

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: AT THE BASE OF THE BRIDGE: A CASE STUDY OF BOUNDARY SPANNING BY MEMBERS OF A UNIVERSITY'S PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

Kathleen Lis Dean, Ph.D., 2008

Directed By: Meredith I. Honig, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Education Policy and Leadership

This study examined the extent to which presidential leadership teams in institutions of higher education realize their goal of helping college and university presidents with decision making. The literatures on leadership teams in higher education and in other contexts suggest that these teams have promise for helping presidents manage complex internal and external demands. However, empirical research on these teams has been limited. This dissertation addresses that research gap with an in-depth qualitative case study of one presidential leadership team. I drew on management and organizational behavior literature to conceptualize team members as boundary spanners who operated between the president and the rest of the university and the university's external environment. This literature suggested team members would help manage both information and political relationships. I then used concepts from the new institutionalism in sociology to help me identify those conditions that might help or hinder team members' boundary-spanning activities. My primary data sources were interviews, extensive observations, and document analysis.

I found that the university president in this case intended for his team to operate as boundary spanners who would manage information and political relationships, but that team members' engagement in these intended activities varied. I found that most team members helped with information management only occasionally and focused their efforts primarily on political activities outside of the institution. However, a core group frequently engaged in these activities. The variation in participation seemed to depend on whether individuals came with the capacity and orientation to engage in these roles. The team setting itself did not provide basic structures or resources to encourage these forms of participation among all members. This study suggests the need to apply additional frameworks and methods to illuminate other dimensions of teamwork in presidential leadership teams. In practice, this study shows that in order for individuals to fulfill boundary-spanning functions, the team setting may need to foster particular dynamics and provide certain structures that enable information management. These structures range from the provision of basic meeting agendas and facilitation to models of how to engage in information and political management activities.

AT THE BASE OF THE BRIDGE: A CASE STUDY OF BOUNDARY SPANNING

BY MEMBERS OF A UNIVERSITY'S PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

By

Kathleen Lis Dean

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Advisory Committee:

Dr. Meredith I. Honig, Chair

Dr. Sharon Fries-Britt

Dr. Adrianna J. Kezar

Dr. Susan Komives

Dr. Robert Waters

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Thomas and Joanne, who helped me learn to build my own bridges.

To my husband, Rob, the foundation of my bridge.

To Heather, Michele, and Asha, my companions on the journey across this bridge.

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*I awoke this morning with devout thanksgiving for my friends, the old and the new.
- Ralph Waldo Emerson*

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ups and downs of life for the past seven years and I am grateful that you have always been there when I needed you, in person and in spirit. You each have been and continue to serve as personal and professional examples for me and I will always treasure our friendship. The achievement of this dissertation completes our collective goal and I am so proud to be the anchor for such a fine group of women. All four one and one four all!

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Figure 1. Presidential leadership team boundary spanning 35

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The presidency is lodged not in one person but in a team.

(Bensimon & Neumann, 1993, p. xv)

The “individual leader as hero” has been a powerful myth both in higher education and in American culture (Reich, 1987). However in recent years, the concept of the “team as hero” (Reich, 1987) has increasingly appeared in the higher education leadership literature (e.g., Bensimon, 1991; Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Green, 1994; Neumann, 1991; Weber & Karman, 1989). Conventional ideas that define leaders as solitary individuals ignore the context in which leaders must operate (Bolman & Deal, 1997; House & Aditya, 1997). No longer can the process of leadership be described in terms of individuals; instead, leadership involves “collaborative relationships that lead to collective action grounded in the shared values of people who work together to effect positive change” (Astin & Astin, 1996 in House & Aditya, 1997, p. 457).

This shift to a team focus in the literature makes sense because presidential leadership in higher education has become increasingly complex in ways that have made colleges and universities too difficult for any single chief executive to understand complexity and to lead alone (Eisenstat & Cohen, 1990; Green, 1994). Even in the late 1960’s, scholars were stating that “the time has long passed when a college can be administered effectively by the Herculean efforts of one man” (Drewry, 1967, p. 1). In the complexity of the 21st century, leaders are faced with economic, demographic, and technological changes that require decisions about such issues as new partnerships, student and staff diversity, and accountability demands. The complexity of these issues

typically pushes the boundaries of a single president's knowledge and extends well beyond the professional training and capacity of a single decision maker. For example, serving as an provost for academic affairs is the most well-traveled path to the presidency, and very few presidents have any senior level experience in areas such as finance, external affairs, development, or student affairs (King, 2007). This career pipeline means that presidents are likely under-prepared for the complex issues facing them and their institutions. Rather than rely on the talent or traits of a solitary hero, organizations must turn to the collective talent and ideas that teams can provide.

The characteristics of an information society have led many to consider the importance, if not the necessity, of leadership teams as a particularly promising to single-leader models (Weber & Karman, 1989). "In an information society, emphasis changes from data gathering to knowledge processing. Transforming information gathered into useful, integrated, decision-making knowledge requires the use of interdisciplinary teams" to work together (Gardiner, 1988, p. 138). In a world increasingly saturated with information, mechanisms for accessing and using information must take into account the essential role of the social system, such as teams (Duguid & Brown, 2000).

Given these conditions, one approach that leaders in institutions of higher education have used to access information to improve decision making is a leadership team – a group of top-level administrators who report directly to the president and with whom he or she works closely (Bensimon, 1991; Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Bensimon, Neumann, & Birnbaum, 1989; Neumann, 1991). The rationale for the popularity of teams in the management literature is that they are "most effective in facilitating creativity and innovation among the highly educated, professional personnel

found in modern, highly sophisticated . . . companies. For the same reasons, this style is particularly appropriate for universities” (Guskin & Bassis, 1985, p. 20). Given the complex nature of higher education organizations and their environments, a team approach to leadership should improve the presidential-level decision making of a college or university by assembling people from across the organization in order to capitalize on different knowledge and multiple perspectives they may bring to decisions (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). This type of organizational arrangement is theoretically more advantageous than traditional models of leadership that focus solely on the presidency because it “enables leaders to see the institution from many different perspectives and therefore to use a wider variety of approaches and strategies” (Green, 1994, p. 56). It is from these multiple perspectives that access to a wider variety of information and interpretations is rooted. When teams engage in these types of bridging activities, they are likely to achieve higher performance (Ancona, 1990). Some suggest that these multiple perspectives may generate solutions to problems that are more relevant and innovative than those possible from a single decision maker.

The higher education and management literature frequently touts the hypothetical value of presidential leadership teams. However, empirical research on leadership teams in higher education is limited and under-developed. The existing empirical work takes a primarily internal perspective on leadership teams, focusing on team dynamics and roles, without consideration of their relationship to their organizational context and the extent to which they realize their promise of spanning boundaries, increasing access to information, and ultimately improving decision making.

Furthermore, we know little about whether presidential leadership teams are up to the challenge of helping presidents to access information and improve decision making and under what conditions they can accomplish these goals. This is a significant omission given the extreme challenges that team face. For example, teams are not isolated and self-sufficient; rather they are embedded within a broader system that can both help and hinder team processes and outcomes (Kozlowski & Bell, 2003). Research suggests that it is important for team members to interact with their internal and external environments in order to access information and provide representation that reinforce decision-making processes (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). However, doing so is not easy as teams must take their context into account and manage complex information and relationships. Literature on organizational behavior literature on boundary spanning and group effectiveness also suggest that these teams likely face particular liabilities as they interact with their environment.

The purpose of this study is to address these gaps in the literature by examining the extent to which presidential leadership teams realize their promise of linking presidents to more and better information to improve decision making. My specific research questions were:

1. To what extent did the president intend for team members to help manage the team's environment?
2. What is the actual role of the presidential leadership team?
3. What were the impacts of the team?
4. What helps or hinders leadership team members in fulfilling their roles?

I turned to the literatures on boundary spanning and the new institutionalism in sociology (NIS) to construct a conceptual framework for this inquiry because these literatures highlight dimensions not previously explored by scholars in the study of presidential leadership teams, particularly the influence of institutional factors and relationships with the environment outside of the team. According to these theories, as individuals perform boundary-spanning activities, they are likely to face significant challenges, including uncertainty, ambiguity, multiple roles, and the social context of the team. This framework called my attention to the variety of influences that these individuals and teams face, aspects that have not previously explored in the study of presidential leadership teams.

Given the nascent stage of research in this area, I used a qualitative, single case study design that involved interviews, observation, and document analysis. I used a cyclical approach to data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994), involving a recurring sequence of data collection, data analysis, and the generation of new and refined questions that led to additional data collection. I organized these data into categories suggested by my problem statement and conceptual framework, including boundary spanning activities, actual and intended roles, decision influences, and conditions that might help or hinder boundary spanners. I drew upon decision-making theory to analyze individuals' attempts to simplify their experience, including comments about past experience and familiarity, concerns with legitimacy, and identification of rules.

In Chapters 2, 3, and 4, I elaborate on my framing of the problem, articulate a conceptual framework, and describe the methods I used to gather and analyze data. Then, in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, I present my findings. In Chapter 5, I show that team members

achieved limited information management and political management activities. However, they could not be defined as boundary spanners in terms of information management due to a lack of evidence of search and use activities. Furthermore, presidential leadership teams may be comprised of subgroups that can be differentiated on a variety of characteristics that help to explain their behavior and the assets that may be useful in successful boundary spanning. In Chapter 6, I describe the team outcomes and show that while they achieve some success with political outcomes, they did not engage in discussion and debate, leading to limited information management outcomes.

In Chapter 7, I describe how uncertainty, differing perceptions, diverse identities, power, and the president's role provided significant helps and hindrances to this team's ability to engage in information management activities. Team members were hindered by the lack of formal structures to guide their behaviors and processes, the uneven distribution of power within the team, as well as by team dynamics that favored affective conflict over cognitive conflict. The conceptual framework proved to be a valuable lens through which to understand boundary spanning in presidential leadership teams as it highlighted institutional factors that influenced their behaviors and explained how team members dealt with the organizational conditions they faced in ways that adhered to the concepts presented by the new institutionalism in sociology.

The contributions of this study are first and foremost that it extends the research on the use of leadership teams in higher education, both methodologically and conceptually. This study differs from previous empirical work by using a qualitative case study to study a single team over an extended period of time and to conceptualize team members as boundary spanners. This research contributes a new perspective on

presidential leadership team by applying concepts from the new institutionalism in sociology. This is a significant departure from previous work on leadership teams in higher education because it locates them in an institutional context and sheds light on dimensions not previously explored by other scholars. The findings provide support for this conceptual framework by showing that team members can be understood as boundary spanners who relied on familiar routines in order to perform their roles and relied on notions of legitimacy, even when these behaviors did not always support boundary spanning. These findings also support the critical role that affective and cognitive conflict can play in developing effective teams, as well as the importance of the team leader (Ancona, 1990; Guzzo & Dickson, 1996; Hackman & Walton, 1986). Future research should further explore the political management function of leadership teams, as well as which tools, strategies, and mechanisms help individuals and team to achieve their goals.

The results of this study may also provide valuable assistance to presidents and cabinet members in structuring and managing their teams to support decision making. This case suggests that presidents and their team should implement several practices or strategies in order to create a solid base for the team's work. Presidents and their team should take steps to ensure that both the formal meeting structures and informal processes are designed to support the organization's goals. Specifically, presidents and their team must address affective conflict, generate cognitive conflict, develop wider sources of power, and use formal meeting structures. Presidents must build their teams' capacity to achieve the benefit of teams as a strategy, rather than just a meeting. In other words,

teams must build a solid base for their bridges in order to reap the benefits of boundary spanning.

This study shows that, in order for individuals to effectively fulfill the functions that boundary-spanning literature suggests, they need a foundation from which to base these activities. Team members' abilities to search for and deliver relevant information, to engage in discussion and debate about that information, and to promote the university's goals would be helped by the existence of formal structures to counter uncertainty and ambiguity, as well as attention to the informal dynamics of the team that hinder interaction and cognitive conflict.

CHAPTER 2: THE PROMISE OF PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP TEAMS

It is unrealistic to expect everyone to be a leader for all times and seasons. Wise leaders understand their own strengths, work to expand them, and build teams that can provide leadership . . . (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 317).

In this chapter, I examined what research already teaches about what presidential leadership teams do and their potential for improved organizational decision making. I reviewed literature on presidential leadership teams in higher education and top management teams in the corporate sector, as well as literature on group effectiveness. This review revealed that leadership teams can help organizations address a wide range of issues through increased access to information and an expanded ability to process information from multiple perspectives. Teams seem particularly useful in this regard because they can draw on their diverse composition and by engaging in effective group processes.

Research suggests that presidential leadership teams exist in colleges and universities, but the literature in this area is limited to a handful of studies that focus primarily on the internal, cognitive dynamics of these teams. (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Dewey, 1998; Knudson, 1997). The literature on similar teams in the corporate sector highlights the importance of functional diversity and group process in team functioning, as well as the importance of the organizational environment's influence (Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Edmondson, Roberto, & Watkins, 2003; Hambrick, 1994). This literature emphasizes that organizational teams must reach beyond their boundaries to engage and influence their environment. In the context of higher education, there is still much to learn about how presidential leadership teams in higher education function within their environment.

Real presidential leadership teams

In the literature on higher education, many authors have advocated for a team approach to presidential leadership in institutions of higher education (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Gardiner, 1988; Green, 1994). The limited research on presidential leadership teams suggests that real teams exist (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Knudson, 1997) and that they can have a positive influence on the organization (Dewey, 1998). For example, Dewey (1998) showed that leadership teams with the capacity to engage in cognitive interaction can predict organizational health. In this section, I rely heavily on the work of Bensimon and Neumann to describe presidential leadership teams in part because theirs is the seminal work in this area, but also because nearly every subsequent study has relied on their framework.

According to Bensimon and Neumann, in higher education, the presidential leadership team is the president's cabinet – the group of top-level campus administrators formally convened to advise the president in his or her decision making (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). This is typically a functionally diverse group, with each team member representing an organizational subunit such as student affairs, academic affairs, enrollment, alumni relations, advancement, government relations, legal affairs, finance, or administrative affairs. While leadership teams exist in name on practically every college and university campus, these entities do not necessarily all function as “real” teams as they are defined in the literature. In the higher education literature, Bensimon and Neumann (1993) provide a definition of a “real” team based on a framework that focuses on three functional domains: utilitarian, expressive, and cognitive. The utilitarian function focuses on the task dimension, encompassing activities that are needed to keep

the institution running and to get things done, such as delivering information, coordinating and planning, and making decisions. A team's expressive function focuses on the social aspects that reinforce connections among members, such as providing mutual support or providing counsel to the president. Finally, the cognitive function enables a team to perform as a sensemaking unit through activities such as viewing problems from multiple perspectives, engaging in questioning and arguing, and acting as a monitoring system.

According to Bensimon and Neumann, a real team is one in which the cognitive function is the central task, rather than primarily or exclusively utilitarian or expressive. In other words, a real team is one that thinks together and has achieved a level of cognitive complexity, or the ability to view an issue, idea, or organization from multiple perspectives. A team, rather than an individual, increases the likelihood of achieving cognitive complexity because it "takes a complex sensing system to register and regulate a complex object" such as a university (Weick, 1995, p. 34-35). By viewing the organization's reality from different perspectives and working together, real teams can "use a wider variety of approaches and strategies" (Green, 1994, p. 56) and "address a diverse range of institutional issues" (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993, p. 44).

Because presidential leadership team members typically represent a variety of university divisions, they can provide access to a wider variety of information than a single individual, such as a president alone, might be able to easily obtain. Such a team, using its strength of diversity, should be better able to "discern the changing needs, positions, aspirations, and particular points of view of diverse members of the campus community" than a president acting alone (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993, p. 132). Having

access to information is important because “knowing more usually leads to better decisions than knowing less” (Davenport & Prusak, 1998, p. 9) when addressing complex problems such as those faced by senior executives.

In Bensimon and Neumann’s framework, team members can provide access to information from two perspectives: by delivering and by sharing. This is an important distinction in the definition of a real team. First, from a utilitarian view, information can be delivered from one individual to another, such as a vice president to the president. An alternative is the sharing of information among team members, in other words sharing information on a broader scale. Sharing implies that information is distributed to the team as a whole and therefore able to be acted upon by a variety of individuals. In contrast, information delivery means that information is handled as a resource to for individuals to control, rather than as a resource to share among colleagues, potentially creating an unequal power dynamic. Information then becomes a means to establish a “common ground for decision making” by the team (Bensimon and Neumann, 1993, p. 35). Teams whose “dominant function is the delivery of information to the president for the president’s own benefit cannot be regarded as real teams because they just provide information” without facilitating the opportunity for consideration or input from all team members (Bensimon and Neumann, 1993, p. 35).

The activities included in both the utilitarian and cognitive functions lead to the characterization of a real team as a collaborative effort in which these functions inform one another (Bensimon and Neumann, 1993). When team members share information within the team, rather than deliver it solely to the president, there is an opportunity to hear from the multiple perspectives that team members bring to the table. When this

occurs in an atmosphere that supports debate, information sharing can lead to information processing. Bensimon and Neumann (1993) place particular emphasis on the processing activity of teams by focusing on the pivotal role of the cognitive function in their framework.

Fulfilling a cognitive function means that team members engage in activities such as sharing their multiple perspectives, debating, and providing feedback. Teams that function in this way examine issues from multiple points of view and bring unconsidered alternatives to light, as well as possible options to solve problems (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). The existence of teams that process information from multiple perspectives has been shown to have a positive impact on organizational effectiveness (Dewey, 1998). While the complexity that such a structure with a diversity of views and values may seem problematic, the benefit is that “multiple solutions to a complex problem can make the problem less daunting and easier to handle” (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993, p. 42). With a cognitively complex team, decisions should improve because drawing on multiple perspectives will result in a more complete picture of a given situation and therefore should lead to better actions (Neumann, 1991). In fact, a team’s ability to consider different perspectives “may be the difference between effective and ineffective leadership for an institution” (Dewey, 1998, p. 10).

The literature on presidential leadership teams in higher education also highlights some factors that shape whether or not teams realize these functions. The ability to share and process information may be dependent on the affective abilities of a team, a third dimension in the Bensimon and Neumann (1993) framework. When a team is able to carry out expressive functions by serving as a source for counsel and advice, as well as to

“act as a mirror” for how others might perceive actions and decisions, it provides a sense of connectedness for its members who have isolated roles and few peers on campus (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). Studies of presidential leadership teams have found support for the importance of the expressive function, particularly emphasizing the role of trust, mutual respect, effective communication, and time for interaction in effective teams (Dee, 2001; Knudson, 1997). Frequent team meetings and informal social interaction can enable trust and collaboration by creating opportunities to learn about one another and to test out ideas (Dee, 2001).

The expressive function supports information processing by helping teams to avoid oversimplifying issues and coming to premature closure on decisions by considering a variety of alternative explanations and solutions. A real team requires a culture of collegiality; a mutually respectful atmosphere provides freedom for team members to provide honest feedback and to consider new courses of action that deviate from what is comfortable. While presidents may value the cognitive contributions of a team, research suggests that team members place higher value on the collegial function of a team (Knudson, 1997). Fulfilling this function compels team members to build relationships that go beyond political alliances and to consider both the personal and professional needs of each member. Adhering to functional roles and relying on our human tendency to connect with similar others can hinder the development of trust and collaboration in presidential leadership teams (Dee, 2001). Furthermore, if interactions occur among a limited number of individuals, rather than all members of the team, this can create a “backdoor negotiation” situation that impedes information sharing and open discussion, and creates cognitive conflict among all team members (Dee, 2001).

Teams with a strong sense of internal cohesion and common identity may also isolate themselves from the rest of the university (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). If a leadership team is working closely together, there is a chance that they will become a “cognitive clique” (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993), meaning that they become so associative with one another that they exclude outsiders and outside information, thereby isolating or distancing themselves from the rest of the organization. For example, in their case studies of fifteen leadership teams, Bensimon and Neumann observed that some teams were so internally cohesive that they were unlikely to be effective leaders because they were only aware of their own “vision of reality” (1993, p.160). Both of these situations can limit a team’s access to information and potentially hinder their ability to process that information in a cognitively complex way.

This literature on leadership teams in higher education also addresses the role of the president in building and maintaining real teams (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Gardiner, 1988; Green, 1994; Knudson, 1997; Neumann, 1991). Echoing the groups and teams literature, higher education scholars suggest that the effectiveness of leadership teams is dependent on the choices and abilities of the team leader to both select team members and facilitate their interactions (Eisenstat & Cohen, 1990; Neumann, 1991). For example, when selecting a team, “a president may want to focus on unique institutional needs in selecting and orchestrating the administrative team” (Neumann, 1991, p.505) in order to have the skills and information necessary to address current organizational issues. But, going beyond design, once a team is convened the president must play a role in establishing and sustaining group norms, engendering trust, and defining clear boundaries of the team’s work (Eisenstat and Cohen, 1990). These leadership tasks

require skills that are associated more with post-heroic leaders, such as the ability to listen, giving up control, and being prepared for unexpected outcomes (Chieffo, 1991; Green, 1994).

In order to function as a real team, all members – and the president in particular – must be able to convey tolerance, respect, and appreciation for others' differences (Neumann, 1991). The need for a collegial atmosphere, particularly on the part of the president, is vital for team members to feel that their contributions are not construed as challenging authority but welcomed as valuable input. Furthermore, the president must articulate norms that support thinking outside of functional areas and that clarify the team role as one that is intended to further institutional goals, not advocate for local interests (Dee, 2001). A lack of congruence among team members with regard to motivation, structure, and interpretation can affect their willingness to trust and collaborate with other team members (Dee, 2001). In other words, the president must attend to a balance between the cognitive and affective needs of the team. As shown in the literature on top management teams, both elements are important to achieving the promise of leadership teams. This task may be difficult as research has suggested that while leadership team members value the affective aspects of team work, presidents value the cognitive characteristics (Knudson, 1997).

The few studies that have explored presidential leadership teams have focused on understanding the internal dynamics of these teams (e.g., Bell, 2001; Bensimon, 1991; Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Dee, 2001; Dewey, 1998; Knudson, 1997; Neumann, 1991). For example, Dee (2001) considered the importance of trust and collaboration with leadership teams. Knudson (1997) relied on the Bensimon and Neumann (1993)

framework to determine the extent to which such teams exist in the community college environment. While the limited research on presidential leadership teams in colleges and universities has primarily focused on these cognitive and expressive functions, there is a substantial body of literature addressing a variety of other factors in similar corporate teams.

Evidence from outside of higher education suggests that these teams have promise for addressing the complexity faced by higher education organizations. While it is challenging to make these comparisons due to the distinct differences in the values and structures of universities and corporations, I turned to the management literature because it helped to elaborate the importance of the organizational environment to the success of such teams, a dimension that is currently lacking in the higher education literature. In the next section, I review literature on top management teams, as they are commonly called in the management literature, to highlight evidence that there is more to learn about their counterparts in institutions of higher education.

Top management teams

Nearly a quarter century ago, Hambrick and Mason (1984) encouraged research on the “upper echelons” of organizations, based on the concept of the “dominant coalition” (Cyert & March, 1963). They advocated that top management teams or the senior executives of an organization, rather than individual executives or the CEO, are the key decision makers in organizations. These clusters of top executives are identified by several terms in the organizational behavior and management literature: executive teams (Ancona & Nadler, 1989; Nadler & Spencer, 1998), senior executive teams (Berg,

2005), the “team at the top” or senior leadership group (Katzenbach, 1998), and most commonly, top management teams (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996; Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Top management team membership is typically based on members’ formal position in the organization, they are generally comprised of those executives at the top of the organization who report directly to the CEO (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Katzenbach, 1998; Nadler & Spencer, 1998). They represent a variety of organizational functions, such as marketing, sales, human resources, or engineering and have likely spent a significant part of their career in one of these areas (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). The term “functional diversity” serves as a proxy for the information and expertise that individual team members bring to a group (Williams & O’Reilly, 1998) that likely arise from differences in education and experience.

An array of empirical evidence has supported the suggestion that organizational outcomes are at least partially predicted by the background characteristics of top management team members (e.g., function, values, experience, education, age, tenure), therefore making this group an important unit for study (Carpenter, Geletkanycz, & Sanders, 2004; Edmondson et al., 2003; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996; Geletkanycz & Hambrick, 1997; Hambrick, Geletkanycz, & Fredrickson, 1993; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Knight et al., 1996; Pitcher & Smith, 2001; Simons, Pelled, & Smith, 1999; Smith, Houghton, Hoode, & Rymand, 2006). In this subsection I review the literature on top management teams to show that certain characteristics and processes are important to understanding these types of organizational teams.

The top management team literature identifies several functions of these teams. The overarching challenge for top management teams is the complex task of

simultaneously managing both internal and external operations and relationships, and engaging in strategic decision making (Ancona & Nadler, 1989; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). Top management teams function at the boundary between the organization and the external environment by gathering and conveying information and impressions (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996; Thompson, 1967) while also managing diverse and interdependent units internally (Ancona & Nadler, 1989). Their activities include gathering and transmitting information across these boundaries, as well as adapting to or attempting to align the organization to the environment (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). Top management teams also engage in strategic decision making, defined as those choices that are important, set precedents, define long-range directions, are non-routine, or involve significant commitment of resources (Eisenhardt & Zbaracki, 1992; Mintzberg, Raisinghani, & Theoret, 1976). The role of top executives on these teams include the formulation and implementation of strategy that aligns the organization with the environment (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). These responsibilities include decisions about which products and markets to emphasize, as well as how to allocate resources, develop policies, and create an organizational context to support those strategies (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996).

Particular characteristics of top executives can help or hinder them as they work to achieve these functions. Top management teams are different from other types of organizational teams because of the socialization and power of the individuals that tend to comprise these teams. First, top executives are likely to have had prolonged experience in, and expertise with, their functional areas as they rise to the top of an organization. This means that they are more likely to be socially entrenched in certain ways of thinking

because they have been successful using what has worked for them in the past (Geletkanycz & Black, 2001). Yet, while they have sufficiently adhered to norms in order to be accepted within their functional areas, these are individuals who have succeeded in rising to the top of an organization by differentiating themselves from others through the use of influence and power (March, 1994).

Top executives' power shapes their ability to exert influence over other individuals or groups (Pfeffer, 1981). Two sources of power common to top executives are a result of structure and expertise (Finkelstein, 1992). They have structural power by virtue of their location at the top of the organization and their particular areas of authority (Morgan, 1997). By virtue of formal positions in the organizational hierarchies, few individuals have gained the formal or expert power that has been attained by members of top management teams. Furthermore, top executives are also viewed as having expert power, based on their level of accumulated experience in their functional area. Their elevated position, their access to information, and their network centrality, or control of resources, all provide sources of power. An executive's rise to power is at least partially due to their functional expertise and its fit with the organization's critical needs (Hambrick, 1981).

Studies of leadership teams in private firms offer a perspective that attends to the strategic role of these teams and focuses on the saliency of top management team composition. This composition can positively impact organizational outcomes, but there are both costs and benefits to team diversity (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss selected top management and team effectiveness research to show that functional diversity can provide access to information and multiple

viewpoints, but that this heterogeneity can also lead to conflict. This research highlights the tension that leadership teams in institutions of higher education are likely to face. This literature also highlights how specific dimensions of the organizational environment can help to hinder team in improving presidential decision-making processes.

Functional diversity

While top management teams are presumed to have generalist's view of the organization, each individual member brings an orientation based on their experience in a functional area and background. Although top executives share some common characteristics, top management teams are generally composed of a relatively diverse group of individuals and can be viewed as a form of a cross-functional or representational group (Berg, 2005). Top management team diversity is defined as the variation among team member characteristics (Hambrick, Cho, & Chen, 1996), or the extent to which a top management team is heterogeneous with respect to members' attributes (Lau & Murnighan, 1998; Simons et al., 1999) such as functional track, career experiences, age, tenure, and education. These attributes are assumed to have an influence on organizational outcomes (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), so a focus on team composition represents a substantial portion of the top management team literature (e.g., Carpenter et al., 2004; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996; Hambrick, 1994).

The diversity of top management teams has generally been considered to be an asset for the ambiguous, non-routine problem solving faced by such teams (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Studies of top management team composition have suggested that these

differences can impact teams' choices, as well as the processes that lead to them, in positive ways. For example, top executives' prior experiences can positively influence firm performance (Carpenter, Sanders, & Gregersen, 2001), as well as strategic choices, such as alliance formation (Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996) and internationalization (Carpenter, Pollock, & Leary, 2003), as well as their propensity for action (Hambrick et al., 1996). Functional and educational experience can impact the extent to which executives are willing to consider alternatives (Geletkanycz & Black, 2001). However, differences in team member characteristics, such as background, tenure, and age can also negatively impact decision making by introducing conflict (Amason, 1996; Amason & Sapienza, 1997; Knight et al., 1996), influencing team processes (Papadakis & Barwise, 2002), and highlighting power (Pitcher & Smith, 2001).

Researchers have found that functional diversity is a team asset because it can provide access to more information, create productive conflict, incorporate more perspectives, and can help teams to manage greater complexity. Team heterogeneity is valuable because top management team composition can influence what information is accessible and/or accessed. For example, functional diversity can increase communication (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998) and create better linkages to information (Milliken, 1996). Information exchange with the external environment is enhanced by functional diversity because of the increased linkages from the team to rest of the organization (Sapsed, Bessant, Partington, Tranfield, & Young, 2002).

While composition is one important factor in improving decision making and group effectiveness (Guzzo & Dickson, 1996), it is also important to consider that bringing together representatives from the various units of an organization can improve a

team's decision making by providing a forum to share information and engage in discussion (Simons et al., 1999). Teams should include members with diverse backgrounds and abilities who can provide multiple perspectives in helping to understand the organization as a whole (Morgan, 1997). As a type of cross-functional team, top management teams can provide multiple sources of information and perspectives (Ford & Randolph, 1992; Keller, 2001) that should translate into an ability to improve decision making. Generating options often leads to more innovative choices and more choices overall. A multiple perspectives approach to understanding organizations assumes that individuals with diverse viewpoints perceive different elements of a situation, thereby highlighting and diminishing various features. "People with different values 'see' different things in the same situation" (Davenport & Prusak, 1998, p. 12).

The functional diversity found in top management teams is a key source of productive, cognitive conflict. Cognitive, or task, conflict refers to differences among team members about how to achieve organizational objectives (Amason, 1996). Cognitive conflict is beneficial precisely because it generates multiple perspectives, particularly when teams are faced with non-routine tasks (Jehn, 1995). Cognitive conflict fosters the exchange of information (processing) that facilitates problem solving, the generation of ideas, and decision making (Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999).

Despite the promise of such behavior, many top management teams exist in a state of fragmentation characterized by team members who "operate in relatively independent spheres, with minimal interaction" (Hambrick, 1995, p. 115), thereby hindering access to information and the ability to process that information. To take advantage of their composition, top management teams should engage in useful practices

such as fact-finding, analyzing, and complex decision making, rather than rely on a routine of reviewing and ratifying (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). Many teams do not engage in the cognitive activity of “mutual and collective interaction” (Hambrick, 1994, p. 188), such as exchanging information, employing collaborative behavior, and engaging in joint decision making (Li and Hambrick, 2005). Behaviorally-integrated top management team make better use of alternatives because their cognitive complexity creates opportunities for debate and discussion (Siegel & Hambrick, 1996) because people draw on the belief structures associated with their experiences (Pelled et al., 1999) which results in differences in opinions, viewpoint, and ideas (Hambrick & Li, 2005).

With the benefits of functional diversity and multiple perspectives comes the potential for conflicts that stem from the value differences among subcultures in organizations (Martin, 1992). Functional diversity can also be a liability because it can create unproductive, affective conflict (Pelled et al., 1999). Affective conflict, also known as emotional or relationship conflict, refers to interpersonal differences among team members (Amason, 1996). Affective conflict often results from demographic or social class differences (Milliken & Martins, 1996; Pelled et al., 1999; Tsui & O’Reilly, 1989) because people tend to trust and like others who are more like themselves, and distrust and dislike those who are dissimilar, especially when differences are easily discernable (e.g., race, gender) (Jackson, 1992; Pelled, 1996).

Less obvious differences, such as functional backgrounds, can also create affective conflict if individuals personalize value differences (Pelled & Adler, 1994). For example, while one vice president might want to increase enrollment in order to boost revenues or to fulfill a public good mission, another might argue that doing so would

decrease selectivity and increase class size. If these differences of opinion create an inability to consider alternatives, the team will not benefit from their different perspectives. Top executives, in particular, with their longer tenure and increased expertise in a particular functional area, may have come to rely on familiar practices or rationale. This can hinder problem solving, the generation of new alternatives and solutions, and a willingness to change practices and policies (Katz, 1982; March and Simon, 1958).

Research suggests that conflict related to value diversity seems to be a greater deterrent to performance than social category diversity (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999), perhaps because team members must have some common ground in terms of values in order to engage in the group processes that can lead to improved performance (Jehn et al., 1999). Affective conflict has a particular tendency to arise when factions, or subgroups that form around differences, are present within a top management team because the groups are inherently divided and in-group/out-group categorization is likely to occur (Hambrick & Li, 2005).

