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Back from the Brink: The Process of Revitalization at a

Small, Private, Religious Institution

A Dissertation Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Samantha K. Brown

December 2015

Dedication

"Always remember who you are, where you came from, and who you represent."

–G.M. Brown

This dissertation is dedicated to my wonderful parents, George Mead and June Gilliam Brown, who are my greatest supporters. Your love and encouragement enabled me to persevere and finish this chapter in my educational journey. Also, to my grandparents, the late Vernon and Frances Gilliam, Helen Brown and the late Harold Mead Brown, I am grateful for your love and the many lessons that I learned from each of you.

conversation with him. He encouraged me to begin doctoral study and supported me throughout my journey. I will forever strive to live up to his expectations. Dr. Bogue's leadership legacy will live on through his many students.

Abstract

Since the recession of 2008, small, private institutions have faced increased challenges, including little to no return on endowments, reductions in philanthropic support, escalating overhead costs, competition for students, families in need of additional financial aid, and growing public concern about the cost of higher education (Brown, 2011). From 2002 to 2012, 49 four-year, private, not-for-profit higher education institutions closed (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012). Many were in a state of decline for years before closure (Porter & Ramirez, 2009). However, closure is not the only outcome of institutional decline. Institutional revitalization is an alternative to closure. Limited research has been conducted in the area of revitalization and college turnaround. Due to the changing landscape of higher education, it is crucial for higher education administrators at small, private institutions to not only understand what determined decline but also factors or decisions that determined institutional revitalization. Participants in this study included eight senior administrators, faculty, staff, and governing board members. A case study methodology was employed to provide a thorough and complete understanding of the case.

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Chapter One:

Introduction

Due to their breadth of academic settings and specialized missions, small, private

institutions offer unique opportunities to students and add rich diversity to American

higher education. Astin and Lee (1972) referred to small, private, not-for-profit, four-year

institutions which primarily served residential areas as "invisible" (p. xi).

Many of these institutions are religiously affiliated, women's institutions, or historically

black colleges and universities (HBCUs) (Astin & Lee, 1972). Small, private, religious

institutions make up a unique niche of American higher education. With specialized

missions, these institutions provide opportunities not available at other types of

institutions. For example, many small, private, religious institutions' mission statements

include aspects of the religion with which they are associated (Taylor & Morphew, 2010).

Students who seek specific religious doctrine to be infused with their education often chose

institutions with missions that align with their values.

These colleges are vital to the economy in the communities in which they are

located by providing jobs and increasing revenue (NCES, 2012). However, small, private

institutions are highly susceptible to decline. Typically, these types of institutions are very

tuition-dependent, and when enrollment declines, vital funding is lost. Since the economic

recession of 2008, increased challenges, including little to no return on endowments,

reductions in philanthropic support, escalating overhead costs, competition for students,

families in need of additional financial aid, and growing public concern about the cost of

higher education, have resulted in many small institutions being positioned in a state of

decline (Brown, 2011; Porter & Ramirez, 2009).   From 2002 to 2012, 49 four-year,

private, not-for-profit higher education institutions closed (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012). Several small, private niche colleges such as Bethany University, CA; Cascade College, OR; Dana College, NE; Lambuth University, TN; Magnolia Bible College, MS; Pillsbury College, MI; Vennard College, IA; and Wesley College, DE also closed (Lyken-Segoesbe & Shepherd, 2013). When these colleges closed, the diversity of American higher education was narrowed and concern for small, private colleges was renewed (Eaker & Kuk, 2011).

However, closure is not the only outcome of institutional decline. As institutional revitalization is the alternative to closure, it is crucial for higher education administrators at small, private institutions to not only understand what determines decline but also factors or decisions that contribute to institutional revitalization.

Statement of the Problem

Factors that precipitate college decline are not well understood. Existing studies are often quantitative in nature (Eaker & Kuk, 2011; Porter & Ramirez, 2009) and therefore, do not yield the narrative that qualitative studies offer - which is helpful in understanding the process. When institutions are in decline, there are two ultimate results; they either take steps to revitalize or begin the closure process (Eaker & Kuk, 2011). At some point during decline, there is a shift toward one of the two outcomes.

MacTaggart (2007) noted that most institutions in decline could successfully revitalize. However, like decline and closure, the revitalization process has not been studied extensively. This study sought to determine specific factors that influence the revitalization process.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore factors that precipitated decline, and to understand what decisions or factors determined revitalization at a small, private, religious institution. Understanding what was occurring during the period of decline—shifting the future of the institution—was important for administrators in this unique niche of small, private, religious institution to avoid future closures. Studying the revitalization process provided information about strategies for institutions to return to viability in the changing environment of small, private institutions.

Significance of the Study

A hallmark of American higher education is the diversity of institutions. However, many small, private, religious institutions are facing decline, and as these institutions close, that diversity is being threatened. Small, private, religious institutions are often cornerstones of the communities in which they are located, with local resources used to develop and sustain them. When institutions close, there is a negative economic impact on the community and devaluing of degrees. Similarly, when institutions are experiencing growth or success through revitalization, there is a positive economic impact and the potential for higher value placed on degrees.

Knowledge gained through this study could assist administrators as they encounter the challenges of operating small, private, religious institutions and could aid those administrators when facing similar situations and decisions. Specifically, administrators at small, private, religious institutions in decline could benefit from the results of this research as they endeavor to bring their institutions out of decline and into revitalization.

Research Questions

Research questions were designed, based on the purpose of this study, to guide the exploration of this phenomenon. This study addressed the following research questions:

1. Why did institutional decline begin at a small, private, religious institution?

2. After a period of decline, how did the institution revitalize?

To address these questions, the researcher analyzed what was occurring at a small, private, religious institution which led to decline and what contributed to how the institution revitalized. This was accomplished by interviewing senior administrators, faculty members, governing board members, and staff at the institution. Senior administrators and governing board members were included in the study due to their management and oversight of the institution. Faculty and staff members discussed the information they received from leadership during decline and gave their individual perspectives on factors which determined revitalization.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs the research (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Robson, 2011). Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that a conceptual framework is a visual or written product, one that "explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied—the key factors, concepts, or variables—and the presumed relationships among them" (p. 18).

Cowan (1993) developed a *Prescription for College Turnaround* that was based on the experiences of declining small colleges that had successfully recovered. Cowan's recommendations were based on in-depth interviews that she conducted at five small,

independent colleges and cursory reviews of 11 other small, independent colleges. She also

reviewed financial, enrollment, annual, self-evaluation, and external evaluation reports

covering periods before and after the turnaround process began at each of the colleges.

Cowan's conceptual framework was used in the present study to compare and examine the

factors and decisions that comprised the revitalization of a small, private, religious

institution.

The five colleges in Cowan's (1993) study had at least four of the following

indicators:

1. Five percent or greater declines in fall FTEs for three consecutive years

2. An endowment smaller than institutional expenses

3. Fifty percent deferral of plant equipment and maintenance

4. A decline in the ratio of net worth to debt

5. Tuition increases 60% or higher than the increase in total expenses

6. Expendable funds lower than debt for two years

Additional indications of decline were also present at each institution; such as, faculty

strikes, program proliferation, quick sales of tangible assets, cash only vendors, high

student attrition, low graduation rates, high staff turnover, and newspaper reports of

imminent closure. Cowan (1993) posited that the critical strategic problem of these

colleges was the lack of clarity of their purpose. During decline, each institution lacked a

clearly stated, shared understanding of what the college offered and for whom. Operational

problems were also plentiful. The basic information needed for even routine decisions was

unavailable. Symbolic problems of pessimism, hopelessness, and alienation were

prevalent.

Cowan (1993) looked for commonalities within the institutions to create her prescription, which consisted of five requisites for turnaround:

1. A willing president- the first necessity for becoming different and better is a president willing to launch the turnaround process and take responsibility for carrying it forward.

2. A collaborative process- a process that envisions a future and develops action plans to realize it.

3. Comprehensive change consistent with the college's character- change that complements the principle that change must come from the college as a whole is the principle that change must affect the college as a whole.

4. Operational effectiveness- college managers must assure operational effectiveness and use its resources efficiently.

5. Symbolic actions to maintain optimism and energy- a high level of excitement, commitment, enthusiasm, optimism, and even fun must be built.

Cowan (1993) asserted that "once turnaround begins, a law of accumulating advantage takes hold." Early and simple successes make more difficult changes more likely, "effectiveness begets effectiveness" (p. 39).

Terminology for this Study

Definitions are provided to clarify frequently used terms. The following relevant terms are defined to assist the reader:

1. *Decline*—For the purpose of this study, decline was "a condition in which a substantial, absolute decrease in an organization's resource base occurs over a specified period of time" (Cameron, Whetten, & Kim, 1987, p. 224).

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2. *Revitalization*—Revitalization happens when institutions progress from a state of decline to a more stable condition (Eaker, 2008). Revitalization and turnaround are used interchangeably.

3. *Small, private institutions*—Based on the Carnegie Foundation's (2010) classification description, these are very small (i.e., less than 1,000 full time equivalent enrollment), four-year, primarily residential, private, not-for-profit, baccalaureate degree-granting institutions.

Delimitations

The delimitations of the study were acknowledged in order to understand the constraints of the research. Creswell (2012) stated that delimitations confined the study and were imposed by the researcher. The primary delimitations pertained to the design of this study and provided boundaries for the research. Thus, generalizability was limited as the findings were specific to the institution in this study. Small, private, religious colleges have long and unique histories and, therefore, strategies for revitalization that worked at one college may not have enabled a different outcome for other institutions. Due to the use of a single site case study methodology, the overall scope of the study was narrowed and findings may not be transferable to other institutions. This study captured a distinct point in time at the university, the turning point in the decline process and subsequent revitalization. Therefore, much of the institutional history was omitted from this research, which limits depth.

Summary

This study is presented in five chapters. Chapter One, the introduction, included the background and context of the study. In addition, the statement of the problem,

purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, conceptual framework,

terminology, and delimitations and limitations of the study were identified. In Chapter

Two, a thorough review of relevant literature on institutional decline and revitalization is

included. Chapter Three details the methodology used to conduct the study. In Chapter

Four, findings of the study are presented, followed by Chapter Five, the final chapter,

which includes a discussion of the findings, conclusions, and implications for research,

practice, and policy.

Chapter Two:

Review of the Literature

Institutional decline and revitalization have not been well understood by scholars and the literature is limited. This review of the literature begins with background information on small, private institutions (including religious, women's, and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). These three types of institutions have faced some of the same issues throughout their histories.

After this historical context, a review of institutional revitalization, institutional decline, and closure/merger is included. These areas have not been well represented in higher education literature. Decline was studied in the late 1970s and 1980s (Nystrom & Starbuck, 1984; Starbuck & Hedberg, 1977; Whetten, 1980; Zammuto & Cameron, 1985), but few studies were published until around 2009 (Blumenstyk, 2010; Eaker & Kuk, 2011; Levy, 2013; Martin & Samels, 2009).

There have been a few quantitative studies in which researchers analyzed decline and revitalization factors (Eaker & Kuk, 2011) from small or single case studies (i.e., mainly dissertations) or from available data on institutions that had closed (Porter & Ramirez, 2009). These studies as well as qualitative research helped frame the present study by providing prevalent themes in decline, such as enrollment (Belkin, 2014; Blumenstyk, 2010; Martin & Samels, 2009), financial issues (Brown, 2012; Dimmock, 2012; Lyken-Segosebe & Shepherd, 2013; Schwarz, 2013), institutional effectiveness (Manning, 2011; Middaugh, 2010) and ineffective leadership (Cowan, 1993; Martin & Samels, 2009; McNeal, 2013; Putnam, 1996). A review of literature on closure and merger is also included, though substantive records of closed colleges were rare (Bates &

Santerre, 2000; Brown, 2012; Martin & Samels, 2009; Porter & Ramirez, 2009). A review

of factors that influence the revitalization (Cowan, 1993; Eaker & Kuk, 2011; Hebel, 2006;

MacTaggart, 2007; Paul, 2005; Wellman, 2002) of institutions conclude this chapter.

Small, Private Institutions of Higher Education

Three types of small, private institutions (i.e., religious, women's, and HBCUs)

struggled to maintain their niche in American higher education. Administrators at

institutions within these groups chose to deal with the changing landscape of education in

differing ways and with varied degrees of success. Some have enjoyed growth and success

while others remained in decline or closed. To understand the current condition of these

related types of institutions, a review of their history should be examined. Thelin (2011)

noted that the discussion of timely higher education topics starts—not stops—with history.

Each of the three highlighted types of small, private institutions had to adapt to

changing times because the demographics of students that they typically recruited had

many options. Thus, the market was increasingly competitive. As such, institutions had to

make many choices about how they intended to operate and become viable institutions.

Religious institutions. Religion has been associated with higher education

institutions in the United States since institutions were formed in colonial times. The

founding of private colleges in America has been primarily a Christian endeavor

(Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). Webb (2006) stated that "the Great Awakening of religious

fervor that swept the colonies in the mid-18th century brought with it an increased

sectarianism that resulted in every religious sect wanting to establish its own college" (p.

91). Almost every major Christian sect had established its own institution by the

beginning of the Revolutionary War (Thelin, 2011; Webb, 2006). Churches led in the

creation and early operation of nearly all institutions, private and public, before the Civil War and in the great majority of private institutions since 1865 (Ringenberg, 2006). A comparison of Christian colleges in 1920 and 1980 showed great contrast not only because many secularizing institutions had departed but also because new liberal arts colleges had appeared. Protestant groups founded fewer colleges after 1920 than between the Civil War and World War I, but nearly all of the new institutions declared a Christian orientation (Ringenberg, 2006). The Holiness movement, especially the Wesleyan and Free Methodist churches, began founding institutions in the late nineteenth century, with Roberts Wesleyan, Houghton, Spring Arbor, Seattle Pacific, Greenville, and Asbury appearing at that time (Ringenberg, 2006). Few colleges founded in the nineteenth century have remained Christian. Most state universities became largely secularized by 1900; however, not until the twentieth century did the Christian religion lose its dominant intellectual position in those institutions which began as private Protestant colleges.

