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A Case Study of Complex Systems in Leadership in Higher Education Fundraising

J. Michael Bonnette
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A CASE STUDY OF COMPLEX SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDRAISING

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Educational Leadership

by
J. Michael Bonnette
August 2015

Accepted by:
Russell Marion, Ph.D., Committee Chair
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ABSTRACT

Institutions of higher education are more focused on raising private funds today than ever before. This need to increase funding has provided opportunity for emergent behavior among all levels of the institution and has provided an opportunity for the study of leadership among those responsible for managing the fundraising operation. This study will endeavor to understand the emergent enabling and adapting leadership in an institution of higher education during a change to a centralized fundraising model. A case study approach will build a narrative of interaction among those involved in the change and develop insight through the lens of Complexity Leadership Theory. Through the story told by administration, deans and foundation staff, an understanding of change management in complex organizations will be produced and recommendations for practice and further study will be delivered.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to leaders who are not such by their title, but by their willingness to face change and commandeer available resources to adapt and enable those around them to be their best.

“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.”

~ Charles Darwin
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the unwavering love and support of my wife Amy and our children, Carson and Laura. They have been more than patient as I have worked to complete this dream of a doctoral degree. Your lives have enriched mine in a way no words can express. I am proud of the partnership we have and the family life we enjoy.

To my committee chair, Dr. Russ Marion and my committee, Dr. Wayne Bennett, Dr. Bill Hanson and Dr. James Satterfield… Your commitment to excellence and attention to my education is most appreciated. I am proud to call you “My Committee”, as well as my friends.

To my family, friends and classmates, thank you for your support over the years. Each of you has given me a different perspective to consider as I have learned more about leadership and positively affecting the world. There is no better lesson to learn in formal education or personal relationship than appreciation for other views.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Fundraising organizations in higher education rely on relationship management through personal interaction by staff members, priority initiatives developed by administration and data management through systems and processes to be successful in raising money to support students through scholarship and faculty through programmatic initiatives of the institution. These organizations are generally managed in two ways: Centralized and De-Centralized models. This study will examine the interaction among three groups of campus personnel responsible for managing and implementing a change in fundraising structure at the study institution to a centralized model. The purpose of the study is to develop knowledge and build theory related to emergent leadership when adapting to a changing management model.

Overview

Institutions of higher education are complex organizations of interacting groups, each charged with the ultimate responsibility of providing for the education of students. This charge assumes many forms within the organization as members of the groups provide supporting functions toward reaching the education goal. Administrators have the responsibility to provide resources and policies for the educational needs of students, thus they run the business of the organization. These business functions provide housing for students, food and health services, opportunities for physical fitness, intercollegiate and intramural athletics, and cultural pursuits, all in a safe and well-maintained environment.
Primary to all of these functions is the necessity to pay for them. While some of these costs are covered by student tuition and fees and state-appropriated funding (in the case of state-funded institutions), a portion are covered by private donations. The Delta Cost Project on Postsecondary Costs, Productivity, and Accountability created a database of information for comparing the costs paid by students versus state funding. The national averages comparing state funding to student costs from 2006 to 2011 showed a 4.3% increase in student costs and a 3.3% decrease in state appropriations. The trends at the study institution mirror the data in that there was a .4% increase in student costs with a 4% decrease in state funding (“Delta Cost Project Database - Institution,” 2011).

Due to this rise in costs and decrease in state-appropriated funding, the Advancement Office at the research site along with its affiliated non-profit Foundation have become highly developed and complex groups responsible for raising scholarships, capital needs, and programmatic expenses to cover the cost disparities of governmental support for education. Their primary function is to raise private money, but they have also become the main communications outlets for the institution, sharing institutional information in order to develop a pipeline of cultivated and engaged donors. It is important to understand the importance of these fundraising organizations to the academic institution and to understand how their interaction with the rest of the institution influences its ability to cover these costs.

Advancement and foundation offices have three areas of operation for providing the necessary oversight for fundraising and each plays a significant role in the administration of the fundraising process. First, and foremost, there is the development
operation. This group fosters daily interaction with donors and potential donors as they
strive to bring in private donations. Their function as external connectors to private
resources is a highly specialized and uniquely managed function in higher education by
comparison to the others in the organization.

A second internal function of these organizations is financial accounting. This
function, generally led by the Chief Financial Officer, provides the fiscal controls for
processing donations, banking and investment management, accounting and outlay of
investment earnings and funds given each year by donors for the purpose of supporting
student scholarship. The funds are also held and managed to provide for capital projects
and programmatic support of the institution.

The third function of the administrative team of a Foundation/Fundraising office
is Data Services. This group manages the database of information related to alumni and
other donors and delivers the information needed to the staff in the Development group to
manage relationships for the purpose of fundraising. They also provide services to other
entities on campus relying on them to be the central point of information for up-to-date
data for constituent groups, such as the Alumni Association, academic departments and
colleges who would like to communicate with their graduates.

Outside of the Foundation, there are multiple entities in the institution with
tangential relationships to the internal functions of the Foundation. These relationships,
primarily in the form of connections with Deans and Program Managers, as well as
Executive-level staff members, provide a complex web of inter-connectivity that must be
managed and utilized to its full extent for the institution to be successful in its endeavor of raising private funds.

**Statement of the Problem**

A concern expressed by fundraising professionals at many universities involves the lack of structure and management in donor relationships. In many cases, there is no central oversight or process directing the fundraising relationships and activities of donors who are not managed by and associated with the university’s foundation or advancement division. While development is the process of raising money and can be done in many of the organization’s functions, relationship building and management is required for raising funds from potential donors. Without proper management of the individuals responsible for developing relationships with donors, the organization fails at its mission of procuring more funding.

It is also important to understand the inner-connectedness among internal administrative functions of an institution in order to determine what factors affect the process of fundraising. As interactions occur and relationships grow among the administration and staff of the institution, each actor in the network assumes a role in the central function of development and is managed toward the end result of increased donations. When the leadership of the study institution made the decision to centralize the fundraising organization and to put that process in place in the Foundation office, the network of individuals responsible for making it function determined the path forward and worked diligently to implement the change. This study will strive to understand the interplay among the individuals responsible for implementing the change and how they
worked together (or separately) to manage the change in their respective areas and still accomplish the goal of raising funds for the institution.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to understand how different levels of leadership implement and adapt to the implementation of a centralized management model in a fundraising organization in higher education. By understanding the administrative, adaptive and enabling functions of the organizational dynamics in the institution, we recognize how leadership forms a strategy for the changes taking place in the organization, how leadership emerges (creates order) within the organization among those responsible for implementing the change, how structure is put in place to enable the goal of increased funding and relationship management and how the organization and the individuals within it adapt to changes in the environment as the need arises.

This study will create knowledge for those responsible for fundraising management as they work to understand the interplay of individuals and process dependence across the institution. It will build knowledge related to the pitfalls and successes of implementing a change in fundraising model, as well as develop knowledge of emergent behaviors among those responsible for managing change.

**Research Questions**

1. How do decision-makers at the executive level of higher education administration understand and implement change strategies for the purpose of increased fundraising?
2. How do individuals responsible for running the academic units of the institution deal with a change in fundraising structure and operationalize it to increase funding for their colleges?

3. How do individuals in the fundraising organization adapt to the changes around them and make adjustments in implementation to increase success in fundraising?

**Significance of the Study**

This study highlights the complexities faced by fundraising organizations in higher education and may assist administrators in identifying the interaction between the development and academic functions that have an impact on the success of fundraising. It will also assist in understanding the complexities of managing the process of development and provide an in-depth review of the intricacies of changing to, and managing, a centralized development model of fundraising. Overall, it will develop knowledge beneficial for leadership of fundraising organizations and administrators in higher education.

The gap in knowledge being studied is related to emergent leadership and how it is given opportunity for success by administrative decision-making. As the catalyst for change to a centralized structure was put in place, the opportunity for emergent behavior among those responsible for implementing it will be revealed. A narrative picture of enabling and adapting behavior will take shape and provide new knowledge for those interested in implementing a change in fundraising process at an institution of higher education.
Theoretical Framework

This case study of the change in the administrative structure of a fundraising organization and the subsequent success of fundraising effectiveness in a development office will provide more in-depth knowledge of the complex interactions between the staff of the foundation and the administrative functions of the academic side of the institution. Complexity Systems Leadership Theory, the study of leadership in complex organizations (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007) states that “leadership is not isolated behaviors of individuals ‘leading’ or influencing one another, but a recognizable pattern of interacting influences that ultimately shape how individuals relate to one another as they work together to determine the way forward to get things done.” (Hazy & Uhl-Bien, 2013) This study will highlight the inter-influences present at the time of the change, the impetus for that change and the emergent behavior of the “actors” in the organization as the change in organizational structure occurred.

“CSLT transcends traditional approaches to leadership research by offering a theoretical framework within which prior results can be better understood, evaluated, and integrated into a common view of how human agency drives collective performance and adaptation.” (Hazy & Uhl-Bien, 2013) With that in mind, I will study not only the administrative decision-making process involved in implementing the change and the interaction between those actors in the institution, but the emergent behavior of individual leadership in the organization as it developed the processes and structure around implementing the change.
Summary of Methodology

Case study methodology will be used to understand the interactions and intricacies of the process of centralizing the development staff at the institution. Structured interviews will be undertaken with the administrative staff and supervisory faculty of the institution, as well as with middle- and upper-management of the University Foundation in order to determine what leadership roles have the greatest responsibility for administering the change process, how their interaction caused the change to take place, and the functions of leadership necessary to enact change and develop increased opportunity for private support. I will also work to understand the emergent leadership behavior within and among the different levels of the institution taking place within the 2.5-year time frame of the study and how that behavior provided for increased fundraising success.

The answers to these structured interview questions will be recorded, transcribed and coded in NVivo to develop an understanding of the environmental conditions in the institution at the time of the administrative shift to determine the changes on the effectiveness of the fundraising organization and the academic institution as a whole.

Limitations

The limitations of any case study are the direct observations of history by the participants in the study as memory can become clouded and some interviewees may be unwilling to share sensitive information if they believe it may jeopardize their livelihood. I will take all necessary precautions to anonymize (be sure information shared does not
give away the source) the data collected as well as follow all Institutional Review Board requirements for confidentiality.

A second possible limitation of the study is that I will be participating in the interviews, as I was the Associate Director for Development responsible for that aspect of the Foundation management during the time frame of the study. This gives me access to first-hand information on the progression of the change. I will be cognizant of this and work to diminish bias in the collecting and reporting of results, taking into account the precepts of Strauss and Corbin related to the process of case study research.
Definition of Terms

**Emergence:** the creation of order—new structure, systems, organization, and interdependent action… social emergents are *purposive* -- they are organized by individuals who *intend* to produce some outcome -- even though the emergent form is always a surprise, unpredictable and uncertain (Lichtenstein, 2015).

**Centralized Development Office:** Centrally managed fundraising organization where Development Officers report directly to one manager who is responsible for their activities and delivering the necessary resources for them to raise money for the institution.

**Decentralized Development Office:** A fundraising structure where Development Officers are managed by sub-units of the institution, generally the Dean or Academic Head of a college or unit, where they direct their work and provide resources for the carrying out of their duties.

**Development Officer:** An individual responsible for raising private support for institutions of higher education.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Private Fundraising has been and will continue to be the way in which public institutions of higher education cover the shortfalls of dwindling state support and rising tuition costs. This gap in funding and the attempt by institutions to fill it has created a complex and widely interconnected group of individuals across the institution with responsibility for raising money.

The management structure of higher education fundraising has evolved over time with centralized, decentralized and hybrid models of management. The centralized structure manages all fundraising professionals under one area, the decentralized model has development professionals reporting to academic deans with dotted lines to the central fundraising function of the institution, while the hybrid model has elements of both… Development officers managed by college administration and development officers who work on institutional priorities while sharing supervisory responsibility for each group.