While cognitive conflict is considered beneficial, affective conflict tends to foster dysfunctional behaviors such as distrust, dislike, and avoidance that can weaken decision quality and decision acceptance (Amason, 1996). A key issue in groups such as top management teams is the tension between team goals and functional priorities (Holland, Gaston, & Gomes, 2000) which can create ambiguity over resources and increase conflict (Ford & Randolph, 1992). Because of their place in the organizational hierarchy, top management team members typically serve on the leadership team while simultaneously serving as the leader of an organizational subunit, such as finance or marketing. This

situation can create tensions about individuals' group identities as a part of an organizational team or their organizational subunit.

The dynamics of groups such as top management teams, who are composed of representatives from a variety of areas, are different than those of simple task groups because they have more in common with intergroup processes given their functional and value differences (Berg, 2005). If team members believe that some will benefit at the expense of others, rather than focusing on the betterment of the organization as a whole, both affective conflict and cognitive conflict are likely to increase (Shook et al 2005). Alternatively, teams who feel that they can safely take risks, such as asking for help and speaking up, are more likely to share information and learn through processing than those who feel that they must suppress ideas or signs of weakness (Edmonson, 1999).

Some research suggests that the findings related to affective conflict are still equivocal. Jehn (1994) found a negative relationship between affective conflict and performance, but later research (Jehn, 1995; Pelled et al., 1999) found no evidence that affective conflict hinders performance. It may be that affective conflict causes dissatisfaction, but is moderated by avoidance or other coping strategies (Jehn, 1995; Pelled et al., 1999). However, the evidence as a whole seems to suggest that functional diversity is likely to stimulate cognitive conflict and improve performance (Eisenhardt, Kahwajy, & Bourgeois, 1997; Pelled et al., 1999; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998), but that affective conflict must be managed because it can be detrimental to decision quality (Amason, 1996; Amason & Mooney, 1999; Amason & Sapienza, 1997; Amason, 1995; Jehn, 1995; Simons & Peterson, 2000). Cognitive conflict appears to improve the quality of top management team decisions because it results in a synthesis of divergent

perspectives (Amason, 1996; Amason & Sapienza, 1997) through discussion and debate, particularly for non-routine tasks (Jehn, 1995). This is more likely to occur in an environment of intragroup trust that can moderate the relationship between task conflict and relationship conflict in top management teams (Simons & Peterson, 2000).

The paradox of conflict is that while more differences among group members can lead to a greater ability to provide a variety of perspectives on complex organizational issues, thereby improving decision quality, it may also weaken the ability of the group to work together (Northcraft, Polzer, Neale, & Kramer, 1995; Schweiger, Sandberg, & Ragan, 1986). While functionally diverse groups can manage greater complexity, differences in background, values, goals, and information can hinder top management teams. Heterogeneous groups are generally slower and less cohesive than homogeneous groups (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Smith et al., 1994; Wiersema & Bantel, 1992; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998) and their diversity may also lead to negative outcomes such as dissatisfaction and dissensus (Priem, 1990; Schweiger, Sandberg, & Rechner, 1989). The goal of a team should be to generate cognitive conflict and reduce affective conflict in order to reap the benefits of interaction among the multiple perspectives that top management team members bring to the table.

Team leadership

The literature on groups and teams suggests that there are three points of leverage for an effective team: design, process, and context (Guzzo & Dickson, 1996). As discussed above, designing a team to take advantage of functional diversity must be coupled with efforts to manage the team's interpersonal and task processes. In both of

these areas, the president or CEO, as team leader, holds a special position that may allow him or her to have a significant influence in selecting team members, defining agendas, and managing meeting interactions. A critical role for team leaders as an element of the team context has been suggested in the literature on team effectiveness (Ancona, 1990; Guzzo & Dickson, 1996; Hackman & Walton, 1986).

While several models of team leadership have been proposed (e.g., Hackman & Walton, 1986; Kozlowski, Gully, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 1996; Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001), little is known about the leaders of organizational groups, despite the extensive literature both on leadership and of group development and effectiveness. Existing models in the groups and teams literature include a range of ideas that include the leader's role in providing direction for task development and team actions (Kozlowski et al., 1996; Zaccaro et al., 2001), developing cohesion and skills (Kozlowski et al., 1996), and monitoring team conditions and taking action to remedy them if they are not contributing to effective teamwork (Hackman & Walton, 1986)

A common theme throughout these group and team models is the role of the team leader in managing or facilitating team processes and conditions. The team leader can be pivotal in developing a team climate of trust (Webber, 2002) and managing conflict by fostering group norms that encourages both debate and trust within the team (Hackman, Brousseau, & Weiss, 1976). Previous research has suggested that in order to understand leadership teams, it is important to be aware of the norms that guide decision making (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). Similarly, the limited research in this area suggests that top management team effectiveness may depend not just on team composition, but also

on the team leader's choices about process (Edmondson et al., 2003) and conflict management (De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002).

Organizational environment

While both the higher education and corporate literature concentrate on internal processes and dynamics (Cohen & Bailey, 1997), teams do not exist in isolation. Other group and team research provides evidence that the organizational environment can impact a team's effectiveness (Ancona, 1987; Ancona, 1990; Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). Teams are nested within organizations where contextual characteristics can influence their effectiveness. "One of the key distinguishing characteristics of the organization perspective on work groups and teams is appreciation that they are embedded in a broader system that sets constraints and influences team processes and outcomes" (Kozlowski & Bell, 2003). Teams must take their context into account and engage in processes to manage their organizational environment through boundary management strategies.

Much early research on groups stopped at the team boundary and focused on internal behaviors. However, as scholars began to step back and include consideration of the environment beyond the team's boundary, the organizational environment was seen to influence internal behaviors by providing opportunities and constraints (Ilgen, 1999). Scholars have shown that the external activity of teams is a better predictor of performance for teams that are not self-reliant for resources such as information (Ancona, 1990; Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). Research suggests that it is important for teams to

maintain a balance between effective internal processes and valuable external management in order to be successful (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992).

Leadership teams in higher education exist in a different context than those in the corporate sector (Berquist, 1992; Birnbaum, 2000; Kezar, 2001). In higher education, the importance of managing the environment is particularly important because there are multiple power and authority structures at work: the duality of professional values defined by collegiality and shared power and those of the administration, which are informed by hierarchy and autonomy (Birnbaum, 2000). Institutions of higher education are an example of professional bureaucracies which are characterized by a flatter organizational structure with greater autonomy for staff who are indirectly controlled through norms and socialization (Morgan, 1997). The decision making processes within higher education have been described as resembling an “organized anarchy” (Cohen & March, 1986) in which there are no strict lines of decision making. In this environment, power tends to appear through networks of influence. Finally, while there is a common “bottom line” in for-profit organizations, the goals of the academy are multiple and conflicting.

While environmental management does not ensure organizational effectiveness, it is rare for organizations to be effective without managing their environments. It has been noted that top management teams serve as boundary spanners for both internal and external actors, given their responsibilities for gathering and transmitting information across boundaries (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Ancona & Nadler, 1989; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996), but consideration of this role has not been pursued in relation to presidential leadership teams in higher education.

Despite the knowledge available in other sectors, our understanding of leadership teams in institutions of higher education is generally limited to internal perspectives. The line of research on presidential leadership teams in higher education has fallen silent without exploring what a variety of literatures has suggested is important to understand: both boundary-spanning and internal processes. Conceptualizing team members as boundary-spanning individuals who provide information and representation for the president may help us to better understand and explain their role in information management and may add to our knowledge about how they contribute to decision making. In other words, leadership teams can and should use their diverse composition as an asset to both access and process information for the benefit of improved decision making. This is their promise.

Conclusion

Organization and management scholars have studied top management teams for over two decades, yet little of this research has been considered within the context of similar teams in higher education. The current work on presidential leadership teams relies overwhelmingly on the strong foundation that Bensimon and Neumann (1993) have provided, but there is much room for additional research on college and university campuses. The scholarship on leadership teams in higher education has remained limited in scope, but knowledge acquired in other contexts can illuminate further avenues for exploration.

Both the higher education and management literature illuminate that the team environment, with effective team leadership, can lead to an improved ability to process

information through the variety of perspectives that individual team members bring with them. However, little research exists within the higher education context to show how individual team members can operate to connect the team to its external environment to improve decision making in support of team goals. I found no research to date that has explored how presidents and teams in higher education can build on the diversity that individuals bring to the team as a means to access information and other resources across the team boundary.

In order to address these gaps in the research on presidential leadership teams in higher education, in the next chapter, I show how team members can be conceptualized as boundary spanners and highlight the organizational conditions that might help or hinder them. In order to explore how team members operate as boundary spanners, this research will apply concepts from the new institutionalism in sociology and decision-making theory to highlight the variety of influences that these team members face and how individuals manage these conditions by using cognitive and normative strategies.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK – ELABORATING HOW
PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP TEAMS MANAGE THEIR ENVIRONMENTS

*The allocation of attention affects the information available and thus the decision
(March, 1994, p. 23).*

As I showed in the previous chapter, research on management units outside of higher education suggests that, in order for leadership teams to realize their goal of supporting presidential decision making, it is important for team members to interact with their internal and external organizational environments to access information and provide particular forms of representation that reinforce decision-making processes (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). Teams that show evidence of external contact, and that avoid isolation from their internal and external environments, achieve higher performance (Ancona, 1990). These activities are sometimes referred to as boundary spanning (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). The current literature on presidential leadership teams in higher education leaves unanswered questions about how teams operate to connect with their environments.

In this chapter, I first draw on the management and organizational behavior literature to define boundary spanning and suggest how members of presidential leadership teams can be understood as having a boundary-spanning role. Based on this conceptualization, I then argue that team members are likely to face certain conditions that are likely to help or hinder these activities. Finally, I use concepts from the new institutionalism in sociology (NIS) to highlight how past experience and concerns with legitimacy can help to explain the boundary-spanning behavior of leadership team

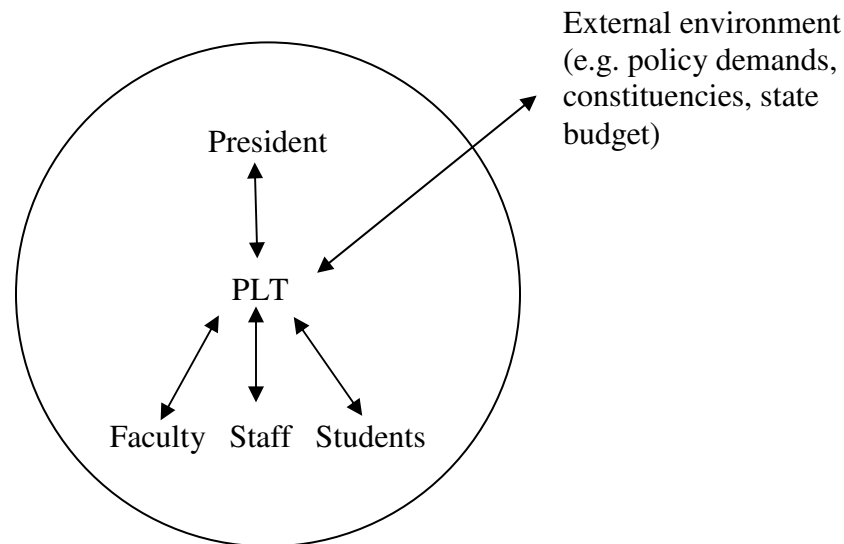
members. This framework illuminates conditions under which individuals and organizations scan their environments and manage complexity to accomplish their goals.

Leadership teams as boundary spanners

A distinct subset of literature on organization-environment relationships from the management and organizational behavior literature reveals more specifically what boundary spanners do in information and representation processes. In this literature, boundary spanning is defined as individual behaviors that connect an organization such as a team to its environments in order to meet team goals (Ancona, 1990; Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). Broadly, these behaviors include the transfer of information, ideas, and resources across intra-organizational or inter-organizational boundaries (Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999). Within teams, boundary-spanners are not confined to particular positions (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981b), but are any "persons who operate at the periphery or boundary of an organization, performing organizationally relevant tasks, relating the organization with elements outside it" (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978, p. 40-41).

Drawing on this literature, I define presidential leadership team members as boundary spanners who: 1) connect the president and other team members to the different parts of the organization, or the internal environment, and 2) who link the team to its external environment as part of their efforts to meet team goals (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Presidential leadership team boundary spanning



For example, team members can span the hierarchical boundary between the leadership team and constituents within the organization such as faculty, staff, and current students, as well as committees and governing bodies such as the faculty senate. Similarly, team members may help link the leadership team to external groups such as prospective students, legislators, alumni, other organizations, and the general public. In both their intra-organizational and inter-organizational roles, individual boundary spanners engage in two core activities: accessing and managing information as well as providing representation for the team and the organization (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Tushman, 1977). In other words, boundary spanners serve as bridges between their base, the team, and the rest of the organization and environment.

Information management

Information management involves searching for and using, or intentionally not using, information in decision making (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Friedman & Podolny, 1992; Jemison, 1984). In this way, boundary spanners serve as a mechanism for information management in organizations (Gladstein & Caldwell, 1985; Huber, 1991). Studies of boundary spanning often draw on theories of organizational learning to define and elaborate these information management activities (Ancona, 1990; Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Leifer & Delbecq, 1978; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981a). Organizational learning is a process of searching for, interpreting, and using information to guide action (Huber, 1991). It is, at its heart, a theory of how organizational actors manage information from both internal and external environments to guide individual and organizational practice (Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Honig, 2004; Huber, 1991; Levitt & March, 1988).

Boundary spanners engage in an ongoing process of searching the environment for information. Search, or exploration (Levitt & March, 1988) and knowledge acquisition (Huber, 1991) are the means by which information enters an organization. The purpose of search is to acquire knowledge that may be useful to the organization (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). Search involves specific activities such as gathering information about internal events, experiences, and needs that might be useful in decision making. This information might originate from inside the organization as a result of meetings in team members' functional areas, membership on organization-wide committees, or informal interactions with individuals. Additionally, team members might also search for information outside the organization through interactions with external

actors in board meetings, alumni events, or legislative sessions, for example that can inform the teams' decision-making process.

Because of the amount of information to which boundary spanners have access and are exposed, they will filter that information by selecting a smaller amount to deliver to the team (Adams, 1976). Not all information in the environment is of consequence, so boundary spanners will select the information that they consider to be important, relevant, and timely based on the team's goals (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Tushman & Romanelli, 1983). Part of a boundary spanner's role is to struggle with a multitude of information and with competing goals on behalf of the organization. Boundary spanners may absorb uncertainty by "drawing on inferences from perceived facts and passing on only the inferences" (Aldrich & Herker, 1977, p. 219) so that the team can take action. In this way, boundary-spanning individuals serve as information gatekeepers (Friedman & Podolny, 1992) who defend the team against information overload (Aldrich & Herker, 1977) and influence the direction of the team through the information that they select and deliver.

Once information is selected, boundary spanners transmit it to the organization and facilitate its use. Information use refers to the utilization or integration of information into organizational routines. To help others use the information, as part of the transmission process, boundary spanners render information useful for the team by simplifying it and making the implications clear (Aldrich & Herker, 1977). For example, a vice president in a boundary-spanning role might gather information related to falling enrollment and retention rates, such levels of student satisfaction, the availability of services, and an overview of advising processes. Instead of sharing a large amount of

complex information, a boundary spanner will translate it into a more manageable and specific format (e.g. suggesting that the university consider implementing a “one stop” location).

Political management

In addition to bringing in information, boundary spanners also serve a function characterized as representation or political management (Honig, 2006). In their political management roles, team members help to access the power structure of the organization and its environment. When boundary spanners engage in political management, they may perform one of several specific activities, including promoting and protecting the organization.

Promotion is a role that helps to create a favorable image of the organization (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Jemison, 1984), to provide political or social legitimacy for the organization (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Friedman & Podolny, 1992), and to garner resources and support for organizational goals (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). To accomplish these objectives, boundary spanners establish and maintain relationships with important actors in the environment who may be vital to the organization’s image and legitimacy, or who control resources. For example, a public university must create relationships in the state government because this represents a group of actors who can significantly impact the organization’s goals through policies and budget. Boundary spanners convey information and ideas to these external actors in order to shape their opinions and behaviors in ways that support their team’s goals (Aldrich & Herker, 1977).

Boundary spanners also protect the organization by controlling information delivery to and interactions with external actors. Boundary-spanning actors might keep information from reaching the outside as a means to maintain legitimacy or to preserve the organization's power. For example, a legal counsel might avoid sharing information about an internal investigation in order to avoid attracting attention from the media, legislators, or potential contributors. This buffering role might also include limiting contact or access (Honig, 2004) between the team and external actors in order to protect the team from interference (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992) or from disturbances in the environment (Adams, 1976; Yan & Louis, 1999). This protective function serves to regulate or insulate processes, functions, or people from the effects of environmental uncertainty (Lynn, 2005).

Helps and Hindrances

The literature on boundary spanning suggests that information and political management may be helped or hindered by several conditions. In complex educational environments, boundary-spanning members of presidential leadership teams are likely to face uncertainty and ambiguity, and the need to manage multiple roles, which can either aid or impede their efforts. In addition, the social context of the team itself can help or hinder.

Uncertainty

Uncertainty is a condition that results from the absence of information to inform a decision, namely to predict an outcome. In other words, it is a gap between the information one has and the information one needs in order to act. When faced with uncertainty, individuals or organizations need more information that can provide cues about direction in order increase their confidence to act (Weick, 1995). Individuals are more likely to perceive uncertainty when the tasks or environments they face are complex rather than simple, routine, or straightforward. For example, non-routine tasks might lead to uncertainty because individuals have incomplete information with which to work (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978). Complex environments with many interdependent components, such as institutions of higher education, may also create uncertainty because it is difficult for individuals to understand each of the parts of the whole.

Boundary spanners' roles in connecting the organization to the environment can lead to uncertainty at different points in the process of obtaining information and delivering a response because of the complexity of organizational life (Milliken, 1990). Individuals may understand their part of the organization, but may be uncertain about what information is available in other areas, what information the team or other actors need, or where to obtain information.

Furthermore, in their roles as environmental managers, boundary spanners function to absorb uncertainty (Aldrich & Herker, 1977), but are likely to lack information about actions that others might take, changes in the state of the environment, the effect of others' actions or changes, or appropriate responses (Milliken, 1987).

In such situations, uncertainty may help boundary spanning by helping individuals to avoid a “commitment to the status quo” (Geletkanycz & Black, 2001) and an ineffective reliance on past knowledge and experience (Honig, 2006). If more information is not accessed or considered, it can lead to a dependence on unproductive routines. A state of uncertainty may support the development of flexibility and the creation of new alternatives by compelling individuals to scan for and access information or to connect with other actors.

However, uncertainty can also hinder boundary spanners because more information may or may not be relevant or accessible (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978). When boundary spanners are faced with incomplete information about non-routine tasks, they may gather irrelevant information as they attempt to manage their uncertainty about the task. Uncertainty can also hinder boundary spanning if individuals are unable or unwilling to access information from unfamiliar sources. For example, in a university setting, a boundary spanner may lack the confidence to access information outside his or her division. This might limit informational or representational contacts to known quantities.

Ambiguity

Ambiguity is the existence of multiple alternatives which are imprecisely defined or that have opposing interpretations (March, 1994). When ambiguity is present, organizational decision makers may be faced with multiple alternatives regarding how to interpret situations, vague or contradictory or goals, or unclear strategies (Cohen & March, 1974; McCaskey, 1982). In other words, no clear answers exist. In contrast to a

lack of information to act when faced with uncertainty, when faced with ambiguity decision makers are faced with too much information.

In institutions of higher education, ambiguity may be more prevalent than in other types of organizations because the complex structure and multiple “bottom lines” are likely to result in competing views among organizational units regarding goals and how to reach them (Martin, 1992). Distinctive values and priorities of functional subunits may not necessarily be compatible with larger organizational concerns or with those of other functional units. This means that team members are likely to struggle with making decisions that introduce conflicting priorities because “members of different parts of universities and colleges may experience the culture in strikingly various and complex ways” (Frost & Gillespie, 1998, p. 9). For example, an academic vice president might frame a university’s budget problem as an enrollment issue, while the chief enrollment officer defines the same problem as a state policy issue. Because information and its interpretations are “subjectively perceived, interpreted and felt” (Weick, 1995), more information may only further ambiguity by adding more possible interpretations. These multiple interpretations create a situation in which decision makers are likely to face difficulty as they try to determine what actions might help them meet their goals.

Boundary-spanning individuals are particularly likely to face ambiguous roles, situations, purposes, and outcomes as a result of straddling two contexts. Boundary spanners are connected to a variety of actors, so they are likely to face differing perspectives and multiple goals as they work to manage information and politics in a complex environment. They will struggle to create clarity around what their role is in relation to a variety of actors, what information to look for, how to use information,

which actors to seek out, and how best to promote organizational goals. Ambiguity creates questions about which course is the right one when both are plausible, even if they are conflicting.

Ambiguity in the organizational environment may help boundary spanners by creating choices. In their information management role, a lack of clarity creates options in terms of how information might be interpreted. When boundary spanners scan the environment and find several interpretations, they are not forced accept a single interpretation, but rather have a variety from which to choose and transmit. Similarly, ambiguity can also help political management because having multiple interpretations may become a source of power. Ambiguity provides flexibility for team members to control outgoing messages by selecting from among several possible interpretations in order to choose one that supports the team's goals. Alternatively, team members might opt to leave messages intentionally unpecific. This lack of specificity can help to appease various constituencies and avoid alienation by leaving an interpretation up to others.

However, ambiguity can also hinder boundary spanners' effort. Because of the large amount of information on both sides of a boundary, multiple interpretations may lead to information overload. While having more information has been shown to improve the quality of decisions and team performance, it does so only up to a point (Eppler & Mengis, 2004). When the amount of information available exceeds the ability to integrate or process that information (Galbraith, 1974; Tushman & Nadler, 1978), information overload occurs and information goes unused (O'Reilly, 1980). They may also struggle with discerning what level of authority they have to access information, how to identify

or prioritize goals, or how to divide their time among roles (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970).

Given the multiple and conflicting goals within institutions of higher education, ambiguity may also hinder a boundary spanner's efforts to understand and translate information and expectations. Whether boundary spanners are managing information for the team's use or using information to promote the team's goals, they may be unsure about which interpretation is most appropriate because communication across boundaries is inherently ambiguous and prone to bias. The greater the differences in context, the greater the difficulty of communicating, which means that boundary spanners in presidential leadership teams are likely to find that translating information for the team's use and using information to promote goals are both difficult activities (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981a). This information may be interpreted differently, depending on the audience. For example, a boundary spanner might encounter different interpretations of the same information when talking to someone in his or her division, the team, or an external actor. Role ambiguity may further hinder boundary spanners' abilities to clearly interpret others' expectations, the methods to achieve these expectations, or role-appropriate behaviors because they may not have specific information about tasks or responsibilities (Rizzo et al., 1970).

Multiple roles

Particularly at higher hierarchical levels in organizations, individuals are typically involved in multiple activities and subsystems (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Leadership team members, for example, participate as part of a team while simultaneously serving as a

leader of their functional area. In one role, they are a member of a high-level team charged with thinking about the institution as whole, rather than from the narrower perspective of their functional area; as the leader for a functional unit – such as student affairs, academic affairs, or government relations – they are responsible for managing their particular part of the organization.

Having multiple roles can help boundary spanners by creating multiple connections to information and actors (Tushman, 1977). Informational boundary spanning is accomplished by individuals who are well connected to other legitimate actors internally and externally (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981a). An individual's membership in multiple domains and involvement in multiple relationships can help boundary spanning by creating multiple opportunities to access information as well as multiple outlets to promote the organization.

While multiple roles can provide access to resources and multiple sources of support (Sieber, 1974), they can also generate multiple sources of stress. While boundary-spanning activity can help team members to access knowledge and combat isolation, this ability to "reduce organizational uncertainty and ambiguity by crossing organizational boundaries to link, transact, and protect the organization from internal and external disruptions" (Pruitt, 1999, p. 82) can lead to role conflict. Multiple roles can hinder boundary spanning because they can create situations in which individuals are faced with multiple and competing expectations, values, and interests that may stifle any action. Defined as the "the simultaneous occurrence of two or more role expectations such that compliance with one would make compliance with the other more difficult" (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p. 204), role conflict is common among people whose position

includes liaison or linkage functions (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). Boundary spanning has also been empirically associated with role conflict (Lyonski, Singer, & Wilemon, 1988) and role ambiguity (Lyonski et al., 1988; Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999; Singh, Verbeke, & Rhoads, 1996), which can frustrate boundary-spanning activities.

Much of the research on role conflict emanates from scholars of organizational behavior focused on corporate entities. As in the organizational behavior literature, a handful of studies on role conflict in higher education suggest that role conflict has also been shown to be a stressor within academia that can significantly negatively affect job satisfaction, work-related stress, and perceptions of effectiveness (Wolverton, Wolverton, & Gmelch, 1999). Sources of role conflict identified by academic deans include working with two or more differently operating groups and doing things that are accepted by one person and not by others (Montez, Wolverton, & Gmelch, 2002). This is not surprising given that deans sit “within a complex web of faculty, students, and administration; it is here that needs, disputes, and demands between faculty and administrators get arbitrated” (Montez et al., 2002, p. 254).

Similarly, members of leadership teams are enmeshed in a role set that includes their peers, the president, as well as their functional unit and external constituencies. In order to fulfill their information management and representation roles, boundary spanners must establish and maintain relationships with actors outside of the team (Lyonski et al., 1988; Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999). Boundary spanners must be able to relate to and have legitimacy with actors on both sides of a boundary (Levina & Vaast, 2005). However, the expectations of these two groups may be in conflict. For example, while serving as a

member of the presidential leadership team, each individual team member also “continues as a member of the constituency (e.g., the faculty) even though he or she now holds membership as well within a very different constituency (e.g., top-level administration)” (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993, p. 67). This structural dynamic may create conflict or tension because of multiple group identities and differing expectations for behavior (Kahn et al., 1964). For members of a team at the top of an organizational hierarchy, their ability to cooperate is vulnerable to their obligations to their subunit identity (March, 1994).

Social context of the team

When individual boundary spanners in presidential leadership teams struggle with uncertainty, ambiguity, and multiple roles, they do so within a social context of the team. The team is an important social setting dominated by diverse identities and power dynamics that influence individual behavior and team outcomes. This situation may provide an opportunity for interaction among team members and can serve as a locus for grappling with the meaning of information. However, the team context can also create additional uncertainty and ambiguity for individuals due to the diversity of views and interests represented in the team.

Diverse identities

As I described in Chapter 2, leadership teams are comprised of a diverse mix of individuals by design. While a team theoretically behaves as the equivalent of a single actor, in reality teams are comprised of individuals with inconsistent identities

(Hambrick, 1994; March, 1994). One of the core assumptions of multiple-actor decision making is that identities differ among participants as a result of socialization and hierarchical processes in the organization. At the top of an organization, boundary-spanning members of a senior leadership team represent a “dynamic distribution of information and interests” that varies depending on the situation, members' current activities, and functional expertise (Edmondson et al., 2003). Individuals with diverse identities bring different perspectives to the table and are likely to see and frame information and situations differently. As described in Chapter 2, such diversity can serve as both a benefit and a barrier to achieving team goals.

Team diversity can help information management because it allows the team to access a wide variety of information from across the university. Furthermore, the social context of team meetings provides an opportunity for interaction among individuals who can share and discuss that information. This can be beneficial if teams can then engage in positive cognitive conflict based on the multiple perspectives they bring to the table. When this does happen, information processing becomes a collective, rather than an individual, process. This diversity can also help political management because boundary spanners from various parts of the organization can more easily access constituents and interpret outgoing messages in order to promote organizational goals across the various subunits of colleges and universities.

The team context can also hinder boundary spanning by creating communication difficulties and negative, affective conflict. The cognitive and affective difficulties faced by heterogeneous teams is often a result of the difficulty in understanding one another (Lovelace, Shapiro, & Weingart, 2001). Different organizational subcultures sustain

differing interpretations of reality (Martin, 1992). For the boundary-spanning team member, these differences may make communication difficult and information unavailable, incomprehensible, or mistrusted. Each team member may be able to perceive (and understand) only a part of the environment (Birnbaum, 1992). Because boundaries create differences in language and values, information that travels across boundaries is prone to bias and distortion, thereby increasing ambiguity and uncertainty (Dearborn and Simon, 1958; March and Simon, 1958; Wilensky, 1967). The greater the difference in values or language on either side of the boundary, the greater the impediment will be to clear and trusted communication (Miles, 1976). If information does bridge the boundary, the recipient may either not understand it or not trust it, depending on the source. If an individual does not trust information or its source, they are unlikely to pass it on to actors on the other side of a boundary.

Network centrality as power

When faced with the interpersonal inconsistencies that exist in a team environment, decision makers must consider the role of power: who wants what, who has power or not, and who will or will not act in the decision making process (March, 1994). Power is domain-specific, so who has power, and how much, depends on the situation and the relevant resources (March, 1994). “Power influences who gets what, when, and how” (Morgan, 1997, p. 170). If power is the ability to get what one wants, then being able to do so should lessen the hindrances of complexity by providing access and control.

A source of power particularly relevant to a discussion of boundary spanners is network centrality. Network centrality as a source of power can be either formal or

informal. Formal network centrality results from individuals' membership in subunits that control resources highly valued across the organization (Astley & Sachdeva, 1984; Pfeffer, 1981; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). This is power that is based on formal authority in the structure of the organization (French & Raven, 1959). These formal positions endow individuals with power and discretion over resources (Tushman & Romanelli, 1983) and with the authority or the ability to set the ground rules for decision making, such as what issues will be discussed, when decisions are made, and who is allowed to participate (March, 1994). The ability to influence decision making is associated with the ability to translate information so that it is useful to the organization, so the locus of influence will shift as the organization's needs change (Tushman & Romanelli, 1983). Access to and control of financial resources are perhaps the most common source of power (Hackman, 1985; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1974a, 1974b), but information, control of technology or other structures, and expertise, particularly if these are central or vital to the decision making process, are also sources of power from a network centrality perspective.

Similar to the formal basis of network centrality, another significant source of power in organizations is informal network centrality (Krackhardt, 1990; Tushman & Romanelli, 1983). This informal source of power refers to an individual actor's position in a network of relationships (Astley & Sachdeva, 1984). While structural centrality provides formal control over resources, informal centrality provides access to and control over resources through relationships or patterns of interaction with other actors (Monge & Eisenberg, 1987). A wide range of connections to other professionals may endow an individual with the ability to access resources and to control uncertainty by accessing

information (Hinings, Hickson, Pennings, & Schneck, 1974; Morgan, 1997). This informal access has been shown to mediate the impact of other sources of power, such as position or expertise, suggesting that informal structures may be more critical than formal structures when the use of power requires boundary spanning (Blau & Scott, 1962; Ibarra, 1993).

These formal and informal sources of power can help boundary-spanning members of leadership teams because they are likely to create avenues of access to information and actors, the ability to translate information in both directions, and a sense of legitimacy with several groups. As gatekeepers, there is power in the boundary-spanning role, as these individuals have a measure of control regarding to whom, when, what, and how information should be given to others (Jemison, 1984; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981a). Furthermore, team-based boundary spanners with connections to external actors have been shown to create the perception of having valuable information (Marrone, 2004). This perception can lead to a consistent reliance on such individuals and to a central role in team structure, thereby reinforcing their power and influence. Finally, expert power in particular may help boundary spanners because information from every arena may not be relevant and some areas may be more critical to attend to than others. The ability both to search for relevant external information and to effectively communicate it to other users or audiences helps boundary spanners in both their information management and political management functions (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981a).

Power can also hinder boundary spanners. Formal leaders may lack access to honest or candid information because of their structural power within the organization.

Other individuals within the organization may be unwilling to share negative information, even if it is relevant and potentially useful. Formal or informal network centrality may create similar problems if other organizational constituents suspect that an individual is duplicitous. Even if individuals can access information across organizational boundaries, this can be a source of uncertainty because other actors may have other goals, so boundary spanners are compelled to assess the validity of information that is shared (March, 1994). Furthermore, both formal and informal leaders may be able to access too much information, thereby leading to information overload.

Managing hindrances

Research suggests that boundary-spanning behavior is beneficial to a team's ability to achieve its goals because it helps them to access information and to provide promotion and protection in support of organizational goals. However, leadership team members are likely to struggle with how to achieve these functions due to the complexity of organizational environments. As boundary spanners, they are likely to experience all of the stresses of uncertainty, ambiguity, and role conflict. Furthermore, boundary spanner members of presidential leadership teams must manage these hindrances within a social context of difference and power.

Cognitive and normative strategies from institutional theory may help to explain how individuals manage uncertainty, ambiguity, multiple roles, and the team's social context. The new institutionalism in sociology (NIS) is an approach to understanding behavior within organizations that assumes "actors and their interests are institutionally constructed" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p. 28). In other words, individuals are

embedded within environments that influence their behavior both by guiding and by controlling individuals through obligations that define appropriate and legitimate behavior (Jepperson & Meyer, 1991; Stinchcombe, 1986). NIS can help to explain how limiting both the amount of information and the direction of their attention to relevant aspects of the environment might guide boundary spanners' decisions.

