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Mobilizing Alumni Constituents for Legislative Advocacy in Higher Education

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MOBILIZING ALUMNI CONSTITUENTS FOR LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

MOBILIZING ALUMNI CONSTITUENTS FOR LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
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By

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ABSTRACT

Adequate funding has become a critical issue for institutions of higher education, affecting outcomes such as accessibility, affordability, and quality of education. The recent economic recession has been detrimental for state funding, resulting in budget cuts for higher education in a majority of states. Overall, state funding has not kept pace with the rising costs of education. Additionally, the issues of state governance and institutional autonomy have also become heightened. Thus, many higher education institutions are initiating advocacy programs with their external constitutions. Because alumni are integral group of an institution's constituent base, and often exhibit the most passion for the institution, this group is identified as a primary focus to employ mechanisms of legislative advocacy.

Thus study used a survey questionnaire as the instrument tool to collect quantitative data. 423 surveys were electronically distributed using a membership database of senior-most alumni professionals at four-year higher education institutions. From this sample, 89 surveys were completed and analyzed. The acceptable response rate of 21.5% was obtained for this sample.

The survey collected information on strategies utilized for the intent of legislative advocacy. The frequency and level of perceived effectiveness were t he primary facets of the survey which were measured. The goal of this research was to provide information which would benefit administrators in their selection of methods to strengthen relationships with government officials and further promote the needs and benefits of higher education. This information is also useful for policy formation as administrators seek to augment higher education.

The first research question determined the most frequently employed strategies of legislative advocacy. The most frequently employed strategy was to use the alumni association website as a tool to encourage participation or legislative advocacy. Several of the most

commonly used strategies involved the alumni website and the alumni magazine, which emphasized the value of these two tools for methods of mass-communication.

The second research question measured the perceived level of effectiveness for the strategies that were utilized. For this question, a Likert-type scale was used. The strategy with the highest mean score was for alumni to participate in a coordinated visit to the state capitol. Other strategies with high mean scores for perceived effectiveness included a visit to the state capitol by alumni leadership, as well as on-campus events for all alumni and alumni leadership to visit with legislators.

The third research question compared the strategies utilized by institutional type. Category I represented baccalaureate/master's institutions, and the most frequently used strategies from that category differed from the strategies most commonly used by Category II institutions (doctoral/research). None of the top three most employed strategies of Category I were in the top three most employed strategies of Category II. Category I represented 60.7% and Category II represented 39.3 % of the participant sample. Yet, in 22 of the 23 listed strategies, Category II yielded more yes responses than did Category I, which displays that Category II institutions are more prevalent in initiating strategies of legislative advocacy.

The final research question assessed the policy implications for higher education institutions, leaders, and policy makers. Because legislative awareness was the most common characteristic of the strategies most often employed, agenda denial and problem definition should be common methods administrators undertake to propel issues to be placed upon or kept from reaching legislative agendas. This emphasizes the value of legislative advocacy to create policies that benefit higher education. Properly facilitated by institution administrators, advocacy programs can assist in policy formation.

This dissertation is approved for
recommendation to the
Graduate Council

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I hereby authorize the University of Arkansas Libraries to duplicate this dissertation when needed for research and/or scholarship.

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In 2003, I made the decision to return to academia and earn a Master's degree. I submitted my job resignation, packed all my earthly possessions, and left my home in Asheville, North Carolina. Over 1,000 miles later I reached the front steps of Old Main at the University of Arkansas. Ironically, I thought this would be a two-year endeavor. Nine years later, as I complete a dissertation towards a Ph.D. in Public Policy, I've reached the conclusion that this is a lifelong endeavor; though I have earned two degrees, I will remain a student of the profession.

Sir Isaac Newton famously postulated that we are standing on the shoulders of giants. I am sincerely grateful for those who have helped me on my journey. I am also fully cognizant that I would not be where I am today without the support of many people.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the man who constantly remains "*By My Side*" – my husband and my best friend, Kristian Underwood.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Inadequate and inconsistent funding has created significant problems for institutions of higher education, as state governments have often treated allocations as political and discretionary priorities (Weerts, 2007). An adverse outcome to the decline of state funding has been the need to increase tuition (College Board, 2006), affecting the accessibility and affordability of higher education for the general public (Noland, 2010). Another implication is the distribution of autonomy within the institution as institutions have begun to rely on alternative sources of revenue while the authority to govern the campus is not adjusted accordingly. Even though state legislatures fund a lower proportion of an institution's budget (Ehrenberg, 2002), they retain authoritative control of the institution, a historical problem dating to the 1970s (Mortimer, 1971).

Chung-Hoon, Hite, and Hite (2005) asserted that because of the recent trend of declining support from state and federal governments (as a proportion of the institution's budget), institutions of higher education have a heightened need to develop new strategies to increase "resource streams to maintain institutional survival and growth" (p. 35). Although institutions have focused more efforts on private fundraising (Levine, 2008), an emerging strategy has been for institutions to use their constituent base, such as their alumni societies or associations, to advocate with state legislators for both favorable policy treatment and increased funding. Weerts, Cabrera, and Sanford (2010) provided an empirical analysis of the non-monetary support provided by alumni to American colleges and universities, and highlighted the value of alumni as strong political advocates for higher education.

Davis (2007) found that all public institutions have been affected by the real and proportionate decrease in government funding, and he argued that institutions that are more dependent on state appropriations are the most vulnerable. While finding that decreases in public funding are detrimental to the perception of institutional quality, Davis (2007) concluded that the institutions with the highest perception of quality positively correlate with the most diverse streams of revenue. The recommendation from his research, then, is that institutions should maximize their pursuit of multiple streams of revenue such as private gifts, research and development grants, and auxiliary services revenues, all in addition to state funding. Davis (2007) alluded to the notion that the diversification of revenue can be accomplished more effectively with alumni who advocate for their institutions with government officials.

Alumni, both individually and through collective bodies, are an integral facet of higher education communities around the country. American colleges and universities have come to depend upon the support of their alumni and external constituents (Levine, 2008), and higher education institutions have historically depended on their alumni for funding and to assist with the academic evaluation of programs (Kozobarich, 2000). Due to the current public financial climate of many institutions (Toutkoushian, 2003), alumni are now serving in volunteer roles in addition to providing private donations. Alumni are also contributing to legislative advocacy and lobbying governments to influence policy that will better support the needs of higher education (Weerts, et al., 2010).

Engaging alumni in policy advocacy is a relatively new practice to higher education. Current and unique examples of new arrangements between university and state officials are found with the Colorado School of Mines (Weerts, 2007), and with the higher education leaders and state governments in Oregon, North Dakota, Arizona, Florida, Iowa, Virginia, and

Washington (Couturier, 2003). Similarly, the University of Wisconsin established the UW political advocacy network (Weerts and Ronca, 2009), which was grounded in the examination of how alumni can advocate for their institutions with state and legislative agencies.

Statement of the Purpose

The scope of the current research project focuses on the changing environment of policy advocacy in higher education where alumni advocate to the government the importance of funding higher education. The purpose for conducting the study will be to catalog and describe the practices of higher education alumni associations and societies advocating for the interests of their respective institutions with state and local governments. According to Weerts (2007), the struggle for fiscal resources is dire as state appropriations have decreased by over 40% in real dollars since 1978. Alumni associations can be powerful allies for their institutions by advocating for state allocations and increasing funding for higher education.

By providing an analysis of the political and social context involved in the mobilization of alumni constituents to serve as legislative advocates, the study will illustrate how volunteers can assist higher education institutions. The research has the potential to describe the power of volunteerism and its potential effect on public policy. Drawing upon a national sample of higher education institutions that employ formal alumni associations, the study will correlate activities of an alumni association with actions and decisions by state and federal governments in the form of allocations (such as student aid) and legislative actions and bills that affect higher education generally and institutions specifically.

Statement of Research Questions

1. What are the most common strategies that alumni associations at institutions of higher education employ to influence their legislators and/or government policy makers?

2. What is the perception of effectiveness of these actions employed by alumni associations in order to influence and/or lobby their legislation?
3. Are there different strategies employed between the two groups (Baccalaureate / Master's degree conferring institutions and Doctoral/Research degree conferring institutions)?
4. What are the potential policy implications for higher education institutions, leaders, and policy makers based on the findings from the data regarding public advocacy by public institutions?

Definitions

The following operational definitions clarify major terms used in this study:

Alumni: Although "alumni" traditionally defines a person who has spent time at an institution, with the amount of time required to become alumni status defined by institutions, the use of the term "alumni" for the current research will refer to individuals who seek to have a meaningful and continually engaging relationship with their alma mater. According to Barrett (1989), “alumni are the end result of the educational effort as well as the future users (employers) of the institution’s graduates” (p. 28).

Alumni Volunteer: According to McClintock (2000), the role of volunteering has changed as alumni have significantly less time to devote to their alma mater than in previous decades, and the current state of alumni relations calls for a partnership of alumni volunteers working closely with Advancement & Government Relations staff as partners.

Alumni Advocates: Alumni who are engaged in contributing to the decision-making for their alma mater; Carlson (2000) asserted that alumni association members “seek not to set policy but rather to have an impact on policy” (p. 268). Carlson also contended that what alumni want most from their alma mater is to be engaged, to contribute information, and to gather information toward an end or decision, and that this is felt to be more important than the outcome of the decision itself.

Alumni Advocacy Networks: Darling and Weimer (2000) noted that an emerging trend has been for institutions to create alumni advocacy networks, in which the institution engages influential state citizens who are willing to contact legislators for issues of budget appropriations or ballot measures on behalf of and in the best interest of the institution.

Alumni Associations: In higher education these associations are staffed with professional officers to represent alumni and the institution, who seek to involve and engage the alumni with the institution in a serious and constructive manner (Fisher, 1989). Associations have an historical role in higher education, serving as a conduit for engaging former students with the activities, interests, and welfare of the institution.

Alumni Association Board Member: According to Renz (2000), alumni board members are individuals that represent the institution and serve as either an advisor or in a policy-making capacity for the association. They are the leaders of their respective alumni societies, often assuming the position based on respect by peers, peer elections, and/or administrative appointments. Those classified as "advisory board members" make recommendations to the association, but allow direction to come from the institution. Conversely, those who serve as "policy board member" set the direction for the entire association, create policy, and are empowered to make decisions about the association's future to be implemented by staff members (Renz, 2000).

Constituent Relations: A professional field in higher education in which the individual seeks to build a relationship with a constituent of the institution, typically a potential or current donor, alumnus, employer, elected official, etc. Through this relationship, the professional will provide the constituent evidence of the institution's good-faith effort to use the investment provided by the constituent in its intended manner, and in doing so, the practitioner will also engage the constituent with the goal of procuring continued investments from the constituent (Barden, 2001).

Government Relations: A professional field, used in the current research with relevance to higher education, in which the staff position is identifiable to the campus community and includes functions that are clearly defined to be responsible for institutional governance and decision-making (Morse, 2000).

Legislative Advocacy: An activity where colleges and universities (in the current study) focus attention and effort on educating elected decision makers about the interests of higher education and the impact of potential legislation, rules, and regulations (Walker, 1991).

Policy Formation: The exceedingly complex process by which public policies are formed, including agenda-setting, development of alternatives, and selection of alternatives. These processes are exceedingly complex because they are each governed by different forces, and the "processes are dynamic, fluid, and loosely joined" (Kingdon, 2003, p. 230).

Policy Implementation: Implementation "is the product of what has happened in the earlier stages of the policy process" (Hill and Hupe, 2009, p. 6), and is the "carrying out of a basic policy decision" (Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983, pp. 20 -21). During the implementation stage, the policy may be substantially modified, elaborated, or even negated (Hill & Hupe, 2009).

University Advancement: An administrative division in a typical university that consists of various professional fields, often including but not limited to alumni relations, development and fundraising, constituent relations and records, special events, and marketing and communications (Webb, 1989).

Assumptions

The following assumptions will be accepted for the current study:

1. Alumni Association senior officers understand the context and premise of legislative advocacy.
2. Alumni Association senior officers who will respond to the survey will do so accurately and with veracity.

Delimitations and Limitations

For reasons of practicality and focus, the study will accept the following limitations and delimitations:

1. Data were only collected from practitioners in the alumni relations profession, with specific focus on what practices were employed by the alumni associations. While institutions may also produce legislative advocacy through other university departments, that is outside of the scope of this research. Therefore, study findings should not be generalized to the broad area of legislative advocacy or to institutional types not included in the study.
2. Data were collected only from the senior officer at alumni associations; thus the survey was limited to one response per institution. Study findings should not be generalized to the perceptions of non-senior alumni affairs officers.
3. Because the survey pool was taken from a membership directory of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), the findings of this study were limited to data collected from respondents who hold membership in CASE.

4. The findings of this study may not be generalizable for other institutions of higher education, such as proprietary institutions, and community colleges.
5. The data collected in the study, specific to the level of effectiveness of strategies, were limited to the opinion of the most senior staff leader of the alumni association.
6. The data collected in the study were limited to the paid professionals of the alumni relations field; alumni volunteers were not surveyed for this research.
7. There was a bias towards those who responded to the survey. The potential exists for a non-response bias if those who did not respond would have provided different answers to the survey questions, as opposed to the results provided by those who did respond.
8. There was also a bias towards those practitioners who do not utilize email. Because that was the only source of data collection, those who are not likely to respond via email may not have completed the survey.
9. A final limitation is the scope of the strategies listed within the survey. There may be additional strategies of legislative advocacy, that are frequently employed or have a high perception of effectiveness, that remain unknown because they were not listed among the 23 strategies on the survey.

Due to these limitations, these findings of this study should only be used as a guide.

Significance of the Study

Kennedy (1986) argued that "the time has passed when colleges and universities can take government relations for granted" (p. 526), and asserted that because government activity in regard to higher education has become "pervasive" (p. 496), institutions must incorporate mechanisms of managing government into their administrative structure. Government both regulates and funds higher education, and of this support and funding Kennedy (1986) suggested that "our relative fate can be positive or catastrophic, depending on how well or poorly we are able to interact with that entity" (p. 496). Thus, it is imperative for higher education institutions to do more than simply monitor legislative activity that affects the institution; institutions of higher education must actively engage in the policy process and utilize their resources to assist in influencing policy that will affect the health of the institution.

In a presentation titled "Forging a Public Agenda for Higher Education in the New Legislative Session" given at the 2010 American Association of State Colleges and University (AASCU) Higher Education Government Relations Conference, West Virginia University Chancellor Brian Noland (2010) listed the recession as the premier issue affecting public policy in higher education for 2009-2010. According to Noland, fiscal years 2009 and 2010 marked very significant and consecutive declines in state spending of general funds, with the impact resulting at the college level in layoffs, furloughs, and cuts in academic programs. Budget cuts from the state have historically been combated by increased tuition and fees. However, raising the cost of education does not coincide with the goal of many institutions, which is to keep higher education an affordable option for state citizens (Noland, 2010). Noland (2010) revealed the negative implications stemming from the most recent years of budget shortfalls. The weakened economy represents a longer spectrum of budget concerns. According to Weerts (2007), research has revealed that declining appropriations to higher education has been a problem in the last three decades, as he noted "the current state investment effort per personal income has declined $32.1 billion below that of 1980" (p. 80).

Barrett (1989) found that alumni populations have historically served higher education, noting "alumni have been an important part of the American collegiate scene ever since the first graduates emerged from the hallowed halls of our oldest institutions of higher education" (p. 25).

Although the importance of alumni has remained strong, the role in which alumni have served their alma mater is ever-changing. The first emergence of alumni activity was by groups who sought to merely stay connected to their institution (Barrett, 1989). The alumni populations have evolved to fulfill a critical financial role for funding their alma mater. Levine (2008) emphasized the importance of alumni contributions, noting that:

> since their inception, colleges and universities in the United States have relied on voluntary financial support of community members to support their missions and make up the gap between institutional needs and available resources. (p. 177)

Funding for an institution is imperative, and while alumni certainly help meet this need, there are other areas of institutional need that are important and can be assisted by alumni (Barrett, 1989). The area of alumni advocacy and mobilization into alumni advocacy networks to help fulfill the needs of their alma mater to government policy-makers is an emerging trend in alumni relations (Darling & Weimer, 2000). This research will provide analysis of this trend, along with adequate justification of the need and a synopsis of best practices.

CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Influence of External Constituents and Alumni on Policy Formation

Constituents -- alumni, parents, donors, corporations and foundations, community members, governing boards, and government officials -- are advocates who influence and contribute to higher education. The breadth of this influence is expansive, yielding many implications. While administrators realize the importance of external constituents and value their contributions, one must also realize that this stakeholder group requires attention and that institutional resources must be devoted to nurturing these relationships so that the outcomes are in alignment with institutional goals. If the relationship is cultivated and nurtured appropriately, then external constituents can play a vital role in assisting institutions to reach their desired strategic goals. Jacobs, Leach, and Spencer (2010), postulate that "At a time when the very role of university education is under scrutiny, and under pressure from external imperatives to conform to guidelines… it is salutary to listen to individual accounts of personal change and growth" (p. 230). By taking the time to listen to constituents and collect the oral history recounted by alumni, administrators will better understand the relationships alumni and constituents create with institutions. This creates an ability to connect the transformative growth incurred by the constituent to the value they connect with the university. Cultivating sincere relationships such as this requires significant time and can yield great results.

According to Kozobarich (2000), these constituents are valued deeply, as "The university calls on alumni, other friends of the university, corporations, and foundations to support student scholarships, new campus buildings, faculty research and teaching, and a wide variety of other projects that strengthen the university" (p. 25). Former president of both Michigan State University and the University of Connecticut John DiBiaggio remarked that he has found "no group is more critical to a university than its alumni, and a supportive alumni corps can dramatically enhance the success of an institution's program" (p. 12). James J. Duderstadt, president emeritus at the University of Michigan, described one important facet of a president's responsibilities to include maintaining responsibility for the "complex array of relationships with both internal and external constituents," the latter to be a myriad consortium of "alumni and parents; local, state, and federal government; business and labor; foundations; the higher education community; the media; and the public at large" (p. 47). A similar definition of external stakeholders is provided by Weerts (2007), who included the following groups: "alumni, donors, community partners, corporate partners, state legislators, governors, and other government officials at the state, federal and local level" (p. 81).

