, I will observe meetings between faculty, administrators, students, and alumni associations while also (sometimes simultaneously) observing the structure, location, and ambiance of physical spaces on the Philander Smith College campus (see Appendix S for observation protocols). These direct observations will allow me to place developing aspects of organizational identity into context through the campus setting and interactions between administrators, faculty members, students, and alumni. Additionally, direct observation will serve as a method by which to triangulate information garnered from the interviews and focus groups. Are the central and enduring attributes associated with Philander Smith College pervasively observed through various campus contexts? Both formal and informal observations will provide the means to answer this question.

### **Participant observation.**

I will engage in participant observation by attending athletic and cultural events and other campus program activities, as I am granted access by the institution. Specifically, I will strive to engage in participant observation at three to five campus events. These events can take the form of an intercollegiate sport competition, an alumni association event, a concert of play, a student organization (i.e., associated government, fraternity/sorority, or academic group) event, a staff appreciation event, or professional development seminars and trainings (see Appendix S for participant observation protocol). As with direct observation, placing myself in the position of being a participant will provide me with the opportunity to experience the espoused aspects of organizational identity by both interacting with constituents and participating in various campus events. Additionally, the nature of relationships between and among administrators, faculty, students, and alumni may be observed more fully through campus events designed specifically to bring these groups together. Finally, triangulation of aspects of organizational identity between the other data collection methods will occur as a result of engaging in participant observation.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in qualitative research is inductive and emerging in nature, thus making it difficult to find one successful, step-by-step approach to this process (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, the coding process I use may change as data is being collected. However, I propose the following procedures as to how I will conduct the analysis portion of this case study. The analysis process will consist of two rounds of coding

denoted by Saldana (2009) as first and second cycle coding methods. First cycle coding methods are processes that happen during the initial phase of data analysis and serve to “fracture” or split the data into preliminary topics and descriptors. Second cycle coding methods build off of the first cycle by further developing initial topics into themes, categories, and abstract conceptualizations (Saldana, 2009). Lastly, to construct an accurate description of Philander Smith’s organizational identity, I will use “causal mapping” a method of analysis that will allow me to hierarchically describe the unique attributes of this institution.

### **First Cycle Coding Methods**

#### **Descriptive coding.**

The first round of coding will include descriptive, structural, emotional, and in vivo coding procedures. Descriptive coding is used first to get a sense of the topics embedded in the data. Because descriptive coding summarizes the basic topic of a passage in qualitative data in a word or short phrase, it works well as an initial process to fracture the data (Saldana, 2009). Structural coding is the next logical method to use since it generally results in the identification of large segments of text on broad topics; and these segments can form the basis for an in-depth analysis within or across topics (Saldana, 2009).

#### **Structural coding.**

Structural coding will also be used in an effort to ensure that the data being analyzed specifically relates to the original research question. According to Saldana (2009), structural coding applies a conceptual phrase representing a topic of inquiry to a

segment of data that relates to a specific research question used to frame the interview. For example one of my research questions contains the (paraphrased) statement asking what leadership tactics are employed by Walter Kimbrough. Structural coding allows me to label certain passages of data as “leadership tactic”, as it directly relates to this research question. Thus, this coding method helps the researcher to stay focused on data that addresses the research questions, which is essential because case study research gathers copious amounts of rich data and information that does necessarily relate to the specific inquiries being investigated.

### **Emotion coding.**

Emotion codes label the emotions recalled and experienced by the participant, or inferred by the researcher about the participant (Saldana, 2009). For the purposes of this research study, emotions are defined as “a feeling and its distinctive thoughts, psychological and biological states, and range of tendencies to act” (Saldana, 2009). This coding method is used because of the research questions, as they are likely to elicit an array of feelings related to the institution’s financial (in)stability since 2004. It is logical to think that emotions are integral to this research question since emotions are a universal human experience, and acknowledging them in research provides deep insight into the participants’ perspectives, worldviews, and life conditions (Saldana, 2009).

### **In vivo coding.**

Lastly, in vivo coding refers to a short word or phrase that is from the actual language found in the qualitative data record (Saldana, 2009). This coding method will be conducted last for two reasons; the first being that I will triangulate the resulting list of

first cycle codes with verbatim quotes from the participants, and the second reason being to prioritize and honor the participants' voices. In an effort to mitigate the possibility of the codes being generated completely from a researcher-perspective, in vivo coding helps to ensure that initial results are actually grounded in the data.

### **Second Cycle Coding Methods**

Second cycle coding methods are advanced processes that reorganize and reanalyze data that has been coded through first cycle methods (Saldana, 2009). Morse (1994) asserts that second cycle methods require "fitting categories with one another" in an effort to develop a comprehensive synthesis of the entire body of data (p. 25). Thus, the principal goal of second cycle coding is to establish "a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from the array of second cycle codes" (Saldana, 2009, p. 149). I use focused and axial coding procedures in the second round of data analysis for this case study.

#### **Focused coding.**

Focused coding searches for the most common or relevant codes derived from first cycle coding methods to develop "the most salient categories" in the body of data (Charmaz, 2006). The goal of focused coding is to develop broad categories based on thematic or conceptual similarity. Focused coding enables comparison of newly developed codes across other participants' data to assess for comparability and transferability (Saldana, 2009). This is essential, as Charmaz (2006) states that research studies "fit the empirical world when the constructed codes have been developed into categories that crystallize participants' experience" (p. 54). Further illustrating this point

is the fact that categories should be developed emergently from the reorganization and classification of participant data (Saldana, 2009). Glaser (1978) argues that “data should not be forced or selected to fit preconceived or preexistent categories or discarded in favor of keeping an extant theory intact” (p. 4). Once general themes and categories are created from focused coding, axial coding procedures are then used to further describe the properties and dimensions of each category.

### **Axial coding.**

Axial coding describes a category’s properties and dimensions, while also exploring the relationships between and among each category (Saldana, 2009). Properties are the characteristics or attributes that capture the nature of the category and dimensions describe the location of these properties along a continuum or range (Charmaz, 2006). Together, both properties and dimensions refer to the conditions, causes, and outcomes of a process – actions that let the research know “if, when, how, and why” something happens (Charmaz, 2006, p. 62). Axial coding is clearly relevant to this case study, as the nuances behind processes at Philander Smith College that have allowed the institution to reverse a severe financial deficit in the campus budget will be illuminated through this data analysis procedure. Additionally, axial coding is deemed appropriate for studies using a wide variety of data forms, as it helps reduce the typically large number of codes developed from the first cycle process (Saldana, 2009).

### **Analytic memo writing.**

The process of analyzing qualitative data is complex, emergent, and inductive in nature (Creswell, 2007). Due to the multilayered complexity of qualitative data analysis

procedures, it is essential for researchers to document and reflect on coding processes and choices throughout the entire course of research (Saldana, 2009). The term used to describe this process of reflection and documentation is analytical memo writing, which is defined as a journal in which to “dump your brain about the participants, phenomenon, or process under investigation” (Clarke, 2005, p. 202). Analytic memos are highly conducive to case study research since this methodology employs a number of different data collection methods (Stake, 1995). The ultimate purpose of writing analytic memos is to generate researcher reflexivity by “thinking critically about what you are doing and why, confronting and often challenging your own assumptions, and recognizing the extent to which your thoughts, actions, and decisions shape how you research and what you see” (Mason, 2002, p. 5). Memo writing will thus be a frequent activity conducted throughout this entire case study, and particularly during the data analysis stage. Specifically, when I notice that I have a tendency to code data in a certain way, or if I make a decision to embark on a path that will lead to what I think is an emerging pattern, I will document such thought processes in the form of an analytic memo throughout the entire research process.

### **Causal mapping.**

Whetten (2005) posits that researchers aiming to understand and accurately describe an institution’s organizational identity should engage in causal mapping, an analysis procedure that “produces an ordered array of organizational features, such that the centrality of a feature reflects its presumed role in causing less central features” (p. 224). Using data collected from constituents at Philander Smith College, I will discern



the level of causation between various attributes associated with this institution. The interview and focus groups protocols contain questions that ask about the central and enduring features of Philander Smith College and through this data analysis procedure, in addition to analytic memo writing and member checking, I will describe this institution's organizational identity and how it impacts the ability of the campus to continue surviving through difficult fiscal times. The following depiction illustrates how I will conceptualize Philander Smith College's organizational identity:

### **Hierarchy of Organizational Identity Claims**

**Highest Level:** These elements have a *causal* role (explaining; account for) in the next two levels of claims:

- Social forms (i.e., mission, clientele, central and enduring claims of organization)
- Social Categories (i.e., university, bank, hybrid organization, etc.)
- Comparable Group Memberships (what organizations are similar to ours?)

**Middle Level:** These elements provide further *clarification* of the Highest Level claims:

- Established Ties with Organizations and Institutions (deeper explanation of how "Highest Level" claims have fostered connections with other organizations)

**Lower Level:** These elements provide *elaboration upon and explanation of* the Highest and Middle Level claims:

- Distinguishing Organizational Practices
- Organization-specific attributes of members, products, and services

Whetten and Mackey (2002) outline three different ways to effectively understand the organizational identities attributed to organization being studied. I will employ the use of all three methods as described by Whetten and Mackey (2002) below:

“Research audits require very broad access to organizational records and personnel, and they primarily involve qualitative methods of investigation. For example, interviewers attempting to understand an organization’s identity claims might use a laddering technique [i.e., causal mapping] to uncover the foundational organizational values used by organizational members to justify their decisions and actions. Alternatively, investigators might begin with an in-depth analysis of the organization’s mission and strategy. Another approach infers identity claims from the organizational referents specified in questions concerning the efficacy of the organization’s identity claims. After an organization’s identity claims have been identified, the next step in the audit process is to collect data from key stakeholders concerning the efficacy of the organization’s identity claims” (p. 406).

Again, all of the methods outlined in the preceding quote will be utilized in an effort to understand how the organizational identity of Philander Smith College impacts the institution’s ability to stay afloat of surging budget cuts and accreditation revocations. The protocols for the focus group and individual interviews contain the “why” and “how” questions related to concepts of organizational identity. Once those concepts have been identified through focus groups, they will be further confirmed through individual interviews with students, faculty, administrators, and alumni.

### **Derivation of organizational identity claims.**

While the literature revealed three organizational identity claims associated with HBCUs, they are constructed from the perspective of the respective authors, and are thus not necessarily accurate reflections of what these institutions claim as central and enduring aspects of their identity. To address this, I attempted to triangulate the identity

claims associated with HBCUs by reviewing the mission statements of at least 20 institutions (a combination of public, private, and religious-affiliated colleges and universities). Specifically, I extracted identity claims from the language articulated in the mission statements and compared them against the three claims revealed in the literature as: (a) provide racial uplift for African Americans, (b) provide opportunities for higher education for those traditionally and historically excluded from PWIs, and (c) emphasize teaching and establishment of collaborative leadership opportunities to effectively prepare African Americans to succeed in personal, intellectual, and professional growth and prosperity (Gasman, 2007; Minor, 2004; Minor, 2008). Further corroboration of identity claims occurred by comparison to what was extracted from my research at Philander Smith College. The results of both efforts are discussed at length in the conclusion chapter of this dissertation.

Therefore, the literature, HBCU mission statements, and specific information derived from this research serve as the bodies of information through which triangulation of articulated identity claims for HBCUs generally, and Philander Smith College specifically, occur. With regard to the specific identity claims associated with Philander Smith, I examine these claims in an effort to illustrate how they did (or did not) contribute to the institutional organizational identity and how these claims have allowed this school to continue successfully operating throughout the economic downturn. The model located in appendix U, which combines the two frameworks including the Wagener and Smith (1993) case study in addition to concepts of organizational identity, is used in an effort to construct identity claims associated with HBCUs. This model also

served as a guide by which the construction of models of best leadership and operational practices was developed.

### **Role of the Researcher**

I embrace a constructivist philosophy as it applies to conducting qualitative research, meaning that I seek to understand the subjective, contextual experiences of individuals in a world where multiple realities exist due to the social construction of historical and cultural norms (Crotty, 1998). The goal of research from a constructivist standpoint is to rely as much as possible on the research participants' views of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2007). Lincoln and Guba (2000) state that constructivist researchers often address the processes of interaction among individuals and focus on specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the research participants, and through my case study of Philander Smith College, I endeavor to accomplish this in addition to presenting an accurate portrayal of best practices being enacted by the institution.

Also consistent with constructivist philosophy is the belief that my own preconceptions, privileges, assumptions, and biases will need to continually be addressed throughout the research process (Charmaz, 2006). As an advocate for HBCUs, it is necessary to reflect on and bracket my personal values in an effort to maintain a fresh perspective on the data (Creswell, 2007). Bracketing is defined as a process in which investigators set aside their personal experiences as much as possible during the research process (Moustakas, 1994). While I will employ the practice of bracketing in an effort to reduce bias, I will not completely sever my values and beliefs from the research process,

as they are inextricably linked. Instead, bracketing will serve to increase and maintain my awareness of such values, and how they may or may not influence the final research findings.

Further illustrating my adherence to constructivism is my belief regarding the nature of the researcher-research participant relationship. I envision this relationship to be one that is collaborative and mutual, rather than authoritative and distant. Approaching this relationship in a cooperative manner will reduce the potential negative interactions that can occur in relationships where a power structure is present. While I will not fail to acknowledge the inherent power dynamics in researcher-research participant relationships, I will maintain an awareness of this and actively work to ensure interactions that are characterized by honesty and collaboration. Such actions will lead to an increased sense of trustworthiness and authenticity between myself and the research participants in this case study.

### **Trustworthiness.**

In an effort to develop and ensure trustworthiness of the final research findings, I will employ the aforementioned methods of triangulation and analytic memo writing. Member checking is an additional technique that bolsters credibility of the research findings with the participants. Defined by Creswell (2007), member checking is an action executed by the researcher that “solicits participants’ views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations” (p. 208). Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider member checking to be the “most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). Stake (1995) argues that participants “should play a major role in directing as well as acting in

case study research” (p. 115). Stake (1995) further asserts that research participants should examine rough drafts of the researchers work and also be able to provide alternative language that more accurately reflects their voice. Creswell (2007) suggests convening a focus group composed of participants and asking them to reflect on the accuracy of the final account. I will certainly take this last suggestion in an effort to member check with as many of my participants as possible, due to the large number (n=20) of individuals I will be interviewing. I will complete member checking by providing raw transcripts, initial findings, and a preliminary final report of the case study to each interviewee and focus group participant. I will invite their feedback and if needed, adjust my findings to ensure they align with the perceptions of the research participants.

An additional tactic that will increase trustworthiness of the results is the use of thick description to accurately portray the voices of the research participants. Denzin (1989) asserts that thick description means that the findings “present detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships...[and] evokes emotionality and self feelings...The voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard” (p. 83). Relatedly, Creswell (2007) states that thick description allows readers to make decisions about transferability. Such detailed description enables readers to determine whether the findings can be transferred to other settings because of shared characteristics. Combining the practices of triangulation, analytic memo writing, intentional collaborative researcher-research participant relationships, member checking, and thick description will effectively work to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of my final case study report.

### **Researcher positionality.**

Although I grew up in Colorado Springs, Colorado, both of my parents and their extended families are from the small town of Greenwood, Mississippi. The majority of my extended family received their higher education degrees from historically Black colleges and universities, namely Mississippi Valley State and Jackson State. However, due to my father's active duty in the Air Force military, I never lived in Mississippi and also never really heard the term "historically Black colleges and universities" until my exposure to higher education options increased in high school. While I can say that I briefly thought about attending Howard University, an HBCU in Washington D.C., I never seriously considered an HBCU as an option for my higher education. This could be due to any number of factors, but at least part of it is ecological, in the sense that I grew up in a predominately White, middle to upper class neighborhood. My exposure to Black people and Black culture was fairly limited, except for within the realm of my family life.

However, as one of very few African Americans in my high school of 1,400 students, attending an HBCU was never presented as a viable option during the numerous advising sessions I attended with the college counselor. Additionally, HBCUs never surfaced in any conversations I had with friends and family regarding my college choice journey. Reflecting back on this part of my life provoked several questions regarding the presence of HBCUs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and what challenges and issues these unique institutions are currently facing and this reflection is essentially what motivated me to propose this study. Despite the numerous milestones accomplished by these institutions, their image is often portrayed in a negative light through various forms of media

(Gasman, 2007). Conducting this study on Philander Smith College is ever-critical during this time of rising deficit-based literature regarding these institutions, in addition to literature whereby scholars are calling for the discontinuation of HBCUs (Riley, 2010; Leonhardt, 2011). It is therefore imperative to focus on the numerous assets these institutions contain, which is vividly illustrated by the fact that HBCUs have historically provided extensive opportunity for upward social mobility in the Black community, and continue to do so for 70 percent of all African Americans. If these institutions are to remain preserved entities in which Black students receive a quality education, then thorough research that includes examination of their history, current issues, and contemporary status in the sphere of higher education is vital.

### **Limitations**

The transferability of the proposed research may be somewhat limited in its applicability to other HBCUs dissimilar to Philander Smith College in size, public/private status, and environmental setting (i.e., rural vs. urban). However, Patton (2002) argues that generalizability is not a focus of qualitative research, and qualitative researchers often question the very notion of absolute generalization in research, and whether such a goal is possible. As a constructivist researcher who believes in multiple realities that are highly contextual, I do not claim generalizability as a goal of this case study, but rather a model of best practices that may be adaptable to different institutional contexts. Nonetheless, the specific environment of Philander Smith College may have inherent structures that make the proposed model of best practices limited in its transferability to other institutions.



Employing the use of several data collection methods can serve as a limitation of case study research. Although providing multiple opportunities to triangulate information across multiple forms of data constitutes a strong point of case study research, the fact that the data collection procedures are not routinized can potentially damage the findings (Yin, 2009). While the use of many data collection methods can be used to affirm initial patterns in the data, it is essential that methods conducted in the later stage of collection are not used only for this purpose. In other words, I must keep an open mind to finding new concepts and themes during later data collection methods, rather than solely using them as a way to corroborate initial findings.

The possibility of bias informing the results of case study research is exceptionally high, due to the fact that a deep understanding of the issues associated with the case is needed before the study is conducted. Furthermore, if a case study investigator seeks to substantiate a preconceived position through research, then the potential for bias is increased while the credibility and trustworthiness of the results are significantly decreased (Yin, 2009). Practicing the aforementioned strategies of bracketing, memo writing, and member checking is invaluable in reducing the threat of bias in case study research.

Lastly, Yin (2009) asserts that case study research rarely goes exactly as planned. Inevitably, case study researchers will have to make minor and possibly major changes, ranging from the need to pursue an unexpected lead to needing to identify an entire new case. Skilled case study investigators must have a willingness to adapt procedures or plans if unanticipated events occur (Yin, 2009). Maintaining an awareness of the original

purpose of the research is imperative when such changes are made. Yin (2009) posits that one of the most frequent complaints of case study research is that “investigators change directions without knowing that the original research design was inadequate for the revised investigation, thereby leaving gaps and biases” (p. 71). It is therefore important to balance adaptiveness with rigor – but not rigidity – in case study research (Yin, 2009).

### **Conclusion**

Through this case study, I will develop a model of best practices associated with Philander Smith College and the institution’s ability to successfully operate in the context of what has been deemed a financial crisis (Gasman, 2009). In constructing this model of best practices, I hope to capture and accurately portray the voices of the research participants who willingly collaborate and work to co-create this model that will serve to assist other historically Black colleges and universities. My commitment to working with constituents at Philander Smith College is characterized by my goal to illuminate the successful practices being exercised by this school to enhance the experiences of those involved with the campus community. Lastly, I hope that my journey throughout this dissertation research will also enhance my own learning as a researcher of and an advocate for these institutions. In the next chapter, I discuss the processes of data collection and analysis in addition to describing my population sample.

## **Chapter 5: Data Collection, Analysis, and Population Sample**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the processes of data collection and analyses in which I engaged for the research portion of this study. I will also discuss the characteristics that define the population sample which provided information through individual interviews and focus groups. This is done in an effort to show that my research findings emerged from the data and to also demonstrate the direct link between my own researcher-generated codes and verbatim information located in the data. Detailed description is particularly important in this chapter, because a large amount of data from a variety of informational sources was collected and analyzed.

### **Data Collection**

Information for this case study was culled from six different sources: (a) individual interviews, (b) focus group interviews, (c) documentation, (d) archival records, (e), participant observation, and (f) direct observation. In total, I conducted 21 interviews with the president, administrators, faculty, and alumni. It should be noted that I also conducted a number of informal interviews, particularly with students, at various campus events where I engaged in participant and direct observation. Several documented items were analyzed and included everything from a white paper written by the president of PSC in 2007 to several newspaper and journal articles written about the institution dating

back to 1987. Archival records dated as long ago as 1979 were also reviewed, along with a strategic planning document developed in 2005.

I engaged in five direct observation activities that included a classroom setting and a meeting among senior and midlevel administrators and faculty on campus. The table below depicts all of the events that I was able to directly observe:

<b>Observation Type</b>	<b>Event/Activity/Setting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Direct	Press Conference - New Res Hall	Thursday, August 25th
Direct	Opening Convocation	Thursday, August 25th
Direct	Community Awards Reception	Thursday, August 25th
Direct	Executive Council Meeting	Tuesday, August 30th
Direct	Dr. K's Classroom	Tuesday, August 30th

Table 1: Direct Observation Settings

There are four campus events for which I observed as a participant. These events were all on campus, with the exception of the annual church picnic, which was located at an outdoor park approximately twenty minutes from campus.

<b>Observation Type</b>	<b>Event/Activity/Setting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Participant Observation	Bless the Mic/Black Male Initiative Program: Kwame Kilpatrick	Saturday, August 27th
Participant Observation	Church Picnic	Sunday, August 29th
Participant Observation	Church Service	Sunday, October 2
Participant Observation	BU Dessert Reception	Tuesday, August 30th

Table 2: Participant Observation Settings

In accordance with Yin's (2009) suggestion for case study researchers, I maintained both a database of materials and case study notes in an effort to stay organized. A complete list of all analyzed documentation and archival records is located in Appendix V. Excerpts from my case study notes are presented in various sections of the findings (chapters 6 and 7) to corroborate information gathered from interviews and

focus groups. Lastly, the details of my interviews and focus groups will be discussed more fully in the population sample section of this chapter. Before that section, I will paint a picture of the data analysis process.

### **Data Analysis**

To initially fracture the data, I employed descriptive coding, which summarizes the topic of a passage in the data in one or two words (Saldana, 2009). Next, I used structural coding to extract data that was directly related to an aspect of my research questions. For example, this study seeks to understand the essential leadership tactics integral to PSC's success. When a successful leadership tactic surfaced in the data, I applied a code of the same name to it. Finally, the same process was used with emotion coding; a passage of data was coded according to the emotion either worded verbatim or perceived as such by the researcher. The following tables depict the analysis process I just described with descriptive, structural, and emotion coding. In vivo (or verbatim) quotes from the interview transcripts show the direct link between the researcher-generated code and the bare data.

Descriptive	In Vivo	Researcher Code
Dr. K's leadership	I think one of the things a visionary leader who is, um, young enough to be willing to take risks, uh, and, but has been around long enough to know what the landscape is, especially in the HBCU world, but doesn't let that effect his leadership style or his, uh, decision making process.	Dr. K as risk taker
Dr. K's leadership	Uh, along with Dr. Kimbrough's leadership and branding of the institution, uh, gave us an opportunity to come out stronger than historically the school has ever been. Uh, nationally and even state-wide. Um, the school is repositioned, I won't say positioned, but repositioned itself in the model that it once was fifty years ago	Branding campaign
Area for improvement	the current weakness on campus and that's making sure we have very, uh, dedicated and fired up faculty to meet the challenges of these new students that are coming in	Challenge to PSC
Dr. K's leadership	Yeah. The rest of them were just attrition or people leaving, but there was, he just didn't come in and say, okay, I'm gonna fire all the cabinet members and we're gonna start all over, so	Did not fire all cabinet members
Success of PSC	It was early on in his tenure that most of those changes happened, uh, so he had, he had a five-year run, yeah, five-year run where there was no changes in cabinet. And that helped tremendously from a consistent standpoint	Consistency with cabinet members
Success of PSC	So, to me I think it's just a freshness with it, so you have to keep changing to be competitive and, you know, get students here and that's my perspective, so.	Stay fresh to remain competitive
Area for improvement	The one area that has not kept up, uh... academics	Challenge to PSC

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis

Structural	In Vivo	Researcher Code
Management Tactic	And so as a result, we, the college has been able to, uh, get large sums of money from some of those organizations to help, uh, young, young men and women have scholarships.	Community Partnerships
Success Tactic	Anyway, and I think that the whole business of this Bless the Mic series we're getting a lot of, I want to say famous, but I don't think that's the term to use. But outstanding persons in our community coming from all across the country, you know, giving some good information for not only the students but the community itself. And most of the time in those sessions the auditorium is full. And it's not that many students, it's more community people. So all those kinds of things I think helps to tie the college's community	Bless the Mic Series; community engagement
Central aspect of PSC	well, is, I think, I think Philander Smith is probably the, the size of college that young people who, especially African-Americans, who leave from small towns without the	Collegial environment

	exposure they need can come to Philander and cannot be lost in the shuffle of numbers. And that they can get a topnotch education in a setting that they can be successful in.	
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Table 4: Structural Analysis

Emotion	In Vivo	Researcher Code
Care	And there's been numerous of instances of that happening here on campus, where you're able to sit down with, you know, people that are high up in charge but they're willing to sit down and they really care about, you know, the students and what are some things they want to see implemented in their, you know, college experience really	Family-like environment
Overjoyed	So, it's a lot of innovative things really happening at Philander Smith College, so I'm just overjoyed to be a part of it	PSC as innovative
Sense of belonging	Well, since I'm not a troublemaker to begin with, um, it makes me feel like I actually belong here at Philander. It makes, it creates relationships, friendships, long-time friendships and relationships. And, yeah, it just makes me feel like I am Philander Smith College. Like I have a reason for being here	Building relationships; higher purpose
Gratefulness	Like, I thank God for Dr. Kimbrough and all he's done for this institution. And like, he's done a lot. And I haven't even been here that long to know that he did a lot. Actually, I do a lot of reading, but, yeah.	Dr. K as key to success of PSC

Table 5: Emotion Analysis

Upon completion of this first round of coding, the second round of coding began with the sorting and reorganization of codes exemplified in the preceding three tables. The sort function in excel allowed me to organize all of the codes alphabetically so that similarly named codes were easily grouped into initial categories. Focused coding (Saldana, 2009) assisted with this process of dividing and regrouping the first round codes. Once initial categories were constructed for each campus population, axial coding was helpful in reducing the plethora of codes into major themes with subthemes that further described the properties and dimensions of each category. The major themes for each population was constructed based upon the frequency of it in first cycle coding, and

the ability for it to be triangulated with other collected sources of information (i.e., archival records, documentation, and observation).

With exception of observation, archival records, and documentation, the major themes for each informational source are presented and extensively discussed in the findings chapters. Rather than discuss the findings from observation, archives, and documentation as distinct sections, I chose to extract information from these sources and integrate them into the campus population findings as a means of triangulation, as suggested by Yin (2009). However, the major themes from all three of these information sources are shown below:

### **Themes from Archives/Documentation**

1. **Church as Driving Force of PSC's Organizational Identity:** Philander's affiliation with the United Methodist Church is both a central and enduring aspect of the institutional culture and identity.
  - a. Definition of Social Justice
2. **Identity in Transition**
  - a. Incorrect Unique Identity Claims
  - b. Key components of strong organizational identity
3. **Back to Old Mission**
  - a. Justification for reversing back to original PSC mission from the 30s
4. **Social Justice as Driving Force of PSC's Organizational Identity**
  - a. Social Justice as primary identity claim
5. **Success Tactics**
  - a. Use new identity to attract students, faculty, and staff
  - b. Community focus groups
  - c. Community partnerships
  - d. Distinct differences between current and previous presidential administration



## **Themes from Observation**

- 1. Success Tactics**
  - a. Black Male Initiative Program
  - b. Retention Efforts
  - c. Fiscal policies
  
- 2. Dr. K's Leadership: Observational Data: Dr. K's Class; Council Meeting**
  - a. Student Oriented
  - b. Upfront/Bold
  - c. Fosters dialogue
  
- 3. Essence of PSC: Observational Data: Convocation**
  - a. Collegial Environment
  - b. Beacon of Growth
    - i. Expansion of Campus Buildings
  
- 4. Church Affiliation as Driving Force of PSC's Organizational Identity**
  - a. Observation of Church Service
  
- 5. A Pillar to the Community**
  - a. Community Awards Ceremony
  - b. Bless the Mic

The processes of data analysis were cumbersome and detail oriented. In the future, use of a computer program with which to conduct analysis will likely make for a more seamless process that is also more organized. In this next and final section of this chapter I will fully describe the people to which I owe significant gratitude for supplying profound information for this research study: the participants.