Bounded Rationality

As boundary spanners face a multitude of information, multiple interpretations, and multiple roles, they are limited in their ability to grasp complexity and to access all of the information that may be available to them in order to act rationally in the process of decision making (March, 1994). The limitations of bounded rationality influence decision making by constraining the information that individuals will use, and their ability to interpret that information. These cognitive constraints impact what an individual can understand by virtue of limits in attention, memory, comprehension, and communication (March, 1994; Simon, 1982). As a result of these constraints, individuals can only explore a partial number of alternatives among the multitude available to them (Morgan, 1997), limiting the ability to pursue truly rational decisions.

Decision makers will compensate for these limitations by using processes that constrict their view of reality and help them to allocate their attention (March, 1994). Specifically, individuals use cognitive and normative strategies that help them to make sense of their experience by selectively noticing cues in the ongoing flow of organizational life (Weick, 1995) and placing them into a framework in order to comprehend and explain them (Starbuck & Milliken, 1988). Limiting strategies, such as

simplifying experience and following logics of appropriateness, allow individuals to direct their attention and interpret information in manageable, potentially productive, and confidence-building directions. However, by attending to some choices, other will be excluded; decisions will result from where attention is given (March, 1994). Over time, these tendencies become habits that lead decision makers to rely on familiar behaviors and repertoires (March & Simon, 1958).

Cognitive strategy: Simplifying experience

Given the complexity of organizational life and the constraints that decision makers face in terms of limited attention, memory, comprehension, and ability to communicate, individuals must negotiate these limitations by using simplification as an information processing strategy, or a means to make sense of the information that is noticed, accessed, and understood. When faced with uncertainty, ambiguity, multiple roles, and power dynamics, decision makers will aim to decrease the amount of information to which they have to attend.

Individuals can reduce information to which they attend in several ways, including editing or decomposing it into its component parts. They can also accomplish simplification through processes such as framing or the use of heuristics (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Other strategies include bracketing or imposing categories upon information, thereby focusing their limited attention in a narrow range, or looking for patterns and familiar situations in order to cope with the plethora of information available to them (March, 1994). Whatever the means, decision makers will frame information in

ways that makes sense to them in order to avoid being overwhelmed, and by doing so disregard other signals.

Once decision makers attend to information, they will only remember or store some information. Information and experiences that are recent, personal, familiar, positive, or concrete typically “make sense” to decision makers and are likely to be utilized in decision making processes. Information or experiences that are more recent, more frequently observed, or more concrete and vivid tend to be more easily recalled and therefore favored and used in the decision making process. Individuals are also likely to attribute information or events to temporally and spatially local causes. When decision makers have a limited capability to store and retrieve information in their memories, individuals also tend to favor more positive, comfortable and familiar experiences and to deny negative or uncomfortable information. These types of information are more available in an individual’s memory than are older, uncommon, or abstract examples.

These choices further limit potential outcomes because once decision makers have focused on such experiences and information, they tend to interpret them in particular ways. First, because individuals use filters to avoid being overwhelmed, there is a tendency to augment the available information and over-interpret their experience towards positive and familiar interpretations. When individuals interpret their experience, they are likely to understand information in ways that support their prior understanding (March, 1994). When evaluating their experiences, “people seem to learn to like what they get” (March, 1994, p. 87). Decision makers tend to interpret it in a positive light and adjust or frame their aspirations to fit the available cues. This leaves information that does not fit with one’s experience to be discarded or left unnoticed, and is not used. This

results in a reliance on small pieces of data or experience to provide more information than might be probable to expect.

Normative strategy: Logic of appropriateness

The limits of bounded rationality, and the cognitive strategies for managing it, provide the basis for the logic of appropriateness as another simplifying strategy. When theorists say that a decision maker follows a logic of appropriateness, in broad terms they mean that individuals make decisions based on their sense of how they should behave in a given context. People are not driven mainly by preference, interests, and rational calculation, but by their sense of what is appropriate or right. Individuals make decisions based on what is considered to be appropriate and legitimate (March, 1994). Decision makers use normative strategies to manage the complexity of organizational life.

Normative factors influence the interpretation of cues by emphasizing the obligatory and moral dimension of social life (Scott, 1995) or what individuals *ought* to do. This approach to decision making suggests that individual decision-making is framed by questions such as “Who am I? What type of situation is this? What do people like me do in such situations?” (March, 1994). In other words, the rules associated with an identity suggest appropriate behavior in a given situation. Ultimately, it is the answers to these questions that guide individual decisions.

The interpretation of identity, or how one sees oneself, is at the heart of the logic of appropriateness. From an appropriateness perspective, identity is a social concept that suggests that individuals derive a sense of identity, at least in part, from the groups to

which they belong (Hogg & Vaughan, 1998; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). This identity results in expectations and obligations that help to characterize an identity.

Within an organization, each subculture is a collection of rules, norms, and values that defines what is or is not appropriate. “Part of what makes the appropriateness framework more ‘social’ than rational choice models is the assumption that the rules applied to choices will often be a consequence of perceived social norms” (Weber, Kopelman, & Messick, 2004, p. 284). Actions are based on group characteristics and relationships as the result of “learned obligations, responsibilities, or commitments to others” (March, 1994, p. 63). These social norms are an example of informal, but real, “guidelines for socially appropriate behavior” that predict behavioral choices (Cialdini et al 1999, p. 195).

However, reality is more complex than simply choosing rules based on a single identity because people have multiple identities or roles within organizations. Decision makers face multiple influences regarding what is legitimate because “most decisions call up a number of relevant identities and rules” (March, 1994, p. 68). Boundary-spanning members of a leadership team are a particular example of individuals likely to find themselves straddling two social identity groups: that of their functional area and that of the leadership team. Being a member of a team adds an identity to each team member’s repertoire of identities, so boundary-spanning individuals must now consider how their choices impact more than one group. So, while logics of appropriateness might help with decision making, multiple identity structures may create new complexities. More identities mean more rules regarding what is appropriate, as well as an increasingly

complicated process of interpretation. Every additional identity comes with its pertinent rules, adding even more complexity to the process of identity choice and interpretation.

Individual actors' decisions about which identity structure to use depends on the situation in which they find themselves. Because decision making is a process of matching identities to situations in order to determine "what someone like me does in a situation like this," the definition of a situation constrains identity and rule choices. How the situation is construed structurally, socially, and politically depends on the available cues and how decision makers interpret them. Situation can be defined by many contextual characteristics, including but not limited to meeting type, participants, leader, agenda, task, topic, and location. The situation may provide cues about appropriate identities, such as the agenda or who is or is not present, that can help a decision maker to understand what identity is appropriate for a situation.

Choosing an identity helps decision makers to simplify complexity by directing their attention and confirming their sense that they are behaving legitimately and successfully. Given constraints on information and the process of sensemaking, certain identities are likely to be chosen, situations are likely to be construed in certain ways, and particular rules for behavior are more apt to be used. When decision-making processes proceed in this way, particular biases tend to result. When faced with uncertainty, ambiguity, role conflict, and social context, decision makers will use their prior knowledge to choose appropriate identities and rules. These identities will guide their attention to information.

These cognitive and normative limitations suggest that identity choices are constrained by what decision makers notice, which leads them to choose identities with

which they have recent, positive experience, and that fits with their conceptions of what legitimate and successful people do. Individuals' experiences in prior, similar situations shape their understanding of what identity and rules are appropriate for a current or new situation (Bettenhausen & Murnighan, 1985). Furthermore, choices about identity are likely to be based on positive experiences with more recently evoked and familiar identities (March, 1994) that have been supported by legitimate authorities, leading that identity to be selected repeatedly.

Decision makers will continue to rely on these identity choices. Knowing which identity is relevant is a result of learning from experience, which leads to conformity to social expectations (March, 1994). Because cues and identities are likely to be interpreted in the same ways that decision makers have done previously, this increased experience leads to increased reliance on past experience (and past interpretations) with less likelihood of considering alternatives. This identity isomorphism, or lack of adaptation, stems from concerns with legitimacy and experience.

Implications for boundary spanning in presidential leadership teams

Top-level decision makers, such as those on presidential leadership teams, may be particularly prone to these cyclical identity choices because their rise through the hierarchy is socially defined as successful which "tends to confirm beliefs and make them less vulnerable to contradictory evidence" (March, 1994, p. 183), especially if they have received rewards, such as promotions, for operating within a limited set of behaviors. For decision makers, identities are shaped by their desire to move up the hierarchy. Their performance is judged using normative standards to which they must conform in order to

gain legitimacy. Given these circumstances, organizational decision makers are likely to repeatedly choose identities that were perceived to work well in a given situation, or that were rewarded, in order to progress in their careers.

Furthermore, as boundary spanners, team members will deal with uncertainty, ambiguity, role conflict, and the social context through the use of rules or routines (Morgan, 1997) based on normative influences from authorities, rather than creating novel or innovative approaches. Acting appropriately enhances legitimacy (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), which should in turn increase an individual's access to resources such as information and actors and thereby increasing their chance for survival (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

A reliance on an appropriateness framework helps boundary spanners to reduce uncertainty, ambiguity, and role conflict by accumulating information related to situation and identity in order to determine appropriate rules (March, 1994). But it also suggests that boundary spanners will repeatedly seek information in the same places and continually connect with the same actors. Uncertainty about appropriate behavior leads individuals to look to other people or models of practice for clues about how to act (Festinger, 1954), regardless of whether following those models is likely to improve outcomes (Honig, 2006).

When faced with ambiguity, simplification processes allow boundary spanners to attend to certain cues and narrow the potential options for identity and rule choices. Individuals are likely to associate "information honesty with particular roles and identities" (March, 1994, p. 126), such as those with whom they share an identity or with whom they have had a recent, positive experience. However, because individuals

typically place more value on the quality of data over the quantity available, these choices may lead them to rely on a small number of cues from certain sources that they consider legitimate, regardless of whether the information is in fact useful.

Finally, the logic of appropriateness can help individuals to choose an identity in order to minimize role conflict. Boundary-spanning members of a presidential leadership team face many sources of legitimacy, including the president, their peers, and the functional area that they represent. Determining what is plausible and legitimate can be particularly difficult for the boundary spanner because legitimacy is negatively affected by the number and diversity of authorities who can confer it (Scott, 1991). What is credible for one identity group, such as the leadership team, may be considered unreasonable by another identity group, such as one's functional area or other constituents (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 415). By choosing one identity over another, individuals risk losing legitimacy, which is an important commodity for any boundary-spanning individual.

Conclusion

Boundary spanning encompasses a range of activities in which individuals connect with important external actors in order to meet team goals and manage the environment (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). However, as boundary spanners, individual team members face certain conditions that can help or hinder their activities. In particular, uncertainty, ambiguity, and role conflict create complexity. Cognitive and normative strategies can help to limit complexity. Such strategies can reduce uncertainty by helping individuals to determine what information is needed, lessen ambiguity by

highlighting appropriate interpretations, and manage role conflict by helping the decision maker to choose an identity appropriate to the situation. In doing so, decision makers will make these choices based on what has worked for them in the past and what they consider to be legitimate.

Choosing an identity constrains rule choices in the context of bounded rationality, thereby minimizing uncertainty, ambiguity, and role conflict and making decisions possible even in highly complex social settings. Understanding how individuals use identity and rules to know what is appropriate and legitimate (March, 1994) is a useful approach to the study of presidential leadership teams in higher education because of its emphasis on considering the social and normative context of the organization in an environment often described as both collegial and political. I used this framework to ground my case study of a presidential leadership team in a single institution of higher education by using the concepts of boundary spanning, organizational conditions, and the logic of appropriateness to guide both data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the methodology of this study. First I discuss the rationale for choosing a case study approach and describe the selected research site and participants. I then explain the data collection and analyses procedures I used to address my research questions. Finally, I describe the methods I used to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of this research while protecting the confidentiality of the research site and participants.

Case study

The design of this study focused on boundary spanning by presidential leadership team members in a single university. To explore this activity, I chose to use a theoretical and criterion-based qualitative case study design. A case study is “an exploration of a ‘bounded system’ or a case . . . over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998). I chose to conduct this research using a case study approach because of the importance of understanding the organizational context when studying organizational teams. Context is an important element in qualitative research in general, and case study research in particular, because it situates the case within its setting – physical, social, historical, or economic (Creswell, 1998). Both the literature review and conceptual framework for this research emphasized the importance of setting, context, or environment as an influence on individual and organizational processes such as boundary spanning. A case study occurs in a natural setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Creswell, 1998, 2003; Merriam,

1998), thereby allowing the individual context of the university to play an important role in observing how information moves through the organization to the top decision makers.

I chose to approach this study from a qualitative perspective for two reasons. First, a qualitative method is well-suited to topics in which little exploration of variables or theories has occurred. The literature on presidential leadership teams in higher education is sparse, much of it conceptual or focused on internal team dynamics, and much of the research on role conflict and boundary spanning is based on survey data. For this research, a qualitative case study was a valuable approach to studying a topic that needs to be explored further (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Second, a qualitative approach can illustrate the complexities inherent within organizations and situations (Creswell, 2003; Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Ontologically, studying context qualitatively is valuable because reality is “subjective and multiple” (Creswell, 1998, p. 75), a necessary perspective when undertaking a study of teams, collaboration, and human relationships. Exploring individuals’ experiences and behaviors unfold and develop over the course of time and cannot be limited to a single instance.

I chose to use a theoretical criterion approach to select my site because it guided my understanding of who to study and what issues were important to examine (Creswell, 2003). A criterion-based case is one in which the selected case meets some criteria for inclusion and can serve to “elaborate and examine” a theoretical construct, such as the boundary-spanning activity of a presidential leadership teams (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 28). Using an expert nomination process, I used theoretical and purposeful criteria prompted by the literature on leadership teams to select a site in which I could observe boundary spanning constructs.

Research site

To answer my research questions, I selected a presidential leadership team at a single institution of higher education to allow for in-depth data collection during a single academic year. I chose a single year as a means to bound the study while allowing time to observe processes and patterns in the team's activities. I based my site selection on primarily on accessibility, but the site also offered some important opportunities that my literature review and conceptual framework suggested would be important, such as the team's design.

The selected site had to allow regular and ongoing access to the presidential team meetings and members. The criteria also required that the team meet regularly (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993) and the selected site met each week with few exceptions. Finally, I considered certain team characteristics for selecting an appropriate site. Based on the literature, I looked for a team whose design included the president as convener, as opposed to an assistant or vice president, and whose team members reported directly to the president. These characteristics were important because I was interested in how leadership teams might help presidential level decision making. In this case, all but one team member reported directly to the president, and team meetings were arranged according to the president's availability.

Through my academic and professional network, I identified expert individuals likely to know teams or team members that met my selection criteria. I informed site nominators of these criteria by means of a letter outlining my project. My use of this approach introduced an additional criterion to my selection process; potential sites were limited to those known to one of my selected nominators. I considered several

recommended sites and explored three possibilities by discussing my project and criteria with additional individuals, beyond my expert nominators, who were most likely to be in a position to speak about the appropriateness of the team for consideration. Based on this information, I contacted the institution meeting the most criteria to discuss the project. I met with the president and, after describing my project and answering his questions, he informed me that the team had consented to participate and invited me to begin observing the team's weekly meeting. As agreed upon with the president and his leadership team, all information collected in this study was confidential. Neither the university nor any study participants have been identified as part of this project.

The site I selected for this case study was a public, urban, doctoral-granting NCAA Division I university employing over 500 faculty members and over 1,000 staff members. The university served about 16,000 students in eight colleges, including business, education, engineering, and law, with 200 fields of study. About one-third of these students were enrolled in the graduate or professional schools. The student population was almost 60 percent female and over one-quarter minority, and the university served a significant part-time and transfer student population. The physical campus comprised 40 buildings on less than one hundred acres.

The study participants included the president, ten members of the leadership team, and other key campus figures, such as deans and university-wide committee chairs who were not members of the team.

Data collection

Data for this project came from three sources: observations, interviews, and documents. Using three sources of data helped to answer my research questions and to triangulate processes and issues (Creswell, 1998). The time frame for data collection was nine months, from September to June of an academic year. Data collection dates and times were arranged to correspond with weekly team meetings and to accommodate the schedules of team members for interview sessions.

Observations

Observation is a valuable component of case study data collection for several reasons (Merriam, 1998). First, observation can help a researcher to notice routines and actual behavior in progress rather than relying on the secondhand perceptions (Creswell, 2003). Observation can also help to provide context for the case and information for subsequent interviews. In this study, I relied on observations to gather data on individual behaviors and team processes related to boundary spanning, as well as to understand the team and organizational contexts.

Prior to my first observation, I obtained the written consent of the president on behalf of the team to attend their weekly meetings. Over the course of nine months, I attended 23 team meetings and one off-site retreat as a non-participant observer (Creswell, 2003). In total, I observed approximately 50 meeting hours. Each meeting lasted approximately two hours, and a single off-site retreat lasted about five hours. During this time, I sat on the perimeter of the room while the team gathered around a conference table. During observation of the team's weekly meetings, I typed verbatim

notes to capture the main topics and discussion patterns at each meeting. After each meeting, I edited my notes for clarity and spelling, and wrote reflective notes about events, behaviors, patterns, or questions that arose over the course of the meeting and that seemed relevant to my research questions.

Interviews

In addition to observations, I conducted interviews to highlight how individual team members viewed the team and interpreted their own roles.. Because much of the work of team members occurred outside of meetings, I used this approach to data collection to capture how they thought about meetings and their roles on the team. Interviews are a major source of data in qualitative research on decision making (Merriam, 1998) because they help the researcher “to enter into the other person’s perspective” (Patton, 1990, p. 196) in a situation in which the researcher cannot observe a person’s feelings or interpretations of past events.

I developed the interview questions using my research questions and concepts from my theoretical framework as a guide. In order to understand the team from the perspectives of participants, the team leader, and campus constituents, I wrote separate interview protocols for leadership team members, the president, and other campus figures (see Appendices A, B, and C). As is typical of qualitative research, additional questions emerged from my conversations with team members throughout the duration of the case. This semi-structured interview format allowed me “to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). Furthermore, using a semi-structured format allowed me to focus on the

topics of interest while selectively moving off the protocol, as warranted, to probe potentially valuable lines of discussion, and adjust questions based on the individual interviewee's role.

At the start of the first interview with each participant, I explained the general purpose of my research and discussed the issue of confidentiality. This included concealing the identity of each individual for both data storage and reporting purposes. Each interview lasted from one to one-and-a-half hours. All interviews were digitally recorded and then sent to an outsourced company for transcription. After receiving the interview transcripts, I reviewed them for accuracy by listening to the recording of each interview.

Overall, I conducted interviews with 11 team members, the president, and nine key campus figures. I used these interview sessions to gather data relevant to the research questions, as well as to collect contextual information such as current issues and events, divisional activities, and team history. The questions were open-ended and focused on individual and team goals, behaviors, and activities. Often, one individual's response would suggest a different way of asking a question or my observation of a meeting would highlight an issue to discuss with individuals in an interview. Therefore, throughout the data collection process, I refined the interview protocol through the addition, deletion, and revision of questions.

The main purpose of the first part of each interview with team members was to introduce myself and to gain a preliminary understanding of his or her background, organizational role(s) and responsibilities, priorities, and relationships with others on the team and on campus. I used the second and third sections of the interview protocol to

explore participants' perspectives, reflections, and ideas about specific campus issues and team discussions. Similarly, I used the president's protocol to explore his professional background and current role, his formation and expectations of the leadership team, and team activities and goals. The interview protocol for other key campus figures focused on the respondent's role on campus, perceptions of current campus issues, and interaction with the leadership team.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with each individual over the course of the academic year, depending on the time necessary to complete the interview protocol. In addition to the president and other team members, I identified several key campus figures for interviews prior to data collection, based on their formal positions in the university. I also used "snowball sampling" (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to identify additional secondary interviews based on the issues that arose in team meetings as a means of better understanding the context of the institution. I became aware of others as their names were repeatedly raised during team meetings and other interviews. For these interviews, I selected individuals such as college deans, the student body president, the faculty senate president, the staff council president, the chief enrollment officer, and the chair of the strategic planning committee, who were likely to contribute additional information about campus issues, their interaction with team members, and the organizational context.

Document analysis

I also analyzed several different university documents, including the university vision statement, the campus master plan, organizational charts, and presidential speeches. Throughout the length of the case, I gathered documents both from individuals

as well as from publicly-available sources such as campus publications and the university web site. I also gathered biographic and demographic data for team members who were willing to provide written information in addition to the interview questions addressing these areas in order to further document their backgrounds and organizational roles.

There are several benefits of documents in qualitative research (Creswell, 2003). Documents can serve as a source for understanding the broader organizational context, including goals and current events that may have shaped team members' roles and decisions. Second, using documents allowed me to gather background information and contextual data without scheduling additional interview time from team members. In this case, this benefit was particularly helpful given that the participants were executive-level administrators with scheduling constraints. Finally, documents provided a third source of data that helped to support my efforts at triangulation for verification of my findings.

Data analysis

I used a cyclical approach to data analysis for this research project (Miles & Huberman, 1994), involving a recurring sequence of data collection, data analysis, and the generation of new and refined questions that led to additional data collection. For example, observation data drew my attention to patterns in the team meetings, which I then asked individuals about during interviews. Similarly, interview data contributed to the development and refinement of the interview protocols, as I found more powerful or articulate means to ask questions.

In order to organize and prepare the data for analysis (Creswell, 2003), I used an independent transcription service to transcribe each interview as it was completed. I then

reviewed each interview for accuracy by reading the transcript while listening to the original audio version. I then entered interview transcripts, documents, and observational data into *NVivo 7*, a qualitative data management software package from QSR International. I used this software to aid in organizing, coding, and analyzing the case study data for themes.

I analyzed the data for this case by first reading through transcripts, observational notes, and document remarks for general ideas and themes. I then coded units of data ranging in size from phrases, sentences and paragraphs to entire passages of discussion. I organized these data into categories, starting with those initially suggested by my problem statement and conceptual framework, including boundary spanning activities such as searching and promoting, actual and intended roles, and decision influences (Creswell, 2003). Specifically, I separated boundary-spanning activities into distinct codes reflecting evidence of information management (scanning, selecting, interpreting, transmitting) and political management (promoting and protecting). I also coded for evidence of the conditions my conceptual framework suggests might help or hinder boundary spanners: uncertainty, ambiguity, multiple roles, and elements of the social context. Finally, I drew upon decision-making theory to analyze individuals' attempts to simplify their experience, including comments about past experience and familiarity, concerns with legitimacy, and identification of rules. I also developed additional codes to describe situations and activities that emerged as I read transcripts and observation notes. At first, I analyzed data from the team as a whole to understand what boundary-spanning activities were present. As individual or subgroup variations became clear, I further analyzed my data using differentiating characteristics to better understand these

differences. Throughout this process, I began to write preliminary findings around broad themes (Creswell, 2003) and further refined my coding structure to capture more fine-grained elements.

Accuracy

Whether a study is qualitative or quantitative in design, it remains important to consider the accuracy of the findings. Creswell (1998) emphasizes that qualitative researchers view verifying the accuracy of findings both “as a *process* that occurs throughout the data collection, analysis, and report writing of a study and standards as *criteria* imposed by the researcher and others after a study is completed [emphases original]” (p. 194). I used Howe and Eisenhardt’s five standards to assure that the process I used to conduct this research and the results of this study are “believable, accurate, and ‘right’” (Creswell, 1998, p. 193).

First, accuracy can be judged in part by the congruence between the research questions and the research process. In this case, my research questions and conceptual framework guided both my data collection and analysis processes. The design of this study focused on exploring boundary spanning in a presidential leadership teams in a single university, so I based my data collection on interview protocols designed to access information about team members’ activities and perceptions related to these areas, as well as observations of the leadership team in action. As I proceeded to analyze the data I collected from interviews, observations, and documents, I again relied on the conceptual framework for this study to develop and interpret the findings.

Second, researchers must clarify their assumptions related to a project as another means of ensuring accuracy. In this case, I believe that presidential leadership teams are a valuable tool for managing complex organizations and that “real” teams, as defined in the literature, can exist. However, they exist in a particular context that influences their effectiveness and their behaviors, which led me to assume that observing them in action and understanding their context in depth would provide important insights.

A third means of ensuring accuracy, according to Howe and Eisenhardt, is the technical competence with which research is conducted. I met this standard through my competence with the data collection and analysis. In addition to doctoral coursework in qualitative methods, throughout this study I continued to consult respected texts in the field of qualitative research related to interviewing techniques, observation, and document review. Furthermore, I conducted this research under the guidance of faculty members experienced in the fields of qualitative research, leadership, and organizational theory.

A fourth standard of accuracy considers the overall merit of the study, including whether the researcher used respected theoretical explanations. As stated previously, the study is loosely based on the prior leadership team research of Bensimon and Neumann (1993). The current study builds on existing scholarship on top management teams in the corporate sector, focusing specifically on the boundary spanning roles and decision making processes of leadership teams in higher education. Through this study’s literature review and conceptual framework, I relied on several bodies of literature to support both the need for this research and to suggest a model for extending the research on leadership teams in higher education.

Finally, research should have the value to inform practice while protecting the confidentiality, privacy, and truth of participants. This study adds to the literature both by providing a new conceptual and theoretical perspective on leadership teams and by taking an in-depth, qualitative approach to studying a single leadership team over an extended period of time. Furthermore, this study informs policy and practice by providing an analysis of decision making and boundary spanning to assist presidents and their leadership teams to improve their usefulness and effectiveness in addressing the complexity faced by institutions of higher education. Furthermore, the published results of this study protect the confidentiality and privacy of its subjects through the use of anonymity and masked quotations. I have also made every effort to assure that the truth has been accurately represented both by utilizing transcribed or verbatim data; by completing careful, close readings of the data; and by engaging in thoughtful data analysis.

Trustworthiness

Creswell (1998) views trustworthiness, or verification, “as a distinct strength of qualitative research [when] the account [provided is] made through extensive time spent in the field, detailed thick description, and the closeness to participants in the study all add to the value of the study” (p. 201). The intent of verification is to assure the accuracy of findings by engaging in one or more common procedures (Creswell, 2003). I used four specific strategies to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of this research.

First, I used triangulation of my multiple data sources to provide strong evidence of issues and factors (Creswell, 2003). The confluence of data from semi-structured in-

depth interviews, observations, and document analysis served to pinpoint the major themes in this study and to create an accurate picture of the university context, individual behaviors, and team goals, activities, and dynamics. Furthermore, I triangulated interview and observation data obtained from individual team members as well as document analysis, to confirm my interpretation of findings. For example, I am confident that enrollment was the most important issue facing this team based on its prevalence in documents, the frequency with which it was raised in team meetings, and its stated importance by team members and the president.

Second, I spent prolonged time in the field (Creswell, 2003). I invested significant time in observing and interviewing this team to learn about its activities and culture and to build trust with individual participants. This strategy of using prolonged and firsthand experience with the team was aided by the intentional use of a single research site, which allowed me to focus more time and effort in one location. For this case study, I spent nine months attending weekly team meetings and interviewing individual team members as well as other members of the campus community. My sustained engagement with the leadership team allowed me to build trust with the team members, learn the culture of both the team and the university, and provided opportunities to check for misinformation. While I was a passive observer, the team became accustomed to my presence in the room. One participant noted that, after the first few weeks, for the most part the team forgot that I was in attendance and was able to proceed with the meeting in their typical fashion. Several weeks after the observation process was underway, I began to conduct interviews with the president and other team members. This delay in beginning the interview process was a helpful mechanism for developing rapport and credibility with

team members (Creswell, 2003). Furthermore, spending this extended time allowed me to develop and refine interview questions and attend to various aspects of the team's meeting behaviors.

Finally, as is typical of the presentation of qualitative findings, I have provided rich, thick description (Creswell, 2003) that goes beyond facts to comprehensively describe context and meaning in order to convey the depth of the case. I have also given voice to the study participants through the use of direct and effective quotations in support of themes and assertions throughout this report.

Limitations

Like all research, there are limitations to the design of this study. First, while a qualitative case study approach provided more in-depth, contextual data than is possible with a quantitative study, this was balanced by the challenges that inhered with selecting an appropriate case and gaining access. Furthermore, a case study approach meant that I had limited control over both what happened, such as when and how frequently the team met, and what information participants provided. In particular, interviews provide indirect information filtered through participants' lenses (Creswell, 2003).

This design must also account for the human error and bias inherent in qualitative research, although this quality is balanced by the intrinsic value of qualitative data. In this case, the accuracy of observational data was dependent upon my note taking and attending skills and the information I gathered and discussed was filtered through my personal lens (Creswell, 2003). In addition, my presence in meetings may have influenced team members to control or limit the information that was revealed during

these sessions (Merriam, 1998). For example, one team member suggested that all but generic legal information was not discussed due to my attendance at meetings.

Given the conditions of confidentiality and anonymity to which I adhered in this case, I was unable to utilize some information gathered in this case. Several interview quotations that might have been used to provide further support for my findings were related to specific, identifiable personnel. Therefore, I omitted these statements and relied only on information that could not be connected to any specific participant. Furthermore, I have shared only a brief description of the institution in order to protect its identity.

Additionally, while I spent nine months collecting data for this case, time was a limiting factor. Conducting a case study required a considerable amount of time to collect data, perform analysis, and draw conclusions. While the predetermined timeline provided a boundary for the case, it also limited the amount of information that could be collected and analyzed.

Finally, the results of this study encompass and are limited to one team's experience and cannot be generalized to all colleges and universities. However, the findings have generated hypotheses that may contribute to our knowledge of leadership teams as a strategy for decision making (Honig, 2003). During site selection, I looked for a team in which the president, as the team builder, encouraged discussion, debate, collaboration, and information sharing (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993) and in which team meetings are characterized by substantive discussion of issues, rather than information delivery (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). These criteria were an attempt to identify a real team, as defined by the literature. However, while initial conversations with various contacts at the university, as well as data I collected about the president's expectations of

the team, indicated that this team was the kind of team I wanted to study, my analysis suggests that these criteria were not met. Despite these limitations, this case study will advance the research agenda on presidential leadership teams by highlighting an important process in context.

Ethical considerations

Due to the essential personal interaction in qualitative research, it is vital to consider the ethical implications of this study. The reliance of this study on senior administrators mandated important consideration in the maintenance of confidentiality and anonymity both for ethical reasons and in order to gain the team's trust. Several steps have been taken in order to maintain appropriate ethics in this study through informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity.

First, each president and leadership team member was informed about the purpose of the study, the use of any information he or she shared, and any risks associated with his or her participation. Signed permission was obtained from the president and each individual member of the leadership teams to use the qualitative data obtained from interviews and observations throughout the study. Furthermore, the president consulted with the team prior to granting permission for access to the weekly meeting as well as to the retreat held approximately midway through data collection.

Second, I assured individual participants and the team as a whole, that I would maintain confidentiality by adhering to several procedures. The names of individuals and their institution have not been used in any identifiable way in this report. Instead, quoted material has been cited using a notation to reflect their role. For example, except for the

president, team members' statements are indicated by the code "TM1" through "TM10" throughout this document; I indicate contributions from other campus members with the same notation scheme but substitute a "CM" prefix. In addition, interview transcripts were not identified using interviewee's names, but rather coded only for data analysis purposes. A record of these codes is accessible only to the researcher and will be destroyed promptly at the conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 5: PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBERS AS BOUNDARY SPANNERS

A president must view the institution as a complex system in which the team is the sense maker – that is, its members are collectively involved in perceiving, analyzing, learning, and thinking (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993, p. 41).

The framework for this study, presented in Chapter Three, suggests that members of presidential leadership teams can be conceptualized as boundary spanners who perform information and political management functions. In this chapter, I draw on observations of team meetings, interviews with individual team members, and organizational documents to articulate findings related to the boundary-spanning activities in this case. I start by describing the case in order to provide an understanding of the setting for these activities. I then present descriptions of the president's and team members' role expectations, my understanding of the university's goals as the context for their activities, and finally the actual information management and political functions of boundary spanning that I observed in this case.

While this study aimed to shed light on the team's external activities, I found that team members' activities to manage the environment outside of the team were limited. They did deliver a multitude of information to the team each week, but I did not observe them participating in information activities such as search and use. Team members did engage in political management activities, but mostly limited to the external environment. These findings provide limited support for the conceptualization of presidential leadership team members as boundary spanners.

Description of the Case

The team

As stated in Chapter 4, the case for this project was the presidential leadership team of a single, public, urban, doctoral-granting university over a nine-month period. The leadership team was composed of eleven members, including the president, university officers, and other senior executives. At the start of the case, the university president had been in office for almost five years, including six months as an interim from outside of the university. He had previous experience as a president, provost, vice president, dean, department chair, and faculty member at several other universities. During the span of the case, the board of trustees extended the president's contract for four years.

The team members represented a variety of functional areas across the university, including academic affairs, alumni affairs, community relations, economic development, financial and administrative services, government relations, information technology, legal affairs, public affairs, and student affairs (see Appendix E). Notably, half of the team was focused almost exclusively on external constituencies, such as the local community, state government, and alumni. These individuals had a variety of experiences in academic, corporate, legal, government, and community organizations. Of the eleven team members, five held the title of vice president and were considered officers of the university. Four team members had experience as faculty members, five held doctorates, two had earned legal degrees, and two held other graduate degrees, including one from the university.