The research questions for this study have been developed to determine the emergent leadership and adaptive structures among individuals responsible for centralizing a staff of professional fundraisers from a decentralized model. Complexity leadership, in this case will guide the study by suggesting “that rather than being ‘in’ someone, leadership – understood as the capacity to influence others – can be enacted within every interaction between members” (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009).
The questions used to collect data will explore the interaction and decision-making processes of the administration of the institution and how they proposed that the plan be implemented. It seeks to understand how individuals responsible for academic leadership in the institution dealt with the change to centralized fundraising, and how Foundation staff adapted to the shifting environment in order to implement the change in fundraising structure.

This chapter will outline the history, management structure and process of higher education fundraising in America and develop a working knowledge of the fundraising process of the institution prior to and during the change to centralized fundraising. It will then discuss Complexity Leadership Theory, which is the theoretical basis of the study, and highlight emergent leadership functions in complex organizations, specifically related to the function of adaptive and enabling leadership, and how they fit together to foster emergence of leadership in the organization. Finally, a set of propositions will provide a framework for the analysis of data and the emergent leadership patterns among the individuals in the institution.

**Higher Education Fundraising**

Higher education fundraising traces its roots in the United States to the first decade of the twentieth century (Worth, 2002). Since that time, institutional fundraising organizations have become more essential, structured and professional in nature. As this profession has progressed, multiple factors have affected its growth, including a decrease in state funding for public institutions of higher education and higher tuition costs. Other factors that have influenced fundraising strategies include economic growth and decline,
an ever-changing political landscape and the cultural aspects of the academy and how it governs and supports itself.

Voluntary support of American higher education has been part of the American ethos since the founding of the colonial colleges. Although philanthropy and fundraising are part of the American postsecondary education history and essential to most colleges and universities in their ability to offer the level of education, services and research that we have all become accustomed to, they are two of the least studied aspects of higher education (Drezner, 2011).

Caboni and Proper (2007) have argued that as fundraising in higher education “becomes ever more central to the fiscal well-being of colleges and universities, there exists an increased need to understand the fund raising function.” This argument offers relevance to this study in that we will learn more about the structures and processes beneficial for administrators in higher education related to fundraising.

The importance of funding has been well documented over the last 15 years, especially in light of the recession that occurred in the United States beginning in 2007. As state funding has dwindled, institutions have made conscious efforts to increase the amount of private dollars available for the support of students and academic programs. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported in March of 2014 that “state spending on instruction at public colleges is at its lowest since 1980 (adjusted for inflation)” (Hebel, 2014). The “Delta Cost Project on Postsecondary Costs, Productivity, and Accountability” developed by the American Institute for Research in Washington, DC, created a database of information to understand the comparison of costs paid for by
students to state funding, an important indicator of the need for institutional support of students. The national averages comparing state funding to student costs from 2006 to 2011 showed a 4.3% increase in student costs and a 3.3% decrease in state appropriations. The numbers at the institution in this study are different in that the increase of student costs was .4%, but do mirror the trend with a 4% decrease in state funding (“Delta Cost Project Database - Institution,” 2011).

It is also important to note that the economic recession of the late 2000’s had a significant impact on the ability of fundraising organizations to increase private donations from alumni, friends of the institution and corporations. It was reported in the 2010 Giving USA survey, conducted by The Non-Profit Times, a business publication for nonprofit management that in the “economic downturn, giving to education declined 5.4 percent in 2008 and 3.6 percent in 2009, accounting for an 8.8 percent drop from 2007 giving levels” (Hall, 2011).

As this was happening, the institution being examined in the current study was also undergoing a change to new leadership, a major shift in its focus on fundraising and the need to increase efficiency in its processes and structure. Grunig posits in his 1995 study that “changes in the organizational structures of higher educational institutions are most likely to occur in response to changes in the institutional environment rather than as a result of organizational growth or changes in technology” (Grunig, 1995). Scholarly work in the study of higher education fundraising has focused primarily on donor behavior and their propensity to give, while few studies have been conducted on the organizational structure as it relates to leadership decision-making and the complexity
within the institutions they support. This is true in the institution being studied, as turnover in upper-level administration had occurred in the three years prior to the study timeframe and the institution was on the verge of needing additional funds to bring about positive growth for its students.

**Fundraising Management**

Fundraising organizations in higher education are complex organizations of interacting individuals tasked with the responsibility of raising funds to support the institution and its primary mission of educating students. As with all institutions of higher education, there is an administrative-level position responsible for the management of the fundraising operation. In the case of this institution it is the Vice President for University Advancement, who has responsibility for managing the Development Office within the affiliated University Foundation, as well as the Alumni Association and Office of University Communications.

The timeframe of this study spans from August 2010 to December 2012. Just prior to August of 2010, the Vice President for University Advancement was appointed to manage re-building the fundraising organization to address a number of issues related to structure and management that were keeping the fundraising organization from being its most efficient and effective. Primarily due to years of neglect by previous management and poor relationship management on the part of the development department and its officers, there was a need to regain control of the current processes and centralize the development operation. The decentralized model that had been in place for many years was lacking in process and structure and the deans responsible for the management of the
development officers were not using them per their prescribed job responsibilities. The average dollars raised per year in the preceding years was $6 to $7 million and many of the large-scale capital projects had failed due to lack of campaign management strategies, campaign timeframes that lasted too long or didn’t happen at all, cost overruns and the economic recession. The lowest year of 2007-2008 was during the worst of the economic recession in the United States and there were no “surprise” gifts given by non-solicited donors that year (See Figure 1, the circled sections represent the approximate amount in each year made by donors who were not solicited by the institution).

Figure 1: Institutional Giving – FY05 to FY10 (Source: Initiative-based Fundraising Proposal presented by VP for University Advancement)
As the institution struggled with the most appropriate way to bring about change, it was determined by the Vice President for University Advancement and the executive-level administration of the institution that a centralized fundraising approach was necessary. They also agreed that an “initiative-based” approach to funding priorities would be undertaken, which meant that top priority initiatives of the university would be determined by the administration and those would be the primary focus of the development staff in the foundation.

Iannozzi, in her 2000 work on Planning and Fundraising sponsored by the James L. Knight Foundation, explains that the strategy of centralization gets the academic division working in tandem with the development division, fostering the alignment of strategic plans and priorities with fundraising efforts (Iannozzi, 2000). This concept was particularly important to this study of the centralization of fundraising management in that the decision-making by the administrative group to centralize the development operation was not only based on a need to develop better processes for managing fundraising relationships, but also to manage the fundraising priorities of the institution. With a centralized structure and process for determining fundraising priorities, the institution made measurable progress in managing relationships with donors and setting achievable goals for priority initiatives.

A portion of the fundraising organization’s ability to manage relationships with donors came in the form of a database system called Raiser’s Edge, which is developed by the Blackbaud Corporation and is widely used in higher education fundraising. This database system had been purchased by the Foundation prior to the implementation of the
centralized development operation, but had not been used to its potential for prospect (potential donor) relationship management. Though the institution was determining ways to control the work being done in relationship management of donors, it was in the process of utilizing data and tracking individual interaction to increase fundraising efficiency and effectiveness where potential gains were made.

**Change Dynamics**

The university was striving to achieve what could only be defined as a highly centralized, command-and-control organizational structure for fundraising. This outcome, however, is of little interest in this paper; rather it is the journey toward the outcome that interests, that period of time between the old model and the new characterized by uncertainty, emergence, change, shifting environments, information flow, and complex adjustments. We want to know how individuals and groups adapted to administrative decisions and to shifting expectations. Hazy and Uhl-Bien (2013) help establish a foundation for this exploration: “In the fast-changing global ecosystem, approaches to management grounded in linear assumptions may overly emphasize applying controls on interactions, thus failing to stimulate information flows, learning and growth.”

Further, introducing my theoretical explanation, “Complexity leadership theory… offers an important middle ground between computational analyses of individual agents, and the structures that emerge through their interactions. It explores the actions and events that catalyze emergent structure” (Lichtenstein, et al., 2006). Ironically, the control measures and processes unleashed by the administration of the institution launched a complex rather than controlled process of change.
Not only do unique dynamics unfold within individual interactions, but also at the group level, the department level, the firm level and the institutional level. Each of these levels provides feedback to all of the other levels, influencing the dynamics of the others. These changes in turn feed back once again to the other levels, and so on in an ongoing adaptive spiral (Hazy and Uhl-Bien, 2013).

The interaction of the differing groups in the institution and the knowledge sharing that occurred in the process of changing the fundraising management model offered the opportunity for dynamically changing decision-making at all levels in the institution. When provided data and information from others, each group of individuals responsible for successfully implementing the change utilized it to determine the best opportunity for managing the change and increasing fundraising.

Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey recognize the utility of available knowledge as an opportunity for emergent leadership (2007). At the study site in the current analysis, knowledge came in the form of donor information, their interactions with the institution and individual development officers, as well as their propensity to give and to what initiatives. This brings the focus of institutional information and leadership into what is called the “Knowledge era”.

Knowledge Era leadership requires a change in thinking away from individual, controlling views, and toward views of organizations as complex adaptive systems that enable continuous creation and capture of knowledge. In short, knowledge development, adaptability, and innovation are optimally enabled by
organizations that are complexly adaptive (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007).

The data made available by the centralized structure and the use of it to foster increased fundraising is where leadership emerged and the adaptation to change was accomplished by individuals in the organization.

There are reasons why emergent, or adaptive (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007) leadership occurs among individuals in the organization, not only in the decision making of the administration, but in the interaction of the individuals who must adapt to the changes being implemented.

It originates in struggles among agents and groups over conflicting needs, ideas, or preferences; it results in movements, alliances of people, ideas, or technologies, and cooperative efforts. Adaptive leadership is a complex dynamic rather than a person (although people are, importantly, involved); we label it leadership because it is a, and, arguably, the, proximal source of change in an organization (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

This study will endeavor to understand the adaptations of the individual managers in the fundraising organization and their interaction with other decision-makers in the institution as the changes were implemented. As Hazy states, “most if not all simplifying strategies that are developed and implemented within organizations may generate unforeseen consequences in the longer term, whether for good or for naught” (Hazy, 2009). With that in mind, the study will also work to understand the unique challenges
across the institution as academic leaders adapted to the change and either accepted or resisted the change.

**Complexity Leadership Theory**

Complexity Leadership Theory considers “leaders as individuals who act in ways that influence this dynamic (internal interactions) and its outcomes. Leadership theory (in general) has largely focused on leaders—the actions of individuals with independent capabilities” (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). That is, leadership is more than individual skills and talent, it is a highly dynamic process that is a product of the way people interact within and across groups and teams (Marion, personal communication, 2015). This change of focus in leadership and the collective influence on emergent dynamics has brought about a new way of understanding leadership and interaction and provides a theoretical lens for the study at hand.

Traditional, hierarchical views of leadership are less and less useful given the complexities of our modern world. Leadership theory must transition to new perspectives that account for the complex adaptive needs of organizations… Leadership (as opposed to leaders) can be seen as a complex dynamic process that emerges in the interactive “spaces between” people and ideas. That is, leadership is a dynamic that transcends the capabilities of individuals alone; it is the product of interaction, tension, and exchange rules governing changes in perceptions and understanding (Lichtenstein et al., 2006).

This study will examine the change brought on by administrative decision-making, as well as the emerging leadership among the groups responsible for
implementing the change. It is this region of “emergent complexity” (Boisot & McKelvey, 2010) that is significant for the study of leadership.

Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT) is necessarily enmeshed within a bureaucratic superstructure of planning, organizing, and missions. CLT seeks to understand how enabling leaders can interact with the administrative superstructure to both coordinate complex dynamics (i.e., adaptive leadership) and enhance the overall flexibility of the organization (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

Complexity Leadership Theory explains:

How to enable the learning, creative, and adaptive capacity of complex adaptive systems (CAS) within a context of knowledge-producing organizations.

