EXAMINING ADMISSION POLICY CHANGE AT A PRIVATE, TUITION-DEPENDENT, BACCALAUREATE INSTITUTION IN AN URBAN SETTING: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

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EXAMINING ADMISSION POLICY CHANGE AT A PRIVATE, TUITION-DEPENDENT, BACCALAUREATE INSTITUTION IN AN URBAN SETTING: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

by

Christopher B. Gage

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Educational Studies
(Educational Leadership & Higher Education)

Under the Supervision of Professor Brent D. Cejda

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2017
EXAMINING ADMISSION POLICY CHANGE AT A PRIVATE, TUITION-DEPENDENT, BACCAUREATE INSTITUTION IN AN URBAN SETTING: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

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University of Nebraska, 2017

Adviser: Brent D. Cejda

Abstract: Higher education in America is resilient; in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges, higher education manages to weather the storm of change, pressure, doubt, and criticism. Consider the following challenges: shifting demographics, escalating tuition, decreased state funding, retention and graduation rates, flat tuition revenue, competition for students, student preparedness, and student loan debt. Enrollment managers navigate these formidable impediments through innovative policy change, leadership and faithfulness to institutional mission (Eckel & Kezar, 2003b; Hector, 2016). Test-optional admission policies are changing the landscape of the enrollment management profession. Critics say some institutions adopt test-optional admissions to improve their national rankings by artificially inflating their average test scores. Proponents state they adopt such a policy to be more inclusive, to support institutional mission, to offer a holistic applicant review process, and cite high school GPA as a better predictor of college success (Mattern & Allen, 2016).

This dissertation studied change in the admission policy at a private, urban, tuition-dependent, baccalaureate institution. Specifically, I examined the case of Metropolitan University, a pseudonym, and why it changed to a test-optional admission policy. I used Kezar’s evolutionary change framework to examine why the change occurred, the degree of change, and how the change occurred.
Six themes emerged when answering the three research questions: *lead from mission, adaptive change in response to external forces, planned change – foster an environment where change can live, allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization, communication, and leadership*.

Why the enrollment management division made this change was grounded in institutional mission but brought about by external forces. What needed to change was minimal for Metropolitan University. The change was possible because leadership fostered an environment where change can live. The division consulted with outside experts and provided extensive staff training. Interviewees noted communication and leadership as key strategies in how the change occurred.

*Keywords:* strategic enrollment management, admission policy change, evolutionary change, test-optional admissions, tuition-dependent, enrollment challenges, demographic changes, SAT test, ACT test, college admissions
Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family.

To my wife, Rhonda, for her never-ending support, love, and understanding. This would never have happened without you—thank you—you never stopped believing. You are my life-partner, best friend and the best thing to ever happen to me. This dissertation is for you.

To my unbelievable and inspiring daughters: Lauren Marina and Claire Lillian. You made this possible with your love, thoughtful patience, kindness, courage, and inquisitive attempts to learn about what dad was studying. You both inspire me to work hard and achieve goals I never dreamed.

With love, Chris.
Acknowledgments

I first would like to acknowledge and thank my advisor, Dr. Brent Cejda, for his support, guidance, and thoughtful nudging to marshal me through this process. Because of him, what started as a simple question about test-optional admissions, turned into this finished dissertation because of his ability to ask probing questions about why this is important and what we can learn from this case. It is with sincere respect and gratitude that I acknowledge Dr. Cejda’s remarkable ability to recall, without hesitation, where I was in the process and provide the guidance and direction necessary to move me forward.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the members of my dissertation committee. I am most appreciative for the support and guidance from Dr. Brent Cejda, Dr. Barbara LaCost, Dr. Christina Yao, and Dr. Stephanie Wessels.

I would like to thank and acknowledge my support network of family, friends, and colleagues.

A special thank you to my multi-talented and generous mother-in-law, Connie, for her endless hours of support to our family and her willingness to take a break from retirement to proof, and re-proof—without judgement—every detail of this dissertation. Also to my handy and warm-hearted father-in-law, Raymond, for sharing his unmatched level of patience and kindness in all that he does with and for our family. He will, and often does, drop everything to help us with anything from home repairs to professional advice; always with a smile and a reminder to love, be happy and not take life too seriously. From the very moment this process began through the final chapter, Raymond and Connie never questioned my intent and were selflessly there for my wife and
daughters while I was studying, writing, traveling, and working so hard to reach my goal. You both helped make this possible and I share this achievement with you.

I would like to express gratitude to my parents: Marsha and David; my brothers: Peter, Matthew, and David; and their families for their prayers and loving support. While our distance makes the everyday knowledge of my efforts less visible, your expressed interest in my professional goals and achievements has meant a great deal to me. Thank you for encouraging and praying for me while I continue to set out on life’s big adventures. And thank you for giving me faith, confidence, and the wings to fly so I will not fear failure while I’m busy working hard to soar!

In closing, I am grateful to have been afforded the opportunity to pursue this degree and dissertation. The level of perseverance and vision required to reach this pinnacle, was at several points throughout this process, hard to find; however, my trust in God, passion for hard and meaningful work, and support of those I deeply love gave me the strength to go the distance. It is with a full heart that I move forward to the next chapter in my life.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

What prompts an institution of higher education to change? Are internal forces or external forces at the epicenter of a change process in a college or university? The system of higher education in the United States is facing unparalleled pressure. Prospective students and their families possess high expectations for employment outcomes, graduate school placement and a return on investment. Students expect an experience, not just an education. Competition amongst institutions has intensified with declining numbers of high school graduates and changing demographics among the prospective student population. Finances are a concern both for families and administrators running the hallowed halls of higher learning. The compounding effect of all the forces impacting higher education is change. What is misunderstood is whether change in higher education is born internally or initiated as a result of external forces. This dissertation seeks to understand why an admission policy change occurred in the enrollment management division at a comprehensive, tuition-dependent, private university in an urban setting.

Postsecondary administrators and enrollment management leaders at private, tuition-dependent, baccalaureate institutions are under pressure to change, adapt, and increase net revenue by recruiting, retaining, and graduating more students in an increasingly competitive and crowded marketplace (Tierney, 1999; Kezar & Eckel, 2002a; Couturier, 2006; Shapiro, 2009). In 2005, private, postsecondary institutions relied on tuition for 30 percent of total revenue (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). In a 2013 Moody’s Investors Service report, tuition and auxiliary revenues in 2011 accounted for
79 percent of total revenue for private universities (Bogaty, 2013). When Moody’s projected flat or lower enrollment for fall 2013, in comparison to the previous year, there was reason for concern (Bogaty, 2013). Pressures continue to mount for university leadership as they seek alternative revenue streams to buffet against increasing tuition discount rates and future enrollment concerns. There is widespread price sensitivity in the marketplace, strains on non-tuition revenue sources, and increased public scrutiny pertaining to the perceived value of a college degree (Bogaty, 2013). In a modest turn of events, the recent 2016 Moody’s higher education sector report projected two – three percent revenue growth (Sharma & Bogaty, 2015).

What should be clear to enrollment management leaders in higher education are the changing student demographics in the United States. By evaluating birthrates, enrollment management leaders can better understand how the future student pipeline is evolving. In 2011, high school graduation peaked in the United States with 3.4 million graduates (Prescott & Bransberger, 2012). Where in 1961 about seven percent of high school graduates were minority students, by 2018 that number will be closer to 45 percent (Mortenson, 2007).

A common consideration in the admissions decision process is the score a student achieves on the ACT or SAT exam. In the present climate of higher education, admission officers are questioning the importance of standardized tests in identifying best-fit applicants for their institutions. A number of studies have found high school GPA, when used as a singular indicator, offers the strongest correlation as an academic predictor of college grades and graduation rates (Geiser, 2002; Astin & Oseguera, 2005; Zwick & Sklar, 2005; Roderick, Nagaoka, & Allensworth, 2006; Geiser & Santelices,
Moreover, there is evidence of cultural bias in standardized tests that negatively impacts underrepresented, racial and ethnic minority student groups including women, low income, and first generation students (Zwick, 2004, 2007). For example, data from a recent study indicate that math SAT scores of female testers are one-third of a standard deviation below scores of male testers; score results for Latino students are two-thirds of a standard deviation below White students, and Black students are one standard deviation below scores of White student test takers (Rosner, 2012).

Further complicating the matter for this study is Metropolitan University’s urban setting and data showing evidence of Black and White student test score gaps being higher in more segregated cities (Card & Rothstein, 2007). Moreover, discrepant SAT and high school GPA performance demonstrates that females, lower socioeconomic, racial and ethnic minorities, and nonnative English speaking students are more likely to have higher high school GPAs relative to their SAT test score (Mattern, Shaw & Kobrin, 2011). Through the lens of these data, a number of colleges and universities have adopted test-optional admissions policies.

The aforementioned changing student demographics results in enrollment management challenges for all institutions that are tuition dependent. This is a critical consideration as the literature shows while the post-secondary enrollment gap between historically underrepresented minority students and White students has diminished over the last three decades, a completion gap still exists (Carey, 2004; Melguizo, 2006; Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010; Ross & Kena, 2012). In fact, while enrollment rates
between White and Black students and between White and Hispanic students have improved, there is ground to cover with minority student graduation gaps (Carey, 2004; Melguizo, 2006; Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010; Ross & Kena 2012). A recent report from The Education Trust shows in the decade 1998 – 2008, Black student enrollment at four-year postsecondary institutions increased 37 percent compared to 28 percent for all undergraduates (Nichols & Evans-Bell, 2017). However, the six-year graduation completion gap between Black and White students made only modest gains and is still 22 percent (Nichols & Evans-Bell, 2017).

In addition, as more students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds enter the prospective college-student queue, it is relevant to know that students with parents who did not attend college and who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to enroll in college, and those who do are less likely to persist (Ross & Kena, 2012). Lynch (2013) reports that first-generation college students make up 50 percent of all college students in the United States. Furthermore, historically underrepresented students from racial and ethnic minority populations are overrepresented in first generation college status.

This national changing demographic landscape points to the need to consider the adaptability and breadth required in enrollment management from student inquiry to admission, from matriculation to persistence, and, finally, to graduation and alumni status. The ability to change enrollment management processes is crucial for most higher education institutions because a significant portion of their revenue comes from students (Flynn, 2014).
Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine a change in the admission process of Metropolitan University, a pseudonym, from one that required a standardized test (ACT or SAT) to one where the standardized test was optional.