Of the eleven team members, all but two were male. Both female members as well as two men were people of color. While three team members had already been on the team when the president took office, he had hired, promoted, or placed the remaining individuals on this team. The most recent member joined the team only a month before the start of the case. During the second half of the case, one team member submitted his resignation and several weeks later the interim replacement for this member joined the team's weekly meetings.

The team met each week for about two hours in the president's conference room, as the president's schedule allowed. If the president was not available, or if the board was meeting, the team did not convene. There was no formal, written agenda for these meetings. Rather, each meeting proceeded in a "round robin" format, with the president directing each team member in turn to share whatever information they had brought. While this case included the team's Friday morning meeting, the president also met with the members of this team plus several other senior university officials at another weekly meeting on Monday afternoons.

Role Expectations

As I described in Chapter 3, the conceptual framework for this study suggests that members of leadership teams such as this one will scan or search the environment for information related to organizational goals, deliver selected information to the team, and translate or interpret that information in the team environment in order to facilitate its use. These activities are similar, but not identical, to the expectations held by the

president and team members, who generally viewed their responsibilities as providing information and advice.

President's expectations

The president reported that he expected that the team would contribute to these goals in specific ways. In interviews, the president reported that he expected team members to share information with him and the team, as well as serve as his representatives. These expectations generally correspond to the information management and political management functions that the literature on boundary spanning suggests is useful for a team's success.

Share information

The president intended for team members to share certain types of information at team meetings. First, he wanted individuals to share information with him and the team regarding their own activities and contributions to organizational goals. For example, he expected team members to keep him and the team informed about "what they've done all week . . . especially with regard to the fundamental goals of the institution . . . and how they've been focusing on the issues as we've defined them." Second, he wanted them to be alert to threats and opportunities related to those goals. Specifically, he expected them to scan the environment by "looking inwards [at the university] to see not just those trouble spots, but [to] be sure we know what our strengths are as well as weaknesses." He also expected team members to deliver information about these "problems they've discovered." Their job was "to identify the problems: what the hell are they, and how do

we solve them?” These statements illustrate the president’s expectation that the team should be focused on certain goals, as suggested by theories of boundary spanning.

Beyond delivering information, the president held expectations for the team to participate in processing information about the university’s fundamental goals, issues, and problems. He intended for the team to provide advice, ideas, and expertise “about how we ought to be doing things here” (President). His goal was to “...force every damn idea I can out of everyone in terms of directionality” (President) in his meetings with them. Throughout his interview comments, the president repeatedly mentioned the importance of the group setting, noting “everybody’s got to pitch in and see ‘what are the big issues?’” In particular, the president expected team members to work together, “avoid silos,” and talk about “ways that they might help each other.” These comments imply that the team meeting was a prime opportunity for team members to share information and generate ideas in support of university-wide goals.

Serve as representatives

The president also expressed expectations that reflected some attention to political management. The president’s goal was essentially for team members to serve as his representatives for shared goals:

You could start with what do the words ‘vice president’ mean? Essentially those words mean acting on behalf of. That’s what vice presidents do; they act on behalf of the president with regard to [their responsibilities] because I can’t do it...I can’t be everywhere.

In particular, he called attention to team members’ roles in promoting organizational goals. In his words, he stated that vice presidents needed to “understand that the reason

that all those people who report to [them] do what they do is in furtherance of the institutional goals that we have and not to build a great empire that's independent of the rest of the place." In other words, team members were expected to act on behalf of the president for the good of the university. While the president did not specify any intentions regarding team members' roles in protecting the university, he clearly indicated that as vice presidents and team members, they were to advocate for the university's overarching goals and use their resources in the service of these goals.

This set of information management and political management expectations from the president provide a useful benchmark for understanding how team members viewed their role. As I discuss in the next section, while their understanding of their role expectations were similar to the president's, their descriptions did differ slightly in a few specific ways.

Team members' expectations

In order to understand team members' interpretations of the president's expectations for the team, I asked each of them in interviews to describe the team's intended function and their roles on the team. I noted that most team members echoed the president's comments that the team, and they as team members, was supposed to provide information and advice to the president and serve as representatives. Notably, most individuals' perspectives on the focus of their information delivery differed from the president's. Furthermore, most team members generally spoke about a single type of activity, such providing expertise or serving as a representative, rather than describing their roles in terms of a range of multiple boundary-spanning activities. This apparent

discrepancy regarding the team's function likely contributed to the differences between the president's intentions and the actual role of the team.

Provide information to the president

While the president indicated that the team meeting was an opportunity for individuals to share information with one another, most team members emphasized the president as the recipient of their information delivery during the weekly meeting. Several team members indicated during their interviews that the point of the team meeting was to deliver information to the president. In the words of some of these individuals, the purpose of the meeting was so that "the president can hear ideas that we've picked up since the last meeting" because "he wants to be kept current." Another individual further emphasized this focus on the president when he described the purpose of the meeting as an opportunity "for the president to meet with his vice-presidents." One individual described the meeting as a forum in which to receive information from the president. He viewed it as a chance "for [the president] to identify crisis or potential crisis situations that maybe we all need to be thinking about.... I believe he chairs it to inform us – kind of top down." Each of these comments highlights the team's central view of the president on the team, both as the recipient and the conveyer of information, in contrast to the president's stated expectation that the team meeting was an opportunity for team members to talk to and help one another.

Similar to the president's expectations of providing advice and ideas, several team members said that they had a role in providing advice to the president, particularly from an expert perspective. Some saw themselves as advisors or "internal consultant[s]" who

could provide information in particular areas of expertise. For example, one team member said, “I’m not really involved in [a certain project] other than to give advice on the soundness of the things that they propose.... So when new things are being discussed, I think he [the president] expects me to, and I see it as my job, to raise the pros and cons ... of anything that’s being proposed or discussed.” Similarly, some team members viewed their roles as expert information providers regarding their particular constituencies. For example, one team member viewed her role as “bringing a perspective that represents the students and their welfare.... I think they count on me for providing them with a student perspective.” Another team member saw a relatively limited role for himself when he said, “The big things for me though, would be to report on anything pending in the media, and what are we doing in role of advertising, which I don’t talk about a whole lot.” Most of these examples highlight a group of individuals who saw their roles on the team specifically to contribute expertise from their functional area.

Only two individuals suggested that the team meeting was an important forum for sharing information among their colleagues. For example, one team member described the meeting as an opportunity to share:

anything related to keeping the president and the other staff members informed with major issues.... If the President’s staff doesn’t understand the issues we have to deal with . . . you got to at least give them understanding of what the issues are, and that’s a big part of my role.

Likewise, the other individual shared a similar view of the meeting as a forum for engaging his colleagues in larger issues:

sift up to the presidential level problems that need to be dealt with in a basis broader than just my division.... Sometimes I want to solve [problems in my division] in coordination with other people’s needs,

which is the smart thing to do, so that you would throw it up for their discussion at senior staff.

Compared to other team members, these two individuals held an institutional, versus divisional, view of the team and its function as evidenced by their emphasis on the team's potential for collaboration and coordination and their concern with larger organizational issues. This pattern of distinction continued throughout my observations and interviews, leading me to classify these two individuals as part of a "core" subgroup of the team.

Serve as representatives

My interviews with team members suggested that some individuals viewed their roles as having a political management component. When I asked them about their roles and the purpose of the team, some mentioned activities that could be broadly described as accessing resources, promoting the organization's image and goals, and advocating for the organization. For example, one team member described his role as "giving [the president] an extra voice and some connections in the community." This understanding of their roles as representatives was more specific than the president's stated expectations, and team members' descriptions were differentiated by the internal or external emphasis of each individual's role.

Despite the prominence of the external environment in the university's four primary goals, very few team members talked about any form of representation as an important part of their role on the team. For example, those individuals whose basic job responsibilities included working with constituents such as alumni, legislators, or the media, spoke almost exclusively about providing representation outside of the organization, but not internally. Specifically, several vice presidents' comments reflected

a role in promoting the university. For example, one externally-focused team member said that part of his role was to “get the image of the university either recognized or enhanced,” while another said that he viewed his role as providing “an extra voice and some connections in the community.” Only two individuals described their role in terms of securing resources for the university. One team member stated that he thinks “the more money I could show [the president] that I’ve brought here that we wouldn’t have gotten anyway, the better he likes it.” The other team member highlighted his role in advancing the university through fundraising and donor relations. Each of these examples highlights the emphasis on promoting the university, which is the focus of one of the university’s primary goals. However, no team members described themselves, or the purpose of the team, as serving a protective function.

Team members whose roles were focused on internal aspects of the university were less likely to view themselves as representatives. Only a few mentioned that they served a role in promoting goals to members of the university community. In the words of one of these vice presidents, “I’m the connection with the vision for the University. And it is my responsibility to assure that we’re all working in concert and so that staff understand that they have individually and collectively a very, very, very important role in moving the institution forward.” None of the internally-focused team members described finding resources or serving a protective function as a part of their roles.

The distinction I observed in representation activities between internally- and externally-focused team members led me to distinguish another distinct subgroup within the team. Based on patterns that persisted throughout my observations and interviews, I defined a discrete cluster of team members as the “external” subgroup. As a result of this

observation, throughout my interviews and observations, I continued to look for patterns of evidence that might support the existence of distinct subgroups within the team. I noticed that I could classify team members into four discrete subgroups based on their understanding of their roles (see Table 1). The core subgroup understood their roles in ways very similar to the president's expectations, especially in terms of the type of information they should deliver and the importance of discussion. The external experts focused on their roles in connecting the university to the external environment, primarily through representation. The task specialists' understanding of their roles centered on the expertise they could provide to the president, based on their professional and functional backgrounds.

Table 1. Leadership team subgroups' expectations of their roles

	Core advisors	External experts	Task specialists	Peripheral participants
Role expectations	Provide information	Connect to external environment	Provide expertise	Advocate for division

Finally, members of the periphery described their roles in ways that emphasized the importance of their division, rather than as experts in those areas in service of the larger organization.

Team goals

Understanding the university's goals provides an important focal point for analyzing the boundary-spanning functions in this case. Boundary-spanning activities, as

identified in other research, generally aim to assist an organization in meeting its goals (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). In this case, I have defined the leadership team's goals as the organization's goals because they served as the senior leadership for the university. I developed a picture of organizational goals by analyzing relevant organizational documents, including presidential speeches, the campus master plan, and the university's vision statement, and by using supporting evidence from team discussions and individual interviews. This analysis suggested that the university had four formal goals: increasing enrollment, updating the infrastructure of the university, improving the university's image, and developing partnerships in the region.

In interviews, individual team members reported that the university's primary goal was to increase enrollment. The primacy of this goal was also evident in my observations of team meetings and analyses of organizational documents. In the president's words, "everything we're doing has some relationship to this miserable problem with enrollment competition," referring to the region's decreasing population and the university's competition for students with other local colleges and universities. Additionally, every person I interviewed, including members of the leadership team, as well as other key campus figures, mentioned without hesitation that the primary goal of the university was to increase enrollment at the university. As one campus member stated clearly:

The number one issue is enrollment. We are in a region of decreasing population, increasing competitiveness, and it's been an institution that has not been an actively recruiting institution...and now with five, I guess, successive cuts from the state on our budget, and decreasing enrollment, enrollment is the number one issue on campus. Retention, I believe is number two.

Related to the issue of enrollment, but identified separately in many documents, was the improvement of the campus's physical infrastructure. While enrollment was intended to play the lead role among this university's goals, infrastructure also appeared to play a significant role. As one vice president described:

[The goal was] to create a climate both from a physical facility and a functional facility and a safe facility standpoint that is conducive to student learning So when we said we wanted to build the college up to [the enrollment goal], we wanted to double the number of freshman. We wanted to increase the number of residential students. Those are all things that are in there. Now we took it back to--okay, where we going to put [all of those] students? Where are we going to put 1,500 students living on campus? How are we going to accomplish the facilities for doubling the number of freshman? Somebody else's job . . . is to find them and get them here. Our job is what we do with them when we get them here, and our piece is also attracting them by building a rec center and a student center and spiffy new housing and stuff.

In addition to improving the university's facilities, a third organizational goal was to improve the university's image. As the president said in one speech, this goal was focused specifically on efforts "make our programs more visible to the public and to our students. . . ." The president characterized this goal as a response to the university's stance when he arrived, which he described as "totally turned in on itself, and nobody knew it was here." Another team member portrayed this goal in similar terms:

I do think that an important issue, an important challenge, for this university is that for a long time people didn't really know what this university was about. Let's focus particularly on opinion leaders [who] would have a very narrow sense of what the university was or was about. And, I will tell you that I was an opinion leader who was responsible for making public many major decisions about what happened at [the university] or what happened in parts of [the university], to be more accurate. With the exception of one significant project . . . I would tell you that [the university's former presidents] were not very effective persons, in terms of knowing how to engage in informing the community about what this university was up to.

As with the campus infrastructure, the focus on improving the university's image was also an opportunity to attract and retain students at the institution.

Finally, a fourth major goal for this university was to develop partnerships in the region, particularly as they related to economic development. As the president highlighted in a speech, "our work is to be an important part of [the region] in such a way that we are indistinguishable from it. Our work is to make this region better in every way that we can" For example, in the context of describing the university as being historically inward-looking, the president emphasized that "facing outward, finding new collaborations and so on, that's very, very important" To accomplish this goal, the president saw the university as a partner in not only educating students for the workforce, but in developing an economy to support them:

While our mission includes the preparation of our students for participation in the economy, we also know that there has to be an economy in which they are able to participate. Our mission, therefore, includes research and organization that translates into economic development for the region.

The campus master plan also reflected the importance of partnering with both public and private groups by including "locations for new [university] facilities and ... a development zone at the periphery of campus where private sector residential and commercial development can occur, in partnership with [the university]" while improving the quality of life for the local community and creating connections to neighboring institutions. The underlying message was that the university needed to become and be recognized as a contributing member of its community, socially and economically.

Actual role: Information management

In terms of how team members actually operated, I observed that individuals served as information managers to varying degrees. Their varying search, delivery, and transmission behaviors allowed me to distinguish distinct subgroups within the team.

Scanning/searching

As a dimension of information management, scanning is an important boundary-spanning activity because it is a means to identify information from outside of the team that may be useful to decision making. Based both on the president's expectations for the team and the literature on boundary spanning, team members should have searched for information related to the organization's four primary goals. However, I found that the extent to which they looked for information related to these goals was minimal. Team members did not generally engage in search activities beyond their daily operational roles and job responsibilities. Furthermore, while sometimes this information and their sources were related to organizational goals, their search processes were limited and unintentional.

In order to understand team members' search behaviors, during interviews I asked team members to talk about how much time they generally spent preparing for meetings and what types of activities they engaged in both to prepare for meetings and to follow up after meetings. I also prompted team members to report whether they consulted with

anyone or checked on information before meetings. In other words, I used preparation as a proxy for search.

What I heard was that most individuals did not spend much, if any, time actively preparing for meetings, nor did they typically follow up on issues or information after the weekly meeting. For example, one team member said that he started “thinking about [his report for the meeting] a couple days [before the meeting]. It kind of kicks around somewhat subliminally. I keep stacks of paper there where stuff gets jotted down....” Yet another team member reported spending as much as “Fifteen minutes probably.... I think I just reported on stuff...I probably gave 15 minutes of thought.” Another reported spending even less time: “Five minutes. Really, I mean I usually put it together—like for the Friday meeting, on Thursday, I’ll try and figure out what the major issues are.” The most extreme routine arose from one team member who reported that he spent “little to none” in terms of time preparing for the meeting and decided what to report while in the meeting itself:

[My] preparation is more . . . top-of-mind, I guess. So I typically come in with a blank agenda, and will find a piece of paper, and, because I’m not in the first chair, unless he happens to go out of order, I will make some notes for myself--two or three parts of the page.

Not surprisingly, team members reported that they spent more time preparing for the weekly meeting if they had something to present. However most of this preparation seemed to involve preparing documents using information that they already had, rather than searching for new information. As one team member stated, “If I have a certain item I want to present, yes, I will prepare it, prepare the handout or whatever.” As another team member shared:

Usually I don't have anything to present at those meetings. Occasionally, I will, if there's something to report on on the legal front that I feel that everyone should know. And then I might prepare then, assemble the materials, if I'm going to pass something out, or look over whatever it is I'm going to talk about. But typically I don't have much to report to them. He does go around the table, as you know, and asks everyone what's up. Typically, I can just say what's up without preparing. Off the top of my head I know what's up, what's happened since the last time I've met everyone, which typically is that Monday. Because the same group, as you know, plus a few others, meet on that Monday.

Only one team member, a member of the core subgroup, seemed to indicate that he spent a significant amount of time preparing for team meetings:

Most times, if I'm bringing something in to that table, that's an important time for me. Because there's a lot of decisions made. I have the ability to influence a lot of things. So I probably spend as much time preparing for the meeting as I do at the meeting, is a fair statement.

This particular response suggested a level of intentionality that was not evident in comments from other team members. This same team member said that he would look for "anything I need. Whether I'm going for an initiative, trying to solve a problem, understand an issue better. [I] do a lot of that." In contrast, another team member seemed to be less focused on particular types of information, stating that he "tried to pick five or six things that I could talk about, and I go in with a list." Overall, most team members' examples of how they prepare for meetings suggest that they did so casually and unintentionally.

Team members' post-meeting activity also did not suggest that they left team meetings with intentions to search for information related to organizational goals. When I asked team members about their activities after meetings, many individual reported that they spent very little time following up on meeting activity. As one team member

described: “In many cases, I’d say ‘nothing.’ Ten minutes, maybe, on a typical day just to sort through ‘Do I have any actions? Something I got to follow-up on from this?’ And usually, in my case, it’s not.” One stated that “I usually do lunch after meetings” and then the meeting is forgotten. Yet another vice president reported “Not a lot. If I’ve got some things I got to do, I go out and do them. Well, no, that’s not completely right. I’m mostly reporting items.”

Only a few team members’ responses suggested that they engaged in some follow-up activity after meetings. One team member reported that “A lot of times assignments, for me at least, come from that meeting.” Another indicated that, during a meeting, he might generate a list of “five to ten actionable things that I need to do ... [that require] probably under an hour ... it may even be under 30 minutes.” Another alluded to setting up meetings or requesting materials, activities that “could take just that day or a week, or it could take several months.” One individual admitted that he did not usually feel responsible to follow-up on any action items after meetings, but does tend to connect with other team members:

Nearly every meeting that I attend, there’s some comment I make or something that takes place or something where I think that it would behoove me to do a follow-up or suggest that they might like to talk to this person or something like that. So yes, I’d say I’m not coming back having to move, “I better get these people to do this, or I better do that,” but I often come back and will call [another team member] and, maybe three days later, we might have lunch, or react to something that [a particular team member] sends me in a mailing. I have quite a bit of stuff which I have kept and follow up on and comment on. I probably about half the time might send an email to the President or see him and talk with him, or he’ll see me and talk with me about it and so forth....

While several of these individuals clearly did engage in search behaviors after meetings it is unclear whether or not they were searching for goal-related information. For most team

members, team meetings did not provide direction for how they should have spent time in service of the team and the organization's goals. Their routines depict their search as a process of amassing or picking up, rather than deliberately searching for, information on a week-to-week basis.

To create a clearer picture of their scanning behavior, I looked at interviews and observation data for evidence of individual team members' interactions with other actors. In the management and organizational behavior literature, boundary spanning is defined as an intergroup activity that occurs in relation to other social systems or actors in the environment (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Friedman & Podolny, 1992; Leifer & Huber, 1977; Pruitt & Schwartz, 1999). While most team members suggested that they did not spend much time preparing for team meetings, scanning is an activity that would likely occur through other organizational meetings and informal interactions with constituents such as staff members, students, faculty, legislators, professional colleagues, and other actors outside of the team. When I asked team members if they consulted with anyone in order to prepare for the team's weekly meetings, most said that they did not consult with anyone beyond other team members or their own staff members.

My interviews and observations suggested that many team members relied primarily on formal interactions as an opportunity to scan the environment for information. In particular, every team member mentioned that they attended regular, scheduled meetings with their divisional staff members during which they could learn, in the words of one team member, "what's going on in each unit, what they have done and is there any problem encountered" in order to speak on their behalf or to gather information about decisions that need senior staff attention. Most team members also

mentioned that they attended a variety of other meetings both within and outside the university, as members of committees or as a normal part of their job responsibilities. For example, one individual noted that he gathered information from “tons of meetings in [the state capital], with the legislature and in Congress” that he attended on a regular basis. Overall, I heard that many team members’ interactions outside of team were limited to meetings and contacts that appeared to be a part of their typical job responsibilities rather than an intentional effort to search for information related to organizational goals.

I found that this team also often scanned for information from non-interactive sources. For example, team members used surveys to gather information from a broad-range of constituents such as faculty, students, and alumni. As one team member announced at a meeting, “we are currently conducting a survey [at a local community college]; [our] colleges would like to know what kind of program the students want.” Another survey was administered by a marketing consultant to seek information about “admitted but not enrolled students. This first one was a web survey... of the most recent group of students who are doing well but leaving.” Yet another survey was, “looking to tap [alumni who are] already engaged and those who are not.” While certain individuals did not appear to rely on surveys, this mechanism did seem to be used primarily as a strategy for gathering information from external actors.

My observations of team meetings also yielded evidence that many team members scanned or “mined” institutional data related to the team’s goals to share at meetings. For example, one vice president had looked for enrollment data related to the incoming class’s adherence to admissions standards:

I'm concerned about the quality of students we have. This is based on 708 students, still missing data. Class is over 1000. 17.2% had lower than 16 ACT. This year it's 21%, last year 16+ was 72.3%, 66.8% this year. I want to know the range, because we've got honors students on one end.

Another team member shared information related to the infrastructure goal: “[We] discovered when we did our research that we have 499 students in [certain] zip codes and only 333 have parking passes, so there's at least 700 [students in a certain area]. We're going to propose that [as an opportunity] to [a regional transportation agency].” These examples suggest that this source of information was the closest that this team came to intentionally searching for information related to organizational goals.

Team members also scanned sources outside the university, particularly the news media and other universities, for information related to team goals. My observation of team meetings and conversations with team members highlighted that the local and state news media was an important source of information frequently scanned by team members. Perhaps due to their concern with the image and outgoing messages of the university, and as a public institution, team members seemed particularly attentive to the news, particularly the editorials. As the president explained to me, “more at urban institutions than at other places...urban schools are really press-sensitive.” While team members often mentioned information that they had read in that morning's edition of a newspaper, I did not perceive that they were strategically using the media as a source of information. Nonetheless, this activity did provide valuable information about the university's image in the local media.

A few team members also looked at other universities for comparative information related to organizational goals. As a state institution, the focus of these benchmarking efforts was typically directed towards other public universities in the same

region. For example, one team member who regularly used this as a strategy had “just read [a nearby state university’s] write-up and they say that 80% of their courses are represented on Blackboard” in order to understand how the university might approach e-learning as an enrollment strategy. In some instances, the team used consultants, or expert scanners, as a source to obtain comparative information. During this case, the team relied on two separate consultants to provide benchmarking information related to enrollment marketing and to donor development.

A rather limited means of using other universities as a source of information was through professional sources such as conferences and research. For example, the president and one vice president relayed information from a retention conference, in support of the enrollment goal. However, attendance at conferences or reading professional literature as a mechanism for scanning the environment seemed to be an infrequent source of information. Only one team member indicated that he had explored the research on a topic:

I’ve been doing a lot of reading as I try to find out about retention from [the university’s] point of view. I’m trying to understand whether my perception is off. I’m struck by how many people have papers, and memos, and opinions, but by how many people don’t seem to be doing anything about it...also trying to figure out when it’s academic, when it’s administration, and when is it a combination.

Overall, I found that this team’s search activities, as defined by my conceptual framework, were limited in time, scope, and source. Team members did not purposefully search for particular types of information between team meetings. When they did search for information, they tended to rely on surveys and benchmarking data, particularly focused on the external environment. The team itself and other regular meetings, as well

as their daily job responsibilities, were their primary sources of information. I concluded that team members used their weekly meeting as a primary opportunity to seek information. In other words, the team meeting was just a meeting, not an intentional opportunity to share and discuss information or to determine how to proceed with achieving the organization's goals.

President's search activities

While routine formal meetings served as opportunities for team members to gather information, they did not indicate that they used informal interactions with other individuals, either inside or outside the university, as a source of information. However, my interviews with the president suggested that he emphasized this type of activity in his own behaviors as a means to scan for information. Similar to other team members, the president was involved in formal meetings, such as with faculty senate and a deans' council. As one vice president described, the president attended "monthly meetings with student leaders. It's kind of open, what's working, what's not, what are you upset about." However, unlike other team members, the president also reported being very active in scanning in very informal ways, particularly with regard to students, faculty, and deans, in order to understand their experiences and ideas. For example, during an interview he talked about connecting with faculty in order to get information he needed. As he put it,

I know a lot of people here who have different skill-sets, and been here a long time, and know things that I need to know. I do drive everybody nuts because I think nothing of calling up a faculty member; I think nothing of calling up a department chairman; I think nothing of calling up an associate dean. [I also talk] to a lot of professors every chance I get, whether it's in the elevator or the cafeteria or one thing and another.

The president also talked about search activities involving informal and unplanned interactions with students. He mentioned that he would “[pick] out some random student over there, poor kids, and I just walk over and sit down and say, ‘Can I have lunch with you today?’ Yeah, just walking around, and watching email.” The president may have viewed these interactions as part of his role to be visible and engaged with these two particular populations. However, my interviews with him president suggested that his attention to scanning for information related to these internal constituents was more likely to have been due to less confidence about the leadership and the information he was receiving from these areas through his team. Through the president’s and other team members’ comments, as well as my own observations of individual behavior, I was able to create a third discrete subgroup, which I named “periphery.”

My interviews and observations did not shed light on the president’s external scanning activity. While he regularly indicated that he had attended a variety of meetings or events, my interviews did not pick up on what type of information he may have gathered from these meetings. In team meetings, the president’s comments most frequently mentioned his interactions with the board of trustees, such as reports of their activities or announcements of membership changes.

Information delivery

While team members did not appear to engage in intentional scanning for specific information related to the team’s goals, as a whole they were able to provide a substantial amount of information to the team each week as a result of their formal interactions with others and through their regular, weekly routines. From the information that team

members searched for, they selected information to deliver that related to a wide variety of purposes. The team heard information related to a diverse array of topics each week, ranging from event announcements to goal-related information. Of all the information that team members delivered, certain individuals limited their delivery to operational or informational topics mainly related to their organizational subunits, while other team members focused on delivering information related to the university's primary goals. Furthermore, how team members delivered this information varied. Some individuals just announced information, others translated information for the team, and others delivered information to the president outside of team meetings.

To elaborate, each week, the team spent at least some of their meeting time hearing about information that was not related to their strategic goals. For example, one vice president admitted, "sometimes all I do is kind of an elegant form of gossip." Specifically, much of the information that team members presented was operational in nature. Team members delivered information primarily related to the work of their functional units, apparently in order to educate others about their activities. But, these items tended to relate to basic operations as opposed to the broader goals of the university. For example, at a typical meeting one vice president reported that he had "cancelled the remaining three years on the food service contract" and another announced that they were "adding some information on the health site about the avian flu, with a link to the CDC." Other individuals would regularly provide updates on their recent activities, whether they were related to strategic goals or not, deliver news items such as new hires or job openings, or announce upcoming events.

My observations were supported by comments from several team members who also noticed these patterns. They commented that some of the information that team

members brought to the meeting table was not related to the university's goals. As one team member shared during an interview:

I could care less what somebody did last week in their own personal schedule. That's just not--I would never endure anybody to learn what I did last week at a meeting, and that happens once in a while. It just sends me to sailing.... And I don't like a lot of history reports. I want to know where we're headed, not where we've been.

Another team member shared a similar perspective:

Well I think that some of them still tend to think in silos, in terms of, 'I see my role very narrowly.' And I think [two particular team members] would fit into those categories. They see their little scope as being "what I do here," and so they're sort of confused about how do we go to the next step.

These two individuals, both members of the core subgroup seemed to indicate that their colleagues needed to shift their focus to the university's goals and provide forward-looking contributions that would inform strategy. These distinctions among the type of information that individuals delivered reinforced differences among the team's subgroups (see Table 2). Some subgroups generally behaved as university citizens whose attention was focused on organizational information and goals, while the periphery primarily focused on information and activities that emphasized their own divisions.

Table 2. Leadership team subgroup citizenship

	Core advisors	External experts	Task specialists	Peripheral participants
Expectations	Provide information	Connect to external environment	Provide expertise	Advocate for division
Type of information	University	University	University	Divisional

Team members' comments about these differences often suggested that they were a

source of conflict:

Well I think that some of them still tend to think in silos, in terms of, 'I see my role very narrowly.' And I think [the two peripheral members] would fit into those categories. They see their little scope as being 'what I do here,' and so they're sort of confused about how do we go to the next step.

Those individuals with more of an organizational or university-wide, rather than a "silo" or divisional, mentality were more likely to present information related to organizational goals, rather than divisional information.

In my interviews with team members and my observations of their weekly meetings, I noticed that the structure of meetings seemed to reinforce this pattern of people presenting any information, even if it was not directed at organizational goals. When I asked team members about a hypothetical "rulebook" for the team, one team member replied that one rule he was sure would be included would be that individuals should always have something to say:

Always have something to report on, even if you have to make it up. Don't ever say, 'I pass,' which some do . . . I think you just don't notice those who pass get kind of a raised eyebrow from the president....

An important dimension of information delivery is boundary spanners' ability to translate information for the team. This means that team members should facilitate the use of information by interpreting information rather than merely passing information on in the form in which they received it. During team meetings, I observed several instances in which team members delivered and then translated information related to team goals. For example, one core subgroup member shared that he had gathered some benchmarking information and proceeded to explain what the information might mean in terms an opportunity related to the enrollment effort:

My department went back and looked at how we are positioned with competition – for-profits [and other state universities]. All data points to four curriculums – health, education and business, and some technology training. Those degrees are strongest and two of the four major privates have [local] offices. Begg the question why only two. We could offer for half the tuition...we could be losing students if we don't get into this. We've got to get in the space and play. Many started as auxiliary, but most have been pulled into the central academic area.

In another example, a member of the external experts subgroups announced that the university had received a “very nice mention in [a major state newspaper] last week. There were references made to [a team member's] study.” He also provided a brief statement regarding the implications of this information for the team, to help them understand why the information was important. In his words, “this kind of attention is helpful because these things are widely read” and therefore would help the image of the university.

During the retreat, another member of the external expert subgroup helped the team to step back and consider their discussion of developing a new market from a different perspective. Instead of allowing the group to go forward, he asked them to consider the implications of the project with regard to the university's resources and capacity:

Do we really have sufficient resources and talent to take on a College 3? I'm concerned about all of the other things being taken on – 4,000 residential students, an ACT of 18, capital construction...Should we focus more effort on Colleges 1 and 2? [He is expressing concern about capacity and human resources]. The second point is that we need to know a lot more about this population. We're in a region where house prices are stagnant; some schools are up, some are down...is [our] enrollment too high a goal?

In another example, a core team member announced a new university partnership during a meeting. Rather than leaving the announcement to stand on its own, he clearly outlined the positive implications of the project for the university:

What's in it for each of us? Increased enrollment and branding via the web, redundant ISP, shared services, non-competitive partnership, positive legislative impact, and increased grant opportunities. There are also benefits to [our partner organization]. There's a lot of political visibility out of this. This is eons above and beyond what we were talking about with [two other universities]. Other benefits include a similar geographic footprint, where [our partner organization] is where we want students. Non-competitive partnership is huge. No overlap in where revenue comes from.

These two subgroups of the team seemed to recognize the importance of going beyond mere information delivery to helping the team to engage with the information in order to consider what the information might mean, by providing different perspectives, possible interpretations, and additional information. This translating activity seemed to serve an educational purpose. In other words, team members who translated information seemed to help. In contrast, I observed no examples of this behavior from other team members that I viewed as being on the periphery of the group. One peripheral team member admitted in an interview:

When I report something, more or less, it's more information sharing . . . [there is] not really a whole lot [that] needs their [the team's] input.... The only person I can see can help make decision is the president....

This tendency to interpret or translate information rather than just deliver it to the team provided further support to my finding that distinct subgroups existed in this team.

While a great deal of information was delivered to the team each week, I heard in interviews that team members did not necessarily deliver all of the information they had

available to them. As one core subgroup member indicated:

I'm going to send the President about some stuff that happened today that I didn't want to throw out in the meeting. But there's two or three items I'd like to put back into the mix, where I had some feelings about how maybe we could do some stuff. But I'd like to use him as a sounding board, rather than just shouting it out and maybe distracting the group, because maybe that isn't where he thinks it ought to go.

Other team members also indicated that they withheld information that they did not believe was relevant for everyone to hear. One team member admitted, "I hold back on things that only the president, I feel, needs to know about, and I don't want to waste everybody else's time... I guess I feel like some around the table are using it as their update with him." This comment reinforced what I heard in interviews and observations regarding those individuals more likely to deliver relevant information and to withhold any type of information from the team were more likely to have regular access to the president. These individuals also were likely to be members of the core subgroup or the external expert subgroup, further strengthening the differentiation among team members.