Women's colleges. Women's colleges remained important as an access point for women to higher education throughout the nineteenth century (Miller-Bernal, 2008). The suspicion that women's colleges were not as intellectually challenging as men's colleges led most nineteenth century women's rights advocates to favor coeducational institutions. As early as 1920, more than four-fifths of women attended coeducational colleges and universities (Wolfram, 1997). Educators at women's colleges recognized that female students, particularly some of the most academically gifted who previously would have attended their colleges, now applied to formerly men's colleges (Wolfram, 1997). To avoid anticipated declines in enrollments and academic standards, some women's colleges decided to admit men (Miller-Bernal, 2008).

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Poulson and Miller-Bernal (2006) highlighted four major ways colleges typically responded to the institutional problems created by the overwhelming coeducation trend: (1) admit men; (2) develop close relationships with nearby men's or coeducational colleges; (3) develop other programs to compensate for insufficient revenues from the traditional undergraduate program, such as part-time and evening programs; and (4) close, merge, or be purchased by another institution. A familiar sentiment among women's colleges who made the difficult decision to admit men was *coed or dead* (Brown, 2011; Gueverra, 2001; Kratzok, 2010).

According to the Women's College Coalition (2009), the number of women's colleges in the United States declined from a high of 345 in 1952 to a low of 54 in 2009. Just a year later, the number of women's colleges dropped to 50 (Gordon, 2010). Brubacher and Rudy (2005) stated several reasons for the decrease in women's colleges including "shrinking application pools, tougher competition for students, a general softening of the economy, as well as major shifts in the lifestyles, preferences, and goals of young people" (p. 69). In recent decades, HBCUs have been faced with many of the same issues as women's colleges.

HBCUs. Wenglinsky (1996) noted that HBCUs are extensions of the ethnic and religious communities in which they served and that they have continued to fill a mission that other higher education institutions could not offer. By the early 1960s, 70% of all African American college students were enrolled in HBCUs (Williams, 1993). Subsequent decades brought many challenges for HBCUs.

Segregated colleges in the south and border states slowly began to admit African American students after the Supreme Court's ruling in the *Brown v. Board of Education*

cases of 1954 and 1955, as well as the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Congress also passed the Higher Education Act of 1965, which provided funds for low-income students to attend postsecondary education institutions. These changes increased the number of African Americans enrolled in college.

As more Primarily White Institutions enrolled African American students, the number and percentage of students enrolled at HBCUs began to decline (Redd, 1998). Due to enrollment declines and the continuing lack of adequate funding from states and other sources, some HBCUs closed or merged with other institutions, while others struggled to remain open. In response, some HBCUs began to shift their foci and missions (Redd, 1998).

Institutional Decline

Levy (2013) asserted that much of the reason to study and understand decline is the same as the reason to study growth. Just as growth studies informed scholars and administrators on strategies to strengthen and expand institutions, decline studies provided cautionary tales and noted strategies that did not work in certain institution types. Institutional decline received little attention in the literature. However, institutional decline in small, private institutions became more prevalent. Martin and Samels (2009) defined a stressed college or university as "an institution that is dependent on tuition or state appropriations, smaller than it should be and needs to be, and lacking in name-brand recognition" (p. 3). Religious, women's, and HBCUs have all experienced decline. After mainstream institutions began admitting students who typically would have attended one of the aforementioned institution types, there was diminished rationale for separate, private institutions (Levy, 2013). These institutions attempted to attract students in an

increasingly competitive market and struggled to retain the needed enrollment numbers for

stability and growth. Martin and Samels (2009) developed a list of 20 at-risk indicators to

assess institutional stress. They interviewed Dennis Jones, President of the National

Center for Higher Education Management Systems, more than 20 years after his 1985

powerful report, *Indicators of the Condition of Higher Education*. They asked Jones what

new indicators would be included if he developed another report. The resulting

information from Jones played a role in the new indicators developed by Martin and

Samels (2009). The first ten at-risk indicators focused exclusively on institutional budget

and resource challenges (Martin & Samels, 2009, p. 9-20):

1. Tuition discount is more than 35%.

2. Tuition dependency is more than 85%.

3. Debt service is more than 10% of the annual operating budget.

4. Less than a 1 to 3 ratio between the endowment and the operating budget.

5. Student default rate is above 5%.

6. Average tuition increase is greater than 8% for 5 years.

7. Deferred maintenance at least 40% unfunded.

8. Short-term bridge financing required in the final quarter of each fiscal year.

9. Less than 10% of the operating budget is dedicated to technology.

10. Average annual alumni gifts are less than $75.

The next ten indicators focused more on comprehensive campus issues:

11. Institutional enrollment is 1000 students or lower.

12. Conversion yield is 20% behind that of primary competitors.

13. Student retention is 10 percent behind that of primary competitors.

14. The institution is on probation, warning, or financial watch with a regional

    accreditor or a specialty degree licensor.

15. The majority of faculty do not hold terminal degrees.

16. Average age of full-time faculty is 58 or higher.

17. The leadership team averages fewer than 3 years or more than 12 years of

    service at the institution.

18. No complete online program has been developed.

19. No new degree or certificate program has been developed for at least 2 years.

20. Academic governance and curriculum development systems require more than

    one year to approve a new degree program.

Martin and Samels (2009) stated that fragile universities may not exhibit all twenty
at-risk indicators and that the presence of a few indicators may not indicate vulnerability.
However, the researchers suggested universities which demonstrated the majority of the
indicators were likely already in a state of decline.

During the recession that began in 2008, many small, private institutions sustained
dramatic losses in their endowment funds. Blumenstyk (2010) noted that the result was a
decline in institutions overall level of resources in relation to their overall debt. These
losses affected virtually every area of the university, and once decline began, it perpetuated
itself (Eaker & Kuk, 2011). Low enrollment, financial issues, and lack of effective
leadership are the major themes that emerged from the literature and have been cited as
contributors to institutional decline.

Enrollment decline. A significant cause of decline in colleges and universities was
a decrease in enrollment, especially for those that were 85% or more dependent on tuition

for revenue (Martin & Samels, 2009; Townsley, 2002). Belkin (2014) noted that, from 2010 through 2012, freshman enrollment at more than a quarter of United States private four-year schools declined 10% or more. Using survey data collected from 120 higher education leaders, McGann and Weiss (2014) found that 85% were *very* or *somewhat* concerned about their ability to maintain current enrollment levels, an increase of 14 percent from 2013 to 2014. Blumenstyk (2010) asserted that the minimum enrollment of small liberal arts colleges should now be 1,500 students if they intend to maintain the critical number of students and have a balanced budget on an annual basis.

Demographic and technological changes within higher education have been forcing administrators at many institutions to take a look at their business model (Belkin, 2014; Magaw, 2014). For example, administrators at St. John's College in Annapolis, MD, changed their business model after freshman enrollment fell 17% from 2011 to 2013. Now, 30% of St. John's budget is funded through gifts, up from 18% in 2008 (Belkin, 2014). However, gifts were not always a sustainable funding mechanism.

In an effort to reduce administrative expenses, Brown (2012) stated that a consortium of seven colleges in the Southeastern United States shared one administrative computing system and one staff. By pooling resources to maintain a single hardware system instead of seven, significant savings were generated. After ten years of operation, each of the institutions saved around $3 million in direct costs, not accounting for increased efficiency and productivity.

Biemiller (2015) noted that small colleges are discovering—some faster than others—that they have to be acutely sensitive to the evolving whims of students and the concerns of parents, as well as nimble enough to meet the marketplace on its terms. In the

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1990s, Elon College administrators sought to make the campus a place that would draw the students *they desired* rather than to just attract *students*. Elon administrators borrowed millions to create the sought-after environment, changed academic strategies, and redesigned approaches to recruitment and retention. Ultimately, enrollment increased to around five thousand students, and debt repayment was no longer a factor (Brown, 2012).

McGann and Weiss (2014) asked higher education leaders to identify the major influences on enrollment at their institution. Participants identified parent/student inability to pay tuition and competition from peer institutions as influential factors. To address both issues, most participants noted they increased tuition discounting (McGann & Weiss, 2014). Since the economic downturn that began in 2008, tuition discounting has been on the rise and has been a strategy frequently employed to shield against enrollment decline that was due to students' inability to pay tuition (Magaw, 2014; Rivard, 2014). According to a study of private, non-profit, four-year colleges by the National Association of College and University Business Officers (2014), the discounted rate for first-time freshmen during the 2013-2014 academic year was estimated to reach 46.4%, which is the highest recorded rate.

A longer-term strategy private college leaders (71%) intended to use to address declining enrollment, according to McGann and Weiss (2014), was to increase spending in technology. Hybrid education delivery models, which included virtual learning environments and managing social media contact with prospective and current students, was part of that increased prioritization of technology. Schwarz (2013) stated, "Online technology offers perhaps the most fundamental change in enrollment strategy for higher education" (p. 14). Online delivery methods enable faculty to reach a greater number of

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students and the per student cost of teaching can decrease. Decreasing costs can often be an important initiative for institutions facing decline.

Financial issues. Financial issues are often derived from tuition discounting (and lower tuition increases), endowment losses, and deferred maintenance. Revenue at private institutions primarily comes from tuition, annual giving, and endowments (Magaw, 2014). Schwarz (2013) stated that private universities experienced slowing net tuition per student growth since the 2008 financial crisis. This was due to lower tuition increases, tuition discounting, and financial aid growth in response to declining family incomes. Even with lower tuition increases, attending private institutions is still more costly for students than attending public institutions. Schwarz (2013) noted that universities were using three particular initiatives to address net tuition revenue pressure: increasing student retention efforts, recruiting out-of-state students, and introducing online courses. By creating initiatives to retain the students who were already enrolled and at the same time increasing the student base, university administrators were making an effort to keep their colleges viable and growing.

Prior to the beginning of the recession, endowments were noted for investment returns compared with other institutional investments (Lerner, Schoar, & Wongsunwai, 2007). The top 20 postsecondary endowments grew more than nine percent annually between 1992 and 2005 (Lerner et al., 2008). As of 2007, the two largest endowments, belonging to Harvard University and Yale University grew to $35 billion and $22 billion in size, respectively (Lerner et al., 2008). However, as a result of the recession, endowments decreased significantly. Harvard University and Yale University endowments dropped by more than 20% in 2009 (Barber & Wang, 2011). Dimmock (2012) stated that large

endowment losses during 2008-2009 significantly reduced some universities' abilities to react to revenue shortfalls. Austin College, a small, private, religious institution in Texas, found that due to the recession in 2008, the value of the endowment was dropping and eventually salaries were frozen and benefits cut. Ultimately, the recession cost the college around $27 million (Biemiller, 2015). Traditionally, endowments have served as a cushion against financial distress (Hansmann, 1990). The value of endowments held by United States doctoral universities was $370 billion in 2008 and declined to $273 billion in 2009 (Brown, Dimmock, Kang, & Weisbenner, 2013). Even institutions with endowments in the billions that touted conservative endowment spending policies had large declines (Goetzmann & Oster, 2012). Jones and Wellman (2010) noted that, "This recession has clearly demonstrated that the financing problems affecting higher education are not short-term but structural. They are born of bad habits and an inattention to strategic financing and resources allocation" (p. 9). Endowment losses affected many operations, including capital spending, fundraising, and credit strength (Biemiller, 2015; Goodman, 2009).

Financial problems also can be compounded by deferred maintenance and the expenses associated with deteriorating facilities which can lead institutions into debt and, potentially, bankruptcy (Brown, 2012). Financial difficulties occurred if deteriorating facilities were coupled with new construction that could not be supported by the institution (Lyken-Segosebe & Shepherd, 2013). An example of the struggle to remain open when dealing with decrepit facilities (Biemiller, 2007) is the case of Antioch College, a small, private institution in Ohio.

Antioch College announced in 2007 that it needed to close its doors in 2008 due largely to financial woes. Antioch's endowment of $36 million engendered financial

insecurity, which contributed to decaying facilities and declining enrollment (Carlson, 2009). Antioch College officially closed in June of 2008. For the next few years, alumni and others worked to reopen Antioch as an independent college. That goal was realized when, in October of 2011, 35 students accepted admission to the college. By the fall of 2013, Antioch College had grown their endowment to $44.3 million and 200 students were enrolled in the college. They have launched a $75 million fundraising campaign and seek to grow to 550 students by 2021. Administrators were committed to learning from previous mistakes, continued to make infrastructure improvements, and sought to lower operating costs (Antioch College, 2013). While Antioch College has been growing, their future remained uncertain. Good stewardship of financial resources was crucial in their effort to remain open.

Institutional effectiveness. Manning (2011) defined institutional effectiveness as consisting "of a set of ongoing and systematic institutional processes and practices that include planning, the evaluation of programs and services, the identification and measurement of outcomes across all institutional units, and the use of data and assessment results to inform decision making" (p. 14). Assessment of institutional effectiveness has become an increasingly important topic as Congress, state legislatures, parents, and students continue to question institutional outcomes (Middaugh, 2010).

Cameron et al. (1988) sought to explore the relationship between financial difficulty in institutions and organizational effectiveness. The researchers utilized responses from administrative and faculty experts in 334 four-year colleges and universities. They assessed three sets of variables in the study: a decline in financial resources; organizational effectiveness, defined as performance; and a set of dysfunctional

organizational attributes, labeled "the dirty dozen" (Cameron et al., 1988, p. 68) that

frequently have been associated with downsizing, restructuring, and/or decline. The dirty

dozen were identified by the researchers as the following:

- Centralization—Decision making is pulled toward the top of the organization.
  Less power is shared.