For the scope of this research, the external constituents that shall be examined will include alumni, donors, corporate and foundation partners, governance boards, and government officials. First these constituents will be identified and a rationale will be given as to why they are important. This shall be followed by an examination of their influence towards higher education. Each constituent group has an effect upon colleges and universities, but a focus will be given specifically in regard to decision-making and policy formation.

Alumni.

Alumni are an important group of constituents as they represent a population of former students who traditionally serve as advocates to their alma mater. This external constituency group has a longstanding history within higher education, and has evolved concurrently with the formation of the educational culture in America (Kozobarich, 2000). In fact, over seventy years ago, President Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia University extolled the importance of alumni, as:

> the alumnus is permanently a member of the University. He has come to it of his own accord, has placed his name upon its books. By these several acts he has become a member of the University family, entitled to recognition as such and bearing responsibility as such. He is always and everywhere, whether willingly or not, whether consciously or not, a representative of his university's training and ideals. (Barrett, 1989, p. 25)

Similarly, Turner (1947), postulated that the alumni constituency group has influenced the American culture of higher education more than what any other country has in the world has experienced, as he contended:

> It must be recognized that colleges and universities of this continent have created the concept of alumni organization, loyalty and support -- unique in the whole world history of higher education -- indigenous to America in the Western World. They have developed that concept into a positive force in the social order -- a powerful influence in the whole area of private philanthropy and a phenomenon well recognized in the arena of practical pressure politics. The alumni in America, as in no other land, have helped to build the institutions of higher learning -- by their interest, their gifts and their organized sponsorship of appropriations (pp. 16-17).

As alumni have helped to support higher education, their role has, in essence, helped shape American higher education. This influence sets the American system of higher education apart from its counterparts across the globe.

Alumni assist with student recruitment in the broadest sense of promoting their university to future students, and their passion can be an indispensible source of marketing for their institution (Bonney, 1989). Many institutions have used the "passionate and abiding interest" of their alumni and sought after this constituent group to serve the institution with student recruitment, by reviewing student applications, representing the institution at college fairs, and hosting student parties (Funderburk, 2000, p. 263). This contribution comes naturally from the alumni and for the benefit of the institution as "alumni have a very high stake in assuring the ongoing excellence of their alma mater by becoming involved in the recruitment of maximally qualified students" (Bonney, 1989, p. 45). Likewise, alumni provide financial contributions to their alma mater for the same reason.

One of the most significant contributions alumni make is through these financial contributions, as alumni represent a major source of financial support for institutions of higher education (Levine, 2008). As resources are declining from state and federal governments, universities are driven to seek private funds often generated through alumni and donors (Weerts and Ronca, 2009). Colleges and universities utilize this constituent base to provide support for the institution (Muller, 1986), and the dependency of this base requires a continuing need to cultivate and retain the loyalty and financial assistance. Worth (2000) noted the significance of fundraising in higher education and posited that, because of the competitive environment and limited resources, philanthropy has become a prominent facet of advancement for all of higher education -- public, private, two-year, and four-year institutions. The Council for Aid to Education (2006) reported that "Historically, alumni and foundations are the biggest sources of voluntary support to higher education" (p. 2). According to Todd (2000), a systematic effort of alumni fundraising began in the late 1800's. While organizational and programmatic structures vary from institution to institution, many alumni associations are responsible for a part of the institutional fundraising endeavors. Some alumni associations operate the institution's annual fund or the class reunion gift program (Todd, 2000). Often, a major donor's engagement with his or her alma mater began with the alumni association, through regional events, the alumni travel program, reunions, or volunteerism (Todd, 2000).

In addition to the tangible benefits of financial support, another advantage of alumni giving is that it has an effect on institutional rankings for colleges and universities. *US News and World Report's Guide to the Best Colleges* considers alumni giving an important criterion

(Levine, 2008). This report is published annually and ranks most of the country's colleges and universities. A study by Monks and Ehrenberg (1999) assessed the influence of this magazine and discovered that administrators altered their operating procedures in hopes to increase their institution's ranking. For example, because this magazine calculates alumni giving by the percentage of graduates who donate to the institution, staff members will purge their database of non-graduates who have not given prior to calculating the results (Monks & Ehrenberg, 1999). Savvy fundraisers will also concentrate on increasing the percentage of alumni who give, in addition to the aggregate totals of funds raised, as another tactic to increase their ranking of alumni giving.

As colleges and universities realize the importance of their alumni, they must increase the number of their personnel in order to provide the resources to better communicate with and cultivate their alumni. Additionally, research is being conducted to maximize the efficiency of operations. For example, research was conducted at Binghamton University to use GIS analysis to better understand giving patterns and predictive models of alumni giving. This research will allow the university to send more targeted solicitations (Jardine, 2003).

Donors.

In addition to alumni, many friends of an institution choose to support the institution for a myriad of reasons. Some donors are alumni and donate because they feel compelled to give back to an institution that invested in them as a student (Weerts & Ronca, 2008). However, this category also includes alumni and non-alumni who participate in philanthropic efforts. A study by Weerts and Ronca (2008) sought to discern the characteristics of donors so that campus fundraisers could maximize their fundraising efforts. This research revealed four categories of motivations for giving, which include: 1) awareness of need; 2) a response to a solicitation; 3) costs and benefits; and 4) altruism or “impure” altruism (Weerts & Ronca, 2008).

These non-alumni donors can include administration, faculty, staff, students, and parents. Current donors are important to the institution, for not only the gifts they have made, but also for the potential of future gifts; Barden (2001) stressed the importance of stewardship and investment in current donors because they can become "your best prospects" (p. 31). An excellent example is John D. Rockefeller, who in 1891 made a $600,000 contribution to the University of Chicago. The University referred to the gift as an investment and went to great lengths to prove that the money was used effectively. Consequently, "Over the next two decades, [Rockefeller]... made gift after gift, helping the University of Chicago become one of the world's greatest research universities" (Barden, 2001, p. 31). The total sum of donations made by Rockefeller exceeded $50 million, and the transformation of this world-class university is attributed to his philanthropic endeavor (Altbach, 2004). While only one example, Rockefeller signifies the importance of donors and continuing donor relationships with external constituents to higher education institutions.

Corporations and foundations.

Both corporations and foundations have played a vital role in contributing financial assets towards the promotion of higher education, and American colleges and universities have benefited from these philanthropic groups for over a century. Worth (2000) posited that “Support from corporations and foundations represents an important component of overall philanthropy at many colleges and universities, especially those with a strong research mission or academic programs that relate closely to the interests of businesses” (p. 298). In the early twentieth century, General Electric opened a corporate-sponsored laboratory on the Bostonian campus of MIT (Kipp, 2003). This example has now become a common trend, and Kipp (2003) asserted that today, corporate giving and "entrepreneurial ambition ... has become a virtue" (p. 21).

An historic example of foundation giving was exemplified by the Walton Family Charitable Support Foundation of Bentonville, Arkansas. With Wal-mart global headquarters based in northwest Arkansas, the foundation formed by family heirs of the world's largest corporation have been philanthropic to the local community, particularly to higher education. In 2002, the Walton Family Charitable Support Foundation donated $300 million dollars to the University of Arkansas Foundation for the University of Arkansas' *Campaign for the 21st Century*. According to Pulley (2002), this was the largest single donation awarded by a private source to a public university in the history of the United States. Donations made from foundations comprise the majority of large single-gift donations made to higher education. Pulley (2002) reported that only four other gifts trump the Walton Foundation gift in regard to magnitude, and within these top five gifts three have been made by a foundation. Other large gifts are listed as follows: A $600 million gift was made by Gordon and Betty Moore and their foundation to California Institute of Technology in 2001; a $400 million gift by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to Stanford University in 2001; a $360 million gift from an anonymous donor to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 2001; a $350 million gift from Patrick J. and Lore Harp McGovern to Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2000. Also noteworthy is the $300 million gift of stock from Ingram Charitable Foundation to Vanderbilt University in 1998 (Pulley, 2002).

Governance boards.

Governing boards are invested with the ultimate authority of creating policy and making key decisions for American colleges and universities (Birnbaum, 1988). A formal area of advocacy in which alumni can serve is through the Board of Trustees, where a common duty is to set policy and determine the general direction of the institution (Barrett, 1989). The results of *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* Survey of College and University Trustees conducted in 2007 demonstrate that 57% of the respondents are graduates of the institutions they serve (Fain, 2010). Other formal advocacy opportunities include positions on other boards, including advisory councils, public relations groups, university committees, alumni association boards of directors and committees, and ad hoc assignments (Barrett, 1989).

Governance boards are an important group of external constituents as they represent a body charged with duties and responsibilities which contribute to the policy formation for institutions. In these days of multi-million and billion dollar fundraising campaigns, the performance demands on trustees continue to rise exponentially (Trombley, 2007). In respect to higher education, these boards may be boards of trustees, boards to govern alumni associations and athletic foundations, or boards to support institutional fundraising endeavors. These boards are necessary to promote and guide the institution. In an effort to discern what makes a higher education institution world-class, Altbach (2004) sought to quantify which criteria are needed to determine rankings. Of significant importance, Altbach (2004) identified governance, along with research, academic freedom, facilities, and adequate funding. According to Altbach (2004), part of the culture at superior universities includes a significant measure of internal self-governance, which is "an entrenched tradition, often buttressed by statutes" and which relies upon the academic community to control central elements of academic life (p. 21). These elements include enrollment standards, curriculum, degree requirements, and areas of research focus for the institution (Altbach, 2004).

A study by Bastedo (2005) explored the emergence of activist governing boards for higher education. This research revealed two theories uncovering a new trend of a more active governance board. The first theory is that the revolution in corporate boards has transcended to higher education as the donors demand an increased shareholder value in the institution. Bastedo (2005) also offered a second theory uncovering political influence, where political appointees have engaged in a more active decision-making role of the institutions' mission. This changing role of governance boards will have implications on the decision-making and policy formation of higher education (Bastedo, 2005). Board performance has become a critical issue in the 21st century, and as the stakes have become even higher, boards will need to consider and take action on a host of issues (Kezar, 2006).

Of corporate governance, Monks (2011) asserted that the problems of governance -- in lieu of the recent corporate scandals and economic collapse -- emanate from a lack of clearly defined roles and duties of the trustee members as well as a lack of enforcing fiduciary conflicts. These skill sets are transferrable to higher education, and members of governing boards such as boards of trustees should have clearly defined scope of responsibility as well as a transparent fiduciary record. In European higher education, the increasing demands on and expectations of institutions, along with the changing relationship between government and institution, have led to movement to improve the standards of internal governance (Boer, Huisman, & Scheytt, 2010). The significance of corporate boards and governance of European counterparts is of importance, in order to have a comprehensive breadth of knowledge regarding governance boards, as these may be of future trends in American higher education governance.

Government officials.

This group of external constituents is a significant group for public institutions, and this group includes both elected and appointed officials. Essentially, any state or federal employee who can influence an institution should be considered an important constituent to cultivate. Elected officers include the governor, state representatives and senators, and US Senators and Representatives, as well as the Department of Education and Secretary of Education. Additionally, in many states the governor will appoint the members of the governing board for the state's higher education system. Bastedo (2005) researched a case study at the University of Massachusetts and examined a governing board which was heavily influenced by the governor's appointees. Those appointees brought with them their own political agenda to influence policy, including admission standards, academic programs, and student tuition and fees.

A Powerful influence.

In an era of declining resources, external constituents have increased their role as contributors to institutions of higher education. While there are a myriad of groups included in the numerous definitions of "external constituents," this research has focused on the key decision-makers who influence policy formation in higher education. Alumni, donors, corporations and foundations, governance boards, and government officials all have a major effect on policies and decisions regarding higher education, including the procurement of financial resources, academic requirements, student recruitment, and legislative advocacy. External constituents bring both positive and negative effects to higher education, contribute significant resources, and also require additional staffing needs. It is imperative to understand these influences and work in congruence with constituents to maintain academic excellence serving the culture of higher education.

The Purpose, Role and Function of Alumni Associations

In America, alumni associations have grown concurrently with the rise of higher education. Alumni associations provide an opportunity for alumni to maintain a lifelong connection to the educational degree they obtained, which becomes part of their identity, as Brown, McIvor, and Rafeck (2004) postulated that "Universities are now seen by social and intellectual historians as bodies that confer identity upon people and places" (p. 4). In this section, a history of alumni and the development of alumni associations will be explained. As alumni have long served their alma mater by donating private contributions, this section will expand upon the importance of institutions procuring financial contributions through the solicitation of alumni to donate to their alma mater. Alumni can also serve their institution not only with fiscal contributions, but also with contributions of intellect and power, by serving as leaders and decision-makers who yield a great influence over policy formation. Thus, content in this section will illuminate how alumni serve in leadership roles and yield a great influence over policy formation. This section will also illustrate how external constituents can collectively -- through an alumni association -- influence higher education. This influence spans the gamut of higher education, including the areas of institutional governance, legislation, and advocacy. Finally, an interpretive analysis will be given as both the costs and benefits of this external constituent group will be explored.

A History of influence.

Alumni Associations have a deep-rooted history within American academia, dating back into the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Yale University began to organize their graduating classes with alumni representation in 1792 (Forman, 1989). Other private east-coast institutions followed suit, and all produced two primary outcomes: the solicitation of alumni for donations and gifts, and the formation of alumni chapters in cities across the country (Forman, 1989). According to Stover, (1930), the first alumni association to be officially organized was the Society of Alumni of Williams College in 1821. Public institutions also began organizing alumni associations; the University of Virginia formed theirs in 1838 (Forman, 1989).

There are several studies that have begun to uncover and explain the influence that groups yield over public policy. Each of these studies may be relevant to advocacy by alumni associations, as they provide insight to a similar topic. For example, Berry (1977) explored the lobbying of public interest groups. In this study, Berry provided a definition for public interest groups that can be applied to alumni associations. If given that the advocacy is conducted towards the general promotion of higher education, which is a service created for the benefit of the greater society, then alumni associations are public interest groups "whose primary purpose is the pursuit of collective goods that will not selectively and materially reward their members" (Berry, 1977, p. 10). Another study conducted by Walker (1991) surveyed voluntary associations. Walker's (1991) findings revealed that common techniques used by citizen groups differed from those used by corporations. The techniques employed by the citizen groups of the non-profit sector often include public demonstrations and protests, communication to the media, publication of voting records, and launching public campaigns (Cook, 1998). Another study with similarities to advocacy conducted by alumni associations was completed by Knoke (1990), who studied professional organizations (Cook, 1998). While these studies may contribute to the newer trend of mobilizing alumni associations, it is noted by Cook (1998) that higher education in general is part of a category of the nonprofit sector which has received little attention in regard to research on lobbying techniques. Research and studies will be needed to this end, as it is noted by Cook (1998) that there has been growth the amount of lobbying and legislative advocacy conducted by institutions of higher education, as well as by higher education associations. Cook (1998) posited that this area of policy has encountered a surge in participants, mainly for two reasons: higher education institutions are engaging more in the policy practices, and these institutions have historically been disengaged, as "higher education institutions and associations have rarely mobilized their various constituencies for grassroots lobbying" (p. 153). The area of external constituencies may be an untapped resource, as Cook (1998) noted that the "potential number of people who could be marshaled for advocacy is huge" (p. 154).

Alumni as fundraisers.

The importance of alumni and the benefits of alumni contributions were realized shortly after the inception of American higher education. The Princeton alumni organization was the first to launch an ambitious fundraising campaign of $100,000 in 1832 (Forman, 1989). While they only reached half of their goal, this endeavor remains a significant contribution for the time period (Forman, 1989). Though not a product of an organized institutional campaign, Harvard alumni began to give back to their alma mater shortly after America's first university was founded in 1636; not more than ten years after opening its doors of academia, an alumnus donated to the college a garden, and in 1672 another graduate donated the funds for the erection of a new building for the campus (Stover, 1930). In 1699, 26 years before this nation was founded, one of the first college dormitories was erected on Harvard property, funded by an alumnus who gave the financial contribution of 1,000 pounds (Stover, 1930).

Kipp (2003) posited that external funding has been a historical attribute of the American higher education system and asserted that "Dollars have always greased the wheels of both American public and private higher education..." (p. 20). Chung-Hoon et. al. (2005) asserted that because of the recent trend of declining support from state and federal governments, institutions of higher education have a heightened need to "develop supplemental resource streams to maintain institutional survival and growth" (p. 35). A recent study by Davis (2007) explored the influences of major revenue sources and concluded that, within public universities, there were significant differences in revenue structures; top tier institutions received more revenue from federal grants and contracts, private gifts, and endowment income while lower tier institutions relied more on state appropriations. Thus, the ability to procure more resources affects the perception of quality of education. Those institutions more dependent on state appropriations are in the most critical of circumstances, though all public institutions have been affected by the decrease in government funding.

The positive end of this financial spectrum is that, while state appropriations are declining, private giving is rising. Alumni and individual donors represent a significant sector of educational giving. In fact, alumni giving has increased significantly in this millennium, and in 2005 it grew by 6% to exceed 27% of total support for higher education (Levine, 2008). In 2004-2005, voluntary contributions to higher education institutions exceeded $25.5 billion (Council for Aid to Education), which indicates the positive growth trajectory of higher education fundraising. For the 2005-2006 fiscal year, gifts from the alumni population exceeded $14 billion, over half of the estimated $28 billion given to colleges and universities (CAE, 2007). Giving USA (2007) collects data annually from Council for Aid to Education (CAE) in respect to reported gifts made to higher education; from the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) for giving information to K-12 schools; and from an independent survey conducted by Giving USA. This research reported that in 2006, American philanthropic gifts are estimated to exceed $295 billion. Within this market, donations to educational organizations held an estimated yield of 13.9%, or $40.98 billion. This is a 9.8% increase from the 2005 estimate (Giving USA, 2007). Colleges and universities benefited from $28 billion in gifts, while K-12 and educational organizations benefited from nearly $13 billion.