Transmitting

In addition to information management activities I looked for based on the conceptual framework for this study, I noticed that team members not only brought information into the team, but they also managed information coming out of the team by sharing it with a variety of audiences. In other words, they transmitted information between the team and its environment.

The two main recipients of information generated by the team appeared to be their own staff members and the college deans. Team members delivered information such as

student data, budget updates, and general announcements to internal actors. For example, during interviews, I asked each team member what types of information from team meetings they shared with their staffs or anyone else. Several team members identified the importance of transmitting information internally, particularly to the members of their divisions, to keep them informed about university goals and decisions. In one instance, one vice president stated that he had a responsibility to his staff to keep them current about organization goals:

I've got quarterly meetings with them. I call them all-hands meetings. It's, again, simple. It comes out of manufacturing. And we bring in speakers. I typically talk about issues, but a portion of every one of those meetings is dedicated to what the University's doing, where we're at relative to that. ... I can tell them this is the University's goals and objectives, but if they don't think at the University level, I think we're kind of naïve to expect them to instantly transform just because I gave them that in writing or something.... If my staff doesn't understand at the top what the issues are, they're going to not produce the results desired... I typically talk about issues, but a portion of every one of those meetings is dedicated to what the university's doing, where we're at relative to that.

However, in some cases this information was limited, as another vice president stated that he only transmitted information that impacted his part of the university, and acknowledged that there was usually little information to share:

Clearly, anything that has an impact on our division, I talk about. But where it really has an impact only on another unit I hear about this or that, I tend not to share. If it has any with human resources I try to remember to share it; although, that area does a decent job of kind of getting stuff out. But there's usually not a lot, actually.

In another example, during a weekly meeting, one team member reported that he had shared "information [about admitted student quality] with the deans" presented at the previous week's meeting "and they asked if the data was correct."

The team members also provided information to a wide variety of constituents outside of the university, including legislators and politicians, community organizations, consultants, the media, and trustees. One team member mentioned that he listened for things in team meetings that he could “report, on behalf of the institution, to public officials.” For example, this same individual had

sent a pretty extensive memo last week on the hiring of [a senior administrator] telling them what she was going to be doing here and how much she was going to make, which would be a huge issue for them. Before that, I sent them a memo about remediation, in December, about the fact that we’re having to do more remediation here than we did last year. Just nuts and bolts about the campus.

These examples suggest that team members did transmit information to actors outside the team, although the design of this study prohibited a clear view of all the information that was received by the broad array of actors with whom team members likely interacted. However, their activities also suggest that they were transmitting information for the specific political purposes of promoting and protecting the organization in addition to merely providing information.

Actual role: Political management

Boundary spanners serve as bridges or buffers between the team and its environment (Adams, 1976; Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Honig, 2004; Lynn, 2005; Tushman, 1977). Consistent with my conceptual framework, team members engaged in activities that included promoting the organization and its goals, and providing protection to the team and the university from environmental influences. They used information as a means to promote and protect by serving as members of committees, managing the

university's image, obtaining resources, developing relationships with non-team actors, and advocating for the university. However, the team appeared to focus almost solely on external constituents, rather than managing politics within the university.

I heard in interviews and observations that team members did provide regular representation of the team, sometimes in leadership roles, to a variety of *ad hoc* university committees, most notably on topics such as strategic planning, e-learning, a management consulting project, the provost search, and retention. These committee assignments may indicate where the president wanted his voice and ears present. Additionally, in my interviews, team members spoke about activities that suggested that they provided representation to specific constituency groups such as their divisions, the academic deans, and the faculty senate. However, little was said about regular representation to the general student population.

Certain team members also provided representation to legislators and political candidates, the media, business and community organizations, funding organizations, consultants, unions, higher education organizations, alumni and donors, governing bodies (i.e., trustees and regents), and service providers. The president provided substantial representation himself, mostly to external constituents such as governing boards and higher education groups, but also to internal constituents in areas in which he did not feel as well connected through the team.

I heard in interviews and observed in meetings that all of the team members engaged in representation, although some to a greater extent than others. This differentiation was often linked to their roles. In other words, their representation activities reflected their formal job responsibilities. For example, there was significant

external representation activity from members of the external experts subgroup. However, my observations of the team's activities suggested that there was a particular emphasis by team members providing representation to individuals and organizations outside of the university. My observations and interviews indicated that team members' efforts to promote and protect the organizational goals within the university were not as prevalent. This may have been a result of the team's structure, in which over one-third of the team's roles were almost completely dedicated to the external environment. But the prevalence of activity focused outside of the organization may also be explained by my interpretation that the so-called peripheral members of this team were those who connected the team to the two primarily internal constituencies of students and faculty.

Promoting

Promoting, or advocating for, the organization was a large part of team members' representation activity, particularly to external actors. As the president noted, under previous administrations:

the place was totally turned in on itself, and nobody knew it was here. And people would take cheap shots at it in the press and one thing and another. Had to put a stop to that. Had to turn the focus outward instead of inward. It's the most inward-looking institution I've ever seen, and it didn't partner up with anybody much, and nobody knew it was here.

I heard throughout my interviews with team members and I also observed in their meetings that individuals helped to promote the university to a broad group of external audiences, including politicians, alumni, donors, prospective students, potential partners, and consultants. Sometimes, this advocacy was a means to secure resources, other times

it served to present a positive image of the university. Government officials were a frequent audience for team members' promotional efforts. For example, one team member described his efforts to secure resources for the university by promoting it to legislators:

We have five projects that last year we tried to get funded, earmarks in the federal budget. So I work with members of the Congress and the two U.S. Senators ... to try to get money for [the university] in that regard.... We tried to match up what the President considers to be the University's priorities, with who we think in Congress has the most clout to get the money for us.

Legislative promotion was not always directly related to financial resources. In some instances, it was also a means to increase legitimacy for the university. For example, one team member shared a significant university publication that highlighted new initiatives and significant accomplishments. "[I gave a copy of the university magazine] to each legislator. I sent a note that we use this extensively in fundraising so that they don't think we spend too much on money on publications." During an interview he added, "There's some really interesting things going on here that I try to feed a steady stream of to the governor and the lieutenant governor and the state budget director and the legislative leaders" in order to help them understand the university's activities. Another team member recounted an informal meeting with the city mayor as an opportunity to promote the enrollment goals of the university:

I talked with [the mayor] about under-prepared students. He's really high on community colleges and he believes that there are some students who are appropriate for community college. I'm concerned about steering high school students who are talented enough for four year. He asked me to send him some information. Of course, then [I talked to him about] the good things about [the university].

The local media also served as a means for the university to promote itself. As one vice president stated during his interview, the media was important because:

[W]e're a public university. That means that the legislature is hugely important to us, at a time the legislature really doesn't hear about higher ed, and the only way you communicate to the legislature is through the newspapers. The second is we're the public's university and so that is, again, how you communicate to the public. Also realizing that the radio and TV stations don't do anything independently in this town.

I observed during team meetings that the media was a significant mechanism for promoting the organization and that team members were often concerned with how the university was portrayed in local and state newspapers. As one team member stated, "I spend most of my time in personally dealing with media in helping create and promote messages." However, my interviews suggested that many team members were attentive to the role that the media played in impacting their organization.

On several occasions, the team as a whole spent time discussing and editing information that would be released to the press, including an "image ad" in the words of one team member, and the wording of a press release about a significant personnel hire. Almost every issue included some discussion about how to present it to the media or how it would be received by the press. For example, when the team was discussing a particular partnership, one individual reminded them that they would "want to make sure there are things that a reporter can write, decrease costs, increase access, protect networks and that inviting the "governor also guarantees you a reporter," as an external expert member stated. The media seemed to impact every organizational goal. In addition to image and partnerships, the team even understood the media's role as a mechanism for their enrollment strategy. As one team member told the team, "we're going to be on radio

in places we've never been before; seems to be the best way to get to younger people; see if we can work with auxiliary services to see where it's being heard."

Another group of actors on whom team members focused promotional efforts were alumni, donors, and foundations from which the university could acquire resources.

One vice president explained this focus:

What that means is money resources, as well as other types but, basically, financial resources. "Connections" [means] hitting on the alumni function to connect and re-connect the alumni with each other and with the institution. And then image is self-explanatory, but it basically is internal image as well as external image. It's across all different sorts of audiences.

Despite the importance of creating a positive image and the importance of financial resources for public institutions in particular, only a few team members were involved in these activities to "[develop] relationships that lead to resources, connections and image," in the words of one team member. However, some team members were intentional about getting others involved in promotional efforts.

In addition to using information to promote the university and its goals, team members also worked with other actors to assist them in these efforts. While they would often serve as direct advocates, they would also work with or through others to promote the university's goals. For example, one team member frequently reported facilitating visits for students, board members, deans, or team members to meet legislators. As he described during one meeting: "I'm working with [the student government president] on a trip to [the state capital] with some of her colleagues in student government...I'll help them get some appointments." On another occasion, the same team member shared that during a recent trip:

[A dean] learned really quickly that if you're talking to a Democrat, you don't talk about the governor's plan. It was great to have him [in the state capital]. He did a great job of explaining what's going on in his college. The deans are great representatives.

For some team members, promoting the organization meant that they coordinated efforts "behind the scenes" so that the university was sending a consistent and positive message to all of its constituents. During an interview, one team member stated that he spent "time writing speeches for the president, and trying to make sure that the word getting out that he's saying the same thing we're kind of conveying in print and kind of conveying on the website." For example, he said that part of his job is "to make [university departments] sure that their pieces look good and are saying things in consonance with what the university's trying to say, the key messages... It's like we just want to make sure we're all singing off the same page."

Further highlighting the importance of their roles in promoting the organization as a part of their work on the team, I observed team members frequently discussing their representation activities during meetings. For example, at one meeting the team talked about ideas for how to put a university publication to better use by sharing it more broadly. One team member suggested,

Once you have these done this way, it's easy to put a section into a smaller publication with a letter from the president to appropriate people. It calls it to their attention. You've got the raw material. There's probably 150-200 people that this ought to be going to and stimulating theory thinking.

At another meeting, a team member suggested parking "the mobile van near [a competitor]. I'm just thinking about visibility. How aggressively are we using that? Just thinking about ways to gain exposure."

Throughout my interviews with team members and my observations of their meeting, I did not collect much evidence to suggest that the team spent a great deal of time promoting the university to its governing board. For the most part, team members did not serve as links to the board, but rather this responsibility seemed to rest with the university's legal counsel and the president. Only one other vice president, a member of the core subgroup, seemed to have regular opportunities to interact with the board, primarily related to the university budget to infrastructure issues. The president described one such instance:

[A team member] was able to do quick presentation of [the] student union building. I think it was very well received. My feeling is that they were starting to come to a point of view that this building has got to go. When [he] showed them how to pay for it they felt better too.

Again, perhaps reflecting the importance of external audiences to the university's primary goals, my observations and interviews suggested that team members served a less extensive promotional role within the university than they did outside the university. When internal promotion occurred, it appeared to be limited to individual team members' divisions. As one team member described:

[Internal promotion is] especially critical within my division because I'm the connection with the vision for the University. And it is my responsibility to assure that we're all working in concert and so that staff understand that they have individually and collectively a very, very, very important role in moving the institution forward.

Another vice president echoed this idea of being responsible for promoting goals within the university, stating that "[team members] understand what the university's doing and trying to accomplish its strategies and directions. We have to also identify opportunities for those others, in the organization, that they might not see themselves. So it's a shared

responsibility.”

As I had noticed in other areas, certain team members were more intentional about engaging in promotional activities. For example, in relation to the enrollment and retention goal, an expert subgroup team member reported that a committee that he chaired would “discuss [mandatory advising for first-year students] at our meeting on Wednesday. That is something that should be instituted and maintained, that we have sufficient staff to be able to do that.” A core subgroup team member who had been assigned responsibility for an e-learning initiative reported that he would “work to get these [two proposal] documents aligned and then organize a meeting of all the people who have a vested interest. Yet another team member volunteered to take on a program because

Under [another vice president] it was clear it was frustrating the president. It was clear that he wasn't getting the type of ownership of the issue . . . that he had spent quite a bit of time expressing his displeasure over the fact that no one seemed to own it...and I thought, ‘Wow, I just have to step forward here.’ And so I told him ... ‘Listen, why don't you let me take [the project]?’ He looked at me and said, ‘Are you sure?’ I said, ‘Well, no one else is stepping up.’

This pattern of differentiation provided additional evidence that I could continue to understand the team as being comprised of distinct subgroups. These subgroups were based not only on the role expectations I heard from team members, but also on actual boundary-spanning behaviors that I observed during meetings and heard about during interviews (see Table 3).

Table 3. Leadership team subgroups' behaviors

	Core advisors	External experts	Task specialists	Peripheral participants
Expectations	Provide information	Connect to external environment	Provide expertise	Advocate for division
Type of information	University	University	University	Division
Behaviors	Provided goal information and translation	Provided external representation and information	Provided expert information	Provided information

Promotion and protection

While promotion seemed to be the primary political management activity in this case, the members of this team did engage in some protective activities as well. Like their promotion activities, efforts at protection were more frequently directed towards the external, rather than the internal, environment of the university. My observations of team meetings and my interviews with individuals suggested that, at times, promotion and protection were simultaneous activities.

I noticed several instances when team members had to both share information that promoted the university while protecting the team from certain external actors. In other words, these activities were not always discrete. For example, on one occasion the team decided to withhold information in the short term, with the intention that the same information would provide better promotion in the long-term if it were released at a later date. Based on the team's recommendation, the president decided that the university should "sign the MOU [memorandum of understanding] on Tuesday and keep our mouths shut [internally]...[inform] my and their direct reports next week. Hold off on a general announcement [for a press conference in a few weeks]. In this example, the

president did not want to delay the start of a partnership, but given the logistics of a joint press conference, wanted to delay announcing the venture so that legislators and the media present would attend the event.

The team's concern with their image in the media seemed an area in which promotion and protection were simultaneously important. In one instance, an individual team member stated that he was often faced with trying to be "a resource to some of the media, sometimes keeping them at a distance, other times passing along information." This example suggests that this team member managed a particularly complex relationship with the media that required a balance between both promoting and protecting.

While these examples reflect the emphasis on the environment outside of the university, on one occasion the need to engage in both promotion and protection was evident with respect to the internal environment as well. When a team member informed his colleagues that there had been a request from the college deans to see a marketing consultant's report, his recommendation was to withhold the information in order to protect it, but to invite them to the consultant's presentation. However, the president re-framed the situation as an opportunity to promote the team's goals, while protecting certain information. The eventual decision, after a lengthy discussion, was to both promote the deans' involvement by giving "[a limited section of the report] to them...with all kinds of [confidentiality] stamps on it" (President) in order to gain their confidence and help them to feel included in the process. In this instance, the team was able to both protect sensitive information while promoting the deans' involvement in the enrollment goal by sharing some information.

In other cases, individuals also worked to protect the image of the university through promotion activities. For example, one team member suggested that “from a protocol standpoint, it might be good for you to get [a copy of a manuscript] in the hands of the chancellor. They’ll probably see it anyway.” In this case, sharing the document would help to promote the ideas in it to specific people as well as protect the university from criticism if the manuscript were to have been received indirectly. In another case, the same team member used the same dualistic tactic. He informed the team that he had given “[a copy of the university magazine] to each legislator. I sent a note that we use this extensively in fundraising so that they don’t think we spend too much on money on publications.” His actions suggest that he was both promoting the work of the university by sharing the publication, while protecting it from criticism of over-spending from an important constituency.

These examples reflect how the team was trying to both promote its ideas to important actors, while simultaneously protecting themselves against criticism. These activities were not always distinct. As with much of this team’s other boundary spanning, these two activities tended to overlap when the external environment was the focus of their attention, particularly the media and state legislators.

Conclusion

The members of this presidential leadership team did fulfill some information and political management functions. However, their roles involved little intentional preparation for meetings – a form of search. Team members did present a wide variety of information to the team at each meeting and engaged in some interpretation to help team

members engage with that information. They relied primarily on team meetings as opportunities to seek information from one another, rather than to guide their daily activities in support of the university's goals. Furthermore, the team fulfilled a multi-purpose representation function that emphasized promotion and protection, especially towards the external environment. However, the literature on boundary spanning suggests that many team members could have been doing more to use their capacity to address the organization's goals, particularly by maintaining a focus on their strategic goals.

Of particular interest in considering the boundary-spanning behavior of these team members is that certain individuals consistently engaged in what most of the existing literature suggests they should in terms of information management and political management. These individuals seemed to engage in a wider range of boundary-spanning activities and to focus on relevant, goal-related information. These findings suggest that there was a clear distinction among several subgroups in this team based both on the president's expectations and individuals' actions.

Boundary-spanning efforts are intended to improve decision making, particularly related to team goals. Therefore, in order to better understand their efforts, it is important to explore whether the team created opportunities to debate and discuss information in support of decision making. In the next chapter, I discuss the extent to which team members' activities resulted in opportunities to use information, as well as their success with achieving political management outcomes.

CHAPTER 6: TEAM OUTCOMES – UNFINISHED BRIDGES

Effective presidential teams act in ways that allow problems or issues to be examined from multiple points of view and along more than one value dimension (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993, p. 42).

According to my argument in Chapter 3, boundary spanners can help presidents to manage both information and politics in order to help teams to progress towards their goals. Theories of group effectiveness suggest that opportunities for the team to debate and discuss information can improve decision making. Boundary spanning can also help teams to acquire resources and political legitimacy and to improve organizational visibility. This chapter draws on my observations of team meetings to examine how well the presidential leadership team I studied accomplished these two goals of boundary-spanning teams. I found that the team achieved few information management outcomes but had moderate success in achieving political outcomes, particularly relation to the university's external environment.

Information use

The literature on leadership teams suggests that their promise lies in their ability not only to access information, but also to use that information. Examining how this team used information in its meetings, I found that while team members delivered a great deal of information each week, not all of the information was discussed and only a small fraction was actually used in decision making. In my observations of weekly team meetings, I noticed that team members did not regularly engage in discussion of, and never debated, the information that individuals delivered. This suggests that this was not

a real team, as defined by Bensimon and Neumann (1993), because they did not engage in cognitive activities, but rather served a utilitarian function. Most decisions were made by the president rather than by the team as a whole. Also, most discussion and decisions generated in the meeting were operational, rather than strategic, in nature. When team members did deliberate, discussions were sometimes goal related, but other issues engaged the team's time as well.

Information used

As noted in Chapter 5, team members brought a great deal of information to weekly meetings. However, only a small part of that information generated discussion or decisions. Information that was in fact used in team meetings typically followed one of two routes.

One route was when a team member explicitly invited others to participate in a discussion through linguistic prompts by asking for feedback, approval, or assistance on issues. Some of these intentional requests for feedback were directly related to the team's primary goals. For example, one team member leading the management consulting project looked to the team for thoughts about how to start the process. He explained, "We were thinking about how we should launch – major kickoff, quietly start subgroups, or have a major meeting after some initial findings. We're leaning towards the latter." He then asked for the team's input. The same team member was also charged with the reorganization of the enrollment function and shortly thereafter presented a plan to the team. "We realized the collective wisdom of this group. [The vice provost for

enrollment] is going to present to you a reorganization for enrollment and get your feedback.”

At other times, team members used the meeting as an opportunity to ask for input on issues not related to the organization’s primary goals. For example, when one team member wanted to send a \$1.5 million request for computer hardware to the university’s board, he asked the whole team to approve this request after presenting his rationale. In another example, a team member raised a question about FERPA¹ that drew on the legal and technology expertise of certain team members.

However, team members also prompted discussion on less complex topics. For example, the team discussed what to do about memorial fund for a board member, a potential location for a new boardroom, and who to nominate for a regional leadership program. While most of these questions were not related to the team’s primary goals, the team meeting was likely a convenient and expedient forum for raising these issues as they drew on the knowledge and experience of multiple team members.

The second route to discussion was when the information presented relied on the input of a single team member. For example, one team member asked how to replace computers in a particular department:

We’re doing our computer rollovers and we need to replace nine in the lab for athletics and that reports directly to you, sir. We need some money for that; it doesn’t qualify for tech fees because it doesn’t serve all students.

¹ The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records ("Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)," 2007).

Similarly, another team member asked about the specifics of the refreshment policy:

TM1: One thing – the refreshment policy. We are asking people to itemize receipt at restaurant. Do we need that?

TM2: Yes.

TM1: To what extent do we need to enforce that?

TM2: You've got to have enough to prove how much and if there was alcohol, what business purpose was and who went. So must have the receipt for potential audit. The form has a block for it if you don't.

TM1: What would you suggest?

TM2: It's really the fiscal officers that need to control this and we told them at the last meeting in October.

These examples neither addressed the team's primary goals nor required the entire team to generate an answer, thereby using the team's time in less efficient ways. These questions were almost always asked by members of the peripheral group, suggesting that they may have not have had or created other opportunities to address these questions to their colleagues on an individual basis outside of team meetings.

I also observed that discussions occurred when a topic had what one individual referred to as "traction," in other words when a topic generated interest among some team members. In contrast to the information that was not used at all, most of the information delivered to the team that generated discussion without the need for questions or requests was related to one of the four strategic goals or to ongoing systemic or environmental issues. However, when discussions did occur around these topics, participation was generally limited to conversations with the president and one or two other team members. This pattern was further enhanced by my observation that those who participated were part of the core or expert subgroups within the team.

The team did use information related to some, but not all, primary goal areas.

Team members rarely discussed information related to the campus infrastructure or partnership goals. However, the goal of increasing enrollment was highlighted or mentioned more than any other topic as indicated by its regular appearance on the team's weekly "agenda." Over the course of nine months, the team discussed potential organizational problems behind both undergraduate and graduate recruiting, opportunities to market summer programs, potential student populations, the quality of admitted students, admissions standards, advising processes, midterm grades, available funding, and consulting projects—all connected to the larger goal of increasing enrollment. Furthermore, enrollment was the focus of two of three topics at the team retreat during this case. This consistent pattern throughout the case lends some support to the president's assumption that "everybody knows what the agenda is anyway...because it's enrollment...just in case anybody missed it." Notably, the team engaged in more discussions about enrollment more frequently after the president had shifted responsibility for that unit from a member of the periphery to a member of the core subgroup.

While the team engaged in several discussions that generated ideas about how to best represent the university to the press, the university's overall image was rarely a topic of discussion. Throughout my observations, I identified very few instances when team members discussed how to improve the university's image or current initiatives designed to accomplish this goal. In one example, a team member generated some discussion on this topic when he noted that he had been in a meeting about "why public higher education doesn't have more support from public officials [at which] a long list of ways we've screwed up [was presented].... I need you to help me think through a strategy."

More frequently, when team members mentioned anything about the university's image, it was generally limited to a comment about an external actors' lack of recognition for the university, but was not followed by any discussion about how to address the issue.

In addition to goal-related topics, I noticed that team members frequently discussed threats and opportunities, particularly with regard to state government and the university's human resources. Throughout the case, members of the team discussed several pieces of legislation that would adversely impact the university, budget cuts, and legislators' perceptions of higher education. For example, at one meeting a team member announced that he had learned about a piece of upcoming legislation that would negatively affect the university:

[The bill] is saying that each public university ought to redirect funding...15% to support the promising area of your doctoral program. We are very small players compared to [other state universities]. It's also open to independents and privates.... Problem for us is that you have to move money from one program to another. We have so few, moving from one to another at the doctoral level means moving colleges. Moving money might affect accreditation. Several provosts are talking about taking away from education. That's why the coordination has to be done. House bill did not say you have to participate, but the spirit is that everyone participates.

This announcement kicked off a discussion about the philosophical issues with the bill, how it would impact the university, and how to avoid participation.

Similarly, human resources also occupied the team's time as they discussed the reasons for employee departures, strategies for intervening in the loss of talent, or impending retirements. For example, a vice president shared:

At the strategic planning session we went to, one of the issues was the number of people retiring in the next few years because of the baby boomer bubble. There was a question about what we were doing to prepare our departments to not lose institutional history and issues of

succession, but our policies go against succession. The other issues – I’ve shared this with the president already – but I’ve got a printout for each of the VPs. It’s illegal to ask if someone is retiring, but you can probably figure out. Theoretically one-third of our workforce turning over. A lot of senior positions. The piece in the strategic plan that this is something we need to address is real.

These examples highlight that, perhaps as much as the university’s goals, concerns with the legislature and human resources captured team members’ attention and generated discussion.

Perhaps because much of the information team members presented was not used or because discussions occurred around particular topics, I noticed in my observations that only a small segment of the team regularly engaged in discussion. One vice president shared his view of this limited participation:

I don’t think [the president] opens up a topic for discussion that he doesn’t know that one of us is going to take it someplace, and it’s generally going to be [a particular vice president or myself], I guess, who’s going to jump on the ball and go someplace with it.

Members of the core and external experts subgroups would nearly always contribute ideas or opinions to discussions, regardless of the topic, while peripheral and task specialists would usually contribute only when the issue was related to their area of responsibility. As one core team member said:

I think I’m willing to offer an observation or an insight without really maybe having a special knowledge-base, and can ask questions and have asked questions about: “Well, wait a minute. What’s the impact of that once we start to talk about it outside of the affected area? Is there a public relations opportunity or down-side--problem if we were to go one way or the other?” And I think those are my--I do try to contribute those. And I think, in general, I’m--of the things that--especially the ones that I’m a little more familiar with--I think everybody speaks from their comfort zone, typically. But I’d like to think that I bring some sense of critical thinking into some of the things.

My observations confirmed that the core and external expert subgroups were more likely to participate in nearly any topic presented at team meetings, but that the peripheral group in particular had notably limited participation in discussions and decisions about organizational issues.

Information not used

I observed during the team's weekly meetings that team members presented a wide variety of information. While some of this information was discussed and some smaller portion used in decision making, much of that information went unused, meaning that the team did not engage in discussion or debate about it. In some cases, the team forum was an opportune time to share important information with everyone it affected, without a need for discussion. Sometimes information did not impact other team members or the team's goals and therefore did not generate discussion. Finally, some information was related to the team's primary goals, but the team still did not use that information for discussion or decisions. I also observed which team members were most likely to present information or engage in discussion.

First, unused information about general organizational operations may have been important to share in the team environment because of its potential impact on individual team members and their staffs. Some of the information that individuals presented to the team each week was likely not intended to generate discussion, such as announcements about university-wide computer hardware or software upgrades, budget updates, and human resource policy and benefits changes. In addition to these broad-based announcements, other information pertained directly to individuals on the team, such as

reminders about upcoming board meeting and announcements of major event at which team members were expected to be present. While this type of information could have been discussed, the information that team members delivered implied that decisions had already been made.

A second type of unused information was announcements that did not appear to affect team members, their units, or the team's overall goals. This information typically included personnel departures or changes, notices or reviews of departmental programs, and other minor issues, but its relevance seemed to be limited to the presenter's division. For example, at one meeting a vice president shared the following statement:

Mural is in the lobby tonight. Hispanic Awareness Week is next week. We'll work around the time conflict [with another event]. It's not attracting the same people. [A member of the division] is going to be out for a month...we're just juggling to cover.

Another vice president shared that his office was "sending out Happy Thanksgiving cards to donors at certain level. It's a good time of year to say 'thank you.' It's not in place of a December card, but it's meant to complement." At another meeting, a team member informed the team that his division was "trying to revise our schedule to catch the March [board] meeting for tenure decisions. It's not going to be easy, but we'll handle it." While this type of information could have been discussed, those who delivered the information did not indicate that they needed, and other team members did not initiate, discussion.

Some portion of unused information was related to the team's primary goals. This included items such as updates on enrollment numbers, potential partnerships, construction, and mentions of the university in the local media. Most noticeably, the team rarely used information related to two of its primary goals – improving the university's

physical infrastructure and developing partnerships – in any substantial way during its meetings. Nearly all of the instances of the physical infrastructure being mentioned in team meetings consisted of the vice president responsible for that area—a member of the core subgroup—delivering updates. For example, at one meeting he informed the team that the board had approved “the document for the parking garage. They will go concurrently and be done [next summer]. It’s all a shell game to come under budget with two projects opening at the same time.” At another meeting, he shared that he had already taken action on items:

We sent out the letter for the board resolution. We did get a report back about the science center site search. Consultants have come up with [an existing building] as the prime site for [the project]. That’s going to the board.... We also selected a development consultant, per the board’s request.

In another example, his announcement clearly would impact a broad range of people, but did not include a discussion:

We’ve asked units [such as student life and enrollment] to cut back [on space use]. Our goal is to get enrollment back out [into a more visible location]. We think that all of student life needs to be in the student center, not bifurcated. We’ve asked people to cooperate, and we understand the need for expansion for some offices. We’ve got one month to go to complete the design if we’re going to meet the goal of having it done in [next summer]. I didn’t go below the level of vice provost on this one – you guys work it out. Eventually the buck stops at the president’ office. Right now, I’m the bad guy, but.... One of the memos I sent out said “the president’ says . . .”

This core team member seemed to manage building projects, city relations, and property acquisition without any input from the team.

Similarly, the team often heard from members of the external experts subgroup about the status of various partnerships, another primary goal for the university. For

example, one of these team members announced that he had been talking with a potential partner:

I spent some time with [a foundation] who is going to handle [our area]. I've given [their representative] all of the information.... She's going to be here two to three days a week for quite some time. They've got over \$1 million in the district that has not been spent. We're dealing with issues of how to run the program [and the] transition to a new CEO....

At another meeting, the same team member shared information about a different project that also went unused:

I'm slogging through a lot of details of [a partnership]. I've been working with [an individual] on how much money we need to do [the project]. I haven't been able to get some of the things we need. Things are slowly falling in to place, but it's just a lot of meetings.

On yet another project, another vice president shared that “[a corporation] had approached [the university] about how they could support economic development here. We're helping them out with their relationship with [another organization] so the *quid pro quo* is coming back.” This pattern of unused information related to these two organizational goals suggests that discussions and decisions about improving the university's infrastructure and developing partnerships occurred outside of the team's meeting. A comment by one team member lent support to my observation:

I don't think the important issues that the University takes on really come through that group. As I said, there's not a discussion about an issue at those meetings. It's more a matter of what you're doing, and so I don't think that's a group that has all that much to say about what the priorities of the institution are or the directions that the institution's going.

These patterns and statements reflect the team's perceptions that the meetings were for the benefit of keeping the president informed.

Nearly every team member contributed some information that was not discussed. When reflecting on a current meeting during an interview session, one team member summarized this as, “if I say I’ve got seven things, that means I don’t expect traction on these issues. This is just what I’m up and doing.” However, in my observations I discerned certain patterns to this behavior. In particular, members of the peripheral subgroup were more likely to deliver information related to only to their divisions. Members of the core and task specialist subgroups were more likely to deliver information that pertained to most team members or the university as a whole. Finally, members of the core or external experts subgroups were most likely to deliver goal-oriented information.

Decision-making processes

In order to understand how team members contributed to decisions, I documented decisions made when the team met (see Table 4). I limited my view to decisions made during meetings because I could observe both the decision-making process and which participants contributed. I observed which decisions were strategic, rather than operational, and related to the four key goals, as well as which generated discussion.

One of the first characteristics I noticed was that the president made the overwhelming majority of these decisions. This observation corresponded with the president’s view that decision making was not a part of this team’s role:

I don’t really rely on them so much for decisions as I do for advice about how we ought to be doing things here. And I expect them to say, “You know, if I were you, Mr. President, I would do thus-and-such,” or, “I’ve decided to do thus-and-such. Does that check out okay with you’?”