- Short-term crisis mentality—Long term planning is neglected. The focus is on
  immediacy.

- Loss of innovativeness—Trial and error learning is curtailed. Less tolerance
  for risk and failure associated with creative activity.

- Resistance to change—Conservation and the threat-rigidity response lead to
  "hunkering down" and a protectionist stance.

- Decreasing morale—Infighting and a "mean mood" permeates the organization.

- Politicized interest groups—Special interest groups organize and become more
  vocal. The climate becomes politicized.

- Non-prioritized cutbacks—Across the board cutbacks are used to ameliorate
  conflict. Priorities are not obvious.

- Loss of trust—Leaders lose the confidence of subordinates and distrust among
  organization members increases.

- Increasing conflict—Fewer resources result in internal competition and fighting
  for a smaller pie.

- Restricted communication—Only good news is passed upward. Information is
  not widely shared because of fear and distrust.

- Lack of teamwork—Individualism and disconnectedness make teamwork difficult. Individuals resist cooperation and involvement.

- Scapegoating leaders—Leadership anemia occurs as leaders are scapegoated, priorities are unclear, and a siege mentality prevails. (Cameron et al., 1988, p. 72)

Cameron et al. (1998) indicated that increasing revenues and institutional performance were linked; however, some institutions experiencing financial stress and decline maintained average and high levels of performance. However, if the attributes in the dirty dozen were present, performance declined. The researchers further asserted that the dirty dozen were better predictors of organization ineffectiveness than financial decline. They noted that, "Fiscal stress, scarcity of financial resources, and decline in revenues do not, by themselves, ensure that a college or university will operate less effectively than an institution with plentiful financial resources" (Cameron et al., 1998, p. 80). The institutional effectiveness literature built on the previous decline literature show that when several decline factors converge at once, the institution often began a downward trend in many areas.

Ineffective leadership. Lack of effective leadership often has been noted as a reason for institutional decline (Cowan, 1993; Martin & Samels, 2009; McNeal, 2013). Martin and Samels (2009) observed that college presidents were older and staying for shorter terms than at any previous time in American higher education. The researchers asserted that this causes "churning," (Martin & Samels, 2009, p. 4) or a stirring up of the campus for a two-year transition when one president left and another began. Repeated churning of presidents began to cause institutional deterioration and neglect as leaders left

and a new president brought in their own set of plans which might be very different from the previous president.

A phenomenon called *problem-blindness*, which stemmed from a failure in leadership and governance, could affect a college for years before it is noticed (Cowan, 1993). For presidents of private institutions, few goals mattered more than student enrollment, fundraising, revenue, and budget benchmarks (McNeal, 2013). By the time decline was acknowledged, any attempt to figure out when and how it started would be futile. Until something disrupts the system, the cycles continue to perpetuate until the college reaches the point of crisis (Cowan, 1993; Eaker & Kuk, 2011).

Putnam (1996) investigated the involvement of boards of trustees in the final days of three small, private colleges that closed. He discovered two early indicators of distress: (a) as the college declined the board took a less active role in the core financial issues of the institution and (b) the president began to restrict access to the financial information that was once easily available. Similarly, Brown (2011) conducted a case study on the closure of Saint Mary's College. Brown looked at the immediate years leading up to Saint Mary's closure from the perspective of the last president. This study followed the efforts of the president to persuade other stakeholders, including the governing board, that significant changes had to be made and their failure to support the president. A major objective of governing boards is to support the president in his/her initiatives (Trachtenberg, Kauvar, & Bogue, 2013). When boards were not supportive, presidents often find it difficult to progress in a positive direction and decline continued, which lead to institutional closure (McNeal, 2013).

Institutional Revitalization

MacTaggart (2007) stated that few colleges were so distressed that they could not be turned around toward a brighter future. MacTaggart studied the turnaround trajectories of 40 colleges, of which three-quarters were private. He focused first on the colleges on "the brink of disaster, threatened by tribulations such as bankruptcy, loss of federal approval for financial aid, and sanctions from their accrediting agencies" (MacTaggart, 2007, p. 1). He also looked at a second group of institutions that, while better off and unlikely to miss a payroll or lose accreditation, had gradually slipped in their academic strength, brand recognition, and ability to attract students. He identified three stages in institutional turnaround. He identified stage one as restoring financial stability, the most critical requirement; stage two as marketing academic programs and branding or rebranding an institutional image; and stage three as revitalizing academic programs and the institutions culture, which may include a change in mission. Both Cowan (1993) and MacTaggart (2007) identified institutional culture and rebranding as important revitalization factors.

Hebel (2006) identified several factors that contributed to the stability of an institution and its ability to weather sudden storms. He acknowledged the following factors associated with the ability to survive in hard times while analyzing conditions at Clarke College in Iowa:

- The ratio of enrolled FTE [Full-time equivalent] to endowment is at a minimum 1,500 enrollment to $50 million in endowments. Expressed as: 1500 FTE/$50 million endowment.

- Focus on improving amenities that attract full time students.

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- Cut back or limit tuition discounting so that it does not exceed the average for type of college and geographical area. Private 4-year colleges similar to Clarke College discount at an average of 35.5 % for freshmen.

- Work hard to get the attention of a foundation.

- Adjust the academic mission to focus on market needs. (p. 14)

Revitalization often began with the willingness to acknowledge that the *symptoms* of decline were not the *causes* (Eaker & Kuk, 2011). Decreasing enrollments did not cause the problems. However, decreased enrollment was a symptom of broader systemic problems within the institutions (Cowan, 1993; Eaker & Kuk, 2011). Cowan (1993) found that the problems needed to be addressed by the highest level of the institution. Often, these broader problems were strategic, operational, and symbolic.
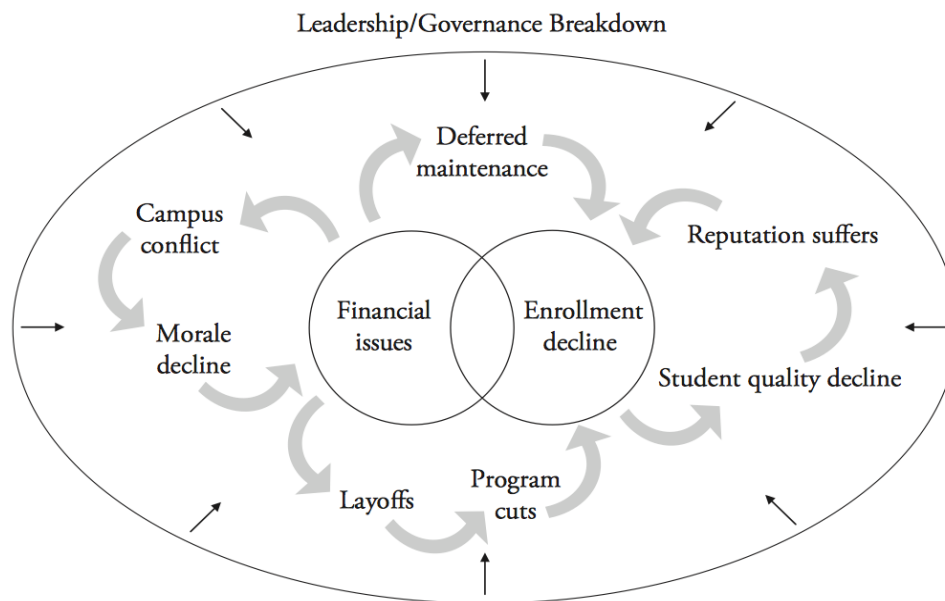
Figure 1. Cycle of Decline. *Reprinted with permission.* (Eaker & Kuk, 2011)

Institutional revitalization can occur when something happens to interrupt decline, such as new leadership, fundraising, new mission/vision, culture change, and/or new marketing efforts (Eaker & Kuk, 2011). These factors can disrupt the process of decline at any point. Eaker and Kuk (2011) identified 47 revitalization variables in their study of 45 small, private revitalized colleges. Examples of the identified variables included a new president, new academic programs, fundraising, building maintenance, operational effectiveness, increased enrollment, improved budget process, and strategic planning.

Of the 45 institutions in the study, 39 mentioned measures taken to address enrollment. Eaker and Kuk (2011) used two different variables to measure enrollment—internal and external activities. Internal activities were defined as the traditional recruitment and marketing tasks undertaken by the admissions staff. Increasing high school visits, developing new brochures, or implementing a new marketing plan. The researchers provided external activity examples as making the campus more appealing to prospective students through renovation, new buildings, and upgraded technology. Eaker and Kuk (2011) noted that the activities/actions identified could happen in any order and without any designated time frame. They also asserted that the revitalization process would not happen the same way in multiple institutions.

Eaker and Kuk (2011) noted six considerations for administrators of institutions in decline following their study: (1) decline could start slowly and go unnoticed for quite some time; (2) once a college reached the point of distress, bringing in money and students was the top priority; (3) look beyond the admissions office for possible sources of the decline; (4) do not rely on a single technique for bringing in students or money; (5) budget cuts would not save a college in distress; and (6) in the effort to bring in money and

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students, institutions should not ignore the importance of mission building and planning. The revitalization process was as unique as the institutions which were studied by Eaker and Kuk (2011). Researchers consistently stated that a good president was crucial as well as support from the board of trustees (Cowan, 1993; Eaker & Kuk, 2011). Data gained from these studies were a good start in learning more about what administrators and other stakeholders at small, private institutions do during revitalization.
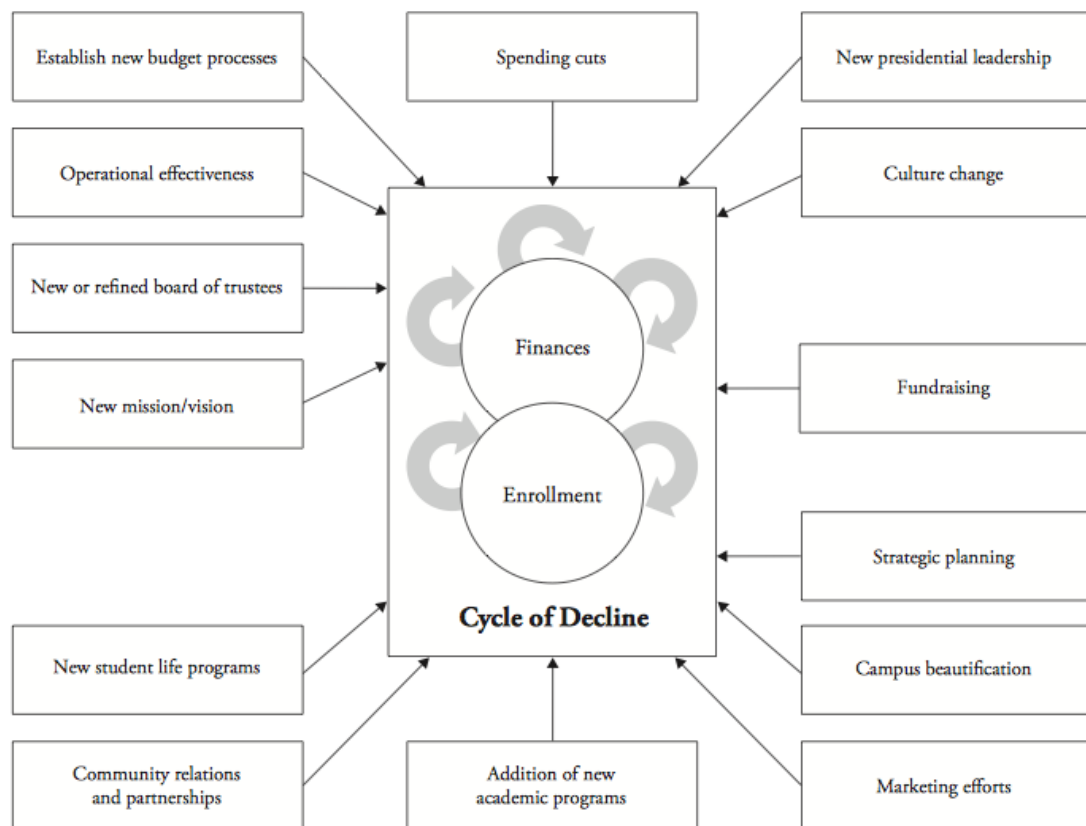
Figure 2. Process of Revitalization. *Reprinted with permission.* (Eaker & Kuk, 2011)

Leadership. Administrators at institutions desiring a turnaround from decline must involve stakeholders in various roles, such as senior leadership, faculty, staff, and the

governing board. Institutions must have turnover at the top level, especially if the president was viewed as partially or fully to blame for the decline (Cowan, 1993; MacTaggart, 2007; Paul, 2005). It was very difficult for presidents, perceived to be at fault, to institute and implement turnaround strategies because they had little credibility, internally or externally to move the organization forward (Cowan, 1993; Pfieffer & Blake-Davis, 1986; Salanick & Meindl, 1984).

Bibeault (1982) developed a four-stage process that began with management change, then evaluation, moving to emergency action and, finally, stabilization resulting in a return to normalized growth. The board of trustees had a large role in institutional revitalization. During revitalization, boards were encouraged to take a more active role (Wellman, 2002). The board had to be involved in any strategic planning changes and important financial decisions.

Collaborative decision making was a requirement for successful institution turnaround (Cowan, 1993).Faculty and staff wanted their opinions factored into leadership decisions (Hotchkiss, 1995). MacTaggart (2007) noted that all key groups on a campus, especially the faculty, must be involved in making the tough choices that were needed to make a successful turnaround. This included helping reposition the institution in the academic marketplace and finding inspiration to revitalize the teaching and learning experience (MacTaggart, 2007).