Complexity Leadership Theory seeks to foster CAS dynamics while at the same time enabling control structures for coordinating formal organizations and producing outcomes appropriate to the vision and mission of the organization (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

In the study institution, the organization was in need of control mechanisms for producing results, but these control mechanisms also provided the opportunity for the organization to act on data rather than institutional knowledge or the lack of institutional knowledge.

This basic need for data and structure in order to insure quality interaction with donors and potential donors provided the opportunity for groups from across campus to interact with each other, share information and save information for later interaction. The groups functioned as:
…neural-like networks of interacting, interdependent agents who are bonded in a cooperative dynamic by common goal, outlook, need, etc. They are changeable structures with multiple, overlapping hierarchies, and like the individuals that comprise them, they are linked with one another in a dynamic, interactive network (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

It is in the interaction of the individuals in the institution that leadership emerges, which was in contrast to the daily management of activities based on structure and process. It was manifested in the continuous need to adapt to the changing environment and outside pressures on the institution to increase effective fundraising. As the “agents develop localized solutions, they affect the behaviors of other interdependently related agents, who subsequently build on the original response to create higher-order responses” (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). These “higher-order responses” provide emergent leadership in the organization as it adapts to its new paradigm and adjusts as necessary to continue progress. In the case studied here, each group involved in the management change (administration, academic deans and foundation staff) had to find their own way of managing the change and interacting with the other groups to determine the best way forward with the information they were given.

**Adaptive and Enabling Leadership Fostering Emergence**

“Adaptive leadership does not mean getting followers to follow the leader’s wishes; rather, leadership occurs when interacting agents generate adaptive outcomes” (Lichtenstein et al., 2006). In the institution being studied, a proposal was delivered for the structure that would be put in place and a directive was given that it would occur, but
the individuals in the institution responsible for implementing the change were given the latitude to work through the change. We learn from the definition above that:

Leadership can occur anywhere within a social system. It need not be authority or position based, but is instead a complex interactive dynamic sparked by adaptive challenges. Individuals act as leaders in this dynamic when they mobilize people to seize new opportunities and tackle tough problems. As the situation changes, different people may act as leaders by leveraging their differing skills and experience (Lichtenstein et al., 2006).

As the change occurred, there were individuals in the institution who were caught in that “interactive process between adaptive leadership and complexity dynamics that generates emergent outcomes” (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009). According to Uhl-Bien and Marion, these emergent outcomes may come in the form of innovation, learning or adaptability (2009). The study institution was forced into this by the administrative decision, but through adaptive leadership moved the organization forward in fundraising.

“Enabling leadership acts in the interface between (administrative and adaptive) leadership: it works to foster conditions conducive to the complex interactive dynamics of adaptive leadership and manages the administrative-to-adaptive and innovation-to-organization interfaces” (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2007). These complex interactive dynamics were present in the study institution at the dean and foundation mid-management levels. As these two groups of individuals worked to adapt to the changes and understand the administrative functions of those positions, they enabled those around them to find their way to success in the change.
The need for control placed on the institution by the administration was met with enabling leadership by the foundation staff in that they understood the daily challenges of making the change happen successfully. We will determine if they exhibited “leadership behaviors versus leadership roles” within the institution and determine if the “enabling behaviors (needed for emergent self-organization) or controlling behaviors (traditional leadership)” (Plowman et al., 2007) were present.

“Enabling leadership is also important in fostering the enabling conditions for the adaptive function (i.e., administrative-to-adaptive interface) when administrative leadership is not already doing it” (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009). The response by the institution, in the various leadership groups, was to move it toward successful fundraising. Because each had differing opinions of what success was, the administration made a decision and placed bureaucratic expectations (end-result control) on the function of fundraising. The control process set the plan in motion, but did not inhibit the organization from finding ways to adapt to the expected outcome through informal leadership in the institution. “More adaptive bureaucratic forms of organizing will have well-functioning informal leadership processes (i.e., adaptive leadership) producing innovative responses to complex problems, and these adaptive leadership processes and outcomes are effectively entangled with administrative leadership” (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009).

The role of enabling leadership is needed in two ways: a) to protect and foster conditions conducive to the emergence of effective adaptive leadership processes (i.e., administrative-to-adaptive interface) and b) to integrate the emergent outcomes generated
by the emerging adaptive leadership processes back into the bureaucratic superstructure to generate adaptive outcomes for the firm (i.e., innovation-to-organization interface) (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009). It is expected by the researcher that once the adaptive and enabling functions of leadership are established in the data analysis, that the feedback of data and information into the bureaucratic structure of the institution will result in emergence of leadership in the institution.

“Emergence in this sense occurs through the interactions across a group of agents – individual members and managers, networks, and organizations – rather than only through the behaviors of a formal manager” (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009). The administration was on the cusp of something big in fundraising, but they had no understanding of the leadership that might emerge as they adapted to the new paradigm. Lichtenstein and Plowman in their 2009 study worked to “identify and empirically confirm … four sequential conditions for emergence which, in combination, appear to generate and explain emergent order: (1) Dis-equilibrium state (sic); (2) Amplifying actions; (3) Recombination/Self-organization; and (4) Stabilizing feedback” (p. 620) (see Figure 2). These four conditions, along with their emergent leadership behaviors will be explained below and assist in developing propositions for this study as the data is analyzed and relate to each research question, shedding light on the emergence of adaptive behavior in the institution in the implementation of the change to centralized fundraising.

1. “Dis-equilibrium state – Dis-equilibrium… reflects a major disruption in system behavior — a new regime of significantly increased or decreased
activity that pushes the system far beyond its existing (normally accepted) range of activity (McKelvey, 2004a,b). Disequilibrium can be provoked by the pursuit of a new opportunity (e.g. an entrepreneurial project/venture), a threat/crisis from the environment or from within the system, or from fluctuations that alter the entire organizational system… a notable movement away from stability and toward dis-equilibrium, which sparks emergent change processes” (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009).

2. “Amplifying actions – A second contextual condition for emergence… is amplifying actions. When a complex adaptive system is in a Disequilibrium state it becomes highly sensitive to shifts in system dynamics, such that a small fluctuation in one part of the system can bring unanticipated and substantive changes to other parts of the system (Holland, 1975; Kauffman, 1993). In addition, these actions are increasingly “non-linear” due to the interdependent interconnections between system participants — individuals and/or groups. Whereas stable systems tend to buffer and diminish fluctuations, the non-linearity inherent in Dis-equilibrium states allows information to jump channels, become amplified, and move quickly through the system (Dooley, 1997). In so doing, small changes can escalate in unexpected ways” (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009).

3. “Recombination/“Self-organization” - The third contextual condition… was Recombination/“Self-organization.” At a critical threshold, when the system
has reached the limit of its capacity, it can either collapse or re-organize” (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009).

4. “Stabilizing feedback - The fourth contextual condition identified… is stabilizing feedback, that is, damping feedback that slows the amplification and keeps the emergent change from spinning the system out of control.” (Lichtenstein and Plowman, 2009).

**Figure 2:** Behaviors that Co-generate Conditions for New Emergent Order (Adapted from Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009)

**Higher Education Fundraising as a Complex Organization**

Institutions of higher education have many competing functions in the organization that have an impact on the relationships needed for effective fundraising. There are multiple individuals in the administrative chain of command who provide
decision-making for the institution as a whole, while not necessarily being motivated by the success of the whole, just their area of the institution. The centralized process, as was described earlier was implemented to counteract that effect at the study institution.

In this study, the interaction between those individuals in the institution and those of the fundraising organization itself (The University Foundation) were of significant importance. The influence of the leadership of the institution as the catalyst for change had a significant impact on the interaction among those individuals and the opportunity for emergent leadership took place.

It is also important to understand “adaptive leadership” as a concept for studying the emergent leadership behaviors of the individuals in the complex adaptive systems (CAS).

Adaptive leadership is defined as emergent change behaviors under conditions of interaction, interdependence, asymmetrical information, complex network dynamics, and tension. Adaptive leadership manifests in CAS and interactions among agents rather than in individuals, and is recognizable when it has significance and impact (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

As the management decision was made to adapt to a changing environment on the campus, a different, but related adaptation was taking place in the fundraising organization. We must understand these “adaptive responses” to the change in order to understand how leadership emerges. Uhl-Bien, et al. discuss these adaptations to change in their 2007 work. “Adaptive responses to environmental problems include counter-moves, altered or new strategies, learning and new knowledge, work-around changes,
new allies, and new technologies” (2007). As the organization dealt with the imposed change structure, it adapted to how it would make itself successful in light of the adaptations needed to do so. The new strategy of a “centralized” structure created a control function for operations while offering the institution the opportunity to adapt more readily to the changing external environment and align institutional priorities with the development of donor funding.

Summary and Propositions

Complexity Leadership Theory defines the complexities of administrative leadership in an organization, the impetus for change in management and structure of the organizations, and the adaptive leadership necessary among the individuals to meet the challenges of the change and provide for the success of the organization. As the institution took on the responsibility of changing the structure of fundraising management, there were multiple factors affecting them from inside and outside of the organization. These factors took on the form of interaction and adaptation at the individual and collective level and will be studied at all levels involved in the change to understand how leadership emerges in the interactions of the individuals and groups with increasing the funds available for the institution.

As the research questions were created to determine emergent behavior within the three leadership areas of the institution, so must we have a way to understand how each leadership group dealt with the change. The propositions below were developed based on Lichtenstein and Plowman’s 2009 model of emergent behaviors and will be used to outline and identify emergent behavior in each of the leadership groups as the analysis of
data is completed. The emergence of leadership of each proposition relates to the research questions of the study in each leadership group and help answer the questions posed in the basis of the study.

Proposition #1: By the administration disrupting existing patterns in the institution, the dis-equilibrium state was created, increasing uncertainty and the mandate for change was put in place to provide opportunity for emergent leadership.

Proposition #2: Novelty was encouraged by the administration in the institution by allowing experiments and fluctuations, encouraging rich interactions in a “relational space” and supporting collective actions, thereby amplifying actions that were beneficial to the organization.

Proposition #3: Sensemaking (the process by which people give meaning to experience) made way for correlation in the institution through language and symbols, resources were recombined and leaders accepted “tags” making self-organization a hallmark and success strategy of the change.

Proposition #4: By integrating local constraints, the institution was able to provide stabilizing feedback during the process, creating an opportunity for organizational learning and emergent behavior among the administration and staff. (Adapted from Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009)
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to understand how different levels of leadership implement and adapt to the implementation of a centralized management model in a fundraising organization in higher education. The participants in this study will be drawn from administrative-level staff in the institution, those responsible for academic management of the colleges, and the executive- and mid-level management of the fundraising organization.

The propositions as described in Chapter 2, are aligned with the research questions in that each question will be answered by looking for emergent behavior described in each of the propositions. The propositions were developed to specifically outline areas of emergent behavior in the change to the centralized fundraising model and build on those behaviors in answer to the research questions related to each leadership group being studied.

An explanatory case study method, described later in Chapter 3, was chosen to answer the research questions related to the interaction of the individuals responsible for the decision to change and those tasked with implementing the change. The research questions are:

1. How do decision-makers at the executive level of higher education administration understand and implement change strategies for the purpose of increased fundraising?
2. How do individuals responsible for running the academic units of the institution deal with a change in fundraising structure and operationalize it to increase funding for their colleges?

3. How do individuals in the fundraising organization adapt to the changes around them and make adjustments in implementation to increase success in fundraising?

**Case Study Approach**

Merriam (2009) states that the case study approach is a particularly appealing design for applied fields of study such as education, social work, administration, health, and so on. An applied field's processes, problems, and programs can be examined to bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practice” (p. 51).