### **Description of Population Sample**

Because I conducted 21 individual interviews in addition to two focus groups, it is imperative that I present a detailed picture of the research participants, as their supplied information constitutes the bulk of my major research findings and implications.

Understanding the multiple identities of the research participants provides additional

context for the major themes constructed from each campus population. I will first describe those individuals with whom I conducted individual interviews and follow up with a discussion regarding the focus group participants. Pseudonyms (with the exception of the president) are used in lieu of real names to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

### **The President.**

Dr. K, also known to some as ‘hip-hop prez’ is the well renowned president of PSC. Officially, I conducted four documented, recorded interviews with him. But we spent a significant amount of time doing informal interviews during various campus events and meals (to which he treated me) off campus. In his early 40s, Dr. K is one of the youngest African American men to ever become president of an institution of higher education. He is tall, dynamic, (he is able to garner significant laughter and engagement in his speeches and as an instructor) and surprisingly introverted. He quickly explained that he can “turn it on” when he has to, but that he is naturally a laid-back, low-key person.

He is married with two young children under the age of six. His smile is very big and it reveals a keen authenticity that also comes through in his voice, which is just barely tinged with a southern accent. He worked in higher education in student activities and a variety of other functional areas for 14 years before embarking on his presidential tenure at PSC. The four individual interviews, coupled with numerous informal interviews lead me to describe the president as bold, upfront, engaging, personable, and empowering. These traits are further exemplified in the findings chapters.

### **Administrators.**

The administration at Philander Smith College is a driving force of the institutional operations, policies, and programs. Of all the populations I interviewed, I gathered the most data from formal, informal, and focus group interviews with administrators. I individually interviewed four administrators (one of them twice) to gain insight into PSC's organizational identity from an administration perspective. All of them were hired by Dr. K and have worked for the institution for as short as 6 months to as long as 5 years. The commitment and enthusiasm the administrators have for PSC was infectious and made the process of interviewing both enlightening and enjoyable. The following table depicts the characteristics of the administrators:

<b>Type</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Years at PSC</b>	<b>Functional Area</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race/ethnicity</b>
Admin Interview (2)	Tameka	5	Special Events	Female	Multiracial
Admin Interview	Chance	3	Development	Male	Black
Admin Interview	Shari	1	Marketing	Female	Black
Admin Interview	Terrell	6 months	Social Justice	Male	Black

Table 6: Interviewed Administrators

### **Faculty.**

The faculty at PSC represented a cross section of multiple identities in a variety of ways. First, two of the faculty members I interviewed were also alumni of the institution. One graduated in 2000 while the other graduated in 1962. Faculty members were one of two campus populations that could provide a perspective characterized by longevity, which also provided an opportunity to gain insight into aspects of the institution prior to Dr. K's arrival. The differences were quite stark, and are further explained in the findings. One of the professors, who is also an alumnus, works concurrently as an

administrator in the Office of the Social Justice initiative. So the information from faculty members represents more than just a faculty perspective because dimensions of their experiences as former students and administrators also surfaced during the interviews. I conducted four individual faculty interviews with three people. The characteristics of interviewed faculty members are outlined below.

<b>Type</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Years at PSC</b>	<b>Functional Area</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race/ethnicity</b>
Faculty Interview (2)	John	6	Political Sci	Male	Black
Faculty Interview	Ray	20+	Political Sci	Male	Black
Faculty Interview	Louise	20+	Humanities	Female	White

Table 7: Interviewed Faculty

### **Alumni.**

PSC alumni had a longevity component to the information extracted from their interviews as well. The youngest alumnus I interviewed graduated in 2000; I happened to spontaneously interview him because we met in a cab from the airport when I was making my second trip to PSC. In an effort to investigate the true communal nature of PSC, I asked John, a faculty member I interviewed whether he knew this gentleman, because they graduated the same year. Not only did John know him, but they were also fraternity brothers. This was the most authentic and natural example of PSC's tight knit community, and this was a major finding from the alumni: the family-like environment that is so well fostered at PSC. Below is more information regarding the four interviews I conducted with four different alumni.

Type	Name	Graduated	Profession	Gender	Race/ethnicity
Alumni Interview	Tyson	1959	Retired Principal	Male	Black
Alumni Interview	Jean	1971	Reverend	Female	Black
Alumni Interview	Sal	2000	Entrepreneur	Male	Black
Alumni Interview	Yolanda	1975	Higher Education	Female	Black

Table 8: Interviewed Alumni

### Students.

Heralded as the prioritized reason behind the vibrancy and active engagement pervasive to PSC culture, the students are a major defining factor of PSC’s organizational identity. A major limitation of this study, which is discussed at length in the final chapter, is that I was only able to officially interview three students. Timing and coordination proved difficult for scheduling a focus group, which is largely due to the fact that I was only at the PSC campus twice for one week the first time and 4 days the second. However, the information received from four interviews (I conducted two with one student) in addition to numerous informal interviews with students at campus events provided ample data with which to construct major themes. Informational characteristics regarding the students I interviewed are below in Table 9.

Type	Name	Year at PSC	Campus Engagement	Gender	Race
Student Interview	Tammy	3rd	Church Choir	Female	Black
Student Interview (2)	David	2nd	SGA/Interfaith Council	Male	Black
Student Interview	Andrew	3rd	SGA President	Male	Multiracial

Table 10: Interviewed Students

### **Focus groups: Administration and faculty.**

Two focus groups were conducted with administrators and faculty members, with 5 and 2 participants respectively. While two people is not considered enough for a focus group (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007), I still treat it as such because it lasted for nearly two hours and there was a significant amount of rich information gathered that did not take the form of an individual interview. The administration focus group lasted for approximately one hour and there was considerably poignant garnered data from it as well. The characteristics of the focus group participants are below in Tables 11 and 12.

<b>Type</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Years at PSC</b>	<b>Functional Area</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>
Admin Focus Group	Kelly	5.5	Advancement	Male	White
Focus Group Interview	Chance	3	Development	Male	Black
Focus Group Interview	Shari	1	Marketing	Female	Black
Focus Group Interview	Albert	6.5	Cabinet Member	Male	White
Focus Group Interview	Mary	6 months	Student Affairs	Female	Black

Table 11: Administration Focus Group Participants

<b>Type</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Years at PSC</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>
Faculty Focus Group	John	6	Political Science	Male	Black
Faculty Focus Group	Janet	10	Biology	Female	Black

Table 12: Faculty Focus Group Participants

Now that the population sample has been described, the next two chapters will examine the research findings and major themes through the lens of each campus population I interviewed. In the final chapter, I conflate the findings across all populations and describe them through the lens of organizational identity. However, in an effort to honor the participants' voices, I foreground the major themes from the standpoints of administrators, faculty, alumni, the president, and students first.

## **Chapter 6: Findings: Themes of Operational Success at PSC**

In this chapter I discuss four emergent themes directly related to the operational success of PSC which include: 1.) Repositioning of PSC as an institution; 2.) Challenges to PSC constituents; 3.) Church affiliation and social justice as driving forces to PSC organizational identity; and 4.) Collegial Environment. Evidence providing justification for the aforementioned themes stems from all campus populations that were interviewed and is also demonstrated by direct quotes from students, faculty, staff, administration, alumni, and the president. Additionally, my case study notes are presented in various sections as a means of triangulation (Yin, 2009) for each theme; as I want to demonstrate consistency across documentation, archival records, and direct and participant observation in addition to interviews and focus groups. The first theme, the repositioning of PSC, is instrumental to the shift in and subsequent success of the operational practices embodied by PSC constituents.

### **Repositioning of PSC**

PSC repositioned itself from three different standpoints: administration, institutional mission and slogan, and academics. The repositioning of the institution essentially allowed the college to rebuild itself and cultivate a stronger reputation both locally and nationally, which is demonstrated throughout the discussion of themes. This particular theme captures the rebuilding of PSC as an institution, a culture, and ever

present force in the surrounding community. Essential to this theme is an emphasis on the institution's process of *repositioning*, because several changes and shifts occurred as a result of new leadership and administration, as evidenced by a quote from Chance, the Director of Development: "...the school is repositioned, I won't say positioned, but repositioned itself in the model that it once was fifty years ago." Chance is talking about the fact that PSC was once an institution that only accepted the top performing students, according to archival information and older mission statements (Kimbrough, personal communication). However, after *Brown v. Board*, the school began practicing open enrollment to in an effort to address the significant decrease in students applying to HBCUs once admission to PWIs was legal (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007) .

In addition to repositioning administratively and to a more academically competitive college, changing the institutional mission and slogan to a social justice orientation served as the major driving force for transformation at PSC. The pervasiveness and visibility of PSC's "Think Justice" slogan allows the message to permeate the campus community on several levels, from student organizations to recent developments in the academic curriculum. The repositioning of PSC is discussed from all three standpoints in the following sections, beginning with the significant changes created by newly hired administrators.

### **Recruiting highly capable staff.**

Administratively, Dr. K hired personnel to ramp up the inner workings of the institution; particularly within the office of admissions. Essential to recruiting higher-achieving students is a capable admissions team, which was lacking upon Dr. K's arrival.



He discusses how surprised he was to learn that yields were rarely calculated by the previous staff, and how firing all of the previous admissions staff was the only option available. The decision was not made lightly, and Dr. K consulted the new Director of Admissions before letting the entire former staff go. He did, however, immediately fire the Director of Admissions who was there upon his arrival because she was not on par with the new reputation Dr. K was trying to build for PSC:

“You know, and so there are some people who came because of her, because like I said she’s nice and probably a decent recruiter, but she had some folks in that office that were just completely incompetent. And she couldn’t train them because she didn’t know any better. So, I was like, no. That’s when I met our admissions director at the time, and he was an assistant director at Morehouse. He was very aggressive. I was like, that’s what I need, because he’s gonna present the right image, you know, he’s been at a more selective institution. I need that kind of mentality. And that’s when we started going up really quickly in terms of profile of our class. Because he has seen what I wanted.”

As a result of hiring several new administrators, a fundamental shift manifested within the institutional climate and culture wherein an increased work ethic was both expected and realized among the administration. Chance discusses the higher performance level of PSC as an institution due to the newly hired administrators:

“I think we have people in those positions that are professional in what they do and have experiences for what they’re doing. Uh, I’m not really here to talk about [how the college operated] before Dr. Kimbrough, but at the same time I just don’t think it [performed at] the same level [from an administration standpoint].”

While being diplomatic, Chance is referencing the increased operating success of PSC under Dr. K’s selected administration. The process of repositioning from an administration standpoint allowed PSC to rebuild its organizational culture and image to one of high performance and consistency. A new Chief Financial Officer assisted the

college with tightening up fiscal policies which eventually helped PSC climb out of mounting debt that almost led to its closure in 2004. The new Director for PR and Marketing developed a strategic plan for the college to promote the new image which in turn boosted the perceived reputation of PSC in the surrounding community. Staff hired under Dr. K's tenure in the Alumni Relations Department increased donations and alumni giving to the institution, according to interviews with Jean, a 1971 alumna who extensively discussed the recent proliferation of new local and national alumni chapters. In addition to hiring new staff, the school experienced an improved reputation with surrounding community organizations as a result of embarking on a branding campaign during which "Think Justice" became the main adage to be associated with the college.

### **Branding campaign.**

From the moment I arrived on the PSC campus, the first aspect of the built environment to stand out is many "Think Justice" flags and signs that are seemingly everywhere.



These signs represent the relentless effort of Dr. K in reinventing a new image and reputation for PSC. Upon his arrival, Dr. K attempted to understand the organizational identity of PSC, its unique selling points and identity claims. According to an archival record of a white paper written by Dr. K, the institution was misguided as to what its unique identity claims were:

“Several unique aspects of the College that were identified during this process have subsequently been determined to be inaccurate. The creation of the Black Family Studies program in the late 1990s was billed as the first minor in the nation, when in actuality the first was at Niagara University in 1989. The college also has claimed that 9 of 10 students approved for medical school have been admitted, yet recently we determined that possibly only one PSC graduate in the past eight years has entered medical school” (Kimbrough, 2007, p. 2).

Upon learning this, Dr. K decided to host a series of focus groups inclusive of people both on campus and in the community. The purpose of the focus groups was to discuss and create a unique identity to be associated with the institution. One aspect of PSC’s struggle to recruit students and faculty was a lack of a unique identity innate to the culture and context of the institution. Dr. K remembers the difficulty encountered by the admission staff to promote the college without relying on the typical buzz words consistently associated with HBCUs, such as nurturing, family-like environments:

“...our new director of recruitment and admissions completed a west coast HBCU recruiting trip. During several of the stops, each school presented their case. Most schools, including PSC, relied on the same buzz words. Those with an advantage were the schools with strong identities. Our director returned with a pointed question: What do I sell?” (Kimbrough, 2007, p. 3).

In an effort to answer the question posed by the director of recruitment and admissions, Dr. K worked diligently with campus populations (students, faculty, and staff), as well as community people and consulting organizations to develop a brand and

unique identity for PSC, spearheading the repositioning of the institution. A social justice orientation was ultimately selected for a number of reasons; chief being the close tie between social justice and the principles of the United Methodist church. Dr. K used two enduring identity claims – the affiliation with the United Methodist church and the social justice nature of HBCUs – to create a sustainable, unique identity and mission for the institution. He also had the foresight to know that a social justice mission would allow for a seamless connection to surrounding community organizations, many of which he lists in his white paper (i.e., Bill Clinton School for Public Service; Boys and Girls Club, etc.).

While it could be argued that social justice has its own “buzz word” nature, Dr. K was intentional in researching and selecting a definition most pertinent to the PSC campus community. In fact, in his white paper, he lists several definitions found from different sources, including legal dictionaries and other institutions of higher education. However, the definition most suitable for PSC, due to its clear language and operational, action-oriented angle, is borrowed from the Social Justice Center at Washington University in St. Louis:

[Social justice is] the pursuit of equity for populations, who are, currently and historically, marginalized, exploited, disempowered, or violated based on their social group membership. These manifestations of oppression are the pervasive existence of social inequality woven through social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness. Rooted in civil rights movements of the past century this includes the rights of the following: people of color; people with diverse religions; women, people with disabilities; homosexuals and

bisexuals; the poor and working class; and younger and older adults (<http://sjc.wustl.edu/aboutsj.shtml>, accessed October 10, 2006).

Essential to the success of this new social justice focused institution is the infusion of it throughout the entire campus community. As pointed out by Terrell, an administrator in the Office for the Social Justice Initiative:

“When you change a mission like that, you probably have pockets of people doing different things. And he [Dr. K] thought it would be good if there was one central office that can coalesce the social justice mission. So, this year he came up with the Social Justice Initiative, the Office of the Social Justice Initiative.”

The creation of this office truly allows the social justice language and action to be recognized and embraced across the entire campus. The operationalization of “Think Justice” is discussed at length as a separate theme later in this chapter. While the new mission drove the major repositioning of the college, it precipitated a number of other changes, including increased academic standards.

### **Rebuilding PSC academically.**

From an administration perspective, PSC has embarked on several processes in an attempt to academically rebuild itself. Though not without difficulty, PSC now recruits academically higher-achieving students. According to archival and documentation data, the standardized test scores and average GPAs of entering freshmen have steadily increased during Dr. K’s tenure. Prior to his arrival, Dr. K stated that students with a score of less than 900 on the SAT and GPAs less than 2.0 were readily admitted to PSC.

However, the average GPA of students admitted to PSC is now approaching 3.0, and this is largely due to Dr. K's leadership in recruiting higher-achieving students.

Faculty members have also been encouraged to challenge the students more, as some have complained that they are not being stretched intellectually according to

Louise, a Professor of Humanities:

“Because that was one of the things they [students] complained about this summer, we're not being challenged enough. I thought, okay. So, that's been really exciting. That's been really exciting in terms of getting the caliber of students where they can go out and really pursue and be and do the things they want to do, and a broader percentage, not that there weren't always those students here.”

However, the shift to increased academic standards has been met with resistance from some faculty members who argue that access is being decreased for African American students who are disproportionately affected by disparate K-12 schooling options. The following quote from John, Adjunct Professor of Political Science demonstrates this concern:

“[With the increased admission standards] we're gonna have generations and generations of African-Americans who are not gonna get an education. And so for me that's the kind of a moral dilemma, you know, when we have to, when you have an institution that's gonna shut out, you know, this portion of the African-American community. And I said, just look at the environment. I mean, we know the educational system is broken. Where are the efforts in trying to, you know, act as a buffer, you know, to try to see if we can take these students from where they're at to where they need to be.”

Although PSC did operate as an open enrollment college for a time, Ray, a professor in political science, argues that the institution never lost the core importance of excellent academics:

“In other words, okay, we might open the door and let you in, but whatever you didn’t have, you’d have to get before you can leave. And sometimes that was misunderstood. Believing that we’d just take anybody. That wasn’t the case, but we made it known, okay, we will help you get to where you ought to be, uh, or else you wouldn’t get out. And so we, we embarked on a, a program of saying, okay, we may not be able to get those students that we used to get, but whoever we get be it understood that you may come in one way, but when you leave you have to be the right way. And that was understood. And so we function in that way for a while. Now, a new president came in and he said, well, we’re gonna work on some of the academics.”

Administratively, the recruitment of academically higher-achieving students allows PSC to boast higher retention rates and successful employment for alumni upon graduation. The controversy surrounding the increased academic standards highlights what Minor (2004) calls a mission paradox, or a clashing that occurs between employees at HBCUs when incongruent identity claims are being developed. Said differently, recruiting a higher achieving student is incongruent with the open admissions policies embodied by a number of HBCUs today. The tension that surfaced as a result of this controversy is discussed more extensively in the challenges section of this chapter. For example, administrators talked at length about how the caliber of faculty has not kept pace with the increasing number of academically competitive students who are looking to be more challenged in the classroom.

Thus, the repositioning of PSC occurred across three platforms: newly hired administrators, the changing of the mission statement, and increased academic standards. This repositioning is the underlying foundation of PSC’s success as an HBCU operating in the economic downturn. However, the successes resulting from the fundamental shift

are also met with some challenges, which are described from administration, faculty, and president perspectives below.

### **Challenges to PSC Community**

The challenges associated with the major shift in identity claims filter through all of PSC's internal campus populations, including the administration, faculty, students, and the president. Challenges faced by each of these constituents are discussed at length in the following section. Most notable about discussions of challenges within PSC culture is that they are often discussed in tandem with ideas of how to solve various issues. The challenges discussed from administrative and faculty perspectives include aging faculty members, controversy surrounding increased academic standards, and the use of current technology. The challenges examined from a presidential perspective are characterized by having to manage tension between employees and forging a better connection to faculty. It should be noted here that student challenges are not discussed in this section and are instead described in the next chapter in the "highlights of the student community" theme. I have chosen to provide an entirely different section on PSC students because their leadership, advocacy, and experiences on campus warrant an entire theme on its own.

#### **Aging faculty members.**

Although not the sole challenge, PSC administration and faculty members mostly focused on an aging faculty and lackluster academics in discussing the challenges associated with the college, as evidenced by the following quote from Kelly, an administrator who works in institutional advancement: "...the current weakness on



campus is making sure we have very, uh, dedicated and fired up faculty to meet the challenges of these new students that are coming in.” Further demonstrating the propensity of this as a major challenge according to administrators is a quote from Albert, a financial officer: “We pretty well have an aging faculty. Okay? Two years ago, and I don’t know what the number is today. Two years ago, the average age of our faculty was 59 years old.”

This information is not a total surprise, as there is often an ideological divide between administration and faculty in institutions of higher education (Fernandez, 2008). Additionally, while Dr. K could hire a new administration that fell in line with his vision for the college, tenure and promotion rules would not allow him to insist upon the resignation of faculty members. This information is evidenced in the faculty members’ characterization of challenges as well; those professors I interviewed agreed with the notion asserted by Kelly that: “...from the faculty ranks there’s 20 to 25% that just, it’s time to go home, or time to go somewhere else.”

From an organizational identity standpoint, the faculty challenges are particularly destructive to the repositioning of the institution that boosted its external reputation. In other words, recruiting academically higher-achieving students who then come to PSC and are not challenged in their courses represents a disconnect between the image, or internal ideology of the institution and the reputation, or external perception of PSC. Reiterating the need for 12% of the faculty to move on to other professional endeavors, Albert stated the gravity of the lackluster academics effect on the institutional image and reputation:

“...and that very tough conversation has to happen sooner than later. Now, who is that person or how that process goes, I can’t really explain, but it has to happen or the school at some point, with all the credibility that has built up externally will lose it internally. So, I, I think it [removing 12% of faculty] can happen, but it has to happen sooner than later.”

In an effort to triangulate this theme of aging faculty as an issue to PSC academics, the first question with which I led the faculty focus group focused on that topic (I also wrote an analytic memo to myself later because I realized that starting off with this topic may be the reason why challenges were so starkly discussed with this campus population).

Although I expected some pushback or resistance from the faculty members, they readily agreed that lackluster faculty members are an imperative issue. Janet, a Professor of Biology stated:

“It is so true. We have certain faculty that are so entrenched in a way that they don’t want to embrace change. Um, we have faculty that does not assess what they do, they just do the same thing over and over and over and over again. Without assessing and seeing what’s new out there, to try to reach out to the students. We have a set of faculty that don’t want the relationship with students. Uh, and really, um, it’s of the mindset of you sink or swim, type mindset. And we have faculty that are not even in tune with the students at all. They’re robotic. They go up there, or they’ll pass out these little handouts, you [the students] do these handouts over and over again.”

Janet goes on to describe the unfortunate result the disengaged faculty have on PSC students: “And they, sometimes we have lost some great students because of the fact of non-involvement with the faculty member. And they feel as if they’re not being challenged. And that is the case. And there (are) times, just countless cases of students not being challenged in particular areas.”

As previously mentioned, these faculty issues regarding obsolete professors being discussed are not unique to PSC. Tenured, yet obsolete faculty members halt academic

progress at higher education institutions in general, not just at HBCUs and certainly not PSC specifically. But it is a well-documented concern amongst faculty and administration alike at PSC, according to information culled from interviews and focus groups. In true PSC fashion, this heavy challenge was also discussed from a problem-solving perspective, as Janet had ideas for how to remedy the issues stemming from aging faculty:

“And, um, even though the area is kind of changing because one of the things that Philander needs is an infusion, infusion of young blood. Um, and we’ve had a difficult time of handling those who have been here multiple decades. Um, and it’s a very sensitive issue. And, you know, they have given quite a bit to the institution, but at some point you need that fresh blood in, new minds, new ways of thinking, energy, to, you know, to move forward. Um, if we can figure out a way to get around that with the faculty that are sort of like, I call it, they’re just trapped in time, and not understanding that students have changed. I’ve been here ten years and I’ve seen the change in the type of students we have now from the students when I got here in 2000. And by me seeing that change, I’m just seeing things that I even have to do, you know, in order to engage them, to get onboard in the classroom. And if you’re not attuned to that, you’re gonna lose them.”

However, in order to infuse PSC faculty members with new blood, fiscal resources are crucial to recruiting high quality instructors. Both administrators and faculty discussed the hardship in luring newly minted professors to PSC without being able to offer a lucrative salary.

#### **Fiscal resources.**

Again, it is imperative to mention that the aging faculty issue is not indigenous to PSC; it is largely documented as one of the major challenges associated with HBCUs specifically and higher education institutions generally (Fernandez, 2008). At least part of the issue is exacerbated by fiscal resources, another challenge mentioned by

administrators and faculty members. It is difficult to lure new, cutting-edge faculty with somewhat limited resources for a competitive salary. Albert mentioned the fiscal strain of hiring newly minted faculty members: “From a fiscal standpoint, if I’m gonna replace that 59-year-old, okay, with a new doctorate or someone that’s out of school for four or five years, the salary is gonna be 25% more for that new faculty than the old faculty.” Such fiscal strains also surface as a challenge in conversations regarding alumni donation and giving, although percentages have significantly increased under Dr. K’s leadership, according to Shari:

“The alums in central Arkansas, quite a few, you know, we really need them to, um, step up to the plate. Because they forgot that they went here and, for instance, I put out an all post bulletin to all alums everywhere. We have some students who are here that can’t afford the books. Come on, buy a book. That’s all we need you to do is pay for some books, okay. Because it’s expensive to go here. This is a private institution.”

One faculty focus group participant said they are the lowest paid faculty in the state of Arkansas. Janet lamented on the difficulty of recruiting young promising scholars to PSC without resources for an attractive salary and benefits package, despite the fact that under Dr. K’s tenure, faculty salaries have steadily increased every year: “I mean we still need more, because I know like me, I need more people in my department. It is hard to recruit faculty. Um, when you think about it, an African-American Ph.D. finishing up in science, they’ll offer quite a cute penny.”

Regardless of the substantial evidence of academics and fiscal resources as significant challenges at PSC, there remains an optimistic outlook regarding the improvement of faculty members. Also tied into these discussions was the importance of

retaining PSC's values as a church-affiliated HBCU, as discussed by Ray, a Professor of Political Science:

“But we have access to more money now. It's more than we used to have, but compared to what our needs are, it's probably not as much as it should. So looking at the way it is now, um, we have more money, yes, but we're operating in a different time. What we would like to hold on to though is some of the values that kept us in those times and make sure they're alive and well today.”

Integral to obtaining more money allocated to faculty needs is the intricate balance of ensuring that PSC will maintain its core, enduring values of social justice and empowering students to be active in the community. Additionally, staying abreast of 21<sup>st</sup> century technology will help PSC faculty and administrators prepare students to be competitive in the job market, as it is a skill that is highly demanded. The following section elaborates on some of the concerns regarding the use of current technology in institutional operating procedures.

### **Technology.**

Another challenge articulated by PSC constituents is also pervasive and documented by scholarly research at a number of HBCUs: technology (Fields, 2008). The technological gap between aging faculty and new, technologically-focused millennial students is vividly clear at PSC. One administrator mentioned the fact that several processes (i.e., student record keeping) still occur manually at PSC even though a much more efficient process could be developed with the use of technology. Furthermore, it is important to Chance that PSC students understand the demand for technology skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: “We need to make sure our students are well equipped to manage technology. But to get things on a digitized plane to where it's much more efficient,

that's gonna be the legacy of people like me before we leave or transition somewhere else in our lives.”

One distinguishing factor about challenges associated with PSC is the fact that they are discussed in tandem with ideas for resolutions to address them, as evidenced by the preceding quote from Chance. While readily acknowledging technology as a challenge, he embraces it as his job to leave a legacy of enhancing technology at PSC before transitioning to another job or institution. Janet talked extensively about ways to increase the caliber of faculty at PSC, such as offering attractive compensation packages on par with other surrounding institutions the state.

While faculty and administrators readily agreed on aging faculty as a significant challenge for PSC, there are other ways in which these two campus populations fundamentally disagree. This disagreement sparks controversy at PSC that is manifested in the form of a philosophical divide between faculty and administration, and is discussed at length in the following section.

### **Controversy.**

There are a number of ideological battles that occur between PSC administration and faculty members. John articulated these differences to be quite divisive:

“I've actually talked to Dr. Kimbrough about this. Um, the faculty I've spoken with, they feel disenchanting and disconnected from a lot of the administrators.

It's almost like this gulf.”

The different positions from which administrators and faculty are coming is significant in these battles; one represents the best interest of PSC from a practical, operation

perspective while the other concerns issues from a value-laden standpoint. Said differently, faculty members have concerns regarding some of the conservative speakers who have been invited to speak on campus and the increasing admission standards of the institution because they seemingly go against the values for which PSC stands. But administrators see those changes as progressive, and challenging to the students because it provides the opportunity for critical discussion and debate. Perhaps the most controversial event at PSC from a faculty perspective is when Ann Coulter, famed conservative voice and author, was invited to speak for the Bless the Mic series. The Bless the Mic program is a series of lectures provided by prominent scholars, reporters, authors, and entertainers on the PSC campus.

Upon learning that Ann Coulter was coming to PSC as a presenter for the Bless the Mic series, several PSC stakeholders responded with uproar and disappointment. One of those PSC stakeholders is John. Although John was not working or attending school at PSC at the time, he heard that Ann Coulter was coming through his alumni association and immediately wrote an email to Dr. K expressing his outrage that someone with her espoused social and political views was welcomed to his alma mater:

“I told him that, um, the model that he used to bring in all these people was, was questionable. Um, especially the Ann Coulter piece because I thought that she did not deserve an audience on a black college campus. To me she’s like Hitler in heels, so it just does, there is no reason why she should even be on this campus. And that was just me, my own personal [opinion].”

This controversial issue will also be discussed in the challenges for the president section, but when I asked Dr. K about this he responded by saying he thinks this kind of controversy and tension is good, because it fosters dialogue. Being a social justice

institution does not mean aligning only with others who express the same viewpoints, but rather encouraging opposing positions to come together in engaging discussion. When taking that perspective back to John he agreed that dialogue with opposing ideas is important, but that there are other ways of achieving such a goal with a social justice lens. Eventually, Dr. K and John had to agree to disagree on this subject matter, and the same had to be done on Dr. K's decision to raise admission standards for PSC.