Institutional funding is derived from several categories, including student tuition and fees, entrepreneurial and auxiliary resources, investments, and private gifts. Constituent giving and grants comprises approximately 12.4% of revenue for private nonprofit colleges and universities (O'Neill, 2002). Mechanisms such as annual funds, major gifts, and endowments have become common resource funds for institutions, and many universities have recently completed large-scale capital and comprehensive campaigns. Weerts (2007) posited that many of the mechanisms have elevated the profession of advancement within the past two decades, and he added to the list of advancement tools sophisticated prospect research, innovative deferred giving vehicles, and enhanced donor communications. Due to the increased focus on fundraising and the growth of the advancement profession, many American public institutions have recently completed billion dollar comprehensive campaigns (Weerts, 2007).

Traditionally private institutions have a higher proportion of alumni who donate to their alma mater than do public institutions, and private liberal arts colleges yield the highest effective solicitation rate (Brady et al., 1999). Additionally, institutions that produce high salary-earning alumni are able to cultivate larger fiscal gifts, as there is a direct correlation between household income and support towards one's alma mater (Weerts, 2007). Hence, it is not surprising that in 2006, of the higher education institutions' fundraising endeavors, the top 10 received a cumulative of $4.56 billion, and the top three fundraising universities were Stanford University, Harvard University, and Yale University (Giving USA, 2007). The latter top three raised a combined $1.9 billion (Giving USA, 2007).

The benefits of financial contributions are apparent, and successful achievements of institutions are aforementioned. However, in the realm of financial giving, there is still much room for growth for the market of higher education. The *Chronicle of Philanthropy* ranked education support sixth of nine categories chosen by American philanthropists (Perry, 2005). An additional concern is that the younger generations are less likely to donate to their alma mater than the older generations; Americans born between 1946 - 1964 yield a 34% giving capacity as opposed to the 29% giving capacity of Americans born after 1964 (Perry, 2005).

To some extent, the ability for colleges and universities to raise funds during the recent economic downturn has been hindered. However, according to Melissa S. Brown, associate director of research at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis and author of a recent study on million-dollar gifts, "The biggest donors are more immune to economic fluctuations because they often hold diversified portfolios or are entrepreneurs with businesses less affected by the recession" (Shieh, 2009, A16).

Alumni as decision makers.

The various types of external support have become a critical need for institutions of higher education in order to maintain operating structures and for the future growth of programs and of buildings. The earliest colleges to form in American did so with three sources of income: the general public, student fees, and donations from alumni and donors (Stover, 1930). More than just a source of revenue, external constituents are an influential aspect of the decision-making and policy formation processes for most colleges and universities. Heinz, Laumann, Salisbury, and Nelson (1990) theorized that external constituents are often needed to influence higher education with contributions to the processes of decision-making, by either supporting or disagreeing with the leadership, as “the percentage of active players supporting a proposal is significantly associated with success" (p. 346). Cook (1998) reached a similar conclusion and noted "the more allies, the more effective a group can be, especially since allies can help focus policy makers' attention on the coalition's issues and get them on the agenda in the first place" (p. 164). Alumni Associations who are organized as a 501 (c)(6) can serve a valuable role to institutions for the major reason that they are not held to the same restrictions as colleges and universities are (Cook, 1998). For example, while institutions cannot legally organize a political action committee, they can encourage alumni and supporters to do so (Kennedy, 1986). Additionally, alumni, as well as faculty and students, are not held to the same legislative requirements of higher education institutions and administrators, in regard to reporting lobbying and advocacy engagements. Kennedy (1986) contended that alumni and constituent groups "can and should be an important element in an institution's government relationship program" (p. 522). Finally, as donors evolve into the role of stakeholders, constituents demand a greater role in operational decisions. According to Kipp (2003), a trend in higher education decision making is that priorities of an institution are determined more by constituents than by institutional leadership. Kipp (2003) identified students, donors, corporations, and politicians as these constituencies of influence.

Several decades ago, Turner (1947) assessed the importance of alumni as he postulated, "the former student is by his very existence a factor in the public relations of the college, either actively or passively he conditions the attitude of his community toward the college" (p. 104). Recent research has determined that extending decision-making opportunities to external constituents may increase stakeholder support, and institutions are compelled to engage donors to a greater extent as a technique to cultivate relationships with the end goal of procuring larger financial contributions (Toutkoushian, 2003; Weerts & Ronca, 2009). Yet this causal relationship dates back to the oldest establishments in American, as Stover (1930) posited that alumni had, from an early onset, expressed a collective desire to serve their alma mater in a decision-making capacity:

> When the organized alumni began to contribute generously to the American college, formal alumni representation in college government was inevitable. The college that solicited donations from organized alumni could not very well deny them a voice in her government. As a result, at the end of the period the alumni of more than a score of colleges were officially represented on the boards of trustees. (Stover, 1930, p. 110)

Barrett (1989) noted several examples of a formal alumni advocacy, including service on the institutional Board of Trustees, service on the alumni association Board of Directors, committee assignments including advisory councils, curriculum committees, public relations groups, and other alumni association committees, and ad hoc institutional assignments. Areas of informal advocacy are also listed by Barrett (1989) and included venues such as student recruitment and assisting with fundraising endeavors as donors or as "finders" who identify potential donors. While it is not common for institutions of higher education to utilize board members and prominent alumni to engage in formal legislative advocacy, these constituents can be great assets to their alma mater as they are often prominent community leaders who carry authority, have political connections, and whose actions are seen as altruistic, which can send a stronger message to the legislators (Cook, 1998).

While federal funding has historically been generous due to the advocacy efforts of higher education associations (Cook, 1998), there have been reported conclusions that internal dynamics of policy communities dilute the ability of the associations to "integrate and mediate the demands of various segments and serve as intermediaries among contending interests" (Cook, 1998, p. xvi). This suggests that institutions cannot rely upon associations as they historically have done so, and implies that there should be new areas of advocacy to draw support for individual institutions. Alumni associations can fill this gap by generating collective support for various needs of the institutions.

Interpretative policy analysis.

While alumni constituents serve a valuable role in providing resources of both financial and leadership contributions, a balanced analysis will examine both the positive and negative aspects of engaging external constituents. This examination shall contribute to an administrator's decision as to whether or not to engage alumni, to what extent alumni shall become engaged, or perhaps to craft a policy regarding the role of spectrum of activities in which alumni should be called upon to act regarding legislative advocacy. Using information to create a policy is an example of using "policy analysis," which is "designed to supply information about complex social and economic problems and to assess the processes by which a policy or program is formulated or implemented" (Yarnow, 2000, p. 2). Policy analysis is designed to "provide both policymakers and citizens with an intelligent basis for discussing and judging conflicting ideas, proposals, and outcomes" (Yarnow, 2000, p. 2). Thus, discussion should occur regarding the roles and responsibilities alumni would undertake. Additionally, both the positive and negative implications should be identified. Similar to policy analysis is "policy evaluation," which is defined as "the applied social scientific activity typically referred to as 'policy analysis' or "policy science" (Yarnow, 2000, pp. 1-2; Fischer, 1995).   Administrators who would apply policy evaluation would scientifically examine the effect of employing a structured program which involve alumni in legislative advocacy.

There are two areas of concern with regard to the decision to mobilize alumni constituents for legislative advocacy: the additional staffing needs to work with the alumni and volunteer supporters, and the insurance liability needed to protect the volunteer actions.

Insurance liability is a concern for alumni associations, specifically those who utilize volunteers to serve as representatives of the institution in leadership capacities. According to McNamee (1987), insurance liability is a critical policy area which demands attention, as:

> The crisis [in liability insurance] is forcing many associations to examine the often-murky connections they have with their colleges and universities. When an organization's dependence or independence isn't spelled out plainly -- and for many alumni association groups, the arrangements are far from straightforward -- its insurance protection might not be either. (pg. 44.)

There is no legal requirement for institutions to cover the voluntary actions of alumni and supporters; each institution has the autonomy to deal with this at its own discretion. However, this issue will affect the institution if a problem arises and the institution is found liable. It appears logical that administrators will address this issue and act accordingly so that they appropriately protect their alumni when they are acting for the benefit of or at the instruction of the institution.

The need for external constituents also affects higher education as it forces the administration to place more time and effort into the cultivation of constituent relations, thus resulting in an increase of staff and manpower. In fact, Kennedy (1986) postulated that "The heart of an effective government relations program is the staff that carries out this responsibility" (p. 501). Specific roles that Kennedy (1986) indicated that alumni staff should be responsible for include the "identification, training, and activation of alumni who can be helpful in effecting governmental action that advances institutional objectives" (p. 522). Also according to Kennedy (1986), government relations officers should coordinate with alumni officers to ensure that government support is part of the alumni program, and advancement professionals should assist in the organization, education, and mobilization of alumni to become an integral part of the institution's government relations program.

Staffing is needed as additional time is required of all administrators, from entry-level officers who work with the constituents to the senior-most leaders of the institutions. Duderstadt (2004) proclaimed that the role of the university president has evolved to now include a "more entrepreneurial role, with the president carrying the primary responsibility for generating the massive resources -- from the state, from the federal government, from private donors -- necessary for the teaching and scholarly pursuits of the faculty" (p. 49). Sanaghan, Goldstein, and Gaval (2008) supported this notion that presidents must work with external constituents to generate resources, and expanded upon this philosophy to include a myriad of initiatives a university president may encounter -- including curriculum reform, policy development, capital projects, fiscal management, and fundraising -- all of which demand a collaborative and inclusive participatory process for the stakeholders to have buy-in. In addition to the role of the president, institutions have needed to increase the number of staff positions in development, alumni, and marketing departments in order to communicate with and cultivate donors.

A qualitative study by Chung-Hoon, Hite, and Hite (2005) found that relational embeddedness interaction and formal structural interaction were factors in identifying donors and procuring financial contributions. Essentially, institutions often engage donors to a greater extent as a technique to cultivate relationships with the end goal of larger financial contributions. Analysis of these interactions is important because there is a direct correlation between the ability for the institution to procure private funds and the ability to create strong relationships and ties with donors (Chung-Hoon et al., 2005). These researchers also postulated that the ability to form an effective relationship with a donor requires a systematic effort of the institution, as well as much time and cultivation from the university staff member(s). Because donors are more likely to give if they are involved with the institution, a cycle of cultivation, engagement, stewardship, and solicitation is created. Research has shown that alumni are more likely to give if they were involved in student organizations, participated in student activities, and continued their involvement with their alma matter as an alumni (Coll & Tsao, 2005). Thus, universities should track student involvement so that practitioners can build individual profiles for their alumni constituents. This information will allow the institution to use the alumnus's history with the university to build a stronger relationship, and that relationship may matriculate into a financial contribution.

According to Levine (2008), "there is both the opportunity and the need for colleges and universities to better inform their constituents of the need for their support" (p. 178). Barden (2001), posited that:

> Donors are becoming more hands-on, more personally involved, more observant, and more desirous of outcomes... [Donors] expect you to prove that you are doing good... with their money. To keep these donors informed and happy, you'll need someone focusing on them all of the time. (p. 33)

Thus, the influence of donors does not cease with their gift; by keeping them involved with the institution -- albeit as a mechanism to seek continued financial support -- donors will become advocates of the institution as their involvement and engagement with the institution is perpetuated.

While the engagement opportunities for alumni to serve their alma mater are ever changing, Barrett (1989) noted to the staffing responsibility that "the receptive attitude and willingness to give support are at the heart of the profession of alumni relations" (p. 27). Yet, to provide exceptional customer service to the reception of alumni support, it is imperative for alumni professionals to stay abreast of current trends and offer engagement opportunities that meet the demands and desires of their alumni population. One of the emerging opportunities for involvement is for alumni to serve in formal advocacy roles.

Alumni and Government Relations

The level of engagement of alumni constituents should be gauged by the needs of the institution, and those needs of the institution derive from the amount of support needed for the respective government relations office (Kennedy, 1986). State and federal governments are heavily involved in higher education in both supportive and regulatory roles (Kennedy, 1986). Federal regulation remains consistent with each institution, but funding varies based upon the institutional need; state regulation and support varies with each state based upon their respective established systems (Kennedy, 1986). Thus, each institution must develop its own operation principles for government relations based upon its unique relationships with legislators and government officials (Kennedy, 1986). Likewise, the lobbying strategies used by institutions of higher education and their alumni associations should be customized depending on the institutional administrators and their conceptual ideas of what will work (Browne, 1985)

Higher education faces many challenges in addition to declining government resources and the increasing need to procure fiscal resources; these include student enrollment pressures and the heightened public scrutiny towards higher education's ability to effectively meet the needs of society (Weerts, 2007). For this reason, Morse (2000) contended that "Colleges' increasing attention and commitment to campus-based government relations is a favorable and necessary trend that comports with a local focus on politics and policy" (p. 47). Weerts (2007) proposed as a solution that an engagement model would assist in the creation of a public agenda, which would in turn generate external support in both public and private sectors. This public support will benefit students, the campus community, and the society at large. One of the four components of Weerts'(2007) strategy is that colleges and universities shall negotiate new relationships between higher education and state governments. Weerts (2007) suggested that there are many state enterprises, including charters, contracts, and public-private hybrids, and if developed in concert with the state would allow for a negotiation of increased institutional freedom in return for reduced state support. Unique examples of new arrangements between university and state officials are found with the Colorado School of Mines (Weerts, 2007), and with the higher education leaders and state governments within Oregon, North Dakota, Arizona, Florida, Iowa, Virginia, and Washington (Couturier, 2003).

Legislation is a great example of a policy which is produced by external decision makers and has major influence upon institutions of higher education. Knott and Payne (2004) used theoretical framework to discern whether governance structures of boards of higher education "affect the way university managers allocate resources, develop sources of revenue, and promote research and undergraduate education" (p. 13). The conclusion of this research was that "measures, productivity and resources are higher at universities with a statewide board that is more decentralized and has fewer regulatory powers" (Knott & Payne, 2004, p. 13).

State legislation had a significant influence over the University of Virginia Darden Graduate School of Business Administration, and this institution serves as an example of a public university forced to evolve towards private operations due to state policy. The government of Virginia mandated a freeze on tuition levels while simultaneously halving the operating budget from the years of 1990 to 2003 (Kipp, 2003). Thus, at the University of Virginia, the business and law schools moved towards self-sufficiency, and "in exchange for eschewing most of the state funds to which it would otherwise be entitled, Darden [UVA business school] has largely been set free to build its own campus, paid for with some $77 million in private contributions" (Kipp, 2003, p. 25). This leverage allows for the business school to pay competitive faculty salaries as well as maintain the buildings and grounds to higher standards than the rest of the university's campus. In the midst of this strained relationship between the flagship university and the state government, the state promulgated that "The Commonwealth should consider changing its business relationship with higher education... allowing institutions to grant greater autonomy to selected schools that could be largely self-supporting" (Kipp, 2003, p. 28).

A method of increasing funding streams is to engage alumni in opportunities of legislative advocacy. In this arena, alumni can use their collective voice to influence government officials to seek greater state and federal funding. This next section will illustrate how external constituents can collectively-- through an alumni association -- influence higher education. The influence spans the gamut of higher education, including the areas of legislation, funding, and policy issues.

Examples of alumni advocacy.

Using alumni to advocate for policy and legislation is a new trend in university affairs (Cook, 1998). However, alumni have long been serving their alma maters as advocates, albeit in different areas (Webb, 1989) such as advocates for student recruitment and fundraising endeavors. Barrett (1989) offered four factors which he ascertained would affect the level of advocacy alumni will bestow to their institution. These factors are: “the degree of trust built up over the years; the degree of commitment alumni feel for the institution; how much information an institution is willing to share with its alumni; and how well the institution articulates its needs to this constituency” (Barrett, 1989, p. 31). Using GIS research, Jardine (2003) produced maps which were used to illustrate where populations of alumni, students and donors live in respect to key congressional districts. In fact, one map was created specifically for a legislative advocacy visit with prominent congressional representatives serving on an appropriations committee that dealt with federal funding for research (Jardine, 2003).

Although mobilizing alumni associations in legislative advocacy endeavors has not become common practice, there are several benchmark examples of institutions successfully employing this technique. In 1984, the state of Michigan proposed a significant budget reduction which would negatively affect the University of Michigan. The university, in response, mobilized their alumni base to educate their alumni on the issue and consequences (i.e., tuition increase, program elimination, and quality erosion), and was thus successful on defeating the ballot measure (Kennedy, 1986). Similarly, the University of Wisconsin established the UW political advocacy network to connect the alumni base with Wisconsin legislative issues (Weerts & Ronca, 2009).

The Pennsylvania State University alumni association was recognized in 2006 with a Circle of Excellence Silver Medal Award from CASE (Williams, 2006). The award was given for the "9.5=0" initiative of Penn State Grassroots Network, which was created by the alumni association in 2002 and consists of a grassroots network led by network volunteers. Most of the volunteers are alumni, and these volunteers work with the association staff to communicate the needs and initiatives of the university to the elected officials in state and federal government (Williams, 2006). The Penn State Grassroots Network consists of over 30,000 alumni, students, parents, faculty/staff, and friends of the university. The goals of the network are to learn about the issues important to the university, and to effectively communicate the goals, accomplishments, initiatives, and needs of the university to community leaders and government officials (Williams, 2006).

The “9.5=0” initiative was a collaborative effort, and partners involved include the Penn State Grassroots Network, the alumni association, the university office of governmental affairs, and university and system administrators (Williams, 2006). The initiative successfully sought to increase the annual budget appropriation of the university from its state government during the state budget process (Williams, 2006). The alumni association website provides a mechanism to join the network, and also offers an “advocacy tool kit,” resources for alumni to contact their legislators, and information regarding the needs of the university (http://www.alumni.psu.edu/tempgrnfolder/grassroots).