Martin and Samels (2009) noted seven items that administrators must ensure to enable a turnaround for institutions in decline. These seven turnaround strategies were comprehensive in focus:

1. *Strengthen the board of trustees and increase volunteer involvement.* During periods of vulnerability the board must look more deeply at how it operates. Policies and outcomes must be evaluated regularly.

2. *Ensure the perception of academic quality.* It is essential to identify niche program areas and develop academic quality in all of them.

3. *Decentralize decision making.* This encourages an institution's flexibility and enhances its ability to address at-risk circumstances.

4. *Maintain morale.* To stem employee turnover, leaders must find ways to retain talented faculty and staff by including them in decision making, communicating more openly with them, involving them in strategic planning, and rewarding commitment, achievement, and improvement.

5. *Broaden the resource base.* Deeper relationships must be built with alumni, government units, corporations, and foundations.

6. *Plan strategically.* Vulnerable colleges need to assess changing student and employer preferences more effectively in order to adapt program choices and stabilize institutional revenues.

7. *Prioritize spending cuts.* Avoiding across-the-board cuts and reallocating resources to new programs and growth areas are crucial for institutional vitality (Martin & Samels, 2009) p. 55-57).

Several researchers highlighted turnaround or revitalization strategies. Effective leadership was always included. Having an *active* board and president was interwoven into many studies. To stop decline and enable revitalization, a combination of the aforementioned strategies had to be employed. The successful combination was likely

different for various institutions, but active leadership must be in place to begin the process. In some cases, despite revitalization attempts, institutions closed. The next section highlights institutional closure.

Institutional Closure

Substantive records of closed colleges and universities have not been kept which limits the information available about them (Lyken-Segosebe & Shepherd, 2013). However, some common characteristics of colleges that have closed can be identified: small, single-sex, tuition-dependent, modest-endowment, religiously affiliated, heavy depreciated, poor retention, junior colleges, liberal arts colleges, underleveraged, and non-performing assets (Martin & Samels, 2009). Brown (2012) noted four major problems that led small, church-related, private colleges toward closure. According to Brown (2012):

> They try to be everything to everybody instead of being the best at something; there is a lot of turnover in leadership so there is building and stopping and momentum is not maintained; much of the funding comes from a church so there is no consistent funding revenue; and college boards are often comprised of clergy, whose expertise is the Bible, not the bank book (p. 63).

Porter and Ramirez (2009) conducted a quantitative study on institutions that closed from 1975 to 2005. The researchers studied the closure of 824 private, research, doctoral, comprehensive, and baccalaureate institutions. They identified the following three factors as contributors: lower endowment per student, lower enrollments, and limited selectivity. Lyken-Segosebe and Shepherd (2013) came to similar conclusions while reviewing articles on four small, private institution closures in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. They found that low enrollment, low endowment levels, high debt and deficit

positions, and deferred maintenance were challenges common to small colleges and universities at the time of their closure.

Several of the factors previously mentioned were highlighted as partial reasons for the closure of Sweet Briar College, a small, private, women's college. In February of 2015, the Board of Directors voted unanimously to close the college at the end of the academic year (Kolowich, 2015). In March 2014, the college began a strategic planning initiative that examined opportunities for Sweet Briar to attract and retain a larger number of qualified students and determine if any fundraising possibilities might exist to support those opportunities. Due to financial constraints, the planning initiative did not yield any viable paths forward (Carey, 2015). The declining number of students choosing to attend small, rural, private liberal arts colleges, and even fewer young women willing to consider a single-sex education, coupled with the increase in the tuition discount rate extended to enroll each new class became financially unsustainable for Sweet Briar College (Carey, 2015).

An option for some institutions considering closure was to merge with another institution. However, Brown et al. (2012) asserted that "typically, a college close to closing will try to save itself by using its own internal resources—board, president, faculty, staff, alumni, and other friends and donors—before considering merger with or sale to an outside institution" (p. 67). Bates and Santerre (2000) indicated that mergers in higher education were less common than in general business because of institutional missions built into the colleges by their founders and made constantly evident by factors such as the name of the college. Their aim was to fill a void in higher education literature regarding exit decisions of private, four-year, not-for-profit colleges. In their research to identify the

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number of closings per year, Bates and Santerre (2000) also discovered that there was an apparent inverse relationship between periods of downturns in the economy that coincide with business failures. The researchers found that private four-year college closures and mergers were more likely when the value of tuition fell, faculty salaries rose, the student pool dried up, and religious institutions dominated less.

Summary

Decline often began or was perpetuated by low enrollment, financial issues, lack of organizational effectiveness, and ineffective leadership. Revitalization factors, such as a new president or new marketing efforts, had the potential to stop decline at any point in the process. The processes of decline and revitalization were cyclical (Cowan, 1993; Eaker & Kuk, 2011). Once decline began, the cycle had to be broken for revitalization to begin. Once revitalization began, positive momentum pushed the process forward. Understanding these processes has the potential to inform positive changes in institutions in the midst of decline.

<p style="text-align:center">Chapter Three:</p>

<p style="text-align:center">Methodology</p>

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore factors that precipitated decline, and to understand what decisions or factors determined revitalization at a small, private, religious institution. Previous chapters introduced the topic and included a review of relevant literature on revitalization, decline, and closure. This chapter includes the research design, site selection, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, and how findings will be represented in the study.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. Why did institutional decline begin at a small, private, religious institution?

2. After a period of decline, how did the institution revitalize?

Research Design

A single site qualitative case study design was used in this study to investigate perceptions of higher education administrators, governing board members, faculty, and staff relating to institutional decline and subsequent revitalization. Case study is a frequently used approach that can involve focused interviews, observations, documents, and/or other means to gather qualitative information (Yin, 2009, 2014). Qualitative case studies are generally the preferred research strategy when *how* and *why* questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 2009, 2014). Case studies can involve either single or multiple cases, and numerous levels of analysis (Yin, 2009,

2014). This method is particularly useful in this study because case studies are appropriate for studying organizational changes (Van de Ven & Poole, 1990).

Merriam (1998) stated that transferability, or external validity, of a case study is obtained through thick description, a thorough and complete understanding of the case to help other persons understand and judge its worth, as well as the context within which it has operated. Creswell (2012) and Yin (2009, 2014) emphasized dominant modes of data analysis involved with case studies; in particular, one must compare *patterns* in responses relative to predictions based on theory from literature, seek causal links and explanations, and trace pattern changes over time.

Bounding the Case

Yin (2009, 2014) asserted that bounding is important in determining the scope of data collection and clarifying the specific constraints. As this is a single site case study, the bounded system includes one higher education institution, Gilliam College (pseudonym). For this study, the case was temporally bounded by the beginning of institutional decline at the site to fifteen years after revitalization began (1987-2015). Also, Cowan's (1993) *Prescription for College Turnaround* introduced in Chapter One offered an initial logical bounding of the case. Turnaround factors identified in Cowan's (1993) *Prescription for College Turnaround* provided a basis for examining potential factors in the revitalization of the site in this study.

Site Selection and Access

The site for this case study was selected based on location, size, structure, and religious affiliation. Gilliam College is a small, private, religiously affiliated college in the southeastern United States. The campus is located in the downtown area of a quaint

southern town. Gilliam College bears the name of a man who provided for the establishment of a school for girls by giving the original endowing gift of $30,000 through a provision in his will in 1870. His bequest was the fulfillment of a dream of his daughter who, before her death at the age of twenty, requested that her father establish such a school for young women. Thus, Gilliam was founded as a women's college in the late 1800s. By 1940, the college became coeducational and became a four-year institution beginning in the 1990s. The decision by the Board of Trustees to become a baccalaureate-degree-granting institution was implemented to expand and enhance the college's opportunities to achieve its objectives. In the late 1990s, the Board of Trustees set the goal of raising enrollment to at least 1,000 students. In 2015, Gilliam College's enrollment exceeds 1,000 students.

The mission of Gilliam College is to: (1) provide challenging educational programs grounded in the liberal arts and sciences that are designed to prepare students for future careers and lives of continued learning; (2) promote a diverse and globally-conscious learning community that nurtures intellectual, spiritual, social, and personal growth; (3) serve the region and church through educational, spiritual, social, and cultural programs (Gilliam Growth Plan #2, 2010).

Access was gained through the religious conference in which the institution is affiliated. After an initial interest inquiry, a senior administrator from Gilliam College (pseudonym) expressed that individuals from the college would be willing to participate in the study.

Data Collection

        In qualitative data collection, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1998). The researcher used a flexible, subjective approach to gathering data and was open to an evolving or emerging structure to the study (Creswell, 2005). According to Guba and Lincoln (1981), researchers are responsive to the context where they collect data. The researcher adapted techniques as the context demanded, responded and began to process information immediately, and clarified and summarized unclear responses.

        Yin (2009, 2014) noted that the first principle of case study data collection is to use multiple sources of evidence. Using multiple sources of data ensured data triangulation; when multiple sources yielded the same result data was *corroborated* (Adler & Clark, 2003). Data for this study was collected primarily through interviews and document analysis. Documents were obtained by searching online for public documents and by asking study participants for sources.

        Interviews. Merriam (2009) noted that interviewing is the most effective technique to use when exploring case study research with a small number of participants. Interviews with eight key stakeholders were conducted to obtain an in-depth understanding of how university stakeholders interpreted the decline and revitalization at Gilliam College. Semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection method for this study. A variety of current and former campus stakeholders associated with the university were solicited for interviews. Interview participants included current and former presidents, senior administrators, faculty members, governing board members, and staff. Snowball soliciting (e.g., Dobbert, 1984) was employed to recruit participants. Some status sampling

was desirable for this study; that is, persons solicited for interviews were thought to be somewhat knowledgeable about relevant issues (Dobbert, 1984).

Interviews used for this case study were conducted with an interview guide (see Appendix A), while allowing for a semi-structured interview format. This allowed the researcher to react to the "situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). Adler and Clark (2003) explained the purpose of semi-structured interviews noting, "structure in an interview can limit the researcher's ability to obtain in-depth information on any given issue. Furthermore, using a standardized format implicitly assumes that all respondents understand and interpret questions in the same way" (p. 281). Asking semi-structured interview questions that are open-ended can help facilitate the data collection process by allowing for in-depth follow-up questions (Yin, 2009, 2014). The interview guide consisted of eight open-ended questions. In addition, follow-up questions and probes were added as the researcher deemed them necessary. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and one hour. The researcher took notes during the interviews, but digital recordings contained the primary data.

Interviews were conducted during June of 2015. The one-on-one interviews were conducted at a location specified by each participant based on their convenience and availability. One interview was conducted via phone. Interviews were recorded, after permission from the participant was granted, using a digital recorder. Recordings were uploaded to the researcher's computer for transcription after each interview was completed. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym after interviews were conducted and before transcription took place.

Documents and records. Documents and records also served as sources of

information for the case study (Table 1). A review of the following documents/items was

conducted: Mission and vision statements, institutional history records, and strategic

plans. Merriam (1998) explained that documents are a ready-made source of data easily

accessible to the researcher. The collection of documents was a non-intrusive way to

gather pertinent information. A review of documents and records aided in providing

contextual information that was not available through interviews alone. The researcher

was unable to gain access to documents that could highlight the decline of Gilliam College.

Repeated requests were made to the administrators of Gilliam, who agreed to supply

documents but never sent them. The Annual Conference of the church affiliated with

Gilliam was also unable to find any supporting documents from the 1980's or early 1990's.

More information was available online about Gilliam in recent years which included

strategic plans, financial statements, and news articles. The documents and records were

analyzed both before and after interviews with participants to identify key themes that

could provide context to information from interviews.

Data Analysis

Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002) stated that the purpose of the data analysis

process was to create meaning which would, therefore, be used "to present the reader with

the stories identified throughout the analytical process, the salient themes, recurring

language, and patterns of belief linking people and settings together" (p. 31).

The constant comparative method (Merriam, 2009) was used to develop categorical

codes and then overarching themes. Relevant information from the individual interviews

was analyzed using this method. Recurring words or phrases within the interview data

Table 1

Documents and Records

Document Type	Number of Pages	Time Period
Strategic Plans	50, 101	2000-2010, 2010-2020
Vision/Mission Statements	1, 1	1999, 2010
Financial Statements	36, 45	2010-2011, 2011-2012
Overall Summary by Independent Reviewer	15	2015
News Articles	Varied	1990-2015
Institutional History	8, 5	1995, 2015

were used for initial codes. Those codes were then used to construct broad themes and categories in an attempt to "capture some reoccurring patterns that cut across the data" (Merriam, 2009, p. 181). The term category was employed when referencing a "theme, pattern, a finding, or an answer to a question" (Merriam, 2009, p. 178). Both participant answers and relevant literature were used as a source when naming categories. This process ensured that each category was "responsive to the purpose of the study" (Merriam, 2009, p. 185). Emergent themes were also compared to Cowan's (1993) *Prescription for College Turnaround.*

Chronological sequencing, a type of time series analysis, was also included (Yin, 2014). Chronology covers many different types of variables and is not limited to a single independent or dependent variable. Thus, the chronology is richer and more insightful than general time-series approaches (Yin, 2014). For this study, a chronology was developed

using data from institutional growth plans. Proposed actions/initiatives with enrollment numbers by year were used to form the chronology.

   Transcription. Dragon Dictate is a speech recognition program that allowed the researcher to dictate words from interview transcripts and the program then transcribed them. This method was chosen due to its potential to decrease the amount of time spent on transcribing interviews. Dragon Dictate was used for a type of gist transcription called condensed transcription, which captures exact words but removes unnecessary words and phrases (Paulus, Lester, & Dempster, 2013). By listening to the interviews and speaking the words to use Dragon Dictate, the researcher became even more familiar with the data (Johnson, 2011).