Background for Study Purpose

Figure 1.1 presents historic enrollment data for Metropolitan University. Beginning in 2000 the institution realized planned enrollment growth, reaching an all-time high of 25,398 in 2011. From that point, enrollment began to decline. This background points to the primary purpose of the study. Why did Metropolitan University decide to change to a test-optional admission policy?

Figure 1.1

*Metropolitan University Total Enrollment*

![Metropolitan University Total Enrollment Chart]

*Note: Historical Metropolitan University enrollment data* (Metropolitan University History of EMM, 2017).
Historical Background of College Admission Testing

In 1914, Frederick Kelly invented the first multiple-choice test (Davidson, 2011). The first administration of the SAT test, designed with the intent to measure a college applicant’s intellect, took place in 1926 (Gambino, 2013). What is unfortunate, however, is that such tests only evaluate a quarter of the knowledge students learn in school (Davidson, 2011). Until the SAT was introduced in 1926, enrollment in institutions of higher learning was in large part a measure of class and social standing, and the argument for standardized testing was to allow for increased opportunities to potential students with cognitive ability who otherwise would not be considered for admission to the hallowed halls of higher education (Lemann, 2000). However, prior to the 1926 partnership between the SAT and higher education, in 1900 a group of twelve colleges in the Northeast joined together to form the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) (Syverson, 2007). The impetus for CEEBs formation was the growing concern surrounding the proliferation of institutional-specific entrance exams (Syverson, 2007).

Shortly after the SAT, the ACT entered the marketplace, and, by the late 1950s, more than half a million high school students were tested annually (Belasco, Rosinger, & Hearn, 2014). While the initial purpose of the ACT was to serve Midwestern colleges and universities, the entrance exam expanded at a rapid pace and is accepted at nearly every college or university in the United States (Syverson, 2007). By 1986, 1.7 million college-bound high school students took the ACT or SAT test (Lewin, 2013). By 2005, nearly 3 million college-bound students (1.4 MM SAT test takers and 1.2 MM ACT test takers) sat for at least one of the aforementioned entrance exams (Syverson, 2007). In 2012, for the first time in college testing history, the number of ACT tests (1,666,017)
surpassed the number of SAT test takers (1,664,479) (Lewin, 2013). After nearly one century of testing, a system designed to filter potential students based on academic promise and ability is now used by most four-year colleges and universities as at least one factor in the admission decision process (Belasco et al., 2014).

However, the use of ACT and SAT testing for admission purposes is not without criticism. Multiple studies have been published demonstrating mixed results on the predictive validity of future collegiate success based on the SAT (Crouse & Trusheim, 1988; Geiser, 2002; Rothstein, 2004; Sackett, Kuncel, Beatty, Rigdon, Shen, & Kiger, 2012; Shaw, Kobrin, Patterson, & Mattern, 2012). In addition, researchers across disciplines have published results on the positive correlation between socioeconomic status and standardized test score performance (Fischer, Hout, Jankowski, Lucas, Swidler, & Voss, 1996; Camara & Schmidt, 1999; Zwick, 2002; Freedle, 2003; Blau, Moller, & Jones, 2004; Syverson, 2007). The results of such studies, growing emphasis on changing student demographics in the United States, and increased attention on student tuition revenue has prompted institutions of higher education across the United States to deemphasize, or drop altogether, the ACT or SAT testing requirement for admissions. In fact, over 900 post-secondary institutions and 195 “top tier” national liberal arts and comprehensive universities have dropped or now deemphasize the ACT or SAT in the admission process (FairTest, 2015).

In the most comprehensive test-optional admission study to date, Hiss and Franks (2014) examined over 123,000 students from 33 different institutions, both public and private, over a three-year period. In this research sample, 30 percent of the participants, roughly 37,000 students, were non-submitters, or test-optional applicants. The report
found few significant differences between submitters and non-submitters of testing when observing cumulative GPA and graduation rates despite significant differences in their ACT or SAT test scores. Specifically, earned cumulative GPAs were only .05 lower than test score submitters, 2.83 versus 2.88, and the difference in graduation rate was only .6 percent (Hiss & Franks, 2014). Hiss and Franks (2014), report that college and university GPA closely track high school GPA despite wide variations in test scores. Of particular interest to baccalaureate colleges considering the changing student demographics is the conclusion that test-optional admission policies appear to support increases in underrepresented ethnic and racial minority student applications and the finding that test-optional institutions have realized a more diverse student population (Hiss & Franks, 2014; Mulugetta, 2015). In addition, supporters of test-optional admission cite ACT and SAT test bias along with college access and diversity as reasons to move forward with such policy adoption (Mattern et al., 2011).

The test-optional movement itself, however, is not without controversy. While some institutions, as uncovered in this case study, adopt a test-optional policy because it is consistent with institutional mission; some higher education leaders have publically criticized adopters of test-optional policies as a manner of gaming their selectivity to improve their national ranking and student profile (Ehrenberg, 2002; Diver, 2006; Syverson, 2007; Hoover, 2010). Furthermore, some institutions, as also found in this case study, adopt a test-optional admission policy to improve the diversity of their admission pool (Syverson, 2007; Epstein, 2009; Espenshade & Chung, 2012; Mulugetta, 2015; Simon, 2015).
In response to such criticisms, when moving to a test-optional admission policy, some institutions have supplanted the ACT or SAT test score requirement with a non-cognitive assessment. For example, the enrollment division at Oregon State University (OSU) operates a sophisticated test-optional, non-cognitive assessment admission policy (OSU, 2008). Known as the Insight Resume and based on William Sedlacek’s non-cognitive variables, OSU’s admission application employs six short-answer questions that cover Sedlacek’s eight variables (Sedlacek, 2004; Sedlacek, 2011). The OSU data show that non-cognitive scores positively correlate with retention, increased diversity in the applicant pool, and higher applicant GPA (Sedlacek, 2004; Sedlacek, 2011). Oregon State University, however, differs from this study at hand. First and foremost, OSU is a public, land-grant, sea-grant, space-grant, and sun-grant university. While total student enrollment levels are similar between OSU and Metropolitan University, OSU is located in the Pacific Northwest in a city of 55,000 residents in a rural and significantly less ethnically diverse location compared to Metropolitan University according to 2010 census-level demographic data (Census, 2010). It is critical to consider this data given the context of changing high school demographics and the fact that Metropolitan University is an urban university located in one of the largest and most diverse cities in the United States.

On a national level, an additional example demonstrating the success of non-cognitive assessments in place of ACT or SAT requirements is the Gates Millennium Scholars program. This program utilizes a scoring system in which 80 percent of the applicant analysis is based on non-cognitive variables. Of more than 11,000 Gates
Scholars attending over 1,450 different colleges and universities, students have a 97 percent first-year retention rate and 78 percent five-year graduation rate (Sedlacek, 2010).

To summarize the background and purpose of this study, while standardized college admission tests such as the ACT and SAT have been in place for close to 100 years, their validity and purpose in the college admission process has come under recent scrutiny. As enrollment management leaders look to their prospective student pipeline, they observe a dramatic shift compared to the historic student population. Changing student demographics and complex pressures facing higher education have put enrollment management leaders in a position to think critically about how they will maintain or increase their enrollments and tuition revenue. Given the questions in using ACT and SAT test score performance in admissions decisions, enrollment management leaders are evaluating new strategies such as test-optional admissions.

**Conceptual Framework**

There are significant outside forces that influence change in higher education; colleges and universities sometimes fail to adapt to changes in the marketplace (Keller, 1983). Organizational adaptation is a process by which organizations modify or alter their process based on the external environment. This form of adaptation, however, is not necessarily reactive, rather it can be proactive in nature. Organizational adaptation, whether proactive or reactive, however, is not planned organizational change. Organizational development is change brought about by the external environment (Cameron, 1984). In this study, planned organizational change refers to the institutional admission policy change to test-optional in order to address enrollment declines.

According to Kezar (2001), given the organizational structure, higher education is best
viewed through the lens of cultural, political, and social/cognition change. However, at present, institutions of higher education must adapt to the changing student demographic and environmental conditions (Hartley, 2003; Hartley & Schall, 2005). The adaptation will focus on the change within the institution, e.g., how did this policy change impact the process and employees? How did the actions and decisions of key policy-makers at the institution impact other organizational employees (Cameron, 1984)?

Kezar’s model of evolutionary change uses the lens of external and internal force interplay and the environment to understand why change is occurring, what is changing, how change occurs and what the intended outcomes are of such change (Kezar, 2001; Baker & Baldwin, 2014). Kezar’s model of evolutionary change has also been utilized in a recent study of organizational change to understand how and why institutions change, what makes them susceptible to change, and what forces promote the change (Baker & Baldwin, 2014). This study, however, differs with a rather narrow focus on change specific to an enrollment management division at a comprehensive baccalaureate university.

In her research, Kezar (2001) noted that all types of higher education institutions experience and manage internal and external forces prompting colleges to change. Kezar’s research findings are not the only findings supporting institutional change over time. The literature is rich with evidence supporting the need and construct for higher educational change (Gumport, 2000; Kezar, 2001; Morphew, 2002; Hartley, 2003; Hartley & Schall, 2005). As discovered, societal values can change over time, and institutions of higher education can be reactionary. Kezar’s research notes six specific types of change: evolutionary/biological, teleological, lifecycle, dialectical/political,
cultural, and social/cognitive (Kezar, 2001). Even when at their core, some institutional values and missions remain intact, colleges and universities must adapt to external forces such as changing demographics (Hartley, 2003; Hartley & Schall, 2005).

Kezar uncovered two primary sources for institutional change as internal and external forces (Kezar, 2001; Baker & Baldwin, 2014). Kezar also explains the timing, scale, and focus of change to uncover the what of change (Kezar, 2001; Baker & Baldwin, 2014). Specifically, change can be slow, planned or unplanned change. It can be linear and purposeful, or a natural progression resulting from intensive training. On the one hand, first-order change happens at the individual or group level and does not impact an organization at the core level (Levy & Merry, 1986; Kezar, 2001). Second-order change, on the other hand, is transformational and can impact an organization’s mission, values, or structure. Second-order change is typically quick and revolutionary as it impacts the mission, culture, and structure of the organization leading it on a new path (Levy & Merry, 1986).