Two additional examples of successful mobilization of alumni associations are from public research universities who have had recent success with the endeavor of creating alumni advocacy programs. Both of these advocacy programs are specific to legislative advocacy and also indirectly deal with campus finances. Ironically, both universities are the flagship universities for neighboring states on the west coast: Oregon and Washington.

A very recent achievement in Oregon legislation is the passage of two state bills (SB 909 and SB 242) which marked historic reform in higher education legislation (University of Oregon Alumni Association, 2011). What is most relevant about these bills was that the University of Oregon Alumni Association (UOAA) became a key player in the effort to pass this legislation, as UOAA Board President Julia Mee stated “alumni met with their legislators, filled hearing rooms, provided testimony, and sent thousands of emails to lawmakers in this session” (UOAA, 2011). The alumni were mobilized to advocate for the passage of these two bills. Leaders of higher education promulgated that these bills will enable the university to increase revenue and better control fiscal operations, as SB 242 will provide the University of Oregon greater flexibility in policy and budgetary decision-making because it removed the Oregon University System from being a state agency (UOAA, 2011). Similarly, SB 909 was the creation of a new governance board which will set policy and make funding decisions for all levels of education (UOAA, 2011). University of Oregon president Richard Lariviere credited the involvement of the alumni association for the success of the policy advocacy initiative (UOAA, 2011).

A second example of alumni mobilization for the purpose of legislative advocacy is illuminated by UW Impact. This is a program sponsored by the University of Washington Alumni Association (UWAA), which is a non-profit organization independent of the university and registered with the state (UW Impact, 2011). UW Impact serves as a resource for alumni of the university, with the intent to provide publically accessible information regarding legislation specific to the university (Schweppe, 2011). UWAA president Colleen Fukui-Sketchley stated that the goal of UW Impact was to create an effective public advocacy voice to support the university and higher education, and this would be achieved by harnessing the energy of the hundreds of thousands of alumni and supporters. While the organization stated it did not yet have specific aims, the mission appears to focus on funding. Courtney Acitelli, the program director of UW Impact reported plans to examine the facts and figures on state funding, as well as to discern which legislators were on decision-making committees responsible for making decisions on funding for higher education (Schweppe, 2011). Perhaps what makes this program most interesting is that UW Impact members have already hired two political consultants, one representing the Democratic party and the other representing the Republican party (Schweppe, 2011).

Both alumni associations have legislative information respective to their institutions posted on their websites. Both websites also lists ways to take action, which include encouragement to contact state legislatures (contact information is listed) and to attend upcoming alumni events. The Washington website also encourages alumni to purchase an alumni association membership (http://www.uwimpact.org) and the Oregon website lists specific pieces of state legislation that alumni are encouraged to support **(**http://newpartnership.uoalumni.com/home.html**).**

To foster more legislative advocacy practices, many public higher education institutions built a grassroots network called the Public Higher Education Legislative Advocacy Professionals (PHELA). The purpose of this group is to share best practices and resources of advocacy for higher education institutions, as well as advance the understanding and support of legislative advocacy (http://phelap.wordpress.com/about/**).** This group formed in 2007, and met on the campus of Penn State. PHELA is a volunteer organization, and over 30 institutions have participated with PHELA since 2007. The group has convened annually since then, rotating its meetings at different host institutions each year (http://phelap.wordpress.com/about/).

Nonprofit and tax exempt status.

Many alumni associations are classified as nonprofit organizations (Webb, 1989). Nonprofit organizations can qualify for federal income tax exemption under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3) (Tenebaum, 2002b). This is the most favorable tax status, yet also carries the most restrictions on government affairs activities (Tenebaum, 2002b). According to Tenebaum (2002a), 501(c)(3) organizations cannot participate or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to candidates for public office, yet the organizations can engage in a significant amount of lobbying activity if it is carefully facilitated. The American Society for Association Executives (ASAE) provides resources for association executives, and has published many white papers on this subject. In one such paper, Tenebaum (2002a) suggested that 501(c)(3) organizations should engage in lobbying activities at all levels of the government, as federal tax law permits some lobbying by nonprofits, and the 1976 lobbying tax law passed by Congress was very clear in granting nonprofits the right to conduct lobbying activities. Additionally, Tenebaum (2002b) posited that organizations who do not engage in lobbying may fail to employ an important activity that might be very helpful to fulfill the mission of the organization.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has implemented regulations and limitations on lobbying activities (Tenebaum, 2002b). The IRS considers lobbying to be of two major categorical types: political activities and legislative activities, and each are subject to different rules and consequences, depending on several issues (IRS, 2012c). The regulations depend upon: the type of tax-exempt organization (e.g., 501(c)(3) organizations, etc.), the type of activity at issue (e.g., political or lobbying), and the scope or amount of activity conducted (IRS, 2012c). The IRS does allow 501(c)(3) organizations to engage in public advocacy not related to legislation or election of candidates, and allows for limited engagement in legislative advocacy (IRS, 2012d). The IRS forbids engagement of 501(c)(3) organizations in candidate election advocacy (IRS, 2012d). Benefits that 501(c)(3) organizations receive include: tax-deductible charitable contributions, contributions or fees deductible as a business expense, a substantially related income exempt from federal income tax, and a limited investment income exempt from federal income tax (IRS, 2012d).

The IRS refers to lobbying in a very broad manner, and includes under the definition activities such as political activities and legislative activities (IRS, 2012a). While the IRS does allow for 501(c)(3) organizations to engage in some lobbying, it threatens the tax status to be revoked if the lobbying activities are a substantial part of the organizations activities, and those activities attempt to influence legislation (IRS, 2012b). Another opinion is given by the

Independent Sector, which asserted that nonprofits play a vital role in strengthening democracy, and have the right to advocate for policies in which they believe (Independent Sector, 2012). The Independent Sector is a nonpartisan coalition and leadership network for nonprofits, foundations, and corporate giving programs. The Independent Sector refers to lobbying as a form of advocacy which attempts to influence specific legislation through direct or grassroots communication (Independent Sector, 2012). The Independent Sector encouraged special attention to be given to regulations when nonprofits advocate for specific legislation (Independent Sector, 2012).

Policy Environment and Decision Making

The role of government relations within higher education institutions has evolved to become a critical element of collegiate administration, as the government has become inextricably involved in education (Kennedy, 1986). In addition to having regulatory authority, state and federal governments also contribute funding towards higher education, the latter contributing 15% to the average revenue of colleges and universities (Cook, 1998). Kennedy (1986) acknowledged that government has authority to create regulation policy regarding the operations of higher education. Public policy is defined by Anderson (1975) as "A purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern… Public policies are those policies developed by governmental bodies and officials" (p. 3). Kennedy (1986) contended that government relations should be the responsibility of the highest levels of institutional administration as "the [government] impact is so pervasive that an institution must account for it in determining policy and in its decision-making processes" (p. 497). The American Council on Education realized the importance of government relations and created a Policy Analysis Service (Bloland, 1985; Cook 1998). This section will outline how institutions shall proceed in creating a policy environment in which alumni volunteers can contribute support to their alma mater. Areas of the policy environment should be addressed by senior administrators, and this research will focus on the areas of stakeholder analysis, advocacy coalition framework, problem definition, and agenda denial.

Policy environment: stakeholder analysis.

Sylvia and Sylvia (2004) addressed the relevance of stakeholders to the work of a program manager, and encouraged a comprehensive examination and/or survey of the system and environment on an annual basis. With this concept applied to policy formation, the practitioner should conduct a stakeholder analysis, by identifying the stakeholders as those affected by the policy. However, the stakeholders consist of both those benefitting and potentially harmed by the policy (Sylvia & Sylvia, 2004). Additionally, related concerns include what participants are needed to both help shape and advocate for this policy. Sylvia and Sylvia (2004) addressed the following participants to be potential stakeholders: customers, potential customers, overhead decision makers, program competitors, and program regulator bodies.

Undertaking a stakeholder analysis is an imperative part of the policy process. Understanding the policy process is an important facet of the social context of policy formation, as the policy process involves an examination of agenda setting, selection of alternatives, implementation, and evaluation (Hill & Hupe, 2009; Kingdon, 2003). Stakeholders are a categorical subset of policy participants, as they have a more narrow scope in that they are the participants with a vested interest in the outcomes of the policy. The scope of this research will focus on the alumni constituents, as they are stakeholders who will be called to action, and they have a vested interest in the success and perception of quality of their alma mater. This concept is reinforced by Webb (1989), who posited that alumni seek to protect and improve the image of their alma mater to ensure that their own degrees maintain a perception of value. Research by Weerts, Cabrera, and Sanford (2010) provides a set of predictors of political participation, including cultural dimensions, which would motivate alumni to serve as legislative advocates for their alma mater. While many of the predicators are of factors that occur during development prior to college, this research may enable practitioners to better identify and mobilize alumni as political advocates.

Specific to the policy of increasing state funding for higher education and in addition to alumni constituents, there are several other stakeholder groups. It is important to briefly mention these groups, though they will not be included in the focus of this research as their role is secondary to that of alumni constituents. The institution's faculty, staff, and administration can also be viewed as stakeholders, for their vested interest lies in their vocation and desire to protect the institution that employs them. In some cases, administrators and consultants are considered to be stakeholders because of their goal to increase revenue streams and support from legislation. Students are also stakeholders in this policy, as they would benefit from state funding to support their institution. The community and society at large is a stakeholder group, albeit rather ambiguous, as those members benefit from the institution of higher education. Non-stakeholder participants include the government officials, whom the stakeholders need to influence as they are the decision-makers of policy.

For the proposed policy of this research, it is recommended that practitioners engage their alumni constituents as stakeholders and seek to generate buy-in of the policy (Cook, 1998; Kennedy, 1986). Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) posit that achieving consensus assists in the success of policy formation, and thus present the hypothesis that "implementation will be most successful where only marginal change is required and goal consensus is high" (p. 461). Of noted importance is the attribute of goal consensus, and in order to achieve consensus it is implied that there is a required degree of participation and input from the stakeholders (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). These policy scholars place much importance on participation, especially from subordinates in the policy formation stage, and contend that by garnering input from an array of stakeholders a practitioner is able to represent the needs of the greater community as well as establish a democracy within the community in which they govern. This establishment of democracy requires a platform of inclusion by allowing all citizens to participate in the decision making process (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). Thus, practitioners can employ this concept to mobilize the greatest level of participation -- alumni populations -- to work towards policy formation and legislative advocacy which would benefit institutions of higher education.

This concept of inclusion does come with several drawbacks for the practitioner, including the additional burden of seeking concerns and examining or inventing alternative plans from stakeholders. Another integral element needed for practitioners to effectively engage alumni constituents are mechanisms of communication, which must be implemented and maintained (Kennedy, 1986). Ideally the institution would have the structure of an official alumni association, and the alumni association would already have in place communication tools such as a website, social networking instruments, and a system for mass email, as well as traditional communication methods such as magazine and newsletter publications (Kennedy, 1986). It is imperative for the practitioner to communicate with the alumni stakeholders, and regular communication must transpire throughout the policy process. Kennedy (1986) asserted that a communication process is the most important element of effective government relations.

While some of these communication tools are created from very recent technology advances, the concept of record keeping has been a perennial concern for alumni associations. Barrett (1989) noted the importance of record keeping as a critical instrument needed to solicit support, as he postulated:

> To tap into this [alumni] support, you need an alumni records system that is constantly updated and an alumni communication program that works. Without these you cannot keep the alumni informed nor can you reach them quickly and effectively when you need them. The longer your records system and communication program continue to be effective, the greater the credibility and trust you will earn from your alumni. (p. 29 -30)

Records, traditional and technological communication methods are needed for operation. However, Kennedy (1986) emphasized that personal contact is the best method for building government relations. This is needed for both to the alumni constituents and for the government officials.

A strategy used to engage alumni stakeholders is what Davidoff (2003) terms the "unitary plan". This plan discourages full participation but rather allows for one agency to develop a comprehensive plan (Davidoff, 2003). The advantage of the unitary plan may be that it creates an efficient process. In this scenario, the unitary plan would come from the institution's administrative team. The practitioners would carefully craft and present the policy to the legislature, as well as design and implement a strategy to mobilize the alumni stakeholders. This strategy shall include a comprehensive communication plan with specific actions needed to be taken by the alumni in order to successfully advocate for the policy at hand.

Policy environment: Advocacy Coalition Framework.

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) was developed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1988) to deal with "the wicked problems" involving substantial goal conflicts, important technical disputes, and multiple actors from several layers of government (p. 189). The ACF has three foundation stones, or key principles that structure the framework (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). First, there is the macro-level assumption that most policy-making occurs among the specialists, and the specialists' behavior is affected by factors in the broader political and socioeconomic system (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Secondly, there is a micro-level "model of the individual" that is drawn heavily from social psychology (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). The third foundation stone is a meso-level conviction that the best way to deal with the multiplicity of actors in a subsystem is to aggregate them into "advocacy coalitions" (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Each of these foundations effects change through two paths: policy-oriented learning and external perturbations (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Sabatier and Weible (2007) postulated that participants must choose which of these three foundation stones to utilize if they are to have any hope of being influential.

In regards to the first foundation stone, the "specialists" are participants that can include: the iron triangle of legislators, agency officials, interest group leaders; journalists-specialists and judicial officials, and researchers including university scientists, policy analysts, and consultants (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). For the scope of this research the specialists may be government officials who are the decision-makers for the policy of funding higher education. Cook remarked that "the "iron triangle" of support for higher education policy was in operation among the various members of the higher education issue network" (p. 26). The specialists may also be high-ranking leadership officials and leaders of interest groups or education-based organizations, both which seek to influence the decision maker.

Sabatier and Weible (2007) noted that within this first key principle, major policy change is difficult in mature policy subsystems when the participants are deep-rooted in their functioning. With relevance to higher education, consensus building can be difficult due to the diverse needs amongst these policy subsystems (Cook, 1998). The vast majority of policy-making occurs within policy subsystems and involves negotiations among specialists (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). There are many factors of change, both external and dynamic. These factors include: socioeconomic conditions, changes in the governing coalition, and policy decisions from other subsystems (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Current factors for this research include the recent economic recession which effected the socioeconomic condition, and the changes in governing coalition which were affected by the political party transition in the office of the presidency, and therefore cabinet positions of influence such as the Secretary of Education. Sabatier and Weible (2007) asserted that identifying the appropriate scope of a subsystem is one of the most important aspects of an ACF assessment. Currently, the economic recession and subsequent budget shortfalls have caused state and federal governments to make budget cuts to areas of importance, including higher education.

Sabatier and Weible (2007) described the second foundation stone as a three-tiered hierarchical structure. At the broadest level are the deep-core beliefs, which are often products of childhood socialization, and which are the most difficult to change (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). The mid-level contains the policy core beliefs, which are applications that span an entire policy subsystem (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). At the top of the pyramid-like structure are the policy core policy preferences, which are the normative beliefs that project an image of how the policy subsystem ought to be (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). The policy core policy preferences provide the vision that guides coalition strategic behavior, which helps unite allies and divide opponents. With regard to this research, examples of these three tiers are: the deep-core belief that higher education should be affordable for society, the policy core belief that public institutions should be funded by their state government, and policy preferences that determine specific funding formulas.

The last foundation stone, according to Sabatier and Weible (2007), is the aggregation of actors into advocacy coalitions which involve a growing amount of research through policy network literature as well as an increasing recognition of the importance of interpersonal relations to explain human behavior. Coalition building is important as it is known to be one of the most useful lobbying techniques, and its most successful when well organized (Scholzman & Tierney, 1986; Berry, 1977; Hojnacki, 1997). An example of this foundation stone is the Action Committee for Higher Education (ACHE), which was an ad hoc coalition formed in the early 1980s by many nonprofit educational associations including the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU), Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), and twenty-five other associations (Cook, 1998). This coalition was formed in response to the Reagan administration's proposed policy to cut funding for student aid and to eliminate the newly created Department of Education (Cook, 1998). This coalition had the successful effect of influencing Congress, which in 1982 decided to neither cut student aid nor disband the Department of Education (Cook, 1998). A second example of an ad hoc coalition to support higher education was formed in 1995 to influence the 104^{th} Congress (Cook, 1998). This group, called "The Coalition," consisted of eighteen major research universities, and advocated for the procurement of federal funds to support research (Cook, 1998). Using the resource of the media and advertisement, this coalition was also successful (Cook, 1998).

The ACF predicts that stakeholder beliefs and behavior are embedded within informal networks and that policymaking is structured, in part, by the networks among important policy participants (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). A critique by the ACF is that there is insufficient justification that actors with similar policy core beliefs actually coordinate their behavior into coalitions (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Another example of this network was illustrated earlier with examples of policy advocacy initiatives of both the University of Oregon Alumni Association and the University of Washington Alumni Association. It is difficult to prove that similar efforts coming from two peer institutions, located in contiguous states, transpired because of an informal network, though there does appear to be a connection.

Policy environment: problem definition.

Problem definition is a concept used to discern how and why social issues evolve into a defined public problem – or the counterfactual, a lack of progress on an issue. In other words, problem definition is a condition that requires change, and that change is often brought about by government action (Kingdon, 2003). According to Rochefort and Cobb (1994), "At the nexus of politics and policy development lies persistent conflict over where problems come from and, based on the answer to this question, what kinds of solutions should be attempted " (p. 3). In other words, the success of agenda setting is predicated on the problem definition. If the problem is defined as a lack of funding for institutions of higher education, then the solution should be to encourage a priority for resource allocations from state governments to support their higher education systems. Rochefort and Cobb (1994) argued that "By dramatizing or downplaying the problem and by declaring what is at stake, these descriptions help to push an issue onto the front burners of policymaking or result in officials' stubborn inaction and neglect" (Rochefort & Cobb, 1994, p. 3). Alumni associations can use this theory to communicate -- and emphasize -- the critical need for funding. Alumni associations can also highlight the government officials who are supporters of higher education, as well as those who neglect higher education by supporting budget cuts. The voting citizens who are alumni will most likely be receptive to this information, and it is very likely that the government officials will listen to their voting constituents.