Prior to Dr. K's arrival, students with GPAs below 2.0 and SAT scores below 900 were readily admitted to PSC. Upon Dr. K's arrival, the institution was buried in fiscal debt due to students using financial aid despite not being academically eligible. The tactics of decreasing operational costs and holding students accountable for their payments were essential in getting the school back to fiscal stability, but it came at a cost for some faculty: PSC needed to recruit a new student. In an attempt to reclaim the elite status it once held before *Brown v. Board*, Dr. K began to recruit academically higher-achieving students and those that did not meet the new increased standards were not admitted to the university. Two faculty members in the focus group deeply disagreed with this new movement, as evidenced by a powerful quote from John:

“It kind of goes back to that, you know, what is the responsibility of the black college and the black community. And I guess that that's going back to Du Bois. I, I believe that the black college does have a fundamental responsibility to the black community and in regards to educating them. And you're right, should we be, should the institution be about itself and striving or is there a fundamental, is there a moral question to it. And I guess I side on the side with Du Bois because, for one, I am one of those students and, two, I do understand the lay of the land and I don't know if I could picture myself twenty, thirty years from now if the trends continue and black life just keeps going down. Um, I'm having this conversation with my children about what happened, you know, 21st century and, you know, black colleges. What did you do? What side were you on during that



time period? And why did this happen? I guess in my mind, that's what is turning in my head and so, and that's why I'm on the side of saying we need to do everything we can."

John admitted that when he attended PSC, it was an open enrollment institution and that had it not been, he would not be where he is today, developing the Office of the Social Justice Initiative and working as an adjunct professor. Similarly, Janet expressed regret regarding the increased admission standards because her son attends PSC and was also admitted under the open enrollment status. However, in spite of the controversy surrounding the repositioning of academics at PSC, John is beginning to understand the reasoning behind Dr. K's moves from an operational standpoint: "...and even though I understood, he finally explained his position about, you know, the profile of a student who wasn't prepared and it's linked to paying the bills basically."

This tension between John and Dr. K is a vivid example of the incongruence among new and old identity claims regarding the operating capacity of PSC and its moral and ethical obligations as an institution. It is also an illuminating example of what Minor (2004) calls the mission paradox that was discussed in the review of literature. However, not all faculty members wrestled with this new initiative of recruiting higher-achieving students, as evidenced by Louise, Professor of Humanities: "And so that, that, uh, and he has done a very good job in bringing in students with higher test scores and grade point average and so on. And so we're working in that capacity now, and, uh, I think it's good. I think it's very good." With the backdrop of challenges and controversy presented for faculty members and PSC administration, I will discuss the ways in which Dr. K conceptualizes the challenges of being the president of this dynamic institution.

## **Challenges for Dr. K as President**

Though he readily admits to some difficulties in his presidential position, Dr. K mostly has a good amount of autonomy and fun with his job:

“No, I’m just doing, I’m just having a good time. That’s what I attribute to me. I came here, I’m being myself and I’m having fun. That’s what I do. And for me it’s just knowing that this was a good fit and that they would just allow me to be me because I always tell people I can back up everything because I’ve got the data. So, it’s not just me saying let’s do this, do this.”

Most of the challenges Dr. K navigates stem from the aforementioned ideological differences between different campus populations.

### **Managing controversy.**

Managing controversy is sometimes challenging for Dr. K, because despite his bold, direct communication style, he is also introverted. He acknowledges a duality to his leadership because while he is diplomatic and encouraging of critical debate and discussion, it takes a large amount of energy to put out fires among his colleagues. He encountered serious tension at the beginning of his tenure due to the financial and accreditation status of the institution and probably took blame for that he should have, as he inherited myriad problems left behind by the prior administration. After getting on more solid grounding in the comfort of his first foray in college presidency, he learned how to temper his responses without being a pushover:

“Yeah, so I was, because I’m just thinking like, okay, you’re supposed to be the president, you need to go on and just be calm. So I’m trying to be presidential, but I had to just show the other side, too. But then I think the hard part for me is deciphering is it the professional ability, is it personal, and I think sometimes in a role when you’re on a small campus, and I was telling some students, they’re like, what part of your job don’t you like, it’s like sometimes I end up having to referee when grownups fight.”

### **Connection to faculty.**

Another major challenge for Dr. K is the creation and maintenance of a connection to PSC faculty. He may be student-oriented to a fault; so much so that there is a lack of a relationship between him and faculty members. He recalls learning of this issue from one his colleagues: “I was talking to a staff member and basically he was saying you should do more with the faculty. Uh, because they are just like kids, they’re jealous because you focus on the students. And I haven’t wrapped my mind around that yet.” When I probed him as to why he did not understand it as an issue he responded by saying:

“Because, eh, for me all the faculty and staff, everything we should do should be geared toward students. Um, and the grownups need to be able to take care of themselves. So, you know, he was saying, oh, let them come to your house, and let them blah, blah, blah, and I [said I don’t know about all that]. Because, you know, and I just know how, and that has been problematic in some places because then you say, well, these people are the president’s pets and they can do certain things, so when you start doing that, and that was the issue with the previous president, some people say well, these people are cool with her, these people aren’t, so.”

Faculty members frequently observe a noticeable imbalance in Dr. K’s outreach efforts to students versus faculty. Some of the emotions faculty members experience as a result of this imbalance include jealousy, hostility, and disenfranchisement from the institution. The same motivation and inspiration that transpires between Dr. K and PSC students is also needed for faculty members. John bravely broached a conversation regarding this issue with Dr. K after the president had come down hard on faculty to be more engaging with students:

“I went into his office and said, you know, I understand what you were doing, but you’ve got to understand that some of these folks are here because they want to be here, and you might need to, if you’re gonna say that, you need to say what you’re gonna do also with them. Some incentives, you know, because it’s not like they’re getting paid, you know, really, a whole lot of money. So, I mean you might want to find some ways to, you know, incentivize. You know, okay, we can’t, we can’t pay you this much but, you know, there might be some award for faculty or something like that. And I was like, you know, and from what I understand they want that relationship with you. But it’s like you’ve, and he was saying it himself, he’s like, well, you know, they’re grown folk, you know, and I need time to deal with the students. And I was like, but see you’re the president. You’re their president and they want to have a relationship with you and you need to be more, you know, kind of presidential and see them as a part of, you know, the whole entire school body. And I said, you know, and there are different ways you can go about doing that, but if you did that I think you wouldn’t have half the problems that you’re having because they just look at you as if, you know, you’re just on the students’ side, or students can come in, they’re undermined and...”

What is different and so effective about Dr. K’s leadership is that he was willing to listen to John’s concerns. Some would assume the common presidential reaction to be more autocratic and transactional; the faculty members either do as the President says or they are relieved from their position. But Dr. K leads a two-way street and tries to take in the constructive criticism from his colleagues, as demonstrated by another quote from John:

“I sat down and I actually gave him a list. I’m like, here are some things you can possibly do, you know, and you can take it or leave it. He was like, you know what, I didn’t look at it from that perspective. He said that. He was like, you know what, you’re right. He said I have been looking at them as if they’re grown folk, I don’t need to spend no time with them. I was like, yeah, you need to, they feel this way.”

Dr. K acknowledges that his disconnect with faculty is a flaw in his leadership with which he can live. That said, he is taking steps to foster more dialogue and social opportunities for faculty. He wants to create a professional development culture among

the faculty population. He envisions setting up a mentoring system between junior and senior faculty members to foster a stronger morale. He sees more strength in faculty members developing their own culture and agenda versus having a president who invites them over to his house for dinner. Still, he engages in efforts to address the matter:

“...but there are some things I’m gonna try to implement or do, like maybe some every other week, I just haven’t got into it yet, some breakfasts or lunches with a small group of faculty. Um, to do some things like that on campus that are sort of neutral. Um, but it’s just part of it. I mean part of my personality is, you know, grown folks have these agendas and everybody’s trying to get some agenda and students are just completely transparent. And so, for me that’s more refreshing. I’m going to lunch with students today. It’s not like, well, you’ve got to have your guard up because somebody’s trying to get some information out of you.”

Despite the various challenges through which PSC constituents have to navigate, the institution continues to thrive operationally from an organizational identity standpoint. Integral to this thriving are the central and enduring identity claims to PSC as an institution of higher education: the church affiliation and social justice mission.

### **Church Affiliation and Social Justice as Driving Forces of PSC’s Organizational identity**

#### **United Methodism.**

Philander Smith College’s affiliation with the United Methodist Church is both a central and enduring identity claim for the institution. As previously mentioned, it is the affiliation with Methodism that sparked the idea to have social justice as the focus of the institutional mission. When asked about the most salient aspect of PSC’s organizational identity, every administrator’s answer included the church affiliation, as evidenced by the following quote from Albert, a fiscal officer:

“ [We are] United Methodist. Okay, we very proudly, you know, resemble that and I think a lot of colleges nowadays they may be religious, started out that way but they’ve gone away from it. You know, they’re not nearly as into their faith and religion as what I think we continue to be. And, um, I think that’s a big part of it. And I think, uh, even the new employees coming in need to know that before they come. Okay? And say that, yes, we are a faith institution, you know. You don’t necessarily have to be a Methodist, but at the same time you’ve got to know what we stand for. And if you have some really strong objection to that, then you don’t need to be here. Because we want to make sure our students get that from every aspect. Okay? And, uh, I think that’s part of the characteristics that we will always have, and keep, keep close to us that a lot schools don’t have, you know. They may still have Methodist in their name, but that doesn’t mean that they’re still following those guidelines.”

Counter to some higher education institutions, the principles of the Methodist church filter throughout the campus community, and do not simply reside in the words of the institutional mission. For example, PSC is quite liberal and progressive, as Methodist principles dictate. An LGBT student group on campus, called “Be You” is widely recognized and supported by a number of allies. I expressed considerable shock and surprise to learn of this student group, as much of the literature cites HBCUs as institutions that are generally wary and not supportive of LGBT students and issues (Nealy, 2009; Patton, 2011).

However, students identifying as LGBT have advocacy from PSC administrators and fellow students, and this support is founded, in part, as a result of the embodiment of Methodist principles explained by Kelley:

“And, and an example of that is our, I mean we don’t hide from LBGT, and the Methodist doesn’t hide from it. Well, if you’re gonna be bold enough to have Think Justice as your tagline, then you better live it. Because it, it isn’t just think justice on things that we agree with, it’s think justice from an overall societal standpoint.”

United Methodism filters through the entire campus community of PSC, and manifests quite vividly among students. Two students were involved in faith-based organizations on campus; one being in the church choir and the other serving on the inter-faith council. Andrew, the President of the Student Government Association (SGA) does not identify as United Methodist, but discussed his respect for the principles of it that are infused on campus. David, a sophomore who also serves on the SGA council, said that even in that position he has the opportunity to “bring Christ into the institution.” When I asked David to describe a unique aspect of PSC he answered with the following vignette regarding the Methodist affiliation:

“We are Methodist affiliated so it’s a great institution to, um, come and experience Christ and to be able to be in an environment where you can be saved and still be a college student. And so, and that’s a lot that I find that’s hard for Christians, especially young people that go to college away. So many times they get into institutions and around the crowd and, um, it’s really not a Christian environment. And, of course, that happens everywhere, but one thing I can say is that you have the ability to, to be able to be in a Christian environment, if you will. So that’s one thing that Philander, too, has to offer.”

Unique to the Christian environment at PSC is its willingness to address controversial issues that do not necessarily align with some Christian values, such as premarital sex. I already mentioned “Sex Week” and interviewing Tammy, a junior majoring in Education, about that event only revealed that students want more of them: “Like last Friday we had a sex education carnival which was, um, which I think was really good because we were trying to let students know to, you know, if you’re gonna have sex, the least you can do is be safe.” Upfront communication about commonly tabooed subjects on some religious campuses is corroborated by two campus events for

which I engaged in participant observation: a church service and a dessert reception hosted by the LGBT student group, Be You. Below is an excerpt from my case study notes on the Sunday church service lead by the chaplain. Again, these excerpts are provided in an attempt to triangulate data sources such as direct and participant observation with interviews and focus groups:

The Reverend's message that day pertained to everyone having "pre-Christ" days. Or even "pre-Christ" moments – he mentioned that some of us may have had those moments this morning, when we're yelling to get everyone out the door. Or some may have had their pre-Christ moments last night while out dancing. These comments were hilarious and met with uproars of laughter and applause. But he encouraged everyone to stay in touch with their Christ-like selves and to embrace the moments that He saves you, consoles you. The most hilarious line (which he admitted was not original) was when he said, "You all can recite and remember Jay-Z word for word! You need to do the same for J.C.!" J.C. being Jesus Christ. The entire church started clapping and laughing at that point.

The Be You dessert reception was a great, low-key event in which students, staff, and allies gathered and mingled over nonalcoholic beverages and delicious desserts including a delectable peach cobbler. I walked over to the event with a couple administrators who had worked with the students to get the details assembled. Tameka, who works in the Office of Special Events, said that it was a pleasure to work with the students and said they went through all of the proper channels to get the event scheduled and executed. She is thrilled that the event is occurring; she remembers when her office was considered one of the only safe spaces for LGBT students to feel comfortable on campus. Further showing the advocacy received from allies across campus is a quote from Andrew: "There's Be You, which is our local LGBT alliance. So, they have a...It's called Be You, it's a recently created lesbian, gay, straight, you know, LGBT



organization, and they basically function in themselves. They have active membership. They have people go to an event who aren't even gay or anything like that. They just go to support." Below are pictures from the event:



The church-inspired environment at PSC helps to keep students focused during times of difficulty or distress. According to David, the Religious Life Council's theme for the 2011-2012 academic school year is "...exemplify what you profess to possess." David explains that this theme serves as a reality check for students to ensure a consistency between their words and actions. These words and actions are more closely examined in the section delineating highlights of the student community.

Dr. K emphasizes the United Methodism component of PSC's organizational identity in addition to the students and administration of PSC. He saw an opportunity to tie in the institution's historically rooted relationship with the church as a unique aspect of the organizational goals and culture. He describes the church-affiliation as a unique aspect of PSC's organizational identity:

"I would say the, um, the religious heritage of it, the church heritage I think is very important. Um, it's probably been refined over time because in recent years, that would start with my predecessor. I think everybody knew it was a Methodist

related institution, but I think it's even more prominent now because she worked for the Methodist church for seventeen years, so she had a complete, I mean she was a Methodist person basically becoming a president. Um, and as a part of her time being here when this building was built, it was, the proposal was a joint proposal with the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church, which is why their office is here. So, it's been even more, you know, everyone knew it was a church-related school, but so, but that's been a strong tie all the way through."

Dr. K goes on to talk about the how the chaplain of the college is also integral to the institution because of his ability to connect with students. Because of Dr. K's student-focused nature, he decided that a chaplain who infuses Methodist principles into the operations of the college while simultaneously connecting with students regarding religious issues was a must:

"Like in Georgia I don't think they appoint the pastors to be the chaplain. A lot of places they hire their chaplains. We don't hire them. The church basically hires them. So, he wasn't the chaplain when I got here. We had, there was a person and she has a church somewhere else. So he was here as a pastor but started doing some things on campus, and then I think there was some little tension because then he was more engaging with the students than the chaplain that we had and I was, told the Bishop, I said, look, we need to let this be so he can do everything right here and integrate the college and the church together."

Additional evidence of Methodism acting as a driving force of PSC's organizational identity is Dr. K's encouragement to attend the college convocation, which he said is very important to PSC's organizational identity. Observing this event was a conglomerate of feeling like I was at a monumental celebration and sitting in a church service all at the same time. At the event that traditionally welcomes new freshman to the institution, the guest speaker was a well known Methodist pastor and he gave a powerful speech to the audience that was tinged with spirituality and motivation. Below is an excerpt from my case study notes I wrote after the event:

Next, Dr. Smith, an old family friend of Dr. K's and a renowned Methodist pastor, proceeds to give the keynote speech. He first touts Dr. K as a dynamic president. He is older and speaks with a slower cadence. He has preached since he was 17 years old. He encourages the audience to "Believe in wind when you can't feel it; believe in love when you aren't beloved; find answers in absurdity; blessings in blackness; inspiration in spite of injustice."

The campus choir also gave an amazing performance at convocation, and the powerfulness within the singing created a feeling of unity and support in the auditorium in which it was held; fellow students, faculty, and staff sang along and constantly applauded. Other campus events I directly observed lend well to the pervasive church influence within the institution, such as a press conference for the opening of a brand new residence hall on campus. The event both opened and ended with a prayer and blessing expressing thanks to God for making the construction of the new building happen. The heavy influence Methodist principles impose on PSC's organizational identity is corroborated from a variety of sources of information including direct observations and the formation of it as a major theme from administration, alumni, and presidential interviews.

The overlap of the church affiliation and social justice mission is so apparent that it is difficult to talk about the former without mentioning the latter. However, I specifically separated them as distinct themes because both serve as significant identity claims to the institution. While the process of adopting social justice as an institutional mission was discussed earlier, the ways in which it is enacted on campus will now be examined. The following section delineates the specifics of how social justice drives the operations of PSC.

### **Operationalization of social justice.**

The approach to embracing a social justice mission at PSC is systematic, and embedded within each respective campus community: students, faculty, and administrators. Chance, an administrator who works in the Development Office, discusses how administrators and students alike embrace social justice principles: “We try to nurture and create a well-rounded student. Well-rounded meaning not only do you have an academic background, but you have service affiliation, um, extracurricular activities, that you know how to go into public and into the community and be a pillar in the community.”

Further exemplifying the systematic nature of and approach to the social justice mission at PSC is the uniform language and principles understood and exuded by the administration. Chance continues to talk about the pervasiveness of social justice throughout the campus community:

“It, it gives every level at Philander Smith from senior administration all the way down, something that we can all be aware of and buy into. Uh, I’ve worked at three other campuses, and you always say, well, we’re here for the students and we want to contribute to the region, or the area, the region, the state, the region, but having that social justice overtone and everybody understanding and knowing our mission statement, and everybody understanding and knowing our, uh, tagline of think justice, it just helps make things more consistent in how we look and how we, we can all go out and say the, give the same message about what we’re about so that consistency makes a big difference.”

Thus, a culture is created in which the “Think Justice” tagline is visible throughout the campus and enacted from a top-bottom and bottom-up standpoint. The social justice mission does not rest solely with the students at PSC, even though Dr. K did say that part of the reasoning behind embracing a social justice mission was to cultivate

socially conscious students. The Office of the Social Justice Initiative on campus works to ensure that a social justice orientation is incorporated into aspects of the curriculum by faculty and student programs by administrators. Shari, the Director for Marketing and PR ties these efforts together by visually promoting the institution through a social justice lens: “Now, when I wrote that PR strategy for Philander Smith, I tied the social justice motto and mission all through it, because that’s our brand. That’s what I sell.”

Surprisingly, discussions of the church-affiliation as a driving force of PSC’s organizational identity did not surface during faculty interviews. Social justice certainly came up, however, and that may be due to the fact that one of the faculty interviewees also works in the Office of the Social Justice Initiative. Other faculty members mentioned the importance of cultivating socially-conscious students and that the new initiative helped to spearhead that movement. The overtone of social justice as the mission and tagline of PSC is clearly present and John is currently working to ensure that it is weaved into every thread of the organizational culture and remains integral to the identity of PSC:

“[I want to] move this from an initiative to an institute, hopefully an institute named after this man, James Cone. Um, and build it up, build an endowment, um, get the kind of national recognition, hopefully get him to deposit his papers here and then try to get some other folk like Jeremiah Wright and some other, then we would have an institute, we would have something that would be sustainable, you know.”

Furthermore, John sees the social justice initiative as a way to ensure that PSC graduates are grounded in social consciousness and he justifies it as in line with Du Bois’ vision for Black colleges: “I see Du Bois’ vision in what we’re doing. In fact, that is what’s guiding me in this office in moving forward. Um, and I think that’s what makes

us very, very different. And there are very few HBCU's who, who've committed to that.”

The communal nature of PSC which is undergirded by a social justice mission permeates the entire campus in visible, verbal, and action-oriented ways that truly define the culture of the campus community. Key to the operationalization of social justice on the PSC campus is the approach taken from a bottom-up, top-down standpoint. PSC constituents eschew the elusive, “ivory tower” intellect surrounding social justice and instead focus on practically and systemically embedding it throughout all facets of the organizational culture. The remaining theme pertinent to PSC operational success is the result of a trickle-down effect from that defined culture. The collegial environment that is well-fostered at PSC is characterized by advocacy and progressivism at this institution.

### **Collegial Environment**

The collegial environment at PSC contains four distinct aspects: progressivism, support/advocacy, higher purpose, and student-oriented atmosphere. While this component of PSC's organizational identity is not unique, it is both central and enduring. As previously mentioned, Dr. K wrote in his white paper that several HBCUs boast a nurturing, family-like environment. While this is true, it is still a significant factor salient to PSC as an organization, and this theme is triangulated across each campus population I interviewed.

### **Progressivism.**

The progressive nature of PSC is vividly demonstrated through the formation and official recognition of Be You, an LGBT student organization on the campus. However,

the institution is progressive in other ways as well, a result of Dr. K's risk-taking leadership. One administrator elaborates on the ambiance of PSC prior to Dr. K's tenure: "And, wow, I mean the way it is now and the way it was before Dr. K arrived, just it's a completely different institution. The, um, belief in it is genuine and authentic now." Dr. K progressively attempts to construct a collegial environment internally while simultaneously ensuring adhesion to external accrediting bodies, according to Tameka, an administrator in the Office of Special Events: "At Philander, well they've worked really hard to not only meet accreditation by the association standards, but they're trying to meet accreditation and have a high morale of their, um, of their faculty and staff."

Further illuminating the progressive nature of PSC is the creation of a new grievance hotline, in which students, faculty, or administrators can anonymously voice a complaint regarding the college. Ironically, the implementation of an anonymous complaint system is rarely needed at PSC again, due its progressive, open environment. Kelly discusses how the one student who has used the new hotline actually left his name on the message, despite it being an anonymous system. The progressivism pervasive to PSC culture creates an environment whereby people feel as comfortable voicing their disagreements as they do their congruence in different situations.

### **Support and advocacy.**

Support and advocacy are two aspects of PSC culture that administrators both provide and experience within the campus community. According to Tameka, she is encouraged to take risks within her job, a notion that goes against prevailing culture at other institutions of higher education:

“Philander has been supportive of almost everything that I’ve done, right or wrong. I wanted to have a concert when I was back in Student Affairs. They hadn’t had a concert in years. Like almost ten years. I wanted to have a concert, they said do it. And even though it wasn’t a major success, it was still something that they supported me on, my idea, my vision, and that’s how a lot of us, being faculty or staff, we’re able to grow because Philander does support those visions that we have. It’s not that, oh, it’s my way or the highway.”

Support at PSC among administrators’ stems from a sense of confidence in and belonging to the institution. Analyzing the data from an emotive perspective helped this finding to emerge. The collegial environment at PSC instills a higher sense of accomplishment within its employees and students, because there is no question that they deserve to be there. Shari, Director for Marketing and PR, sharply captures this idea with the following quote: “You don’t have to defend your space. There’s no affirmative action crap, and there’s no one wondering well why are you here.” The support received from peers across all domains of PSC’s campus allows the supportive environment to prevail.

### **Higher purpose and student-oriented atmosphere.**

The last two subthemes to emerge from the larger theme of a collegial environment are 1) a sense of higher purpose and 2) a student-oriented atmosphere. It works well to discuss these subthemes together because they directly relate to one another. My literature review chapter discusses the distinct purpose of HBCUs, as these institutions arose out of resistance from Whites to willingly be educated with African Americans. The goal of HBCUs was not only to educate Blacks, but to also holistically develop students from political, social, and economic standpoints that would allow them to astutely navigate and function in a racist society (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007;



Gasman, Baez, Drezner, & Sedgwick, 2007; Minor, 2008). This same sense of higher purpose resides within PSC administrators. When discussing the social justice initiative at PSC, Terrell, who works in that office, said the following: “We don’t want to just be a talking piece. We want to partner with and sometimes spearhead certain movements, missions, issues. So nobody needs anymore ivory tower intellect activists, you have to get down there and get your hands dirty.”

The student-centered orientation of PSC as an institution is a strong theme that surfaced across all interviewed domains of campus. The way this student-focus of the institution ties into the sense of higher purpose among administrators is demonstrated by a quote from Tameka, “The main goal of working at an HBCU is helping black students be prepared for the real world, or the world outside your college doors.” Administrators at PSC embark on this higher goal with the knowledge that they are not paid very much to do so. But the internal rewards that come with working for PSC negate the small salary annually earned: “Our paychecks are small anyway. They’re appreciated, but they’re not as large as, you know, one thinks they are. Um, and even though I’m not greatly rewarded always financially, I’m greatly rewarded because I know that my duties do not go unnoticed.” Further demonstrating the student-centered orientation at PSC is another quote from Tameka, whereby the centrality and foregrounding of the student is vividly clear:

“And I can see the seeds that I planted within my students five years ago come into fruition, um, at graduation. My last class that I brought in, um, it has since

graduated this past May and it was just tears of joy but I cried the entire three hours.”

Thus, the collegial environment at PSC is fractured into different characterizations and definitions. This progressive, supportive, student-focused environment is imperative and central to the institutional identity. The awareness level of the collegial environment among PSC alumni is vividly clear as well, and discussed further below.

### **Alumni perspective of collegial environment.**

From the social justice initiative, to the increased academic standards, the interviewed alumni generally had some knowledge regarding the matter. The collegial environment at PSC was initially characterized by alumni from an experiential perspective; Jean, a 1971 alumna remembers her own experiences at PSC over 30 years ago: “I enjoyed, I mean genuinely loved my four years here at Philander. Made some life-long friendships and, with instructors as well as students.” However, the environment is also collegial in the sense that the increased admission standards were attracting new students and faculty to the institution. Jean talks about her knowledge of the shift the organization made to focus on excellent academics:

“I remember when we were in school academics was really a big issue, and there seemed like there was a lag for a while but in last seven or eight years, especially under Dr. K, they really moved to academics. And I’m just so pleased to see the students who they are recruiting have built the GPA’s, and I think that’s the only way the college is going to survive in relationship to kids staying there. So I don’t know if that’s unique in relationship to other HBCU’s. I don’t know. All I know is that’s what I like about it.”

The knowledge of the increased academic standards instills a sense of confidence in PSC among its alumni. This feeling of confidence was not always present, as the college has weathered some difficult financial situations. However, alumni talked about PSC as having an “upward movement” a continual climb on the ladder to the success. Tyson, a 1959 alumnus, acknowledges the institution’s troubled past: “I heard about some of the bad things going on, but when I got active the college was making this move upwards and so everything that I hear about Philander Smith these days is a very positive.” Jean also comments on this upward mobility:

“We’ve had some, you know, we’ve had some rocky roads and, uh, some accreditation issues ages ago, and we’ve had some money to pay back. But all that’s been cleaned up and it’s just, this is our time. But that just shows you the things that are gonna happen at Philander. We’re not about to die.”

The collegial environment at PSC leads to a discussion regarding the importance of HBCUs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Alumni of PSC do not want to see these institutions discontinued; they believe in the power of being educated not only about various academic subjects, but also the complexity of individual identity and Black history. Although Ray was primarily interviewed as a faculty member, he is also an alumnus and provided the following poignant quote about the intersection of individual identity and PSC’s organizational identity:

“Uh, essentially because what seems to be missing from some other schools, some other colleges is an essential mold of telling you who you are. You, you, are of African heritage. There is a life, there is a span that you must know to understand who you are and why you’re here. This is one of the things that we provide. So, yes, we might provide a guy who’s good in chemistry or physics or political science or something, but that person knows from whence they came and why. And they understand the responsibility they have to maintain and continue. So when they say it’s not necessary, yes, you can get a brilliant degree from

wherever you get it, but somewhere along the line you need to know who you are. And this is what we do here. This is what, so when you say I am black and proud it's not a slogan. So, I say, yes, Philander Smith will always be needed because no matter how we slice the cake, there is still a need for that.”

PSC alumni evoked feelings of confidence, gratefulness, and sincere enjoyment when discussing the organizational identity of the institution. Their awareness of and constant support to the school and Dr. K as the president is vividly clear and concretely stated. The key aspect of the alumni discussion is the fact that the majority are not involved in the daily operations of the college, yet they knew intimate details regarding the institutional goals and thriving campus community. This gives credibility to the fact that PSC's local reputation is continually increasing.

Now that I have provided an extensive overview of themes associated with PSC's operational success and challenges, the next chapter will describe themes relevant to the leadership exuded by this institution at all levels. My intention in distinguishing the themes in this manner is not to suggest that no overlap occurs, as some of the themes presented in the next section are also integral to PSC's operational success. The distinction is analogous to a cause and effect relationship; the operational success at PSC directly affects how leaders are creating and experiencing change within the campus and the surrounding community. Additionally, a closer look at the nuances between how various PSC campus populations are experiencing the operational success of the college, such as the student community, is provided.