Evolutionary change, first-order timing, is more natural and occurs over a longer period of time (Levy & Merry, 1986; Kezar 2001). The scale of change refers to the breadth and depth of change. Is it industry-wide or specific to one entity, group or division? The focus of change points to how the organization is impacted and is represented by three foci: structure (organizational), process (employee interaction), and attitude (how employees feel) (Bergquist, 1992; Kezar, 2001). Moreover, Kezar’s theoretical framework describes the institutional response to change as either adaptive or generative, planned or managed, proactive or reactive, and active or static (Kezar, 2001; Baker & Baldwin, 2014). In this framework, adaptive change is typically one-time
change resulting from external forces (Kezar, 2001). Whereas generative is ongoing change and part of the institutional fabric (Kezar, 2001). Planned change is a result of institutional member’s conscious effort, while unplanned change is more evolutionary (Kezar, 2001). Proactive change occurs prior to a situation, dilemma or pressure, while reactive change happens because of a situation, dilemma, or pressure (Kezar, 2001). Finally, active change is when organization members are involved in the process, while static change results from few members implementing the change (Kezar, 2001).

To summarize, I used Kezar’s theoretical framework of evolutionary change to understand why, to what degree, and how Metropolitan University changed their admission policy. Specifically, given Kezar’s (2001) framework, I sought to understand Metropolitan University’s admission policy change through the lens of the following questions advanced by Kezar’s change research:

1. The forces and sources to understand the why of change;
2. First- or second-order degree of change;
3. Adaptive/generative, proactive/reactive, active/static, and planned/unplanned referring to the how of change (p. 23).

Central Research Question

This study was guided by research questions that seek to understand the case of Metropolitan University and why it changed to a test-optional admission policy. In this qualitative, bounded, instrumental case study, I examined why, to what degree, and how the admission policy change occurred in Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division, and to be specific, given Kezar’s aforementioned framework, I examined the following research questions:
1. Why did the enrollment management division change to a test-optional admission policy?
   a. What were the forces and sources leading to this change?
2. Was the degree of change in the test-optional admission policy first- or second order for Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division?
   a. First-order change would not result in changing the division core.
   Second-order change would result in revising the mission, structure or major processes of the enrollment management division.
3. How did the change to test-optional admissions occur?
   a. Was this policy change adaptive/generative, planned/unplanned, proactive/reactive, or active/static?

**Research Methodology and Data Gathering**

This bounded, instrumental case study is qualitative in nature. I sought to understand, through multiple interviews, the purpose behind change and the results impacting the organization thereafter. Given Kezar’s framework for change, and higher education institutions’ reactive nature to outside forces, this qualitative case study approach allowed me to explore, through deep and meaningful interviews, the admission policy change in great detail. Stake (1995) implored the reader to understand the importance of designing good interview questions. In considering the research questions for a bounded, instrumental case study, a researcher must remember that the case is the dominant factor in the study.

With an instrumental case study, the issues of the case are central to the research questions to gain a better understand of something else (Stake, 1995). A considerable
amount of time needs to be dedicated to the purpose of getting the research questions right. Researchers are instructed to consider a set of 10 to 20 questions during the early stages and then pare the questions down to two or three allowing the researcher to design the observations, interviews, and document review (Stake, 1995). The researcher should also know in advance of the case study that the research will move in unexpected directions, that the process and focus changes, and as a result, should be fluid and flexible based on newly discovered data (Stake, 1995). With this information in mind, the researcher needs a set, but also flexible, list of questions as the best questions will evolve during the study. Stake advocates that coding should be used to classify the data collected during interviews due to the copious amount of data. This step assists retrieval of the data at a later point during analysis (Stake, 1995).

Qualitative research seeks to understand the human experience. Researchers will employ thick description to convey this human experience to the reader (Stake, 1995). While a quantitative researcher seeks to inform via generalizable data interpreted from measured variables and data points, the qualitative researcher seeks to inform via the interpretation of events. This ongoing role of interpretation for the researcher is most prominent in qualitative case study (Stake, 1995).

Because of the subjective and interpretative nature of qualitative case study research, the practice comes with considerable criticism from members of the scientific community. The process is slow, interpretive, subjective, costly, and the societal impact of qualitative case study can be minimal (Stake, 1995). As such, an effective qualitative case study is holistic, empirical, interpretive, empathetic, verified through triangulation, nonhierarchical, and sensitive to human exploitation (Stake, 1995).
**Definition of Terms**

For this case study, there are specific terms to understand that give meaning to the study.

*ACT* – at the point of formation in 1959, this was referred to as the American College Test. Today, the ACT organization refers to this test as the ACT. It is a standardized assessment test similar in nature to The College Board SAT (Zwick, 2002).

*Active change* – in the change literature, this refers to change requiring the involvement of many organizational members (Kezar, 2001).

*Adaptive change* – in the change literature, this refers to a one-time response to the external environment (Kezar, 2001).

*Admission committee* – a group of admission officers who evaluate applicant files after a reader reviews and makes a recommendation.

*Admission officers* – professionals in the enrollment management industry who work to advise prospective students on the college admission process.

*Axial Coding* – making connections between qualitative data findings into categories where themes can emerge (Pandit, 1996).

*Changing demographics* – shifting racial and ethnic composition of future American college and university students.

*Cultural models of change process theory* – as a result of deviations in the human environment change occurs naturally. Under this theory, change is constant and the process is slow and long-term (Morgan, 1986; Kezar, 2001).
**Dialectical/Political models of change process theory** – as a result of conflicting ideologies or belief systems, change occurs under this theory through the lens of political models. This is naturally occurring change resulting from human interaction (Morgan, 1986; Kezar, 2001; Bolman & Deal 2003).

**Enrollment Management** – the administrative function at a college or university employed with recruiting, processing, admitting, and enrolling students at an institution. An enrollment management division can be comprised of admission, financial aid, student orientation, retention, registration, and student success functions.

**Evolutionary/Biological models of change process theory** – notes that change is mainly a result of external forces, variables, and the environment in which the organization functions—unplanned change (Morgan 1986; Kezar, 2001).

**First Cycle coding** – a method of coding used after the initial data gathering that assigns data into sizeable groups (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

**First-order change** – in the change literature, this is associated with theoretical perspective of change. First-order change typically does not result in changing the core of an organization (Levy & Merry, 1986; Kezar, 2001).

**Forces and sources of change** – in the change literature, these can be external or internal, and refer to the why of change (Kezar, 2001).

**Generative change** – in the change literature, this refers to ongoing change (Kezar, 2001).
In Vivo Coding – the use of participants’/interviewees own words in the data findings as codes. This method is particularly helpful for novice qualitative researchers (Miles et al., 2014).

Instrumental case study – this is the study of a particular case in order to gain a general understanding (Stake, 1995).

Lifecycle models of change process theory – evolved from child development studies and focus on organizational growth, maturity, and decline. Under this theory, change occurs as a result of human or organizational growth and development (Levy & Merry, 1986; Kezar, 2001).

Non-cognitive assessments – an assessment tool some test-optional institutions use in place of the ACT or SAT. These tools are used to assess whether an applicant should be admitted to a college or university (Sedlacek, 2004; 2010; 2011).

Open Coding – A method of labeling and grouping data findings from qualitative sources (Pandit, 1996).

Planned change – in the change literature, this refers to change that is deliberately shaped by the organization or its leaders (Kezar, 2001).

Proactive change – in the change literature, this refers to change that happens before a crisis (Kezar, 2001).

Reactive change – in the change literature, this refers to change that happens after a crisis (Kezar, 2001).
Reader – an admission professional trained in the process of reading a prospective student admission application. Most readers make a recommendation for admission based on criteria valued by their respective institution.

SAT – introduced by The College Board in 1926, SAT was referred to as the Scholastic Aptitude Test. Today, The College Board refers to this test as the SAT. It is a standardized assessment test similar in nature to the ACT (Zwick, 2002).

Second-order change – in the change literature, this refers to transformational change (Levy & Merry, 1986; Kezar, 2001).

Second Cycle coding – data analysis that uses the grouped records from First Cycle coding (Miles et al., 2014).

Social/cognitive models of change process theory – this is change as a result of mental learning and mental models. Under this theory, change occurs because subjects understand the need to learn, grow, and adapt their behavior (Kezar, 2001).

Static change – in the change literature, this refers to change as a result of a few organizational members (Kezar, 2001).

Teleological models of change process theory – planned change models that assume organizations are purposeful and adaptive. Leaders, change agents, and other key stakeholders recognize the need for change (Carr, Hard, & Trahant, 1996; Kezar, 2001; Carnall, 2007).

Test-optional – the option for a high school student to apply for admission to a college or university without having to provide ACT or SAT test score results.
*Tuition-dependent* – a college or university that relies on net tuition as the primary revenue source for operations.

**Assumptions**

Assumptions are general and set the framework for why Metropolitan University changed to a test-optional admission policy. Assuming the interview participants will answer the questions honestly, with a well-constructed interview protocol, I should be able to uncover answers and findings to the central research questions. To encourage and facilitate honest dialogue, I reminded the interview participants about confidentiality and mentioned that pseudonyms would be used and data destroyed after a certain time frame. Furthermore, with substantive research, a thorough literature review, adequate data analysis and validation, the study findings will offer answers to the central research question.

**Delimitations**

This case study has several delimitations. Only one institution that changed to a test-optional admission policy in the last five years was examined. The case selected was a four-year, private baccalaureate institution that previously relied on ACT or SAT tests as a tool in the admission process. A tuition-dependent institution in a racially diverse, urban setting was selected as the case studied. Participants in the study included only the senior leadership members in the enrollment management division.

**Limitations**

This study has two primary limitations and one secondary limitation to mention. First, even though discussed in this research, the intent of this study is not to discredit the potential validity of the ACT or SAT, rather, it is to understand admission policy change
in the enrollment management division of a private, urban, tuition-dependent, baccalaureate institution. Second, as a qualitative, instrumental case study, the findings are not generalizable to a broad population (Stake, 1995). Generalizability is always a primary concern with case study research (Stake, 1995; Merriam, 2009). The beneficial research findings are limited and not generalizable as a bounded, instrumental, case study (Stake, 1995). This case study focused only on Kezar’s evolutionary change framework given its emphasis on the interaction between the organization and the environment (Kezar, 2001).