Bosso (1989) posited that problem definition is an integral component of agenda setting, and argued that the importance of problem definition is increasing as American loyalties of established institutions are declining. Bosso (1989) also noted that a policy-centered approach to problem definition is a preferred approach as it considers cultural values and societal characteristics with existing structural and political conditions -- elements which converge to create a policy arena within which political actors and other policy participants promote alternative problem definitions. Political parties and interest groups help to shape how problems are defined (Rochefort & Cobb, 1994), and alumni associations can increase their value to their institution by functioning in the role similar to an interest group and endorsing specific policies that will affect funding for higher education.

Much of policy formation depends on participants and values, as "Although institutional factors and the characteristics of an issue are certainly strong influences, the political process and policy products of problem definition are greatly determined by the mix of participants and the values they introduce into the policy debate" (Rochefort & Cobb, 1994, p. 155). Thus, by alumni associations communicating to their alumni constituents the dire need for funding for higher education, as well as the socioeconomic benefits which education brings to a society, the recognition of the problem definition may result in greater participation of alumni advocating the funding needs to their legislature.

Cultural and political values are major influences of problem definition and largely affect the progress of policy formation (Rochefort & Cobb, 1994). According to Muller (1986), alumni are often viewed as the most loyal support group of an institution. Thus, alumni associations and practitioners at institutions of higher education can mobilize this loyal constituent group to reinforce the cultural value of the importance of higher education upon society. Because the higher education community is well connected electronically (Cook, 1998), alumni associations can use their communication resources to connect alumni and constituents with issues institution administrators deem important for policy agenda. Additionally, alumni can be encouraged to seek the support of their elected officials to help fund this cultural benefit.

Policy environment: agenda denial.

Cobb and Ross (1997) provide a comprehensive overview of agenda denial through their research. Their framework examines why some issues make it to an agenda, and conversely why some do not. These authors posit that policy outcomes can be controlled by the leverage of cultural and symbolic forces, and they identify key concepts related to agenda setting as well as agenda denial, which include: the types of agendas, the categories of participants and the strategies used to block issue progression to policy adoption. Cobb and Ross (1997) illustrate these concepts with analysis of respective case studies.

According to Cobb and Ross (1997), categories of participants can include government officials, lobbyists, and interest groups. Government officials often employ low-cost strategies as a mechanism to avoid confrontation. Conversely, medium to high-cost strategies are often used by interest groups, and resources become more sufficient when a "threat" increases motivation of the cause (Cobb & Ross, 1997). Cobb and Ross (1997) identified viable resources as: "scope (the number of people involved), intensity (strength of commitment to a particular issue), and visibility (public awareness of the dispute)" (p.5). Cobb and Ross (1997) suggested that the outcome of agenda setting is often correlated to the resources employed in the debate;

the resources differentials between proponents and opponents typically explain what policy is placed on the agenda and what policy is blocked from the agenda.

Institutions of higher education and their alumni associations need to understand this concept to help determine the specific resources and amount of resources that need to be allocated in accordance to the priority of the issue. One strategy of alumni associations is to focus a mass communication endeavor to communicate with alumni. The cost of this strategy will depend on the communication mechanisms (i.e., databases, websites, email broadcast systems, etc.) that are already in place. The greater audience that the alumni association can reach, the more successful the communication endeavor.

Strategies of agenda denial vary in cost and resources. Cobb and Ross (1997) ascertained that typical strategies are low-cost. One strategy is to attack the goal through the use of symbols. For example, symbols that have a negative connotation can be employed to attack a message. Alumni associations can easily employ this low-cost strategy by using symbols in their communications. Symbols like a bell tower or a campus landmark may be used to invoke a nostalgic feeling. The communications may also use symbols which reflect knowledge, such as an apple or text book. Connecting feelings of nostalgia and knowledge will also bring greater visibility and attention to the communication piece. Likewise, illuminating legislatures that are not funding higher education will pivot these government officials against the positive invocations of nostalgia and knowledge. Understanding the strategy of agenda denial may influence the association in the decision whether or not to "attack" other opposing messages.

Agenda denial low-cost strategies were displayed towards the federal agenda during 1995-1996, as higher education representatives employed these strategies in response to the proposed budget cuts of the 104th Congress (Cook, 1998). These strategies were coined "outside strategies," and defined by Gais and Walker (1991) as those strategies common to low-budget citizen groups. Examples of these agenda denial strategies were media ads and voter registration drives (Cook, 1998).

A second strategy, often described as medium-cost, is used to discredit opposition groups by attacking the legitimacy of the policy initiator or of the policy problem. For example, a government official who favors cutting the higher education budget may be attacked for other areas, such as his moral character. Another strategy is for interest groups to issue containment strategies to block policy progress, and to narrow the conflict to as limited a scope as possible. Symbolic placation is a strategy in which the problem is validated, but the solutions are attacked. High-cost strategies are employed with groups of great resources and deny opposition access to the decision-making agenda (Cobb & Ross, 1997). Examples include the use or threat of incarceration and physical force. The latter medium-cost and high-cost strategies may or may not be applicable to alumni associations, depending on their advocacy needs and issues.

Policy advocacy or policy analysis.

This research focuses primarily on policy advocacy. However, policy advocacy is usually not a successful venture without policy analysis, and thus both policy advocacy and policy analysis are needed for the scope of mobilizing alumni associations to influence the policy of increasing state funding for higher education. The benefit of policy analysis is that it provides practitioners a deeper understanding of policy, such as what is the policy and what is the development of the policy. Moreover, an analytical and descriptive policy analysis will identify the participants, the process, and reasons why certain issues make it to the agenda when other similar topics fail. An understanding of this process will allow practitioners to best focus their efforts and resources so that they can successfully steer their constituents to influence higher education legislation. Policy advocacy is used in relation to the concept of influence in policy; according to Griffin (2006), "it has been argued that the once clear distinction between research-evidenced advocacy and the attempt to influence on other terms no longer holds good" and thus "there is no longer an identifiable difference between research evidence-based advocacy and other possible forms of influence" (p. 567). Thus, advocacy is very much needed to influence policy, and policy analysis will direct the action plan of policy advocacy.

Chapter summary.

Higher education is important because it enriches society and has a direct impact on the economy (Cook, 1998). The area of policy formation and government legislation is important because of the influence it yields upon institutions of higher education. According to Sanaghan, Goldstein, and Gaval (2008), policy development is one example which demands a collaborative and inclusive participatory process for external constituents and university staff. Current attention to public policy is needed by educational institutions and organizations, and it is important to understand this political and social context. Levine (2008) asserted that "there is both the opportunity and the need for colleges and universities to better inform their constituents of the need for their support" (p. 178). Because higher education faces many challenges, including declining government resources and the increasing need to procure fiscal resources, Weerts (2007) proposed that an engagement model would assist to create a public agenda, which would in turn generate external support in both public and private sectors, and that this support would benefit students, the campus community, and the society at large.

This research gives practitioners a better understanding of policy advocacy as well as policy analysis, both of which are beneficial in the initiative to employ alumni to serve as legislative advocates. While alumni have a history of serving as volunteers, mobilizing alumni to promulgate policy to their legislative representatives and move the policy to the appropriate agenda is a relatively new concept. Weerts et al. (2010) differentiated political advocacy from volunteerism, and listed a specific set of behaviors of political advocacy that includes "contacting legislators, the governor's office, local politicians and serving on a political action team" (p. 346). A definition of "political participation" is also given by these authors, and that includes a myriad of behaviors, such as "voting, contacting officials at the federal or local level, giving campaign money, conducting campaign volunteer work, protesting or demonstrating, signing a petition, or persuading family or friends to vote on an issue" (Weerts et al, 2010, pp. 348-349).

The research discussed in this paper is useful information for practitioners to employ for plans to stimulate legislative advocacy. By understanding the political and social context of participants and stakeholders, practitioners will be able to expertly determine who is needed to help shape policy and whom to mobilize to become advocates. The Advocacy Coalition Framework will help practitioners decide partners for advocacy efforts, depending on similar characters and the focus of the policy issue. An overview of agenda denial provides an understanding of the importance of cultural and political interests. Using this knowledge, practitioners can create a strategy to segment messages conveyed to their alumni associations. Selecting the appropriate participants to endorse issues may help advance those issues to an agenda. Examples of policy advocacy utilized by Pennsylvania State University, University of Michigan, University of Oregon and University of Washington offer empirical examples to illustrate success stories of mobilizing alumni with legislative advocacy.

CHAPTER III. METHODS

The purpose for conducting the study will be to evaluate the activity related to government and legislative advocacy conducted by alumni associations of higher education institutions. The strategies that are commonly used to mobilize alumni populations to encourage participation in legislative advocacy will be identified. The study will assess the perceived effectiveness of those strategies employed by alumni associations. Analysis will also address the possible correlation between types of institutions (i.e., bachelor's degree and master's conferring institutions verses doctoral degree conferring institutions) and strategies employed.

The methodology for this analysis will be outlined in the current chapter with six sections. The first section will address the identification of the participants, and section two will follow with the design of the research. The third section will describe the instruments used for data collection. The fourth section contains the process of data collection. The fifth section will detail the procedure for data analysis. The sixth section will provide a chapter summary.

Participants

The study will use participants who are the senior-most officer of an alumni relations office at institutions who are members of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). For consistency and homogeneity, the study will be limited to alumni offices within the United States, and the participants will be limited to four-year institutions of higher education. The senior-most officials identify themselves through the CASE membership profile. By filtering the participants to the senior-most official, in theory only one survey per institution will be sent, and no institution will submit more than one survey. There are 423 member-institutions of CASE who have a senior alumni relations officer listed in the CASE

Membership Directory (CASE, 2011). Thus, there will be 423 questionnaires emailed to these representatives.

CASE is an international nonprofit educational association with offices on three continents and membership organizations from 59 countries (CASE, 2011). Any educational institution or educational nonprofit organization may join CASE by paying the membership dues. The CASE membership base includes nearly 3,400 colleges and universities, primary and secondary independent schools, and nonprofit organizations (CASE, 2011). The benefits of CASE membership include subscriptions to professional journals, online resources, networking opportunities, conference and webinar participation, and professional leadership opportunities.

The sample size will be appropriate to statistically represent the population. Borg (1989) noted that correlational research should have a minimum of 30 cases, and that survey research should have a minimum of 100 subjects with 20- to 50 responses in subgroups. While Ary, Jacobs, and Razaveih (1972) contended that there is no single rule that regulates or determines sample size, these authors did suggest that a minimum of 30 subjects should be used, as "statistically speaking, a sample n = 30 is considered large, since with this n, the t-distribution and the normal curve are practically the same for the hypotheses testing purposes" (p. 167). The authors also emphasized that the size of the sample does not guarantee accuracy, but rather the representativeness is "the most important consideration in selecting a sample" and "must remain the prime goal in sample selection" (p. 167 - 168). By sending the questionnaires to the senior most officer of the alumni office, the research seeks to create a sample with the best representativeness, because insight was derived from the most knowledgeable practitioner of the institution. Also, Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorensen (2006) noted that "extremely large samples" (p. 380) are not needed for correlational studies. Thus, the responses to the surveys should be sufficient to draw statistically significant conclusions.

Research Design

This study will use an explanatory correlational research design. Quantitative research was defined by Cresswell (2005) as

> a type of educational research in which the researcher decides what to study, asks specific, narrow questions, collects numeric data from participants, analyzes the numbers using statistics, and conducts the inquiry in an unbiased, objective manner. (p. 39)

Cresswell (2005) described correlational research as a research design that does not treat nor manipulate variables and conditions, where "investigators use a correlation statistical technique to describe and measure the degree of association (or relationship) between two or more variables or sets of scores" (p. 343). This research design will be explanatory, which "explains or clarifies the degree of association among two or more variables at one point in time" (Cresswell, 2005, 343). Research Questions 3, 4 and 5 will derive a quantitative correlation, and thus use the product moment coefficient of correlation (Pearson's "r"). According to Sommer and Sommer (2002), the Pearson product moment coefficient "r" is used when sets of scores are to be correlated and are continuous. Ary et al. (1972) noted that the Pearson "r" method is the most commonly used correlation index. A dependent variable for all of the research questions is the aggregated levels of effectiveness for each strategy of advocacy used. Other variables include the institutional type and institutional location within a defined geographic region.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument used for the research will be developed based on literature and previous research. Ary et al. (1972) described the survey method to be a widely employed instrument in educational research, and one that is more efficient and practical than interviews.

The study is designed to use a structured questionnaire in order to measure perceived effectiveness of various strategies employed with the intent to engage alumni as advocates of their alma mater in areas regarding legislation and government relations. The instrument was developed after a comprehensive review of literature in the field of alumni relations and its role in the higher education setting. Table 1 provides a listing of the item numbers, the type of service to which the questions relate, and literature reference(s) for the survey.

After the initial design of the structured questionnaire was completed, it was pilot tested by a panel of experts. These experts will be practitioners in the field of higher education who would not be included in the participant sample. The questionnaire will be emailed to a select group of CASE colleagues, known to the researcher through prior service on the CASE III Board of Directors, and thus will not be included in the participant sample. Likewise, the questionnaire will also be distributed to the participants who attended the 2011 Higher Education Government Relations Conference sponsored by the Association for American State Colleges and Universities (AASCU). A cover letter of explanation of the research along with opportunity for feedback will be attached (Appendix D). All content will be identical to that of the email questionnaire, though the format may differ slightly due to the software. Upon response from the panel of experts, the survey may be modified as deemed necessary. The activity of testing the instrument will increase validity of the study. Content validity of the instrument is also substantiated through use of questions which were reported in literature and have direct relation to the research questions of this study.

Table 1.

Questionnaire Items Drawn from Literature Base

Questionnaire Item Number(s)	Type of Strategy	Literature Reference
3,8;9	Electronically post (on website), to promote information regarding current trends or issues related to government affairs for alumni base	Gabrick & Dessoff, 2002; Meyers, 2006
10, 11	Utilize alumni magazine to promote information regarding current trends or issues related to government affairs	Gabrick & Dessoff, 2002; Meyers, 2006
2,14,15	Use mass communications (other than alumni magazine) to distribute and/or promote information regarding current trends or issues related to government affairs to alumni base	Gabrick & Dessoff, 2002; Meyers, 2006
4,7, 12, 16	Encourage alumni to participate and take action with legislative advocacy	Cunningham & Lanier, 2001; Weimer, 2005;
5, 6, 13, 17	Encourage alumni to contact government officials	Meyer, 2010
18, 19	Facilitation of events at state capitol	Meyers, 2006
20, 21	Facilitation of events on campus/visits to campus	Cunningham, & Lanier, 2001; Kennedy, 1986; Meyer, 2010;
22	Staff leaders whose responsibilities are to communicate with government officials	Meyer, 2010, Pulley, 2002
23	Consultants whose responsibilities are to communicate with government official	Meyer, 2010, Meyers, 2006
24	Selected volunteers whose responsibilities are to communicate with government officials	Meyers, 2006; Meyer, 2010; Weimer, 2005

Data Collection

An email was sent to the most senior practitioner of alumni offices located in the United States. The email addresses were obtained from the aforementioned CASE membership directory. The CASE membership directory was accessed online. A list was generated of the most senior alumni practitioners. From that list each email address was viewed. Each email was copied and pasted into a Microsoft Excel database. The email was then sent to the entire list. A private email account was established by the researcher to prohibit the respondents from forming opinions or bias about the researcher's institution.

The email message included a letter of intent (Appendix A). The survey (Appendix C) was attached to the email using electronic software provided by the University of Arkansas. As there were 423 email addresses obtained, the same amount of surveys was sent out. All respondents received the same survey, and there was not a segmentation of respondents.

The letter of intent explained the purpose of the survey. It also emphasized that participation in the survey was completely voluntary, anonymity was given to participants, and they had the option to withdraw from the survey at any time. Additionally, the letter of intent provided an introduction of the principal researcher of the study, and also included a disclaimer of research. Finally, the letter of intent requested that each senior practitioner completed the survey. Specific instructions for completing the survey were embedded within the survey. The respondents completed the survey through the internet, as designed by the software provided. It reiterated that all information will be submitted anonymously.

Within two weeks after the first message was sent, a follow-up email was sent to the participants who had not yet responded, using a list of non-respondents generated through the survey software. A follow-up letter (Appendix B) was sent with that message. Continual follow-up messages were sent every two weeks to non-respondents, using the same format. The desired result of n = 30 (Ary, Jacobs, & Razaveih, 1972) was obtained and exceeded. Dillman (2007) suggested that multiple contacts will increase the response rate.

Data Analysis

The preliminary data analysis was derived from computing descriptive statistics from each of the answers submitted in the participants' responses. Using Table 1, the instrument's questions were grouped in strategies. Responses were aggregated by strategy category. The research questions were answered using the following methods:

Research Question 1: What are the most common strategies that alumni associations at institutions of higher education employ to influence their legislators and/or government policy makers? For this research question, survey questions 3-25 were analyzed. Descriptive statistics were used to determine which strategy was employed the most. A frequency rate was established with each strategy. The mean score of each strategy determined the strategies most used by the respondents. Frequency reporting is a technique to generate accurate representation (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Research Question 2: What is the perception of effectiveness of these actions employed by alumni associations in order to influence and/or lobby their legislature? To answer this research question, survey questions 3 – 25 were examined. These answers included scores for the perceived level of effectiveness of each strategy employed. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean, mode, and median score for the level of perceived effectiveness for each question. These statistics revealed the perceived effectiveness of each strategy. According to

Borg and Gall (1989) mean, mode, and median are descriptive statistics which are used to provide analytical information, which described the techniques employed.