This statement has unique implications for the study at hand in that we are examining administrative decision-making and leadership interaction in the field of education with an interesting link to the business world. When the processes and problems associated with events such as those in this study are examined, a narrative of unique interaction and leadership will likely emerge and will act as a model of interaction related to complexity in the organization. This will, in-turn, provide new knowledge for leaders in higher education fundraising who are looking for innovative ways to increase funding and develop fundraising professionals.

What we stand to learn from case study research is outlined by Merriam (1998): Case study explains the reasons for a problem, what happened, and why it worked or
failed; we learn about alternatives not chosen; and through evaluating and summarizing
the data, we create opportunities for applying the findings to other situations. With
structured interviews and case study analysis, we expect to understand more about the
interconnectivity of individuals and variables and how they adapt to the changing
environment around them. This will be particularly relevant in this study since there are
multiple perspectives related to the interaction of all the decision-makers and managers in
the change processes. It also helps us identify processes relevant to Complexity
Leadership Theory, which is the framework for the study.

Participants

The study took place during the timeframe of August 2010 to December 2015 at a
public research university in the southeastern part of the United States. All executive- and
mid-management level individuals who were involved in the change to a centralized
fundraising process at this university were asked to interview. This included individuals
who were involved in initiating the change at the administrative level and individuals
who had to implement them at the college and foundation levels. Interview requests were
made to members of the executive leadership team of the institution, academic deans
from each college and mid-management level individuals in the university foundation.

In addition to those on the academic side of the institution, the Executive Director
for the University Foundation (same person as the Vice President for University
Advancement), the Associate Director for Development, the Associate Director for
Advancement Services and the Chief Financial Officer in the University Foundation were
asked to participate. Actual participants are listed in Chapter 4 in Table 1. No participants refused to participate, but some were unable due to unavailability.

The Office of Research Compliance at Clemson University reviewed the proposal and interview questions for this study and gave Institutional Review Board approval in November 2011. The researcher had received all appropriate training related to IRB standards and additional training by the Committee Chair on interview processes and protocol. The IRB consent form for this study can be found in Appendix E.

**Research Procedures**

Yin (2014) has stated there are six sources of evidence most commonly used when conducting case study research. They are: Documentation, Archival Records, Interviews, Direct Observations, Participant Observation and Physical Artifacts (p. 106). As a former mid-level manager in the organization being studied and a participant in the change of the organization, I have a unique advantage of being able to provide all of these sources as evidence in the case study, with the exclusion of physical artifacts. Each will play a role in telling the story of emergent leadership and change in the organization.

The Vice President for University Advancement developed documentation for the centralization process at the university setting the path for the change in the organization. The details of this document provided a framework for the implementation of the change. Structured interviews (see Appendix D) will be conducted with each of the participants in the various levels of administration and responsibility in the institution. Direct and participant observation will be available due to my knowledge and involvement in the change and its implementation over time.
All interviews will be recorded digitally using Skype and handwritten field notes will document observations. Digital files will be securely transferred to a transcription service and transcribed. Once transcribed, the documents will be sent back to the researcher securely and stored on a password-protected computer for archiving and analysis. The analysis will be conducted using NVivo software (v. 10).

**Data Analysis**

The open-ended, structured interview questions will address interactions and adaptation among individuals in the organization as well as those in the larger institution who are responsible for accepting and working with the change in organizational structure. The questions will be organized from general (e.g., “What was happening in the institution at the time the decision was made to centralize the fundraising organization?”) to specific (e.g., “How would you describe the success of the organizational change?”) in terms of understanding the interactions of all the individuals, internally and externally, and they will be analyzed in the same way. These questions are intended to lead respondents to discuss the context for change, how change was implemented, and how respondents adapted to the change. The process of understanding the change to a centralized structure from the structured interview questions moves the process from an administrative decision, to an institution-wide process and into implementation by way of the individuals responsible for implementing it in the University Foundation. Interviews will be recorded, transcribed, coded and analyzed in NVivo to develop an understanding of the contextual conditions at the institution at the time of the change and the adaptations made.
Similarly, Documentation, Direct Observations and Participant Observations will be used for analysis in this study. Documentation will consist of information provided by the Vice President for University Advancement in the form of the proposal document, detailing the move to centralized fundraising and initiative-based fundraising in the summer of 2010. As the Associate Director for Development during the study timeframe, I was able to observe first-hand the implementation and results of the change to the centralized fundraising model and had a hand in developing the initiative-based approach to fundraising priorities. These direct and participant observations in the management changes at the study institution add to the study analysis providing depth and color to the story being told. This direct observation of the institution in the study time frame allows the opportunity to make sense of information being shared by the study participants.

The data analysis process will follow the guidelines of Strauss and Corbin (1998), using open, axial and selective coding in order to identify patterns in the data and to tie those patterns to the theoretical model (Complexity Leadership Theory). Strauss and Corbin emphasize that researchers should let the data “do the talking,” so we will strive to be open to unanticipated revelations about the theoretical model.

**Open Coding.** The data will first be coded using Open Coding procedures in which “the analyst is concerned with generating categories and their properties and then seeks to determine how categories vary dimensionally (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 143)”. This type of coding enables the researcher to identify basic concepts developed from the data and to classify information to be further studied and reviewed from different perspectives. It provides an in-depth view of phenomenon occurring in the data, labels
the emerging concepts and sets them in categories of significant information (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To help assure that I am tapping constructionist (group) knowledge, a category will not be considered “significant” unless a minimum of two respondents describe it.

**Axial Coding.** Axial coding, the second step in the process, is primarily concerned with “relating categories to their subcategories, termed “axial” because coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Here we understand the categories as phenomena, or higher-level categories of information that are significant to respondents; we work to understand how participants pattern and group the phenomena under investigation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We accomplish this by looking for connections across open codes and gathering similarities into clusters of ideas. Axial coding is the process of understanding the how and why of things, it develops a relationship between structure and process and “create[s] the circumstances in which problems, issues, happenings, or events pertaining to a phenomenon are situated or arise” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The patterns of information in this step of the analysis provide an opportunity for the emergence of a theoretical structure.

**Selective Coding.** Selective coding, the final step in the analysis, is “the process of integrating and refining categories” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The concept of a “central category” becomes important to this level of coding and is the point in which “all of the products of analysis are condensed into a few words that seems to explain what ‘this research is all about’ “(Strauss & Corbin, 1998). At this point, the researcher has
come to understand and delineate the core concepts of the data and has built a framework, or model, that either guides new theory or fits in existing theory. The theory is “validated” and should be “recognizable to participants, and although it might not fit every aspect of their cases, the larger concepts should apply” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The central category for each research question in the study will be found by looking for “its ability to pull the other categories together to form an explanatory whole” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). By utilizing the categories from the axial coding level, the central categories for each research question will tell the story of the change at the institution and provide the narrative from study analysis.

*Theoretical saturation*, as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) is where “no new data are being unearthed and any new data would only add, in a minor way, to the many variations of major patterns”. The categories created by the researcher reached saturation in the selective coding level, thus developing the story of interaction and emergence during the change.

**Use of Word Frequency Clouds as a Supplementary Research Tool**

Word frequency clouds provide a network-like understanding of the importance of individual areas of the institution to each leadership group. They draw a picture of the most frequently used words by a group and thus provide an additional understanding of what is important to them. In this case, they will illuminate how the case study analysis developed the story of interaction at the institution by correlating word frequency to context, providing a means of triangulation between coded data and the narrative.
McNaught and Lam in their 2010 study of using word clouds as a supplementary research tool explain that word clouds have demonstrated that they can allow researchers to quickly visualize some general patterns in text. In the research setting, these texts are likely to be informants’ spoken (transcribed) and written responses. The visualization allows researchers to grasp the common themes in the text, and sometimes even to find out main differences between sets of responses (2010).

Individuals in each leadership group were interviewed for this study and their interview transcripts were coded for meaning. The text-based data used to build these word clouds came from the axial coding level of the process and the top 50 words over 5 characters long were developed by Nvivo into the figures shown at the end of Chapter 4 in Figures 3, 4 and 5.

**Reporting**

Reporting in case study research requires the researcher to “compose” in a way that makes “a significant contribution to the knowledge… and to share this contribution with others” (Yin, 2009). This study will utilize tables and charts to outline the interactions between the institution (university) and the fundraising organization (foundation) as they work to increase the success of fundraising at the institution after the change in management structure. It will also develop a narrative of the implications of the fundraising structure change as it was implemented and as the individuals responsible for the change adapted to their new environment.
As is the case with most qualitative analysis, participant quotes will be used in reporting to help tell the story of the interaction. These quotes will document and detail the interaction and will bring the knowledge gained in the study into focus for the reader.

Data from supplementary documentation will be used primarily to support observations from the interviews. They could be used to affirm a trend in the interviews, to validate an idea that was only sparsely mentioned by respondents, as alternative perspectives of events in the system, and, occasionally, as a source of new phenomena in the open coding stage. The goal is to combine these sources and provide a rich, well-articulated description of the dynamics observed in the data.

**Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness**

Validity in case study is concerned with determining the accuracy and credibility of the findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Researchers support claims of validity by “triangulat[ing] data sources, as well as data collection methods” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). To assure validity of the data, I will ask my professional colleagues in leadership and fundraising to verify that the analysis is relevant to the study and have had a colleague in educational leadership engaged in the reading and review of chapters as they have been written. This will support the credibility of not only the data, but that the analysis took into account all aspects of the data and was not biased.

Reliability in research and data analysis exists when other researchers are able to replicate results. Qualitative research does not offer the opportunity for generalizability since it is generally based in one instance within one time frame. So, it is important that the researcher understands this issue and that he or she documents all items in order to
show the work that has been done and be able to show consistency in the coding and analysis process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Yin states the goal of reliability is “to minimize the errors and biases in a study” (Yin, 2014).

Issues of trustworthiness are even more important in the work of a qualitative researcher. And, as a former employee of the institution being studied, I will need to be sure everyone understands these issues and make them feel very comfortable about the anonymization of the data as it is analyzed and reported. I will also be trained by my committee chair, Dr. Russ Marion on the proper way to conduct the interviews in order to account for these and other “trustworthiness” issues.

The issue of triangulation becomes important at this point in the analysis. . Triangulation is a technique by which the researcher utilized multiple approaches to the data to validate findings (Yin, 2009). In this study, the case study findings from open, axial and selective codings as laid out by Strauss and Corbin are compared to word frequency cloud analysis provided by the NVivo software. Documentation in the form of the proposal document delivered by the Vice President for University Advancement, the transcripts of the interviews, and these word frequency clouds paint a picture of interaction and draw out data that validates the findings in the narrative section of Chapter 4.

**Limitations of the Study and Personal Biases**

As the Associate Director for Development at the institution being studied, I was in a leadership role, responsible for the implementation of the centralization process of the fundraising organization. Although I have since moved on to a new post at a different
university, this could pose a significant limitation on the study if there is no correction for bias in the reporting of the facts. I am well aware of this limitation and will work to overcome it in the interaction with the subjects being interviewed, but also in the analysis of the data.

There are some distinct advantages to having been engaged in the change in that I will be able to provide context for the interactions of the individuals and organization being studied and I have access to a trove of information, documentation and archival data from the study timeframe. This information will provide an opportunity to understand some personal and political implications of structure and process changes that may not come out in the interview process.

It is important to keep in mind that “qualitative case studies are limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator. The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 2009) and there must be a significant level of trust associated with the handling of the data to be studied. I will take all precautions to be sensitive to the wishes of those being studied and to not put the fortunes of the institution at risk by sharing any sensitive information related to donor or employees of the institution.

It is also important to not let personal bias interrupt the opportunity to gather and analyze data objectively. “The concept of confirmability refers to the notion of objectivity in qualitative research. The implication is that the findings are the result of the research, rather than an outcome of the biases and subjectivity of the researcher” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). It is easy to understand how bias may influence the
researcher in this case due to the work that was done in the 2.5 year time period and the relationships built along the way. Detailed research notes will be kept in order to show how personal bias was left out of the process of analysis.