Table 4. Decisions in leadership team meetings

Meeting	Decision	Strategic	Discussion
1	Vice president receives approval from team to go to board with proposal for computer program funding	No	Yes
	Agreement that team members will decide who needs access to certain institutional information	No	No
2	President decided that he wants a team member involved in a proposal	No	No
	President decided that the university should pursue a fund or memorial for a deceased board member	No	Yes
3	Decision to delay public and internal announcement of a new partnership in order to have greatest impact in terms of media and legislature	Yes	Yes
	Decision to go ahead with an economic development project	Yes	No
4	President affirmed that he wants to pursue a personnel opportunity	No	Yes
	President affirmed decision to consider moving the board room	No	Yes
	President decided that the team should have a focused discussion about nonacademic program review	No	No
5	President decided that provost should pursue fellowship funding opportunity	No	Yes
	President decided that a team member can assume another team member's responsibilities for a computer lab	No	Yes
	President decided to let a college dean determine her capacity for a project	No	Yes
	President decided that the university needs to benchmark summer programming	No	Yes
6	President decided that a discussion about student quality needs to occur in conjunction with the enrollment office	No	No
	President decided on type of correspondence for a university publication	No	No
	President decided what slide show to present for a regent	No	No
	President decided that a faculty member could not have a leave without pay	No	No
7	President agrees with legal counsel that public affairs remain silent about a case	No	No
	President states that provost can explore marketing out-of-state career opportunities to prospective students	No	Yes
8	President made a variety of decisions regarding press release edits	No	Yes
9	President decided that a partnership agreement event needed to be rescheduled	No	No
10	President decided that a VP should put out an RFP for a consultant	No	Yes
11	President agreed that the university should engage a consultant for a legal case	No	No
	President decided that another institution cannot have an event banner on campus	No	No
12	President agreed to keep web development in-house rather than use a consultant	No	No
	President announced decision about leadership of a consulting project	No	No
13	Team assisted a VP in a decision about an alert message regarding recent vandalism	No	Yes

14	Vice president decided to give an external group free access after team members stated that it would not be problematic	No	No
15	President decided to give deans an abridged copy of a consultant's report	No	Yes
16	President decided that students can not waive an introductory course, disagreeing with a VP, and that the provost could take it to a faculty senate committee	No	Yes
	President decided that a vice president could explore a joint program partnership	No	Yes
17	No decisions	n/a	n/a
18	Team made decisions about who to include in consulting subgroups	Yes	Yes
	President decided to alter reporting lines of an employee from a vice provost to a vice president	No	Yes
	President decided that he and a team member should visit the county commissioner about legislation	No	No
	President decided that global education task force should be re-appointed	No	No
19	President decided that a team member should call the mayor's office regarding a group's planned protest	No	Yes
20	President decided that the university should start marketing a faculty program	No	No
21	Team decided to send a president's letter and a dean's letter to admitted students	Yes	Yes
22	President decided to address advising with the deans	No	Yes
	President decided that classroom allocation would revert to the registrar	No	No
21	President decided that common hour should be eliminated	No	Yes
22	No decisions	n/a	n/a
23	President decided that naming opportunities should not go to the board without an identified donor	No	No
24	President decided that he would send a letter to faculty who don't submit freshmen midterm grades	No	Yes

Despite my observation that decisions were made at nearly every meeting, some team members perceived that decisions did not happen in that forum:

Decisions get made outside of the meeting ... by people with stronger opinions that then go to the president and say, "Hey, how about this?" And then he goes and brokers that or makes that decision, as opposed to making those decisions at and around the table.

When I asked other individuals about decision making, another team member admitted that this group was not necessarily involved in decisions about the university's goals, as the management literature suggests senior executives would be:

I can't think of anything that I would--I think the University's had some great accomplishments, but I can't think of one that you could clearly identify with that group, that came out of that. There's some great things happening here, but they don't really come out of that group.

I also noticed that none of these decisions were planned. In other words, they were all based on information that was brought to the meeting, rather than on a pre-determined issue. For example, one team member brought an issue about a course requirement to a team meeting:

TM1: I have a question about waiving the "Introduction to the University" course. Who can make decisions about waiving this course? This is a general ed requirement. If it goes to petitions committee, sometimes they act on it, other times they kickback to Deans. Some personnel changes and catalog changes have made it less clear. It is beneficial for new students, for freshmen. If you haven't taken it by junior year, it is not helpful. The university Petitions committee is concerned that some of the deans are waiving it. We really need some protocol or some clarity. I don't have an issue with deans waiving past a certain level, but there are no guidelines. Clearly we're not going to hold up graduation.

President: We're not?

TM1: Why would you hold up graduation of an honors student?

President: Answer is because I don't want to.

TM1: OK.

President: Telling them that they'll look silly taking it as a senior.

TM2: It's got to back to petition committee and they have to come up with protocol; I'd be happy to remind them.

President: I think that's right – let the senate wrestle with it; waiving these courses should be for a really extraordinary reason.

TM1: In the old Bulletin individual colleges MAY offer an orientation course.

President: And that says colleges are departments.

TM1: Yes.

President: This is a University requirement.

- TM1: But it's under gen ed; they need to look at the language; I'm trying to get a sense of how many students over the last few years.
- TM2: Send it to gen ed and petition committee; we don't know what they'll say; they may say get rid of it.
- President: That would be a mistake; let's get this to admissions and standards.

This situation exemplifies many of the decisions that occurred at team meetings. A team member would raise an issue or a question, sometimes a few people might interject comments, and then the president made a decision. There were few occasions when team members had advance notice of a decision point and could search for relevant information. This demonstrates that the president did not use this team in ways that optimized their boundary-spanning activities to improve decision making.

Furthermore, the president did not typically bring issues to the table for the purpose of making a decision. Decisions always stemmed from information that another team member brought to the table, suggesting that the team meeting was an opportunity for individuals to get answers rather than as a mechanism to help the president with decision making. For example, at one meeting a team member raised a practical issue that pertained only to the president:

- TM1: Other items – we signed admissions agreement with [a community college]. They want a ceremony – but they want to have it at same time as ceremony with [another university].
- President: No, I don't want to get lost in the shuffle. I'll be sick that day.

Similarly, in another example, the team member only needed a response from the president on a practical issue:

- TM1: ACE came here for [a project] and went away with a good impression. You may remember that we were part of an ACE

project two years ago, and we had a task force. Will try to tie it in more with general education. The committee could be terminated, but they are asking to continue until further decisions are made.

President: Why don't you reappoint for a year.

In many instances, issues like these probably did not need everyone's input and decisions were often made in bi-lateral conversations. This illustrates that the president did not use full potential of the team to contribute information in support of decisions.

Throughout the case, I heard about only one example that any team member could recall when the team had challenged the president's thinking on an issue and changed his mind about a decision. This example had occurred prior to my observation of the team.

As the president described to me on two separate occasions:

I had gone in there pretty much thinking that that was not the moment to do that, that financially we were a little shaky, and it might be a little risky. And it would be risky because we couldn't put much in the way of graduate business courses in there. And they turned me around on it, saying, "This is not the time to be faint of heart, sir." And they were right. As it turned out, they were right.

When I asked a vice president whether the team had ever challenged the president, he mentioned this same example that the president had mentioned:

We were going to postpone going to the [initiative] another year, and I adamantly disagreed with it. And we changed it at that table. That was kind of neat. It was an about-face after we revisited it again.

I interpreted this repeated recollection of the same example to mean that this instance was particularly memorable because team members rarely shared divergent viewpoints or influenced the president's decision.

Nature of discussion and decisions

While the discussions that occurred during team meetings sometimes focused on issues related to some of the primary goals, these were rarely of a strategic nature. Decisions were also overwhelmingly procedural or routing rather than strategic. In other words, the team's interactions were seldom, if ever, characterized by issues that were non-routine, precedent-setting, interdependent, long-range, or involving a significant commitment of resources (Eisenhardt & Zbaracki, 1992; Mintzberg et al., 1976). Instead they spent much of their weekly meeting time talking about operational issues that were more reflective of routine or logistical issues.

One team member's perceptions concurred with this observation:

I think that last year, in the last 12 months at least, I don't think we really made any monumental decisions. Mostly it was pecking away at little annoying things that just didn't get resolved and still haven't resolved, like the retention issue problem and how we're going to deal with that, and we still haven't resolved. I mean we've been discussing for more than a year the e-learning initiative. Put it on the shelf, brought it back off the shelf....

There were two exceptions to this pattern of operational, rather than strategic, decisions. Notably, these discussions were some of the few that directly related to the team's strategic goals. In one example, the team discussed whom from the team and other parts of the university to include in campus-based subgroups for a project with a management consultant. The entire team had an extended discussion about the skills and perspectives of a variety of individuals and where their talents might best serve the project. The second example was the team's discussion about the use of a president's and a provost's letter to incoming students. Again, most of the team participated in a discussion of a process and timeline for these letters to be sent to admitted students. What

I noticed about these two examples was that they both involved a discussion among most of team members and that I could not clearly identify the president as the decision maker. However, I did not observe that these decisions were based on debate or the generation of alternatives.

I also observed that strategic, rather than operational, discussions occurred at the team's retreat. Specifically, the team discussed the upcoming retirement boom and the opportunities that presented for the university, as well as the existence of thousands of individuals in the region with "some college, no degree" and how the university might meet their needs. Finally, they heard and discussed two proposals for the structure of an e-learning initiative.

However, at the retreat as throughout the 24 meetings I observed, I saw no examples of team members engaging in debate around issues. When two different proposals for the e-learning initiative were presented at the retreat, there was no debate about the strengths and weaknesses of each. Team members only asked some clarifying questions and offered some opinions. My observations at the retreat and in meetings suggested that team members were more likely to take an incremental or refining approach to topics, in which their participation was characterized by asking questions or providing suggestions about different aspects of an issue, rather than challenging ideas. Team members contributed to decision making only in an advisory capacity (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). This pattern may suggest that the team meeting served to legitimate the president's pre-determined or pre-approved choices. In other words, while this team had the potential to generate alternatives, they did not take advantage of that opportunity. Therefore, decisions that were made were likely not as innovative or inclusive as they

could have been.

Political management

Boundary spanners' political management is intended to help the team to acquire resources, keep the organization visible to external actors, and maintain or improve the university's position of power. (Aldrich & Herker, 1977). I expected to see evidence that the team's promotion and protection activities helped them to achieve at least some of these intended outcomes, especially in relation to their four primary goals. I relied on team members' statements about their success in these areas and examples that suggested that team members had influenced these outcomes. Throughout observations and interviews, I heard that team members' representational activities had varying levels of success in gaining support for some of their goals. I found that they were able to acquire some resources, had some success protecting their political legitimacy, and kept the organization visible to particular constituents. However, I observed that most of this progress was due to individuals' efforts in their positions in the university rather than to their participation in the presidential leadership team. While team members reported on their political accomplishments in team meetings, I found little evidence that their participation on the team influenced their political activities.

Resource acquisition

Team members had difficulty acquiring various types of resources that they sought. Despite their efforts to promote the university and protect current resources, the team experienced several setbacks. In particular, efforts to attract more students were less

successful than the team would have hoped. These difficulties were particularly notable because of the prominence of the university's goal of increasing enrollment. During a team meeting, one individual shared an example of this struggle:

We tried to attend an information session at [a local manufacturing plant], and they said they don't want to open to just one university...[other universities and colleges were there]. A bit of a surprise. We thought we would recruit to graduate programs, but most people there were in their late 50s, they were looking for job skills, not certificates or degrees. We were disappointed. Something we did not expect.

I regularly observed less than promising news about their enrollment efforts at team meetings. One team member reported, "We lost 500 students this past year." Another shared, "We're 3.4% behind from last year, 4.5% behind projected...on international students we have more applications and admissions, but we're a little short on enrollments." This situation was not helped by losses in their professional staff in the enrollment area. One team member described the difficulty he faced in trying to protect the university from these losses: "It's a hard time of year... [a local community college] is raiding her staff."

I also observed that the team had varying success with its efforts to acquire financial resources. As a public institution, the university was at least partially dependent on the state for funding, making these efforts particularly valuable. During observations, I often heard how the state's actions adversely impacted the university's financial resources. "The legislature did some bad things to us. Less money after three go-arounds...they just sent us an email telling us to lop off another \$1.5 million." This struggle seemed to be an ongoing issue, despite team members' efforts to promote the university's needs to legislators:

I'd like to have done better in the capital budget. Last year the state capital budget, we had some money we tried to get in there and couldn't pull it off, but nobody else got any either so I didn't feel quite so bad about it. But it would have been helpful to me and to the institution to have been able to produce some funding when nobody else got any. Couldn't do it.

However, team members were not entirely unsuccessful at acquiring resources to support university goals. Their boundary spanning efforts did result in the acquisition of consultants to assist the university with their enrollment efforts. For example, through the efforts of a particular team member, the team acquired *pro bono* consulting services to focus on the management and marketing of the enrollment function. As the team member described:

Then the President says, "Well, so what would you do?" And I said, "Well, if I had been in my former role at the [a local organization], I'd have picked up the phone, I would go to a general consultant like [a firm] here in town." The President said, "Yeah, but that would cost a couple hundred thousand dollars." I said, "No, I think we could probably get it done for *pro bono*." Essentially that's what I arranged. Not that there was magic with them, but it's an outside force which helps sort of shape and push things. I mean that is directly related to the fact that I've had this connection and have worked with them over a 30-year period, and I can do that.

While this consulting relationship and project was still ongoing at the time I completed data collection, it had already resulted in the realignment and restructuring of the university's enrollment function.

Another common form of financial resources in higher education is donations and gifts from alumni and other philanthropic sources. While there were both successes and failures in this area, I observed that the team members shared the positive news. As one team member would regularly report at meetings, they had "continued good news on the fundraising front. The president was able to secure a gift from [a donor]," "We got a \$2

million deferred gift,” or “We’ve gotten a couple of gifts in. \$150,000 from [abroad] for a scholarship in [a college].” However, in an interview the same team member was more likely to admit that “we were asking somebody for \$7.5 million, even though we were resoundly [*sic*] turned down” or “Our fundraising numbers were up...significantly over the previous year, but we acknowledge very quickly that that is basically in two big gifts.” Overall, these examples illustrate that team members’ boundary spanning resulted in limited success in promoting the university to donors.

Organizational visibility

As team members worked to promote the university and its goals, a second result of these efforts should be increased or improved organizational visibility for the university (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Friedman & Podolny, 1992). This potential outcome of team members’ boundary-spanning activities is also reflective of their strategic goal of improving the university’s image (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Jemison, 1984). My observations of this team suggested that they were particularly concerned with the university’s visibility among legislators, among prospective students, and with regional organizations. Based on my observations of the team, they had some success in their efforts to improve the visibility of the university.

The team’s efforts at increasing the university’s visibility among legislators were primarily handled by one team member. During an interview, he shared that the university’s “visibility, down state, isn’t what it ought to be, and having people from those areas and regions come up and see what we’re doing gives them a real fresh look at this place.” Through his efforts to bring visitors to campus and sharing information about

the university's accomplishments, he seemed to have had some success in changing that view. For example, he told that team "we got some very nice mentions in [a state paper] last week . . . this kind of attention is helpful because these things are widely read." In another example, "when we had that announcement here that led to a press conference, I had, I think, six legislators come over and sat in on that," further suggesting that this individual was having success in drawing positive attention to the university. It must be noted, however, that this individual was fulfilling his duties as a university leader and that I saw no evidence that the team contributed to this result.

Given the team's goal of improving enrollment, I would expect that the team's promotional efforts would have had a positive impact on the organizational visibility among prospective students (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Friedman & Podolny, 1992). I heard that, despite their difficulties with acquiring new students at the moment, there was some evidence that they were seeing success in their efforts to make the organization visible to the next group of students. One significant example was the creation of a partnership with local school systems, which the team viewed as an opportunity to strategically create visibility among future prospective students. While other efforts were smaller in scope, they still suggested that the team was successfully reaching more potential applicants. For example, one team member shared that "we were at an information session at [a local company] and over 300 people came." Another noted that in seven days on a Google-sponsored link, they had "2,340,000 pop ups [and] 1,200 click-throughs."

Political legitimacy

Boundary spanners' promotional and protective activities should also have resulted in the maintenance or improvement of their organization's authority and power. As with their efforts to acquire resources, this team had success in some areas but not in others. I observed that the team was most concerned with their power in relation to state government. At several points during this case, team members mentioned proposed or actual legislation that would adversely impact the university. For example, when the state wanted to redirect funding for doctoral programs in a way that would harm the university, one team member worked to promote the university's viewpoint on that issue and announced to the team that "we prevailed" on that issue. However, working to sway legislators did not always work, as when one team member reported that "[another team member] got nowhere with House members on [a transportation issue]."

I observed that the team seemed to face an ongoing battle and onslaught of legislation that had the potential to derail their goals of improving their image, updating facilities, increasing enrollment, and developing partnerships. This environment might explain why the president felt that it was important to have someone in government relations on his team:

[The government relations expert is] the single most respected higher ed lobbyist in [the state]. He had worked for the [a governing board] for a long time, [and another state university].... He walks around the statehouse and everybody [knows him].

I expected that this individual's boundary-spanning activity would result in improved legislative influence for the university. However, as one team member told me:

We've not been successful in getting the legislature, lately, to react to any of the things that don't make sense to us, like not having the ability to do

design-build. So we'll do a work-around like, if I let [another state agency] build it for me, they don't have the same rules as I do. They can do design-build. I just have to lease them a piece of land, tell them to build me a parking garage and give it back to me when you're done. So that's a work-around. So I have to call a bunch of attorneys to make sure you can do that, and it looks like we probably can. So you have to figure out a creative way to get around it.

This example shows how team members helped to maintain the university's autonomy to achieve its infrastructure goal by finding an alternative route. Once again, however, it is not clear that either the government relations expert or the team member who found the "work-around" drew from the expertise and input of the team as a whole; rather, they were acting in their respective university roles.

While external actors are important constituents, organizational leaders must also achieve political legitimacy closer to home. In this case, I observed that only a few team members specifically worked to promote the primary goals within the university community. While I heard team members talk about improved morale on campus since the president's arrival, when I spoke with other campus constituents, I heard that many constituents felt left out of the university's decision making process.

As I spoke with individuals across the university, I heard several comments from faculty, students, and staff members that suggested that these constituents did not respect the university leadership's use of authority. While I heard reports from team members that the university community's morale and optimism was higher than anytime in recent memory, I also heard from constituents that they did not feel included in or informed about important aspects of the university's future.

One faculty member noted, "I can't think of a case in which an administrator took the initiative and said, 'This issue is coming up. We should talk about it'." A student

shared similar concerns that “we’re doing a lot of strategic planning, a lot of renovation, a lot of forward thinking in terms of 10, 15, 50 years from now. I don’t think students are aware of what we’re doing.” In particular, several people noted their exclusion from development of the vision statement, upon which many of the leadership team’s goals are based:

[The president] came up with [the vision statement]. And it was top-down. No faculty were involved. No department chairs were involved. Nobody knew what was going on. Everybody came back in the fall. There was [the vision statement].... And so people got real--their backs got up and they just went, “This is not right.” ... I think the thing that people didn’t like about [the vision statement] is that they weren’t involved in planning it, as opposed to a specific piece.

I heard that this lack of inclusion led to what one campus member referred to as “a distrust of how those kinds of decisions are made. You know, people really love [the president’s] ideas. He’s a visionary, and he’s done great things for this university. But they also go, “Well, how did that happen?” These sentiments may suggest that, while the team seemed to have a strong focus on managing relationships and power structures outside of the university, they were less successful internally. As one team member noted, “I think we’re doing better outside than we get credit for inside. I think we have a better perception outside than we do inside.”

Conclusion

This team’s boundary-spanning activity resulted in mixed outcomes. In this case, while the team participated in decision making, they typically focused on procedural issues. Furthermore, the team setting was not regularly used as forum for discussion,

suggesting that they were not a real team. In other words, the meeting was primarily a setting for individuals, rather than the group as a team, to act. This was an unexpected outcome, given the variety of expertise and background that could have been used to generate ideas and contribute to decision making. While the purpose of this study did not encompass an evaluation of the quality of decisions, the lack of debate and discussion suggests that they could have made better decisions by incorporating different perspectives into their processes.

The team was somewhat successful at fulfilling their political management functions. They acquired some human and financial resources, developed some political power, and kept the organization visible, particularly among external constituents. However, for the most part their political activities stemmed from their particular roles in the university rather than from their participation in the president's team. Their focus in these activities was primarily external and they seemed to constantly struggle to successfully promote and protect the university from state interference.

The team's success or failure in achieving some of the expected outcomes can be at least partially understood by the choices they make and the conditions they face. Given these outcomes, what might explain what helped them to be effective in some areas? By viewing individual and team actions as an indication of what they consider to be appropriate, we can begin to understand how those choices either helped or hindered their boundary-spanning activities and outcomes.

CHAPTER 7: HELPS AND HINDRANCES – A SHAKY FOUNDATION

To act appropriately is to proceed according to the institutionalized practices of a collectivity, based on mutual, and often tacit, understandings of what is true, reasonable, right, and good (March & Olsen, 2004, p. 4).

Boundary spanners face certain conditions that can impact their information and political management activities. My conceptual framework suggested that uncertainty, ambiguity, multiple roles, diverse identities, and power all have the potential to help or hinder boundary-spanning members of a presidential leadership team, but did not indicate which of these factors were likely to be more or less prominent in this case. In this chapter, I draw primarily on my observations of team functioning, as well as team members' perceptions, to show that uncertainty, differing perceptions, diverse identities, and power provided significant hindrances. These conditions also supported team members' efforts at boundary spanning, particularly related to information management. I did not find evidence to suggest that ambiguity or multiple roles had particularly significant influences on this team; however, the president seemed to have a discernable and equivocal impact on team members' abilities to fulfill a boundary-spanning function. When faced with these conditions, team members relied on their past experiences and their concern for legitimacy to guide their behaviors.

Uncertainty

Uncertainty is a condition that results from a lack of information that an individual needs in order to take action. This condition can hinder boundary spanners if information is inaccessible, or if the information gathered to combat uncertainty is

irrelevant (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978). However, if individuals do not access more information, uncertainty can lead to a dependence on unproductive routines, such as attending only to one's familiar responsibilities rather than learning new skills. The presence of uncertainty in the environment can help boundary spanners to avoid a "commitment to the status quo" (Geletkanycz & Black, 2001) and an ineffective reliance on past knowledge and experience (Honig, 2006).

The members of this presidential leadership team did face uncertainty. While they knew that weekly meeting occurred and the meeting's typical routine, this information did not help them to determine what actions they should take, specifically to perform boundary-spanning functions. In particular, one of the first aspects I noticed about this team as I started observing their weekly meetings was the lack of a formal, written agenda. This information could have decreased uncertainty by providing additional information to guide team members' boundary-spanning activities. When I asked the president about this aspect of the team's functioning, he responded that everyone "should know" what the agenda is, "because it's enrollment." However, my observations of team meetings and interviews with team members suggested that many of them were not aware of this focus. The lack of an agenda instead increased uncertainty and likely hindered their ability to both search for and use information.

In contrast to the weekly lack of an agenda, approximately halfway through the academic year, the entire leadership team went off-site for one day to discuss three pre-determined, specific issues: retirements, prospective students, and e-learning. I noticed that, in addition to having a pre-planned agenda, the structure and process of this retreat was noticeably different from the team's typical meeting. Specifically, I observed that

individuals presented more relevant information and that more team members participated in discussions. In other words, team members had information for which they had searched in preparation for this particular meeting. Furthermore, the meeting process in this instance appeared to help the team take action, or use information, because they were more certain of the agenda and focused on specific issues rather than individual reports. The lack of a regular meeting agenda appeared to create a situation in which team members lacked information to guide their behavior during and between meetings.

Uncertainty about the agenda and purpose of the meeting was exacerbated by the existence of a second weekly meeting. In addition to meeting on Friday mornings, this same group of individuals also met every Monday afternoon with the addition of a few more senior staff members. When I asked the president about this schedule, he replied that the Monday meeting served as a means to access additional information, but that he relied on it only out of habit, having inherited the structure from his predecessor, and that he did not consider it that important:

The Monday meeting has a number of people in there who are called members of the senior staff. Some of them are direct reports. That's the way I inherited the structure. I don't care about it that much. It's a place where the vice-presidents then get to hear from some other people about other issues, and so do I. The athletic director is in there, my assistant's in there . . . some other people. But the idea is to get more voices heard about other things. It's really a less-important meeting than the Friday meeting.

When I asked team members about the different purposes of these meetings, at least half of the team indicated that there was “not a whole lot [of difference] . . . Monday can be a recap of Friday.” Team members indicated that they had “difficulty distinguishing between the two of them,” that it was “basically the same group of people meeting twice

a week for the same purpose” and that the meetings seemed “to be redundant.” During an interview, one team member tried make sense of the two meetings:

Well, in many respects there’s not a lot of difference. I think we probably hold a little more of the detail back a little bit on Monday. And we don’t get into--the issues are a little bit more on the--I won’t say surface, but they’re not as deep down in at times, I guess. We might talk a little bit more strategy on Fridays, as opposed to on Mondays it’s more round-robin sort of reporting on things. And I’ve been thinking about--and I don’t know what [the president’s] view is on these two meetings, but I wonder what the effect would be of skipping one of them.

Team members did not know how to respond to the existence of two similar meetings on their weekly schedules.

The uncertainty that this team faced about the content of their weekly meetings hindered their ability to fulfill their boundary-spanning functions. They were missing information that could have helped them to understand how to behave between and during team meetings, specifically the types of information to search for and deliver. Through my observations of team meetings, I found that team members presented a multitude of information, on a variety of topics, much of which was not used by the team. The team did not necessarily hear information related to the university’s goals, and therefore could not discuss or make decisions about these goals. Instead, team members acted on the information that they did have, which tended to be divisional or short-term in nature and related to their weekly responsibilities rather than focused on long-term, strategic goals.

The lack of an agenda may have also contributed to a lack of focus during meetings, therefore hindering information use through discussion. The lack of a focus on

specific agenda items also did not support a team process in which specific, goal-related information needed to be accessed or discussed. As one vice president articulated:

The interesting weakness [about the meeting structure] is you don't have a strategic focus that's consistent throughout the year. The strength is the fact that it's pretty fluid, and anything can come up, and that's the best way of giving the President a wide range of intelligence, both internal and external. So that form in the meeting really works, and it acts as a personality.

Consistent with my conceptual framework, in order to manage this uncertainty, team members relied on information management routines with which they had experience. In particular, because team members lacked focus and intentionality to their search activities prior to meetings, they relied instead on recent, rather than goal-related, information to deliver to the team as evidenced by the lack of effort they expended to prepare for meetings. Most team members also relied heavily on routine and familiar sources of information, such as their typical meetings, even though they were ineffective from a boundary-spanning perspective. Most importantly, no authorities or role models indicated that their behavior was not legitimate, so team members had no impetus to change their approach to meetings. Team members did not appear to receive either incentives or sanctions that would prompt them to take more time to prepare for their weekly meetings, which further legitimized team members' behaviors.

Despite the uncertainty, to some extent group norms for discussion seemed to help focus attention on relevant information. My observation of meeting themes and discussions suggested that team members attempted to overcome the hindrance of uncertainty by filtering and attending to information related to the university's goals. Specifically, I noticed that information presented to the team that was also relevant to

team goals was more likely to lead to discussion among some members. What they chose – or to what they attended to as a team – was an indicator of what they considered to be important topics. Team members may have interpreted these topics as appropriate to pursue. This pattern suggests that information had legitimacy in terms of the topic, its urgency, and its relevance to the team.

Consistent with arguments that rationality is “bounded” by prior experience and knowledge, decision makers are likely to remain committed to existing policies and practices (Hambrick et al., 1993). In other words, individuals are unlikely to change their meeting practices because they lack any information that would indicate that they should behave differently. The conceptual framework suggests that when team members recognized the situation as a team meeting they exhibited certain behaviors based on the information they had. In this case, the members of this team provided examples of many different behaviors in their weekly meeting, ranging from making announcements to presenting goal-related information, suggesting that there were multiple interpretations of what constituted appropriate and legitimate behavior.

Differing perceptions

As I described in Chapter 3, ambiguity is the existence of multiple alternatives which are imprecisely defined or that have opposing interpretations (March, 1994). Ambiguity can help organizational decision makers by creating choices about how to interpret information or situations. As with other conditions that individuals face in organizations, ambiguity can also hinder the ability to fulfill their roles by leading to

information overload or by creating conflict among decision makers who hold differing interpretations.

While I did not find clear evidence of ambiguity, I did detect a related condition in this case. Specifically, as I talked with individual team members, I noticed different perceptions among them about the purpose of team meetings and about what type of information was appropriate to deliver to the team.

Not all team members perceived the purpose of the meeting in the same way that the president did. The president's description of the team meeting focused on team members sharing information with one another. Many team members, however, expressed their understanding with an emphasis on "keeping the president informed" rather than sharing information and engaging in discussion with their colleagues. Only a few individuals viewed the team's weekly meetings as an opportunity to raise issues for discussion.

Team members also presented different interpretations about the type of information that should be shared at the meeting. For example, one core subgroup member said:

Any kind of a decision that impacts priorities, as we talked about before, should come to that table.... I think anything that we couldn't resolve on our own should come to that table... I mean, sometimes you've just got to get a third party in to look at it from a broader perspective.

Similarly, another team member stated that he viewed the purpose of the team meeting this way:

I think to be able to sift up to the presidential level problems that need to be dealt with in a basis broader than just my division. I would assume that in most cases, I should be in a position where I can solve my problems within my division, but sometimes I want to solve them in coordination

with other people's needs, which is the smart thing to do, so that you would throw it up for their discussion.... I mean if somebody's got problems in their department, fix them. But if it doesn't affect me, I don't need to know what all the events were that are happening. There's a calendar to do that. I would like, I guess, the meeting were productive, if more of the issues that came up at these meetings were things where, "I got some problems in my division and I'm stumped about how to solve them."

While these two interpretations closely reflected the president's intentions for the meeting, another team member expressed what I had observed in meetings:

I mean, people often times bring a problem to the table that really isn't very well thought through. . . . In my point of view, I think a lot of detail comes to the table that shouldn't. I think there's a lot of stuff brought to that table that doesn't deserve time with all us. I think anything related to keeping the president and the other staff members informed with major issues deserves to come to that table.

Another team member observation echoed this sentiment, as he commented that some information was not an appropriate use of the team's time, particularly because it lacked a broad focus on the university and its goals:

We sort of self prioritize what we think is important for the rest of the group to know, and some people, I think, don't. They just tell you everything that they have on their mind. I guess if I were the President, I would have a more entire agenda, in terms of, "I don't want to hear about how you discipline[d] somebody last week. I want to hear about what it is that we need to know that enters into the overall major decisions of the University. If you want to tell me about your problems in your own division, schedule a half hour with me."

As another team member stated during an interview:

So you're just sitting around listening [to] discussion about the quality they're finding in the student newspaper. I'm sitting here saying, 'What the hell is the hourly rate being devoted [to]? How much cost is being devoted to this really bizarre little subject?'

These comments and my observations suggested that team members held different views about what type of information was appropriate to deliver at the weekly meeting, and also provided clues to the presence of affective conflict within the team.

While these examples cannot clearly be defined as ambiguity, the effects of differing perceptions were comparable. The dissimilarity among team members regarding the purpose of the meeting and the types of information they should deliver hindered their boundary-spanning activities by creating a situation in which the team was overloaded with information and also by creating affective conflict. Specifically, team members brought a great deal of information that varied in terms of its relevance to goals and the need for the team forum. However, very little of this information was used by the team for a discussion or a decision. While more information can improve the quality of decisions, when the amount of information available exceeds the ability to process that information, information overload occurs and information goes unused (Eppler & Mengis, 2004; Galbraith, 1974; O'Reilly, 1980; Tushman & Nadler, 1978). In this case, the amount of information that was expected each week appeared to reduce the team's ability to actually use any.

The team's ability to process or use information was further hindered by their differing perceptions of their roles and team meetings. These differences formed a basis for affective conflict as team members personalized approaches to the meeting that were different than their own. Furthermore, while affective conflict was not overt in my observations of this team, the lack of interaction among certain individuals outside of meetings suggests that this was one strategy for coping with their differences (Jehn, 1995; Pelled et al., 1999). This avoidance likely further inhibited team members' abilities to

search for information outside of their own areas of responsibility, as well as to engage in positive, cognitive conflict during the team's meetings.

Team members dealt with their differences in two ways that support decision-making theory. First, team members did what they thought they were supposed to do and what they considered to be legitimate behavior. Second, they viewed others who held similar perceptions to theirs as being legitimate, and considered other team members' behaviors as inappropriate. They viewed individuals who deviated from this model as engaging improper behavior. Many team members managed differences by interacting with team members who they saw either as similar to them or as legitimate role models. In other words, they only trusted and liked others who were most like themselves, and distrusted and disliked those who were dissimilar (Jackson, 1992; Pelled, 1996). These differences did not help the team to engage in productive boundary-spanning activities.

Diverse identities

Presidential leadership teams contain a diverse mix of individuals representing a "dynamic distribution of information and interests" (Edmondson et al., 2003). This diversity can help boundary spanning by creating access to a wide variety of information and actors both within and outside of the organization. This heterogeneity can also provide an opportunity for interaction among individuals' diverse perspectives, or cognitive conflict, which the literature suggests is useful in decision-making processes. However, this same diversity can also hinder efforts at boundary spanning by creating communication difficulties and affective conflict.

In this case, the team was composed of a wide variety of individuals with diverse functional backgrounds and experiences in higher education, business, government, media relations, community relations, law, fundraising, and economic development. This composition of this leadership team seemed to help the team to have access to a wider variety and more information, as well as provide formal legitimacy that the breadth of the organization was represented in the president's cabinet. I did not find evidence of cognitive conflict on this team, but I did find evidence of affective conflict, which seemed to stem from the diverse team composition. As outlined by the conceptual framework for this study, my interviews suggested that there was affective, or relational, conflict among groups of team members that hindered their ability to engage in productive cognitive conflict. This affective conflict hindered team members' ability to engage in both information and political management activities through a lack of interaction both in and out of meetings. This lack of interaction reduced opportunities for team members to access information outside of team meetings and for cognitive conflict to develop in team meetings.