## **Chapter 7: Findings: Themes of Leadership Success at PSC**

The next four emergent themes derived from my research data illuminate how the leadership at PSC is successful in creating harmony between its organizational image and reputation. While the leadership primarily stems from Dr. K as president of PSC, the administrators, alumni, students, and faculty also implement initiatives in an effective way that allows the entire campus and surrounding community to prosper. The following themes to be discussed include: 1.) Dr. K's leadership; 2.) Success Tactics; 3.) PSC as a Pillar to the Community; and 4.) Highlights of the Student Community. Discussing Dr. K's leadership from administrator, faculty, alumni, and student perspectives will provide a backdrop with which to understand how his initiatives infiltrate the entire campus community.

### **Dr. K's Leadership**

Often praised as the major factor related to PSC's institutional success, aspects of Dr. K's leadership surfaced in every interview and focus group I conducted throughout this research. Described as bold, effective, and direct, his leadership pervades the campus community at all levels, from students to executive staff, and external constituents from organizations in the surrounding community. In addition to boldness, other adjectives describing Dr. K's leadership include progressivism, humility, transparency, care, and

accessibility to students. The following section describes the progressive and humble aspects of Dr. K's leadership.

**Progressivism and humility.**

Based on information synthesized from interview data, Dr. K leads the institution in a valiant, upfront manner that is effective and highly efficient. While the successful operations of PSC during the economic downturn cannot be exclusively attributed to the president, his leadership and student-centered focus was discussed at length in all interviews. PSC administrators describe Dr. K's leadership as bold and direct, with Chance using the metaphor of an architect:

“I was actually on the outside watching this architect go to work, watching this builder go to work. Uh, I was part of the focus groups that he was making reference to, to figure out how to rebuild and rebrand this institution. So, I got a chance very intimately early on to see exactly what Dr. Kimbrough was going to do.”

Despite his bold leadership and communication style, Dr. K is also willing to be humble. He is humble in a quiet way; if someone were not paying close attention, humble may not be a word used to describe this dynamic president. Chance wonders why Dr. K has chosen to remain at PSC for a tenure arriving at seven years:

“[I wondered] why would a young man that has his pedigree put himself in this type of environment when he can go to a much larger school and be protected or to do something else with a dynamic family that he had. But, again, as I told you, you never know how you can motivate other folks.”

Furthermore, contrary to the pervasive visual stereotype of an HBCU president with a lavish home and expensive car, Dr. K drives a modest Buick. A poignant quote from Tameka demonstrates the subtlety with which Dr. K humbly leads PSC:

“I said, well, why do you drive a Buick, you know. He’s the only college president I know that drives a Buick. He was like, you know, why do I have to have a flashy car. It’s paid for, the school takes care of it, that’s what I want, it has all the amenities that I need. I don’t have to have a flashy car to know that, you know, I have a decent salary and everything. I don’t have to show others. It’s all about being humble and making sure that others know that you’re here to serve the student body.”

To demonstrate his humility and student-focused nature even further, PSC constituents talked extensively about how Dr. K handles fiscal resources. He has refused an annual raise for six consecutive years and instead asks the board to use that money to further fund student programs and initiatives. Most recently the money was allocated toward student scholarships. When I asked him about this he shyly replied:

“I, um, tell them no, I don’t want it. If they give it to me, I up the money that I give to scholarships on campus. So, there has not been a net increase in my salary. Because the gap is too big. I mean the faculty salaries were atrocious. I was like, um hmm, we need to deal with this. It’s not about me getting more money. I’m focused on them. And see those are the things I probably don’t get credit for, but I don’t go trumpeting that. So I don’t take it. And when I’m ready to go make more money, I’ll just go somewhere where I can make more money.”

In addition to humility, his progressivism shines through his use of technology, as told by Shari,

“The high tech is Dr. Kimbrough. He has his own blog. He has a Facebook account and he has a tweeting account, and we, the Bless the Mike speakers who come here, we, we follow them on Twitter, we follow them on Facebook, we do the same type of promoting for them that we do, that I do for the campus. And you get to your core audience, your young people, I’m sorry, through social media. That’s where they are.”

Sewn within his progressivism and student-oriented leadership is his willingness to take risks and go out on a limb based on vision. Administrators particularly appreciate Dr. K’s support and advocacy in encouraging his staff to embark on projects that veer

beyond traditional guidelines. Young, dynamic, student-focused, and action-oriented are a few adjectives that comprise the whole of Dr. K's leadership style. A powerful quote from Shari ties all of these adjectives together, showing the truly layered complexity of Dr. K's leadership from an administration perspective. Shari is referencing Dr. K's embodiment of the social justice initiative and the white paper he wrote regarding its enactment at PSC:

“So, and Dr. Kimbrough, he took that message, he wrote a white paper, it went on the website, and it went in his speeches, and it comes across through him. And the way he interacts with our students, and the way he expects his staff and faculty to interact with the students. He wanted to see people helping move students into the dorm. Staff and faculty. Do you understand? There's not this, you know, ivory tower where....., you know, we've got all the knowledge and you've got to come and acquire it. None of that crap, no. Uh huh. What I have, I share with you to make you smarter, stronger, wiser, so that you can share it with someone else. Do you know what I mean? That's what he's all about. He really is. And he's not a snob. Not at all.”

PSC's presidential leadership is described from the progressive and humble standpoints of his personality. His leadership has a very positive effect on the campus community, to the point of being uplifting for the institution and empowering for its students, faculty, and staff. Evidence of this is provided in the following sections elaborating upon the transparency dynamic of Dr. K's leadership.

### **Transparency.**

Faculty members' perceptions of Dr. K's leadership are unique in that the longevity of their tenure at PSC allows for comparison of how the institution was led under a different president and administration. The differences are stark as night and day and attributable to the transparency and progressivism central to Dr. K's leadership. Dr.



K's characteristics of being student-oriented and empowering have garnered him a vote of confidence from PSC faculty. Similarly to the administrators, PSC faculty members define Dr. K's leadership skills as key to the success of PSC as an organization.

The transparency with which Dr. K leads PSC is especially appreciated by faculty members. Janet expresses the extreme difference from a previous president's tenure:

“But, um, but just not to feel as if you couldn't speak to anybody or to discuss what is happening at Philander Smith College. We were under martial law where we couldn't even talk to anybody, and if you talked you would get dismissed. You would be terminated. But he [Dr. K] will come and let us know, this is the predicament we're in, this is what we have to do, and this is what has to be taken care of.”

This transparency is a direct result of Dr. K's bold, upfront communication style. He is willing to start bold initiatives, even if those initiatives are being eschewed by other HBCUs. An example of this is the new social justice mission; John explains how this is a very unique approach to branding an HBCU:

“...they [HBCUs] get caught up in these academic fads like, um, we need diversity, and all these other kinds of, same initiatives a lot of white schools do because they need to diversify and they need, you know, this kind of approach, so they get caught up in these kind of mainstream things. But they don't look internally and say, okay, what can we offer the world. You know, what does our institution, what has it done, and how can, how can we contribute to the body of knowledge, you know, in the world. Um, and so in that respect Dr. K is, is different; very, very different.”

Dr. K does not shy away from controversy, further proving his bold leadership and communication styles. The president actually takes criticism and controversy head on, and encourages it. When he was receiving backlash from inviting Ann Coulter to Bless the Mic, he welcomed the conversation, particularly with John who said he was surprised to receive email responses back from Dr. K within 24 hours. The transparent

leadership exuded by Dr. K's upfront communication style allows PSC faculty to feel comfortable and supported as employees.

The academic and student-focused nature of Dr. K's leadership has helped PSC shine a different national spotlight in which it is portrayed as an academically challenging institution. Ray, a Professor of Political Science and 1962 alumnus of PSC takes notice of the different reputation being cultivated for PSC: "Uh, one of the things that Dr. Kimbrough has done is to show the nation and the world that we are a good institution. And we can provide you with an education that will make you competitive against anybody else." Ray goes on to provide a particularly poignant quote regarding the empowering aspects of Dr. K's leadership:

"Well, I think that he's fundamentally honest and he tells people what is and what ought to be. And he aspires to get the best from us and the best from our students. In other words, when he goes and tells somebody in an article that this is so-and-so, you can't prove him wrong. And so what he does uplifts and maintains us."

However, PSC's operational success cannot be solely attributed to Dr. K. His empowering nature is what will allow the seeds of success he has planted in the institution to grow and be sustained for a number of years after his departure as president. John discusses how Dr. K has begun to back away from media press and other PR events by asking other faculty and administrators to step up to the plate. He is working to develop, grow, and sustain a culture that is not as dependent on his dynamic presidency. Says John of these efforts: "I would say, I would say up until now probably 70% of it [PSC's success] has been him [Dr. K]. And now we're shifting, um, this year towards it, you know, breaking it from 70% hopefully down to like 30 or 40%."

That 70% of presidential effort put into the success of PSC is perhaps the foundational reason for why PSC faculty members instill such a high level of confidence in Dr. K's ability and leadership skills. The belief that Dr. K's leadership is key to the success of PSC from a faculty perspective is underscored by the significant vote of confidence they have for him, as explained by John: "Me coming here is, you know, giving back to my institution, my alma mater. I believe in the work that Dr. Kimbrough is doing." Says Janet, "...but I think that as long as we have, um, leaders like Dr. Kimbrough I don't have to fear. We'll be alright. We'll be alright as long as (he's here)."

**The caring mode.**

I began interviews with alumni by giving a background on the recent attack on HBCUs for fiscal instability and the deficit approach the media takes to any press regarding these institutions. I did this in an effort to provide context for my research because two of the alums I interviewed went to PSC in the 1960s when it was an elite institution as opposed to employing open enrollment policies and I was not sure of their awareness level of contemporary issues in higher education. These questions provoked a conversation regarding the uniqueness of PSC and how Dr. K's leadership has helped the institution surge to successful levels beyond what anyone could have hoped for. Jean, a 1971 graduate of PSC, attributes Dr. K's leadership effectiveness to his student-oriented nature: "HBCU's add, I think, flavor to a person's life, to be honest with you. And just a different character, and I think that's the caring mode. Walter Kimbrough, you couldn't find a better president for caring about the students."

Dr. K's notoriety and garnered respect on local and national levels leaves some alumni with fears of his imminent departure. While they readily acknowledge that the fact that he is so well-respected is a significant factor in propelling PSC to its pillar status, they are also apprehensive that he will take his talents elsewhere. It is under Dr. K's tenure as president that some alumni have just started being active with the institution, from a fiscal giving standpoint. Tyson, a 1959 graduate, explains his fear for Dr. K's departure and regret for not getting involved with the institution sooner:

“One of the biggest questions out in the community is that, how long can you keep your president? When is he going to leave? You know, that's always a, you know, that's the big question because Philander Smith now is, you know, really respected in the community and the president, many believe, is one of the key reasons. That's the reason I guess I'm active, and I wish I had been active even when it wasn't doing well because they did need the alumni to kind of pitch in...”

Alumni viewed Dr. K's leadership as key to the success of PSC. Sean, the 2000 alumnus I spontaneously interviewed in the cab ride from the airport, immediately said that the school has turned around as a result of Dr. K's efforts. He said that he most appreciated the fact that one of the first jobs Dr. K embarked upon was getting the liquor store located directly across the street from the college, removed. According to Sean, the liquor store was terribly misplaced and sent a contradictory message to PSC students. The level of support alumni have for Dr. K and PSC is enormous, but Jean wishes there was more:

“He has become so wonderfully known, but he still loves Philander, and that's the great thing about him. He wants, he has goals and visions and dreams for Philander, and he has support. And I just wish more alumni would support the visions of this leader. I believe in supporting leadership. I can say the same thing about my church and my home, I support leadership and so this is my president.”

Another poignant quote from Yolanda, an alumna who currently works in alumni relations on campus underscores the idea of his leadership being key to the success of PSC: “He’s the change that has brought about the change at Philander Smith.” The loyalty of PSC alumni to both Dr. K and the institution itself is clear.

**Accessibility to students.**

Along with the social justice mission and church-affiliation, Dr. K’s leadership spirals down and throughout the PSC community from top-level administration to the undergraduate students. Andrew works and interacts with Dr. K a fair amount due to his position as President of SGA. However, Tammy and David reported frequent interactions with the president as well, demonstrating that it is not only students with prominent positions on campus who are allotted bonding time. The fact that Dr. K teaches a class on campus further demonstrates his heavy interaction with and outreach to PSC students. I was luckily able to engage in direct observation of Dr. K’s class, which is a freshman seminar course, and see for myself just how much he engages students. As a class, they were reading Michelle Alexander’s well-known book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. Dr. K facilitated a discussion by first having all the students move their chairs into a circle, followed by asking probing questions regarding the assigned readings for that day. Of course, he knew all 12 student’s first names.

Tammy is especially appreciative of Dr. K’s leadership: “Like, I thank God for Dr. K and all he’s done for this institution. And like, he’s done a lot. And I haven’t even been here that long to know that he did a lot. Actually, I do a lot of reading [about him],

but, yeah.” David discusses how Dr. K’s student-oriented nature motivated him to ultimately decide on attending PSC:

“I mean at any time you can feel free to send Dr. Kimbrough an email and he will email you back. In fact, when I was doing the application for Philander he had in the application, he said, he said, I want you, I’m the only president in a college that if you email me, I will email you back. And in so many other words, I think he went on to say if I don’t email you back, then it was some kind of incentive, which I can’t remember, but I didn’t even bother to try it because I just knew I mean he convinced me enough that this guy, you know, really cares about the students, and he’s really interested in, in, you know, the students doing well. And even on freshman year, he opens his, his, um, he opens his schedule to allow freshmen to go to lunch with him, and he pays for us to go to lunch. And then, I mean he really sits down and he wants to get to know, you know, your background and what are your inspirations, and what are the things that you want to see happening, and what do you like, what you don’t like. So, he’s very, he’s very, um, he’s very great at doing that.”

The student-oriented nature of Dr. K is significantly triangulated; every single campus population mentioned the fact that he prioritizes the needs of students. This notion is underscored by the fact that on my very first day at PSC, there was a senior male student from Morehouse College who was shadowing Dr. K because he aspires to be a college president in the future. Below is an excerpt from my case study observation notes on that first day:

Upon arrival at PSC, I walked into the Kendall Center, where Dr. Kimbrough’s office is located. However, I didn’t see him and I stopped a woman to ask if I was in the right place. She said yes, and that he would be along shortly. When I stepped into his office, he was sitting at his desk and there was another gentleman sitting at a table not far away. Dr. K is tall, African American, with glasses and a huge smile. His demeanor is softer and shyer than I expected. He is wearing a suit, with a green and yellow (school colors) bowtie situated perfectly around his neck. [I wondered if bowties are a trend in the south]. I formerly introduce myself to the president even though we had been in contact through email several times. The student who was sitting at the table was from Morehouse College, and he was shadowing Dr. Kimbrough because he also wanted to become a president of a university one day. Upon hearing this, I said “How cool”. He responded by saying

that Dr. Kimbrough was “the most accessible guy I know”. [I immediately thought that this – a student shadowing Dr. Kimbrough – was a vivid example of Dr. K as a president, a professional, and a person]. I would later find out that Dr. K had this student set up in the nearby La Quinta hotel, had treated him to several meals, and truly let the student get an inside sneak peek into the life of a college president.

Students have as much, if not more, access to Dr. K as executive level administrators and faculty members. While this is somewhat problematic for some faculty members due to a perceived bias toward support of students above anyone else, it allows the students to feel welcome and important to the PSC culture. Dr. K readily admitted that his leadership and interactions with students is strong, but chose not to articulate other aspects of his leadership as the next section describes.

#### **Boldness and use of inclusive leadership.**

When I asked him to define his leadership style, Dr. K did not give a specific answer, except to say that it is unique: “My style is hard to compare because it’s real unique just how I operate. So I, you know, I don’t know if it’s good or bad. For students, it’s good because I’m just real active and engaged with them.” With the student-focused nature of his leadership acknowledged from administrators, faculty, alumni, and student themselves, it is clear that they remain at the forefront of his decision making processes and interactions. Also discussed extensively is his upfront communication style that results in transparency, inclusive research, and an ever-present boldness that pervasively shines throughout the PSC internal and surrounding community.

Wagener and Smith (1993) assert that bold leadership is needed for HBCUs in order to remain active, effective institutions. Dr. K embodies a boldness that is, as he

said, difficult to compare. When I first arrived at PSC, I had just missed “Sex Week”, an event in which safe sex behaviors are promoted and awareness of sex issues, such as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) is increased. After just attending the heavily church-inspired convocation event, I was flabbergasted to learn that the school had just completed an event entitled “Sex Week”. I had to write analytic memos extensively about my preconceived notions regarding religious-affiliated institutions, as I assumed that controversial matters such as premarital sex would not be discussed on campus.

However, I was proven aptly wrong, and when I asked Dr. K about it, the boldness within his leadership shone through:

“So it’s like everybody knows that I come from a real strong Methodist pedigree. But, you know, I’m just honest about the issues that are going on in our country. And I think that some of our board people are probably a little apprehensive about it, but then we have, you know, the first black Surgeon General, Joycelyn Elders, is on our board. Now, she got in a lot of trouble when Clinton appointed her because she was talking about sex and masturbation and stuff. Well, she’s on our board now, so if I’ve got Dr. Elders on my board and I say I’m going to do some sex education, nobody’s going to say anything because I’ve got a former Surgeon General right there saying, yes, I’m going to call Trojan and have them, because she’s on their board, and I’m gonna have them send you some condoms. And I said I know I’ve got her, and I just looked at some of the research that says you have this group of people, African-Americans, and this study that talked about how we’re the most religious group of any group on campus, yet, you know, our families are the most jacked up, we have the highest rate of STDs... out of wedlock births. There’s a disconnect. So we can’t just keep saying we’re all holy because we have more problems with the connection than anybody else. So, I was like, we’ve got to have that conversation. So I said, people are probably nervous but I’ve been here long enough now so it was like they just sort of know how I[work] and they just sort of let me alone because nothing, it doesn’t ever go poorly, we don’t get a bad rap about it.”

As a result of sex week, over 150 students at PSC proactively got tested for an STD. A couple informal interviews with students revealed that they enjoyed the



conversations, and that it was actually relieving to talk about things that people sometimes refuse to acknowledge. Another vivid example of Dr. K's boldness stems from his response to the controversy surrounding his initiative to increase academic standards at PSC. He indirectly addresses that controversy in a quote that is discussing his upfront nature of confronting the dip in retention experienced by the college during the 2010-2011 academic year:

“Right, exactly, so if I say this is important, then I have to make sure I keep saying it and when I'm on panels and I just say, look, we've done a good job, but we had a dip this year. I don't try to sugarcoat it. When I sugarcoat it I was like, but still over the last three years we're averaging 70% [retention]. That's the only way I can soften it. Um, because you can't improve if you don't, and that's why people sugarcoat everything. We're providing access. Yeah, your graduation rate is 10%. So what about the 90, what about the 90? What about the loans that they took out? That's why I don't like the access conversation because it's sort of like, that's your product, too. So don't give some wonderful story about somebody who was less than 2.0, they got a 12 on the ACT but they graduated. Okay, I don't care. I mean, and then my other question is after that, do they get a good job with that?”

The boldness with which Dr. K leads is moving mountains at PSC, though not without some resistance and controversy, as mentioned in the faculty analysis. But with that boldness comes an empowering nature as well. As Dr. K contemplates his future with the institution, he acknowledges that he has been there nearly seven years which is a long time. He has not formally announced his departure during these interviews, but was apparently thinking about it, because he is actively finding ways to ensure that the success of the institution becomes less dependent on his leadership and notoriety.

One of the most effective aspects of Dr. K's leadership is that he uses research and theory to inform the decisions he makes regarding PSC as an organization. This was

demonstrated repeatedly in conversations with the president; he used research to benchmark the increasing retention and GPAs among students during his tenure, he used statistics to implement more competitive faculty salaries, and he even used research to support his decision to change PSC from an open enrollment institution to one that is academically more competitive. If something is not researched and documented, then do not bother taking it to Dr. K:

“So, I mean, people have to, you know, when we have these ideological battles, you’ve got to come more, more with it, I think, because that doesn’t work with me. I need some, I need some research and some data because that’s exactly what I’m gonna do, and I’m gonna show you all of the comparisons. So I responded, I was like, well, let’s talk about this. I’ve got time today, tomorrow before I go out of town. You let me know when, but here’s all the data. Now, you’ve got to present some data to me. Just don’t tell me what you think or what you’ve heard. I need you to give me some data because I’ve just given you the data.”

With the background of my conceptualization of Dr. K’s leadership style, I will now discuss specific success tactics essential to the reversal of the campus fiscal debt. The success tactics range from organizational goals to rebuilding the administrative team. These tactics are discussed through the lens of the president, administrators, alumni, faculty members, and students. They are also discussed with a leadership orientation, as opposed to operational, to highlight the experiences of success through the aforementioned campus population lenses.

### **Success Tactics**

Success tactics were specifically asked about in an effort to unearth concrete actions that moved PSC from being mired in accreditation and fiscal disarray to an institution with an exceptional reputation. While the result of the tactics increased the

operating efficiency of PSC as an organization, they were created and implemented by various leaders associated with the institution. PSC constituents talk at length regarding the numerous actions responsible for propelling the institution upward.

The success tactics deemed significant in PSC's successful operation throughout the economic downturn are numerous, but administrators described three: 1) pruning operationally, 2) enforcing strict fiscal policies, and 3) implementing effective marketing strategies. These tactics are concrete and specific; they have a direct correlation to PSC's fiscal stability and efficient operation. They result from the broader, pervasive elements central to the organizational identity of PSC such as the social justice mission and Dr. K's leadership. Significantly reducing the student population, or what the administrators called "pruning operationally", was the first step on the road to financial recovery.

#### **Pruning operationally.**

Upon Dr. K's arrival to PSC, the institution was in danger of closing due to fiscal issues and mismanagement of financial aid. During an executive council meeting I was able to observe, an administrator from the Office of Financial Aid talked about what he called "Pell grant runners" or students who obtained Pell grant funds and then proceeded to fail or stop out of school. While this situation is now rare at PSC, there was a time when a significant amount of students were mishandling financial aid. According to Dr. K, the campus debt weighing down the institution at the time was largely the result of mismanaged financial aid and unpaid student accounts. The gravity of the situation was severe; Dr. K talks about his reaction to learning just how much sorting needed to happen to tackle some of the financial disarray (I asked him if he ever wanted to quit):

“Well, I had that the first week. Not that I was gonna quit. That was never an option. But, um, like midway through the first week, because like, it was like nobody really was here, it was the week of December 13. After like two and a half days of reading all this bad news that nobody told me, I just, at lunch I went to go, I went to lay down. I laid down on the couch. I was on the other side of town at Extended Stay. I’ll never forget it. I went and laid down for an hour. I was like my head was blowing up. I said, and so then that Friday I was going to meet with the board chair, and I typed out a list, I need to find it because I know I have it. I typed out a list of all the stuff I found and he laughed at me. And he said, well, we didn’t think you would take the job if we told you. I said, you’re right I wouldn’t have taken this job. I was like, man, you all got a mess, this thing is a mess.”

However, in the true, bold fashion for which Dr. K is known, he went about addressing the fiscal issues in an upfront manner that did not always go over well with his colleagues, but he did not let that stop him:

“And like I said, the toughest part, like I said, the turning point for me was in 2006 when I just had to let everybody on campus know, alright, look, we’re gonna fix this. I’m sorry, but I’m not gonna take any blows. You all aren’t gonna swing on me because I didn’t do this. So, I have to, it’s my job to fix it, we’re gonna fix it. And if you don’t like it, that’s too bad, you need to go somewhere because I’m fixing it.”

One of the first steps taken by Dr. K to address this fiscal situation was to immediately hire a financial consultant to begin clearing space at the table for more financial aid-deserving students. Students who were not performing at the required academic standard were not asked to return. Students who did not meet initial academic requirements including standardized test scores and GPAs were not accepted into the institution. Here is what Albert, a financial officer, said about the pruning process:

“I would say that because we had to prune, operationally, um, before the recession really hit. Operationally, and also student-wise. We had to pare down from where we were. Uh, [that] gave us a huge leg up when the recession hit in 2008, 2009, that we already had some preparations that allowed us to weather it a little bit better than a lot of other schools, HBCU’s and other schools combined.”

Although most institutions would attempt to increase student enrollment as a way of collecting more tuition funds to remedy fiscal strains, doing just the opposite is what allowed PSC to more easily weather the recession in 2008. Having a smaller student population meant having smaller operating costs, and the new adjustments needed in the wake of the 2008 recession were minor. This is further substantiated by Kelly:

“And it was mentioned the pruning or paring down and Albert was a part of that process from the very beginning of becoming very lean, uh, from a fiscal standpoint, and because we had become lean, uh, I think that the point being made is that, um, there wasn’t a lot of unnecessary funds being spent. With the help of the former VP of finance who brought in some people to help get us to that point to make sure that were using our, or being fiscally responsible, because we did take a major hit in enrollment very early on in Dr. Kimbrough’s tenure here, in the first year. Uh, so, because of that it has helped us to where we could stay on a very even keel from a fiscal standpoint.”

Dr. K also insists on the importance of decreasing the student enrollment:

“...we made some changes that cut enrollment a little bit, but we realized that after the Department of Ed came in that students were getting financial aid that shouldn’t have been getting financial aid so we had to tighten up our policy immediately. So we went from 949 students to about 750. But it was essential in moving forward.”

This would not be the last decrease in enrollment experienced at PSC. Upon hiring a new Director of Financial Aid, who is now the Vice President for Enrollment Services, the fiscal policies tightened up even more and PSC saw its student population plummet to 560 students, nearly half of its original population. As mentioned earlier, this significant decrease was timely because it occurred right as a major recession hit the economy in 2008 and the institution had lower operating costs as a result. Furthermore, Dr. K said that having half the amount of students with accounts paid in full was nearly

equal to operating with 1,000 students for whom the majority owed the college large amounts of money. Weathering that storm was not easy, but with time and an aggressive director of admissions, the enrollment slowly started to increase and is now back up to approximately 700 students. Wagener and Smith's (1993) finding that fiscal stability is essential for long term organizational health is heavily emphasized in this discussion of findings.

### **Enforcing strict fiscal policies.**

Revising and enforcing the fiscal policies at PSC also contributed to the now financially stable institution. Students were held accountable to the requirements of receiving financial aid. Implementing this accountability, however, did require some bravery as many were worried when the student enrollment dropped to nearly half of what it was prior to Dr. K's presidential tenure. However, instilling trust in the process proved fruitful, as discussed by Albert:

“Um, the, one thing we made the students accountable when we first came here. Uh, there was, uh, students weren't paying their bills. We put into place a policy and procedure that, uh, has improved every year. In this past fiscal year, net-wise we were down to like \$25,000 from a million dollars seven years ago. So, we're making the students accountable and once we did that, yeah, tuition dropped, I mean enrollment dropped the first couple of years. But since then we've picked it back up.”

### **Implementing effective marketing strategies.**

Lastly, in addition to pruning operationally and enforcing stricter fiscal policies, the hiring of Shari, the Director for Marketing and PR has also proved fortuitous for PSC's organizational image and reputation. Shari has embarked on a number of marketing strategies that shine a light on the operations of PSC in local and national

contexts. The internet is a huge helper in that process and she believes in the power of technology, particularly for the millennial population:

“So when I came on board, I started doing some editing and redesigning of the website, updating the pictures, updating the stories. I try to keep a running, um, news and events column on the far right side with fresh details, fresh information. Every week I try to change that out. And we also need to be more, um, in tune with our Facebook and our tweeting accounts. So, just moving us into the 21st century.”

Success tactics from an operational standpoint are characterized by increasing student accountability and staying current with 21<sup>st</sup> century policies governing higher education. Success tactics for faculty underscored Wagener and Smith’s (1993) research finding that HBCUs must involve faculty in strategic planning. The experiences of faculty members adjusting to this presidential call to participate in discussions regarding strategic plans for the college are described in the next section.

#### **Involving faculty in strategic planning.**

Stemming from Dr. K’s leadership are a number of success tactics faculty members described as essential to the elevation of PSC as an organization. In addition to Dr. K’s efforts to involve faculty with strategic planning and implement promotion and tenure policies (underscoring Wagener and Smith’s ((1993)) finding), faculty members, like administrators, discussed the repositioning of PSC as critical to the institution surviving the economic downturn. Though not without controversy, as mentioned earlier, the majority of faculty agreed that the shift to an academics-focused institution has allowed for a prosperous growth among and within the campus community.