**Researcher Bias**

In a qualitative research study, it is critical to account for researcher bias (Merriam, 2009). As a former member of the enrollment management community and proponent of test-optional admissions, I must bracket my bias during the participant interviews and remain objective in my conversations with interviewees. This case study is critical to my own academic research interests. Furthermore, my present institution of employment is evaluating whether to implement a test-optional admission policy. As a former member of the enrollment management profession, I seek to provide understanding and context to why the change occurred in the enrollment management division at a private, urban, tuition-dependent, baccalaureate institution. As an objective interviewer, by monitoring my bias, my intent with this research is to inform members of the enrollment management profession about admission policy change. The tenor, pace, and method of each respective interview was always professional. At the outset of each interview, I consciously approached the conversation with a flexible and objective position. I reflected on this process, making certain my personal belief in the advantages
or disadvantages of a test-optional admission policy were not openly present. Although this was a challenge, it is one I accepted in pursuit of this understanding.

**Significance of the Study**

Increased cost, price sensitivity, and the commodification of higher education calls for a clear understanding of the internal and external forces that bring about change at a college or university. Changing demographics and a decreasing high school graduation population requires colleges and universities relying on traditional student enrollment to pay particular attention to the enrollment management function and budget forecasting. The downward pressure on institutional budgets and call for increased revenue streams amid declining high school graduates leaves a narrow window of error in the enrollment management function.

Select stakeholders can benefit from this research. Enrollment management leaders and higher education administrators may want to know the steps a peer took in changing to a test-optional admission policy. Enrollment management professionals may want to know how the change occurred, why it occurred, and the circumstances leading to the change. This research may afford enrollment management professionals the opportunity to learn from potential mistakes made by a peer. They can also learn how to best position their respective department and campus when adopting a test-optional admission policy.

Policy-makers can gain a better understanding of why change occurs in an enrollment management division of a private, urban, tuition-dependent, baccalaureate institution. This research allows policy-makers to understand the external and internal factors leading an enrollment management division of a private, urban, tuition-dependent,
baccalaureate university to change its admission policy to test-optional. Higher education finance officers who manage budgets and analyze revenue sources may find the results of this study of critical importance given the interplay of internal and external forces resulting in policy change. Members of the academic community, parents, and secondary school officials can gain new knowledge on the implementation process of a test-optional admission policy and how non-cognitive variables can inform admission officers during the applicant review stage for college admission.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to understand why the enrollment management division at a private, urban, tuition-dependent, baccalaureate institution changed their admission policy to test-optional. In an effort to understand this change through the lens of Kezar’s theoretical framework, I conducted a qualitative study of admission officers at a private, tuition-dependent, baccalaureate institution in an urban setting. I examined the findings for fit in Kezar’s evolutionary change theory (2001) and the role that external and internal forces play in impacting change framed this qualitative study. In exact terms, I sought to understand the case of Metropolitan University and why it changed to a test-optional admission policy.

Organization of the Study

Chapter one offers a brief overview of the proposed study. Chapter two reviews the relevant literature surrounding evolutionary change in higher education and the use of ACT and SAT tests in the college admission process. Chapter three reviews the case study methodology with particular attention to case strategy, data collection, and analysis. Chapter four summarizes the research findings and gives an explanation of the themes
that emerged from the interviews. Chapter five concludes the dissertation with a discussion and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief history of ACT and SAT tests in college admissions, followed by the test-optional movement in higher education. Chapter two reviews the theoretical framework literature of change in higher education, how change occurs, and why it occurs. A brief literature review on enrollment management in higher education is also included. The enrollment management section is followed by an abbreviated financial pressures on enrollment management section. This is followed by a review of the organizational change in higher education literature. Chapter two concludes with the Kezar’s evolutionary change framework literature review as the purpose of this study is to examine why change occurred in an enrollment management division of a private, urban, tuition-dependent, baccalaureate institution. Findings from this case study may add to the literature surrounding change in higher education through the lens of Kezar’s (2001) evolutionary change framework. There is a brief summary at the close of chapter two leading into chapter three—the case study methodology.

American colleges and universities are not immune to change as George Keller noted in 2001. Over time, postsecondary institutions altered academic programs, admission policies, faculty hiring, and campus activities to accommodate immigrants (Keller, 2001). Multiculturalism and diversity initiatives brought to the fore programs in Latino or Chicano, Chinese, Japanese, and sub-Saharan Africa studies (Keller, 2001). The Academy will continue to be challenged to meet the new and permanent demographic change with the forthcoming students.
ACT and SAT Testing in College Admissions

Prior to 1900, postsecondary institutions in the United States utilized institution-specific entrance exams that varied in scope and content. In 1900, 12 colleges developed the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) (Zwick, 2002). In 1926, the scholastic aptitude test (SAT) was developed in part by questions adopted from the Army’s Alpha tests used during World War I (Zwick, 2002).

The development of the SAT in 1926 sought to formalize the admission test process for willing institutions given the unstructured nature of college admission tests around the country. The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, also known as the G.I. Bill, allowed for rapid growth and expansion in the American higher education system as thousands of returning veterans enrolled in college with the use of the SAT (Zwick, 2002).

In 1959, the SAT met its first competitor, the ACT. Created in Iowa City by Iowa Testing Program officials, the ACT sought to expand testing opportunities to a broader geographic constituency, as the SAT heavily concentrated its efforts in the Northeast (Zwick, 2002). Critics of the ACT and SAT have, over many years, expressed concern about test bias toward race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Lemann, 2000; Zwick, 2002; Zwick, 2007).

Even though the SAT test has been used in college admissions for nearly one century, it is not without controversy. Documented research show that SAT test results combined with high school GPA is a better predictor than high school GPA alone, critics and advocates both comment on the predictive nature, or lack thereof, the SAT test score can demonstrate for college-bound students (Zwick, 2007; Sackett et al., 2012; Shaw et
al., 2012). Countervailing research attempted to discredit the predictive value of the SAT test in college success (Crouse & Trusheim, 1988; Geiser, 2002; Rothstein 2004).

Zwick’s 2007 study, *College Admission Testing*, commissioned by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), was based on a 1985 data set of 45,000 students from 45 colleges. Zwick conducted a regression analysis using only high school GPA as a predictor for college grades and it yielded only a moderately high correlation of .39. A regression analysis using only the SAT as a predictor yielded a slightly lower correlation of .36. However, when the study combined high school GPA and SAT, the correlation increased to .48. In essence, the SAT amplified the correlation .09 when combined with the high school GPA (Zwick, 2007). This is relevant to note as the data show that GPA alone to be a slightly better predictor of college success compared to the SAT alone (Zwick, 2007).

The Korbin et al. (2008) research report consisted of a sample size of 151,316 students entering their first year of college in the fall of 2006 at 110 postsecondary institutions. The postsecondary school sample was diverse in geographic location, enrollment size and control. The College Board commissioned this study to assess the predictive validity of changes made to the SAT test when the organization added a writing section to the test along with the standard math and verbal section. The results of the analysis showed that while the new writing section of the test was the single best predictor of the three test sections, the changes made to the entire exam did not change the overall predictive nature of the test for first-year college student GPA performance (Korbin et al., 2008).
The subsequent Shaw research report from 2012, also commissioned by The College Board, used a subset of the Korbin sample from 2006. Shaw’s subset sample was 66 of the 110 original institutions and 39,440 students from the original 151,316 (Shaw et al., 2012). The Sackett et al. (2012) study also used a subset of the Korbin sample from 2006, however, this study included 143,606 students from 110 post-secondary institutions. The Sackett report differed in that it sought to account for socioeconomic status (SES) in the analysis.

The challengers to reliability of the SATs predictability of future college success focus on the positive relationship between test performance, SES, and race (Lemann, 2000; Sedlacek, 2004; Espenshade & Chung, 2012). This particular focus is of critical importance given the changing landscape of the United States student pipeline and shifting demographics. In The Case Against the SAT, Crouse and Trusheim (1988) conducted a six-year study surrounding the history and use of the SAT in college admission. While they did not seek to make an argument against the tests validity, they did make a case to raise questions about the purpose and need for the SAT in college admissions when data support the persistent and positive relationship between test scores and SES (Crouse & Trusheim, 1988). For their study, Crouse and Trusheim used data from the National Longitudinal Study (NLS) from the high school graduating class of 1972.

The 2002 Geiser study, UC and the SAT, is a University of California (UC) system-wide sample across eight campuses including nearly 78,000 first-year students over a four-year period. The obvious limitation with this study was the narrow focus on one, public, university system (Geiser, 2002). The Geiser study underscored the positive
relationship between test scores and SES noted in Crouse and Trusheim’s findings from the NLS data set. Rothstein’s (2004) study also used a University of California data set from the 1993 high school senior class who applied, were admitted and enrolled in any one of the eight UC system campuses. In total, Rothstein’s sample included 22,526 student records (Rothstein, 2004).

Furthermore, Sedlacek’s (2004) non-cognitive assessment work found that the SAT test alone to be a weak predictor of college success for nontraditional students. In his research, Sedlacek did not attempt to discount the ACT and SAT tests, rather to offer additional measures and variables to assess the likelihood of success and meet the needs of an evolving and diverse applicant pool. Sedlacek (2004) argued the ACT and SAT have not evolved over the decades in the way prospective student backgrounds, gender, race, nationality, orientation and experiences have evolved. The non-cognitive assessment variables measure points that cannot be revealed from the ACT or SAT and are more amplified in nontraditional students (Sedlacek, 2004). His variables are correlated to college grades, persistence, graduation and success (Sedlacek, 2004). This is relevant to point out when evaluated through the lens of changing high school student demographics across the United States coupled with aforementioned challenges of first generation and lower SES post-secondary persistence and completion rates of racial and ethnic minority students. While the ACT and SAT still measure their original intent, intellectual aptitude, they offer limited actionable data for nontraditional students (Sedlacek, 2011).
Test-Optional Admissions in Higher Education

What does it mean, exactly, when a college or university announces that they have adopted a test-optional admission policy? As noted in the definitions, test-optional allows high school students to apply for admission to a college or university without having to provide ACT or SAT test score results. There are, however, variations of test-optional admission policies within higher education. Some institutions allow students to submit a portfolio of accomplishments, others accept additional letters of recommendation, graded writing assignments, or detailed essay statements (Syverson, 2007). Some large state university systems allow for automatic admission to students graduating with a certain high school GPA or class rank percent (FairTest, 2016).

Test-optional admission policies have proliferated since 2013. A FairTest (2016) report indicated over 80 institutions adopted a test-optional policy between 2013 and 2016, and 174 since 2005, taking the total number of test-optional institutions to over 900. Furthermore, half of the U.S. News & World Report top 100 national liberal arts institutions are now test-optional (FairTest, 2016).