Trustworthiness of Data

   In qualitative research, trustworthy data are those that present an accurate picture of phenomena under investigation (Merriam, 2009, Creswell, 2009). In this study, multiple sources of data were utilized to triangulate and corroborate findings (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009, 2014). Data collection consisted of one-on-one interviews, the collection of documents, and analysis of institutional records. These distinct sources equipped the research with "multiple measures of the same phenomenon" which verified consistency across findings and established internal validity (Yin, 2009, p. 116). For instance, interview data and site documents that illuminated decline and revitalization in similar ways. Data sources such as these were reviewed for corroborating evidence that confirmed emergent findings, thus enhancing the accuracy and trustworthiness of the data (Creswell, 2009). Also, visualization of frequently appearing words was created by the use of word

clouds (Konopasek, 2008) and assisted in the initial coding process of the data. The word clouds confirmed the common themes established by the researcher.

Ethical Concerns

Participation in the study was voluntary and participants were notified that while every effort would be made to ensure confidentiality, there might be a chance that readers could identify the sources. The researcher obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval prior to conducting the study. Ethical guidelines and approvals set forth by the University of Tennessee IRB were followed. Informed consent forms (Appendix B) were given to each participant at the time the interview was conducted. Interviews did not begin until the informed consent form was signed. Data from the study was kept on the University of Tennessee's server, the researcher's hard drive, and a USB drive which was kept in a locked drawer in Suite 112 of the Business Incubator on the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, campus.

Representation of Findings

This study utilized several digital tools throughout the research process. Each tool was carefully selected and evaluated for affordances and constraints. These tools strengthened many elements of the study and assisted me in data collection, analysis, and disseminating findings. The research process has come a long way from conveying findings via pencil and paper, typewriters, word processors, and now to a fully digital process. Findings were represented in three ways: through a research paper written in Microsoft Word, visually through Wordle, and presented graphically via Microsoft PowerPoint.

Findings from the case are presented in Chapter Four. Findings were visually represented via Wordle, a tool for generating word clouds from provided text. Interview transcripts were added initially to help determine themes. Also, once codes were established, they were entered into Wordle to provide a visualization of dominant codes. Visualizations can assist in understanding the findings and are also useful in presentations (Konopasek, 2008). After the study is completed, Microsoft PowerPoint, a presentation software, will be used to highlight the research. Microsoft PowerPoint is a tool for creating visual presentations.

Reflexivity and Positionality

I used Evernote, software designed for note taking and archiving, to document reflexivity. I kept a personal journal in Evernote to capture my thoughts and concerns throughout the research process. I compiled the notes and journal at the conclusion of the study. As Watt (2007) stated, "careful consideration of the phenomenon under study, as well as ways a researcher's own assumptions and behavior may be impacting the inquiry" (p. 82) are essential. Evernote was available on iPhone and iPad, which made capturing notes and reflections from many different locations and having the same information on each device possible.

I have never attended a small, private religious university. However, I am a member of the faith that is the foundation of Gilliam College. Before conducting this study, I knew little about how small, private religious universities operate. As Kilbourn (2006) noted, "a proposal is not aimed at proving what a researcher is convinced about and already believes" (p. 536). Therefore, I was curious about what led to the revitalization of

Gilliam College but did not have preconceived notions about the phenomenon. However, I do believe in the mission of Gilliam College and institutions similar to it.

Flyvbjerg (2006) asserted that cases are important for researchers' own learning processes in developing the skills needed to do good research. Further, "If researchers wish to develop their own skills to a high level, then concrete, context-dependent experience is just as central for them as to professionals learning any other specific skills" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 223). This study helped me to grow in my capabilities and expanded my knowledge base while contributing knowledge to my field of study.

Weaknesses. While this is the first time that I used this methodology, I spent several years learning about this method through coursework and by reading literature and other research. This provided a constraint for me in that there is not familiarity with this methodology and most aspects of it were novel. In its novelty, though, there was also opportunity. I was open to all ideas in relation to conducting case study research and not hindered by preconceived notions pertaining to how the study should have been developed and conducted.

Strengths. I am an administrator of a large and complex federal project. I often conduct various analyses on aspects of the project, note implications, and identify solutions. Thus, my conceptual understanding of viewing many aspects of various phenomena then gleaning knowledge from findings and evidence is advanced. Also, my understanding of higher education has been strengthened by six years of graduate study (i.e., masters and doctoral work). Thus, I am familiar with the structure, governance, and common issues facing higher education institutions.

<center>**Chapter Four:**</center>

<center>**Findings**</center>

This chapter presents an overview and analysis of institutional decline and subsequent revitalization at Gilliam College (pseudonym). The data for this case study spans from 1987, when decline was at a crucial point, to July 2015, when revitalization was ongoing. The findings were drawn from eight interviews among current and former presidents, governing board members, faculty, and staff (Table 2) as well as documents and records. Two research questions were analyzed in this study:

1. Why did institutional decline begin at a small, private, religious institution?

2. After a period of decline, how did the institution revitalize?

Also, a chronology of actions/events related to enrollment growth is presented in this chapter.

Gilliam College Decline

Founded in 1870, Gilliam College spent 123 years as a religious, junior college. In the late 1960s, the growing community college system in the southeastern region of the United States increased the competition for students. Area students could attend the community colleges for a much lower cost. All eight participants mentioned the negative impact of the growing community college system on student enrollment at Gilliam. When asked about the circumstances, actions, or events that precipitated decline at Gilliam College, the current President who began in the late 1990s stated:

> I think the primary dynamic was the development of the state's community college system…the cost differential was very significant. Gilliam did focus in on selling the residential program of the two-year institution. Honestly, I think it just wasn't

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enough. Through really the mid to late 80s, things really began to decline based on the competition, primarily from the community colleges.

Table 2

Study Participants (pseudonyms)

Name	Title	Duration of Employment/Involvement at Gilliam College
Dr. Phil Wesley	President	17 Years
Dr. Glen Langston	Former President	6 Years
Mr. John Banks	Trustee	30 Years
Ms. Caroline Lawson	Former Trustee	4 Years
Dr. Harris Fout	VP- Academic Affairs	13 Years
Mr. Jonas Green	VP- Campus Life	27 Years
Ms. Lily Duncan	Associate Director- Financial Aid	21 Years
Dr. Kim Parker	Faculty Member	24 Years

Mr. John Banks, a long-time member of the Gilliam College Board of Trustees and alumnus, stated that "when the junior colleges came out, the religious conference at that time didn't see any reason to sponsor a church related college. Why not go to something cheaper? Why not go to something closer? Those were really tough times in my opinion for the life of the college." He also noted that, "We didn't have, in my opinion, the support of the ministers. I think it probably wouldn't have mattered to them if the doors closed at some point." With dwindling support from the Conference and enrollment numbers

decreasing to around 200 students, it was evident that continuing to operate as usual would not be sustainable.

Dr. Glen Langston, former President throughout most of the 1990s, noted that:

It was the enrollment declines that I think ultimately caused, or maybe not even enrollment declines as much as an inability to capitalize on any economies of scales. The institution is so small and it had an aging physical plan and small endowment. And all that point to the demise of the small, private institution.

That sentiment was echoed by Dr. Harris Fout, Vice President who said, "private two year schools are dinosaurs and there just wasn't that much interest. A lot of people don't want to go to a small school and then have the hassle of transferring to go to a senior institution."

In the late 1980s, the regional Annual Conference of the college's religious denomination put its membership to a vote to close Gilliam College, when enrollment had declined to around 200 students. The vote failed, but by less than 20 votes. Afterward, the Conference redoubled their efforts to support the College. President Wesley noted that, "Their resources were really critical in terms of pulling Gilliam out of the depths." Financial support from the Conference grew each year and continued to be a reliable source of income for Gilliam.

During the early 1990s, Gilliam was in better standing financially due to the fundraising efforts of the Board of Trustees and the president at the time as well as the Conference financial support. Dr. Langston, stated that:

When I arrived, my predecessor President Mark Young was with the college and it was no longer in decline. It just wasn't growing. And so I think what precipitated

the decline was the same old story about small, private two-year colleges that were strapped for cash. So he was pretty successful at getting the institution at least financially stable so it wasn't in jeopardy of closing. So when I arrived I came into an institution that was stable but it was clear to me and I think to our Board of Trustees that it wouldn't stay that way for long unless we did something to make the institution more attractive to prospective students.

With Gilliam College in stable condition but its future still uncertain, a major change had to be made. Dr. Langston asserted that:

It didn't take much boundary scanning to understand that small, private two-year colleges were kind of anachronistic. They were closing like crazy. And we were in a particularly precarious position because we were surrounded by community colleges. They were essentially stealing our market.

With President Langston's leadership, the decision was made in 1993 for Gilliam College to become a baccalaureate granting institution. The 2015 Gilliam College Catalog noted that, "The decision by the Board of Trustees to become a baccalaureate-degree granting institution was one of the most far-reaching decisions in the history of the school and was implemented to expand and enhance the school's opportunities to achieve its objectives." Accreditation was achieved quickly and in 1995, the first baccalaureate degrees were awarded. The senior administrators and the Board of Trustees hoped that by moving to a four-year institution, the community colleges would actually create a market for transfers. President Langston also discussed his fears about the change to a four-year institution:

You're kind of giving up your identity as a two-year school. And in that process you are likely to have declining enrollments. You need to be able to weather those

years without putting the institution in jeopardy. And so it wasn't all just
programmatic and moving to a bachelor's degree granting status. It was also
making sure that they institution was on good financial footing, a growing
endowment, a good relationship with the conference and the churches in the
conference, and having the ability to invest in the future.

Trustee Banks noted that, "We wouldn't give up. Finally, it began to stabilize." The
growth was modest initially. Some evening programs that were degree completion
programs for students with two-year degrees from local community colleges were added.
Former president Langston also noted that during the time of transition, the Board of
Trustees were "very, very supportive in terms of being partners with me as a president and
very supportive of our efforts to make change. But, also supportive financially and willing
to help raise money." President Wesley noted that he thought the move to a four-year
institution was "maybe 10 years too late but that they did make it very efficiently."

Trustee Banks said that, "finally we got through a couple of administrations that
were good people, but then they left. Then we got Dr. Wesley. He's been the lifeblood of
this place." After the influential but relatively short tenures of Presidents Young and
Langston, President Wesley was hired in the late 1990s and is still serving the college in
2015.

Revitalization through Collaboration

Gilliam College was stable during the 1990s after decline ended but growth was
very slow. In the late 1990s, when President Wesley was hired, he put into action a new
strategic plan called the Gilliam Growth (pseudonym) Plan. When asked about the
revitalization of Gilliam College, Vice President Harris Fout noted that:

Bringing in a new President and I think some real strong support from the Board of

Trustees. We have an excellent Board of Trustees, at least in my opinion, many of

whom, while they're not alumni, have a real interest in the school and the students

that it serves. They began some long-range planning, developed something called

the "Gilliam Growth Plan", which must have been completed around 2000, 2001,

not long after Dr. Wesley came and it gave them some goals to really work

towards. I think that was probably the thing that really turned it all around."

At the Board of Trustees planning retreat in 1999, the Board made the decision to

grow the student body to at least 1,000 students. That decision set into motion a planning

process to develop a ten-year strategic plan. The planning process began with a new vision

statement, which represented the preamble for the ten-year plan of development for

Gilliam College. The plan presented a dramatic move ahead for the College on all fronts,

but also represented the next logical stage in the evolution from a junior college to a full-

fledged, exemplary baccalaureate degree granting institution.

Three task forces were created comprised of trustees, faculty, staff, students, and

alumni. The first, Campus Life Task Force, was responsible for suggesting ways to expand

and enhance student life to serve an enrollment aimed at 1,000 students by the year 2010.

Thirty-four recommendations were developed covering these areas: Student activities,

counseling and career services, housing, health services, religious life, students

communications, student security, parking, international student concerns, and evening

student concerns. The major recommendations fell into three areas: Program expansion,

facility development, and additional personnel. A campus master plan was also created.

The second task force, Image Task Force was formed to review the current public image of Gilliam and to develop a plan for enhancing that image. As part of their assignment, the members did an extensive series of surveys directed at every constituent group of Gilliam in order to gain an accurate view of the institution's public image. Strengths and vulnerabilities were targeted and objectives were developed to capitalize on assets and improve weaknesses. Another aspect was to evaluate the current state of facilities and grounds.

The third task force, Technology Task Force was formed to develop a comprehensive plan for using information technologies to strengthen all of Gilliam's programs. The members of the task force recommended that a technology plan be created and that faculty members receive incentives to design courses using new methods of delivery and training in the design of new learning methods. An online newspaper was also proposed.

Enrollment growth was an important initiative for Gilliam College. It was determined by the planning groups that it would take 1,000 students to achieve critical mass and gain the efficiencies of scale that would lead to educational effectiveness and financial stability. To clearly show what it would take to achieve the growth, a *Model for a College of 1,000 Students* (Appendix C) was developed in 2001 to identify the vital statistics of a 1,000 student college. The model was compared with Gilliam's current metrics and determined that the timing for growth should be staged over a decade, in part because of the infrastructure that needed to be added and the resources that needed to be gathered to support such growth. Mr. Green noted that:

We want to make sure that we grow in a reasonable way. Small colleges have X

number of beds and X number of classrooms, so we need to grow in a smart way,

and we've done that. We were able to increase our enrollment, graduation rates,

retention rates, and also our discount rate during that time (2000-2010).

The Model was segmented into six groups of indicators, including; Enrollment,

Academics, Students, Administration, Facilities, and Finances. Statuses from 2001 as well

as growth targets for the year 2010 were listed for each objective.