Summary

This case study analysis of the emergent and adaptive leadership of individuals in higher education and fundraising will provide unique knowledge for the management of fundraising. Leaders will understand more of the intricacies of organizational interaction and adaptation to changing environments and how to navigate the complexities inherent in knowledge-based organizations.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to understand emergent leadership in the interaction of individuals charged with the implementation of a centralized fundraising management model in higher education. By examining the organizational dynamics in the institution, we should come to understand how leadership generates strategies for changes taking place in the organization, how leadership emerges within the organization among those responsible for implementing change, how structure enables the goal of increased funding, and how the organization and the individuals within it adapt to changes in the environment.

In this chapter, we seek patterns among the interview responses to identify emergent leadership in response to the change of fundraising structure. A framework based on Complexity Leadership Theory, which describes the behaviors of emergent leadership (see Chapter 2) was used to organize the analysis; the research questions also assisted with understanding more about the leadership and interaction of individuals in the study institution. After a review of the demographic descriptions of the interview respondents, the researcher will explain the open and axial coding as they relate to the research questions, culminating in an in depth review of their associated selective coding and quotes from the interviews linked to the propositions from the end of Chapter 2. As a form of triangulation, word frequency clouds developed from the coding process will also build the story of interaction among the leaders in the institution.
**Demographics of the Interviewees**

There were three separate and distinct groups at the study institution who were responsible for implementing the change to a centralized fundraising structure. They were the University Administration, the Academic Deans and the Foundation Staff. The administration members interviewed included the President, the Vice President for University Advancement and the Vice President for Student Affairs. The President had been at the institution for three years at the time of the decision to centralize the fundraising organization under the University Foundation. The University Foundation had struggled with unfocused leadership over a number of years, so she made the Alumni Association Director of the past 12 years the Interim Vice President for University Advancement and Executive Director of the Foundation. The proposal to move to the centralized model and initiative-based fundraising was developed by the Interim Vice President and delivered to the administration as an opportunity to increase funding for the institution. The Vice President for Student Affairs had been at the institution for 30 years, primarily in the Vice President role and had observed the lack of progress in the fundraising organization over that time.

The deans who were interviewed for the study came from the College of Arts, the College of Business, the College of Education, the College of Health and the College of Science (college names changed to increase anonymity). Each of these deans had been in place for a number of years and had individual development officers working within their colleges, tasked with raising money for their specific college needs.
The mid- and executive-level management of the University Foundation interviewed for this study consisted of the Vice President for University Advancement who was also the Executive Director of the Foundation at the time, the Association Director for Development and two individuals who served in the role of Associate Director for Advancement Services. The Associate Director for Development was responsible for the management and implementation of the change to centralized fundraising and operationalized the initiative-based fundraising approach for the institution. He was also responsible for interaction across campus with all of the deans and other individuals who wanted to fundraise in their area. Internally, he was responsible for management of the development officers, marketing and communications, special events and annual giving, as well as interaction with the other Associate Directors to development relationship management processes for the database and fiscal policies for securing and stewarding donations. The Associate Director for Advancement Services was responsible for managing the staff and database associated with donor and donation information.

The Blackbaud Raiser’s Edge database held institutional knowledge related to donors, their interactions with foundation and university staff, as well as information related to their donations over time. This information was invaluable to the staff in the institution and had not been managed in some time. The work of this group gave the development officers and foundation management what they needed to identify new potential donors and interact knowledgably with existing donors (See Table 2).
Table 1: Respondent Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Years at Institution</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>&lt; 5</td>
<td>Overall management of the institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Vice President for University Advancement</td>
<td>&gt; 10</td>
<td>Management of University Foundation and Alumni Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Vice President for Student Affairs</td>
<td>&gt; 30</td>
<td>Management of all student-related activities on campus outside of academics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Administration</td>
<td>Dean, College of Arts</td>
<td>&gt; 10</td>
<td>Administrative management of the college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Administration</td>
<td>Dean, College of Business</td>
<td>&lt; 5</td>
<td>Administrative management of the college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Administration</td>
<td>Dean, College of Education</td>
<td>&gt; 10</td>
<td>Administrative management of the college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Administration</td>
<td>Dean, College of Health</td>
<td>&lt; 10</td>
<td>Administrative management of the college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Administration</td>
<td>Dean, College of Science</td>
<td>&gt; 10</td>
<td>Administrative management of the college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Staff</td>
<td>Executive Director, University Foundation</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>Administrative management of the University Foundation – split position with Vice President for University Advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Staff</td>
<td>Associate Director, Development</td>
<td>&lt; 5</td>
<td>Management of Fundraising, Marketing and Communications, Special Events and Annual Giving for the University Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Staff</td>
<td>Associate Director, Advancement Services</td>
<td>&lt; 5</td>
<td>Management of foundation database, gift and pledge processing and donor research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Research Questions and Coding for Meaning

As described in Chapter 3, the process of analysis in case study research consists of coding interview questions in three steps: open, axial and selective coding. In coding the interviews for this study, coding groups were identified that addressed the three
research questions. The first step in case study analysis is open coding, in which statements relevant to the research questions are identified and thematically coded. In the second step, axial coding, the researcher identifies common relationships among open codes. Selective coding models relationships among axial codes. Table 2 outlines linkages among research questions, open codes and axial codes that were identified as the analysis evolved. As coding reached saturation, the point at which no new information emerges during coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the axial categories were used in the selective coding process to create the central categories developing the narrative of emergent behavior in the institution.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Axial Codes</th>
<th>Open Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do decision-makers at the executive level of higher education administration understand and implement change strategies for the purpose of increased fundraising?</td>
<td>Administrative decision-making Creating institutional priorities Impact of change on fundraising Informational interaction</td>
<td>Decision-making Leadership opportunity Priorities Resources Fundraising opportunity Relationship building Interaction among Administrators Interaction with Deans Interaction with Foundation Information sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do individuals responsible for running the academic units of the institution deal with a change in fundraising structure and operationalize it to increase funding for their colleges?</td>
<td>Creating institutional priorities Impact of change on fundraising Informational interaction</td>
<td>Decision-making Leadership opportunity Fundraising opportunity Relationship building Data and information Information sharing Interaction across campus Interaction among Deans Interaction with Administration Interaction with Foundation Information sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do individuals in the fundraising organization adapt to the changes around them and make adjustments in implementation to increase success in fundraising?</td>
<td>Internal systems interaction Impact of change on fundraising Informational interaction</td>
<td>Decision-making Leadership opportunity Data and information Fundraising opportunity Interaction among Foundation staff Interaction across campus Interaction with Foundation Interaction with Deans Interaction with Administration Information sharing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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These code groupings provide insight into opportunities individuals in the organization had for leading the change to a centralized development model and working with others in the institution toward the goal of increased fundraising. There were 17 open codes developed in the process of coding, resulting in five axial codes. The research questions were associated with open-ended interview questions (See Appendix D) developed in to bridge all opportunities of interaction between the three groups being interviewed. The Selective coding process allowed the researcher to build the story of interaction and emergent leadership among the respondents at the institution.

**Code Groupings Related to Research Questions**

**Research Question #1.** Research question #1 was primarily concerned with decision-makers at the executive level of the university responsible for the process of determining a path forward and delivering that message to the institution. Open coding for this level of interaction consisted of broad decision-making, leadership by management, a focus on priorities and resources, as well as the necessity to raise funds and provide opportunity for interaction across the institution.

The axial level codes that addressed research question #1 were administrative decision-making, creating institutional priorities, the impact of change on fundraising and informational interaction (see Table 2). As the administration studied options and made decisions about the change to centralized fundraising, their primary goal was to increase fundraising, while implementing a set of priority fundraising initiatives. The informational interaction material relevant to the administrative function was largely about how the data related to fundraising was helping raise additional funds.
There were multiple open codes related to the axial code of administrative decision-making. These codes were, decision-making, leadership opportunity, fundraising opportunity, relationship building, interaction among administrators, interaction with deans and information sharing.

As the administration chose to move in the direction of centralized fundraising, the Vice President for University Advancement summarized the core theme of their decision making when he stated that “the rationale behind it was that it was an attempt to increase the amount of money that we were raising and make us a more efficient operation… and it was time to look at an alternative way of doing things in order to make it better.” This focus on priorities also became a focus on resources in the institution as the foundation took on more management of the development staff. The Associate Director for Development spoke of the prior development officer interaction as “they’d had issue with stewardship, they’d had issues with their interaction across campus with other development officers… they were not being managed for interaction across donors either.” This need to change structure, management and process was the impetus for decision-making, opening an opportunity for leadership among each group of actors in the change process.

Because increased funding was the ultimate goal of the change, the institution needed to build internal and external relationships to foster interaction within the university. A key element of this internal relationship building was evident in the interaction between the administrative staff and deans and also among the administration. The President of the University stated that the change to this centralized model “educated
people… who had not had any experience with fundraising”, providing consensus and priority around a common cause. As the process of centralized fundraising was established, the deans took on the role of “student” and learned what it meant to work within a structured development environment; something that had not been present in the previous de-centralized fundraising structure. The interaction they had with the administration and the foundation staff became a relationship building opportunity that fostered emergent behavior as they learned and shared information with each other.

Informational interaction, the sharing of data that would assist in identifying donors and maintaining relationships, as well as detailed the priorities of the institution was encouraged with the change to centralized fundraising. In some cases this interaction between the deans and administration was good and in some cases it was not. One dean shared that “it really did pit dean vs. dean”, in relation to the fact that the initiative-based fundraising model had them competing for a spot on the priority list and not working together. This was in some cases a detriment to information sharing among the deans, but in the case of the administration, this conflict made informational interaction even more crucial and also provided the control structure they were looking to attain. The Vice President for University Advancement articulated this control structure by observing that there were some “people on campus that were confused that they couldn’t walk down the hall to talk to a development officer assigned to their college – that they had to go through a little bit more formal structure to determine what was going to happen from a fundraising standpoint.” The formalized process was based in the data system used by the
foundation to manage relationships across priorities with donors and in better communications fostered by increased interaction.

According to the Vice President for University Advancement, “now, there is system (expectations, processes and procedures) in place where not only do they have clear leadership and clear expectations of what they’re supposed to do, but they’ve got other people, other development officers they learn from as well.” The leadership opportunity among the staff and the mid-level management of the Foundation created a profound impact on fundraising in the institution by providing leadership opportunity for all staff, increased fundraising and closed the circle on relationship building.”

**Research Question #2.** Research question #2 examined managers at the dean’s level of academic leadership in the institution. These individuals were the most adversely affected by the change in that they were losing their connection to the fundraising staff of the institution because the Development Officers were removed from the colleges. Open coding for this level of leadership in the institution consisted of decision-making, leadership by management, a focus on fundraising opportunities and relationship building (which they felt they were losing in the process). They also had to understand a new and different way of sharing information and of interacting within the academic leadership as well as with the institution at large. They had an opportunity, upon the implementation of the change, to centralized fundraising, to be a part of training the new staff in the Foundation.

At the axial level of coding for research question #2, the focus was on creating institutional priorities, the impact of change on fundraising and informational interaction
As the deans were adapting to the change to centralized fundraising, their primary goal was to maintain their connection with donors and find ways to meet their fundraising needs with the new structure.

The deans were also dealing with the initiative-based fundraising process created by the administration to focus institutional goals and resources. While some of the deans had priority initiatives on the list of top initiatives (those initiatives that were being actively managed by the foundation staff), some did not. One dean who had a priority on the list was upset that the interaction with the foundation took place with the Department Chair in her college, therefore they felt left out and not offered an opportunity for relationship building with donors. Another dean, with a high priority initiative stated, “We actually received more resources with the centralized model than we had before, so in our case, it was all hands on deck.” A third dean with no priority on the university priorities list was dejected that they not only did not have a development officer, they now were trying “to raise scholarship money, internship opportunities, but that doesn’t rise to the level of being on the Top 10 priority list”, thereby eliminating the possibility of fundraising for his college.