While the Hiss and Franks report is the most comprehensive test-optional study conducted to date, others have been conducted (Belasco et al., 2014; Mulugetta, 2015). Even though Belasco et al. (2014) did not analyze why institutions changed to test-optional admissions, their report collected time-series, cross-sectional data on 180 liberal arts colleges in the United States. The data spans from 1992 – 2010 and includes data points of specific interest relative to student SES.

Areas of concern relative to SES and the SAT are that students of financial means are advantaged with the opportunity to be coached and trained on how to perform well on
the exam and can also afford access to SAT tutors and prep courses (Robinson & Monks, 2005). Moreover, at smaller postsecondary institutions where an admission officer can read each application thoroughly, high school GPA, class rank, curriculum rigor, personal essays, and recommendation letters may collectively provide a more accurate prediction of college success (Robinson & Monks, 2005). This may help make the case for marginal applicant pool candidates who possess desirable attributes at the postsecondary level with the exception of SAT scores (Robinson & Monks, 2005). After Mt. Holyoke College adopted a test-optional admission policy, Robinson and Monks (2005), conducted a case study to examine the results of the non-test submitter (non-submitters) matriculants. Data from the 2001 freshmen class was used in the analysis (Robinson & Monks, 2005). Even with the limitation of analyzing a single, small, liberal arts institution, the non-submitter matriculants had a slightly lower first-year GPA (3.24) compared to SAT submitter matriculants (3.35) (Robinson & Monks, 2005). As a result, their primary case study conclusion of Mt. Holyoke’s admission policy is that selective college admissions can be successful under a test-optional process.

In a similar case study, Father Brian Shanley from Providence College, examined the results of Providence’s test-optional admission policy pilot. After a year-long study in 2006, the institutional research office at Providence College, released an analysis of data on entering classes from 2002 to 2005. The findings show that high school GPA was the strongest single predictor of students’ success at Providence (Shanley, 2007). Furthermore, after implementing the test-optional admission policy, Providence increased underrepresented racial and ethnic minority student applications 20.8 percent and first-generation student applications 21 percent (Shanley, 2007). The first test-optional class
to enroll at Providence included 31.1 percent more underrepresented racial and ethnic minority students, 18.8 percent more first-generation students and a 4.5 percent increase in Pell-Grant eligible students (Shanley, 2007).

Mulugetta (2015) conducted an analysis at Ithaca College to better understand the impact of test-optional on Ithaca’s changes in student diversity. Mulugetta (2015) analyzed six cohorts and concluded that the test-optional policy did, in fact, increase the student diversity at Ithaca College.

In 1985, well before the recent rapid increase in test-optional admission policies at institutions across the country, Schaffner examined the success of Bowdin College’s test-optional admission policy. Bowdin, a highly selective, small private liberal arts institution in Maine adopted a test-optional admission policy in 1970 (Schaffner, 1985). Much like Providence, this Bowdin study is limited to a single case participant; however, Schaffner analyzed 2,241 students who enrolled at Bowdin during 1976 to 1981 and completed at least three courses (Schaffner, 1985). Specifically, this case study included complete academic records for Bowdin’s 1976 class, 1977 class, and 1978 class. The case included partial academic records on the 1979, 1980, and 1981 class, and admission records for 1976 – 1982 classes (Schaffner, 1985). Results of the analysis were similar to Providence; the individual student high school academic record was the single strongest predictor, followed by the SAT verbal score, then the SAT math score (Schaffner, 1985).

**Higher Education Enrollment Management**

At present, enrollment management leaders at baccalaureate institutions must focus one eye on the present recruitment class at hand, with the other focused on the future. With the exception of a few exclusive, highly selective baccalaureate institutions
with robust endowments, most colleges in this classification rely on student tuition as their principal source of revenue. Adapting to the changing demographics is essential for higher education because a significant portion of their revenue comes from students (Flynn, 2014). Therefore, it is critical for enrollment leaders to recruit a class of first-year students who meet campus budgetary goals, retain and persist at a level that ensures stable financial health for the institution.

Budgetary goals and changing high school student demographics has brought the relationship between high school GPA, ACT and SAT test scores and students success in postsecondary education to the forefront for enrollment management leaders. Given this information and importance of tuition revenue, it is understandable why enrollment leaders are now afforded a senior or executive level position on a college campus. Strategic enrollment projections and budget forecasting based on net tuition revenue has become a critical component to any successful enrollment office. Campus budget projections can hinge on incoming first-year student class size, transfer students, student retention, and tuition revenue. This data demonstrate the importance now placed on net tuition revenue, stable enrollment projections and outcomes.

Research found GPA is a more accurate predictor for college success compared to ACT or SAT test alone (Schaffner, 1985; Geiser, 2002; Astin & Oseguera, 2005; Zwick & Sklar, 2005; Geiser & Santelices, 2007; Epstein, 2009; Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009). Hiss and Franks (2014) examined the outcomes of test-optional policies based on cumulative GPA and graduation rates (Hiss & Franks, 2014). The report found few significant differences between submitters and non-submitters of testing when observing cumulative GPA and graduation rates, despite significant differences in
their ACT or SAT test scores (Hiss & Franks, 2014). In fact, earned cumulative GPAs were only .05 lower than test score submitters, 2.83 versus 2.88, and the difference in graduation rate was only .6 percent (Hiss & Franks, 2014). The report goes on to mention that college and university GPA closely track high school GPA despite wide variations in test scores (Hiss & Franks, 2014). Of particular interest to baccalaureate colleges considering the changing student demographics is the conclusion that test-optional admission policies appear to support increases in underrepresented minority student applications and the finding that test-optional institutions have realized a more diverse student population growth (Hiss & Franks, 2014). The Hiss and Franks report clearly demonstrates the level of success test-optional, non-submitter applicants can achieve at the college level. Relative to this particular research study, their report does not detail why an admission policy change to test-optional occurs at a post-secondary institution.

Most everywhere, there are fewer White or Black children and more young children are Asian and most are Hispanic (Lipka, 2014). What might be even more telling of the challenges ahead for enrollment managers and colleges alike is the level of financial need most upcoming students will likely demonstrate (Suitts, Sabree, & Dunn, 2013). Where the demographics represent growth, the people are poorer (Suitts, Sabree, & Dunn, 2013; Lipka, 2014). Of 450 counties where there are significantly younger children than older ones, about 330 have median incomes below $50,000 (Lipka, 2014).

Viewed through the lens of persistence and graduation rates, it is critical that baccalaureate institutions offer a welcoming environment to underrepresented minority students given the connection between enrollment growth, tuition revenue, and changing
high school student demographics. Questions remain as to whether primarily white institutions (PWIs) will transform themselves by embracing underrepresented racial and ethnic minority students like never before, as some colleges can be reluctant to change until outside forces alter their ability to maintain present standards (Hoover, 2014). Research shows that both White and minority students benefit from a diverse learning environment. Students believe that a diverse learning environment better prepares them to participate in an increasingly diverse society (Hurtado, 1999). For sustainable enrollment purposes, schools with an eye to the future have started developing relationships with community-based organizations that serve low-income and first-generation students (Hoover, 2014). Efforts in this area must be emphasized with the realization that return on investment will come years later in the form of steady enrollments of diverse classes that will represent the national gender, racial, and ethnic makeup of the United States.

**Financial Pressures on Enrollment Management**

Most literature on this subject notes the price competition and price elasticity of private higher education (Kiley, 2013). This rising average discount rate at private institutions is becoming alarming as net tuition levels decrease and tuition levels continue to increase. Some private institutions may reach a point where their discount level is not financially viable. In 2008, according to the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), the average discount rate for private 4-year, non-profit schools in the United States was 41.8 percent (Fain, 2010). The most recent NACUBO tuition discounting study (Seltzer, 2016) indicated that private institution discounts reached an all-time high of 48.6 percent in the 2015-2016 academic year.
Why do some private institutions continue down this caustic financial path? Over the last three decades, tuition at private colleges has increased each year on average 3.5 percent more than the rate of inflation (Ehrenberg, 2012). This increase is due, in part, to private institutions aspiring to be their very best in all that they do for students. Administrators also believe in the parent and student perception that attending a higher-priced, private college affords unique economic and educational advantages (Ehrenberg, 2012). To an extent, higher education has created a cyclical, toxic high-tuition/high-discount model. As institutions increase their tuition, the school-specific level of price elasticity determines how much of the increased fee is returned to the student to subsidize financial aid in the form of discounts (Ehrenburg, 2012).

As some research has demonstrated, tuition-discounting practices weaken the financial condition and lower the quality of many lower-tier private institutions (Martin, 2004). Not surprising to some, the position of inelastic price demand rests with limited, exclusive private institutions. There is a small minority of elite private institutions in the United States whose prestige, selectivity, and demand allow for inelastic tuition pricing. For these elite, selective institutions, their inelastic demand allows the institution to collect increased revenue that can be used at college administrators’ discretion. These elite institutions are not central to this case study as their levels of demand, regardless of price increases, continue to remain resilient. The increasing fees among private institutions are forcing less selective, more elastic colleges to implement a high-tuition/high-discount philosophy. The aggressive price discounts by less selective private colleges’ leads to defensive discounting by peer institutions, in turn lowering the ability to finance need-based aid (Martin, 2004).
The present and looming national demographic changes in the prospective student pipeline carry broad and deep implications for baccalaureate institutions. While a substantial portion of American higher education must plan for and enact change to manage this matter, the changing demographics are perhaps most acute to PWIs given their dependence on tuition revenue to sustain financial grounding. It is with this in mind, that enrollment leaders and campus administrators at baccalaureate institutions must be keen to enrollment projections. In addition, the present fiscal landscape for smaller, private, baccalaureate institutions in rural America will face increasing challenges with enrollment and financial viability (Belkin, 2013; Brueder, 2014; Papandrea, 2014; Carter, 2016). To combat these challenges, institutions will need to grow enrollment by admitting students they normally may not accept (Papandrea, 2014).