Faculty members were initially resistant to be involved with the strategic planning of the college. It was a fundamental shift they were not used to, as basic principles of academic freedom did not reign under a previous president's administration. It also required a shift in thinking for academics to be heavily involved in a more practical activity of exploring different options for the organizational identity of PSC, which Louise, Professor of Humanities discusses:

“So that when branding first came up, and there was true resistance, you know, it's like why are we talking branding, we're academics, what, what, what. And then when the renaissance first came up, you know, immediately in the humanities we're like which renaissance, Harlem, European, what are we talking about. And, of course I wrote him [Dr. K] immediately and I said which one, you know, because everybody I met with was like which one, and at that point I was [department] chair, and he wrote back and he [Dr. K] said, any, but most particularly I'm talking about a Philander renaissance from the 1960's.”  
Despite the initial confusion, engaging faculty in strategic planning is one of the

most significant success tactics from a faculty perspective with regards to PSC. The stark contrast of this initiative compared to how the previous administration operated took some faculty members by sheer surprise, as demonstrated by the usage of a powerful metaphor by Janet:

“Well, uh, my analogy to it is being, um, an indentured servant at the onset under the prior administration and then being liberated or freed. But, um, it's what we experienced. Um, the lack of academic freedom, destructions of programs, um, release of faculty, great faculty, just because of voicing their opinion. And then with this administration it was nice to hear somebody wanting to hear what we had to say.”

Dr. Kimbrough wanted to hear what faculty had to say all the way from the rebranding of the institution to the development of a new strategic plan. Louise talked extensively about how Dr. K asked the faculty to read a book in preparation for a series



of meetings of which the purpose was to develop the new direction of the institution. Major decisions for the college are discussed and deliberated upon at faculty-senate and executive council meetings; the key component being that such decisions are discussed, and not already decided. Involving faculty members in leadership activities regarding the institution further integrated them into the campus community.

**Revising and implementation of tenure and promotion policies.**

Another key tactic to the progress of PSC faculty is the revising and implementation of tenure and promotion policies. The pervasive ambiguity of rules and regulations regarding tenure and promotion created an environment filled with uncertainty and even hostility in various academic departments. The lack of concrete policies allowed department chairs to retain their position regardless of performance. Such randomness in who was allotted control of academic departments did not sit well with Janet, and she discusses her appreciation for Dr. K's implementation of performance reviews:

“But also he's putting a structure in place to validate whether or not you deserve to get A, B, C, or D. And which is the appropriate thing to do instead of being something you pull out of a hat and you do. And I've seen that happen. And so to have transparency and I keep echoing that. It's a key with respect to, for me as an employee here to do my job and to feel comfortable doing my job.”

While he has spearheaded an upward movement with faculty through his transparent leadership, Dr. K is beginning to separate himself from the notoriety of PSC by asking other colleagues to step in as hosts or guest speakers during major campus events. As previously mentioned, this separation is causing some faculty (and

administrators and students) to fear his inevitable departure. However, John sums it up to the fact that sustainability is trying to be created:

“He has a national reputation, everybody knows who he is, but I think he’s starting to make a conscious move towards trying to say, no, it needs to be about Philander. He’s trying to put me out in certain places, trying to put other people in certain places, so his name won’t be attached to it. I think he’s starting to realize that this can’t happen.”

However, as much attribution Dr. K receives for the success of PSC, it is clear that it goes way beyond his accomplishments as president, and truly involves the convergence of an entire campus community working toward a common goal. Despite the enormity of success he has experienced with PSC, he provides a powerful vignette regarding why he will leave PSC in the future:

“I think, you know, an institution needs different people with different skill sets, so there’s some areas I’m strong and there’s others that I’m not as strong, and we need somebody who follows me who’s strong in those areas so we can be a well-rounded institution. And so I understand that and so just staying forever, and there are people who stay in presidencies twenty, twenty-five years, they get comfortable and everybody gets comfortable but they don’t grow. And I don’t think that’s good. And I don’t want us to lose momentum, so, um, I sort of think about, I guess my mortality, if you call it that, about being here. And I think about it more even, like I’m a baseball fan, um, and when Terry Francona left the Boston Red Sox, I’m a Yankees fan, so of course I don’t have any tears because he’s leaving, but he was, he’s been manager eight years and he’s just like, you know, it’s time to get somebody else. When I hear things like that, it’s like, yeah, I need to, so that’s the way I look at it. It’s like, you don’t want to be selfish, things are great here, I love it, we love being in Little Rock, but I don’t want to get stale and I don’t want the institution to get stale. Um, and that can happen, even if the board is just sort of like you need to stay, whatever we need to do to keep you. It’s like, yeah, but it’s bigger. People calling me, what are you gonna, what do we need to do to get you to stay. It’s like, no, when it’s time for me to go, I need to go and the institution will be okay. You can get a different person. And like I said, and the people who are looking for something else they can get that, because I’m very different from my predecessor. We’re night and day. We’re completely different. Um, but I think there are some strengths that she brought to the table that set it up and then there are some things that I brought,

and then if we get somebody who's different from both of us and do something else with it. So, if you look at it like that, it's a good thing.”

The success tactics of PSC as an institution with dynamic leaders are concrete initiatives integral to the continuous upward mobility of the institution. This upward trajectory is not limited to the internal constituents associated with PSC, however; the tie to the external community is heavily emphasized by students, faculty, administrators, and alumni. The following section describes PSC as a leading pillar to the surrounding community.

### **PSC as a Pillar to the Community**

The social justice orientation of PSC's organizational identity allows the institution to create, develop, and maintain extensive partnerships with several community organizations. It is because of this that throughout all of my interviews with the administration (and students, alumni, and faculty), the term “pillar to the community” repeatedly surfaced. Each time I visited the institution, there were numerous community events occurring, from a community awards banquet to the highly attended guest speaker Kwame Kilpatrick's (former mayor of Detroit) presentation. The Bless the Mic series, created by Dr. K, is a program during which several prominent speakers come to engage the PSC campus and surrounding community with a public presentation. This year the series is titled “The Sisters Speak” because the entire line up is comprised of distinguished women, including Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* and Mary Mary, award-winning gospel artists.

A significant factor in PSC's ability to remain a pillar to the community is the institutional reputation perceived by external stakeholders. Said differently, the relationship with the community is a two-way street, according to Kelly, who works in institutional advancement:

“In other words, the community is gonna have your back when you go through those tough times and things are not working out as well, if the community can see that you have been engaged with them, they'll give you the support that you're looking for. Uh, as you continue to grow, and you may have to buy land and buy property, you know, if you have good will in the community, then they will want to see you grow. And so it all, it has to be that synergy between the community and the school that allows you to grow anyway.”

The consistency between PSC's internal image and external reputation allows the school to continually cultivate meaningful and advantageous community partnerships.

This next quote by Chance who works in the development office poignantly captures the justification of naming PSC a pillar to the community:

“We as faculty and staff have opportunities to be, uh, on boards, commissions, and the such, and be involved here in town because of how the school is received. Um, as a matter of fact, Dr. Kimbrough is on one of the largest banks in the State of Arkansas. He's on the board there. I am the Vice Chairman of the State Banking Board here in the State of Arkansas. And the more we get involved in the community, and the more the community sees us, the more we actually grow because the firewall always has been and will be the community.”

The synergy between PSC and the surrounding community is corroborated by information gathered in alumni interviews. It seems that the pervasive improved reputation of PSC among external community stakeholders is what has increased the percentage of active alumni in Little Rock and nationally, though I did not have enough data to solidify this idea as an actual theme or occurrence. The school has gained a significant amount of recognition in the media since the implementation of the Bless the

Mic series which is open to the community. Tyson, a 1959 graduate, expresses his appreciation for the signature PSC event:

“Anyway, and I think that the whole business of this Bless the Mic series we’re getting a lot of, I want to say famous, but I don’t think that’s the term to use. But outstanding persons in our community coming from all across the country, you know, giving some good information for not only the students but the community itself. And most of the time in those sessions the auditorium is full. And it’s not that many students, it’s more community people. So all those kinds of things I think helps to tie the college’s community.”

Alumni were also privy to the community partnerships forming between PSC and community organizations such as the Bank of Commerce and Clinton School for Public Service. Such partnerships are keeping consistency with the organizational image and reputation of the institution; the internal espoused goals of social justice and community engagement is demonstrated through concrete relationships with community organizations. This consistency allows for a pervasive culture to be created at PSC that makes for a collegial environment in which the students, faculty, staff, and local alumni can thrive.

The students of PSC were a significant topic of discussion with all of the campus populations I interviewed. There is an unspoken acknowledgement, although at times it is spoken very loudly, that PSC is an institution that prioritizes students and their needs from academic and holistic standpoints. Although PSC has seen major transition, particularly in the past decade, one aspect of the campus that has seemingly been retained is the advocacy for its students. The decision to present this student-focused theme last is two-fold; I wanted student voices to justify and triangulate with previous themes culled from administrative, faculty, alumni, and presidential interviews. Secondly, the student

voices lend credibility to the effectiveness of the aforementioned policies and traditions introduced on campus by Dr. K, as they are often the campus population that is most heavily affected. The major highlights of the student community that emerged from interviews with this population are discussed below.

### **Insights from the Student Community**

#### **Bless the mic series.**

The number of campus events occurring at PSC on any given day can be anywhere from one to five. When I first arrived on campus in August, I attended five events within the first three days. These events are a rich portion of student life at PSC. One that received significant attention from students is the Bless the Mic series. Tammy talks about her appreciation for this event:

“I think this school is unique period. Um, well, besides Bless the Mic. Well, this school has Bless the Mic series, this will be I think season six, The Sisters Speak. And that’s when um, he [Dr. K] brings in like different celebrities, writers, authors, or whatever the case may be, and they come in and they like kind of motivate the students. They say, well not necessarily speeches, but they come in and speak to the students and, you know, motivate them.”

David sees the Bless the Mic series as an effective way for PSC to give back to the surrounding community:

“And I think that Philander is really a great example of what it means to give back to your community. Um, every month, just about once a month throughout the year we hold different people that we invite, Dr. Kimbrough, and all of us to what we call a “Bless the Mic” lecture series. And I mean, we, we bring in people as far as from Al Sharpton, Kurt Franklin, to a CNN reporter...”

I was fortunate enough to attend an event that was a hybrid of Bless the Mic and the Black Male Initiative program. Dr. K initiated the development of the Black Male

Initiative (BMI) program on campus in 2007 in an effort to foster advocacy and positive activity for male students. Through funding and administrative support from both of these programs, former Detroit mayor Kwame Kilpatrick came to campus and gave a compelling presentation. Being able to attend the signature event for which the campus is known helped to construct my own perspective regarding how the formerly troubled mayor could provide information to students from a social justice standpoint. It also corroborated a number of other findings including Dr. K's bold leadership and PSC as a true pillar to the community, as the auditorium in which the event was held was nearly full with PSC constituents and many community members. An excerpt from my case study observation notes detail the event below:

It is 7 pm on Saturday evening, and I am sitting in the auditorium (the same space that convocation was held). The auditorium is approximately halfway filled and there is a mix of students, faculty, and staff from PSC as well as members from the community present. The program begins by a graduating senior introducing the Black Male Initiative program at PSC. He uses light humor to ask the audience to turn off cell phones – and emphasizes that everyone should do that RIGHT NOW. He also reminds everyone that there will be a question and answer period and to please stay on topic with the questions.

Next, another BMI student introduces the program, and touts Dr. K for spearheading BMI at PSC [I immediately thought this exemplifies the student-focused nature of PSC; the fact that they are directly involved in high profile campus events]. He goes on to say that students can follow their work on facebook and twitter [Corroboration of PSC as progressive with technology]. He then introduces Dr. K who is going to introduce the keynote, Kwame Kilpatrick.

Points from Dr. K's speech are below (they are not verbatim):

- “I don't simply introduce a speaker...Our guest was in jail”
- Media won't cover this event when Michelle Alexander (author of *The New Jim Crow*) comes to speak. They are only here because of the controversy surrounding Kwame.

- I had to answer a wave of tough questions – Why would I bring Kwame after all of the corruption, the lies? I answer those questions with another question. How do we decide to forgive?
- I received a letter from a woman claiming to be from inner city Detroit saying that the fact that I was having Kwame speak at PSC made her son decide not to attend. But I realized that her signed name was different from the one that showed up in my inbox. I also noticed that her address was not in inner city Detroit, but rather a suburb of the city. So I invite whoever wrote such an email to actually contact me and be honest about who you are because I handle criticism directly; head on.
- Dr. K then goes on to say beautiful things about why he asked Kwame to come and that this is a tremendous learning opportunity; particularly for students.

As Kwame Kilpatrick embarked on a 30 minute speech, members of the audience appeared completely engaged; there was not the usual bright lights flashing from cell phone screens as texting occurred, nor were there distracting whispers or rustling throughout the audience. One of the most powerful messages he gave to the audience involved the importance of maintaining integrity with increasing talent and accolades: “My gift took me to a place that my character could not keep me.” He encouraged students to polish and develop their character with as much tenacity and persistence that they put into their talents, be it sports or academics. A hushed murmur traveled across the room as the audience reflected on the gravity and powerfulness of Kwame’s advice.

Within this event several themes converged and also became illuminated and corroborated against other informational sources, such as interviews. The boldness with which Dr. K addressed the controversial email from the woman in Detroit; the social justice messages woven throughout the entire presentation; the presence of several community members who introduced themselves as such during the question and answer period, the student-focused nature of the event as several were on stage with Kwame during the entire presentation. It is a true display of PSC’s organizational identity from



both theoretical and practically implemented standpoints. At the culmination of the event, Kwame was sitting in the entry way leading to the auditorium, talking with students and signing books.

### **Challenges for students.**

As positive and engaging the student culture at PSC can be, there are some challenges experienced by the students as well. Because there is such significant student engagement among numerous different groups and clubs on campus, it is difficult for the entire student body to come together at times, as described by David:

“Um, but I think that the college community could, could better come together and really express Panther pride and, um, ‘cause, of course, a lot of kids they come from different backgrounds, different communities. We have kids from Rwanda, the other side of the world, from Bahamas, uh, we had a young lady from, I think she was from, uh, Liberia or something. So I’m just saying that we have international students that come from all different cultures and background and experiences, and sometimes I think that, um, sometimes we tend to be, at times, a little too, you know, to ourselves, more or less.”

Not unlike students at other institutions of higher education, PSC students have been affected by the economic downturn in terms of the amount of financial aid in which they receive. Andrew said they he has mostly been unaffected because he attends PSC on a scholarship, but he knows plenty of students who did received a lower amount of financial aid than the previous year. He also mentioned that there are a number of work study programs, which are great for students because some of the positions allow them to develop close relationships with faculty.

The last challenges discussed by students are characterized by negative media attention for HBCUs and a desire for students to express more pride in PSC. I was

surprised to learn the extent to which students were aware of the negative media surrounding some HBCUs. Andrew talked extensively about how he had wanted to go to Paul Quinn College, but decided otherwise upon hearing about their accreditation issues. David said he is disappointed that the media does not cover more positive aspects of HBCUs:

“I think, like the media does so very well, and they’re really known for it, is that they always show the negative things. Um, so many times, we had so many, um, events that go on here on campus and a lot of the times they went under the radar, and so the media, it has a way of always portraying the negative about things. And the same part with, you know, how they portray the negative about, um, you know, the money issue. Of course, that is an issue overall, but every institution is not, you know, dealing with that issue so to label it for everyone is outrageous and absurd really.”

Despite the negative media, David wants to see more students appreciate the history PSC is making:

“So, I think if we, as students, really would, um, come together more and express more Panther pride and more pride in our school and realize the great heritage and the great shoulders of those that came before us that we really stand on. And I think that, again, goes with a part of maturing. So many times you look at alumni that, you know, they cry when their hear the alma mater of a school, and I think it kind of hits you after you leave a place and you go on to another chapter and then you look back and you realize this really was a central part of my life, and this was a place that I needed to experience to get me to where I am today. So, I understand it comes with time and it comes with growth, and as you mature in this life. But I think that that’s one instance that we could work better on becoming more, you know, enthusiastic and more proud of this great heritage that we’re able to partake in here at Philander.”

PSC students are the true pillar to the college’s organizational identity. They are able to authentically flourish and holistically grow within a rich organizational culture defined by advocacy and social justice. Students were prioritized in conversations regarding the rebranding of the institution, as a major reason for selecting a social justice

mission was to embark on the goal of cultivating socially conscious students. PSC students do not stay within the walls of their culturally rich institution; however, they are in tune with issues in the surrounding community through volunteer and internship efforts with a variety of community organizations; particularly with the Boys and Girls Club of Little Rock.

Now that I have provided a picture of PSC's organizational identity through the lens of its various campus populations in eight themes, I will discuss it through the conceptual framework and terms adjusted from Albert and Whetten (1985) that I presented in the literature review. Additionally, I propose two models of best operational and leadership practices based on the presented findings. An overview of implications and limitations will also be discussed. Chapter 8 begins with a comprehensive review of information, including a summarization of the findings.

## **Chapter 8: Conclusion: Best Practices of Organizational Identity at PSC**

### **Review of Information**

In chapter 1 of this dissertation, I provided a historical overview of historically Black colleges and universities. Essential to this chapter is the emphasis on historical underfunding and institutional racism for these schools, as both directly relate to some of the issues with accreditation and fiscal stability HBCUs are experiencing today (Jenkins, 1991; Wennersten, 1991). Chapter 1 also discussed the fact that current literature and media overwhelmingly provide a deficit-based portrayal of HBCUs despite the fact that several are successfully operating in what has been called a double recession occurring in the nation and higher education (Gasman, 2009).

Chapter 2 presents an abridged literature review of the conceptual framework through which I discuss both findings from the literature review and this research. Organizational identity and its associated terms of culture, image, reputation, and identification are discussed at length in order to provide sufficient context for the literature review in chapter 3, which outlines five pressing topics facing HBCUs today. These topics include: (a) student experiences, (b) fiscal circumstances, (c) governance, (d) accreditation, and (e) leadership. A second conceptual framework is used to ground and organize the information discussed in the literature review, developed by Wagener

and Smith (1993). This framework situates four central themes integral to the success of HBCUs including: 1.) HBCUs must build upon their strengths; such as the student experience, 2.) HBCUs need bold leadership, 3.) Faculty must be involved in strategic planning, and 4.) Fiscal stability is essential for overall functioning ability. Through the organizational identity framework I was able to construct a model of literature review findings (located on p. 105 and appendix U) that deciphered between identity claims which underscored the unique attributes associated with HBCUs from those that detracted from these institution's historical and current missions.

Prior to discussing these current topics, I provided an overview of the legal policies and enforced laws that significantly shape the standing of HBCUs today. These policies are summarized in appendix A. The major take away from the literature review is that deficit literature largely pervades available information regarding HBCUs, which significantly influenced my decision to use case study methodology (discussed in chapter 4) to answer the following research questions that focus on the positive aspects of these institutions:

1. What role, if any, has the organizational identity of Philander Smith College played in the institutional ability to continue successfully operating in the context of what has been deemed a financial crisis?
  - a. How does the campus community (i.e., students, faculty, administrators and alumni) define the institution's organizational identity?
  - b. What aspects of Philander Smith College's organizational identity were essential in the institution's ability to reverse the campus deficit in 2004,

while also effectively staving off potential detrimental effects stemming from the current economic downturn?

- c. What tactics has the leadership (i.e., administration and faculty) employed to effectively handle the economic crisis upon Philander Smith College from the late 1990s through the early 2000s?
  - i. How did these tactics align with or disassociate from Philander Smith's organizational identity?
  - ii. How did these tactics enhance or detract from Philander Smith's organizational identity?

A variety of data collection methods (i.e., focus groups, interviews, archival records, documentation, and participant and direct observation) through case study methodology allowed me to collect a plethora of information with which to answer the research questions listed above. Chapter 5 paints a detailed picture of the processes associated with data collection, analysis and coding procedures. A comprehensive description of the entire population sample (which includes the PSC president, administrators, faculty members, alumni, and students) concluded chapter 5 and preceded the presentation of findings.

#### **Summarization of findings.**

A total of eight themes emerged from the data regarding PSC from operational and leadership standpoints. Despite the overlap and intertwining between the eight themes they were separated into chapters 6 and 7, with chapter 6 elaborating upon themes illuminating the operational success of PSC and chapter 7 discussing those themes related

to the leadership success of the institution. A review of all eight major themes follows below.

1. **Repositioning of PSC:** the repositioning of PSC occurred across three platforms: the changing of the mission statement, newly hired administrators, and increased academic standards. This repositioning is the underlying foundation of PSC's success as an HBCU operating in the economic downturn.
2. **Challenges to PSC Community:** challenges are experienced across all campus populations at PSC. Administrators feel challenged to ensure that faculty and academics maintain a similar upward movement that the institution has seen from an operational perspective. Faculty members have a difficult time connecting with Dr. K and feel slighted by his significant focus on students. Dr. K does not enjoy refereeing the conflicts that can arise between and among PSC employees. Finally, students would like to see PSC become more integrated among different subcultures within the student body, such as international students and student athletes.
3. **Methodist affiliation and social justice as driving forces of PSC's organizational identity:** the church affiliation and social justice mission are the enduring and central identity claims unique to PSC's organizational identity. These two attributes inform decision making processes and pervade the campus culture in physical, visible and audible ways. Both are triangulated as central and enduring identity claims across all campus populations that were interviewed.
4. **Collegial Environment:** the collegial environment at PSC allows its operational success to flourish from all levels and within all campus populations. It is essential to

- the positive morale and productive nature that is woven within the institutional culture.
5. **Dr. K's leadership:** Dr. K's leadership is discussed from administrator, faculty, alumni, and student perspectives. His leadership style is essentially characterized as direct, bold, and highly effective.
  6. **Success tactics:** the success tactics associated with PSC's upward mobility are plentiful and characterized on organizational and leadership levels. They center on increasing student accountability with fiscal responsibility, increasing admission standards, hiring highly capable administrators, and creating policies and structures to sustain and document procedures. The use of research to determine institutional decision making also proved effective in PSC's leadership successes.
  7. **PSC as pillar to the community:** The synergy between the PSC campus and the surrounding community is realized through numerous community organization partnerships and interactions. This finding was corroborated against a number of data collection sources, including interviews and participant and direct observation.
  8. **Insights from the student community:** this finding allowed the voices of the real pillar to PSC as an institution, the students, to be discussed. Highlights included aspects of student leadership and advocacy on campus through various student groups and campus events, such as a dessert reception for the LGBT student group.

The findings illuminate the effectiveness of the conceptual framework adapted from the study conducted by Wagener and Smith (1993) (appendix B). Dr. K's bold leadership is consistently referenced as a major strength associated with the institution.



Involving faculty in strategic planning proved difficult in the beginning but significantly helped faculty feel more included in crucial institutional decision making. Dr. K's leadership in tightening and enforcing stricter financial aid policies helped the institution achieve fiscal stability. Lastly, Dr. K's focus on the students allowed PSC to build upon one of the well-known strengths of HBCUs, which is the student experience.

Now that a comprehensive review of information provided in chapters 1-7 has been presented, I will describe the essential elements of PSC's organizational identity through the lens of the conceptual framework developed by Albert and Whetten (1985). In addition to discussing PSC's organizational elements, I will extract larger implications relevant to the operation of HBCUs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, followed by a discussion of limitations associated with the study. Lastly, ideas of future research and final thoughts are presented in the conclusion.

### **The Organizational Identity of PSC**

In an effort to foreground the research participants' voices, I presented findings in the preceding two chapters from the perspective of the administration, faculty, alumni, president, and students. Now I will integrate the research findings with the organizational identity conceptual framework adapted from Albert and Whetten (1985) to show the complex web of relationships between the two. It is important to note that this relationship is not causal; it is difficult to prove that aspects of organizational identity are the ultimate cause of an institution's operational success. Rather, aspects of organizational identity intertwine with the operational and leadership practices at PSC to

produce a number of successes at various institutional levels and among different campus populations.

Thus, in answering the primary research question guiding this study, the organizational identity of PSC has played a significant role in its ability to continue surviving and thriving in the context of the double recession. In fact, it is the examination, determination, and consequential exhibition of the institutional identity that has helped PSC to become more positively integrated in the community; resulting in its increasingly successful operation practices. The financial and leadership tactics essential to the institutional success (parts b and c of my research question) include increasing student accountability, decreasing the student population to those in compliance with federal requirements for financial aid, and the use of focus groups and inclusive, bold leadership to propel the college into the community with a social-justice focused mission. The last component of my original research question inquires into how the aforementioned tactics align with or disassociate from the organizational identity of PSC. According to Dr. K, the success tactics heavily (and purposefully) disassociate from PSC's former, ambiguous identity:

“I mean, we compromised the identity of the institution as it was then, but that was, that was, that had to be done because the image and the identity wasn't good. So we needed to, yeah, it needed to be compromised. Yeah. Yes, oh, it's fundamentally different. It's a fundamentally different place. But that was the purpose. That was, that was the purpose. We just couldn't, you know, because I, you know, I did a lot of the focus groups, so I talked to community people, I talked to alumni. Informally, with parents of students.”

However, the leadership and operational tactics integral to PSC's current success as an institution are in very close alignment with the new, social-justice focus of the

organizational identity. The nuances of this identity are what drive the practices, traditions, and policies embraced by the college. I will now describe this identity through the lens of Albert and Whetten's (1985) conceptual framework.

In its most basic form, Albert and Whetten (1985) define organizational identity as the central and enduring components of an organization, which are also known as identity claims. These authors also delineate three different aspects of organizational identity, namely ideational (i.e., the answer to the question, who are we as an organization?), definitional (the central and enduring components of the institution), and phenomenological (the context in which organizational identity is being examined). The research findings from all interviewed campus populations will be integrated to examine the organizational identity of PSC from all three different aspects of the term.

Ideationally, PSC is an organization that cultivates students, faculty, and administrators who are social justice minded and work to develop themselves holistically with a commitment to the surrounding community. This is evident in all aspects of the institution, from the answers PSC constituents gave to interview questions, to the direct and participant observation events on campus in which I engaged and from the actions of the president to spearhead a social justice mission that permeates the entire campus. When asked to complete the sentence, "Philander Smith is..." the majority of participants answered with "progressive" or "phenomenal". The progressivism evoked by the campus culture encouraging the community to foster dialogue particularly regarding controversial topics is evident through the presenters who have been asked to speak on campus (i.e., Ann Coulter) and events like Sex Week, during which over 150 PSC students got tested

for a sexually transmitted disease. The consistency of this ideational aspect of PSC's organizational identity is therefore corroborated against several different sources of information, enriching the viability of this research finding (Yin, 2009).

From a definitional standpoint, the central and enduring identity claims innate to PSC are found in its classification as a historically Black college and the affiliation with United Methodism. Since its inception in 1877, those two characteristics have been retained through its initial status as an elite institution in the 1930s, the transition to an open enrollment school in the late 1960s through the 1990s, and now as it works to become more academically competitive. The HBCU classification and United Methodist affiliation is what was considered constant and essential during discussions of constructing the newer, social justice aspect of the institutional identity (Kimbrough, 2007). Doing so allowed PSC to maintain what Deephouse (1999) termed a strategic balance or a process during which organizations strive to be "as different as legitimately possible" (p. 223). Also important to note is that while the new social justice aspect of PSC's organizational identity may not be enduring, it most likely will become so over time. Whetten (2006) asserts that organizations are capable of making new commitments endure, thus allowing the social justice mission to eventually be both central and enduring to the institutional identity.

The physical, visible, and audible performance of the church affiliation and social justice mission demonstrate the institutionalization of PSC's organizational identity. In other words, the central and enduring identity claims are not just what top-level administrators think about PSC as an organization, they are rather pervasive to the

campus culture and institutionalized into the operation of the college. This underscores Whetten and Mackey's (2002) claim that "identity as institutionalized claims available to members allows organizations themselves to act as social actors" (p. 395).

The new social justice mission also reveals the power of identity claims to influence institutional decision making. Once social justice became the new focus of the image and reputation, Dr. K garnered support to develop an office titled "The Social Justice Initiative". This office ensures that aspects of social justice drive decision making in the academic curriculum as well as campus events such as the Bless the Mic series. The new social justice orientation also helped the "Be You", PSC's LGBT student group, become recognized as an official student organization.

The contextual or phenomenological element of PSC's organizational identity is characterized as somewhat tumultuous, with the storm of deficit media swirling around HBCUs. I have previously discussed the numerous accreditation and fiscal hardships that some HBCUs are currently experiencing as a result of a double recession in higher education specifically and the national economy generally.

Consistent with Albert and Whetten's (1985) assertion that it is during unstable situations that organizations seek to examine their institutional identity, are the actions Dr. K took in 2006 to reposition PSC. Beyond the similar characteristics attributable to several HBCUs (i.e., family-like, nurturing environments) there was no unique niche of identity to which PSC could subscribe. Upon learning this, Dr. K embarked on convening a number of focus groups to determine a new direction and identity for the institution so that soon thereafter, a new image and reputation for the college could be constructed.

This approach further justifies Albert and Whetten's (1985) declaration that identity claims drive an organization's image and reputation versus arguments that such claims are constructed after efforts to develop an attractive appearance to external stakeholders.