One highlight of the interaction across campus, specifically related to the deans and the impact of information interaction, was an invitation of all of the deans to be involved in the training of the development officers and foundation staff responsible for bringing in money for the institution. One dean stated, “You invited me to present to all of the staff on what was going on in the college… we could educate them so they could go out and educate everyone else. We had all been accustomed to working with one
development office who represented one college and now we had this diversified group, and they were all going out on our behalf.”

**Research question #3.** Research question #3 addressed mid-level management staff of the university foundation charged with implementing the change to centralized fundraising. These individuals were the most affected by the change in their daily operations and the processes and structures implemented to effect the change. Open codes for this research question consisted of decision-making, leadership opportunity, fundraising opportunities and relationship building, which was a significant part of their daily management strategy with the development officers. They also had to understand a new and different way of sharing information and interacting with academic leadership and the administration. They had daily responsibility for implementation of the change to centralized fundraising, including training the staff in the Foundation.

In the axial level of research question #3 coding, the focus was on understanding the internal systems interactions, the impact of change on fundraising and informational interaction (Table 2). As they were adapting to the change to centralized fundraising, their primary goal was to provide an opportunity for development officers to do their job successfully, thus increasing funds for the priority initiatives.

Interactions relevant to the foundation staff involved getting information to and from the rest of the institution for the purpose of pursuing additional funds. The Associate Director for Advancement Services shared “the decision made it easier for us to do our jobs… if we generated a lead (information being brought in from outside the university related a potential donor), we were able to work on that lead together and do
what we needed to do to prospect (determine feasibility of a gift) it appropriately. He also stated “we needed a good, centralized approach about how we interacted with everyone outside and inside the university community, but mainly, our donors.”

The foundation staff was primarily split into separate groups of mid-level management individuals responsible for implementing the change. This required significant internal systems interaction among these three to lead the staff in providing for the needs of the institution. The Associate Director for Advancement Services offered that he “made sure that those across campus had access to information because they no longer had access to a development officer.” This sharing of information across campus provided a bridge for those not having a dedicated development officer and became significantly important to those responsible for leading the change. As time passed, the deans adapted to the model and the internal foundation leaders found the best ways they could assist the institution with moving forward. It was the processes and procedures put in place by the management team of the foundation, and then effectively communicated across campus, that assisted with building trust and delivering information to those who needed it.

As the institution learned how to work with the new model and the individuals in the foundation, the impact on fundraising was evident. The success of the new model was driven by interaction with the deans and utilized the power of information to manage fundraising in the “knowledge era”. There was focus on stewardship, which allowed “the opportunity to get more from the donor”, and a focus on understanding more about the donors before the development officers visited which allowed for “the art and science of
fundraising.” As the Associate Director for Development stated, it allowed the development officers to think differently about relationship building and managing the stewardship side increased our ability to do fundraising.”

Emergent leadership in the foundation staff came in the form of interaction and adaptability based on information. As the Associate Director for Development added a stabilizing element to the change through interaction, the deans began to understand more about the centralized model and realized the change was going to be beneficial to them in the long term and it also helped them create ways of dealing with the change through structural changes in their colleges, i.e., External Relations Directors.

Propositions

As stated in Chapter 2, the following propositions will utilize the Lichtenstein and Plowman model of behaviors that co-generate conditions for new emergent order (2009, p.620). The first proposition argues that complexity and resultant change are driven by disequilibrium states. In this study, dis-equilibrium was created by the administration as it made the decision to change to the centralized fundraising model and to implement the model. The second proposition proposes that amplifying actions in a complex system foster novelty among the individuals involved in change. The third proposition discusses how sensemaking is created by recombining resources among the individuals and how leaders accepted “tags” and provided inspiration to others in the process of leadership. The fourth proposition explains how stabilizing feedback among actors in the change provided opportunity for building on successes and continuing a growth path of change
Proposition #1: The Dis-Equilibrium State

Proposition #1: By disrupting existing patterns in the institution with the mandate for change, a disequilibrium state was created that increased uncertainty and fostered the emergence of leadership in the institution.

The Executive Cabinet of the institution, and especially the President were interested in providing a successful plan for increased fundraising and priority setting for the institution. When the decision was made to move forward with the change to a centralized model, there was a significant disruption in the equilibrium of the institution. The President stated, “There had been some substantial leadership changes… I was a relatively new president and we were really, for the first time ever in the institution’s history, focused on fundraising.” This opportunity for change and more focused fundraising provided that shift in uncertainty in the institution, in turn opening up more opportunity for leadership to emerge.

The Vice President for University Advancement was named to the position in the spring of 2010 and was charged with creating the path toward greater fundraising success. Prior to that, he had been the Executive Director of the Alumni Association for 12 years, giving him intimate knowledge of the inner workings of the institution. Along with the responsibilities of the Vice President’s position, he was also named the Executive Director of the University Foundation, which brought with it the responsibility of managing the Development, Advancement Services and Financial Services areas of the Foundation.
As he was attempting to make sense of the fundraising situation at the institution, it became apparent that he must look for opportunities to focus the resources of the institution on specific priorities and centralize the fundraising operation. A proposal for change was created and the main theme was summed up in the following statement: “In the current structure, each college has one DO (development officer) responsible for all of the fundraising for the entire college. This has resulted in numerous fundraising campaigns and initiatives being launched with virtually none of them reaching a successful conclusion. This is primarily due to the fact that the campaigns have received little support from the ‘centralized’ fundraising staff of the Foundation and the fact that each college DO is pulled in too many directions for varied needs suggested by the programs and departments of the college.”

The President was excited about this change since it “required (the institution) to be much more strategic in (its) thinking and more analytical” and it helped her to “respond more effectively to fundraising opportunities.” The institutionally significant priorities were driven by the administration and focused the work of the university. In discussing the impact of the change on the institution as the development officers were centralized and priorities were established, the Vice President for University Advancement stated, “I was really concerned that I was going to hit some major roadblocks with the deans, because in effect, they were all losing an employee”, which was a clear example of how the institution was entering a dis-equilibrium state.

The deans in the institution were trying to grasp the implications of this change and most were concerned with how they were going to continue to do fundraising without
an individual development officer specifically assigned to their area. The rationale for the change was shared with the deans by the Vice President for University Advancement as described by one dean: “He came to talk to the deans and saying we have just misfired repeatedly, we’ve started a lot of projects, we don’t finish projects and the only way we’re going to finish is by prioritizing and concentrating our energies.” It was also shared by this dean that it was “Very powerful logic, very persuasive logic, and I can remember saying ‘I get that, but man, I really despair over the loss (of the development officer) to the college.’” Another dean said, “the decision was made to focus on priorities rather than allowing different aspects of the institution to target specific needs that they had, so it was more about the university focusing on priorities than other groups pursuing their own goals.”

Despite the fact there was a proposal document shared by the administration and one dean remembered a meeting where the Vice President for University Advancement shared the details of the change in fundraising structure, there was discontent on the part of the deans about how it was going to happen and how much input the deans would actually have in the process. One dean stated that “it appeared to me at least that the decision had already been made” and there was not an option for discussion. Another dean shared that it was his understanding that “there were some high profile projects that they needed funding for to support, and I think they wanted to put their efforts into making sure those high profile projects would have the private donor support that was needed.” This statement, coupled with the statement that “you could tell very quickly based on things that were already in place, what those priority projects would be” make a
case by the deans that the decision was not based as much on an opportunity to provide successful fundraising for the colleges as it was to focus all efforts on the priorities of the institution as determined by the Executive Cabinet.

A fourth dean, who was leading the college of one of the priority initiatives stated that “there was no consultation in the decision” from the administration and “for the size of the institution and the resources that they had to commit to fundraising, it was not a bad call… even though I disagreed with it, I can understand why they went with that, and if it had been communicated, I think everyone would have understood better – even if they had disagreed.” The Vice President for University Advancement shared that “there were some challenging questions posed, but to a dean, they all got on board with this new model.”

As the administration set about the change to increase fundraising, their decision and delivery process created a significant amount of dis-equilibrium. This perceived threat to the autonomy of the deans was met with resistance to change, but also pressured them to find ways to adapt to the new paradigm and how it might help them in the long run. This “pursuit of a new opportunity”(Lichtenstein and Plowman, 2009) offered individuals in the organization responsible for implementing the change to lead in ways that were not detailed in the proposal, but by creativity and leadership as the new system was executed.

Leadership emerged in the process of finding new ways to work together after the decision was made to centralize the staff. The deans understood why the change was mandated and as the foundation staff developed the plan for managing the new model, a
process of interaction based on information exchange and mutual benefit emerged. The dean responsible for a top priority in the institution shared ‘the School of Nursing actually tried to learn from what we were doing because they were expecting to be the next in line… the person who eventually became the dean once the school became its own college, actually consulted with me and said, ‘Ok, who are you doing this and what process did you follow?’” The process of moving away from the stability of the existing system to a new un-tested system of management provided “emergent change processes” in the interaction of the individuals.

**Proposition #2: Amplifying Actions**

Proposition #2: Novelty was encouraged by the administration in the institution by allowing experiments and fluctuations, encouraging rich interactions in a “relational space” and supporting collective actions, thereby amplifying actions that were beneficial to the organization.

Amplifying actions are defined as “when a complex adaptive system is in a Dis-equilibrium state it becomes highly sensitive to shifts in system dynamics, such that a small fluctuation in one part of the system can bring unanticipated and substantive changes to other parts of the system (Holland, 1975; Kauffman, 1993)” (as cited in Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009, p. 620). As the organizational shift was taking place, the deans and the foundation staff were working to understand and adapt to the changing environment. According to the Associate Director for Advancement Services, “the deans were trying figure out how to continue interacting with their donors” and the foundation staff was “working to adapt and implement all of their internal processes to the end of
better fundraising.” These adaptations in the system were a result of the dis-equilibrium state created by the organizational change and were amplified actions related to the fluctuations being caused by the change.

A significant leadership effort in this change management process was to provide the institution with priorities for fundraising and develop a unified strategy for developing donors. The process for developing this priority list was proposed by the Vice President for University Advancement in the proposal document that “in initiative-based fundraising, the University’s Executive Cabinet, with the endorsement of the Foundation Board of Directors, will determine a top ten list of priorities for the charitable giving at the University.” The President of the University stated that there was real value in having a “much-needed order, but with enough flexibility that if something really promising came up, we could move and allow it in.” And, as initiatives were brought to the table for consideration, the administration could give a better rationale for decision-making, by “rather than just saying ‘no’, I could say, ‘No, and here’s why’.”

The Vice President for Student Affairs offered this analysis of the opportunity to enhance institutional priorities. “We can’t be all things at once, and so given our limited donor base, given our limited staff, we’ve got to get more focused on institutional priorities and if we had not pulled those decentralized fundraisers into a centralized organization, we couldn’t have had that conversation. So to me, it greatly enhanced high-level administrator communication around institutional priorities and a better focus on private fundraising.” His position that high-level administrator communication was enhanced and fundraising was more successful has a direct link to the study of
complexity leadership and organizational success based on sharing of information and multiple opportunities for interaction, as well as the idea in Proposition #2 related to encouraging “rich interactions” among individuals in the institution, encouraging emergent leadership.

From the foundation staff perspective, the administration of the institution was giving them what they needed to be successful in their jobs. As the development officers were being centralized, the internal staff of the Foundation was determining the best way to operationalize the change to the fundraising model. The Associate Director for Development stated that even though it was an opportunity to set priorities for the institution, it was also a “better way to manage how the message was being delivered to the donors and potential donors. When they (the donors) saw that there were priority initiatives at the university, they realized that we had a focus… that intentional focus of what our priorities were allowed us to do some significant fundraising because not only could we share that message better, but then we could also target specific individuals.” That opportunity to target specific individuals then allowed “not only the interaction with the donors, but how resources were managed.” This collective process was an amplifying action for the foundation staff to interact with the deans in a way that would provide support for their needs, while meeting a general criterion of success for the administration in increased funding and long-term efficacy of institutional fundraising.