Differences among individuals led them to interact with a limited number of other team members outside of the team meetings, an indication of an illusory team (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). Specifically, I heard and observed that the members of the peripheral subgroup did not interact with each other or with other team members, either in or out of the meeting, while other team members seemed to engage in regular interactions. The core group in particular was a focal point for interaction as they were likely to consult with one another, or be consulted by others, outside of the team meeting. As one member of the core subgroup said, "I think if I had an overall management problem, I would talk

to either the President or [the other core member] are probably the only two other [team members] I would go and say, 'How would you do this?'" Other team members also viewed the core individuals as role models:

If you're asking me more of vice-president who I connect with more it's probably [a core team member], because I probably like him the most on a personal level. I think we think somewhat alike. I feel like I can learn some things from him in terms of his business approach versus the more academic approach.... I have the strongest relationship and the most regular contact with [a core team member] . . . we kind of do a regular breakfast-type meeting or so. And we work together pretty well on some other things and have some common interests, and so we're talking about those things....

While there were clear indications of informal interactions outside the meeting, these seemed to occur mostly among the core group, whose statements in interviews indicated that they had positive relationships with one another and shared similar perspectives on issues. As one core advisor stated:

I think probably [the other core advisor's perspective] was [most closely aligned with mine on a certain issue], because he understands, I think, the difference between a mindset that says we have to deliver a degree online, versus some of the more traditionalists who look at e-learning as the professor is going to deliver a PowerPoint in his class, which will then go up on the web.

The core group in particular emphasized their differences with the periphery and their similarities with one another:

We're in different worlds. It doesn't mean that our interests are opposed to each other. We're just in different worlds.... It's just a whole different culture and makeup, and stuff like that.... Some of them, like [the peripheral subgroup] and [a task specialist], are, I think, completely out of the academic field. [The other core group member] and I . . . [our] experiences are all in the private sector before we came here.

Similarly, the other core subgroup member noted:

[The other core member] and I, I think, have a huge amount of respect for each other. Both of us--I would probably align our work ethics close or the same. We're kind of like workaholics . . . time is valuable, and when we're both invited to the same dinner meeting that's kind of dull, at least we have something to talk about. We can catch up, okay? So we save those times for that kind of stuff, for the chit-chat stuff.

These comments suggest that these interactions were primarily based on perceived personal similarities, shared professional goals, and common programmatic initiatives.

In contrast, team members repeatedly cited a lack of interaction with the peripheral team members:

I spend hardly any time with [one peripheral member], and I probably have not met [the other peripheral member] twice in my four years here . . . I can count on one hand the number of times I--I've never been to [one's] office, and [that individual] has never been to mine.... I've been to [the other's] office a handful of times; he's never been to mine.... I think it's not good form that I've never been to [one's] office. I mean, I know where it is, but I've never had a meeting with [that individual]. I've never sat down with [that individual]. That's terrible.

Another individual shared this attitude:

[I] don't have much relationship [with one peripheral member] at all. No problems. [That individual] needs something, come there and deliver. If I would need something, [that individual] would give me equal treatment. . . . You know, our personal makeups are like black and white kind of thing, but there's a common bond in terms of [the university]. So it's not a negative, not a positive. It's not near the other ones.

In addition to hindering team members' abilities to access information from within the university, this lack of interaction also likely increased the state of uncertainty for peripheral individuals. Those team members on the periphery would not have had a high level of awareness regarding what was happening in other parts of the university other

than what they heard in meetings and therefore may not have known how best to use their boundary-spanning roles in support of the university's goals.

I noticed another form of diversity based on the extent to which their identities reflected a focus either in the organization as a whole or primarily in their particular division. As members of a presidential leadership team, particularly the vice presidents with divisional responsibilities, their roles were inherently ambiguous because they served both as a member of the presidential leadership team and as a leader of another organizational unit. Within this ambiguity, some team members interpreted their roles as university leaders, while others emphasized their roles as divisional leaders.

In interviews, I heard comments that suggested that members of different subgroups subscribed to different identities. For example, one peripheral team member described his role as one of advocating for students to the team, while the other described his role on the team as "advocating for the academic side of the house...to make sure that no other policy procedures [have] a negative effect on the academic side." As one peripheral member stated:

[I don't bring these issues to the table] because there's nothing to be discussed. What they going to say? And besides, a lot of things [have] to do with the Faculty Senate, you see, because it's already gone through Faculty Senate. There is nothing to say the VPs group has to approve it...there's nothing [to] say discuss it in the VPs meeting. That's almost automatic, just keep going. So there is nothing saying, "Oh, this one has to be discussed or approved by the VP's group."

The peripheral group's descriptions reflected an emphasis on their divisional identities that focused on advocacy for their part of the university, rather than the university as a whole.

In contrast, members of the other subgroups frequently spoke in terms of the whole institution and its goals. For example, a member of the core subgroup had a clear outward focus when he talked about his role in terms of providing a service for the whole institution, as opposed for advocating for his division. In his words:

I got a huge service function, in the sense that I can assist and help them make their missions, in almost all cases. I can improve their mission by utilizing what we do best. On the other hand, we also wear a hat that we've got to be smart enough and knowledgeable enough about the university that, if we understand the technology and we understand what the university's doing and trying to accomplish its strategies and directions, we have to also identify opportunities for those others, in the organization, that they might not see themselves. So it's a shared responsibility.

Other non-peripheral members were able to distinguish between both types of roles, clearly highlighting the importance of the institutional identity for the team. As one team member explained:

[Team meetings are] times when [we are] supposed to be thinking about institutional-level issues Those are points in time when I'm expected to be, you know, not really thinking about what's going on in my unit, but I'm [supposed] to be thinking about the university.

These differences in organizational versus divisional identity continued to support the subgroup differentiations I had identified earlier, based on expectations and behavior. Especially for the peripheral group, these different views hindered their abilities to fulfill a productive boundary-spanning role. Not only did their perspectives lead them to overlook boundary spanning in support of the university as an important activity, but this approach also isolated them from other team members.

Overall, the differences among team members, their lack of interaction, and their different levels of attention to the organization as a whole did not encourage the development of trust, which likely hindered individuals' willingness to share different perspectives or raise questions during meetings. In other words, this condition hindered the team's ability to engage in information use. Structurally, the diverse composition of this leadership team and its team processes did give the team access to a great deal of information, though the information was not necessarily useful to the team. The diversity of representation also provided legitimacy to the team, but it did not create cognitive conflict through interaction of diverse perspectives. While interpersonal difficulties were not overt in my observations of meetings, team members' statements during interviews indicated that affective conflict was indeed a hindrance for this team. One vice president, who was particularly reflective about the group's dynamics, indicated that team members were generally unwilling to engage in cognitive conflict during meetings:

I don't think we trust each other. I mean, I don't think we know each other. And I think because we don't know each other, maybe we don't trust each other. I think we're, as a group, perhaps not as open to the idea of being criticized. ... [The team is] somewhat closed. We really aren't very open with each other. And it's a little dysfunctional in that regard. I mean, we're all very pleasant, and we all more or less get along. Some of us pretend to get along. But we really aren't very open with each other.... As a group, we aren't openly critical of that, but we roll our eyes. ... If we were a more open group, we would flat-out be raising our voices more and saying, "Well, why would you want to do that?" And people would be saying that to me or to [other vice presidents] or this or that. We get a little bit of that. But there's a value to kind of feeling like you can--not duke it out, certainly not in a physical sense. But in a mental sense of being able to kind of lay some stuff out there. There's a value in kind of having your feelings known about things and taking a position. And we never--we don't go there.

The lack of cognitive conflict likely hindered the development of options/alternatives, especially around major, strategic issues, which should improve decision making. This team did not appear to be taking full advantage of the opportunities that existed by working in a team context. The impact of the team's diverse identities is easily understood when considered through the lens of appropriateness. When faced with diverse identities, team members chose to interact with those who they saw as similar to themselves and/or whom they considered to be legitimate.

These choices primarily hindered boundary spanning. The interaction among some individuals helped boundary spanning by increasing their access to information outside of the team meeting. However, these differences also prevented other team members from having the same access to information and also discouraged cognitive conflict during team meetings. Those team members who were less likely to interact may have felt that they were not legitimate participants, or did not view certain topics as a part of their identity. Their lack of involvement in initiatives and connections to information and actors might also have made them less able to participate. This limited, fragmented participation likely hindered the team's and the president's ability to gain different perspectives and thereby generate alternatives that would have improved decision making. While differences can create positive cognitive conflict, individuals are more likely to trust and interact with those more like themselves. The affective conflict based on differences within the team, however covert, seemed to hinder their ability to interact in ways that could positively impact information management.

Power

Power is a resource that allows individuals or organizations to influence others or to access resources that others value. I tracked three sources of power in the presidential leadership team: formal power based on one's position within an organization, network power, and expert power. These sources of power can help boundary spanners by creating avenues of access to information and actors, developing the ability to translate information across boundaries, and providing legitimacy with several constituencies. However, formal power in particular can also hinder access to honest or candid information power within the organization.

In this case, power helped boundary spanning primarily by providing access to information and actors. However, power differentials within the team may have hindered certain individuals' ability to carry out information and political management functions. My observational and interview data suggested that the same subgroups I identified in Chapter 5 based on team members' expectations and behaviors continued to appear as I considered power as an organizational condition faced by boundary spanners (see Table 5). Core advisors possessed a wider variety of power than any other group. Peripheral team members, by contrast, held only formal power in their roles as vice presidents responsible divisions of the university. The other two subgroups, external experts and task specialists, did not have such formal power but did have sources of network and expert power.

Table 5. Leadership team subgroups' sources of power

	Core advisors	External experts	Task specialists	Peripheral participants
Expectations	Provide information	Connect to external environment	Provide expertise	Advocate for division
Behaviors	Broad information management	Broad representation	Provide expert information	Provide information
Type of information	Organizational	Organizational	Organizational	Divisional
Sources of power	Formal Network Expert	Network Expert	Network Expert	Formal

Formal power

Two of the four subgroups had formal power based on their roles within the organization based on their roles as vice presidents with responsibility for major divisions of the university. Structurally, team members with operational leadership responsibilities had potential access to information and actors within their units, but a member of the core subgroup noted that he was “one of the few people who probably touch the campus from end to end, both vertically and horizontally. So I have an opportunity to get involved in other stuff” that helped to promote the team’s goals. The other core group member was responsible for financial and human resource matters, and therefore was also very central from a structural perspective. He commented on the value of knowing where the money is in an organization:

If you understand the finances, you run the operation whether you do or not...you do. So early on in my career I learned that if I knew where all the money pieces fit together, I knew how it all worked, that I could have the maximum influence because no one else care about that, but that really was what they should care about.

Peripheral team members had only formal power based on their roles in the university. The other two subgroups, external experts and task specialists, did not have clear formal power, as only one individual in these groups had responsibility for a minor division of the university.

Network power

A second form of power evident in this team was network centrality, or individuals' varying positions in a network of information and actors. Network centrality is a form of power particularly relevant to boundary spanners because it draws on an individual's formal membership in subunits that control highly valued resources or on the individual's informal network of relationships (Astley & Sachdeva, 1984). Boundary-spanning members of leadership teams typically must manage multiple roles as a result of their involvement in multiple activities and multiple subsystems (Katz & Kahn, 1978). For example, individuals are members of the leadership team as well as leaders of subunits in many cases. Others are also involved in other activities, such as committees both on and off campus. These multiple roles can help boundary spanners by creating multiple links to information and actors (Tushman, 1977). For some members of this leadership team, I saw evidence that their involvement in multiple subsystems or activities helped boundary spanning because their role accumulation placed them within a valuable network of information and actors (Sieber, 1974; Tushman, 1977).

In interviews and in my observations of team meetings, I interpreted that network power was present in three of the four subgroups primarily because this team's concern with particular issues seemed to direct power to certain actors. How critical one's role

and resources are to the organization (Astley & Sachdeva, 1984) and the ability to leverage that centrality with access provided an advantage to the core, external expert, and task specialist subgroups because of their centrality to the team's main goals. Furthermore, the multiple roles held by some team members, another condition I described in the framework for this study, appeared to contribute to certain individuals' network power.

Members of the non-peripheral subgroups had valuable access to information and actors critical to the university's role in the community, financial health, infrastructure, and human resources, as well as the media and local and regional partners. For example, the president noted that one core subgroup member was "so central to the way the place operates in all the divisions that he's got to be at the table." With some restructuring by the president, a core subgroup member also gained control of the enrollment function. The task specialist subgroup was comprised of team members whose organizational roles also provided power and discretion over particular resources of value to the organization, such as the board of trustees, the media, and alumni. The external experts in particular also had more influence related to organizational goals, perhaps due to the emphasis on the external environment. For the external experts, representing the team and the university to external actors was an explicit part of their role and areas in which they had substantial experience.

Holding multiple roles particularly helped the external experts to represent the university to external actors. The external experts were a group of three individuals – one vice president and two senior advisors – whose primary constituents (alumni, government, legal, and the media) were outside the university, making them a valuable

group based on the team's primary goals. For example, one team member shared how his multiple roles outside of the university allowed him to provide protection. "I'm the person who's on [two regional committees] and sort of look out for the university's well-being." Yet another highlighted how an additional role as a board member of a local organization helped him to identify potential resources because "there's a high probability they can get grant funding to support us [in a partnership initiative]."

Expert power

My observations and interviews also suggested that three of the four subgroups held some sort of power based on their experiences or expertise. For example, both individuals in the core subgroup had significant business experience. One of these individuals also had extensive experience with the university in a variety of senior executive roles and the other had experience in a variety of industries outside of the higher education sector. Similarly, members of the external expert and task specialist subgroups had particular types of experiences or expertise in community and press relations, economic development, law, and fundraising that were highly valued by the president and relevant to the organization's goals. For example, the president noted that he needed one individual "at the table to help us understand what's going on in the economic development communities around here, and see where we can match up with that." Of the other core member, the president said:

He's very good at his work.... And he is first class at organization of management. Just terrific.... His capacity for work is huge, but you've got to give him the right work. Give him a project and he's just happy as a clam. So if I've got ... any organizational issue, I know I can hand it to him and it's going to get done. And that's one of the reasons I gave him

this enrollment issue because it's a huge project. It's complex in its organization, and I knew he could do it.

While the president did not spend much time talking about the core advisors in his interviews, the time he did spend was exceptionally positive in comparison to his less-complimentary comments about the peripheral group. In other words, the peripheral group drew his attention for different, less positive reasons. My interviews suggested that members of the peripheral group lacked both a variety of experiences and expert power upon which they could draw. They had both followed very traditional and limited academic or administrative paths in higher education. For example, the president described one of the peripheral members as “very traditional in their understanding of that role. It won't work here.” The president also noted that peripheral members specifically lacked expert power related to organizational goals. Specifically, he stated that they either had not taken initiative or did not care about enrollment, or that they lacked the skills to address this particular goal, one he valued highly. The president stated in an interview that one peripheral member “didn't make my job easier, he made it harder.” While he noted the valuable contributions of the core group, he was more likely to note a lack of contributions from peripheral members whom he did not see as “making any contribution to either retention or enrollment in any way.”

Power and legitimacy

Overall, the diverse sources of power within this team helped them to fulfill important information management and political management functions because they created avenues to access information and actors. The formal power of some individuals

helped them to access a wide variety of information to deliver to the team. Many team members were also ensconced in networks that helped boundary spanning by providing access to information and actors that were particularly valuable to achieving the university's primary goals. Finally, the expert power held by several individuals helped boundary spanning by providing both access to information and the ability to translate that information. However, the lack of expert and network power in the periphery also likely hindered boundary spanning by decreasing access to valuable information and actors within those areas of the university, as well as opportunities to promote organizational goals. Furthermore, the periphery's lack of connection to the external environment further limited their power by decreasing their ability to participate in the primarily externally-focused team discussions. The other subgroups also had a variety of experiences and expertise from which they could draw, while the periphery had very limited experiences and seemed unwilling to consider other perspectives or alternatives.

The conceptual framework for this study suggests that these power differences can be explained by considering the importance of past experience and legitimacy in decision-making processes. Many individuals in this team had access to information and actors that had legitimacy in terms of the university's goals, particularly through network or expert power. While the two peripheral members could have been critical to the university's major issue of enrollment based on their formal roles, they were not successful seemingly because they lacked expert or network power in relationship to the external environment. The president, and other team members, appeared to value those team members who attended to enrollment as an important issue. The lack of power, familiarity, and involvement hindered the peripheral subgroup's ability to participate in

and promote organizational goals. While the contributions of the periphery were marginal, in order to have legitimacy as a leadership team, they needed to be included on the team. Given the importance of the university's external environment to organizational goals, those individuals who lacked network centrality were unable to participate and gain legitimacy within the team.

The president's role

The president's role as team leader and meeting convener had a distinct impact on the team in ways that both helped and hindered their boundary-spanning activity. The president spoke of his intentions for the team in ways that suggested that he intended for them to engage in boundary spanning. However, his espoused views were not enacted into the key supports the team needed. Using his formal power, the president created or sustained many of the conditions discussed above, whether by design or by default (Smircich & Morgan, 1982). My observations suggested that the president helped the boundary-spanning functions of the team by creating connections and by centralizing power, but that he hindered boundary spanning by relying on unilateral formal power and by inhibiting team processes. As the team leader, the president's leadership orientation and use of power stood as a barrier to the team's functioning, but also helped to facilitate some boundary-spanning activities in limited ways (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993).

Helps

Creating connections

The president's power as the organization's leader did help boundary spanning through his ability to make changes that could create or improve access to information and actors. Specifically, the president's ability to place individuals on the team, as well as to restructure responsibilities, helped boundary spanning by increasing the team's access to information and the promotion of organizational goals. For example, when it appeared that the team's enrollment goals were not being addressed to his satisfaction, the president used his authority to shift responsibility for the enrollment function from the academic division to a less-conventional unit where another vice president provided stronger management. This use of power to shift or award responsibility in order to improve the promotion of team goals was evident in several other situations as well. For example, the president delegated responsibility for the e-learning initiative to information technology rather than the academic division, and moved responsibility for retention from student affairs to another team member. In other words, the president changed the rules by using an alternative script to eliminate an inferior routine (March, 1994) and improved boundary spanning in that area.

The president's power to make hiring decisions also helped the team to gain access to information and actors. While many team members, or their predecessors, sat around the table under previous administrations, the president had added particular components and shifted responsibilities in order to gain access to areas of information need and representation. Prior to this case, he had added a team member by elevating the senior information technology role to the team "because [that individual] becomes so

central to the way the place operates in all the divisions that he's got to be at the table with them as an equal." The president's ability to add this person to the team helped to bring expert information and an additional perspective to the table. In addition, the president stated that he had hired other team members for very specific information and representation needs. For example, he noted that he asked one member to join the team because this individual was "more in touch with this town than you can imagine. And that's why I want him as close by as I can get him" while another was "at the table to help us understand what's going on in the economic development communities around here, and see where we can match up with that." In all, the president had placed seven team members around the table, several of whom specifically reflected his attention to the external environment. The inclusion of these external experts emphasized the importance of university's external environment and helped to focus attention on the team's goal areas by creating intentional ties with areas of information and influence need (Geletkanycz & Hambrick, 1997).

Centralizing power

The president further used his power to concentrate responsibility and representation in a few key people, leading him to depend on a small group of individuals whom he trusted (Roberto, 2003). In particular, I noticed that the changes in structure and leadership described above were always a move away from the periphery towards the core or external experts on the team. The president's decisions to shift several responsibilities meant that several major initiatives were concentrated in a handful of individuals. In fact, when I asked him which team members he relied on, he mentioned

only the two core subgroup members. When I asked team members about how the team prioritized or made decisions, one comment made it clear that the core subgroup was tapped for organization-wide projects:

[The president] does from time to time [just meet with myself and the other core subgroup member] and figure out how we're going to make something work. Sometimes it doesn't even get brought to the big group level. I think that's how he got the e-learning back on the forefront again.

The president used his structural power to further centralize power within the team by repeatedly looking to those who he viewed as model team members.

The president's use of his power suggests that he relied on well-respected, known quantities when he delegated responsibilities. For example, even though many of these individuals had already been committed to other major projects, the president followed a consultant's advice to "find one of your senior officers to drive [an initiative]. Don't worry about how busy that person is. Who is it you have confidence in to make this happen?" In other words, his actions emphasized the legitimacy of certain team members.

Depending on others who are similar to oneself is a means to reduce uncertainty (Kanter, 1977). The president's patterns of reliance suggest that, when faced with uncertainty, he repeatedly turned to the same group of individuals that he identified as legitimate and from whom he had received positive results in the past, as suggested by the conceptual framework. In this case, the president filled positions that face more uncertainty with individuals who were more like him. The ability to make these changes may have improved access to information in certain areas, but it may also have led to a dependence on the core group in a way that limited broader access to information and representation.

While the president's restructuring decisions created access to information and actors, it also hindered boundary spanning by centralizing power in a few individuals. This scarcity of power hindered team members' abilities to search for information and engage in information use. Team members who lost responsibility could no longer deliver information about these areas.

Hindrances

Relying on unilateral formal power

The team's meeting schedule and certain patterns of information delivery further highlighted the president's formal power and how it hindered some aspects of boundary spanning. First, the team only met when the president was available. While the president's statements about the team meeting indicated that the forum was intended to be useful for team members, not just for him, the team only met when he was available to attend. When I asked one team member in an interview if the team ever met without the president, he replied that "the purpose of the meeting is for the president to meet with his vice-presidents and legal advisor, and he wasn't available. He had another meeting to attend." Another member agreed that he "would never meet with all the vice presidents without the president knowing about it. I would not be a part of that regardless of the situation. I wouldn't. I'd like to think I wouldn't do that." Throughout my interviews with individual team members, I heard about a single instance of a time when a portion of the team met at the regular time in the president's absence, but only after asking his permission. While meetings were not frequently cancelled, the centrality of the president further emphasized the perception that information delivery was for his benefit rather

than for the team to focus on goals and engage in strategic discussions as a group. This narrow definition of the team meeting hindered team members' abilities to help with information management outside of the president's availability.

Team members' responses to the president's legitimate power hindered boundary spanning by removing some information from the team forum. During interviews, several team members commented about information that they would discuss with the president ahead of the meeting before sharing with the team. For example, one vice president stated "I'm not going to spring something at the table that I haven't...I mean, something major like that I wouldn't spring at the table without having had a conversation with the President first." Another stated:

If I've not briefed him on a big solicitation that we're going to be making, I would not bring it up in front of the group without letting him know about it first. Typically, I would not present really good news of a larger gift, or this or that, without letting him know ahead of time.

I also heard in interviews that members of the core and external expert subgroups seemed to have more access to the president than others. For example, one team member suggested that "[a core member] probably also talks to the President almost every day, and so some of the structure, by the way, is these people talk to the President. He knows what's going on." Another team member said:

I go with him to [the state capital] once a month, and it's a three-hour trip down and three-hour trip back. I drive. In fact, I come up here expressly so I can go down there with him and come back with him. I mean there's six unencumbered hours to just talk so I use that time too.

While this type of access helped the president to hear information, it also removed information from the team environment, thereby hindering opportunities for others to

participate in discussion and deliberation. The rule that some information is for the president inhibited information sharing among all team members by making information a resource to control rather than to share (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). Furthermore, if team members did not have as much access to the president, by design or by choice, they were likely to lack information, be unsure about goals, and understand how they could contribute, thereby hindering their ability to effectively engage in information and political management activities.

Inhibiting team process

Despite his role as the meeting convener, the president did not exercise his formal power to positively impact the team's processes during meetings. Both the meeting format and the lack of facilitated dialogue hindered the team's ability to focus on strategic issues in substantial ways. Each meeting proceeded in a "round robin" format directed by the president who would turn to each team member and ask, "What have you got?" While this format helped boundary spanning by ensuring that team members would deliver information, it likely also hindered the team's ability to spend time on goal-related issues as some team members described feeling compelled to deliver any information in this context. The expectation that everyone should always have something to report seemed to ensure that nearly everyone provided some kind of information at every meeting.

The conceptual framework suggests that individuals' sense of obligation, in conjunction with the lack of an agenda, led to the delivery of a plethora of less relevant information, much of which was not used by the team. The lack of certainty regarding the

routine meeting format and the perceived expectations of the president for information delivery created a “commitment to the status quo” (Geletkanycz & Black, 2001) and an ineffective reliance on past knowledge and experience (Honig, 2006). In order to do what was expected by a legitimate authority, team members likely relied on information that would reflect that they were doing something each week. Acting “appropriately” in this team meant having something to say, so team members were guided by this rule. This suggests that gathering and possessing any type of information to report indicated competence or “acting properly” (March, 1994, p. 216), in other words, it served as a sign of legitimacy (March, 1994). Team members had gained a sense of competence by repeating the same behaviors on a weekly basis, and had come to understand it as the accepted meaning of their roles (March, 1994).

The president also did not facilitate the team’s ability to engage in productive cognitive conflict because he did not encourage discussion and debate during meetings, nor did he direct discussion towards organizational goals. The focus of the meeting was on individuals rather than issues. In interviews, team members themselves did not talk about the team forum as an opportunity to engage with others around information. The meeting was not necessarily an opportunity to raise opposing or differing views, as one vice president noted “Obviously you're going to say something which is not [going to go in a] different direction as the President's.” Another team member reflected:

I can't think of an example of conflicting perspectives. Not the way the conversation’s structured so much. I mean it’s because it’s more reporting of what I’m doing or what I’m going to do or what I did. It’s not any kind of a debating society, and so somebody might report on something, and I may sit there and think, “Yeah, that’s stupid.” But I wouldn’t say it. That’s not the format of the meeting.

While a great deal of information was made available to the team, and some was discussed, these discussions provided few examples of debate or the generation of alternatives to help with the decision making process.

Instead, I observed that most conversations were bilateral in nature between an individual team member and the president, or else a small group of team members, and that the president continuously relied on the same individuals for advice. For example, the president would sometimes ask the opinion of core or expert individuals, but would rarely encourage others to speak up. This may suggest that he viewed any discussions as an opportunity for team members to confirm his decisions, rather than to generate alternatives. Perhaps he had learned to “like what he gets” (March, 1994, p. 88) so he was not compelled to change the rules of team process. My observations suggest that the president may have had little incentive to change because he got what he needed from the core and external expert subgroups. In this way, the president’s power to manage meetings hindered the team’s ability to add information or otherwise productively interact around an issue. The meeting was viewed mostly an opportunity to deliver information on a variety of topics and there were few incentives or alternative scripts available to promote discussion or debate.

Conclusion

My observations and interviews with team members indicated that the formal structures and informal dynamics of the team both helped and hindered boundary spanning. Individuals were faced with uncertainty and differing perceptions about the weekly meeting, were unable to manage diverse identities, and were influenced by

several sources of power, including the president's. While some individuals did have significant sources of power to assist them in achieving boundary spanning, as a whole the team was hindered by formal structures and informal dynamics. Team members dealt with the organizational conditions they faced by means that adhered to the concepts presented by the new institutionalism in sociology. When faced with uncertainty, individuals held fast to familiar routines, for better or worse. In many cases, these routines did not help the team to fulfill its potential for boundary spanning and legitimate authorities did not prompt them to change their behaviors. These structures largely, but not entirely, hindered individuals' efforts to access and process information in support of team goals.

CHAPTER 8: AT THE BASE OF THE BRIDGE

Good teamwork depends, not only on the individuals who compose the team, but also on innumerable institutional factors . . . (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993, p. 4-5).

Multifaceted issues such as diversity, technology, and accountability can push the boundaries of a president's knowledge and extend beyond the training and experience of a single decision maker. As the issues facing colleges and universities become increasingly complex, scholars have acknowledged the value of leadership teams in higher education (Eisenstat & Cohen, 1990; Green, 1994). A team approach to leadership should improve the presidential-level decision making of a college or university by assembling people from across the organization as a way to capitalize on the different knowledge and multiple perspectives that these individuals can bring to the table (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). Using a leadership team promises to help presidents manage complexity, master new knowledge, and improve problem solving because it encompasses more information and more expertise than an individual leader could attain alone. However, research about leadership teams in higher education has not fully addressed this promise. While literature from the corporate context highlights the importance of the environment for team functioning, previous empirical work in higher education has taken a primarily internal perspective on leadership teams (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Dee, 2001; Dewey, 1998; Knudson, 1997).

This study suggests that members of presidential leadership teams can be viewed as boundary spanners who help to manage information and the political environment in support of team goals. Specifically, presidential leadership team members have the potential to operate as boundary spanners who connect the president and other team

members to the organizational environment through information management and political management functions. Information management involves searching for, selecting, and interpreting information needed by the organization from sources across team boundaries (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Friedman & Podolny, 1992; Jemison, 1984). Political management includes promoting and protecting the organization in order to garner resources, to provide legitimacy for the organization, and to increase the organization's visibility. Boundary-spanning behavior can be beneficial to a team's ability to achieve its goals because it can help them to access information and to provide promotion and protection in support of organizational goals. However, the organizational behavior and boundary spanning literature suggests that leadership team members are likely to face significant challenges in implementing such activities, including uncertainty, ambiguity, multiple roles, diverse identities, and sources of power.

Decision-making theory explains that the limitations of bounded rationality influence decision making by constraining the information that individuals will use, as well as their ability to interpret that information (March, 1994). As boundary spanners face a multitude of information, multiple interpretations, and multiple roles, they are limited in their ability to access all of the information that may be available to them in order to act rationally in the process of decision making (March, 1994). This research applied concepts from the new institutionalism in sociology and decision-making theory to show how team members will deal with uncertainty, ambiguity, role conflict, and the social context through the use of rules or routines (Morgan, 1997) based on normative influences from authorities, rather than creating novel or innovative approaches. These strategies can help individuals to manage uncertainty by helping them to determine what

information is needed, to lessen ambiguity by highlighting appropriate interpretations, and to manage role conflict by helping the decision maker to choose an identity appropriate to the situation. In doing so, decision makers will make choices based on what has worked for them in the past and what they consider to be legitimate. This framework called my attention to the variety of influences that these individuals and teams face in their roles as boundary spanners, aspects that had not previously been explored in the study of presidential leadership teams.

The design of this study focused on boundary spanning in a presidential leadership team in a single university. Given the nascent stage of research on presidential leadership teams in higher education, I addressed my research questions using a qualitative, single case study design that incorporated observations, interviews, and document analysis. I chose to conduct this research using a case study approach because of the importance of understanding the organizational context when studying organizational teams (Creswell, 1998). Based on my literature review, I aimed to answer four research questions:

1. To what extent did the president intend for team members to help manage the team's environment?
2. What is the actual role of the presidential leadership team?
3. What were the impacts of the team?
4. What helps or hinders leadership team members in fulfilling their roles?

Summary of Findings

Based on my observations and interviews, I found that the university president, as the team leader, primarily expected this team to fulfill an information management function. Specifically, the president expected team members to share information with him and the team as it related to the university's major goals of increasing enrollment, improving the campus infrastructure, developing partnerships, and improving the university's image. Furthermore, he expected team members to fulfill a political management function by serving as his representatives. Team members had a similar understanding of these expectations, but notably, most individuals viewed the team as an opportunity to deliver information to the president, rather than share with their colleagues. As Bensimon and Neumann (1993) suggested, information sharing, rather than information delivery, is characteristic of a real team. This team was also composed of a wide variety of individuals representing all of the major university constituencies, suggesting that they were structured to attend to relevant aspects of the environment. As a result, I concluded that this team was set up to fulfill both information management and political management functions. The expectations and composition of this team suggested that these individuals were well situated to serve as boundary spanners.

Despite these intentions, I found that these team members did not always serve as boundary spanners, based on evidence that individuals fulfilled some political management functions but were lacking many information management roles. Specifically, their activities included little intentional scanning or preparation for team meetings, even though team members did present a wide variety of information to the team at each meeting. Most individuals relied primarily on the team meeting as an

opportunity to seek information from one another, rather than to guide their activities in support of goals between meetings. Team members could have searched more intentionally for information focusing on the strategic goals of increasing enrollment, improving the campus infrastructure, developing partnerships, and improving the university's image. While I did find some evidence of boundary spanning in this case, the literature in that area suggests that many team members did not use their capacity to address the organization's goals.

Individual team members varied in the extent to which they focused on goal-related information and facilitated the use of information by the team, as well as participated in political management activities. I found that some, but not all, team members consistently engaged in activities that the literature on boundary spanning suggests they should in terms of information management and political management. Furthermore, some team members failed to focus on the university's primary goal of enrollment, which relegated these individuals to the periphery of the team. These findings regarding individuals' content and process behaviors suggested that there was a clear distinction among several groups of individuals in this team. I ultimately identified four distinct subgroups that were characterized by team members' role expectations and boundary-spanning behaviors.

Ultimately, boundary spanning should help with decision making, particularly related to organizational goals, based on the discussion and debate of information and ideas among team members. Team members' boundary-spanning activity resulted in mixed outcomes regarding the extent to which they helped with decision making. These team members typically focused on procedural decisions, rather than the strategic issues

of increasing enrollment, improving infrastructure, developing partnerships, and improving the university's image. I found that the team was not regularly used as a forum for discussion; rather, the meeting was used as a setting for individuals, rather than the team, to act. This was an unexpected outcome, given the variety of expertise and background that could have been used in the team.

Based on their political management roles, I did find that this team had some success garnering certain types of resources, developing some political power, and keeping the organization visible, particularly among external constituents. However, there appeared to be little intentional effort to manage politics within the organization, particularly within the divisions led by peripheral team members. Furthermore, the team seemed to constantly struggle to successfully promote and protect the university from external influences, particularly state interference and media lenses.