**Organizational identity claims.**

To further understand the nuances of an organization's identity, it is imperative to examine and arrange identity claims in a hierarchical order (Whetten, 2006). The highest level includes those claims that are indicative of social forms, categories, and group memberships, while the middle level includes established relationships with other organizations. The last, lower level describes institutional practices, traits, and traditions unique to the organization. Causal mapping was used to determine the hierarchical order of PSC's identity claims, as this method is recommended by Whetten (2005). It includes arranging research findings in an order that reflects the participants' voices and also aligns with Albert and Whetten's (1985) conceptualization of the associated terms. The following depiction represents the hierarchical order of PSC's organizational identity claims, in accordance with my research findings and the way Albert and Whetten (1985) outline the rules for ordering:



## Institution of Higher Education

- United Methodist Affiliation
- Historically Black College



## Social Justice Mission

- Academically Competitive & Socially Conscious Students
- Pillar to Surrounding Community



## Collegial Environment

- Nurturing, family like environment for students
- High morale fostered among faculty and administrators

At the highest and also most basic level, PSC is an institution of higher education, the most concrete indicator of its social category. The HBCU classification along with the affiliation to United Methodism further describe the social forms and practices of the institution, in addition to being the central and enduring components of its identity. An also important, but not yet enduring aspect of PSC is the social justice mission, a midlevel identity claim. The socially conscious goals of PSC justify its relationships to several organizations in the surrounding community. Lastly, the collegial atmosphere that is fostered by nurturing practices among faculty and administrators are essential, but located on the lower level of the identity claims ladder because it is fairly similar to what other HBCUs claim about their institution.

With the nuances of PSC's organizational identity claims and their hierarchical order fleshed out, I will now turn to the other concepts associated with organizational

identity: organizational culture, image, reputation, and identification. Examining each of these elements allows the conflation of the research findings, culled from a number of information sources, to be brightly illuminated while still grounded in the conceptual framework. A discussion regarding PSC's culture follows.

### **Organizational culture.**

Defined by Hatch and Schultz (1997), organizational culture “involves all organizational members, originates and develops at all hierarchical levels, and is founded on a broad-based history that is realized in the material aspects (artifacts) of the organization (e.g. its name, products, buildings, logos, and other symbols)” (p. 359). Simply put, PSC's organizational culture is defined by social justice. With the “Think Justice” slogan decorated all over the campus and the Office of the Social Justice Initiative, social justice permeates the campus in personal, physical, and visible ways.

In all of the campus populations interviewed (administrators, faculty, alumni, students, and the president), social justice surfaced as a major aspect of the institutional culture. Terrell, who works in the Office of the Social Justice Initiative, gave an overview of the four organizational values inherent to PSC culture which include professionalism, integrity, compassion, and conscientization. An interview with Tammy, a junior majoring in education, revealed that she tries to live by the social mission every day. Alumni commented that the new social justice is phenomenal. Shari, the Director of Marketing, discussed that she ties the social justice mission throughout all of the visual representations of PSC because of its centrality to the organizational culture. Thus, between knowledge of the social justice orientation from internal and external (i.e.,



alumni) PSC stakeholders and the institutionalization of it through the infusion of its principles in the academic curriculum and visibility of it in PR and marketing efforts, social justice pervades the environment of PSC at all institutional levels. The pervasive element of social justice in PSC's culture also makes it an integral part of the institution's image.

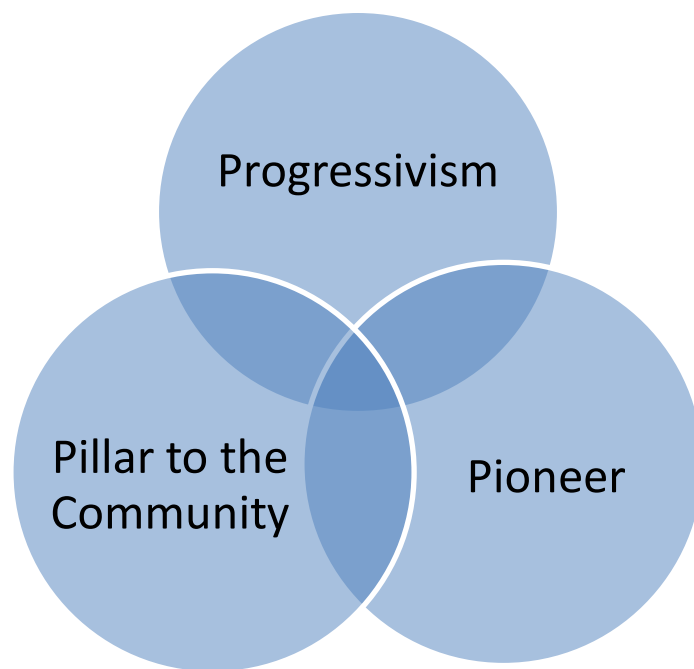
### **Organizational image.**

Whetten and Mackey (2002) define organizational image as “what organizational agents want their external stakeholders to understand is most central, enduring, and distinctive about their organization” (p. 401). Essential to organizational image is the element of transparency; internal constituents try to honestly present organizational identity claims to external stakeholders in an authentic way. I conceptualize image as an internal perception of an organization's culture and unique identity claims. Consistent across all sources of information used in this case study are the following elements of PSC's image: social justice, collegial environment, and progressivism.

Having already discussed the manifestation of social justice at PSC extensively, I will focus on the collegial environment and progressivism aspects of its organizational image. On one level, the collegial environment at PSC can be characterized by the nurturing and mentorship fostered among students, faculty and staff. However, upon deeper examination, the collegial environment fosters dialogue and allows risks to be taken without the fear of any repercussion.

With leadership that encourages students, faculty, and staff to take risks and be aggressive with their professional goals, PSC internal constituents have a sense of

comfort and confidence in creating programs and initiatives at the college. Dr. K would rather have a staff and student body that is progressive, instead of safe and stale. That is why the institution has been able to boldly confront issues that typically clash with and cause controversy at religious-affiliated HBCUs, such as premarital sex and conservative political values. The social justice element of PSC's image spearheads the numerous community partnerships maintained by the college, giving rise to a major research finding defining PSC as a pillar to the community. The college is a pioneer in regards to the programs and initiatives that are integrating the social justice mission and Methodist principles that lead to an indelible impact on the surrounding community. The conceptualization of PSC's organizational image is visually depicted below:



The integration of all three elements works together to comprise the essence of PSC's image. The progressivism and pillar to the community components are pulled from

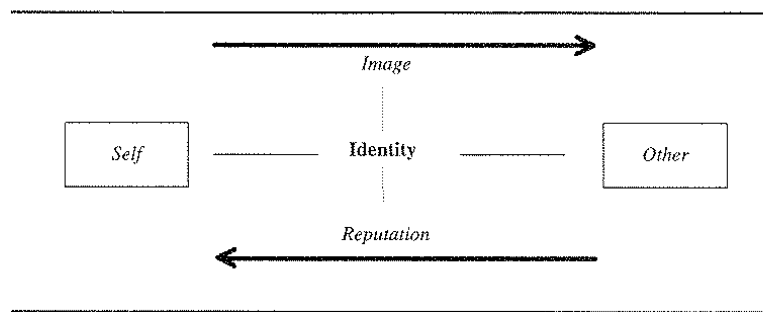
emergent themes in the data. The pioneer aspect is researcher generated; while participants did not classify PSC as a pioneer, it is evident through other informational sources including my direct and participant observation protocols, in addition to numerous documents proclaiming PSC to be a major factor in the progress of Little Rock. The strong organizational image of PSC is in harmony with its reputation, or the external perception of the institution.

### **Organizational reputation.**

Whetten and Mackey (2002) define organizational reputation as a “particular type of feedback received by an organization from its stakeholders, concerning the credibility of the organization’s identity claims” (p. 401). Image and reputation are two concepts that are often used interchangeably, despite the distinct difference on the former being an internal concept while the latter is external. Consistency between the two introduces the importance of transparency and gives rise to the credibility and authenticity of an organization. When inconsistency occurs between the organizational image and reputation, troubles can arise and lead to issues with accreditation and/or fiscal (in)stability. PSC administrators talked at length regarding the former disconnect between the college’s image and reputation and the effect it had on the surrounding community organizations. Kelly, an administrator for institutional advancement discusses this inconsistency:

“Whereas, to the community before they saw things but they felt something different. What it [PSC] was showing and what it was, uh, what was actually going on, on in the inside were, you know, it was a dog and pony show.”

It is not uncommon for disharmony to occur between organizational image and reputation, and while PSC did operate in that situation for a time, the current leadership and organizational practices have allowed the institution to develop a more seamless integration of the two. The following conceptual framework developed by Whetten and Mackey (2002) shows what it looks like to have harmony between image and reputation:



**Figure 1:** Relationships Between and Among Organizational Image, Identity, and Reputation

The framework demonstrates how identity drives image and reputation and when those last two concepts work both harmoniously and simultaneously, an authentic “self” of the organization is constructed from internal and external positions. PSC’s reputation is certainly corroborated against its image, as a number of external constituents spoke the same language regarding the institution as its own students, faculty, and administration. In my case study notes, I reflect upon the fact that whenever I mentioned my research to local community people at coffee shops, eateries, and the hotel at which I stayed, it was met with an overwhelmingly positive response regarding the institution. The hotel manager said that the school had really “turned around in recent years”. The gentleman who gave me a ride from the airport to the hotel when I first arrived said, “Oh Philander? That’s a great school now!” Even alumni that I interviewed talked about the pervasive

and positive reputation the college is gaining in the community. Tyson discusses his experience with hearing good things about PSC in the Little Rock community:

“I was talking to a lady, uh, in the Infinity repair shop, I had my car was in there and she was in there, and she was a white lady by the way, and she was talking about Philander Smith and what a great college it is, and I realized that that’s true especially in relationship to the kind of work they’re doing now. And I think that, you know, twenty years ago they might not have said that.”

Because of the consistency between PSC’s organizational image and reputation, the school is constantly gaining notoriety and fostering more connections with community organizations. This phenomenon is also causing more constituents to embrace the institution from an identity standpoint. The organizational identification of PSC is constantly increasing, as result of its positive, authentic, and transparent operating practices.

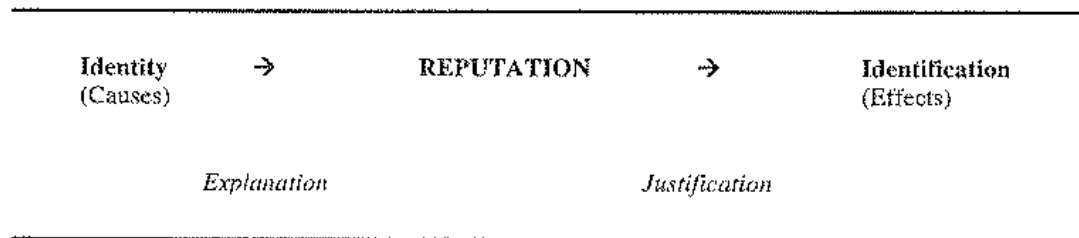
### **Organizational identification.**

A report by the Association for the Study of Higher Education (2004) defines organizational identification as a process whereby “organizational goals and the goals of individuals become increasingly integrated and congruent, a particularly desirable outcome for any organization” (p. 18). The result of this process is that individuals eventually incorporate the organization into their identity; they view it as part of who they are or hope to be. The following quote poignantly shows the process of identification for Tammy, a PSC student:

“I want to give my, my little overview of my wonderful, small institution. Um, I mean, yeah, I really, really, really like this school. Like I told you on Friday, if I had to go to another school, it would not be the same. I probably would not like it. I would probably not enjoy the rest of my experience due to the fact that this school has affected me so much. Like actually last year we had a little PSC

awards and I got the spirit award. I am like a Philander unofficial cheerleader. I really, really love this school. This school is like a part of me. Like, yeah. I couldn't trade this school for any other HBCU in the nation. That's how much this school means to me. I don't care how much better those other schools are, none of them compares to Philander Smith College."

Tammy has chosen to embody the spirit of PSC as part of who she is; the social justice mission she receives from the college affects her everyday actions in addition to her larger life goal to become a teacher. Although a cause and effect relationship is not present between organizational identity and operational success, there is one for the process of identification. Organizational identity claims cause a reputation to develop among external stakeholders. When that reputation is positive and in alignment with values held by external stakeholders, then the process of identification, or internalizing aspects of an organization into one's individual identity, begins. The second conceptual framework developed by Whetten and Mackey (2002) depicts this relationship below:



**Figure 2:** Causes and Effects of Organizational Identity, Reputation, and Identification

The identity, or social justice mission of PSC filters through the community, which causes an effective reputation to develop that then leads to internal and external constituents' desire to engage in identification with the institution. Tammy's statement above is a vivid demonstration of this process, and it happens on organizational levels as well. In other words, community organizations go through the same process as Tammy

and ultimately decide to foster a lasting relationship with the college. PSC has seen this happen with the Boys and Girls Club of Little Rock and the Clinton School for Public Service.

The major research findings from the data coalesce well within the walls of the organizational identity conceptual framework. Placing the findings through the lens of the conceptual framework underscores organizational identity as an effective model with which to examine current issues associated with HBCUs. The implications derived from the research findings are numerous and will hopefully positively affect the operational practices of HBCUs in the future.

### **Implications**

In addition to models of best operational and leadership practices, this research revealed a number of other implications relevant to higher education. Some of the implications are applicable to HBCUs specifically, while others are pertinent to aspects of higher education in general. There are of course, limitations in the ability of the implications to actually be implemented by other institutions, and these limitations are accordingly acknowledged later in this chapter. I will begin with discussing implications for other HBCUs and end with those that are more general and applicable to the field of higher education as a whole. I should note that all of the implications have some level of pertinence to the entirety of higher education, but some are to a lesser extent than others.

#### **Moving beyond lower level identity claims.**

When Dr. K began his presidential tenure at PSC, he tried to figure out the unique aspects of the institution by asking a number of students, faculty, and staff about the

strengths of the college. However, none of the information he gathered proved to be unique to the college; instead it was comprised of the same words used to describe the environment of most HBCUs: small, nurturing, family-like, authentic care. In light of the current competitive market, coupled with a double recession, Dr. K realized the college needed a stronger identity in order to recruit more students, faculty, and staff to the institution.

The social justice mission at PSC was born from the initiative to develop an identity that goes beyond the typical elements associated with HBCUs. And this mission essentially propelled PSC forward by getting a more solid reputation with community organizations that are embarking on a similar mission. It is thus imperative for HBCUs to consider going down the same path of figuring out their distinguishing, and not just enduring, identity claims which make them stand out from other institutions. Doing so will not only enhance the internal culture and image of the institution, but will also bolster the external reputation which will essentially result in a larger number of individuals and organizations desiring to identify with the school (ASHE Report, 2009; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). The actual process of developing a stronger identity is intricate and must be done in a diplomatic, inclusive manner. Fortunately, Dr. K did have these elements ingrained in the repositioning process of PSC and it represents another implication.

#### **Use of inclusive research to determine unique identity.**

As previously discussed in the findings chapters, Dr. K is very research oriented. The use of research and theory to inform institutional decision making is important on a



number of levels. Because every HBCU is unique in its heritage and surrounding community, getting the perspectives of several constituents is essential to ensuring that a product is developed with the expertise of those who have longevity with the institution. Dr. K could have relied entirely upon an external consulting organization to develop a new brand for PSC. Instead, he effectively convened several focus groups inclusive of administrators, faculty, students, and members of the community to determine a new direction for the college. The focus groups motivated one current employee to work for PSC while he was in transition from a former corporate business career:

“Because I was looking for that type of change, but even before that, if I had not had an opportunity to sit on the president’s community, uh, focus group I couldn’t have seen what the school was attempting to do before I met Kelly to begin with. So had I not been a part of that, uh, I don’t know if I could have made the adjustment the way that I did and professionally it has allowed me to grow, seeing a whole ‘nother industry, but it was, again, going back to the president and had he not had those focus groups for the community, and I was a part of that, I couldn’t have seen where the school was attempting to try (and) grow.”

By hosting community (and internal) focus groups, it allowed PSC constituents to have a voice in the development of a new brand for the institution. Faculty especially appreciated being a part of the strategic planning elements of the college, as their voices are often left out of such discussions. The use of research inclusive of several campus populations helped to create a unique identity for the institution that everyone could get behind and support. Also incorporated into the success of the rebranding campaign is the transparency with which it was conducted.

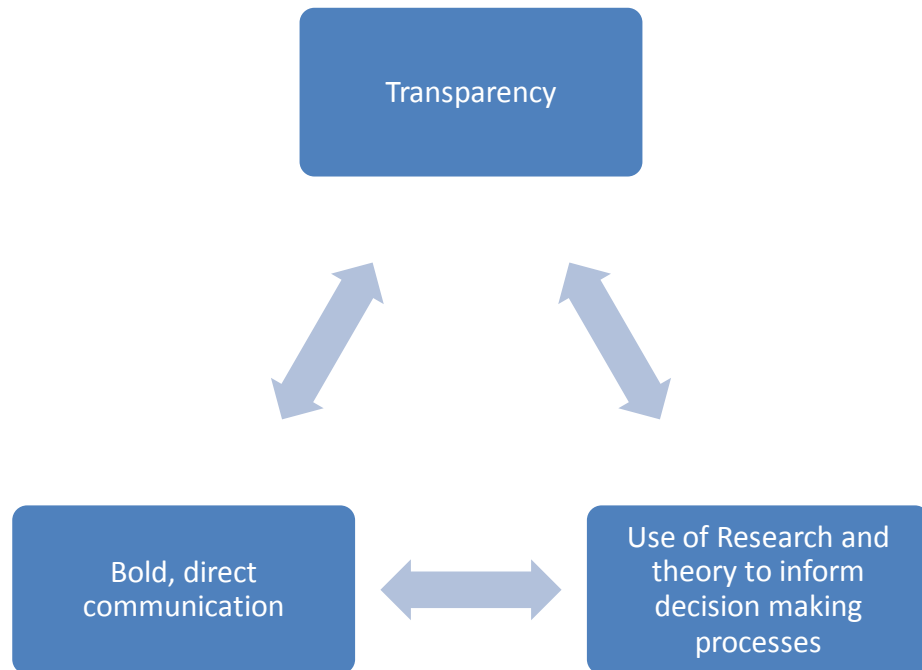
### **Transparent, dynamic leadership.**

It would be difficult to develop a model of best practices based off of research on an institution with such a dynamic president. If the success of a college is heavily dependent on its president, then how are other schools supposed to reposition themselves? While this is a valid question, the answer is simple: hire a transparent, dynamic president who is progressive and research oriented. There are some HBCUs already embarking upon this idea, as evidenced by a quote from Dr. K:

“Where you’re having, you know, the executive director for the White House Initiative he tells people in sessions, we’re not funding institutions anymore. We’re not advocating the funding of institutions, we’re advocating funding strong leaders. So I’ve heard him say that publicly. That we’re looking for leaders who are doing a good job, people who get it. And that’s where the money will go. So, there’s gonna be pressures on boards of trustees to get people who are much more progressive. That’s, and that’s what’s happening. Those are people that are getting the press. I mean the new president at Alcorn, he’s 39, he’s coming in, same kind of language, talking about matrix, um, accountability, you know, assessment. He’s getting press. People are buying into that, that language.”

One of the most effective aspects of Dr. K’s leadership is his transparency. Part of the reason he is able to lead with such boldness is the fact that he authentically informs administrators, faculty, and students of various situations regarding the institution. Last academic year (2010-2011) the school experienced a significant drop in retention, and he boldly brings it up at every executive council meeting to remind employees that efforts need to take place to make sure it does not happen again. I remember being at one of these meetings for observation and he announced that they would be performing an “autopsy” to determine the causes of the dip by contacting the students and finding out their reason for stopping out. The transparency with which Dr. K leads then permeates

the entire campus community to act in the same fashion. Tameka, a Special Events administrator, talked extensively about her appreciation for not having to act out of fear of repercussion, which is what typically leads to the development of inconsistency with what is reported and what actually occurs. The confluence of the last three implications is depicted below:



While the convergence of these three elements is essential to presidential leadership, they are also evident of a larger, systemic model that fosters an authentic, productive culture. The following model of best leadership practices is therefore attributable to campus leaders beyond the president, including administrators, faculty, and staff:



### Model 1: Model of Best Leadership Practices

By having employees embody the principles of leadership outlined in this model, a systemic approach to repositioning an institution will occur. Developing systemic structures that are sustainable within an organization will also make sure the success of the school has a wider foundation that goes beyond one or two key leaders.

#### **A systemic approach.**

Although obsolete, autocratic presidents are often the scapegoat for the problems some HBCUs are currently experiencing, the issues go deeper than that. The problems are systemic, on a number of levels. Practices become deeply ingrained under the reign of some leaders, and those structures do not become absent should that leader no longer work for an organization. That is why a larger, more systemic approach must be taken to

reverse a major fiscal debt and successfully reposition an institution, as exemplified by PSC.

An example of this systemic approach to repositioning an institution is shown through Dr. K's decision to hire a completely new admissions staff. The former director had unfortunately laid faulty groundwork with which to recruit and retain students to PSC. Upon figuring out that the admissions staff could not complete basic duties, such as calculating student yield, Dr. K realized that hiring a new staff whose skills were more conducive to the new image he was trying to cultivate was sorely needed. At an executive council meeting I was able to observe, Dr. K encouraged all of the present staff to thank the admissions team because they recruited a class of 221 students, the largest class the college has seen in several years. While I cannot be sure, it is fair to say that such an accomplishment would have been much more difficult with the skill set of the previous admission staff.

Also embedded in a systemic approach is the development and documentation of sustainable structures and policies that can be easily understood to a new employee. As I previously mentioned, practices and procedures do not leave with the leader who put them in place; creating sustainable structures helps said practices and procedures to remain consistent, despite new leadership. Dr. K experienced difficulty at first in his efforts to foster a community of dialogue, debate, and involvement in institutional strategic planning. Janet, a PSC faculty member, remembers being trained to stay under the radar and never voice opposition to anything proposed by the leadership. However, Dr. K runs a different ship, and when he would try to seek the opinions of other campus

constituents (especially faculty) he was often met with silence. Dr. K laments his experience with this:

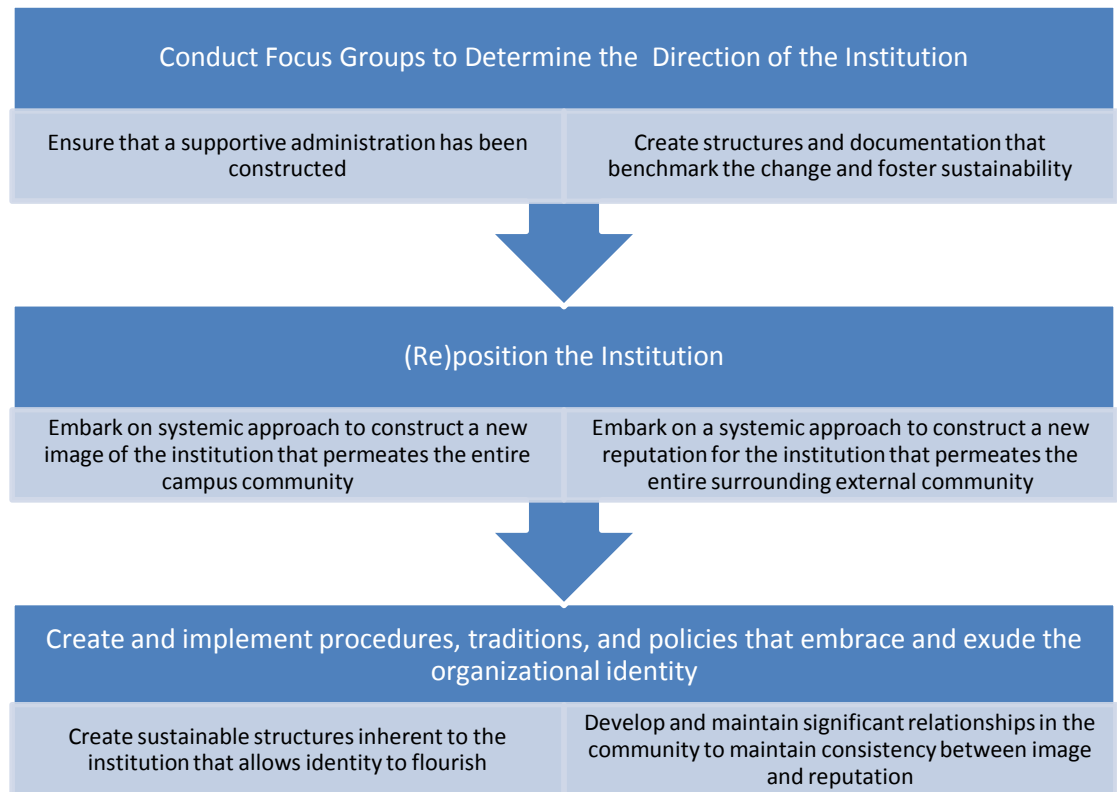
“And when I brought together those executive councils initially...they weren't used to getting together. And in that get-together I say here's a topic, let's talk about it. People looked at me like I was crazy. I was like, no for real, let's, no, let's talk for real, what do you think, let's have some conversation. And there's still some that just, that's not what they do. But, so everybody's free in there to argue, but I'm trying to get people on the broader level to say let's debate ideas and that kind of thing.”

So creating a culture fostered by open dialogue and transparency takes time and becomes sustainable when policies are developed and implemented to ensure it happens. An example of this is the new performance reviews that faculty department chairs now undergo at the end of each fiscal year to determine eligibility to continue.

Another example of creating sustainable structures is Dr. K's approach to cleaning up the fiscal debt he inherited upon his presidential tenure at PSC. At first a financial consultant was hired to immediately begin sorting out the money issues and collecting debts. However, the consultant did not simply come in, fix the financial issues, and depart; he actually stayed at PSC for three years. Dr. K made sure he trained the current employees on how to implement and enforce the new, stricter financial policies:

“I hired him sort of to be interim CFO. The VP at Spellman told me about this guy who was in Atlanta and, uh, he came out and visited, had a lot of experience, I was like, okay, come out here for a couple of years, get us set up, he ended up being out here three [years] and he hired everybody and trained them and then finally left. He's at Cheney now.”

The following model of best operational practices represents the convergence of my research findings, implications, and literature. It encompasses many practices that are embraced and exuded by the entire campus community at PSC. The model is effective from an all inclusive standpoint, as students, faculty, administrators, and the president must all work within its guidelines for maximum production.



### Model 2: Model of Best of Operational Practices

This model is both linear and hierarchical in terms of order and importance. Using theory and research is the first and very important step to determining the direction of an institution. The information gathered from such research will determine whether a new identity needs to be constructed and/or if a repositioning of the institution should occur.

In the event that either happens, a systemic approach must be taken to ensure consistency between the new organizational image and reputation of the institution. Finally, to create sustainability of the repositioned institution, sustainable structures and relationships must be accurately documented and persistently maintained. Ingrained in this model is the last implication, which is examining a repositioning of HBCUs as higher education institutions.

### **Reexamining and possible repositioning of mission.**

HBCUs were once the only option for premier education for African Americans. However after Brown v. Board, these schools saw their enrollments plummet as more students chose to attend PWIs. The reaction taken by these institutions to survive during that time was to practice open enrollment, thereby increasing access for socioeconomically disadvantaged students. This period lasted for 30-40 years, and a significant number of HBCUs still operate in that mode today. In fact, PSC was an open enrollment institution prior to Dr. K's arrival. Although it is still met with heavy resistance, Dr. K reexamined the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of practicing open enrollment. He also conducted extensive archival research to find out that the institution was formerly known as the "snooty school" one in which you could only attend if you had an excellent GPA. With the current options that students have for access to college via community colleges and for-profit institutions, Dr. K sees a need for a movement among HBCUs to reexamine their mission from a historical standpoint. His justification for this is exemplified in the following vignette:



“Even though, I’d say, I don’t know, I mean I think some faculty were concerned that we were recruiting some better students, because I had to have conversations on campus about the mission of the college. And people would say, um, well, our mission is to, you know, provide access to, you know, anyone, it was a like one of those page and a half mission statements. Um, and they said, well, that’s our mission, so you’re changing our mission. And so I did, with this executive council one time I did a presentation on our mission, and I did it from a historical point of view. Because I was like, you know, I’m a shade tree historian, and I know how to use archives so when I pulled out the mission statement from the 1930’s it blew people’s minds. Because it explicitly said we will only take A and B students. Period. I said, this is where it used to be. And now, and then I showed them when the faculty voted in the ’70’s and they said, well, every school wants the A and B student, Philander will now take the C student who can achieve if they have blah, blah, blah. I said, dang, by the time I got here, you all were taking D and F students.”

The major take away from this implication is that constituents affiliated with HBCUs should understand the institution from a historical perspective, and in so doing, consider repositioning the school to the mission it embodied prior to the Brown v. Board decision. The PSC community was much more comfortable with transitioning to increased academic standards once it was realized that the college formerly operated in that mode. It is also important to remember that there are several other options for access for academically underprepared students, as demonstrated by Dr. K:

“And we’re a private institution, too. So that same at-risk student can go to a community college for a quarter to a fifth of the cost. That’s a lower risk right there. You also then have the for-profits that come in and they’re straight open admission. They’re doing the same thing. And so my point is, I tell people the two-year institutions can provide access cheaper. The for-profits can provide access better. What’s your niche then? You can’t keep saying we’re providing access when I find two that can do it better than you.”