Novelty was encouraged by the administration in the institution by allowing experiments through the work of the foundation staff and their interaction with the deans. By offering stronger donor interaction based on campus-wide priorities and management
of those relationships by the development officers, the foundation staff and the deans had more and deeper engagement with donors, providing for increased funding at the institutional level. The foundation staff was allowed the chance to creatively deal with the process of implementation and look for rich interactions across campus and with donors that provided for collective action.

**Proposition #3: Recombination/Self-Organization**

Proposition #3: Sensemaking made way for correlation in the institution through language and symbols, resources were recombined and leaders accepted “tags” making self-organization a hallmark and success strategy of the change.

As the process was established and implemented, it became apparent to the Associate Director for Development that the foundation was giving the deans somewhere to go when assistance was needed, providing a resource and a sense of organization for them as they dealt with the change. “The deans understood they could come directly to us if they had issue with how something was going, or they needed to share information.”

One dean shared a recollection of the opportunity to train the Development and Foundation Staff on aspects of his college. “We had all been accustomed to working with one DO who represented one college, and now we had this diversified group, and they were all going out on our behalf, so I think that knowledge transfer to the development staff actually worked pretty well.” The two-way sharing of information proved to be a significant part of the success of the change, as the deans became more comfortable with not having their own development officers.
This comfort level on the part of the deans and the competency of the Foundation staff in implementing the processes of the centralized structure was a point at which the Associate Director for Development accepted a “tag”, directing “attention to things that are important… A change agent (the Associate Director for Development) becomes a tag when other people see that individual as symbolizing a message that is trying to be communicated through the system” (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009). As the opportunity presented itself for the Associate Director for Development to be the conduit of information dissemination in the institution, he became the central point of interaction across all of the leadership groups.

The use of common language within the institution like “Initiative-based Fundraising”, “Centralized Development” and the term used inside the foundation, “Moving toward normal” provided much needed common ground among the staff in the foundation and in their interaction with others in the institution. The deans and administration came to understand these terms and made an effort to use them when working with and within the system.

Emergent behavior in the interaction across the institution was found in the “coming together” around these common terms and the structure put in place as the foundation staff organized themselves around the mandates of the administration and the needs of the institution at large. Though they seemed to be at odds in some cases, the success of the larger priority fundraising initiatives brought on by the centralization of the development staff provided donors a chance to see the institution was stewarding their
resources in a more focused way and they were making positive change for the greater good.

The deans were also attempting to find additional ways of dealing with the change and attempted to create new positions in their colleges that would allow them to continue interacting with donors for their own purposes. This ran afoul of the directives of the administration and there was much conversation about how these positions would be structured. The compromise was that three deans hired External Relations Directors, allowing for continued interaction with alumni from each college, while providing information for the Foundation as it went about identifying and cultivating donors for the priorities. This recombination of resources and self-organization on the part of the colleges was emergent in reorganizing how the deans interacted with their constituents and continued to help the institution with its goal of increased fundraising.

**Proposition #4: Stabilizing Feedback**

Proposition #4: By integrating local constraints, the institution was able to provide stabilizing feedback during the process, providing an opportunity for organizational learning and emergent behavior among the administration and staff.

The foundation staff was the most affected by the change in structure and development model. The Associate Directors of Advancement Services and the Associate Director for Development were responsible for implementing the change, but also with adapting to the unknowns of the process, including interaction and challenges from the institution and external constituents, while enabling the staff members of the Foundation to complete the task of increased fundraising.
Managing the prospects through the donor lifecycle with a clear goal of receiving a donation for the targeted priority became a managed activity of the Foundation. Not only in terms of the development officer building and developing the relationship with the donor, but the fully integrated approach of data services providing solid research about the donors and gift processing and financial services being fully prepared to handle the gift receiving and stewardship of the donors. An Associate Director for Advancement Services offered that the Foundation staff had finally found “the appropriate harmony.”

The Associate Director for Development was intent on making sure the donors understood how the change at the institution would provide them an opportunity to support what they were passionate about. He stated “when they (the donors) saw that there were priority initiatives at the university, they realized that we had a focus, and we had an end in sight… that made the difference. That intentional focus… allowed us to do some significant fundraising.”

The structure and process of development was enhanced along the way by the use of data to build better relationships for the institution. “Relationship management is an art, but getting to the point where you have a relationship to manage is a science, so the database and knowledge piece was important to us” (Associate Director for Development). There was, according to the Associate Director for Development, “no concerted effort to understand what the donor’s potential was.” This level of data management had not been in place at the foundation in more than 15 years and the change to the centralized fundraising model offered the opportunity for the institution to
say to its donors, “This is where your money is going! (First Associate Director for Advancement Services)”

The support of the administration for the change to centralized fundraising and the creation of the centralized management position of the Associate Director for Development in the Foundation provided the opportunity for stabilizing feedback during the process of change. Stabilizing feedback occurs when “damping feedback slows the amplification and keeps the emergent change from spinning the system out of control” (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009). The interaction of the Associate Directors in the foundation, specifically that of the Associate Director of Development with the deans and administration, provided stability in the system as each group was dealing with the change. Organizational learning existed in the space between these actors through the dissemination of data and information, providing the opportunity for emergent leadership in their interaction.

Local constraints in the foundation were implemented by having a structure and process for information sharing among the deans and development officers. It was also managed by the priority-driven system supported by administration. While the deans were not all on board with losing their development officers, they were cognizant of the need to focus resources and provide the best opportunity for fundraising at the institution. Stabilizing feedback came in the form of success in increasing funds for the institution and organizational learning occurred related to that success as well. Once the administration, deans and foundation staff realized that the transition and implementation was successful for raising funds and completing projects, they began to understand how
the institution would be stronger under this new model. Leadership interaction at all levels was enhanced by positive outcomes and information flowed more freely among those affected by the change.

**Analysis of Word Frequency Clouds**

Word frequency clouds provide a visual representation of frequently occurring words in text-based data. The word clouds below will offer a triangulation method and an opportunity for richer data analysis than just narrative coding alone. Individuals in each leadership group were interviewed for this study and their interview transcripts were coded for meaning. The text-based data used to build the word clouds below was from the axial coding level of the process and the top 50 words over 5 characters long were developed by Nvivo into the figures you see here.
Administrators

Figure 3: Administrator Word Frequency Cloud

The administrators, based on the size of the words in the word cloud in Figure 3, and in the case study analysis of the interviews, were most interested in *fundraising* as opposed to *development*. It was discovered in both that the administration was primarily focused on raising money and not concerned about what happened within the individual colleges at the time of the change to centralized fundraising or the process of development.
As the change was taking place, there was a significant amount of work done on the part of the foundation staff to help the university understand the role the development process would have on increasing donations. It is important, based on what is shown in Figure 3, Figure 4 and Figure 5 to understand the difference between the terms fundraising and development. According to a 2003 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, fundraising and development are defined as “the time we spend cultivating or soliciting donors is fund raising [sic]; that spent aligning fund raising goals with institutional planning and maturation is development” (Drozdowski, 2003).

Administrators were over two times more likely to discuss fundraising than they were to discuss development when mentioning the change from a decentralized to the centralized model (See Appendix A). They were three times more likely to mention fundraising than *college*, highlighting the findings of the case study analysis that the administration was not concerned about the priorities of the college. This focus on raising money only, rather than figuring out a larger development strategy within the colleges, was definitely a concern for the deans as they dealt with the ramifications of the change to a centralized model.
By comparison, deans were less likely to mention fundraising than they were to mention college when discussing the change to centralized fundraising (See Figure 4). This is significant and is verified by comments from the deans in chapter 4 that they were more concerned about maintaining their autonomy in the college than figuring out how to increase fundraising for the institution, even if the priorities of the institution affected their college. Their interest in the process of development was even less significant by nearly half. It is interesting, however, that the words *relationship* and *relationships* are...
small by comparison to others since that was primary concern to the deans as they looked at alternative possibilities to losing their college-based development officers.

**Foundation Staff**

![Figure 5: Foundation Staff Word Frequency Cloud](image)

The staff in the foundation was uniquely aware of the need to work on the process of development as it related to all functions of the foundation. The word frequency cloud in Figure 5 shows nearly the same percentage coverage for the words development and fundraising. As a comparison to administration and deans, the foundation staff, also used the word college, but two and half times less than the words fundraising and
development. This is significant in light of the fact that the institutional priorities being worked on by the foundation were college-specific, and their daily interaction was with the college administrators, but their overall goal was increasing funds for the university. This external focus allowed for more interaction with donors and increased funding, but did cause some difficult interactions with deans and internal constituencies.

**Summary**

Each group of individuals responsible for leading the change to a centralized fundraising model at the study institution had their own desires for seeing the institution be successful. Though the deans did not feel they were involved in the decision making that concluded in centralizing the fundraising staff, they did understand the need to best utilize the resources of the institution toward the successful end of increased fundraising.

The administration realized their goal of setting priorities for the institution and provided the opportunity for the Foundation staff to accomplish the task of increased fundraising. While the administration’s ultimate goal was to raise more money, the process of leadership among the groups in the institution has provided a solid foundation for data based interaction with donors and better information for managing the resources of the institution.

The research questions for this study were developed as an opportunity to understand emergent leadership among the groups involved in the change to a centralized fundraising structure. The first question was primarily focused on the administration as they engaged in the management and administration a change that was the catalyst for emergent behavior at the institution. There was however, a relevant emergence of
relationship building among the administration and the institution in that each administrator was responsible for identifying opportunities and providing resources for the proposed changes. It also allowed them to utilize data and information in a different way to develop the priorities of the institution.

Research question #2 examined emergent behavior among managers at the deans level of academic leadership in the institution. As leadership emerged in this group of individuals, it came in the form of self-organization and coping strategies related to managing external relationships. They felt as if they had been left out of the decision entirely and were determining as many alternative options to deal with the change as possible. Not until they were engaged in the process of training the development staff and realized the success that was occurring for their respective areas and the institution did they get on board with the change and work to use the system to their best advantage.

The third research question was focused on emergent behavior in the staff of the Foundation. It was apparent in the analysis of interview data that this group of individuals had the most opportunity for emergent leadership in that they were given the autonomy and opportunity to implement the change by the administration. Though the control measure was put in place with a clear mandate for an end result of increased fundraising, they worked diligently among the individuals in the foundation and those around campus to understand the dynamics of interaction and utilize information to find the best possible way forward.

Their focus on effective use of information and process allowed them to interact differently with individuals on campus and externally. The donors realized the change
was giving them a comfort level with the stewardship of resources entrusted to the institution, resulting in additional funding. The internal use of information gave way to richer and deeper opportunities for interaction when Development officers visited donors and that would not have been possible had the Foundation leaders not found ways to increase the use of data and better relationships internally to provide better leadership and interaction across campus.

The propositions offered an analysis of the behaviors of emergent leadership in light of the information collected during the study and in relationship to the research questions at each level of leadership. The dis-equilibrium state was primarily created by the administration, as they set about the change as proposed and agreed upon among the executive cabinet of the institution. The institution was forced into a state of flux by the decision to centralize the development staff in the foundation and created an opportunity for emergent leadership among the deans and foundation staff as they dealt with the change to this model.

Throughout the interaction of the change, the administration did open the opportunity for emergent leadership among the deans and the foundation staff to create novelty in their approach to the change and all areas brought forth new and different ways of managing internal and external relationships for the continued efforts of fundraising. It was in these internal interactions in a “relational space” that collective action was realized and leadership emerged in the form of managing data across institutional needs and finding common ground around quality interaction with donors.
By bringing all of the development officers together in one place and under one manager, there was an opportunity for correlation among the group and the feeling that they were all on the same page, pulling in the same direction. The use of common phrases, such as *centralized fundraising* and *initiative-based fundraising* created a rallying cry for the development officers and the understanding that resources were being put aside to assure that it was going to be successful, created a common bond among those in the institution. As the Associate Director for Development became more enmeshed and engaged in the process of the change, he was afforded and accepted the opportunity to be a “tag” and bridge the gap between the deans and the administration and provided a pivot point for leadership emergence across the institution.