With the proposed growth, the following goals were developed to serve the

changing needs of students and support the college mission (Gilliam Growth Plan, 2001):

- Ability to staff a broad and robust general education program in support of the

    mission of the College and the goals of the liberal arts and sciences

- Ability to offer a broader range of majors, perhaps with a program of minors, and

    with the flexibility that results in terms of student choice

- Ability to offer expanded learning opportunities through extracurricular programs

    such as student media, expanded choir offering, ensemble band and/or orchestra,

    expanded drama offerings, service projects and organizations, and other special

    interest groups

- Ability to offer a full range of residential programs and services for students living

    on campus (residence hall programming, social events, tutoring and study hall

    programs, intramural athletics program, 24-hour security, etc)

- Ability to host a more substantive series of cultural events and lectures

- Ability to offer attractive new and expanded student services (medical services, expanded career and personal counseling services, expanded academic support services, student internships, international travel opportunities, etc)

- Ability to add facilities that support a broader range of functions and programming

- Ability to offer a wider range of options for student housing and dining services (e.g., apartment-style residence halls, food-court style dining services) (p. 7-8)

The Gilliam Growth Plan (2001) stated that, "in this extraordinarily competitive environment, a college's distinctiveness is its salvation" (p. 8). The authors of The Plan articulated a desire to be a *nurturing* institution in their vision statement, which is distinctive and uncommon. Underlying the concept of nurture are the stages of growth and development. To be a nurturing institution means taking seriously the movement of each student from a lower stage to a higher stage. The Gilliam Growth Plan (2001) noted two areas of institutional measurement that directly related to the issue of nurture: first, the rates of admissions selectivity; and second, measures of student success. For admissions selectivity, this means diverging from the common practice today in higher education of focusing on college admissions test scores and high school grade point averages as the sole basis for the admissions decision (Gilliam Growth Plan, 2001). Nurturing institutions, because of their focus on the stages of growth and development, scrutinize a wider array of admissions information, especially information that reveals motivation (Gilliam Growth Plan, 2001). For student success, to be a nurturing institution means creating a nurturing culture across the campus. A crucial recognition in this concept is that every member of the campus community has a role in creating a nurturing environment (Gilliam Growth Plan,

2001). Ms. Lily Duncan, an Associate Director of Financial Aid, confirmed the

commitment to nurturing:

> When I say we are a family, we are a family. We help each other in our hard times
>
> and our bad times and we celebrate the good times together. I think that makes a
>
> big difference. A number of the students when they leave us, that's the way they
>
> are talking about us in the community, you're not a number, you're a name. You
>
> come into my office and you start giving me your ID number, I say "I'm sorry, I
>
> need to know your name." It doesn't work that way with us.

The individual growth objectives for the Gilliam Growth Plan (2001) were grouped

by year. This set of objectives was compiled into a chronology to simplify the breath and

detail of the overall plan (Table 3). These objectives made it very clear to all college

stakeholders what the path forward would be. Dr. Kim Parker, a faculty member, noted

that, "the classes started getting bigger and the real jump happened with the Gilliam

Growth Plan under Dr. Wesley's leadership. That's when it really started growing. The

admissions office was bringing in amazing numbers every freshman class."

Supportive leadership. President Phil Wesley has been the president at Gilliam

College for over 15 years. Dr. Fout, who has served as a senior administrator at three

institutions stated that Dr. Wesley is "the best one I've worked for. He lets us set our own

pace and goals." Former Trustee Ms. Caroline Lawson, noted that when the Board was

searching for a new president in the late 1990s that they were looking for someone:

> Who was dedicated to spiritually guiding Gilliam, and its students, and its faculty.
>
> Dr. Wesley is a pastor, and a preacher, and a very spiritual man. I think that was the
>
> first impression that people had of him. Also, he had been in administrative

situations, which put him in good standing for the experiences that Gilliam was going to need to move ahead. In many ways, he was that blend of the spiritual, and the realistic, and the business person, and the educator, and all the things that were needed to lead and guide Gilliam.

Dr. Kim Parker noted that she did not think the growth at Gilliam College would have happened if Dr. Wesley had not been hired in the late 1990s. She stated that the strongest thing that helped the college to revitalize:

Had to be centered in a person. Phil Wesley and Phil Wesley's vision of the school. He came in having really strong ideas about what a small, religiously-affiliated institution ought to be and what it ought to be able to do. He set out to help Gilliam achieve those things, though I won't say it was easy sailing.

Dr. Wesley noted that, "the leadership of the President, the leadership of the Management team, and the Board's involvement in terms of governing the institution, effectively, those dynamics really helped to make the process (revitalization) effective." He also asserted that the Board of Trustees:

Is as good a small college board as you will find anywhere in the country. It's partly due to the influence, especially area trustees who bring connections and wealth and all the things you need. The board was critical, in particular, critical in driving the change process.

He further noted that, the decision making was very efficient and effective and the process of moving the change forward was also, amazingly, refined and effective.

Each participant discussed strong leadership from Dr. Wesley and the Board of Trustees. Mr. Green, Vice President, stated that:

Revitalization began with Dr. Wesley, the president's strong leadership. He

certainly had a vision where he wanted to be by the year 2010, and his leadership,

his strong board of trustees which helps him with the strategic planning for the

college, and then faculty and staff that carried it out.

Universally, participants praised their President, Dr. Wesley for his strength as a leader.

Dr. Wesley however gave all the credit to the Board, administrators, faculty, staff, and

church conference for Gilliam's revitalization. He did, however, discuss the longevity of

the average presidency in the United States, which he noted was about four and a half

years. Further, he opinioned that:

It's a mistake for us to move from Presidency to Presidency rather than to really

hunker down and invest the time and energy that it takes to really move an

institution forward. I've seen that so much. It's partly a Board dynamic too. Boards

get impatient and say, 'ok, let's just get somebody else in here.' But, I do think it's

partly Presidents who feel like, 'Five years is enough. I've done everything I can do

here. I'm going somewhere else.' I think that's a huge mistake for the institution

more often than not.

President Wesley discussed his role in the early years of revitalization as being

different than he had envisioned, "In my first few years, my primary role was head

cheerleader. I was just giving encouragement wherever I could. That was not a dynamic I

expected." Handwritten notes were his tool of choice:

I would go home at night and I would think through the day, okay who did what

that I could say thank you or give them some encouragement? I would typically

bring 15 to 25 cards that I would put in the campus mail the next morning.

Table 3

Chronology of Actions and Enrollment Growth by Year (2000-2010)

Academic Year	Actions (Gilliam Growth Plan, 2001)	Student Enrollment
1999-2000	This initial year of the plan represented the year of preparation. Virtually all of the objectives during the fiscal year related to preliminary tasks that needed to be completed prior to the implementation of the plan. The development of the Campus Master Facilities Plan was developed which guided the renovation and construction of physical facilities.	600
2000-2001	The first full year of the plan represented a transition year from preparation to execution. A feasibility study for the comprehensive fund-raising campaign was completed. Five faculty members were added to teach in new academic majors along with new support services and personnel. Over 10,000 volumes and 125 new journal titles were added to the library and significant extensions to the computer technology were made.	620
2001-2002	The comprehensive fund-raising campaign was launched. A new residence hall was constructed and improvements were made to the women's residence hall. Four faculty positions were added and three staff positions.	670
2002-2003	The dining hall and student union were expanded. A new student apartment unit was constructed. Two additional faculty member and two staff members were hired. The athletic facilities were in the development stages. Technology advancements were a priority.	720
2003-2004	A facility for church leadership was created and science building was renovated. New faculty offices were added. The library and technology programs provided support of new academic programs. Three faculty members were hired.	760
2004-2005	Three additional faculty members were hired as well as two staff members. Residential units were added and renovations began on the men's residence hall to make floor plans more attractive to students.	810
2005-2006	A new auditorium was constructed and more residential units for students were added. Fundraising continued to be a priority.	860

Table 3 Continued

Academic Year	Actions (Gilliam Growth Plan, 2001)	Student Enrollment
2007-2008	More residential units for students were added. A new recital hall was built. Fundraising was a priority.	960
2008-2009	More residential units for students were added. Three more faculty members were added to support the addition of academic programs.	1010
2009-2010	This was a year of celebration as most objectives for the Gilliam Growth Plan were completed. The campus attained a critical mass of students. Fundraising continued to be a priority.	1060

Those notes seemed to give the administrators, faculty, and staff confidence in what they were doing.

Building up confidence can take a lot of time. Dr. Wesley's approach to equipping the faculty and staff at Gilliam was one of support and encouragement. However, other leadership styles might have proved more efficient. It took over 10 years to get Gilliam to a point where there was a critical mass of students.

Flexibility of the faculty. One critical dynamic mentioned by five participants was the flexibility/support of the faculty. Trustee Banks noted that, "one thing he (President Wesley) had was a willing faculty." President Wesley surmised that it was:

Probably partly because many of them suffered through the years of decline and were happy to see that there might be a solution. I've seen other institutions were faculties, even despite decline, are not willing to change. I think that made it a lot easier to move in the right direction.

One challenge was the lack of confidence in the faculty and administration to move programs forward and to plan new facilities. President Wesley stated that, "These are

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things that they had not done for so long, and yet, they were perfectly capable of doing it. Somebody just needed to tell them that they could do it and that the resources they needed would be found."

When the college transitioned to a baccalaureate degree granting institution, there were four academic programs. In 2001, five more were added. Dr. Fout, Vice President, was hired during 2002 and helped develop 18 majors, with options within them for a total of 37 different programs for students to select. When Dr. Fout was hired there were 28 faculty members at Gilliam College, in 2015 there are 54. When discussing faculty response to the Gilliam Growth Plan (2001), Dr. Fout noted that faculty, "had a very positive response to the Plan, there were some enrollment goals, programmatic goals, goals for some building renovations and new construction. When they saw this (revitalization) starting to happen, it made them feel really good that, *this really is working*. I think they were very supportive." Similarly, Dr. Parker had the following to say about faculty attitudes toward the Plan:

> Overall people were very on board. The natural mentality of any workplace is for there to be a little grouching along with the celebration. I think the faculty was very supportive of the administration. I think they understand that we're all in this together. We're creating something together.

Mr. Green also stated that:

> Dr. Wesley probably had 100% buy in on the Plan. The faculty and staff carried it out. I think everyone knew we needed to grow. Everyone saw themselves sort of as admissions counselors, no matter where they worked on campus and we were very successful.

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Without support from faculty, the Gilliam Growth Plan (2001) simply would not have been successful. The growth of Gilliam over the last several years was in large part due to the changes that the faculty members were willing to embrace.

Growth of athletic programs. Each participant noted the role of athletic programs in the growth of Gilliam. In 2001, Gilliam College had one athletic building that was primarily a basketball facility but was used for volleyball and all the other teams as well. At that time, there were 12 total team sports. During the campus master planning process, athletic facilities were an item of interest. However, Gilliam did not have the land to build new facilities. The Board of Trustees purchased 45 acres of property around a mile from the academic campus to build an athletic campus.

A soccer field was put in and since that time, three national titles were won by both the men's and women's teams. New baseball and softball fields were added. There is an indoor practice building that several of the teams use, described by Ms. Duncan as "huge." She further noted how pleased the staff and student were with the new facilities especially given that for many years, "People had to go out to the marshy area that they had in this industrial park section with weeds growing everywhere to practice. Now, we have fantastic facilities."

New facilities. Athletic facilities were not the only buildings on campus built or renovated. Gilliam College had not had any improvements to facilities for 20 years. President Wesley noted that, "There was so much of what they call deferred maintenance that we had a lot of work to do. It wasn't just doing the work, it was trying to figure out how to do it because we hadn't done it for a long time."

The Fine Arts Center was renovated and one participant noted that she particularly appreciated that some of the old finishes were refurbished instead of replaced. There is a 124 seat recital hall in the Center with acoustics that several participants noted were "fantastic." As part of the Gilliam Growth Plan, in 2001 and 2002, with the launch of a comprehensive fundraising campaign, a series of facility additions and renovations began (Table 2). This included improvements in the residence halls and the beginning of construction on a series of student apartment units, student union, dining hall, a church leadership facility, a science building, faculty offices, and an auditorium for the entire student body. As infrastructure improved, student enrollment steadily increased from 2000 to 2010. Ms. Lawson, Former Trustee, asserted that "upgrading of existing facilities, building the new buildings, all of that certainly makes the campus more attractive and more appealing when competing with other campuses." While the introduction of new and renovated facilities cannot be solely responsible for enrollment increases, they did contribute.

Operational effectiveness. In 2003, Gilliam adopted a comprehensive electronic administration system to keep track of student records as well as college operations. The new system, which became fully operational in 2004, assisted the College in meeting the needs of its growing student body. Ms. Duncan, Associate Director, noted that the system helped the college "continue without a large number of additional employees." The growth from 2004 to 2015 has been so large that they have now outgrown the initial system and plan to bring in a more robust system in the summer of 2016.

Around 2003, a new Chief Financial Officer was hired. Dr. Fout acknowledged that the newly hired person, "did a great job of helping the college be more effective in its

budgeting process, keeping track of expenditures and when they come along." He further

stated that while in 2015, the college was not where it would like to be, it was well on its

way. In the past, individuals in key roles were not as effective at helping Gilliam grow.

The college has made an effort to hire highly qualified individuals who are committed to

advancing the mission of Gilliam.

The Gilliam Growth Plan #2 (2010) noted a strategy to "undertake a systematic

review of all college operations to identify improved efficiencies" (p. 29). Further, the

review spotlighted potential inefficiencies or potential opportunities associated with

manpower, finances, facilities, and services. The Plan stated that, "the systematic

assessment strategy provides a pathway for transforming the institution into a sustainable

entity" (p. 29).

Challenges to Revitalization

Several participants mentioned the struggles that Gilliam had during revitalization.