The implications derived from this research represent opportunities for HBCUs (and other higher education institutions) to take a second, closer look at their institutional identity. Upon reading these implications HBCUs can ask their internal and external

constituents a number of questions: Who are we as an organization? Is there consistency between our internal image and external reputation? What is our mission from a historical standpoint, and does it need to be reexamined and possibly repositioned? Asking and embarking on a process to answer such questions will allow HBCUs to re-institutionalize themselves in a way that does not overly impose external values from accrediting bodies, and instead relies more heavily on the experts who have shown consistent dedication to these institutions through their work, attendance, active involvement, and ultimate loyalty.

**Relevance of implications specifically to Black colleges.**

A number of historically Black colleges and universities are currently experiencing what Minor calls an “identity crisis” (James Minor, personal communication). Currently, the relevance of these institutions is being questioned (Leonhardt, 2011; Riley, 2010) and simultaneously, deficit literature and media is disproportionately allocated to Black colleges (Gasman, 2009). Despite a complex history that is laced with racism, systemic underfunding, and significantly less resources for success, HBCUs have endured to educate the majority of African Americans today (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007; Avery, 2009; Gasman, 2009; Nichols, 2004). Because the accomplishments of these institutions tend to get overlooked in favor of highlighting the financial difficulties some are experiencing, it is essential for HBCUs to embark on a series of steps to redefine their place in the American higher education system. That said, one could argue that the implications I have presented are not specific to HBCUs, and that any institution of higher education can take the initiative to move

beyond lower identity claims and embark on a systemic approach to develop a new or sustain a current, organizational identity.

While this is a viable argument, the importance of context is underscored in that assertion. Predominantly White institutions are not currently experiencing an “identity crisis”, at least not from a collective standpoint. Other institutions of higher education are not facing a barrage of media and literature that is mostly presented from a deficit perspective. Finally, unlike other colleges and universities, leaders associated with HBCUs are being forced to provide justification toward the fact that these institutions are still highly needed and germane in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although other colleges and universities, such as PWIs are experiencing financial difficulty during this economic downturn, the value and effectiveness of these institutions are not questioned. PWIs do not constantly work to prove their worth and stake in the landscape of higher education, despite the fact that they experience some of the same issues the media highlights regarding HBCUs. Conversely, constituents associated with HBCUs must work overtime to justify their presence regardless of what these institutions have overcome to provide racial uplift and leadership opportunities for the Black community (Gasman, Baez, Drezner, & Sedgwick, 2007; Minor, 2004; Minor, 2008;).

These arguments lend well to the notion that the aforementioned implications are very much aligned with Black colleges and universities. Provided the current context in which these institutions are operating, it is imperative that constituents understand an HBCU from a complete historical perspective which is what reexamining and possibly repositioning the mission will provide. Most other institutions of higher education did not

experience a significant drop in enrollment after a major piece of legislation (*Brown v. Board, 1954*) was passed. The call for leaders at HBCUs to proactively develop a new or embellish a current organizational identity that is not based on a law that was enacted nearly sixty years ago is sorely needed. The leadership model presented attempts to provide a snapshot at how presidents at these institutions can begin the very process of understanding their respective institution from a comprehensive standpoint.

The model of leadership, therefore, is highly relevant to HBCUs, because a lack of transparency is one of many culprits responsible for the administrative difficulties these schools are experiencing. The stark difference between Dr. K's leadership and that of the prior administration is that his staff knows exactly where the institution stands from accreditation, fiscal, and governance standpoints. Historically, HBCUs have breaks in communication between upper administration and the rest of the employees, stemming from a tradition of faculty and mid-level administrators focusing on the needs of students and cultivating a nurturing environment (Gasman, 2007; Minor, 2004). However, Dr. K illustrates how a collegial environment can co-exist with transparent leadership that involves faculty and staff in strategic planning for the college.

As previously stated, HBCUs were created for fundamentally and philosophically different reasons than PWIs and other institution types: they were created to educate and uplift the Black community out of a resistance from Whites to willingly engage in this endeavor. Because the context of the social conditions and philosophical reasons for the emergence of these institutions has now slightly changed, leaders associated with HBCUs

are forced to redefine their place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Embarking on the implications presented in this study can be the first step taken on that all-important journey.

### **Limitations**

As previously mentioned, aspects of PSC's organizational identity cannot be causally attributed to its operational success. It is rather a web of relationships stemming from leadership, initiatives, internal advocacy and external responses (i.e., reputation) that determine the successes of an institution. Organizational identity serves as an effective framework through which to analyze and conceptualize this web of relationships into models of best practices that can be adapted by other institutions.

Although I collected an immense amount of data through several informational sources, I did not collect all that I initially proposed. In addition to individual interviews, my initial proposal included focus group interviews with students, faculty, alumni, and administrators. However, I only conducted focus groups with administrators and faculty due to difficulty with timing and schedules. That said, the research findings from those two populations are richer and more fully developed, but not to the lack of richness or development among students and alumni. Although I did not conduct a focus group with alumni, one faculty member and one administrator were both alumni, and even though I interviewed them in a different context, they did talk extensively about their experiences as former students at PSC.

It is also important to note that only three students were formally interviewed for this study. The information presented from the PSC student perspective is therefore narrow and not representative of the entire student body. In acknowledgment of that,

several informal interviews were conducted with students at numerous campus events at which I participated and directly observed. Nonetheless, the theme entitled “insights from the student community” mostly reflects the experiences of three highly involved students who were leaders in various student organizations. Had a greater sample of students been interviewed, the findings relevant to this campus population may have been different.

In the methodology chapter (chapter 4) I discussed the limitations often associated with qualitative research, including lack of generalizability, transferability, and ability to authentically display the voices of the research participants’. As a qualitative, constructivist researcher, I question the very notion of generalizability regardless of the research method due to the heavy contextualization that is unique to every individual and situation. Profound reliance upon vignettes and thick description of PSC’s organizational identity will hopefully allow for the possible transferability of the models of best operational and leadership practices to other institutions. Finally, analytic memo writing and member checking were employed in an effort to ensure consistency with my major findings and the research participants’ perceptions.

In the methodology chapter, I also stated that I would attempt to triangulate the historical identity claims of HBCUs that were derived from the literature with information gathered from 20 different HBCU missions. I collected mission statements from a variety of 20 different HBCUs that were rural, urban, land grant, private, religious-affiliated, and located in the South, East, and Midwest regions of the U.S. The most consistent claims focused on leadership (in a globalized world), developing research with community partners, and cultivating a sense of ethical and moral responsibility in

students. However, I realized that current mission statements are not direct representations of an institution's identity claims and furthermore that missions of many HBCUs have been greatly modified, especially after *Brown v. Board*.

A more comprehensive, archival research study should be conducted in an effort to affirm the historical identity claims of HBCUs listed in current literature, which are to: (a) provide racial uplift for African Americans, (b) provide opportunities for higher education for those traditionally and historically excluded from PWIs, and (c) emphasize teaching and establishment of collaborative leadership opportunities to effectively prepare African Americans to succeed in personal, intellectual, and professional growth and prosperity (Gasman, 2007; Minor, 2004; Minor, 2008). In fact, such a study is proposed in the next section, areas for future research.

### **Conclusion and Areas for Future Research**

Understanding the mission statements of HBCUs from a historical standpoint may provide justification for more of these institutions to move from open enrollment to being more academically competitive. Doing just that certainly improved the image and reputation for PSC, and the same could happen for other HBCUs in the right context and with adequate resources. The notion of systemic change is also gaining momentum, particularly with initiatives like Race to the Top, whereby public high schools received significant governmental funds when entire staffs were fired in an attempt to overhaul the damaged school system. What would happen to higher education institutions if employees with faulty work practices were let go and replaced with people who are more aligned with the institutional goals and expectations? The difference was clear once Dr. K

did just that with the former admissions team when the new staff he employed brought in the largest class PSC has seen in several years.

Also curious is the intersection of individual identity and organizational identity. How does one reconcile fundamental differences between their belief system and that espoused by the organization for which they work? My interviews with John sparked this question, because he remained in heavy opposition to the increased admission standards of PSC while maintaining a respect for the president and deep commitment to the institution which kept him working there. What is this experience like for individuals and how do they manage to still find fulfillment and satisfaction in their work?

The literature also revealed a number of areas for future research regarding HBCUs. One gap in need of more research is the concept of political power within HBCUs. United States President Barack Obama has pledged to invest \$850 million dollars in these institutions over the next decade (Riley, 2010). The literature states that leaders at several predominately White institutions have long used political savvy to route more monies to their respective institutions, and in so doing have developed the capacity to build relationships with policymakers in the legislator, creating long term connections in the political realm (Evans, Evans, & Evans, 2002). With the attention and support of President Obama, how can leaders at HBCUs develop and maintain a sense of political power both locally and nationally? What are leaders at these institutions currently doing to remain at the forefront of educational issues in the White House? Research and investigation into these questions may provide effective strategies for leaders at HBCUs with struggling budgets to employ.



Factors pointing to college choice would help HBCUs develop effective marketing tools that will increase enrollments, which have been dwindling since 1960s (Allen et al., 2007). More research into what factors are most important to prospective students in their college selection may shed light on why African American high school students are increasingly losing interest in attending an HBCU (Townes, 2009). Specifically, it will be helpful for research to focus on the perceptions of HBCUs to high school students, and how these perceptions influence higher education decision making.

While there have been studies regarding the details of HBCU presidential leadership specifically and Black leadership generally (Fields, 2004; Gordon, 2000; Marable, 1998), there is a need for the construction of more recent research in this area. Understandings of Black leadership must move beyond the prevailing literature detailing accounts of historical figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and W.E.B. Du Bois to a more current assessment of contemporary African Americans executing impactful leadership. Furthermore, an understanding of how elements of Black leadership converge and/or diverge from dominant leadership theories will underscore the importance of context in such research.

Ironically, all of the proposed future areas for research will work great with organizational identity used as a conceptual framework. The ability for the concepts and phrases of organizational identity to extract productive themes from data and create models of best practices at institutions should not be ignored for future areas of research regarding HBCUs and other higher education institutions. The learning curve I have

experienced from conducting this research is large and complex, and of course leaves me with more questions.

In chapter 1 of this dissertation, I stated that an ancillary goal of this research is to provide evidence toward the need and justification for the continued presence of HBCUs. Although all of the interviewed campus populations spoke to the importance of HBCUs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, PSC students did so most extensively. The effectiveness of youth seeing someone to whom they can relate in a position of empowerment and advocacy is significantly high. David discusses why HBCUs are so important in regards to this notion:

“But, overall, I think, I think every African-American student should have a time to experience an HBCU. I mean, because an HBCU is like none other. You get to see educated kids just like you. Sometimes we live in a world that we feel like, you know, us blacks that, you know, sometimes people, and let’s be honest about it, they say we’re not gonna be nothing, that we aren’t nothing, and stuff like that. So sometimes you have a culture shock and it’s a wake-up call for other students that are the same color as you that can look at a friend or look at a student and say, wow, they’re excelling and they’re just like me. And, I mean, they have the same complexion as I do. I mean they come from the same background, like me. They live, they live in the same community that I live in, you know. And so I think that’s an essential and an important part of a HBCU because it really makes you aware and make you known that, you know, you can, you can excel.”

The hard work and incredible willingness of the research participants at PSC to share their experiences with me has resulted in two powerful models from which other institutions can pull to possibly reposition their school, if needed. The findings from this study not only emphasize the continued need and importance of HBCUs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; they also lend credibility to the notion that these institutions are managing to successfully operate during a double recession with significantly less resources than

many PWIs. Lastly, and most importantly, this research commends and celebrates the stellar successes of Philander Smith College as an organization, a community, and a family.

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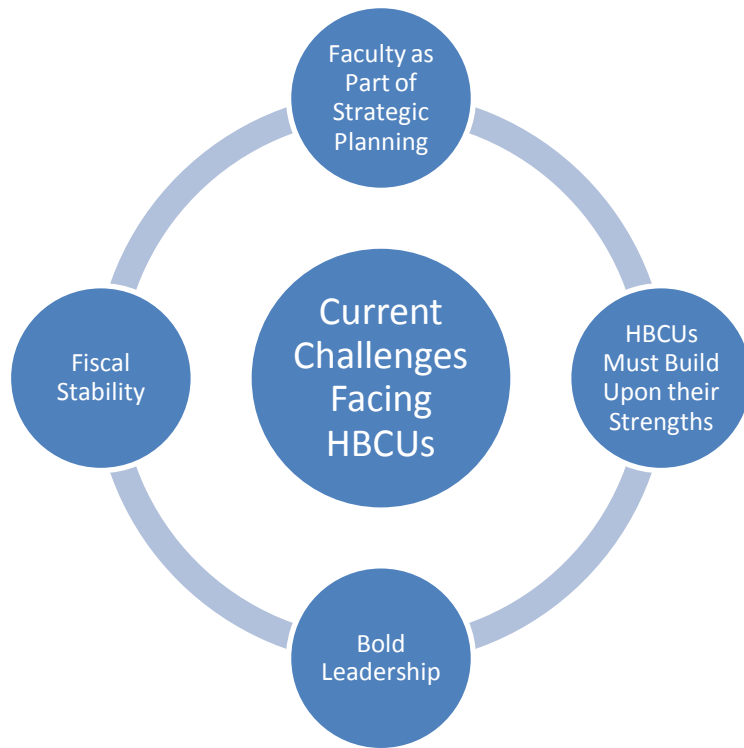
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## Appendix A: Federal Policies and Legal Cases Impacting Development of HBCUs

<b>Federal Policy or Legal Case</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Implication for HBCUs</b>
<b>Second Morrill Act of 1890</b>	Provided funding for public land grant HBCUs	Increased enrollment and increased number of institutions
<b>Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)</b>	Separate but equal education	Increased enrollment and increased number of institutions
<b>Brown v. Board of Education (1954)</b>	To desegregate schools	Contributed to the “Great Migration” of Black students from HBCUs to PWIs
<b>Meredith v. Fair (1962)</b>	Resulted in first Black student legally allowed to attend a PWI	This case precipitated a large increase of Black students enrolling in PWIs
<b>Civil Rights Act of 1964</b>	To provide protection from discrimination and fairness in law to all citizens	Contributed to the “Great Migration” of Black students from HBCUs to PWIs
<b>Title IV of Civil Rights Act</b>	Requires all colleges receiving public funds to desegregate	Contributed to the “Great Migration” of Black students from HBCUs to PWIs
<b>Title VI of Civil Rights Act</b>	Declares discrimination on the basis of race illegal for institutions receiving federal aid	Contributed to the “Great Migration” of Black students from HBCUs to PWIs
<b>Higher Education Act of 1965</b>	Distribute funds to HBCUs in acknowledgement of 8 decades of underfunding from the government	Temporarily helped to narrow the financial aid budget gaps between HBCUs & PWIs
<b>Adams v. Richardson (1970-1973)</b>	Class action suit against Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare for permitting a dual racial system of higher education in U.S.	Revealed deep differences about integration within Black community: full integration vs. preserving Black culture. Also revealed that federal courts treat desegregation differently in higher education; due to choice of school being a factor.
<b>Ayers v. Waller (1975)</b>	Plaintiffs in this case are concerned with 2 issues: are HBCUs legal, and if so can they demand major financial enhancements to catch up with PWIs?	Overtime, both the Adams and Ayers cases evolved into United States v. Fordice
<b>United States v. Fordice (1992)</b>	Acknowledged that Mississippi had not taken adequate measures to desegregate higher education. District judge ordered the state to create new programs for 2 HBCUs and provided \$500 million over 17 years.	Some argue that despite the financial settlement, this case presents a direct assault on HBCUs due to the court ruling program duplication between HBCUs and PWIs to be wasteful & that eliminated culturally sensitive campuses

**Appendix B: Adopted Conceptual Framework from Wagener and Smith (1993)**





**Appendix C: HBCUs with Financial and/or Accreditation Issues**

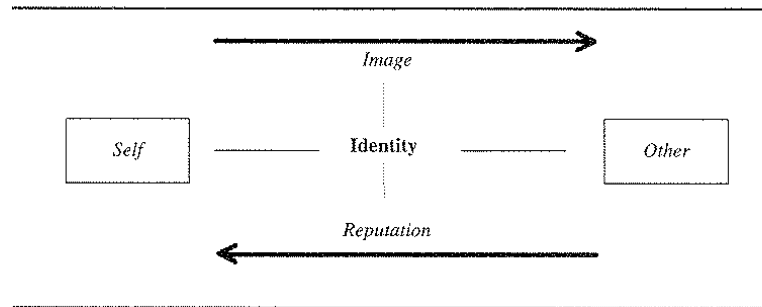
<b>Institution</b>	<b>Status</b>
1. Albany State University	Struggling Financially to remain open
2. Central State University	Grave financial issues
3. Fisk University	Grave financial issues
4. Florida Memorial University	Warning Status from SACS regarding accreditation
5. Grambling State University	Grave financial issues
6. Savannah State University	Struggling Financially to remain open
7. Texas College	Grave financial issues
8. Tougaloo College	Warning Status from SACS regarding accreditation
9. Wilberforce University	Grave financial issues

**Sources:**

Hawkins, D. (2004). Doing more with less. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, 21(9), 37-39.

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## Appendix D: Organizational Identity Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1:** Relationships Between and Among Organizational Image, Identity, and Reputation

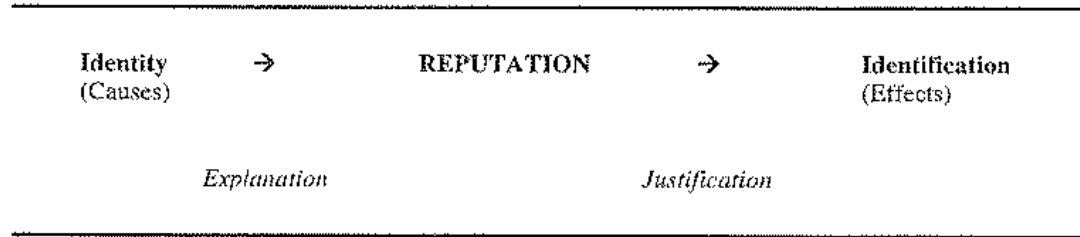
**Source:** Whetten, D.A. (2006). Albert and Whetten revisited: Strengthening the concept of organizational identity. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 15(3), 219-234.

Figure 1 illustrates the connections between and among concepts of organizational identity, image, and reputation. Specifically, this framework is useful for distinguishing organizations from one another, and it is also helpful in proposing compatible, yet distinct definitions of image and reputation for specific organizations. Broadly speaking, identity, image, and reputation are essential components of an organization's ability to be successful as social actors (Whetten & Mackey, 2002).

Within this framework, image and reputation are treated as components of a symmetrical, co-occurring communications process between the organization and its relevant constituents (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). This two-way communications exchange is used as a regulatory device to preserve an optimal level of congruence between organizational commitments and organizational identity claims. Barney & Hansen (1994) posit that when these processes operate as shown in the model, unity within organizations is cultivated and predictability-based trust among external stakeholders is engendered.

This framework (Figure 1) will effectively illustrate the repercussions of the fiscal crisis on the images and reputations associated with HBCUs. It will allow for a demonstration of what occurs when organizational activities and identity claims are not working in unison, in addition to the tangible disadvantages, such as loss of trust and appeal among internal and external constituents. However, using this framework alone will not adequately capture the resulting effects of disharmony on organizational identification.

## Appendix E: Organizational Identity Conceptual Framework 2



**Figure 2:** Causes and Effects of Organizational Identity, Reputation, and Identification

**Source:** Whetten, D.A. (2006). Albert and Whetten revisited: Strengthening the concept of organizational identity. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 15(3), 219-234.

This framework (Figure 2) distinguishes organizational identity as a “cause” of organizational reputation, while organizational member’s identification is an “effect” of organizational identity and reputation. To explain this process in a different way, aspects of an organization’s identity causes a reputation to be constructed of that organization by external stakeholders. The effect of this resulting reputation is the increase or decrease in constituents’ (internal and/or external) decisions to personally identify with the organization.

The cause and effect relationship of identity, reputation, and identification will provide a useful framework conducive to examining some of the lower enrollments and lower fundraising ability issues plaguing a significant number of HBCUs today (Gasman, 2009). Specifically, a critical examination of how external forces, such as historical underfunding from the government (Jenkins, 1991) have contributed to the damages of reputations associated with these institutions. Additionally, elements of how HBCUs have managed to sustain prestigious reputations, strong cultures, and effective connections with external stakeholders will also be highlighted within the constructs of this framework.

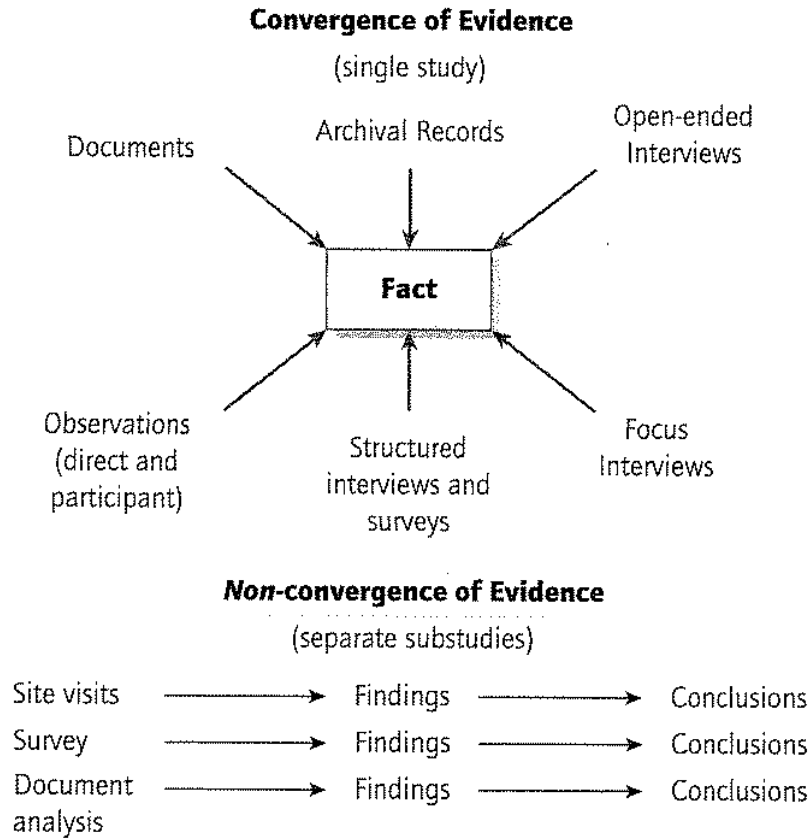
## Appendix F: Strengths and Weaknesses of Case Study Methods

Source: Yin, R.K. (2009). *Case study research designs and methods*. (4<sup>th</sup>ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

SOURCE OF EVIDENCE	Strengths	Weaknesses
Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Stable—can be reviewed repeatedly</li> <li>◆ Unobtrusive—not created as a result of the case study</li> <li>◆ Exact—contains exact names, references, and details of an event</li> <li>◆ Broad coverage—long span of time, many events, and many settings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Retrievability—can be difficult to find</li> <li>◆ Biased selectivity, if collection is incomplete</li> <li>◆ Reporting bias—reflects (unknown) bias of author</li> <li>◆ Access—may be deliberately withheld</li> </ul>
Archival records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ [Same as those for documentation]</li> <li>◆ Precise and usually quantitative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ [Same as those for documentation]</li> <li>◆ Accessibility due to privacy reasons</li> </ul>
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Targeted—focuses directly on case study topics</li> <li>◆ Insightful—provides perceived causal inferences and explanations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Bias due to poorly articulated questions</li> <li>◆ Response bias</li> <li>◆ Inaccuracies due to poor recall</li> <li>◆ Reflexivity—interviewee gives what interviewer wants to hear</li> </ul>
Direct observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Reality—covers events in real time</li> <li>◆ Contextual—covers context of "case"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Time-consuming</li> <li>◆ Selectivity—broad coverage difficult without a team of observers</li> <li>◆ Reflexivity—event may proceed differently because it is being observed</li> <li>◆ Cost—hours needed by human observers</li> </ul>
Participant-observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ [Same as above for direct observations]</li> <li>◆ Insightful into interpersonal behavior and motives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ [Same as above for direct observations]</li> <li>◆ Bias due to participant-observer's manipulation of events</li> </ul>
Physical artifacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Insightful into cultural features</li> <li>◆ Insightful into technical operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Selectivity</li> <li>◆ Availability</li> </ul>

**Figure 4.1** Six Sources of Evidence: Strengths and Weaknesses

## Appendix G: Triangulation of Evidence

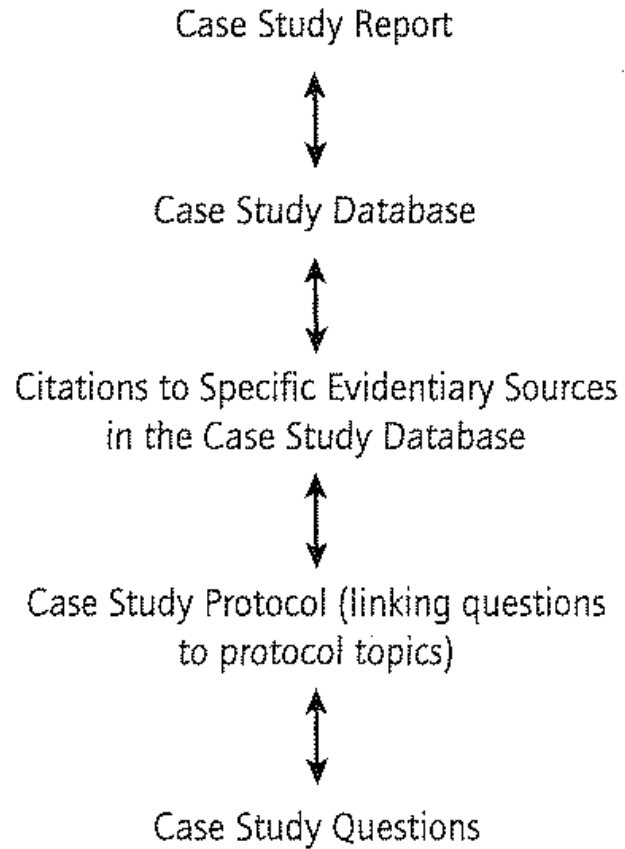


**Figure 4.2** Convergence and Nonconvergence of Multiple Sources of Evidence

**Source:** Yin, R.K. (2009). *Case study research designs and methods*. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

## Appendix H: Collecting Case Study Evidence

### COLLECTING CASE STUDY EVIDENCE



**Figure 4.3** Maintaining a Chain of Evidence

**Source:** Yin, R.K. (2009). *Case study research designs and methods*. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

## Appendix I: Informed Consent Form

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

#### *Staying Ahead of the Economic Crisis: A Case Study of Philander Smith College*

You are invited to participate in a study that will examine the leadership tactics and financial strategy processes associated with Philander Smith College. In addition, this study is being conducted to fulfill the requirements of doctoral dissertation research conducted by **Shametrice Davis**. Results will be used to develop a model of best leadership and fiscal practices to be shared with other institutions and their constituents and to also complete a doctoral dissertation. Shametrice Davis can be reached at 360-910-5995 or shametrice.davis@du.edu. This project is supervised by the course instructor, Dr. Lori Patton, Higher Education Program in the Morgridge College of Education, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208, 303-871-3753, lori.patton@du.edu.

Participation in this study should take about 60-120 minutes of your time. Participation will involve responding to questions about perceptions of leadership and financial management. Participation in this project is strictly voluntary. The risks associated with this project are minimal. If, however, you experience discomfort you may discontinue the interview at any time. We respect your right to choose not to answer any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. Refusal to participate or withdrawal from participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your responses will be identified by pseudonym only and will be kept separate from information that could identify you. This is done to protect the confidentiality of your responses. Only the researcher will have access to your individual data and any reports generated as a result of this study will use only group averages and paraphrased wording. However, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena. Although no questions in this interview address it, we are required by law to tell you that if information is revealed concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect, it is required by law that this be reported to the proper authorities.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the interview, please contact Susan Sadler, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 303-871-3454, or Sylk Sotto-Santiago, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 303-871-4052 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.

You may keep this page for your records. Please sign the next page if you understand and agree to the above. If you do not understand any part of the above statement, please ask the researcher any questions you have. I have read and understood the foregoing descriptions of the study called (name). I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

(If appropriate, the following must be added.)

I agree to be audiotaped.

I do not agree to be audiotaped.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I would like a summary of the results of this study to be mailed to me at the following postal or e-mail address:

## **Appendix J: Individual Interview Recruitment Email**

Dear Student, Administrator, Faculty Member, or Alumnus,

You have been identified as a person who can provide useful information regarding the leadership tactics and financial management strategies associated with Philander Smith College. I am hoping that you are interested and willing to participate in an interview about these topics.