As the process occurred, the institution found itself in a more stable position due to the success of the change. But, more importantly, they had worked through the challenge of understanding the change by allowing emergent behavior among those responsible as they made sense of what was happening. Process and structure gave way to information, which was utilized to its fullest advantage and offered better and more interaction with donors.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This case study of complex systems leadership in higher education fundraising was completed to grow the knowledge of how individuals adapt to organizational change. A single, explanatory case study approach was used to understand the dynamics of interaction among the individuals in the study institution and develop examples of emergent leadership among those individuals. As an overview of the study, this chapter will review Complexity Leadership Theory (the theoretical model of the study and the lens through which we are viewing the interaction of individuals) and share a review of the study findings. It will conclude with practical knowledge in higher education fundraising change management and recommendations for further study in educational leadership.

Review of Theoretical Model and Study Purpose

Complexity Leadership Theory provided the theoretical framework and a lens through which we view the study by outlining the administrative, adapting and enabling functions of dynamics involving interaction among the individuals in the organization. The study group was split into three leadership areas: administration, academic deans and foundation staff, all of whom had specific roles in the implementation and operationalization of the change to centralized fundraising and were interviewed individually to understand how leadership emerged in the process.

Open, axial and selective coding was performed on the interview transcripts, as well as the proposal document developed by the Vice President for University
Advancement that provided a road map for implementation at the institution. The open codes were guided by the research questions through related open-ended research questions, and then categorized in the second round of axial coding. They assisted in answering the research questions while developing an understanding of the experiences of each leadership group. In the selective coding process, common themes among each group of interviewees were used to develop a storyline of interaction and adaptation to the change to centralized fundraising once coding reached saturation.

This final round of coding allowed the researcher to clearly understand and present a picture of the emergent leadership among each group of leaders and how they adapted to the change utilizing the propositions in Chapter 2. Word frequency clouds were also developed giving context to the information shared in the interviews and achieve triangulation of analysis.

Conclusions

Analysis of the interview data in light of research question #1 determined that administration received the result they had hoped in the change to centralized fundraising by gaining increased funding for the institution, but did not have the full support of the academic deans at the outset. Those deans that did not have priority initiatives on the university-wide list, in some cases, shut down communication with the administration and foundation and worked to find alternative routes to raise funds for their colleges. This action by the deans, as an answer to research question #2, led to emergent behavior when they found they could minimize the damage of losing their development officer by
creating external relations positions to fill the interaction gap with outside supporters of the college.

As discussed in proposition #1, a dis-equilibrium state was created by the administration as a way to begin the process of change at the institution. That dis-equilibrium state and the emergent behavior of the deans to counteract it, was provided in part by the amplifying actions (changes that lead to fluctuations in the system) described in proposition #2. This emergent behavior described in Proposition #1 and #2 was present among the deans and had implications for understanding the basis of research question 2 and how the deans found ways to adapt to the change and enable those around them to continue fundraising for their colleges.

Though the administration had set the path for change, they had not mandated any approach other than the institutional priority model, the centralized structure and the end result of increased funding. Individuals in the institution were given the opportunity to develop strategies for implementing the change and all those involved embraced novelty in their approach. As the deans met this challenge with emergent behavior in creating ways to get around the process of centralized fundraising and deal with the loss of human resources, the foundation staff was working hard to mitigate the unease of the institution as a whole and developing management strategies for the change within the foundation and across campus.

In response to research question #3 and how the foundation staff dealt with the change to centralized fundraising, it was found that this group was most affected by the change and more likely to create adaptive and enabling leadership options to support the
staff around them. As related in proposition #3 regarding the acceptance of becoming “a change agent”, the Associate Director for Development developed the process by which the deans and others in the institution applied for priority initiative status, worked with the other Associate Directors in the foundation to build the prospect management process and utilized the database and institutional knowledge to better understand the potential for fundraising among donors and deal with turnover in the staff. His interaction with the advancement and financial services areas of the foundation provided an opportunity for emergent leadership in the foundation and a point of leadership interaction across campus.

In relation to proposition #4, the foundation staff found that utilizing the information available from all areas of the institution provided an opportunity for organizational learning and emergent behavior. By understanding and utilizing data from development officer, dean and administrator interaction, they could better connect with and steward donors. They also found that the institutional priority system gave them much needed social capital with donors as they were helping them understand the change and how it would affect their ability to support the institution.

Overall, the move to centralized fundraising was successful in generating additional funds for the institution, but there were pockets of resistance among individuals who felt they were not a part of the decision-making process or were being left in the lurch because of lost staff members. By creating institutional priorities, the university was able to garner additional support from potential donors because there was
a heightened awareness that the university was being focused on what was best for itself in the long term.

The foundation staff would not have had the opportunity to lead the change in the institution had there not been a concerted effort by the administration to change how priorities were communicated to potential donors. This focusing of control, while providing a difficult challenge for the academic deans of the institution, provided an opportunity for the foundation staff to utilize valuable human resources and access to robust data systems for increased funding.

**Practical Knowledge for Higher Education Fundraising Change Management**

The process of change in any organization is always met with resistance. The study of complex system leadership offers an opportunity to show how that resistance can be beneficial and foster emergent behavior to deal with the change. This study has shed some light on how a process set to control outcomes can open opportunities for leadership to adapt and enable in ways that still meet the desired outcome, but build on internal conflicts by utilizing information and informal interaction to create new ways of dealing with change.

By setting the desired outcome, administration effectively drove the institution to change. By not setting the detailed path for the change and allowing emergent behavior among those responsible for implementation, opportunity for success was greatly enhanced. As is discussed in Complexity Leadership Theory, information from all those involved in the organization provides a basis for success and that was the case here in that knowledge and information was used to the best advantage of the institution.
When dealing with the internal constituencies in the institution, it is important to garner as much knowledge and support as possible prior to enacting the change. There are intricacies and politics involved in higher education that are not present in the business world related to shared governance and decision making that must be taken into account when positioning change. Deans are used to working together in the academy to affect change and provide opportunity for student success. When the message was delivered to them in this study, they felt as if they were not given enough opportunity to vet the proposal and were being left out of the opportunity to continue working with their donors. This was mitigated by time and success on the part of the new fundraising model in the institution, but not before the deans had made moves to figure out how to continue the work they were doing through creating External Relations positions in their colleges.

It is also important to understand how the interaction of the foundation staff with the rest of the institution not only affects the transfer of knowledge internally, but also the ability for the foundation and development officers to interact with donors and potential donors. Had it not been for utilization of the Raiser’s Edge database and its backend processing capability, donor relationship management and stewardship would have faltered losing donors for the institution. At that point, it would not have mattered how well the development officers were managed and by whom, as the donors would have been less likely to engage with them in the first place.

This relationship management activity on the part of the development officers, kept in close communication with the deans and administration provided greater access to data for institutional priority setting. It also offered an opportunity for the institution to
deliver a stronger message of institutional priorities to its external constituents. That, coupled with the success of a few of the initiatives had the effect of bringing more donors to the table and proving that the institution was on a path of change that would give donors a sense that their support of doing good at the institution.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

An interesting study that could be done at this institution, or one going through a similar change would be to understand at what level control structures offer the opportunity for emergent leadership. The researcher believes there was emergent leadership among the groups studied here based on how they dealt with the change and the limits of the task they were given to increase funding. However, at what point would those control measures have diminished the ability of the leaders in the organization to create new and different approaches to the problem? Would a more open arrangement for decision-making and sharing of data have made for a smoother transition for the deans? Would a hybrid system of management of the development officers offer the same results, if there had been resources to add central staff fundraisers specifically associated with the foundation?

Management in the modern business and education sectors seeks to control outcomes on a regular basis and we all work to adapt to the ever-changing environment around us. As leadership emerges in that adaptation, there are many reasons why fluctuations and behaviors occur. They are just naturally occurring phenomena that change the dynamics of our interaction with the environment and then there are decisions made by those who have responsibility for the organizations we work in on a daily basis.
As long as those management decisions are made and offered to us with opportunity for
creative behavior, then the complexities that come with leading through those changes
are most readily handled and individuals have the opportunity to emerge as leaders in the
organization.
APPENDICES
## Appendix A

Administrator Word Frequency Cloud Data Table

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Dean Word Frequency Cloud Data Table

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Appendix C

Foundation Staff Word Frequency Cloud Data Table

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Appendix D

Interview Questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – 2-10-15

1. What was happening in the institution at the time the decision was made to centralize the fundraising organization?

2. What caused the administration to consider the change in fundraising structure?

3. How was the message delivered by the administration and how was it implemented?

4. How did the decision to centralize the fundraising organization affect the interactions among administrators, the University Foundation and the Academic Deans of the institution?

5. What actions did you take in your area to deal with the change in fundraising structure?

6. How did you continue fundraising efforts under the new model? How did the change affect your ability to do fundraising?

7. What challenges did you face across campus when interacting with other groups related to the new centralized fundraising model?

8. How did individuals in the fundraising organization adapt to the centralization of the fundraising process?

9. How did knowledge management, in the form of the fundraising database and relationship management processes, influence the fundraising organization and its success after the change to a centralized structure?

10. How did the change to the centralized fundraising structure affect your daily interaction with/within the Foundation staff?

11. How would you describe the success of the organizational change?
Appendix E

Institutional Review Board Approved Consent Form

Information about Being in a Research Study
Clemson University

A Case Study of Complex Systems Leadership in Higher Education Fundraising

Description of the Study and Your Part in It

Dr. Russ Marion and Mike Bonnette are inviting you to take part in a research study. Dr. Marion is a Professor at Clemson University, Mike Bonnette is a student at Clemson University, running this study with the help of Dr. Marion. The purpose of this research is to understand the leadership implications of the fundraising structure management change process at the study institution.

Your part in the study will be to answer interview questions delivered by Mike Bonnette.

It will take you about an hour to participate in the interview and possibly brief follow-up questions by e-mail or phone to be in this study. The interviews will be audio recorded for transcription purposes.

Risks and Discomforts

There is a possibility of the loss of confidentiality. Participants will be asked to comment on managerial decision making that they may not have agreed with or thought was detrimental to the organization. There is a possibility that you could be singled out based on your comments. To minimize this possibility, we will remove all references to names and titles in the final report. The information collected will be reported in generalized categories and concepts that are applicable to the entire organization and not to any specific job function. Specific supporting quotes will be carefully reviewed to assure they cannot be associated with the source.

Possible Benefits

We do not know of any way you would benefit directly from taking part in this study, however the information shared and the analysis of the data by the researcher may provide new knowledge and insight into leadership development and management in this particular field of study.

Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy and confidentiality. We will not tell anybody outside of the research team that you were in this study or what information we collected about you in particular. Only Mike Bonnette, Dr. Russ Marion and one additional committee member will hold any electronic files related to this study on a password-protected computer. All recorded data will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study.

We might be required to share the information we collect from you with the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance and the federal Office for Human Research Protections. If this
happens, the information would only be used to find out if we ran this study properly and protected your rights in the study.

Choosing to Be in the Study

You do not have to be in this study. You may choose not to take part and you may choose to stop taking part at any time. You will not be punished in any way if you decide not to be in the study or to stop taking part in the study.

If you choose to stop taking part in this study, the information you have already provided will be used in a confidential manner.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Dr. Russ Marion at Clemson University at 864-656-5105.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-6460 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside of the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC’s toll-free number, 866-297-3071.
REFERENCES

http://doi.org/10.4135/9781452226613