**Organizational Change in Higher Education**

More broadly, Curry (1992) adds to the available literature on organizational change noting three critical steps to foster an environment where change can take place:

1. Mobilization;
2. Implementation;
3. Institutionalization.

As the interview findings show in this case, change cannot survive without institutionalization of the innovation (Curry, 1992). Furthermore, having evidence-based information to validate a position can allow innovation to survive and thrive through leadership communication and decisiveness (Curry 1992). Elements of visionary leadership, funding change-making opportunities with resources, and building a culture where innovation and change can live while all represented more broadly in
organizational change literature, are also represented in this instrumental case study (Curry, 1992). In addition, change literature notes the interconnectedness of change and learning (Beckhard & Pritchard, 1992). Curry (1992) shares Kezar’s perspective of external and internal force interplay resulting in change. Still, Curry’s findings describe change as more disruptive to an organization, coupled with the lack of ideal timing for change to occur. To foster an environment where change can live, however, organizations need to approach change as learning opportunities for leadership, communication, innovation, and institutionalization (Beckhard & Pritchard, 1992; Curry, 1992).

As there are multiple change frameworks outlined by Kezar (2001), organizations, more broadly, can be looked at from multiple perspectives (Bolman & Deal, 2003). This is to say organizational change can be viewed through the lens of power, control, hierarchy, culture, structure, and resources (Kezar, 2001; Bolman & Deal, 2003). This is especially pronounced in understanding change within complex organizations such as institutions of higher education. To understand change more directly in a college or university environment, Birnbaum (1988), wrote about the unique relationship of loose and tight-coupled subsystems, where change in one tightly coupled subsystem does not impact the operation of another loosely coupled subsystem in the organization. This distinction is most evident when observing the structure and hierarchy in the staff/administrative subsystem and faculty subsystem at a college or university. While higher education is rather unique in subsystems that coexist in their operation, Birnbaum (1988) also notes the importance of institutional responsiveness to their external environment in order to survive.
**Kezar’s Evolutionary Change Framework**

On a larger scale, it is critical to step back and take a more expansive look at change and how organizations adapt. In their research Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers (2005) note that for organizations to change, it is critical to possess a broad understanding of present conditions and reality. In a sense, being attune to marketplace conditions, having a vision and sense of strategic direction is what allows systemic change to occur (Senge et al., 2005). In this case study, my one-on-one interviews afforded me the opportunity to seek whether or not the enrollment management division senior leadership had a true sense of their place in the market and a clear understanding of vision and strategic direction. This clarification uncovered whether the admission policy change was reactive or proactive. The interviews also allowed me to discover if the change was first- or second-order referring to what changed in the enrollment management division, and the level of scale and focus relative to this change uncovers how this policy change occurred (Levy & Merry 1986; Kezar, 2001).

With the fallout from the 2008 financial crisis, Metropolitan University experienced increased pressure to grow enrollment and expand capacity to help drive tuition revenue, as did most institutions of higher education (Bogaty, 2013). Moreover, constricting revenue streams continue to challenge the higher education landscape, especially private, tuition-dependent institutions who rely on a high sticker cost/high discount rate model (Callahan & Finney, 2002; Fain, 2010; Kiley, 2013).

While evolutionary change takes place over a longer period of time, the external environment plays a major role in the process and leads to new processes (Baker & Baldwin, 2014). Kezar’s research notes that two of the primary sources of change in
higher education are costs and changing demographics (Kezar, 2001). With this understanding, this instrumental case study elected to use the evolutionary model of change to understand if Metropolitan University changed because of their environment.

Baker & Baldwin (2014) effectively summarize Kezar’s (2001) research findings surrounding evolutionary change in higher education. In particular, they note that timing, scale, focus, and responsiveness are all critical aspects of change (Baker & Baldwin, 2014). The internal and external factors that influence institutional change can be adaptive or generative, planned or unplanned, proactive or reactive, and active or static. The level of influence these factors have on an institution can lead to first-order or second-order change (Kezar, 2001). First-order change is negligible while second-order change can be transformational (Levy & Merry, 1986). Kezar (2001) notes that institutions tend to operate in survival mode where they manage change rather than plan for change. As such, a key tenet to this case study is to seek a clear understanding of the interaction between the enrollment management division at Metropolitan University and its external environment.

It should be acknowledged that a criticism of Kezar’s evolutionary change model is the manner in which it minimizes internal factors that can influence the change process (Kezar, 2001). Furthermore, specific to evolutionary change theory and an enrollment management division case study, there is no available research on the relationship between institutional culture and why change occurs (Kezar & Eckel, 2002a). With this knowledge, however, I asked purposeful questions during the interviews and looked for evidence in a manner that accounts for factors that may have helped the enrollment management division at Metropolitan University adopt this change.
The Metropolitan University enrollment management enterprise should be viewed as a system larger than any individual or functional group within the division. When change occurs at the system level, it is best analyzed through the evolutionary framework so as to take into consideration the external environment (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). The enrollment management division at Metropolitan University has nine functional departments all working toward a similar goal of enrolling students. These functional areas must work independently serving a specific task while also working toward the larger mission of the division. Given the interconnectedness of the functional entities comprised of Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division, this admission policy change should be viewed as second-order change that is transformational (Levy & Merry, 1986; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995; Kezar, 2001; Baker & Baldwin, 2014).

Kezar’s model of evolutionary change uses the lens of external and internal force interplay to understand why change is occurring, what is changing, how change occurs, and what the intended outcomes are of such change (Kezar, 2001; Baker & Baldwin, 2014). Kezar (2001) noted that all types of higher education institutions experience and manage internal and external forces prompting colleges to change. Her research also classified change in higher education as either evolutionary/biological, teleological, dialectical/political, social/cognitive, or cultural (Kezar, 2001).

Using change literature as the foundation for her studies, Kezar sought to move beyond generalizations formulated from quantitative surveys through the use of qualitative research methods (Kezar & Eckel, 2002a; Kezar & Eckel, 2002b; Eckel & Kezar, 2003b). Early researchers, Nordvall (1982) and Van de Ven and Poole (1995), developed the aforementioned categories of change constructs with Kezar’s work in 2001.
providing the aggregation of early scholars’ research. Kezar’s work has since become the standard reference for understanding change in higher education (Eckel & Kezar, 2003b). An early limitation with evolutionary change literature was its reliance on change as a result of external influences (Morgan, 1986). Kezar realized this shortcoming and further developed the change literature in a subsequent study to include the role of internal circumstances and cultural influences (Kezar, 2001; Eckel & Kezar, 2003b).

Additional studies also support the findings surrounding higher education change (Gumport, 2000; Morphew, 2002; Hartley, 2003; Hartley & Schall, 2005). Gumport, however focused her change literature on academic program reductions using interview data from case studies of two public research universities. Her exploratory study was not designed to be conclusive. While Morphew’s study included 105 postsecondary institutions, the research was focused on the institutional characteristics that led an American college to change its name to a university—not why the college changed to a university. Hartley and Schall’s work, while qualitative in nature, focused only on liberal arts case participants. Their work did focus on change, but at the institution-wide level, relative to mission and purpose.

To move change process theory forward, Kezar and Eckel studied six institutions over a 5½ year period. They used interviews, participant observation, site visits and document analysis (Kezar & Eckel, 2002a; Kezar & Eckel, 2002b; Eckel & Kezar 2003b). Their studies were limited as participant institutions self-selected to be part of the study and much of the data was self-reported. Two of the six cases were highlighted in one report, a community college and a private, urban research university (Kezar & Eckel, 2002a). Kezar and Eckel noted three strategies related to transformational change:
senior administrative support, collaborative leadership and vision (Kezar & Eckel, 2002a).

Eckel and Kezar (2003b) continued contributing to the change process literature using the same sample set of six institutions in which they sought to better understand sense-making during transformational change and used a three-step qualitative approach. The team uncovered additional strategies the case participants used to help lead transformational change: numerous and continuous widespread conversations, the use of cross-departmental teams, staff training, the use of outsider perspectives, guiding documents, and public presentations (Eckel & Kezar, 2003a).

Using the same sample, Kezar and Eckel (2002a) showcased three of the six participant institutions in another report to understand the change process through the use of five strategies: senior administrative support, collaborative leadership, vision, staff development, and visible actions. These findings also demonstrate the positive relationship between institutional culture and successful, transformative change (Kezar & Eckel, 2002a). This case study of Metropolitan University examined whether senior leadership used these strategies, and whether the process challenged divisional culture in making the change to a test-optional admission policy in the enrollment management division.

To deductively analyze this case study, I pre-assigned categories and codes based on Kezar’s evolutionary change framework. From her literature, the external environment would lead to why the change occurred; the process, or degree of change, would be slow, adaptive and gradual over-time; the outcomes of the change would be first-order structures (Kezar, 2001). Given the frameworks emphasis on external forces,
this change would be unplanned, objective, and shaped by the environment (Morgan, 1986; Kezar, 2001). This follows Kezar’s findings that the external environment has demonstrated to be a factor in creating change at a college (Kezar, 2001).

An extensive examination of change literature discloses no empirical data studies and is limited to isolated strategies, nothing transformative or systemic (Kezar & Eckel, 2002b). The change literature reviewed by Kezar, revealed that prior research examined the content of change, factors related to change outcomes and conditions related to change (Levy & Merry, 1986; Morgan 1986; John 1991; Gumport, 1993; El-Khawas, 1995; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995; Hearn, 1996; Sporn 1999; Kezar & Eckel, 2002b; Burnes 2004; Collins, 2005). Moreover, prior change literature was larger in scale, as demonstrated with St. John’s (1991) analysis of permanent transformative change at five private liberal arts institutions where four of the case participants perceived a threat to their continued survival, therefore, prompting system-wide, transformative change.

Summary of the Literature

This chapter provides a literature review on ACT and SAT college admission testing, test-optional in higher education, higher education enrollment management change, financial pressures on enrollment management, organizational change in higher education, and Kezar’s evolutionary change framework. When evaluating Kezar’s evolutionary change literature, I could not locate case studies of change specific to an enrollment management division in a higher education setting. While test-optional has been studied in higher education, how and why an institution decided to change an admission policy based on evolutionary change framework does not exist in the present literature. My purpose with this study is to examine the why, the degree of change, and
how of change in the admission policy of an enrollment management division at a private, urban, tuition-dependent, baccalaureate institution. Through purposeful, qualitative interviews, I can understand the case of Metropolitan University and why it changed to a test-optional admission policy.