Research Question 3: Are there different strategies employed between the two groups (Baccalaureate / Master's degree conferring institutions and Doctoral/Research degree conferring institutions)? Content analysis was employed as will correlational statistics. The Pearson "r" method can evaluate the relationship between the differing institutional types and the strategies employed. Pearson 'r" is the most commonly used method for deriving correlations (Ary et al., 1972), and is applicable to measure the significance of this relationship (Berman, 2002).

Research Question 4: What are the potential policy implications for higher education institutions, leaders, and policy makers based on the findings from the data regarding public advocacy by public institutions? A content analysis of the derived correlations was conducted, in order to evaluate the relationship of the perceived effectiveness of strategies employed by institutions and the type of institution.

Data collected for research questions 2, 3 and 4 can be displayed in scatterplots. Scatterplots "illustrate the comparison of two different scores and how the scores regress or differ from the mean" (Cresswell, 2005, p. 196).

Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed a methodology which will allow for a correlational study. The data obtained from a survey instrument distributed to 423 professionals exhibited relevancy towards the focus of the study. This research determined the most effective strategies used by higher education alumni associations to garner legislative support. The research also determined if there is a correlation between perceived effectiveness and frequency of strategies to the institutional type.

CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

Introduction

Across the United States, state funding for higher education has not grown in proportion to the relative overall percentage of the cost of education (Weerts, 2007), and thus, funding has become a critical problem for higher education. Affordability and quality of education are just two of the issues negatively affected by this trend. Additionally, colleges and universities are forced to become more active in maintaining relations with state and federal governments (Cook, 1998). Accordingly, institutions of higher education must increase the support coming from external constituents (Davis, 2007). Although private financial support remains a crucial funding source, alumni are also now being asked to give of their time and legislative connections (Cook, 1998).

The goal of the research was to provide information used to create relationships that illuminate and accentuate higher education, and hopefully lead to policy formation that benefits higher education. The research is valuable given the current economic climate and consequential implications to higher education. The results and findings from the study have been identified in this chapter. These results and findings showcase a collection of industry practices used for legislative advocacy. The results and findings of the research provide insight to higher education practitioners who can glean information on trends and best practices of legislative advocacy to be employed by their respective alumni associations.

This chapter consists of a summary of the study and of the data collected. Next, the procedure of the data collection has been identified, and the results of the survey have been presented along with a statistical analysis of the results. Then the data analysis was presented with relation to the study's research questions. Finally, this chapter concluded with a summary of the results.

Summary of the Study

The purpose for conducting the study was to discern mechanisms that alumni associations can use to strengthen relationships with external constituents. The research questions provided a framework for the study. Results from the study examined practices that are currently employed by alumni associations -- the practices that are used to augment these aforementioned relationships. Data collected in the study addressed the current strategies used by alumni associations to connect with their legislative constituents.

The study was important because the research identified current strategies of legislative advocacy employed by alumni associations in higher education. Data also revealed the legislative advocacy strategies that are perceived to be the most effective. The findings of the perceived effectiveness of strategies may assist administrators in choosing which practices they will want to pursue. The research may provide rationale to institutions that are not currently practicing these strategies to begin implementing them. Identification of these practices provides administrations new options to consider undertaking and assists in choosing which practices institutions will want to use. The research also served as a foundation for future research on higher education and legislative relations.

To conduct the study, a survey was created from the existing body of literature. The survey was distributed electronically, using a database to identify participants. The database was created specifically for this research. The population of the database was selected using the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) membership directory of four-year institutions. The senior-most alumni professional for the CASE member institution was selected for inclusion in the study. For each message sent, the survey instrument generated an individual link that directed each participant to the website of the survey. This allowed for the results of the survey to be linked to each participant. All completed surveys were automatically stored online through the survey instrument.

Presentation of the Data

There were 423 surveys distributed to the senior-most alumni professionals. There were 142 surveys that were started by participants. However, not every survey that was started was actually completed. To complete the survey, participants must have clicked through to the final survey page at the end of the survey. There were 99 surveys completed by participants. A total of ten surveys were discarded due to lack of substantive information; while some of the participants may have answered the first three questions regarding demographic information, all ten of these participants skipped through the next 23 and then clicked through the end of survey. Thus, the total number of surveys analyzed was 89. The number of analyzed surveys was 21.5% of the total surveys sent, which is considered an acceptable response rate for an online survey.

A total of three emails were sent to each participant. The first email was sent on Sunday, February 19, 2012. After the first email was sent, 51 surveys were completed within two weeks. A reminder email was sent on March 8, 2012. Within eight days, 63 total surveys were completed. The final reminder email was sent on March 16, 2012. This email generated an additional 26 surveys. After the total 142 surveys were collected, the incomplete surveys were filtered out, leaving 99 surveys. After a more careful examination, ten additional surveys were discarded as they were also found to be incomplete surveys with only the first two of 25 questions answered..

Each email contained the following components: a request for participation, information explaining the intent of the survey, a description on the survey including the time requirement, number and format of questions, a statement of anonymity, contact information for both the researcher and dissertation chair, and a disclaimer of research (Appendix A). Each email also contained the web link directing the participant to the survey questionnaire website. The reminder emails were sent on different days and at different times in attempt to generate a maximum response rate. All participants were told that they could request a copy of the survey results, and 11 participants requested a copy of results. Each of these 11 participants received a personal follow-up email thanking them for taking the survey and for their interest in the research, along with a projected timeframe of when they would receive results.

The first question on the survey asked participants to select which classification best described their institution. Of the 89 completed surveys analyzed, 60.7% of the surveys represented a baccalaureate or master's degree conferring institution (Category I). Those representing a doctoral or research institution (Category II) represented 39.3% of the responses.

The second question on the survey was about the population of institutions who have a government relations officer on staff. The results of the question have been represented in Table 2. With regard to institutions that currently employ a full-time government relations officer, 44.8% of the completed surveys indicated that their institution does have this position, and 55.1% indicated that their institution does not a full-time government relations officer. Of the surveys completed for Category I, 22.2% employ a government-relations officer. For Category II, the percentage changes to 74.3% that employ a government-relations officer.

In the survey questionnaire, 23 strategies were listed, and each involved alumni participation with legislative advocacy. On a column to the left of the strategy, participants were asked to answer “yes” or “no” as to whether they practiced that strategy. On a column to the right, participants were asked to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of the strategy on a Likert-type scale of 1 to 5, with 5 holding the highest perception of effectiveness and value.

Table 2.
Comparison of Categorical Institutions and Government Employees
N = 89

Strategy	Category I Yes	Category I No	Category I N/A	Category II Yes	Category II No	Category II N/A
	n = 54			n = 35		
Does your institution employ a full-time professional whose primary focus is government relations?	12	42	0	26	8	0
Percentage	22.2	77.8	/	74.3	25.7	/

Data Analysis

Table 3 displayed the frequency of strategies which were used by alumni associations. The most employed strategy was to encourage participation or legislative advocacy on the alumni website. This strategy was survey question number 5, and it yielded 25 responses of yes, which was 28%. The next most popular strategy employed, with 23 responses of yes, was survey question number 8: Do you advertise any events relating to government relations and/or legislative advocacy on your website? Following were two strategies, each with 21 responses of yes, survey questions 12 and 19. One of these strategies was to utilize the alumni magazine to include articles on the impact of current legislation and policies on higher education. The other strategy was for the alumni association to participate in a coordinated visit to the state capitol that was open to and promoted to all alumni.

The top two strategies shared the theme of website use; they both utilized the alumni association's website to encourage legislative advocacy and specifically to advertise events relating to government relations.

The least employed strategy, which yielded 87 responses of no, or 2.25%, was survey question number 9, to create messages on their website specifically intended to be read by a legislative official. The second least employed strategy was survey question number 14 (84 responses of nos), to publish in the alumni magazine the respective government officials and their contact information. The following four questions each had 83 responses of no: question number 10, question number 15, question number 18, and question number 24. These questions asked if the survey participant's institution took the following actions (respectively): posted alumni association policies on the alumni website directed toward a legislative issue, utilized the alumni website content to include articles profiling local government officials, utilized the alumni website to publish government officials and their contact information, and employed a consultant, consulting firm or lobbyist whose official duties include communicating with government officials and/or monitoring legislative policy.

A common theme among these strategies was that the questions asked for a very particular call for action. For example, the strategy to create a website message specifically intended to be read by a legislative official involved a very narrow audience. Additionally, two strategies were to publish the government officials' contact information in the alumni magazine and on the alumni website. Information regarding specific policies and a profile of a person involve an article (whether published in the magazine or on the website) focused on a very specific topic.

Table 3. `

Use of Influencing Strategies

N= 89

Strategy	Frequency Yes	No	Not Answered
postal mail regarding government affairs current trends or issues	7	81	1
government affairs and/or legislative advocacy on website	20	69	0
encourage participation or legislative advocacy on website	25	64	0
identify government officials on website	10	79	0
provide contact information on website	6	49	34
advertise government relations events on website	23	66	0
create messages on website intended for legislative officials	2	87	0
post policies on website regarding a legislative issue	6	83	0
magazine articles profiling government officials	13	74	2
magazine articles on legislation policies	21	68	0
magazine promotes legislative advocacy	16	72	1
identify government officials' contact information in magazine	3	84	2

(table continues)

Use of Influencing Strategies, Continued

Strategy	Frequency		
	Yes	No	Not Answered
website content profiling government officials	4	83	2
website content on legislation policies	13	76	0
website promotes legislative advocacy	19	69	1
website includes government officials' contact information	5	83	1
participated in **state capital** visit for all alumni	21	67	1
participated in **state capital** visit for alumni leaders	15	74	0
all alumni invited to **on campus** visit from legislators	18	70	1
alumni leaders invited to **on campus** visit from legislators	13	76	0
employ a government relations staff member	7	82	0
employ a government relations consultant	5	83	1
employ a volunteer leader to have government relations duties	8	79	2

Table 4 showed the descriptive statistics for the frequency of use for the 23 strategies listed on the survey. For each strategy, the participant was asked to answer yes or no if their institution employed that strategy. A maximum of 89 responses were collected for each question. Data generated a minimum value of 1 for a yes and a maximum value of 2 for a no. Thus, the strategies with the highest mean score were the least used, and conversely the strategy with the lowest mean score was the strategy used the most. When aggregated together, the data yielded a mean and a mode score of 2 for every strategy. This indicated that the most common answer was "no." Additionally, the middle score is always a "no" because, of the dominance of that answer. However, when the data are dissected by category type, these statistics will alter, which shows the significance of the category. The low standard deviation score reveals the homogeny of the data. The strategy with the lowest standard deviation score represented the strategy that had a response rate with the most responses closest to the mean score of that strategy. Interestingly, the lowest standard deviation score has the highest mean score, which means it is the strategy employed the least (create messages on the website intended for legislative officials). Likewise, the highest standard deviation score was connected to the strategy that yielded the lowest mean score, and thus was the most used strategy (encourage participation or legislative advocacy on website). The variance of the data was relatively low, as the difference between the minimum and maximum values was small. In this example, variance scores paralleled the standard deviation scores in that the lowest variance score (.02) was the strategy with the highest mean score, and the highest variance (.20) had the lowest mean score.

Table 4

Statistical Analysis for Frequency

N = 89

Strategy	Responses	Mean	Mdn	Mode	Var	SD	Min	Max
postal mail regarding government affairs current trends or issues	88	1.92	2	2	0.07	0.27	1	2
government affairs and/or legislative advocacy on website	89	1.78	2	2	0.18	0.42	1	2
encourage participation or legislative advocacy on website	89	1.72	2	2	0.20	0.45	1	2
identify government officials on website	89	1.89	2	2	0.10	0.32	1	2
provide contact information on website	55	1.89	2	2	0.10	0.31	1	2
advertise government relations events on website	89	1.74	2	2	0.19	0.44	1	2
create messages on website intended for legislative officials	89	1.98	2	2	0.02	0.15	1	2
post policies on website regarding a legislative issue	89	1.93	2	2	0.06	0.25	1	2
magazine articles profiling government officials	87	1.85	2	2	0.13	0.36	1	2
magazine articles on legislation policies	89	1.76	2	2	0.18	0.43	1	2
magazine promotes legislative advocacy	88	1.82	2	2	0.15	0.39	1	2
identify government officials‟ contact information in magazine	87	1.97	2	2	0.03	0.18	1	2

(table continues)

Statistical Analysis for Frequency, Continued

website content profiling government officials	87	1.95	2	2	0.04	0.21	1	2
website content on legislation policies	89	1.85	2	2	0.13	0.36	1	2
website promotes legislative advocacy	88	1.78	2	2	0.17	0.41	1	2
website includes government officials" contact information	88	1.94	2	2	0.05	0.23	1	2
participated in **state capital** visit for all alumni	88	1.76	2	2	0.18	0.43	1	2
participated in **state capital** visit for alumni leaders	89	1.83	2	2	0.14	0.38	1	2
all alumni invited to **on campus** visit from legislators	88	1.80	2	2	0.16	0.41	1	2
alumni leaders invited to **on campus** visit from legislators	89	1.85	2	2	0.13	0.36	1	2
employ a government relations staff member	89	1.92	2	2	0.07	0.27	1	2
employ a government relations consultant	88	1.94	2	2	0.08	0.29	1	2

In addition to frequency, the level of perceived effectiveness was also measured. Table 5 provides a display of these data. Descriptive statistics were also provided for the data. The number of responses for each strategy was lower than in the previous table, because only the participants who answered "yes" to using the strategy were asked to evaluate the perceived level of effectiveness of that strategy. Thus, the strategies with the most answers correlated to the most used strategies. Participants rated the strategies with a Likert –type scale of 1 to 5 that was provided in the survey instructions. The lowest number represented the lowest perception of effectiveness and value; the highest number represented the highest perception of effectiveness that provided the most value and/or produced the most successful results for the institution. All strategies had the minimum value of 1, but not every strategy had the maximum value of 5; three strategies had the maximum value of 3 because that was the highest score that those strategies yielded.

The strategy with the highest mean score and thus the strategy that yielded the highest ranking score of perceived effectiveness was to have a visit to the state capitol in which all alumni are invited to participate. This was not the most often used strategy, though it was in a four-way tie for the third most employed strategy. The strategy with the second highest mean score was a similar strategy: to have alumni leaders participate in a visit to the state capitol. This strategy did not stand out when measured by frequency. The strategies with the lowest mean scores were some of the least employed strategies: to employ a consultant and to identify government officials' contact information in the alumni magazine. There was a more diverse response of modes in the table, as values ranged from 1 to 5. The highest mode score was 5, and was connected to the same strategy as that with the highest mean score (3.5). Similarly, the lowest mode score of 1 was paired with the lowest mean score of 2.14. The median ranged from values of 2, 3, and 4. The highest median score (4) went to the second highest mean score, and the highest mean score had the median score of 3.5. The strategy regarding magazine articles that profiled government officials received the lowest standard deviation score (.54) and the lowest variance score (.30), but the mean score (2.81) did not rank in terms of perceived effectiveness. The highest standard deviation score (1.60) was connected to the strategy of alumni associations who employed a staff member designated to government relations. This strategy also had the highest variance score (2.54). The mean score of this strategy (2.90) did not have a high value of perceived effectiveness.

Table 5

Statistical Analysis for the Perceived Effectiveness of Strategies

N = 89

Strategy	Responses	Mean	Mdn	Mode	Var	SD	Min	Max
postal mail regarding government affairs current trends or issues	12	2.33	2	3	0.97	0.98	1	4
government affairs and/or legislative advocacy on website	22	2.73	3	3	0.87	0.94	1	4
encourage participation or legislative advocacy on website	25	2.96	3	3	0.87	0.93	1	5
identify government officials on website	15	2.87	3	3	1.41	1.19	1	5
provide contact information on website	8	2.75	3	4	1.64	1.28	1	4
advertise government relations events on website	24	3.21	3	3	0.95	0.98	1	5
create messages on website intended for legislative officials	6	3.00	3	3	2.00	1.41	1	5
post policies on website regarding a legislative issue	11	2.91	3	3	1.49	1.22	1	5
magazine articles profiling government officials	16	2.81	3	3	0.30	0.54	1	3
magazine articles on legislation policies	23	3.09	3	4	1.26	1.12	1	5
magazine promotes legislative advocacy	19	2.84	3	3	1.58	1.26	1	5
identify government officials" contact information in magazine	7	2.14	3	3	1.14	1.07	1	3

(table continues)

Statistical Analysis for the Perceived Effectiveness of Strategies, Continued

website content profiling government officials	8	2.25	3	3	1.07	1.04	1	3
website content on legislation policies	17	2.82	3	3	1.40	1.19	1	5
website promotes legislative advocacy	21	3.05	3	3	1.15	1.07	1	5
website includes government officials" contact information	8	2.50	3	1,3	1.71	1.31	1	4
participated in **state capital** visit for all alumni	22	3.50	3.5	5	2.26	1.50	1	5
participated in **state capital** visit for alumni leaders	17	3.35	4	4	1.99	1.41	1	5
all alumni invited to **on campus** visit from legislators	22	3.23	3	3	1.61	1.27	1	5
alumni leaders invited to **on campus** visit from legislators	17	3.29	4	4	1.85	1.36	1	5
employ a government relations staff member	10	2.90	3	1	2.54	1.60	1	5
employ a government relations consultant	7	2.14	2	1	1.48	1.21	1	4
employ a volunteer leader to have government relations duties	9	2.67	3	3	1.75	1.32	1	5

The most employed strategy by institutions within the Category I type (i.e., baccalaureate or master's degree institutions) was to advertise government relations events on their websites. This strategy was listed as the survey question number 8, and had 9 responses of yes. Following were two strategies that each received 8 responses of yes. One of these strategies was survey question number 4, to post issues or current trends regarding government affairs and/or legislative advocacy on the website. The second strategy was survey question number 21: to invite all alumni to an on-campus event with legislators.