My name is Shametrice Davis, and as a Ph.D. student at the University of Denver, I am working on completing a dissertation that is a case study of Philander Smith College. My dissertation will explore how this institution has effectively managed to stay afloat of the current economic downturn through various leadership and financial management strategies. It is my hope that, through this research, I will be able to construct a model of best practices to be shared with other historically Black colleges and universities.

Would you be willing to meet me for an interview? The interview will last for approximately 60 to 90 minutes and can be conducted in a location convenient for you. I will ask questions regarding your perceptions of Philander Smith College and the leadership/financial management strategies associated with the institution.

I appreciate your consideration in helping me move forward with my research. I know that your time is valuable. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Shametrice Davis  
PhD Candidate  
Graduate Assistant  
Higher Education Program  
Morgridge College of Education  
University of Denver  
360.910.5995



## **Appendix K: Focus Group Recruitment Email**

*To be distributed via the Philander Smith College student, administrator, faculty, and alumni list serves containing email addresses for all of those individuals currently connected to the institution.*

Dear Student, Administrator, Faculty Member, or Alumnus,

My name is Shametrice Davis and I am a current doctoral student at the University of Denver. I am working on completing a dissertation that is a case study of Philander Smith College. My dissertation will explore how this institution has effectively managed to stay afloat of the current economic downturn through various leadership and financial management strategies. It is my hope that, through this research, I will be able to construct a model of best practices to be shared with other historically Black colleges and universities.

You have been identified as a person who can provide useful information regarding the leadership tactics and financial management strategies associated with Philander Smith College. I am hoping that you are interested and willing to participate in a focus group interview.

Would you be willing to participate in a focus group interview? The focus group will last for approximately one to two hours and will be conducted in a location on campus. I will ask questions regarding your perceptions of Philander Smith College and the leadership/financial management strategies associated with the institution. There will be a total of six to ten other participants, and they will also be current students, faculty, administrators, or alumni.

I appreciate your consideration in helping me move forward with my research. I know that your time is valuable. If you are interested in and available for participation, please let me know.

Shametrice Davis  
PhD Candidate  
Graduate Assistant  
Higher Education Program  
Morgridge College of Education  
University of Denver  
360.910.5995

## **Appendix L: Focus Group Protocol and Guiding Questions**

Distribute the informed consent form, collect one signed copy from each participant.  
Turn on audio recorder.

I'm Shametrice Davis, it is (time, date) and this is a focus group for (students, faculty, administrators, or alumni). Thank you so much for coming today. As some of you may already know, I am conducting my dissertation research on the organizational identity aspects of leadership and financial management strategies used by various constituents Philander Smith College.

Please choose a pseudonym that will represent your voice throughout this focus group interview. Once you have selected a pseudonym, please write it on the name tent in front of you. Throughout the interview, I will refer to you by your pseudonym to maintain the confidentiality of the group. Even though some of you may know each other, please try to use the pseudonyms throughout the interview. I will also use your pseudonym when I am writing the results of my study.

Please complete the information sheet – with your pseudonym – and return it to me. This information will allow me to look across focus group participants and make sure that I have included various perspectives and experiences based on the information collected on this form. I will only be reporting averages and generalities of this information. There will be nothing to identify you in my written dissertation.

The consent form you signed and have a copy of gives me your permission to record our discussion so that I can consult it later for my dissertation research. I will be the one to listen to the recording and you and I will be the only people who know who was here today. Once my research is complete, I will write my dissertation, which is maintained by the University of Denver. Your names and any identifying information will not appear in the dissertation – only our pseudonyms. Since you will not be able to be identified after today, you can be as honest as you like in our discussion. This is a dialogue, so feel free to agree and disagree with each other to give your point of view. After the discussion today, please respect the confidentiality of your fellow participants and do not disclose the details of our discussion.

I will primarily be listening and will not be as active in the discussion as you all.

Within two weeks, I will email each of you a full transcript of our discussion today. If you have any feedback or additional comments to add, I encourage you to email me.

For the second portion of my research, I will be following up with some participants to conduct a follow-up interview, so you may receive another email from me asking if you are available to schedule an individual interview.

Any questions? Let's get started.

*Guiding Questions for the (student, administrator, faculty, and alumni) Focus Groups*

1. How would you describe the distinguishing characteristics of Philander Smith College?
  - a. How do these characteristics contribute to the financial stability of the institution?
  - b. How do these characteristics contribute to the leadership effectiveness of the institution?
2. How would you describe the leadership (from the president, administrators, and/or faculty) processes at Philander Smith College?
  - a. What are aspects of the leadership that is effective?
    - i. Why are these aspects effective?
  - b. What are aspects of the leadership that needs improvement?
    - i. Why are these aspects ineffective?
3. How have you experienced budget cuts at this institution?
  - a. How were such budget cuts communicated to you?
  - b. What effect did the budget cuts have on your experience with Philander Smith College?
4. How would you describe the financial management strategies implemented at Philander Smith College?
  - a. What aspects of these financial management strategies are effective?
    - i. Why are these aspects effective?
  - b. What aspects of these financial management strategies are ineffective?
    - i. Why are these aspects ineffective?
5. Why do you think Philander Smith College has been able to avoid financial instability during this national economic crisis?

## Appendix M: Participant Information Sheet

*To be completed and collected at focus group discussions.*

Pseudonym \_\_\_\_\_

When did you begin (working or attending school) at Philander Smith? (please list the month and year) \_\_\_\_\_

If you are a student, what is your current standing (i.e., freshman, sophomore, senior)? \_\_\_\_\_

If you are an administrator, what is your position level (i.e., entry, midlevel, senior)? \_\_\_\_\_

If you are an alumnus, in what year did you graduate from Philander Smith College? \_\_\_\_\_

Were you associated (i.e., student, faculty, administrator) with Philander Smith College prior to 2004? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a professional or personal relationship to the president of Philander Smith College? \_\_\_\_\_

If the answer to the above question is yes, please describe the nature of the relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix N: Individual Interview Guide for President**

*Guiding questions for the guided, in depth, and focused interviews with the president*

### **Focused Interview Questions:**

1. How would you describe the central and enduring components of Philander Smith College?
2. How is Philander Smith different from other higher education institutions?
3. How is Philander Smith similar to other higher education institutions?
4. How do you think your leadership style is perceived on campus among students, administrators, faculty, and alumni?
5. How do you engage the campus community?
6. How would you describe your communication style?
7. Describe the way you conduct meetings with senior level administrators.
8. Describe how you conduct meetings with students.
9. Describe your approach to addressing the financial deficit associated with Philander Smith in 2004.
10. What was successful about this approach?
11. What aspects of this approach could use improvement?
12. Were aspects of Philander Smith's organizational identity compromised as a result of this approach?
13. What was and is essential to remaining financially stable during this economic downturn?
14. How is your job affected by the economic downturn?
15. How does Philander Smith College solicit donations from alumni?
16. What are the strengths of Philander Smith College?
17. How does Philander Smith College market its strengths as an institution?
18. What are weaknesses associated with Philander Smith College?
19. How does Philander Smith College attempt to address its weaknesses?

### **In Depth Interview Questions:**

1. What are your thoughts regarding the ways in which HBCUs are funded?
2. What are your thoughts regarding the current standing of HBCUs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
3. What are your thoughts regarding the media coverage of the financial issues plaguing HBCUs?
4. What are your thoughts regarding the disproportionate effect the current economic downturn has on HBCUs, as compared to other higher education institution types?
5. What is the most pressing need for HBCUs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

## **Appendix O: Individual Interview Guide for Administrators**

### **Focused Interview Questions:**

1. How would you describe the central and enduring components of Philander Smith College?
2. How is Philander Smith different from other higher education institutions?
3. How is Philander Smith similar to other higher education institutions?
4. How would you describe your leadership style?
5. How do you think your leadership style is perceived on campus among students, administrators, faculty, and alumni?
6. How do you engage the campus community?
7. How would you describe your communication style?
8. Describe the way you conduct meetings with other senior or mid-level administrators.
9. Describe how you conduct meetings with students.
10. Describe the campus approach to addressing the financial deficit associated with Philander Smith in 2004.
11. What was successful about this approach?
12. What aspects of this approach could use improvement?
13. Were the central and enduring components of Philander Smith compromised as a result of this approach?
14. Were the central and enduring components of Philander Smith enhanced as a result of this approach?
15. What was and is essential to remaining financially stable during this economic downturn?
16. How is your job affected by the economic downturn?
17. How does Philander Smith College solicit donations from alumni?
18. What are the strengths of Philander Smith College?
19. How does Philander Smith College market its strengths as an institution?
20. What are weaknesses associated with Philander Smith College?
21. How does Philander Smith College attempt to address its weaknesses?

### **In depth Interview Questions:**

1. What are your thoughts regarding the ways in which HBCUs are funded?
2. What are your thoughts regarding the current standing of HBCUs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
3. What are your thoughts regarding the media coverage of the financial issues plaguing HBCUs?
4. What are your thoughts regarding the disproportionate effect the current economic downturn has on HBCUs, as compared to other higher education institution types?
5. What is the most pressing need for HBCUs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

## **Appendix P: Individual Interview Guide for Alumni**

### **Focused Interview Questions:**

1. How would you describe the central and enduring components of Philander Smith College?
2. How is Philander Smith different from other higher education institutions?
3. How is Philander Smith similar to other higher education institutions?
4. How would you describe your student experience at Philander Smith College?
5. How do you continue to support Philander Smith College?
6. Why do you continue to support Philander Smith College?
7. How do you engage the campus community?
8. Describe you are approached by Philander Smith College to remain an active alumnus.
9. What was successful about this approach?
10. What aspects of this approach could use improvement?
11. What was and is essential to developing a strong alumni base?
12. What are the strengths of Philander Smith College?
13. How does Philander Smith College market its strengths as an institution?
14. What are weaknesses associated with Philander Smith College?
15. How does Philander Smith College attempt to address its weaknesses?

### **In depth Interview Questions:**

1. What are your thoughts regarding the current standing of HBCUs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
2. What are your thoughts regarding the media coverage of the financial issues plaguing HBCUs?
3. What are your thoughts regarding the disproportionate effect the current economic downturn has on HBCUs, as compared to other higher education institution types?
4. What are your thoughts on how HBCUs can increase alumni involvement and giving?
5. What is the most pressing need for HBCUs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

## **Appendix Q: Individual Interview Guide for Faculty**

### **Focused Interview Questions:**

1. How would you describe the central and enduring components of Philander Smith College?
2. How is Philander Smith different from other higher education institutions?
3. How is Philander Smith similar to other higher education institutions?
4. How would you describe your leadership style?
5. How do you think your leadership style is perceived on campus among students, administrators, faculty, and alumni?
6. How do you engage the campus community?
7. How would you describe your communication style?
8. Describe the way you conduct your classroom.
9. Describe how you conduct meetings with students.
10. How are faculty members involved in strategic planning at Philander Smith?
11. Describe the approach to addressing the financial deficit associated with Philander Smith in 2004.
12. What was successful about this approach?
13. What aspects of this approach could use improvement?
14. What was and is essential to remaining financially stable during this economic downturn?
15. How is your job affected by the economic downturn?
16. What are the strengths of Philander Smith College?
17. How does Philander Smith College market its strengths as an institution?
18. What are weaknesses associated with Philander Smith College?
19. How does Philander Smith College attempt to address its weaknesses?

### **In depth Interview Questions:**

1. What are your thoughts regarding the ways in which HBCUs are funded?
2. What are your thoughts regarding the current standing of HBCUs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
3. What are your thoughts regarding the media coverage of the financial issues plaguing HBCUs?
4. What are your thoughts regarding the disproportionate effect the current economic downturn has on HBCUs, as compared to other higher education institution types?
5. What is the most pressing need for HBCUs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?



## **Appendix R: Individual Interview Guide for Current Undergraduate Students**

### **Focused Interview Questions:**

1. How would you describe the central and enduring components of Philander Smith College?
2. Why did you choose to attend Philander Smith College?
3. How do you describe your student experience at Philander Smith College?
4. How do you engage in the campus community?
5. How would you describe the campus community?
6. Do you engage with senior-level administrators on campus?
7. How is Philander Smith different from other higher education institutions?
8. How is Philander Smith similar to other higher education institutions?
9. How is your student experience affected by the economic downturn?
10. What are the strengths of Philander Smith College?
11. What are weaknesses associated with Philander Smith College?
12. How does Philander Smith College attempt to address its weaknesses?

### **In Depth Interview Questions:**

1. What are your thoughts regarding the ways in which HBCUs are funded?
2. What are your thoughts regarding the current standing of HBCUs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
3. What are your thoughts regarding the media coverage of the financial issues plaguing HBCUs?
4. What are your thoughts regarding the disproportionate effect the current economic downturn has on HBCUs, as compared to other higher education institution types?
5. What is the most pressing need for HBCUs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

## **Appendix S: Observation/Participant Observation Protocol**

*Questions to consider during formal and informal observation procedures*

### **Formal**

1. How do meetings between administrators, faculty members, students, or alumni begin?
2. To what extent do all of the participants of a meeting engage in discussion?
3. What teaching methods are used by the professor to teach a class?
4. To what extent do students participate in the classroom discussion or other learning activities?
5. What nonverbal cues are communicated throughout the event (i.e., meeting, class, etc)?
6. What is the overall ambiance of campus events (i.e., sport competitions, alumni association programs, etc.)?
7. Is there a sense of inclusion and belonging among the participants of campus events?

### **Informal**

1. What is the location of the space in which I am interviewing someone?
2. How does this location relate to the entire campus? For example, is the space in a centrally located, prominent area or a distant, rarely-traveled area of campus?
3. What pictures, words, and/or messages are on the walls of various buildings, including but not limited to the student union, cafeterias, presidential office, financial aid office, and student organization spaces?
4. Is there a sense of value associated with different spaces on campus?
5. What buildings have a look and feel that is contemporary and new?
6. What buildings have a look and feel that is outdated and in need of renovation?
7. Is there a difference in the interactions that occur in different spaces on campus (i.e., the cafeteria versus the financial aid office?).

## **Appendix T: Protocol for Review of Documents and Archival Records**

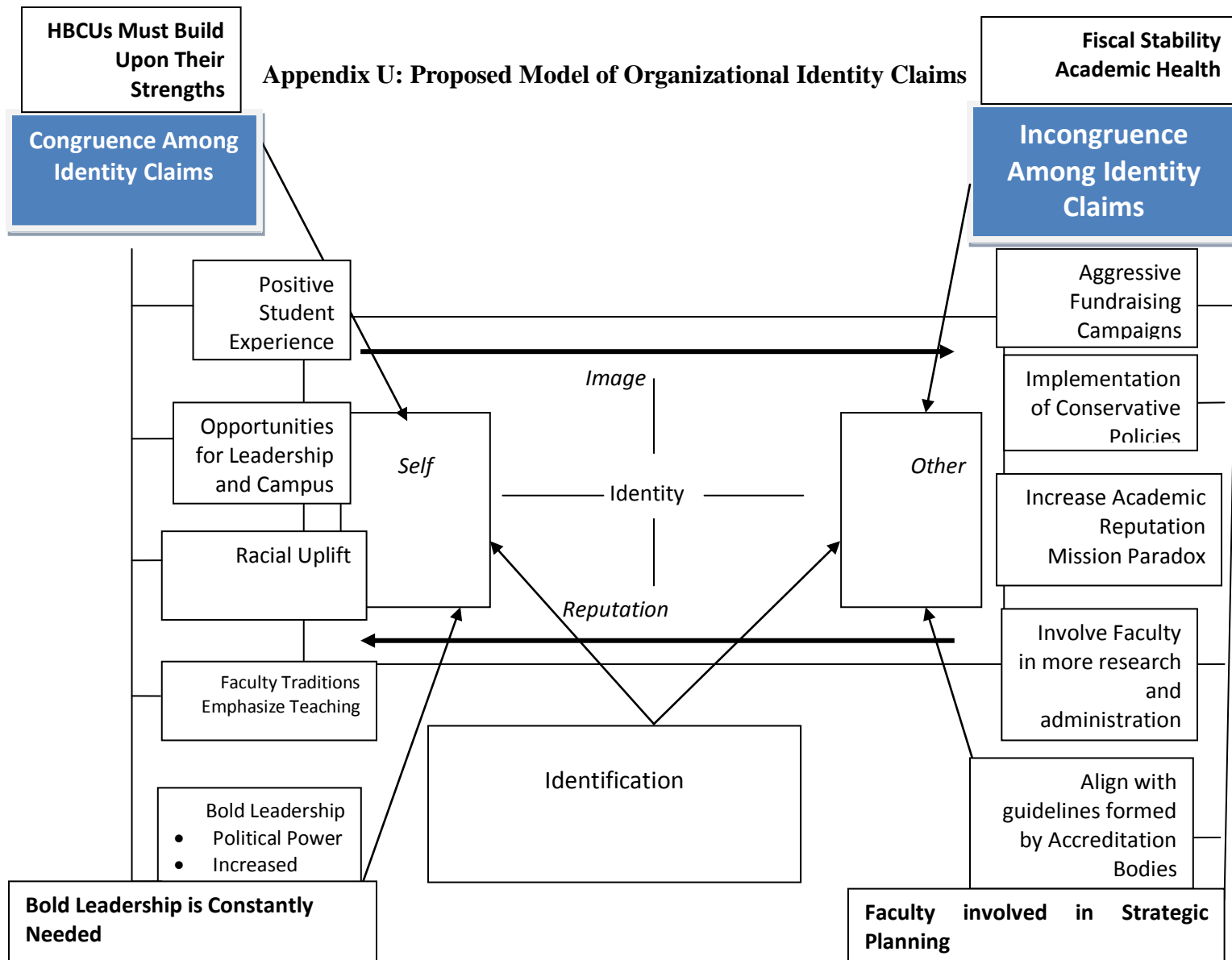
*Questions to consider during document and archival record review*

### **Documents (including journalistic newspaper clippings, peer-reviewed journal articles, and ((if allowed)) internal written reports meeting minutes and progress reports)**

1. Is the coverage of Philander Smith College generally positive or negative prior to 2004?
2. Is the coverage of Philander Smith College generally positive or negative after 2004?
3. What aspects of this institution are primarily discussed?
4. What is the institution criticized for?
5. What is the institution praised for?
6. What campus constituents (i.e., president, administrators, students, alumni) are referenced?
7. What messages are conveyed through meeting minutes between administrators?
8. How many total action items are on meeting minutes?
9. What is the nature of the action items on meeting minutes?
10. Have some of the action items of previous meetings been implemented?

### **Archival Records (including organizational charts, budget information)**

1. Was there a major shift in the organization of the institution after 2004?
2. How has the organizational chart remained the same from 2000 to 2011?
3. How has the organizational chart changed from 2000 to 2011?
4. Was there a major shift in fiscal allocations after 2004?
5. How have fiscal allocations remained the same from 2000 to 2011?
6. How have fiscal allocations changed from 2000-2011?
7. Has funding ever been allocated to developing fundraising resources?
8. Where (i.e., athletics, academics, student programs) have major budget cuts occurred from 2000-2011?



## Appendix V: Archival Records and Documentation Materials

The following list comprises all of the archival records collected and analyzed:

- Sex Week @ PSC: Fall 2011 (Flyer)
- Bless the Mic Season Seven: The Sisters Speak (Flyer)
- Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church Presents Extraordinary People in the Community Awards (Flyer)
- Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church (program for church service on Sunday, October 2, 2011)
- *The Wesley Chapel Scroll*, Volume 4, Issue 5: October 2, 2011
- Please Join Us for Fall Opening Convocation August 25, 2011. Featuring guest speaker: Rev. Dr. J. Alfred Smith (Flyer)
- Philander Smith: A New Mission (Flyer, no date)
- From the Office of The Social Justice Initiative (informational packet, including a signed letter from the founding director)
- Black Male Initiative (Flyer promoting Kwame Kilpatrick as a guest speaker)
- The Opening Convocation. “Think Justice: A Call for Faith”. August 25, 2011(program for convocation ceremony)
- Black Male Initiative: Philander Smith College (comprehensive informational packet)
- Kwame Kilpatrick: Former Detroit Mayor and author of *Surrendered*, Saturday, August 27, 2011 (Flyer)
- The Philanderian: A campus magazine. Fall/Winter, 2009
- The Philanderian: A campus magazine. Fall, 2010
- The Philanderian: A campus magazine. Spring/Summer, 2011

The following list comprises all of the archived newspaper/magazine articles collected and analyzed (listed chronologically):

Gibson, D. (1972). *A historical overview of Philander Smith College, 1877 to 1969* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Arkansas, Little Rock, AR.

Zeigler, W. (1987, February 1). A question of survival: Can Philander Smith make it? *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*. Copy in possession of author.

[Former President] welcomed as new president of Philander Smith College in LR yesterday. (1998, July 2). *Arkansas Tribune*. Copy in possession of author.

Friedman, M. (November, 2000). [Name of Former President] attracts money, attention, to Philander Smith. *Arkansas Business*, 17(46).

- Morris, K.E. (2004). President of Philander Smith College: An HBCU leader. *Afrocentricity*, March/April, 30-35.
- Hilliard, H. (2004, February 22). Philander Smith finds the beat. *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*. Copy in possession of author.
- Hudson, S. (no date). LR college starts new mission: Philander Smith initiative aims to improve social justice. *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*. Copy in possession of author.
- Philander Smith luncheon shows appetite for justice. (no date). [Clipping from an unidentified Little Rock, Arkansas publication.] Copy in possession of author.
- Ex-Detroit mayor to speak at Philander Smith. (2011, August 11). *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*. Copy in possession of author.
- Philander Smith lectures take feminine turn. (2011, August 21). *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*. Copy in possession of author.

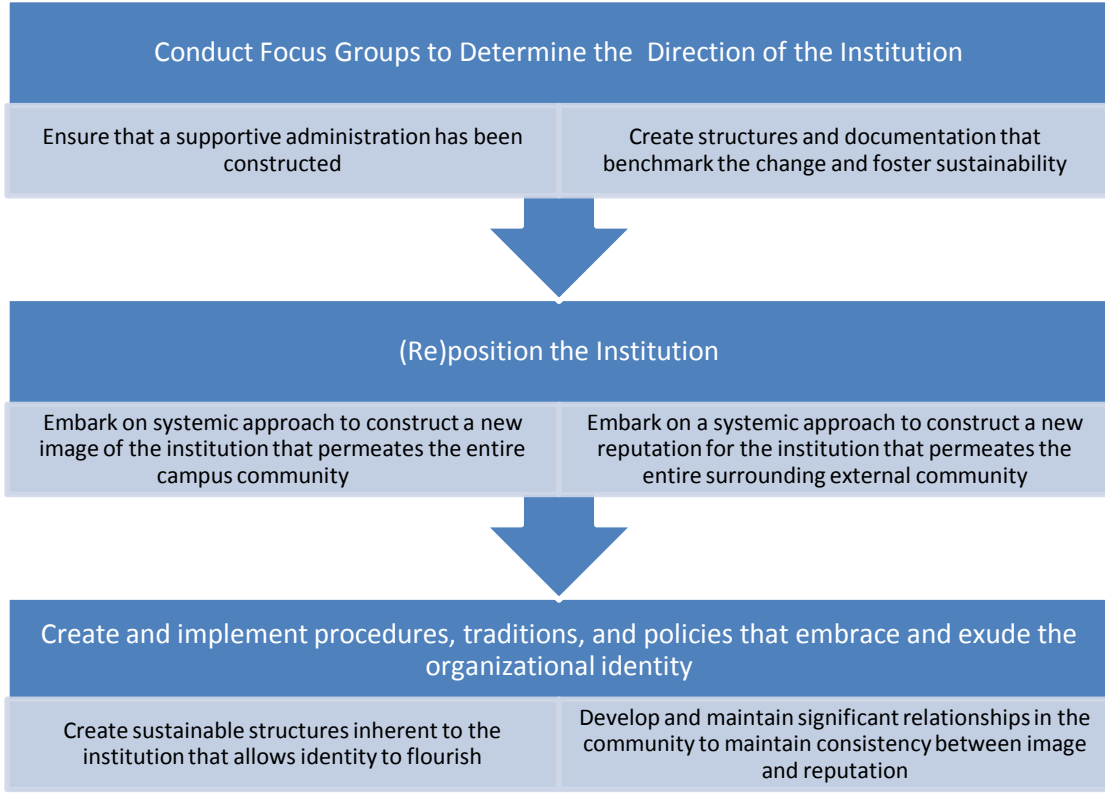
The following list comprises all of the documentation items collected and analyzed:

- Social Justice White Paper written by Dr. K., 2007
- Philander Smith College Renaissance Plan. Phase One: 2006-2012
- Retention/Graduation data for freshman cohorts from Fall 2004 – Fall 2010
- Strategic Planning Report, written by former President, May 11, 2004

## Appendix W: Model of Best Leadership Practices



## Appendix X: Model of Best Operational Practices





## Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

***Association for American University Professors [AAUP]*** - The AAUP's purpose is to advance academic freedom and shared governance, to define fundamental professional values and standards for higher education, and to ensure higher education's contribution to the common good.

***Department of Health, Education, and Welfare [HEW]*** - The Cabinet-level Department of Health, Education and Welfare, was created under President Eisenhower, officially coming into existence April 11, 1953. In 1979, the Department of Education Organization Act was signed into law, providing for a separate Department of Education. HEW became the Department of Health and Human Services, officially arriving on May 4, 1980.

***Historically Black College and University [HBCU]*** - The federal Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, defines a historically Black institution of higher education as “any historically Black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principle mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans.”

***Legal Defense and Education Fund [LDF]*** - The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. is America's premier legal organization fighting for racial justice. Through litigation, advocacy, and public education, LDF seeks structural changes to expand democracy, eliminate disparities, and achieve racial justice in a society that fulfills the promise of equality for all Americans. LDF also defends the gains and protections won over the past 70 years of civil rights struggle and works to improve the quality and diversity of judicial and executive appointments.

***National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP]*** – Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. The mission of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination.

***National Association for Equal Educational Opportunity in Higher Education [NAFEO]*** - The National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher education (NAFEO) is the 501 (c) (3), tax-exempt, not-for-profit umbrella organization of the nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs). Founded in 1969, NAFEO is the only membership association of its kind, representing the presidents and chancellors of the diverse black colleges and universities: public, private and land-grant, two-year, four-year, graduate and professional, historically and predominantly black colleges and universities.

***Organizational Culture:*** a distinct property of organizational identity, Hatch and Schultz (1997) provide the following definition: “organizational culture involves all organizational members, originates and develops at all hierarchical levels, and is founded on a broad-based history that is realized in the material aspects (artifacts) of the organization (e.g. its name, products, buildings, logos, and other symbols)” (p. 359).

***Organizational identification:*** a distinct property of organizational identity, organizational identification is a process during which “organizational goals and the goals of individuals become increasingly integrated and congruent, a particularly desirable outcome for any organization” (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2004, p. 18).

***Organizational Identity:*** the central and enduring attributes of an organization that

distinguish it from other organizations. These attributes are institutionalized claims; essentially allowing organizations themselves to exist as “social actors – authorized to engage in social intercourse as a collectivity and possessing rights and responsibilities as if the collectivity were a single individual” (Whetten & Mackey, 2002, p. 395). There are three components of organizational identity, and examination of all three is essential to gain a comprehensive understanding of an organization’s identity:

- *Ideational component*: parallels organizational identity with members’ shared beliefs regarding the question “Who are we as an organization?”
- *Definitional component*: outlines organizational identity as the central and enduring features of an organization.
- *Phenomenological component*: this component proposes that identity-related discourse is frequently observed simultaneously with significant organizational experiences. Scholars must recognize that studying organizational identity during turbulent situations may not reflect the identity in its entirety.

***Organizational Image***: a distinct property of organizational identity, Whetten and Mackey (2002) provide the following formal definition of organizational image:

“Organizational image is what organizational agents want their external stakeholders to understand is most central, enduring, and distinctive about their organization” (p. 401).

***Organizational reputation***: a distinct property of organizational identity, Whetten and Mackey (2002) define organizational reputation as a “particular type of feedback received by an organization from its stakeholders, concerning the credibility of the organization’s identity claims” (p. 401).

***Southern Association for Colleges and Schools [SACS]*** - The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools is one of the six regional accreditation organizations recognized by the United States Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. This agency accredits over 13,000 public and private educational institutions ranging from preschool to college level in the southern United States. SACS accredits educational institutions in the states of Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee and Texas, as well as schools for US students in Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America.

***United Negro College Fund [UNCF]*** –UNCF envisions a nation where all Americans have equal access to a college education that prepares them for rich intellectual lives, competitive and fulfilling careers, engaged citizenship and service to our nation. UNCF's mission is to build a robust and nationally-recognized pipeline of under-represented students who, because of UNCF support, become highly-qualified college graduates and to ensure that our network of member institutions is a respected model of best practice in moving students to and through college.