President Wesley noted that, "it would be a mistake to think that this has been a flawless

process. We definitely had our challenges. A lot of that is the start-up that has to take place

such as fund raising start-up and new program start-up. Learning to do things that you

don't really know how to do very well. We still struggle with that sometimes." Trustee

John Banks, when discussing the challenges of revitalization and President Wesley's role

asserted that, "It all hasn't been easy for him. He's made some changes, but he's made

them when necessary. When the hard call comes I'll stay in there for the right decision. He

started building buildings and doing things that blew my mind. But, I said I'd be right there

with him."

Five participants mentioned college reputation as a challenge. President Wesley discussed the fact that college reputations "are pretty static for a long period of time." He further noted that even now, 20 years past the time of moving to a baccalaureate institution, that many people if asked would say that Gilliam is a junior college. Gilliam is the only college within a 13 county region and people within those counties and affiliated churches often think that Gilliam is still a junior college.

Gilliam went through a re-accreditation process in 2001 and had a few challenges in the area of institutional effectiveness. The process of re-accreditation required Gilliam to develop necessary skills to build up institutional effectiveness; President Wesley acknowledged that it was a really important step and that they are, "still living with the benefits of what happened during that time." Enhancement Plans are submitted before accreditation is reaffirmed. In preparation for Gilliam's 2009 re-accreditation, an Enhancement Plan was developed to initialize projects that would further enhance academics and campus life. Service-Learning initiatives were part of that Plan. The emphasis put on these plans is often transformative for the institution.

Summary

While the findings of this study point to several themes that were key aspects of the successful revitalization of Gilliam College, strong new leadership seemed to be the most influential factor. President Wesley was relentless in his commitment to focused improvement across the board. Gilliam College needed a strong, caring, confident, personable leader. They made a good hire in the late 1990s. While it is impossible to know what would have happened to Gilliam College without President Wesley, it is not implausible that the college would have already become a statistic in institutional closure

literature. Gilliam College became a thriving and vibrant campus community that

continues to seek improvement and growth.

Chapter Five:

Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore factors that precipitated decline, and to understand what decisions or factors determined revitalization at a small, private, religious institution. A primary application of qualitative research is to explain the causal links in real life situations (Yin, 2009). Case study design was selected because it offered an in-depth look at the events and process of institutional revitalization. Cowan's (1993) *Prescription for College Turnaround* provided context for the data collection plan and helped organize the data gleaned through the interviews and documents (Yin, 2009). This method enabled me to understand the circumstances, actions, and events that enabled institutional revitalization. Comparing the data to Cowan's Prescription added to the validity of the data by showing synthesis.

Overview of Findings

This study highlighted the current challenges of many small, private, religious institutions. Senior administrators and board members affiliated with colleges experiencing decline may find practical applications and suggestions for transformative change. The strategies and process of revitalization at Gilliam College may provide a foundation for other institutions to begin developing a plan for revitalization. The study also expands the existing base of literature regarding small, private college decline and revitalization. This study sought to address the following research questions:

1. Why did institutional decline begin at a small, private, religious institution?

2. After a period of decline, how the institution revitalize?

A study of the relevant literature found that decline often began or was perpetuated by low enrollment, financial issues, lack of organizational effectiveness, and ineffective leadership. For Gilliam College, decline began due to enrollment declines caused by the growth of the community college system in the state that it is located. Financial issues, deferred maintenance, and organizational ineffectiveness followed. Scholars noted that revitalization factors, such as a new president or new marketing efforts, had the potential to stop decline at any point in the process. The processes of decline and revitalization were cyclical (Cowan, 1993; Eaker & Kuk, 2011). Once decline began, the cycle had to be broken for revitalization to begin. Once revitalization began, positive momentum pushed the process forward. Many revitalization factors noted in the literature (Eaker & Kuk, 2011) were present at Gilliam College, such as: New presidential leadership, strategic planning, addition of new academic programs, community partnerships, new mission/vision, operational effectiveness, and new budget processes.

Because each revitalization process is different, something unique can be gleaned from each of them. The need for the flexibility of faculty and staff was highlighted in this study whereas it has not been a prominent theme unto itself in previous studies. Also, the tenure of the president who initiated the Gilliam Growth Plan (2001) has been lengthy (over 15 years). Tenure of revitalization presidents has not been documented in the literature.

Framework for the Findings

Cowan's (1993) *Prescription for College Turnaround* provided a relevant and compelling conceptual framework to understand this case. Cowan's (1993) *Prescription*, consisted of five requisites for turnaround:

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1. A willing president- the first necessity for becoming different and better is a president willing to launch the turnaround process and take responsibility for carrying it forward.

2. A collaborative process- a process that envisions a future and develops action plans to realize it.

3. Comprehensive change consistent with the college's character- change that complements the principle that change must come from the college as a whole is the principle that change must affect the college as a whole.

4. Operational effectiveness- college managers must assure operational effectiveness and use its resources efficiently.

5. Symbolic actions to maintain optimism and energy- a high level of excitement, commitment, enthusiasm, optimism, and even fun must be built.

Gilliam College had each of the components listed in the *Prescription for College Turnaround*. According to Cowan (1993), leadership, good decision-making, organizational mission, and operational effectiveness were the fundamentals of the turnaround process. Each of these aspects could also be found at Gilliam (Table 4).

Analysis of Findings

Through the careful review of interview transcripts and documents, several themes were identified and used as initial codes. The codes were then grouped and organized into themes. From the analysis, six key findings emerged. The findings critical to revitalization were: Strong leadership, a comprehensive growth plan, operational effectiveness, stakeholder support, flexible faculty/staff, and a culture of support. These findings correlate with existing revitalization studies and also present new information.

Table 4

Comparison of Cowan's (1993) Prescription to Gilliam College Revitalization

Cowan's Turnaround Prescription	Gilliam College Revitalization
Willing President	☑
	A new President brought in a compelling vision for growing Gilliam.
Collaborative Process	☑
	All groups of stakeholders were involved in creating a ten-year strategic plan to grow the student body to 1,000 students.
Comprehensive Change (Character)	☑
	The culture of nurture was retained as well as religious ideals.
Operational Effectiveness	☑
	New staff was hired to help Gilliam make progress toward its goals. A new comprehensive administrative system was introduced to assist with organization.
Symbolic Actions	☑
	The President was often in the role of *cheerleader* and was known for writing thank you notes to faculty and staff. These actions kept morale high as changes were being implemented.

Strong leadership. All eight participants discussed the theme of strong leadership as a contributing factor to Gilliam College's revitalization. Gilliam College hired a new president in the late 1990s during a time when the college was stable but not growing. President Wesley was a first-time president that was described as capable, personable, supportive, and confident. The presidential leader is one of the most critical factors to a turnaround (Sarver, 2005). MacTaggert (2007) indicated that for a successful turnaround to happen, new leadership must be hired so that an institution is not encumbered by the past. Cowan (1993) asserted that in all of the cases of successful turnarounds that she studied, each one required a new leader. Dr. Wesley was hired from a university in another state. However, Eaker (2008) found that not all of the turnaround presidents were brought in from outside of the institution. Martin and Samels (2009) observed that college presidents were older and staying for shorter terms than at any previous time in American higher education. The researchers asserted that this causes campuses to be in a period of transition for around two years each time that a president leaves (and another begins). President Wesley noted that he felt that leaving within a few years of becoming president was a mistake and that presidents should invest the time and energy needed to move an institution forward.

It was evident throughout the interviews with trustees, senior administrators, and faculty that President Wesley's name was synonymous with success. Several participants even smiled when his presidency initially came up during the interview. President Wesley noted the immense responsibility that he felt with Gilliam's role in the economic, cultural, and educational development of the region in which the college is located.

For revitalization to happen, a good president is crucial as well as support from the board of trustees (Cowan, 1993; Eaker & Kuk, 2011). Wellman (2002) stated that the board had to be involved in any strategic planning changes. Gilliam included the Board in the creation of the ten-year strategic plans (2000-2010 and 2010-2020). Collaborative decision-making has been noted as a requirement for successful institutional revitalization (Cowan, 1993).

Comprehensive growth plan. When discussing initial steps to revitalization, President Wesley stated that it was imperative for new leaders to take the time to get to know their institution, engage people in the planning process in a broad way, and leverage assets. All study participants credited the Gilliam Growth Plan (2001) to President Wesley. It was seen as his vision for the College. However, many groups were instrumental in the development of the Plan. Study participants often called President Wesley a visionary. MacTaggart's (2007) three stages of institutional turnaround were all encompassed in the Gilliam Growth Plan (2001). He identified stage one as restoring financial stability, the most critical requirement; stage two as marketing academic programs and branding or rebranding an institutional image; and stage three as revitalizing academic programs and the institutions culture.

The Plan gave all campus stakeholders a clear and definitive plan regarding the path forward. The Gilliam Growth Plan (2001) noted that:

> Over the next ten years, Gilliam College faces a time fraught with both risk and opportunity. In a very real sense, the College has never been stronger nor has it ever been more vulnerable. The plan describes a compelling vision that holds the potential for moving Gilliam to the forefront of a very special group of colleges.

Our vision is not about prestige or elite status nor is it about selectivity or privilege. Instead, the core values of this vision—faith and nurture—are those that have brought fulfillment to Gilliam people since the College's founding. More than that, they are the values that have made a difference for an endless stream of Gilliam students for over 130 years. This plan represents a bold agenda for a small college, but it is also an agenda brimming with worth and significance as we seek to realize the unique potential of Gilliam College. (p. 14)

After the completion of the Gilliam Growth Plan (2001), another plan was developed for the next ten years. The Gilliam Growth Plan #2 (2010) continues to expand on the successes of the Gilliam Growth Plan (2001) and added new emphasis a bit closer to home:

The Gilliam Growth Plan #2 (2010) falls into a succession of planning initiatives that have had a dramatic effect on the evolution of the institution. The Gilliam Growth Plan (2001) achieved both a programmatic and enrollment *critical mass*, with over 32 baccalaureate programs and an enrollment over 1,000 students. As a result, the expectations are high for this cycle of planning, although the approach we are recommending entails a focus that is actually quite close to home. As the only baccalaureate college in the region, it is natural that we would seek a heightened level of service to and visibility in our home region. Specifically, we intend to become the *educational epicenter* of our region. (p. 2)

This strategy of developing comprehensive yet targeted plans worked well for Gilliam. These plans have affected all aspects of Gilliam College and continue to move

the institution forward. All eight participants discussed the theme of comprehensive growth plans as a contributing factor to Gilliam College's revitalization.

Operational effectiveness. Manning (2011) noted that institutional effectiveness is having a set of ongoing and systematic institutional processes and practices that include planning, evaluation of programs and services, and identification and measurement of outcomes across all institutional units. The Gilliam Growth Plan (2001) noted the institutions commitment to this theme:

> Institutional effectiveness and assessment will be important watchwords for us over the next decade. The accreditation process has proven the worth of these efforts. As a result, we have designed an exemplary pattern for institutional effectiveness. Now we must allocate the resources to assure its success. We have a new member of the administrative team to oversee the area, but we also need tools for identifying, collecting, and maintaining the data that supports assessment. A new administrative software package would serve the entire campus, as well as provide a crucial tool for institutional effectiveness. (p. 11)

With the addition of a computerized administration system and new processes and procedures put in place, Gilliam is much more operationally effective than it was in the past. Also, since improvement in the area of institutional effectiveness was a finding of the College's accrediting body in the early 2000s, Gilliam made effectiveness a priority. Specifically, much improvement was made in the area of budgeting and keeping track of the financial state of the college.

President Wesley noted that in 2015 he is launching the fund raising effort related to Gilliam's current ten-year plan (2010-2020). He hopes to grow the endowment from $10

million to $42 million by 2020. In 2020, the target enrollment is 1,800 students (undergraduate and graduate), which would make the college more stable financially. Cameron et al. (1998) indicated that increasing revenues and institutional performance were linked. If Gilliam can maintain operational effectiveness and increase the endowment and student enrollment, then it can look forward to continued overall growth and stability.

Stakeholder support. All eight participants discussed the theme of stakeholder support as a contributing factor to Gilliam College's revitalization, including the religious conference in which Gilliam College is affiliated. President Wesley noted that the financial support received from the conference is one of the highest amounts in the United States. There is no doubt that the sustained support of the conference has played a key role in the revitalization of Gilliam College. President Wesley stated that:

> The Conference has just been amazingly generous in terms of congregational apportionments, which are operating funds. Those are funds that we can depend on being there year after year after year that we could build upon.

President Wesley further observed that the "dynamic of taking a vote on the floor of the Annual Conference and them deciding that they were not going to close the college…and I can see from there, significant growth from that time." Funding from the Conference enabled Gilliam to address some key areas during a difficult time. The conference has not only supported the college financially but in other ways as well. The churches that make up the conference were often important recruitment venues for Gilliam.

The small community in which Gilliam is located was also very supportive of the college and the students. One participant noted that the merchants of the town have an event to celebrate the beginning of school each year that is free to students. The event is

elaborate and a lot of effort going into it by people who are not directly affiliated with the college. Two participants discussed that despite the fact that sometimes there is a phenomenon of town versus gown in communities such as the one that Gilliam is a part of that there is no evidence of it in the community. The College and the town seem to understand that one is integral to the success of the other (MacTaggart, 2007). The partnership is long standing and important to Gilliam College.

Flexible faculty and staff. Five participants discussed the theme of the flexibility of faculty and staff as a contributing factor to Gilliam College's revitalization. MacTaggart (2007) noted that all key groups, especially the faculty, must be involved in making the tough choices that are needed to make a successful turnaround. This included helping reposition the institution in the academic marketplace and finding inspiration to revitalize the teaching and learning experience (MacTaggart, 2007). While implied in some cases, the *flexibility* of faculty and staff during revitalization has not been discussed in the previous literature. Perhaps these traits are unique to this institution type or even just to this institution. President Wesley noted the great flexibility that faculty and staff exhibited during such uncertain times. The growth of the college often required faculty and staff to do things that they had never done before such as embracing online learning. Most of the faculty had been at the college for many years and were used to a traditional learning environment. However, with the rise in the popularity of online classes they were met with a new challenge. They were willing to take risks and go into unchartered territory. As small successes were evident, it became easier to embrace change. Even the best leaders with the best plans and strategies cannot be successful without people to embrace and

implement their vision. Without the support from faculty and staff, the revitalization of Gilliam College would not have happened.