Category II had a different set of most employed strategies, as none of the top three most employed strategies from Category I were in the top strategies of Category II. The most employed strategy of Category II had 19 responses of yes: to encourage alumni participation or legislative advocacy on the website. This was survey question number 5. Three strategies came in second place, each with 16 responses of yes. Survey question number 12 involved using magazine articles on legislative policies, question 17 involved using the website to include messages, advertisements, or articles that would promote legislative advocacy, and question 19 involved participation from alumni at the state capitol.

Category I and Category II did not share the same rating of most frequently employed strategies, but there are some commonalities. A comparison of these two categories are displayed in Table 6. Several of the questions involved using the website as a communication method. Category I favored advertising events and posting issues and current trends on the alumni website. Category II favored encouraging participation in legislative advocacy, and posting content of messages, advertisements, and articles that would encourage legislative advocacy. The former strategy was broader in scope, and the latter would influence the reader (through the article, advertisement, or message) on which direction to take with legislative advocacy. Additionally, both Category I and Category II had a top-ranking strategy that involved event participation; the former is at the campus, and the latter is at the state capitol.

The least employed strategy by institutions of the Category I type is to create messages on the alumni website that are intended for legislative officials. This strategy had 53 responses of no, and this is also the least employed strategy for Category II. There were 33 responses of no for this category.

Table 6.
Comparison of Institutional Type
N = 89

Strategy	Category I Yes	Category I No (n = 54)	Category I N/A	Category II Yes	Category II No (n = 35)	Category II N/A
postal mail regarding government affairs, current trends, or issues	2	52	0	5	29	1
government affairs and/or legislative advocacy on website	8	46	0	13	22	0
encourage participation or legislative advocacy on website	7	47	0	19	16	0
identify government officials on website	5	49	0	5	30	0
provide contact information on website	2	28	24	4	21	10
advertise government relations events on website	9	45	0	15	20	0
create messages on website intended for legislative officials	1	53	0	2	33	0

(table continues)

Comparison of Institutional Type, Continued

post policies on website regarding a legislative issue	3	51	0	4	31	0
magazine articles profiling government officials	5	49	0	9	24	2
magazine articles on legislation policies	6	48	0	16	19	0
magazine promotes legislative advocacy	5	49	0	12	23	0
identify government officials' contact information in magazine	0	53	1	3	31	1
website content profiling government officials	1	52	1	3	31	1
website content on legislation policies	3	51	0	11	24	0
website promotes legislative advocacy	4	49	1	16	19	0
website includes government officials' contact information	1	52	1	4	31	0
participated in **state capital** visit for all alumni	6	47	1	16	19	0
participated in **state capital** visit for alumni leaders	5	49	0	11	24	0
all alumni invited to **on campus** visit from legislators	8	46	0	11	23	1
alumni leaders invited to **on campus** visit from legislators	4	50	0	10	25	0
employ a government relations staff member	0	54	0	7	28	0
employ a government relations consultant	3	51	0	1	33	1
employ a volunteer leader to have government relations duties	4	50	0	6	27	2

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What were the most common strategies that alumni associations at institutions of higher education employ to influence their legislators and/or government policy makers? Descriptive statistics were used on survey questions 3-23 to determine the answer to this research question. The most employed strategy, with a 28% activity, was question number 5, to encourage participation or legislative advocacy on the alumni website ($M = 1.72$, $V = .20$, $SD = .45$). Survey question number 5 had a mode and median of 2, a variance of 0.20, and a standard deviation of 0.45. The variance and the standard deviation score for this survey question were the highest in rankings, compared to the other strategies. The next most employed strategy, with a 25.8% activity, was question number 8, to advertise government relations events on the alumni website ($M = 1.74$, $V = .19$, SD .44). The next two strategies both had a mean score of 1.76 and one more strategy had a mean score of 1.78. The close proximity of mean scores display how close in rankings were the most employed strategies.

Research Question 2: What was the perception of effectiveness of these actions employed by alumni associations in order to influence and/or lobby their legislature? The scores for the perceived level of effectiveness for survey questions 3 – 25 were examined. Descriptive statistics determined the mean, mode, and median score as well as the variance and standard deviation for the level of perceived effectiveness for each question.

The four strategies with the highest mean scores of perceived effectiveness were ones that involved interactive visits with legislators, whether at the state capitol or on campus, for all alumni or simple for alumni leaders. Question 19 ($M = 3.50$), was for alumni to participate in a state capitol visit; question 20 ($M = 3.35$), was for alumni leaders to participate in a state capitol visit; question 22 ($M = 3.29$) was for alumni leaders to be invited to an on-campus visit from legislators; and question 21 (M = 3.23) was for alumni to be invited to an on-campus visit from legislators.

The statistics of the 23 strategies covered a range with the lowest mean score ranking of 2.14 and the highest mean score of 3.5. In other words, these mean scores, as defined by the survey instruction guidelines for ranking the perceived effectiveness, covered the range of slightly above "somewhat effective; provides small value or purpose" to that between "average" and "very effective; provides value and/or produces results and benefits the institution." Thus, the strategies that were identified in the survey were being employed but the level of perception was not perceived to be at the highest level of effectiveness.

Research Question 3: Were there different strategies employed between the two groups (Baccalaureate/Master's degree conferring institutions and Doctoral/Research degree conferring institutions)? Category I, baccalaureate/master's degree, had a different frequency of strategies employed then that of Category II, doctoral/research. The most often employed strategy of Category I was to advertise government relations on the alumni website. This question received 9 responses of yes. The most frequently used strategy of Category II was to encourage participation or legislative advocacy on the alumni website (19 responses of yes). This strategy was also the most frequent when Category I and Category II were aggregated.

None of the top three frequently employed strategies of Category I were the same as the top four frequently employed strategies of Category II. Only one strategy in the top three most frequently employed strategies of Category I placed in the overall most often used categories, and that strategy was the survey question number 8. The most frequently used strategies of Category I were also employed by Category II institutions. One reason for the discrepancy in frequency ranking is that Category II institutions yielded a higher participation rate in using the strategies than did those institutions of Category I. It is reported that in 22 of the 23 strategies, Category II had either the same number or a greater number of yes responses than did Category I (Category II had 54 responses and Category I had 35 responses). In other words, Category I had a higher percentage of the survey participants, but Category II had a higher percentage of participants responding yes. Thus, it is suggested that there is a difference of strategy employment by Category type, and that difference is that Category II institutions have a more active alumni participation in legislative advocacy then do Category I institutions.

Research Question 4: What were the potential policy implications for higher education institutions, leaders, and policy makers based on the findings from the data regarding public advocacy by public institutions? A content analysis produced several findings with regard to the frequency of strategies employed, the perceived effectiveness of strategies employed by institutions, and the type of institution. The major strategies employed involved legislative awareness. Information regarding legislative issues was posted on alumni websites and in alumni magazines, and alumni were encouraged to participate in legislative events and visits to the capitol. The advantage of alumni associations using these tools of mass communication to further legislative awareness is the ability to exponentially increase the number of participants. Schattsschneider (1960) argued that outcome of a policy depends on the number of participants, as noted, "a conflict's outcome depended directly on the number of people who come to be involved in it. And it is always in the interest of the weaker side to seek to expand involvement by recruiting new participants to its support. Whoever can control this expansion, whether by accelerating or limiting it, gains the political upper hand" (Rochefort & Cobb, p. 5). Thus, mechanisms of legislative awareness increase the participants, which increase the ability to promote or dissuade the issue from evolving into policy.

In addition to increasing the number of participants, legislative awareness also has an effect on problem definition; as problem definition is a concept used in agenda-setting, this technique may be invoked by institutions who have stronger programs of alumni advocacy networks. As Rochefort and Cobb (1994) indicated, the success of agenda setting is predicated by problem definition, and accentuating a problem can bring it to the top of the agenda. By utilizing their alumni associations for legislative advocacy, institutions can help bring problems, such as funding shortfalls, to the forefront of a legislative agenda. The message coming from the alumni association, which should reflect the position of the university, should also be crafted to gain support for the issue; essentially, the message should define the problem. Rochefort and Cobb (1994) noted that the way in which the problem is defined is critical to the development of the conflict, because, "the outside audience does not enter the fray randomly or in equal proportion for the competing sides… the uninterested become engaged in response to the way participants portray their struggle" (p. 5). Finally, problem definition is used to develop political conflict (Rochefort & Cobb, 1994). The three levels of political conflict (whether a problem exists, what the best solution is, and what the best means of implementation are) are defined and redefined, thus problem definition is a tool that is conveyed by alumni associations that will bring an advantage to the legislative issue (Rochefort & Cobb, 1994).

Additionally, agenda denial may also be invoked by institutions wishing to propel or squash an issue moving to the legislative agenda. Cobb and Ross (1997) have posited that agenda denial can provide a framework in which policy outcomes can be controlled or leveraged with use of cultural and symbolic forces. Because alumni are often the most passionate and involved group of external constituents for higher education (Bonney, 1989, Funderbunk, 2000), this group is most likely to advocate for their alma mater. Culture and symbolic forces, when representing education, can be used to invoke feelings of nostalgia and pride. These images, such as a campus landscape image (e.g., bell tower), or icon (e.g., mascot), can be used to increase the opinion of an issue or problem (Cobb & Ross, 1997). Thus, alumni associations who incorporate symbolic and culture forces into their messaging may increase the number of participants advocating for a policy issue, and this use of agenda denial may help shape the majority pubic opinion of this legislative policy.

A final policy implication is that Category II institutions may be more likely to develop policy than Category I institutions, because they have more active alumni advocacy networks, which may correlate to more influence. This research indicated that Category II institutions are more involved with legislative advocacy than Category I institutions (Table 6), which means that Category II institutions are in better shape to utilize their mass communications, possibly employing tactics such as problem definition and agenda denial, and thus may have better resources to shape legislative policy. This information may be useful to Category I institutions, as they consider in which institutional resources to invest. Category I institutions are less active then Category II institutions are with legislative advocacy. However, if Category I institutions see the influence and rewards that legislative advocacy can produce, they may be more likely to support alumni associations and the tools of mass communication (e.g., alumni magazines, alumni websites, etc.) that alumni associations need to reach their audiences. In addition to the resources of mass communication for alumni associations, Category I institutions may use this research to support the case to hire a full-time government relations officer. The Category II institutions have a noted advantage over the Category I institutions, in that they are more likely to employ this position on their institution’s staff (Table 2). However, if Category I institutions may view this as a disadvantage and correlation to the amount of legislative advocacy produced by their institution, as this research indicated that the amount of advocacy is also less for Category I institutions, then Category I institutions may decided to dedicate the resources needed to further support legislative advocacy (e.g., full-time staff person and tools for mass communication).

Chapter Summary

Chapter Four presented a summary of the study, described the procedure of data collection, presented results of the data, and supplied answers to the research questions. Findings highlighted the most common strategies of legislative advocacy, the perception of effectiveness of those strategies, and a comparison of the differences of strategies as employed by varying categories of institutional type.

The most common strategies employed by the institutions who participated in this research used the communication tools of website and magazine. Alumni websites were used to encourage participation or legislative advocacy, post trends and current issues related to government affairs or legislative advocacy, and advertise events related to government relations. The alumni magazine was often used to include articles on legislative policies. Both of these tools greatly affect the ability to increase legislative awareness and the number of advocacy participants for the institution. Problem definition and agenda denial may be used in the messaging from the alumni associations, which would also yield significant increase in the legislative awareness and number of the participants, as well as increase the opportunity for the issue to be propelled or dissuaded from reaching the legislative agenda.

Another strategy commonly employed was for alumni to participate in a coordinated visit to the state capitol. Of all 23 strategies, this strategy had the highest perception of effectiveness, as it produced a mean score of 3.5, placing it in between the descriptions of average and very effective, providing a value or results that benefit the institution. This strategy also has great opportunity to increase legislative awareness, as well as increase advocacy participants.

Category I institutions provided the majority of participants for this study. However, Category II institutions were more active in the utilization of the strategies. Category II survey participants also indicated a higher percentage of employing a full-time government relations officer on the institution's staff. Category I and Category II institutions had a different frequency ranking of the 23 strategies listed in this survey.

There are many policy implications learned from this research. Agenda-setting can be propelled by problem definition and agenda denial. These methods can be utilized with mass communication and legislative advocacy. While problem definition occurred in a myriad of ways, Rochefort and Cobb (1994) have demonstrated that the defining process yields a significant impact on the issue's political standing, as well as the design of the political solution. It is this interest group advocacy from alumni associations that has assisted in shaping the content of the problem definition. Additional frameworks, such as Advocacy Coalition Framework and stakeholder analysis will improve legislative advocacy initiatives. Through all of these actions, policy can be created for the benefit of higher education. Institutions with legislative advocacy programs will have an advantage over those who do not. Category II institutions represent more legislative activity than do Category I institutions, and are thus better situated to control policy formation.

CHAPTER FIVE. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

External constituents are a valuable resource for higher education institutions, and government officials represent an influential group of external constituents. Relationships with government officials are especially critical at a time when government funding continues to decrease as a proportion of institutional budgets (Noland, 2010; Chung-Hoon, et al., 2005). Alumni are also an important group of external constituents, and have historically contributed to higher education institutions in a variety of ways (Barrett, 1989). One way that alumni can serve their alma mater is to be a conduit between their institution and government official(s), serving as a connector and/or influencer, and subsequently institutions are cultivating this political support from their alumni (Weerts, et al., 2010). This research explored strategies used by higher education institutions to communicate with their alumni populations, specifically with the ultimate goal of legislative advocacy.

This chapter offers a summary of the study, followed by a presentation of the conclusions from the research. Also provided are suggestions for future research and recommendations for future practice. The chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

Summary of the Study

The purpose for conducting the study was to better understand the current trends of legislative advocacy for alumni populations of higher education. The research sought to identify strategies that were currently used with the intent to mobilize alumni for legislative advocacy. The scope of the research was to identify the strategies currently employed, to quantify the frequency of use of these strategies, to measure the value of perceived effectiveness, to determine if there is a correlation between type of institution and strategy used, and to discern the policy implications based on the study findings. The sample group of the study was the senior-most alumni officials serving at four-year institutions of higher education.

The research used a survey questionnaire to collect data. Surveys were developed by the researcher, distributed via email, and responses from the surveys were maintained in a database that was a component of the survey tool. Participants were selected through a distribution list from the CASE membership; the senior-most alumni officers at four-year higher education institutions were invited to participate. The response rate of the survey was 21.5%, a rate determined acceptable for an electronic survey. Prior to the distribution of the survey, a panel of experts was selected to review the survey. The responses of the panel of experts consisted of 11 practitioners in the advancement profession, many of whom were active leaders in the CASE leadership.

The first research question sought to determine the most employed strategies of the 23 strategies for alumni advocacy. The most frequently used strategy was to encourage participation in legislative advocacy on the alumni website ($M = 1.72$, $SD = .45$). Other common strategies also involved mass communication tools, such as the alumni website and alumni magazine.

The second research question identified which of the 23 strategies listed on the survey questionnaire were perceived to be the most effective. The strategy with the highest ranking of perceived effectiveness was to have alumni participate in a visit to the state capitol ($M = 3.5$, $SD = 1.50$).

The third research question revealed that there were noticeable differences in the strategies used by baccalaureate/master's degree conferring institutions (Category I) and those strategies used by doctoral/research (Category II) institutions. There were more survey participants in

Category I (n = 54, or 61%) than in Category II (n = 35, or 39%). Another difference was that only 22.2% of Category I participants represented an institution that employed a full-time government relations officer, while 74.3% of Category II participants did have such an officer on their institution's staff. Finally, there was also a difference in the ratings of most commonly employed strategies between the two categories of institutions. None of the top three most frequently employed strategies of Category I were on the list of the top four most often employed by Category II institutions.

The final research question provided information regarding the policy implications for higher education institutions. Data produced findings that Category II institutions were more likely to facilitate alumni advocacy than were Category I institutions. Category II institutions yielded a higher frequency use of strategies over Category I institutions. Category II institutions had a higher frequency rate in 22 of the 23 strategies listed on the survey, which was especially important considering that Category II institutions represented only 39% of the survey participation.

Institutions that conduct legislative advocacy may have an advantage over those institutions that do not, and Category II institutions were more prevalent than Category I in frequency of strategy use and in employment of a full-time government relations officer. The most frequently employed strategies all produced a legislative awareness to the institutions' constituents. Legislative awareness may give these institutions an advantage in invoking problem definition and agenda denial, which could affect the ability to propel or stall an agenda item getting on the agenda. These techniques can be used by administrators of institutions who have the alumni resources of mass communication tools, such as the alumni website and alumni magazine.

Conclusions

The conclusions of this study were based on the aforementioned findings. The conclusions have been presented below.

1. Data revealed that all participants of the survey questionnaire practiced strategies to promote legislative advocacy to the alumni of their institutions.
2. There was a difference in the frequency of use of strategies by Category I institutions and Category II institutions. Category I institutions represented 61% of the survey participants, yet only one of the 23 strategies was employed more frequently by a Category I institution; survey question number 27 was the only question that was utilized more by Category I institutions then by Category II institutions.
3. Category II institutions were more likely to employ a full-time government relations officer then were Category I institutions; 22.2% of Category I participants reported to having this position on their institutions' staff, as opposed to 74.3% of Category II participants.
4. There was a difference in the types of strategies employed by Category I and Category II institutions. The top three strategies employed by Category I institutions were completely different than the top four strategies employed by Category II institutions.
5. There was room for improvement to facilitate the strategies of legislative advocacy. The perceived level of effectiveness did not provide any responses with a mean score of 5, which displayed that there are not any strategies that yield a mean score of perception classified to be highly effective and provide an important value for the institution, the description of the highest ranking of 5. There were no strategies that received a mean score of 4, which was to have the perception of very effective, and the strategy provided a

value, and or produces beneficial results. The average mean score of the perception of effectiveness was 2.84.

Recommendations

Based on the results and conclusions formed from this study, the following recommendations for future research are made.

Recommendations for future research.