The review of this literature provides a clear rationale for the purpose of this qualitative case study. Disruptive forces, both internal and external, can bring about change in an organization of higher education, and with this case study, I examined why Metropolitan University changed their admission policy. There can be reactive reasons of change or proactive measures calculated by understanding market conditions. The evolutionary change literature revealed that some organizations initiate change through their actions while others react to external pressures and are forced to change.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Overview

I selected a qualitative case study approach for this research to understand why the enrollment management division at Metropolitan University changed to a test-optional admission policy. Metropolitan University presents a unique case to study a change to a test-optional admission policy for the purposes of recruiting and enrolling a larger percentage of underrepresented minority students in the first-year class. Metropolitan University is located in the fourth largest city in the United States and one of the most ethnically diverse. Stake (1995) discussed the process of conducting semi-structured interviews with case study participants to allow the opportunity for fluid conversation and discovery of why and how this change occurred. Furthermore, the qualitative interviews afford the opportunity to explore how different functional departments in the enrollment management division were impacted as a result of this admission policy change. The interviews allow for a deeper understanding with this particular case. Moreover, I selected this particular case because the case itself is unique. As an urban, baccalaureate-intensive university, Metropolitan University changing to a test-optional admission policy is a case worth examining. In this qualitative study, I use primary data through personal interviews to understand the case.

I met with Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division’s senior leadership and various functional departments that managed this admission policy change. I collected thick, rich, descriptive primary data through one-on-one interviews. This methodology, allowed me to uncover why Metropolitan University’s enrollment
Management division made this admission policy change to test-optional. The personal interviews also allowed me to gain a thorough understanding of why the change occurred, the degree of change, and how the change occurred.

Through the lens of Kezar’s evolutionary change framework, I analyzed data to find answers and understand the internal and external forces that caused Metropolitan University to change to a test-optional admission policy. It is possible external forces were so intense, Metropolitan University needed this admission policy change to continue its pro-growth enrollment agenda. However, it is also possible the change was driven internally either through top-down leadership, division forces outside enrollment management, or trickle-up change from junior admission officers. Regardless, understanding why the division made this admission policy change, what actually changed, and how the change occurred is central to this case study. Using the lens of Kezar’s framework of evolutionary change and inductive analysis of the data findings, I can understand how the research findings fit the framework or whether new factors emerge (Miles et al., 2014).

The inductive process can allow for new factors to emerge against present evolutionary change. Conducting these interviews and learning how the enrollment management division at Metropolitan University has changed as a result of this new policy may allow the opportunity to make revisions to Kezar’s framework. In this case study, I examined the timing, scale, and focus of the enrollment management division’s admission policy change. The results of this study explain how Metropolitan University’s enrollment management divisions’ employees were impacted by this policy change. I focused on how the change occurred, why the change occurred, and the
circumstances that led the enrollment management division to change its admission policy.

A program, child, person, institution, class, system, or innovative approach are all examples of a potential qualitative research case study. A case study is typically a study of a bounded system; however, researchers can also collectively study multiple lived experiences as part of a research project. A case study can be intrinsic or instrumental in nature depending on the focus of the research (Stake, 1995). From a scientific perspective, the purpose of qualitative research is to gain better understanding of a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). I can learn as much as possible about this case through personal interviews with leadership members of Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division. In this specific, instrumental case study, I used personal interview information to understand why a change occurred in the enrollment management division system at Metropolitan University. During the interviews, I asked participants broad, general questions to collect the data in the form of words to provide understanding for this case (Creswell, 2013).

By interviewing members of the enrollment management division at a higher education institution who changed the admission policy to adopt a test-optional process, I better understood the steps leading up to such a change and the lessons learned from adopting such a policy. Metropolitan University, located in the Midwest, is one of the largest, private universities to implement a test-optional admission policy. The university serves students from all 50 states and over 100 countries. With enrollment of over 23,000 students, this case study participant represents a comprehensive university with nearly 300 undergraduate and graduate academic programs. As a faith-based institution
located in an urban environment, Metropolitan University offers a public-facing mission statement to serve the societal, economic, and cultural needs of the greater campus community. This university adopted their test Optional policy within the last five years after conducting thorough research and piloting the test-optimal admission program. Additionally, as a supplement to the ACT and SAT, in 2008 Metropolitan University implemented non-cognitive variables to assess an applicant’s likelihood for success before making an admission decision.

**Research Questions**

The research questions for this qualitative, instrumental case study were guided by my interest to understand the case of Metropolitan University and why it changed to a test-optimal admission policy. Furthermore, given Kezar’s model, I examined why the change occurred, the degree of change and how the change occurred. To understand the evolutionary change process of Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division, the research questions are as follows:

1. Why did the enrollment management division change to a test-optimal admission policy?
2. Was the degree of change in the test-optimal admission policy first- or second-order for Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division?
3. How did the change to test-optimal admissions occur?

Subquestions that help guide this case study research are as follows:

1. What are the forces and sources leading to this admission policy change?
2. What had to change in the enrollment management division for this admission policy to be successful?
3. Was the process of changing the admission policy adaptive/generative, proactive/reactive, active/static, or planned/unplanned?

4. To what extent has the intended outcome been realized?

This study addressed the matters of higher education policy change in an enrollment management division’s office of admission. This study addressed the problem of higher education evolutionary change and the interplay of external and internal forces that lead to change according to Kezar’s theoretical framework. In addition, this case study examined the process of changing the admissions policy at a private, tuition-dependent, baccalaureate institution in an urban setting. This case studied the admission policy change in the context of needing to meet institutional enrollment goals. A list of interview questions is provided in Appendix C under the interview protocol.

**Rationale**

In answering the research questions, I selected a qualitative case study approach. This approach allowed me to interview and learn about the study participants experience in changing their admission policy to test-optional. A qualitative case study is preferred over a quantitative study to understand why, to what degree, and how the change occurred. Analyzing the internal and external factors that prompted this admission policy change through the lens of Kezar’s framework may add to the literature concerning evolutionary change theory in higher education.

As demonstrated in figure 1.1 in chapter one, Metropolitan University experienced a downturn in enrollment starting in 2012. After years of successive enrollment growth, even though the economic downturn and financial crisis of 2008, Metropolitan University was able to grow total enrollment to an all-time high in 2011.
Strategy

A qualitative case study is most pertinent for this research because I examined the experience of one bounded system (Stake, 1995). As a bounded, instrumental case study, the data findings are not generalizable to a larger population. The data findings are intended to give meaning to the why, to what degree, and the how of change, and thus one-on-one interviews are most critical in understanding why Metropolitan University made this admission policy change. I do not intend to uncover or seek understanding to the lived experience of individuals in the admission operation at Metropolitan University as a phenomenological study directs (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2013). In addition, grounded theory, narrative research, or ethnography approaches do not fit the goals of this qualitative case study as I do not intend to develop any new theory, or seek evidence to describe customs; as the purpose and goal of the study is to understand why change occurred in this particular case (Merriam, 2009).

Role of the Researcher

In a qualitative study, it is critical to remain cognizant of my particular role in the process (Merriam, 2009). As the primary instrument for data collection and analysis in this research case, I acknowledged my biases and did not ignore relevant knowledge I possess about the subject (Merriam, 2009). Given my personal background and experience in the enrollment management profession and personal preference for test-optional admission policies, the focus for this study remained on why, to what degree, and how this admission policy change occurred. I bracketed my belief in the value of non-cognitive assessments and the opportunity for applicants to be evaluated for admission to post-secondary schools on a holistic basis and not simply by their ACT or
SAT test score. Moreover, the cultural bias of standardized tests noted in chapter one is reason enough to give admission officers pause when evaluating non-White applicants. Furthermore, the aforementioned changing national demographics substantiate the need for change in higher education admission policies. As such, given the shifting landscape of higher education and financial pressures impacting institutional revenue, this research uncovered why the change occurred in the enrollment management division of a private, tuition-dependent baccalaureate institution in one of America’s largest and most diverse cities.

As the primary researcher in this case study, I reflected on my personal and professional experience and bias in the higher education admission industry in order to understand and bracket my beliefs (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2013). This process of reflecting and understanding any personal prior experience is also explained in Stake’s text. Acknowledging and understanding my bias with this case study at the outset of data collection was critical to the credibility of the data collection process. Finally, in this case study, I also played the role as an evaluator (Stake, 1995). It was my responsibility to understand the why, to what degree, and the how of this admission policy change at Metropolitan University (Stake, 1995).

**Data Collection Types and Methods**

There are four types of qualitative data: observations (ranging from non-participant to participant), interviews (ranging from closed-ended to open-ended), documents (including public and private), and audio-visual materials (ranging from photographs to videotapes) (Creswell, 2013). This brief analysis explains each type in short detail along with outlining the advantages and limitations of each process.
With Metropolitan University, the data were collected via semi-structured qualitative interviews with six members of Metropolitan Universities’ enrollment management leadership team. At the recommendation of a senior leader in the enrollment division, I selected five additional administrators most instrumental in making the admission policy change possible. Data collection was audio recording and subsequent transcription of the interviews. Once transcribed, I destroyed the audio files. The transcriptions and field notes were saved on a flash drive and backed-up on a laptop hard drive and will be stored for one year then destroyed. A data collection matrix was developed and participant names were masked for privacy concerns. Stake outlined the following essential parts to data gathering: defining the case, listing the research questions, identifying the case helpers, locating data sources, allocating time, expenses, and intended reporting (Stake, 1995).

According to Stake, during a first visit for data gathering, the researcher must ensure proper access, observe the site, allocate necessary resources, identify the informants and sources of data, define the record keeping system and sketch the plans for the final report (Stake, 1995). After this first visit, the researcher can prepare to gather data. A qualitative researcher’s intent is to develop vicarious experiences for the reader; detailed observation and interpretation are key in order for the researcher to give the reader the actual sense of living the experience (Stake, 1995). Each potential interviewee has a different specific experience to share. The researcher, again, needed to be flexible with the approach in the individual interviews, but it is also most critical that the researcher be a proficient listener. It is at this time when a qualitative researcher will observe, interview informants, debrief informants, gather logs, review documents, and
use surveys. Once the data are collected, a qualitative researcher will validate for accuracy with data source triangulation and member checking (Stake, 1995).

**Data Sources**

The primary data source for this qualitative case study was one-on-one interviews. Direct access to the enrollment management division leadership who were at the epicenter of this admission policy change offered accurate, primary data through one-on-ones interviews. This source of primary data allowed me to understand the reasons behind why, to what degree, and how this admission policy change occurred at Metropolitan University. Through a carefully constructed interview protocol, I gained insight and understanding into the internal and external forces that brought about this admission policy change. Furthermore, meaningful follow-up interview questions uncovered the results of this admission policy change, i.e., has the admission policy change resulted in a larger, more diverse first-year class of students that meets the institutional revenue goals?