My analysis of these findings through an appropriateness lens highlighted several conditions that helped and hindered individuals in accomplishing their roles as boundary spanners. By viewing individual and team actions as an indication of what they considered to be appropriate, I was able to gain some understanding of how those choices influenced their boundary-spanning activities and outcomes. Specifically, I found that team members were faced with uncertainty and differing perceptions about the weekly meeting, were unable to manage diverse identities, and were influenced by several sources of power, including the president's. When faced with uncertainty, team members retained familiar routines, for better or worse. In many cases, these routines did not help the team to fulfill its potential for boundary spanning and meetings did not prompt them to change their behaviors. Furthermore, underlying conflict and a lack of interaction

among groups of team members who were viewed as dissimilar or unfamiliar hindered the quality of both boundary spanning and decision making. Some, but not all, team members had significant sources of power to help them manage these hindrances, including access to information, actors, experience, and other resources. Overall, the conditions faced by members of this leadership team hindered their ability to achieve the potential of their boundary-spanning roles.

In conclusion, despite the president's intentions, this team was not comprised of boundary spanners. Specifically, individuals fulfilled some political management roles but were lacking many information management functions such as accessing and processing. In particular, the meeting was primarily a setting for individuals, rather than the group as a team, to act. However, those individuals who focused on the university's primary goal were more successful at these activities, while those who failed to maintain this focus were relegated to the periphery of the team. While some team members were somewhat successful at fulfilling limited information and political management functions, the formal structures and informal dynamics of the team largely hindered boundary-spanning activities.

Contributions

The contributions of this study are first and foremost that it extends the research on the use leadership teams in higher education, methodologically and conceptually. This study contributes a to the literature on leadership team in higher education by conceptualizing team members as boundary spanners, as well as to the boundary-spanning literature by using a qualitative case study methodology to study a single team

in its organizational context over an extended period of time. This is a significant departure from previous work on leadership teams in higher education because it locates them in an institutional context and sheds light on dimensions not previously explored by other scholars. In particular, this study acknowledged that team members exist in an environment that influences them and that they face conditions that help and hinder their activities where others have focused on internal matters. While this study ultimately concluded that internal dimensions provide an important foundation for team members' boundary-spanning activities, it also adds to our understanding of team members' external functions. Specifically, this study contributes evidence that these activities can serve to promote and protect organizational goals, a dimension that has not previously been included in models of understanding presidential leadership teams in higher education.

This study also provides support for the ideas and concepts that Bensimon and Neumann (1993) first put forth in their seminal work on leadership teams in higher education. First, this study contributes further evidence that many presidents do not consider their teams useful for decision making (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). In this case, the president did not intend for his team to engage in decision making, despite my observations that they regularly made decisions in team meetings. Second, this case reiterates Bensimon and Neumann's (1993) findings that internal issues of power and diversity hinder teams from working well. This study also provides additional support for the literature that emphasizes the importance of the team leader in managing group process and lends support to the suggestion that real teams are less likely to be found in the top levels of larger, more complex organizations. In Bensimon and Neumann's terms,

this case provides an example of an illusory team and dimensions that contribute to that characterization. While my findings concluded that the president had the power to create structures and processes to improve his team's ability to effectively contribute to decisions, the team did not engage in "real" team behaviors such as sharing information and taking advantage of the multiple perspectives around the table. Finally, this case provides an example of the role of conflict in a higher education leadership team setting. As suggested by the literature on group effectiveness, this leadership team did not engage in cognitive conflict, at least in part due to the presence of affective conflict (Amason, 1996; Amason & Sapienza, 1997; Jehn, 1995; Jehn et al., 1999; Pelled et al., 1999), providing additional support for the need to attend to these two important dimensions of team interaction.

Implications for research

The conclusions in this study suggest several implications for research in terms of frameworks and study design that might further develop the literature on boundary spanning and leadership teams.

Theoretical frameworks. First, while I intended to better illuminate appropriateness as a lens for understanding boundary spanning in a leadership team, I realized that this particular setting would require different data collection and analytic strategies. However, the evidence of conflicts in this case only reinforces the importance of considering how this lens might matter in future studies to address leadership teams in higher education.

Future studies should also consider the value of knowledge management as a framework that which could help to isolate dimensions of boundary spanning in the higher education environment. Knowledge management is a process of transforming information into enduring value, it is a means to connect individuals with the knowledge that they need in order to act in a timely manner (Kidwell, Vander Linde, & Johnson, 2000). The application of a knowledge management framework to future studies could further explore processes of knowledge creation, organization, access, and use throughout the organization. The finding in this study that only a limited number of core individuals were truly involved in strategic decision making suggests that a consideration of knowledge management would benefit the study of presidential leadership teams. Rather than relying on the knowledge of unique individuals throughout our organizations, a focus on knowledge management would help to explain how that information can and does become more widely available (Kidwell et al., 2000) as well as illuminate the political implications of broader participation and access to information.

A second direction for future research is to specifically explore the political management function of leadership teams. This case suggests that many of the political functions of leadership teams involve information, whether they were transmitting information to external actors, or otherwise relying on information to promote and protect the university and its goals. This may indicate that, in a higher education setting, information management and political management activities are not easily distinguished. One of the limitations in this case was the focus on the team and its members as the primary source of data. Expanding data collection to include observations of team members' interactions with other actors as well as more extensive interviews

with constituents would further add to our understanding leadership team members' political management functions. Future studies should aim to construct a clearer picture of these activities.

Study design. In charting future directions, scholars should also consider the limitations of this study, particularly in terms of design. I learned that the many dimensions of presidential leadership teams and their individual members are difficult to capture through a reliance on observations and interviews. While a design that focused almost exclusively on team members and the team setting yielded valuable information, it also limited my ability to create a clearer picture of their boundary-spanning activity. Different approaches to data collection should include access to a broader set of institutional stakeholders, including divisional staff members, and observation of other meetings in which team members are involved. To build on the finding that some team members were part of the core and others were on the periphery of the team, social network analysis should be considered as a means of mapping and measuring relationships and information flows (Krackhardt, 1990). This approach would help to create a better understanding of the location of actors in a given network and the centrality of actors, particularly within informal organizational structures. Such design changes could yield a richer set of data around team members' interactions with the environment and with each other.

Subsequent research should consider using other methods to better isolate boundary spanning and identity. For example, I would recommend that future researchers design studies that could better capture this information by utilizing different interview questions. In terms of gathering improved data related to boundary spanning, future

interviews should more explicitly probe participants' experiences in information search and use, and promotion and protection. One productive strategy might be to select a single organizational issue, such as enrollment, as explore the team's boundary-spanning behaviors in more depth related to this topic. This approach should include observing and interviewing a broader range of individuals and forums related to the selected issue. Regardless of a topical focus, modified interview questions should ask about the team's environment and focus more on the external work of the team. Future research should also focus on capturing rich narratives and probing the identities of team members by allocating more time to uncovering participants personal and professional histories to better understand individual perspectives.

Finally, future researchers should explore alternatives for selecting a team for study. In particular, I found that it is difficult to know if a team is "real" or "illusory" team from the start. While I relied on non-team members both within and outside the institution in order to understand this prior to site selection, not until I began preliminary analyses did uncover patterns to suggest that the participating team tended toward the illusory end of the team continuum. Future researchers might utilize a self-designed or existing instrument (e.g., Bell, 2001) that could more reliably identify team characteristics. Also, given the suggestion that real teams are more likely to exist at smaller institutions, another approach to sampling should consider other institutional types (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993).

Implications for practice

While this research sought to extend our understanding of presidential leadership teams' activities beyond their borders, in the end the findings suggest that the internal dynamics and structures of teams require attention before successful boundary spanning can occur. These findings have considerable implications for professional practice, both for presidents and for their teams. The literature on learning organizations, the practitioner-oriented writing related to organizational learning, as well as writing directed towards improving executive teamwork, provides useful concepts that can be used to address the hindrances identified in this case.

A learning organization is one that is able to acquire knowledge and use it to modify behavior (Garvin, 1994). Several authors who have written on the topic of learning organizations have suggested several practices that could help presidents and their teams to improve learning, in other words their ability to identify, access, and use information (Garvin, 1993; Senge, 1990). This case suggests that presidents may need to intentionally structure their teams and employ particular practices to participate fully in information search and use.

Foster team learning. Team learning is about group interaction that occurs over and above team building. Presidents need to develop the capacity of their teams to engage in dialogue, building on individuals talents and personal mastery (Senge, 1990). In this case, I found that the team did not engage in vital processing activities of discussion and debate. Furthermore, I found no evidence to suggest that the president had taken steps to develop this capacity within his team. In order to foster learning, presidents must create a conducive environment that allows for analysis and reflection, strategic thinking, and

innovation (Garvin, 1993). Such an environment requires dialogue and the ability to suspend assumptions in order to explore issues and information deeply rather than superficially (Senge, 1990). The goal is to transmit knowledge and to put the creativity of different perspectives to use. This capacity is reflective of what Bensimon and Neumann (1993) refer to as a real team. One that works and thinks together, relying on the use of multiple perspectives to improve decision making.

One of the most important steps that presidents can take as the meeting convener is to make time for team meetings. It is important to hold regularly scheduled meetings that are considered to be a sacred part of everyone's role. These meetings should have a clearly stated purpose that is geared towards intentional learning. Use tools that can help team member to prepare for meetings, such as providing an agenda and assigning pre-work (Nadler & Spencer, 1998). While the team is meeting, it is important to develop the capacity to dig deep into information and issues. Presidents, or a delegate, can accomplish this by using tools to generate cognitive conflict, such as encouraging team members to question, disagree with, and challenge one another, and pushing the team to identify alternatives. Inject a sense of uncertainty as a means to develop new ideas and approaches. Teams should also regularly review both their successes and failures as opportunities to reflect on and learn from past experience (Garvin, 1993; Senge, 1990). Finally, presidents should allow and embrace experimentation within the bounds of the organization's strategic goals. Team members should be encouraged to take risks and explore alternatives in ways that can increase their own and the organization's knowledge about issues of importance.

Engaging in learning also means questioning assumptions, both as individuals and

as a team. Within a learning organization, everyone must understand their own mental models and question them before information use can be a productive team endeavor (Senge, 1990). Individuals need to examine their own roles influence the information to which they are exposed and how they interpret that information (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). Team members must be aware of their own perspectives in order to be able to hear and appreciate others' models.

Presidents can encourage team members to think differently about their work and the work of the organization by questioning the assumptions that arise at the table. As the meeting convener, and the individual most responsible for team processes, the president can play a devil's advocate role in order to illuminate competing perspectives. Presidents should also develop a habit of drawing out team members to voice their perspectives, if they are not readily being shared. Teams can also work to avoid "win-lose" situations, by taking time to integrate various views in an effort to avoid alienating a particular part of the system in order to reach quick decisions (Katzenbach, 1998). Other useful mechanisms include inviting guests with unconventional or opposing views to speak, or holding brainstorming sessions to get at creative thinking. The team might also incorporate the role of a critic who can re-define and re-interpret issues and information (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). Team members, and presidents, need to learn how to be critical of themselves and of others, and to view questioning as an opportunity for learning (Argyris, 1991).

Each of these tools may help teams address the need to question whether current norms are appropriate for achieving their goals in order to avoid traditional control systems and defensive routines that exist to protect the status quo (Morgan, 1997). For

example, presidents and their teams consider maintaining a focus on outcomes, and avoid the conventional fixation on image and prestige. By turning the spotlight so brightly on inputs rather than illuminating intended outcomes, teams adhere to habitual measures of success and be waylaid in their efforts to base their decisions on data and information (Astin, 1993). Questioning assumptions and reflecting on past experience can help teams to view learning as integral to change (Kezar, 2001). The goal is for team to examine the status quo and use information to consider alternatives, to consider new options rather than relying on the old. Team meeting should be an opportunity to really get at an issue, to dig deep, rather than to skim over administrative minutiae.

Generate cognitive conflict. Presidents must encourage certain behaviors in team meetings in order to achieve the benefit of teams as a strategy, rather than just as a meeting. The literature on groups and teams suggests that such forums can potentially provide an opportunity for the generation of positive, cognitive conflict. In describing real teams, Bensimon and Neumann (1993) emphasized the need for a team culture that supports the sharing of multiple perspectives, of questioning, arguing, and debating. The team leader must attend to the informal dynamics of the team by actively encouraging these behaviors in order to stimulate information use.

In this case, I found that the president continuously relied on the same individuals – the core subgroup – and did not engage other team members in conversation. As the meeting convener, presidents can intentionally foster debate by intentionally asking for different perspectives and drawing individuals who have not shared their views, rather than repeatedly relying on the same individuals to share their perspectives. Over time,

these actions will teach team members that disagreeing and debating, within an environment of respect, are legitimate behaviors.

Develop a shared vision. In order to benefit from the search for information and to engage in systemic thinking, team must have a shared vision that include mutual purposes and shared images (Senge, 1990). I found in this case that there were some relatively clear goals. However, these goals had been developed almost unilaterally by the president and were not effectively communicated as a guiding framework for team discussions. While a president can and should share his or her vision for the organization, this activity should be a prelude that encourages others to voice their visions, rather than a unilateral statement. Goals need to be points of reference that are a shared vision and value to the organization, not mandates from above that are strictly defined. Instead, allowing the best ideas to emerge from throughout the organization creates a fertile ground for innovation. In other words, the organizational or team vision should be created and implemented in interaction with other individuals.

In addition to developing the broader organization vision in conjunction with team members and their divisions, presidents can encourage shared vision within the team through several means. First, develop your team's commitment to a vision by engaging team members in dialogue about goals and setting priorities as a group (Katzenbach, 1998). If team members are encouraged to contribute to a vision, rather than applying a unilateral template to their work, they are likely to be more engaged in the process to achieve those goals. Second, neutralize politics by fostering a team identity and reducing reliance on a limited number of team members (Katzenbach, 1998). This includes moderating the amount of information that is unnecessarily shared with the

president outside of the team, as well as taking steps to include all team members in decision-making processes. While some information is extremely sensitive and perhaps confidential, in order to be effectively used information should be shared as broadly as possible within the team. Reinforce the team's identity by spending time together both in and out of meetings (Nadler & Spencer, 1998). Finally, use an agenda to communicate the shared purpose of the team meeting and to help keep the team focused on common goals. While uncertainty with regard to agenda items is not uncommon in executive teams (Nadler & Spencer, 1998), presidents should not overlook the value of formal structures to provide a solid foundation for team members' boundary-spanning activities. An issue-driven agenda can help to direct the focus of meetings from individual reports to a focus on the discussion of shared goals.

While a strategy as simple as a pre-determined agenda might seem mundane, given the complexity of team members' roles this increased information can improve their ability to intentionally search for information. A well-defined agenda can explicitly inform team members about the topics for the upcoming meeting and can help team members to focus on particular issues and information needs both during and in preparation for team meetings. This notification would provide team members with time to collect relevant information, learn more about the issue if necessary, and consider what resources they might contribute. Having a clear agenda for each team meeting can provide a legitimate guide for members to follow and can therefore increase their ability to search for and provide information related to the shared vision, rather than individual interests.

Be systematic and intentional. One of the building blocks of a learning

organization is the ability to engage in systematic problem solving (Garvin, 1993). As a part of problem solving, both search and use must be intentional and both are necessary to learning (Garvin, 1993; Lave, 1993; Wenger, 1998). Teams need mechanisms to ensure that both search and use occur. In this case, I found that the lack of an agenda hindered the team's ability to engage in such important information management activities. Presidents must send a clear message to their teams that information is an important foundation for team meetings. Clarify the point of meetings, whether the goal is to engage in information sharing, problem solving, or decision making, and clearly communicate your expectations for information and participation (Nadler & Spencer, 1998). I suggest that more information about the meeting's purpose and goals would have helped the team in this case to search for and deliver information related to the organization's goals.

There are several means that leaders might use to increase the amount of data and information available to their teams. First, insist that team members use data rather than assumptions to contribute to discussions and to support decision making (Garvin, 1993). Such a stance indicates that individuals must "do their homework" before each team meeting. Presidents might also identify specific information needed from team members and request that this be brought to the meeting. If needed, call special meetings to address urgent or particularly complex issues and give team members the time they need to prepare and engage in such forums.

Colleges and universities should also ensure that certain information-gathering structures are in place throughout the organization in support of organizational learning and decision making. Assigning individuals or units within organizations the

responsibility to engage in search functions increases the likelihood of search and organizational learning occurring (Gladstein & Caldwell, 1985; Kanter, 1988; March & Olsen, 1975; Scott, 1995). For example, presidents should assess the strength of their institutional research structure and take steps to improve or expand this function. This might include re-structuring to highlight its importance within the university, familiarizing team members with the institutional research function, and adding a representative at the team to both share information and understand data needs. However, depending on the organization, the research function might also be more dispersed. Increasingly, outside of the academic function, student affairs divisions are adding their own assessment functions and enrollment operations track a multitude of data and indicators. Presidents should encourage team members to consider how they have incorporated research structures within their divisions to search for relevant information and to support their roles on the leadership team.

Encourage systems thinking. Teams must also acknowledge the interdependency of team members and their parts of the organization, as well as their relationship to the larger systems outside of the organization (Senge, 1990). It is important that teams recognize that each individual has particular, but limited, knowledge that must be combined with others' perspectives and experiences in order to understand the whole (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). Team meetings are the most obvious means to share information. However, as this case showed, merely holding a meeting does not ensure that information is shared. From a learning organization perspective, it is important to ensure that knowledge is transferred among individuals. Presidents must develop mechanisms to ensure that information from across the system is shared.

One means of accomplishing cross-systems thinking is to open boundaries, both horizontally and vertically. Presidents should consider the skill mix in their teams and take steps to ensure that the right individuals and talents are at the table based on organizational needs (Katzenbach, 1998). Above and beyond contributing knowledge and skills to organizational goals, individual team members must have an “enterprise” perspective and be able to make decisions for the greater good of the university rather than just for their own interests (Nadler & Spencer, 1998).

Team conveners should invite in non-team members into the team to share data, information, and advice to the team. These might be other organizational members or external experts who can expose team members to new ideas. Such information can be used not only to improve decision making, but also to educate team members on vital issues. Team members should also be compelled to look for, evaluate, and share good practices both from within and outside of the organization. Presidents and their team should also consider developing intentional partnerships within the team to address specific issues. For example, rather than asking one team member to lead an initiative, include two or more members who can both learn from one another and address a complex issue from a variety of perspective. Such assignments or activities can provide explicit mechanisms for team members to engage with the environment in search of specific information needed for decision making. Presidents might request that team members conduct benchmarking studies and reviews of best practices both within and outside of the university in order to better understand how the university is situated in the environment with regard to specific dimensions. By engaging with, rather than merely monitoring the environment from a distance, team can develop their scanning capacity.

Even within the course of regular meetings, presidents can encourage systems thinking by asking questions about how information, events, and decisions affects individual units. Individual team members might experiment with taking on an interpreter role that can translate how others outside the team might view an issue (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). Spend time on topics in order to allow team members to look beyond discrete events and get at their underlying causes (Senge, 1990). Focus team meetings on issues, rather than on individuals, and work to encourage the different perspectives and lenses that are present around the table. Meetings should stimulate the exchange of ideas. The goal should be to get the team engaged with information so that it is used, as well as encourages the search for additional information for their next interaction.

Develop power and personal mastery. Presidents and team members must work to develop the sources of power that are available within the team. This case highlighted the discrepancy of power within the team and suggested that these differences were indicative of team members' abilities to contribute to team goals. A broader base of both informal and formal power at the individual level may help team members to be more engaged and successful in their boundary-spanning activities. Creating a wider diversity of power within the team may also help to prevent the centralization of power in a few individuals. By doing so, a president can avoid relying on a few key people and risking a void in the team's access to information and actors if a particularly central individual leaves the team. Power should be fluid and regenerative, rather than isolated in a minority of team members (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993).

Presidents can play a role in developing team members' power, and hence their teams', in several ways. First, work to increase the network centrality of team members.

Take advantage of opportunities for individuals to serve on committees both within and outside of the university, on external boards, or in professional organizations, especially in areas that are related to strategic goals. Furthermore, as described above, presidents can help to ensure that their teams have sufficient knowledge regarding the organization's goals by inviting presenters to address these issues at team meetings or by strategically sending team members to conferences. Finally, make assignments and delegate tasks based on skills or skill development needs, rather than relying purely on organizational roles (Katzenbach, 1998). These measures can foster access to information and individuals that can help the team to understand and influence the environment.

Individual team members must also take responsibility for developing their sources of power. In addition to support from the president and others, individuals should seek to increase their personal mastery by seeking new experiences, building their access to information and actors through networks, and developing relationships both inside and outside of the team in ways that foster expert and network power (Senge, 1990).

Individual team members must also take responsibility for educating themselves about the university's core issues and strategies by reading professional and academic literature, attending conferences and workshops, and seeking the advice of colleagues with expertise in these areas. Developing access to individuals and information, and committing to learning about the core goals of the team, will create opportunities for team members to participate more fully in information and political management functions, making every individual part of the core rather than leaving some on the periphery.

Address affective conflict. In order for many of these strategies to success, presidents must also be attentive to processes and issues of team building. In particular, the ability, team leaders must recognize that the ability to use information will be sorely diminished if affective conflict is allowed to weaken a team's capacity. This case highlighted what several others have concluded is important in a team or group environment, specifically that building trust and relationships among team members is a vital team activity (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Dee, 2001; Knudson, 1997). The clear presence of affective conflict among team members hindered their ability and willingness to interact with one another both within and outside of meetings. Presidents and team members must take steps to avoid the isolation and alienation of any team member. This means paying attention to the quality of relationships on the team because these connections, or lack thereof, can impact the quality of a team's work. Inclusiveness is an obligation of the whole team, as evidenced by the group norms and individual practices (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). Alienating or isolating members ignores the benefits of creative problem solving that each individuals' unique contributions and different perspectives can provide (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993).

Presidents, and individual team members, must take steps to manage relationships address affective conflict within teams by addressing instances as soon as they become recognizable. Which means that all team members must be attentive to the source of conflict (Katzenbach, 1998). Personal conflict can be destructive and unproductive, while constructive, task- or issue-based conflict can generate alternatives and improve decisions. Presidents should model respect for and curiosity about differing perspectives in order to emphasize that such differences are valued. Be intentional in your effort to

make each member's value evident in order to increase appreciation for the value of each individual and be clear that everyone has a voice at the table (Katzenbach, 1998; Nadler & Spencer, 1998).

Teams can work to develop or improve their interpersonal relationships by increasing their familiarity with one another both in social and professional settings. For example, in addition to creating social opportunities to foster informal interaction, presidents should also intentionally partner team members with one another on collaborative organizational projects in order to build trust and familiarity (Garvin, 1993). This would be especially helpful for team members who would not normally spend time with one another outside of structured meetings (Nadler & Spencer, 1998). Creating additional occasions for interaction can help to build relationships, but can also create opportunities for diffusion that may have help team members to gain information and to learn from the experience of others (March, 1994). Increasing familiarity and gaining trust through increased interaction then creates a foundation for positive cognitive conflict to emerge in the team.

In order to improve organizational learning, presidents must develop the capacity of their teams to scan and anticipate change in the wider environment in order to detect variations; develop the ability to question, challenge, and change norms; and allow strategic directions to emerge (Morgan, 1997). Furthermore, presidents themselves, as team leaders, must monitor team discipline and attend to issues of conflict (Katzenbach, 1998). It is vital to spend time on both relationships and issues in order to build trust and develop the capacity for learning. The logic of appropriateness suggests that once these structures and processes become routine, team members will rely on their experience

with these productive habits and accept them as legitimate behaviors. Presidential leadership teams have promise for addressing complex issues by engaging in boundary spanning, but they must find ways to build their capacity for information and political management in support of organizational goals. These strategies for addressing both team building and team learning can help presidents and their teams to construct a solid base so that they can bridge those boundaries with intentionality and purpose.

APPENDIX A. TEAM MEMBER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

- This protocol was used to conduct semi-structured interviews across several sessions with each team member.
- Prior to start of protocol: Review consent form. Ask for and answer any questions about the project.

I. Influences – Background

1. What is your current professional position?
How did you come to be in this position?
What would you say your professional training is in?
Particular disciplinary background?
2. How long have you been here?
What were you doing immediately prior to this position?
What about before that?

II. Influences, Identity and Rules –What does the division do?

3. Does your office/division have a mission statement?
If not, how would you describe the mission of your office/division?
What was the process by which this mission was decided?
On a scale of 1-5, how effective is your office/division in fulfilling this mission?
If so, is there anything you'd change about what the mission statement says or assumes about your office/division?
4. What are the office/division's specific goals for the current year to help it meet this mission?
Which 2-3 goals are currently your top priorities?
What was the process for determining these goals? Who participated?
If I asked your top staff which 2-3 goals are currently the top priority, how would their list compare to yours?
5. What activities does your office/division undertake to meet those goals? For instance, what are some of your regular, ongoing activities?

What new activities or projects have you initiated in the past year?

If your office published a newsletter about your activities, what would be today's top three headlines?

6. What resources do you and your office/division control?

Financial, human, information, other

What resources or factors don't you control that affect your job?

7. What were your 1-2 big successes this past year?

What made it a success?

What was one of your biggest challenges this past year?

Would you say that situation is resolved? If so, how did you tackle it? If not, what are you doing to resolve it?

8. Who else, besides you and your staff, influences the goals or day-to-day activities of this office?

[for each constituency mentioned:] How do they communicate their expectations to you?

Taking all of the outside influences as a group, to what extent to their expectations coincide with your own, on a scale of 1 to 5?

III. Influences, Identity and Rules – What does the individual do?

9. Think about your activities in a typical week. Out of all the responsibilities in your job description, which 2-3 responsibilities do you spend the most time on in a typical week?

Do you think those 2-3 responsibilities are in fact the most important? If not, which responsibilities do you think you should devote more time to?

How often do you meet with others in your division in a typical week?

With whom?

For what purpose?

Examples.

10. What have been your most significant accomplishments during your tenure in this position?

If you knew today that you would be leaving this position in one year, what one thing would you most like to accomplish between now and then? Why is this important to you?

When you can't accomplish a goal you set for yourself as TITLE, what kinds of things typically stand in your way? How do you deal with these barriers?

11. If I asked your staff to give you a grade on you as a leader, what grade do you think they would give you and why?

What are their 2 or 3 greatest expectations of you as a leader?

How do they communicate those expectations to you?

What grade would you give yourself as a leader? If it's different from the grade your staff would give you, what are the reasons?

12. Is there anyone, inside or outside the university, whom you regularly use as a sounding board or advisor when you have a problem?

What are the characteristics that make this person a good person to talk to?

13. Of all your skills, knowledge, and abilities, which 2 or 3 do you think are the most vital contributions you bring to this office/division?

If continuing with interview at this time: I'd like to shift the focus of our conversation from your office/division to the leadership team.

If picking up at next visit: Recap first sections and then shift the focus of conversation from office/division to the leadership team.

IV. Influences, Identity and Rules – What does the Leadership Team do?

14. How long have you been on the team?

How did you come to be on the team?

Were you one of the original members, or did you join an existing team?

15. How would you summarize the team's function(s)?

Has that always been the case? Has it changed?

16. What three words would you use to describe the culture of this team?

In follow up interview, use continua of each element (e.g., congenial to contentious, political to not political).

17. If there were a rulebook for team members regarding team operations, what would be the top three dos and don'ts?

18. Describe your relationship with other team members, including the president.

What other team members do you frequently work with?

19. Think of some of the major issues the team has tackled over the past year.

How does the team prioritize which issues are most important?

Get examples of a time they prioritized something.

Which do you think are the 3 most important issues?

Does your analysis of the 3 most important issues correspond to the team's priorities?

20. Choose one of those major issues and think of the process by which the team addressed it.

As each team member represented the interests of their own offices/divisions, which members' interests seemed most closely aligned with those of your office/division, and in what ways?

Which members' interests seemed farthest from those of your office/division, and in what ways?

What was the outcome? How were conflicts among the various interests of team members resolved?

21. What was the team's greatest accomplishment last year?

Can you identify any areas in which the team failed to live up to your expectations?

22. What should I know about this team that I've not asked you about?

V. Influences, Identity and Rules, Interpretation – Role on Leadership Team

23. How would you describe your unique role as a member of the leadership team? What can you do or contribute that other members cannot?

To what extent does your perception of your role match what you perceive to be the president's expectations of your role?

24. Think of a recent leadership team meeting you would characterize as typical.

How much time did you spend preparing for this team meeting?

Did you consult with people outside the team in preparation for the meeting? Who? About what?

What information did you seek, and how did you gather it?

Of the information that you gathered, were there any parts that you decided not to bring to the meeting? What led you to decide not to include it?

25. Still thinking of that typical meeting, how much time did you spend afterward following up on the meeting?

Did you have particular tasks to accomplish as a result of the meeting? Did you do them? Why or why not?

Did you share information from the meeting with your staff? Someone else?

How much of the information discussed at the meeting did you share?

How did you decide what to share and what not to share with your staff?

Example?

26. In team meetings, what kinds of issues or activities immediately get your attention as being relevant to your office/division? Give me one or two examples.

Why are these issues or activities important to you?

What kinds of issues or activities seem less relevant to you and your office/division?
Are there issues or activities that seem to you to be outside your area of responsibility?
Why?

27. How would you describe the perspectives held by other members of the team?

Whose perspective do you share? Why?

Whose perspective do you not share? Why not?

How are different perspectives managed in the team? Example?

28. Has there ever been a time when you felt the leadership team was not taking the needs of your office/division as seriously as you do, when you felt you had to advocate for your office/division to the team? Can you give me an example?

What did you do about this situation? What was the outcome?

What about the reverse – a time when your office/division was not taking the needs of the University seriously?

29. When you take leadership team decisions back to your staff, what kinds of reactions do you usually get?

Can you give me an example of a time when your staff responded with what you would consider wholehearted support?

Can you give an example of a time when your staff resisted the decision of the leadership team?

What did you do in that case?

What was the outcome?

30. How would you summarize the way you negotiate the balance between being the head of your office/division and being a member of the leadership team?

How would you complete the sentence “ I sit between the President and _____”?

APPENDIX B. PRESIDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

- This protocol was used to conduct semi-structured interviews across several sessions with the president.
- Prior to start of protocol: Review consent form. Ask for and answer any questions about the project.

I. Influences – Background

1. What is your current professional position?
How did you come to be in this position?
How long have you been here?

II. Influences, Identity and Rules – Leadership team

2. How did you form your leadership team?
3. What is the goal of your team meeting?
4. What would you say are the major problems that the team's dealing with right now?
5. What do you expect of the members of that team?
6. What was the team's greatest accomplishment last year?
Can you identify any areas in which the team failed to live up to your expectations?
7. What are the top three issues or challenges the team currently faces?
What do you expect the team as a whole to do to address those issues or challenges?
8. Do you meet with team members individually?
9. What kind of decisions do you rely on them for?
10. How are issues prioritized within the team?
11. If you were to write a job description for a vice-president, what would be the top three characteristics that you would look for?

12. How does this team help connect you to all of your constituents?
13. How do you know what's going on in the rest of the institution?
14. Each team member has his or her unique strengths and abilities, and each represents a different part of the university. Can you give me some examples of ways that you drew on individual member's unique strengths or knowledge?

Are there some team members you rely on more than others to make substantive contributions?

If so: What makes those members more useful to you and the team than others?

IV. Influences, Identity and Rules, Interpretation – Role on Leadership Team

15. What is your role on the team?
16. What do you team members expect of you?

How do they communicate their expectations to you?

17. Are there people outside the team, inside the university or outside the university, that you rely on for advice?

V. Influences and Rules

2. In your routine management of the day-to-day operations of the university, say, last week, did you ever turn to others for information or advice?

If any: What people or organizations did you turn to?

Are these the ones you rely on most often? What are the 2 or 3 people or organizations you most often turn to for information or advice in managing day-to-day operations? Are they members of your leadership team, other people within the university, board members, outsiders?

3. Can you give me an example of when you simply made a decision without consulting anyone?
4. What opportunities do you have to communicate with the campus as a whole?

How do you decide what messages to communicate in these forums?

What avenues does the campus as a whole have for communicating with you?

How well do you think people on campus understand what your vision is or what the goals of the university are?

APPENDIX C. KEY CAMPUS INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Prior to start of protocol: Review consent form. Ask for and answer any questions about the project.

1. What is your role on campus?
 - a. Responsibilities
 - b. To whom do you report?
 - c. How long have you been here?
 - d. In any other capacity?
 - e. What is your role in campus decision making?
2. How would you characterize interaction with members of the leadership team?
3. What are the current issues on campus?
 - a. History
 - b. What is important to know about this issue? What are the facts?
4. Where should I go for more information on [ISSUE]?

APPENDIX D. DOCUMENTS

1. University vision statement
2. President's inaugural address
3. President's message
4. Campus master plan

APPENDIX E. ROSTER OF TEAM MEMBERS

President

Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Vice President for Business Affairs and Finance

Vice President for Economic Development

Vice President for Information Services and Technology

Vice President for Student Affairs

Vice President for University Advancement

University Legal Counsel

Executive-in-Residence

Senior Advisor for Government Relations

Director of Marketing and Public Affairs

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