1. Research should be conducted using a greater sample. Community colleges, private institutions, and for-profit institutions should also be surveyed. This study could be expanded upon to utilize the survey format to solicit input from the senior-most alumni professional at additional category types of institutions. Comparative analysis can be conducted using a multitude of categories of institutions.
2. Research may also be conducted on the correlation between institutions who receive state funding and the degree of legislative advocacy that institution supports. This research may yield results that would offer administrators a general understanding of the level of advocacy needed to produce beneficial results.
3. Another future study might entail the correlation between state funding percentages and the specific strategies of legislative advocacy. The research may determine the effectiveness of certain strategies, measured by financial outcomes as opposed to the perceived level of effectiveness. The study would provide administrators a deeper understanding of what specific advocacy methods equate to specific outcomes.
4. Research could be conducted on the correlation between effectiveness and perceived effectiveness. Specific quantitative measurements, such as funding levels or

increases in funding, would determine the actual effectiveness. The current research could be expanded upon to become part of a greater longitudinal study.

5. Research can be conducted to determine a correlation between government funding, legislative advocacy, and institutional quality of a higher education institution. Institutional quality would require quantitative measurements such as institutional rankings.

6. More literature can be produced regarding the profession of alumni affairs and the advancement profession. The research of the literature review was limited by the amount of published material on these areas. For example, in 1977, the first edition of the *Handbook of Institutional Advancement*, edited by W. Roland, was published by Jossey-Bass. Nine years later the second edition was published by the same editor and publisher. The third edition of the handbook was published in 2000, edited by Peter Buchnan and published by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). Although all three of these guides hold important information, 12 years have passed since the last edition. The field of university advancement has evolved to include many new programs, policies, communication strategies, industry standards, and best practices. For instance, since 2000 internet-based software and databases have transformed the alumni relations profession. Thus, there is the opportunity for more research and publishing of a more recent edition of the handbook. Likewise, there has been only one edition of the *Handbook for Alumni Administration* ever published. This handbook was edited by Charles Webb, and was published by American Council on Education (ACE) in 1989. As 23 years have

passed since this publication, future research could focus on a second edition of this handbook with relevant material to the 21st century practices.

7. More international research should be generated in journal publications. The vast majority of research collected from the study was from American authors, which is understandable as Turner (1947) asserted that the cultivation of alumni originated in American higher education. However, alumni relations is now practiced world-wide. Jacobs, et al. (2010), produced qualitative research by collecting oral histories of alumni from the University of Winchester, UK. CASE has evolved from an American based agency into an international organization with membership representing 74 countries, office staff in four countries and on three continents (www.case.org**).** Yet, the international growth of alumni relations and the advancement profession is still relatively young, and many higher education institutions located outside of the USA are only beginning to practice alumni relations. Thus, future research may be conducted regarding the comparisons between international and American practices of alumni relations.

Recommendations for future practice.

1. Leaders of alumni associations should emphasize the importance of legislative awareness to their alumni constituents. Funding appropriations continue to decrease, and awareness of this issue is needed.
2. Alumni associations who are not currently practicing strategies of legislative advocacy should undertake some strategic initiatives to position their institution and alumni association in priority with legislative officials.

3. Alumni associations should quantify the effectiveness of the strategies which they employ, by tracking attendance numbers, surveying alumni responses, and measuring specific outcomes of government support.

Discussion

Alumni associations should promote awareness of legislative issues that affect higher education. Alumni who have an understanding of the legislative issue can be motivated to draw support from government officials (Weerts & Ronca, 2008, Cook, 1998). Awareness will not only connect alumni back to the institution from which they graduated, but it may invoke an emotional connection to support their alma mater (Brown, McIvor and Rafeck, 2004).

Professionals in the alumni relations field should give thoughtful consideration to the legislative needs of their institutions, as well as how alumni can support those needs. Alumni associations can provide communication and programming to keep alumni informed. Alumni associations can also encourage participation from constituents to increase awareness of the needs of the higher education institutions (Cook, 1998, Berry, 1977). Alumni should be mobilized, when appropriate, to propel issues to legislative agendas (Cook, 1998, Walker, 1991). Problem definition and agenda denial are two areas, which alumni can offer support to assist in brining issues forward -- or keeping issues from reaching legislative agendas.

Although alumni professionals should put legislative advocacy strategies in place, this should be done with intentional forethought. Legislative needs and strategies should be first determined from senior administration at higher education institutions. Next, a stakeholder analysis should be conducted and constantly revisited.

Alumni should be mobilized for action only with the consent of senior administrators, and issues should be carefully vetted before bringing to the attention of the mass population

(Davidoff, 2003). Additionally, administrators should be well informed of legal parameters, insofar as when action is appropriate and within the boundaries of political limitations (i.e., lobbying regulations). Alumni associations operate in many different ways -- as independent associations, as institutional supported associations, and a combination of both (receiving both public and private funds).

Category I institutions should consider placing a greater emphasis on legislative advocacy. This may require an adjustment to resource allocation. The majority of Category II institutions employ a full-time government relations professional, and this may give an advantage with legislative priorities and funding allocations.

Administrators who facilitate a purposeful course of action to handle an issue of concern become policy makers (Anderson, 1975), and institutions who appoint such administrators will have a clear advantage over those who do not. Moreover, the institutions who effectively mobilize their alumni associations and use mass communicate to covey their message to external constituents are more able to effect agenda-setting and policy formation. Continual policy evaluation is needed to evaluate the goals and performance of the advocacy strategies performed (Yarnow, 2000).

Legislative advocacy has grown to become a more prominent practice in the alumni relations profession. CASE currently co-sponsors a joint conference with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), entitled Higher Education Government Relations Conference. The support of this annual conference proves the value of skills and transferability of skill sets between government relations and advancement. Future research may produce a greater number of educational opportunities for the government relations profession, whether it be district or national meetings, or merely collegial collaborations between institutions. More research on this topic is expected in the future.

The study sought to address the essence of legislative advocacy facilitated under the auspices of alumni relations. The research provided an extensive history and overview of external constituents' role within higher education, legislative advocacy, policy formation, and alumni associations.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INTENT

To: Most Senior Alumni Professional
From: Elizabeth S. Underwood (underwooddissertation@gmail.com)
Subject: Short Survey on alumni program needed for dissertation research
Sent: February 20, 2012

Dear Colleague,

Your participation is needed to collect research for our profession. The purpose of this study is to examine the intersecting areas of alumni relations and government advocacy. I realize that your time is valuable, and thus designed the survey to be completed in an efficient manner. This survey should only take approximately five (5) minutes, as it consists of 25 multiple choice and Likert scale questions.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and very important. All answers will be submitted anonymously. Should you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact either Elizabeth Underwood (esu@uark.edu, xxx.xxx.xxxx), or Dr. Michael Miller (mtmille@uark.edu, 479.575.3582). I will be glad to share results of the research with you upon completion of this study.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth S. Underwood

Doctoral Candidate

Public Policy

University of Arkansas

Disclaimer of research

The data collected from this study will be used for the sole purpose of the research needed for the dissertation study of the research conductor, Elizabeth Underwood. The research collected and produced from this study is not affiliated with the institution with whom the research conductor is employed. Likewise, the conclusions made from this research do not represent the institution for whom the research conductor is employed.

APPENDIX B

SECOND LETTER OF INTENT

To: Most Senior Alumni Professional
From: Elizabeth S. Underwood (underwooddissertation@gmail.com)
Subject: Short Survey on alumni program needed for dissertation research
Sent: March 8, 2012

Dear Colleague,

I hope that 2012 has begun a great year for you. I am working on a dissertation that relates to our profession, as the purpose is to examine the intersecting areas of alumni relations and government advocacy. I ask that you assist me by taking a short survey. I have sent this survey to the senior most alumni relations officer at CASE member institutions. If you have already taken the survey, please disregard this message, and I thank you for your time.

All answers will be submitted anonymously. This survey should only take approximately five (5) minutes, as it consists of 25 multiple choice questions. I realize that your time is valuable, and thus designed the survey to be completed in an efficient manner.

Your participation in this study is very important. Should you have questions about the study, please feel free to contact either Elizabeth Underwood (**underwooddissertation@gmail.com**, 479.466.4125), or Dr. Michael Miller (**mtmille@uark.edu,** xxx.xxx.xxxx).

I will be glad to share the results of this research with you upon completion of this study.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth S. Underwood

Doctoral Candidate

Public Policy

University of Arkansas

Disclaimer of research

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APPENDIX C

3rd LETTER OF INTENT

To: Most Senior Alumni Professional

From: Elizabeth S. Underwood (underwooddissertation@gmail.com)

Subject: Short Survey on alumni program needed for dissertation research

Sent: March 16, 2012

Dear Colleague,

I am working on a dissertation that relates to our profession, and seek your assistance to take the survey (link below). Your participation in this study is very important. If you have already taken the survey, please disregard this message, and I thank you very much for your time.

I realize that your time is valuable, and thus designed the survey to be completed in an efficient manner. All answers will be submitted anonymously. This survey should only take approximately five (5) minutes, and consists of multiple choice questions.

Should you have questions about the study, please feel free to contact either Elizabeth Underwood (underwooddissertation@gmail.com, (xxx) xxx.xxxx), or Dr. Michael Miller (mtmille@uark.edu,479.575.3582).

Sincerely,

Elizabeth S. Underwood / Doctoral Candidate / Public Policy / University of Arkansas

APPENDIX D

SURVEY

NOTE: This is a written copy of a survey which will be sent electronically. The format may alter slightly with technology, but the content will remain.

This purpose of this study is to understand how institutions of higher education utilize alumni populations for legislative advocacy. This research will produce information regarding the mobilization of alumni for legislative advocacy, including analysis of strategies employed by institutions and methods used by institutions to achieve desired results for the institutions. Participants who complete the survey will have the option to see results of the study upon the completion of dissertation.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. All data will be collected anonymously; respondent information will not be connected to information collected. Only group data will be reported.

Should you have questions about the study, please feel free to contact either Elizabeth Underwood (underwooddissertation@gmail.com, (xxx) xxx.xxxx), or Dr. Michael Miller (mtmille@uark.edu, 479.575.3582).

PART ONE: The following 2 questions will provide information to be aggregated for broad correlations:

1. What classification best describes your institution?

   ____ Baccalaureate or Master's Degree College or University

   ____ Doctoral or Research University

2. Does your institution employ a full-time professional whose primary focus is government relations?

_____ Yes

_____ No

PART TWO:

The following 23 questions will determine an aggregated efficiency level for each strategy. Please answer both the left column (yes or no) and the right column (if yes, please rate the level of effectiveness).

Please use the following guide to rate your level of effectiveness:

1 = not effective; provides no value

2 = somewhat effective; provides small value or purpose

3 = average

4 = very effective; provides value and/or produces results and benefits the institution

5 = highly effective; provides an important value for the institution, and/or produces successful results for the institution

Yes No	3. Do you send any postal mail exclusively to your alumni base that includes information regarding current trends or issues related to government affairs?	1 2 3 4 5
Yes No	4. Do you mention any current trends or issues related to government affairs and/or legislative advocacy on your website (i.e., funding, need for	1 2 3 4 5

	transparency, etc?)	
Yes No	5. Do you encourage participation or legislative advocacy on your website?	1 2 3 4 5
Yes No	6. Do you identify any government officials on your website?	1 2 3 4 5
Yes No	7. If you answered yes to #6, do you provide their contact information (i.e., email, phone number, address, and website)?	
Yes No	8. Do you advertise any events relating to government relations and/or legislative advocacy on your website?	1 2 3 4 5
Yes No	9. Do you create messages on your website specifically intended to be read by a legislative official?	1 2 3 4 5
Yes No	10. Do you post alumni association policies on your website directed toward a legislative issue?	1 2 3 4 5
Yes No	11. Does your alumni magazine include articles profiling local government officials?	1 2 3 4 5
Yes No	12. Does your alumni magazine include	1 2 3 4 5

	articles on the impact of current legislation and policies upon higher education?	
Yes No	13. Does your alumni magazine include messages, advertisements, or articles which would encourage alumni to participate in legislative advocacy?	1 2 3 4 5
Yes No	14. Does your alumni magazine publish government officials and their contact information?	1 2 3 4 5
Yes No	15. Does your alumni website content include articles profiling local government officials?	1 2 3 4 5
Yes No	16. Does your alumni website content include articles on the impact of current legislation and policies upon higher education?	1 2 3 4 5
Yes No	17. Does your alumni website content include messages, advertisements, or articles which would encourage alumni to participate in legislative advocacy?	1 2 3 4 5
Yes No	18. Does your alumni website content	1 2 3 4 5

	publish government officials and their contact information?	
Yes No	19. Has your alumni association ever participated in a coordinated visit to the **state capital** that was open to and promoted to all alumni?	1 2 3 4 5
Yes No	20. Have leaders of your alumni association ever participated in a coordinated visit to the **state capital** that was exclusive to the specific leadership group and conducted on behalf of the alumni association?	1 2 3 4 5
Yes No	21. Has your alumni association ever participated in a coordinated event **on campus**, which brought legislators to campus or focused on legislative advocacy?	1 2 3 4 5
Yes No	22. Have leaders of your alumni association ever participated in a coordinated event **on campus**, which brought legislators to campus or focused on legislative advocacy?	1 2 3 4 5

Yes No	23. Does your alumni association employ a staff member whose official duties include communicating with government officials and/or monitoring legislative policy?	1 2 3 4 5
Yes No	24. Does your alumni association employ a consultant, consulting firm or lobbyist whose official duties include communicating with government officials and/or monitoring legislative policy?	1 2 3 4 5
Yes No	25. Does your alumni association have a volunteer board member/leader whose official duties include communicating with government officials and/or monitoring legislative policy?	1 2 3 4 5

Thank you for your participation in this survey. If you would like to receive an electronic copy of the results, please submit your name and email to Elizabeth Underwood at underwooddissertation@gmail.com. NOTE: this method is used so that your contact information will NOT be connected with the survey answers you just provided.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth S. Underwood

Doctoral Candidate

Public Policy

University of Arkansas

Disclaimer of research

The data collected from this study will be used solely for the dissertation research of the study conductor, Elizabeth Underwood. The research collected and produced from this study is not affiliated with the institution with whom the research conductor is employed. Likewise, the conclusions made from the research do not represent the institution with whom the research conductor is employed.

APPENDIX E

PANEL OF EXPERTS

A Panel of Experts is used to test the validity of the instrumentation of questionnaire. The Panel of Experts consists of two groups: 1) participants at a conference on government relations in higher education, and 2) participants who are colleagues and whom I know through previous service on a CASE District III Board of Directors. None of the participants on the Panel of Experts will be duplicated as a participant in the actual study. Answers to the following questions will be compiled and adjustments will be made as needed.

Each participant of the Panel of Experts will receive a cover letter attached to the survey instrument. Participants of the first group will receive a printed packet, and participants of the second group will receive an electronic message. Answers will be collected according to the respective format. Due to the nature of delivery and the audience of the group, the cover letters vary slightly.

Dear conference participant,

Because of the level of your expertise in the profession of government relations, I seek your assistance to be part of a "Panel of Experts". I am a doctoral candidate and aim to use the attached questionnaire as the primary instrument to collect data for my dissertation. I can increase the validity of the questionnaire with facilitation of pilot tests taken by a Panel of Experts.

Would you please take less than five (5) minutes to evaluate the attached questionnaire?

Realizing that your time is valuable, as is that of the participants who will be taking this survey, I have designed the survey to be concise and efficient

You need **NOT** take the survey. Simply read over the survey and answer the following questions.

1. Were the instructions clear and easily understood?

2. Was the language of the survey easy to comprehend? Were there any terms that should be defined for better comprehension?

3. Were there any questions that you did not understand or know how to answer (if so, please list the question number.

4. Do you have any feedback to give me, realizing this may increase the validity of the questionnaire?

Attached is a copy of the questionnaire, along with an addressed envelope. You may leave this packet at the conference hotel desk as you check out of the conference. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions or concerns about the survey, you may contact me at underwooddissertation@gmail.com or (xxx) xxx.xxx. I will be glad to share results of the research with you upon completion of this study.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

Elizabeth S. Underwood

Doctoral Candidate

Public Policy

University of Arkansas

Disclaimer of research

The data collected from this study will be used for the sole purpose of the research needed for the dissertation study of the research conductor, Elizabeth Underwood. The research collected and produced from this study is not affiliated with the institution with whom the research conductor is employed. Likewise, the conclusions made from this research do not represent the institution for whom the research conductor is employed.

Dear CASE Colleague,

I hope that this email finds you doing well and enjoying your winter holidays. Because of the level of your expertise in the profession of Advancement, I seek your assistance to be part of a "Panel of Experts". As you may know, I am a doctoral candidate and currently working on my dissertation. I aim to use the survey questionnaire (link below) as the primary instrument to collect data for my dissertation. I can increase the validity of the questionnaire with facilitation of pilot tests taken by a Panel of Experts.

Would you please take less than five (5) minutes to evaluate the attached questionnaire?

Realizing that your time is valuable, as is that of the participants who will be taking this survey, I have designed the survey to be concise and efficient.

You need **NOT** take the survey. Simply read over the survey and answer the following questions. You may find the online survey link at ----.

Your participation is greatly appreciated.

1. Were the instructions clear and easily understood?

2. Was the language of the survey easy to comprehend? Were there any terms that should be defined for better comprehension?

3. Were there any questions that you did not understand or know how to answer (if so, please list the question number).

4. Do you have any feedback to give me, which you feel would increase the validity of the questionnaire?

If you have any questions or concerns about the survey, you may contact me at underwooddissertation@gmail.com or (xxx) xxx.xxx. I will be glad to share results of the research with you upon completion of this study.

The survey link below will take you to -----

Sincerely,

Elizabeth S. Underwood

Doctoral Candidate

Public Policy

University of Arkansas

Disclaimer of research

The data collected from this study will be used for the sole purpose of the research needed for the dissertation study of the research conductor, Elizabeth Underwood. The research collected and produced from this study is not affiliated with the institution with whom the research conductor is employed. Likewise, the conclusions made from this research do not represent the institution for whom the research conductor is employed.