Culture of support. Seven participants mentioned that President Wesley empowered his staff and faculty to make their own plans and vision. He supported them in their initiatives and made resources available to them when requested. He also wrote many notes of encouragement and thanks. These actions empowered faculty and staff to make necessary changes or try something new. Martin and Samels (2009) noted maintaining morale as one of the items that administrators must ensure to enable revitalization. To stem employee turnover, leaders must find ways to retain talented faculty and staff by including them in decision making, communicating more openly with them, involving them in strategic planning, and rewarding commitment, achievement, and improvement (Martin & Samels, 2009). Four task forces comprised of over 30 individuals developed the foundation for the Gilliam Growth Plan (2001). Those individuals were trustees, faculty members, staff, students, and alumni. It was evident that Dr. Wesley's leadership style was very influential in creating the culture of support that enabled Gilliam College to grow and revitalize. The faculty and staff noted that they were very committed to providing the best possible environment for students. Of particular interest was providing a nurturing environment. Part of that was providing training and support to students interested in becoming clergy and future lay leaders in the church. Gilliam even developed a facility with staff dedicated to providing that support and a nurturing environment to students.

Limitations of the Study

Due to the nature of case studies, the findings may not be generalizable to other institutions (Yin, 2014). According to Merriam (2009), qualitative studies may be limited

beyond the researcher's control due to the fact that the researcher is the primary research instrument. The findings of the study may or may not be affected by these conditions. Yin (2009) stated that interview data, though insightful, might reflect bias. Peshkin (1991) described that a researcher's personal bias can emerge when researching a topic of interest and that the researcher must be responsible for monitoring one's subjectivity to ensure, "that [he or she] may avoid the trap of perceiving just what [his/her] own untamed sentiments have sought out and served up as data" (p. 294). Although case study design provided the opportunity to probe into the rich story and information is detail, only one case was studied. Therefore, the context was limited to one institution and the participants involved. Since the window for data collection was a period of time after decline occurred and revitalization began, stakeholders from the college may have forgotten information that would have added rich detail to the data.

Implications for Practice

The implications of this study may be of most interest to board members and senior administrators of small, private, religious institutions. The study substantiates the literature and emphasizes the need for a new, strong leader for institutions in decline who wish to revitalize (Cowan, 1993; MacTaggert, 2007). A new president with a compelling strategic plan (developed collaboratively) is imperative for institutional revitalization.

A comprehensive strategic plan for revitalization also should be a priority for administrators. The plan should be developed in collaboration with all groups of stakeholders. The Gilliam Growth Plan (2001) drove the vision of the college for ten years and another ten-year plan is in place now. Without the plan, there would not have been a definitive vision or process for transformation. The plan allowed all institutional

stakeholders to envision where the institution was headed and their role in the growth. It also provided very specific tasks that were needed for Gilliam to meet its goals. Growth of student enrollment to 1,000 was a bold agenda for Gilliam in 2001. However, the administrators and other stakeholders had a clear vision of what the college could be. The following was written in the Gilliam Growth Plan (2001):

> Although a small, church-related college like Gilliam is limited in its direct impact on society, its influence as a model can reverberate on a national or even international scale. This does not mean that Gilliam can expect to be known widely by the person-in-the-street, for no small college in the country enjoys visibility of that kind. Nor does it mean that our College will draw a truly national student body, for few if any small colleges can achieve this. It does mean, however, that Gilliam would be seen by knowledgeable observers across the country, especially leaders in the church, as a place worthy of emulation. In terms of coherence of its programs, the strength of its resources, the quality of its faculty and staff, and its sense of community, Gilliam would be acknowledged as a church-related leader. (p. 14)

It is evident that Gilliam succeeded in the aims of the Gilliam Growth Plan (2001). It even surpassed what it thought was possible with the inclusion of students from many different states in the United States as well as many international students. Gilliam sought to be a model for other colleges in this unique niche of higher education institutions. Gilliam achieved that goal. Now, Gilliam looks to the future:

> The Gilliam Growth Plan #2 (2010) comes back to students and our fundamental drive to serve as a college of opportunity. Gilliam is a uniquely compelling success story; but that is because we are comfortable with the college's distinctive character

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and proud of the manner in which it impacts its students, and through students in

our community, region, church, and even the world. We find genuine fulfillment in

the accomplishments of our graduates, especially given the circumstances from

which many have emerged. Now we want to ensure that Gilliam's distinctive

influence continues to grow in its impact and in its reach…This is the time to fully

engage the opportunities and to realize the unique potential of Gilliam College. (p.

3)

In the original Gilliam Growth Plan (2001), the college sought to build a strong

foundation and become a truly viable institution. Having done that, the college is now

making sure that it stays committed to the mission and its students (current and future).

Through all of the growth and changes, Gilliam stayed true to its mission and vision. That

is an important element to sustained institutional growth.

Future Research

An area of future research would be to compare revitalized institutions to closed

institutions with similar characteristics. Originally, this study included a closed institution

but I delimited it to one to explore a single institution. However, a comparative study

would illuminate ways in which revitalization may not work. Studying what happened

during decline to shift the future of the institution, either toward revitalization or closure

might be informative. Also, a study of closed institutions that unsuccessfully attempted

revitalization and the strategies used would further contribute to the literature in this area

of higher education.

A study of the perceptions of the revitalization process of college presidents who

have successfully revitalized institutions may provide more details for consideration in

turnaround strategies. The amount of time over which revitalization takes place at institutions is not well documented. That would also be an interesting data point in future studies.

Summary

Small, private, institutions add rich diversity to American higher education. Decline will likely continue to be a common occurrence for many small, private institutions for the foreseeable future. With specialized missions, these institutions provide opportunities not available at other types of institutions. Students who seek specific religious doctrine to be infused with their education often chose institutions with missions that align with their values. These colleges are vital to the economy in the communities in which they are located by providing jobs and increasing revenue (NCES, 2012).

The revitalization of Gilliam College offers hope for institutions in the midst of decline. Gilliam went from a school with 200 students to an institution with over 1,000 students in less than two decades. The college was on the verge of closure and narrowly missed that outcome by 17 votes at the Annual Conference of the church in which they are affiliated. The growth and revitalization of Gilliam was slow but steady.

As I studied Gilliam College, I gained an immense respect and admiration for President Wesley. He is a true visionary and embodies all of the traits of an exemplary leader. It is easy to understand why the Board of Trustees, faculty, and staff love him. I was also struck by the passion that each participant had for the college. There is a tremendous amount of school spirit and genuine love for the institution. In fact, the enthusiasm from participants was infectious. Gilliam College is a special place. I am glad that all of the groups involved with the college persevered through the years of decline and

continue to have great interest in the growth of Gilliam. I have no doubt that Gilliam College will be around for years to come.

Trustee Banks noted a bright outlook for the future of Gilliam College, "we've got the right leadership, we've got the right faculty, we get the right kind of students. We have a lot of right things to go on." The revitalization of Gilliam College was not easy, nor quick. It took a lot of hard work from a lot of different groups. But, the participants universally noted that *it was worth it.*

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Could you tell me a little about yourself and your role at the university? How long have you worked at the university (or served as a governing board member)?

In your opinion, what circumstances/actions/events precipitated the past decline of the institution?

When did the decline begin? When did the decline end?

In your opinion, what circumstances/actions/events determined the revitalization of the institution (after a period of decline)?

When did the revitalization occur (general time period)?

What groups (or individuals) were responsible for determining whether to revitalize the university (rather than closing or continuing decline)?

What additional important aspects of the university's path to revitalization have not been discussed?

Is there anything else that you would like to share with me?

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

The Process of Revitalization at Small, Private, Religious Institutions

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore circumstances that precipitated decline, leading to revitalization at small, private, religious institutions.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

Interviews will last approximately one hour. The interview will be audio-taped for the purposes of collecting our discussion verbatim. A follow-up interview may also be conducted. The second interview will last no more than 30 minutes. This interview (or interviews) will represent your complete involvement in the study.

RISKS

All research carries risk. Participation in this study will incur minimal risk. The standard for minimal risk is that which is found in everyday life. Anything more than minimal risk or discomfort is not anticipated; however, if you do not wish to answer or feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview, you have the right to decline to answer any question and/or to end the interview. You do not have to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, you may stop at any time without any penalty.

Participants' identities and participation will remain confidential. All audio files will be securely locked in a filing cabinet in a locked office. No real names or identities will be associated with the interviews. All participants will be immediately given a pseudonym once they agree to participate and their gender and affiliation may also be changed. All participant audio files will be recorded with the assigned pseudonym. Audio files will be deleted after transcription. The data will be stored until it is no longer needed at which time all data will be destroyed (no longer than one year after the completion of the study).

BENEFITS

Data gained from this study may add to the body of knowledge on higher education revitalization.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any and all data collected during the course of this study will be reported using pseudonyms for both participants and institutions. Every attempt will be made by the researcher to ensure confidentiality of participants. Data will be stored securely in a

locked office on the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, campus that is only accessible to the researcher unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT

The University of Tennessee does not "automatically" reimburse subjects for medical claims or other compensation. If physical injury is suffered in the course of research, or for more information, please notify the investigator in charge (Samantha Brown, 931.607.4334).

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Samantha Brown, at 2450 E.J. Chapman Drive, Suite 112, Knoxville, TN 37921, and 865.974.8045. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-7697.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

_____

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

Appendix C: Model for a College of 1,000 Students

MODEL FOR A COLLEGE
OF 1,000 STUDENTS

#	Indicator	Current	Target
1	Commuter Student Full-time Enrollment	207	200
2	Commuter Student Part-time Enrollment	192	200
3	Residential Student Enrollment	183	600
4	Total Enrollment (Headcount)	582	1000

Academics

#	Indicator	Current	Target
5	Academic Programs	10	24 - 32
6	Student to Faculty Ratio	15 to 1	18 to 1
7	Number of Faculty (Headcount)	43	74
8	Number of Full-time Faculty	21	55
9	Faculty Full-time Percentage	48%	75%
10	Number of FTE Faculty	35	62
11	Terminal Degree Percentage	47%	60%
12	Minority Faculty Percentage	0%	8%
13	Women Faculty Percentage	40%	50%
14	Average Faculty Salary (current dollars)	$32,744	$42,000
15	Library Volumes (All Media)	41,773	160,000
16	Number of Computers (Public Access)	31	166
17	Student to Computer Ratio	19 to 1	6 to 1

Students

#	Indicator	Current	Target
18	Acceptance Rate	99%	85%
19	Minority Student Percentage	13%	15%
20	International Student Percentage	13%	14%
21	Number of Residential Students	183	600
22	Percentage of Residential Students	31%	60%
23	Retention Rate (Freshman to Sophomore Year)	70%	70%
24	Honoraries	4	10
25	Clubs/Social/Religious Organizations	12	28
26	Cultural Events Per Year	15	36

Administration

#	Indicator	Current	Target
27	Number of Staff Members	51	68
28	Student to Staff Ratio	12 to 1	15 to 1
29	Faculty/Staff Computers	70	110

Facilities

#	Indicator	Current	Target
30	Number of Classrooms	25	42
31	Students to Classroom Ratio	23 to 1	24 to 1
32	Number of Science Labs	5	8
33	Number of Computer Labs	1	5
34	Number of Faculty Offices	24	66
35	Library Square Footage	9,269	16,000
36	Library Square Footage Per Student	16.8	16.0
37	Number of Residential Spaces	286	600
38	Dining Hall Square Footage	5,000	15,000
39	Dining Hall Square Footage Per Boarding Student	27.3	25.0
40	Student Union Square Footage	2,850	8,000
41	Student Union Square Footage Per Student	5.3	8.0
42	Auditoriums or Lecture/Recital Halls	2	4
43	Primary Auditorium Seats	528	1,200
44	Intercollegiate Athletic Venues	4	8
45	Number of Off-Street Parking Spaces	339	750
46	Number of On-Street Parking Spaces	47	50
47	Total Number of Parking Spaces	386	800
48	Parking Spaces per Student	0.66	0.80
49	Number of Staff Offices	46	68

*Finances**

#	Indicator	Current	Target
50	Tuition, Fees, Room & Board (current dollars)	$13,500	$15,000
51	Tuition Dependence	61%	50%
52	Discount Rate	42%	35%
53	Total Revenue	$ 7,311,560	$ 20,500,000
54	Current Unrestricted Gifts/Apportionments	$ 1,089,803	$ 1,800,000
55	Total Contributions for the Year	$ 2,117,984	$ 3,500,000
56	Alumni Giving Participation	9%	26%
57	Endowment Market Value	$ 7,658,635	$ 35,000,000
58	Endowment Per Student	$ 13,159	$ 35,000

* These figures represent current dollars and are expected to be adjusted for inflation over the ten-year period of the plan

Vita

Samantha Kate Brown was born in Hillsboro, Tennessee. She attended the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, where she received her Bachelor of Science degree in Human Resource Management and General Management with a minor in Psychology. She then earned her Master of Science degree in College Student Personnel at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. While completing her Master of Science degree, she worked as a Graduate Assistant in the University of Tennessee Parents Association. Upon graduation, Samantha began work with Tennessee Solar Conversion and Storage using Outreach, Research, and Education (TN-SCORE). During her time there, she served as Business Manager, Project Administrator, and Outreach Director. Samantha was named a 2015 Presidential Management Fellow and began her appointment in Washington D.C. in the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration as a Workforce Analyst in September of 2015.