**Interviewing**

Willing case study participants were identified, contacted, and verbally agreed to participate in the study. The interviews took place in the administrative office building of Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division. All participants received the informed consent letter and had the option to withdraw from the study at any time. While this is a small sample size, interviewees identified by the enrollment management division leader ensured that I interviewed the senior-level leadership most instrumental in this admission policy change. The interviews ranged in length from 40 to 90 minutes and resulted in a total of 226 double-spaced pages and over 3800 lines of transcripts.
**Site Description**

Metropolitan University is located in the Midwest and is one of the largest, private universities to implement a test-optional admission policy. The university serves students from all 50 states and over 100 countries. With enrollment of over 23,000 students, this case study represents a comprehensive university with nearly 300 undergraduate and graduate academic programs. As a faith-based institution located in an urban environment, Metropolitan University offers a public-facing mission statement to serve the societal, economic, and cultural needs of the greater campus community. Metropolitan University is focused on the access and diversity initiatives designed to serve the community in its closest proximity. The institution has been an established member of the community for over 125 years and since its founding has sought to impact the local surroundings through inclusiveness, social justice, service learning, and meaningful action.

When I arrived at the site location, I had to register as a guest and sign in by name with a security guard at the front desk in the lobby. The feeling was very sterile, unwelcoming and corporate. I took public transportation to the office building and was early so I waited in the lobby and observed patrons in the lobby coffee shop. Roughly 15 minutes before the first scheduled interview, I too the elevator up to the enrollment management division floor, walked out of the elevator and through a set of floor to ceiling glass doors. The office lobby was empty and decorated with typical, but well-appointed wooden office furniture. The walls were decorated with student pictures and had the feel of staged university photographs. Without the obvious display of Metropolitan University’s name on the walls, one would not naturally surmise the space
as a university enrollment management office lobby. Moreover, I felt as though I were in a corporate interview environment.

After waiting a few minutes in the lobby, I peeked my head around a corner and looked for someone to announce my arrival so I could prepare for the first interview. I was then greeted by the division’s administrative assistant who was very welcoming and friendly. She offered my coffee and water and escorted me to the conference room where I conducted the interviews. I entered a large conference room through a set of wooden double-doors. In the center of the room was a large, oval, wooden conference table with room for approximately 20 people. The conference room was designed to hold large meetings but also had a lectern for small presentations. The room contained multimedia and technical equipment capable for virtual meetings, teleconferencing, and multimodal presentations. I was impressed with the level of connectivity and technical sophistication in the space. I remember making a mental note at the number of wires running under the conference table from the multimedia cabinet.

After I settled in my seat and unpacked my interview equipment, I made a coffee from the machine sitting on a small desk behind the conference table. I unpacked my laptop, smartphone, portfolio and paper documents as I prepared for the first interview.

For this instrumental case study, I elected to study the organizational change process in the enrollment management division of Metropolitan University resulting from a new admission policy. I selected Metropolitan University because of its unique location, size and institutional type. While this case does not fit the criteria for an intrinsic study—as one of the largest, private universities to implement a test-optional
admission policy, the findings from this case might allow for applicable themes other higher education institutions can use in adopting a similar policy change.

This instrumental case study is somewhat unique given the location and recruitment base of Metropolitan University (Stake, 1995). Why would Metropolitan University, being located in one of the America’s most racially and ethnically diverse cities, need a test-optional admission policy change to maintain enrollment and increase levels of student diversity? As a private institution with a public-facing service and access mission, the desired outcome of Metropolitan University adopting a test-optional admission policy was to enroll greater numbers of underrepresented racial and ethnic minority students. This position is supported in the evolutionary change literature stating that external forces can have a major impact on policy based on a desired outcome (Kezar, 2001).

Table 3.1 illustrates the national undergraduate fall enrollments by race/ethnicity and gender for years 2010 – 2015. In particular, note the decrease in White student enrollments overtime and corresponding increase in Hispanic student enrollments. Black student enrollments demonstrate a .3 percent decrease over the six-year period. Table 3.2 illustrates undergraduate fall enrollment for Metropolitan University by race/ethnicity and gender from 2010 – 2015. Metropolitan University underperforms the national percent distribution for Hispanic student enrollments and Black student enrollments. The significance of Metropolitan University’s geographic location and public-facing mission cannot be understated in the context of the national and case-specific racial and ethnic minority student enrollments. Moreover, Metropolitan University, while still a PWI, is
far more diverse compared to most small, private, rural, baccalaureate institutions who adopt a test-optional admission policy (FairTest, 2016).

Table 3.1

Total Percentage Distribution, and Female percent of Undergraduate Fall Enrollment in Degree-granting Institutions, by Race/ethnicity: Selected Years, 2010 – 2015

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<td>Percentage distribution</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>57.2</td>
<td>57.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>15.1</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>14.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonresident alien</td>
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<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100ᵃ</td>
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<td>100ᵃ</td>
<td>100ᵃ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent female</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56</td>
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*Note: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), Fall Enrollment in Colleges and Universities surveys; and IPEDS Spring 2001 through Spring 2015, Fall Enrollment Component.

*Projected.
++Not applicable.
+++Not available.
ᵃDue to rounding, some totals may not equal 100.
Table 3.2

Metropolitan University Percent of all Students Enrolled, by Race/ethnicity, and Percent of Students who are Women: Selected Years, 2010 – 2015

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<tr>
<td>White</td>
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<td>55</td>
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<td>Black</td>
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<td>9</td>
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</tr>
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<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonresident alien</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100(^a)</td>
<td>100(^a)</td>
<td>100(^a)</td>
<td>100(^a)</td>
<td>100(^a)</td>
<td>100(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent female</td>
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<td>53</td>
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</table>


\(^a\)Due to rounding, some totals may not equal 100.

Participants

Purposeful sampling is used in this bounded, instrumental case study. The sample size is a set of six senior leaders from the enrollment management division at Metropolitan University. I pre-qualified the staff members to interview with the enrollment management division leader. These six enrollment management professionals were identified as the leaders most impacted and by this admission policy change. To identify the participant institution, I used public information announced in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* noting Metropolitan University’s change to a test-optional
admission policy. Table 3.3 provides context and illustrates general participant demographic information.

**Table 3.3**

*Interview Participant Demographic Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/ethnicity</th>
<th>Time with MU</th>
<th>Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>MBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>BA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>BS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>26 years</td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abby</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Robert**

Robert is responsible for over 250 employees and nine functional areas. He has been with the institution for 20 years and worked through three institutional strategic plans. He is widely known throughout the enrollment management industry as a data-driven, research-based leader who facilitates innovation. He is a highly sought after speaker on strategic enrollment management and marketing topics ranging from tuition revenue planning, retention, assessment and research. He has authored over 20 publications, given over 110 presentations and authored chapters in eight books. Furthermore, he has served on editorial boards and been a faculty member for a higher education doctoral program and enrollment management certification program (Metropolitan University Leadership Bios, 2017). Robert was warm and congenial but very thorough in his interview. He was soft-spoken and extremely detailed in his responses.
Steve

Steve has been employed with Metropolitan University since 2002 but brings over 35 years’ experience to his position. He is a self-defined strategist and data visualization expert. Prior to working in higher education enrollment management, Steve worked in corporate America. Steve is a first-generation college graduate and enjoys working with data and predictive modeling. His portfolio of responsibility includes the enrollment of all new undergraduates (Metropolitan University Leadership Bios, 2017). Steve was curt during his interview and required more probing than expected going into the interview. He was pragmatic and stoic, almost deadpan, during the interview.

Jennifer

For nearly 20 years, Jennifer’s department been responsible for all the planning, creation and implementation of marketing campaigns related to enrollment management. She oversees a staff of social media experts and monitors all media outlets across the university. She is married to a university professor and long-time resident of the metropolitan area. Jennifer was warm, energetic and appeared thrilled to participate in the interview. Her responses were at times lacking in content but very informative from a humanistic perspective. To some questions, Jennifer was able to offer unique perspective given her husband’s position at the university, and could offer a distinctive viewpoint not shared from the other interviewees. She demonstrated a genuine interest in the study findings and offered any assistance going forward with the study.

Lynn

Lynn had the shortest tenure at Metropolitan University from all the study participants. At 14 years, she could still share in-depth perspective on the case study and
could juxtapose her response relative to the other five higher education institutions where she also served in leadership positions. A highly skilled administrator, Lynn manages several key functional areas in the enrollment management division. She is nationally recognized for her work in enrollment growth, student diversity, academic quality, and serves on many state, regional and national boards (Metropolitan University Leadership Bios, 2017). This was the first, shortest, and least meaningful interview in terms of data and content. Lynn was cold and blunt during the interview.

**John**

John is the longest serving administrator I interviewed from Metropolitan University. He has been employed at the institution for over 26 years. This was the longest and most informative interview in terms of content and meaningful data. For the last ten years, John has worked closely with the local public school system with a focus on community engagement, outreach activities, access and attainment (Metropolitan University Leadership Bios, 2017). He spoke passionately about the institutional mission as it relates to inclusion, access and service to first-generation and low-income students. The interview with John was loquacious and I found myself in the awkward position of having to steer the interview back to the main questions. John was gregarious and appeared well-suited for a role in community relations.

**Abby**

Abby has been in her role since 2001 but also spent time with Metropolitan University in the early 1990s. Abby works in research, data, reporting and analytics. Similar to Steve, Abby possesses an interest in data visualization and information technology (Metropolitan University Leadership Bios, 2017). In the interview, she was
very direct and her responses offered data-rich content for the study findings. As a researcher, I could see and feel Abby deconstruct the interview questions in her mind before responding. She was candid and polite while at the same time somewhat reserved.

**Transcription**

To collect data, I used semi-structured qualitative interviews with enrollment management professionals at Metropolitan University. The primary data are from audio recordings and transcription of the interviews. Once transcribed, the audio files were destroyed. The transcriptions and field notes were saved on a flash drive and backed-up on a laptop hard drive. A data collection matrix was developed and participants were assigned pseudonyms for privacy concerns.

To offer a deeper understanding and clarity of the data collected, I personally transcribed all participant interviews. This allowed me to be fully present and deep in the data to assist in identifying salient points from participant comments. While personally transcribing the interviews was a time-intensive process, taking almost eight weeks, this allowed me to explore more conscientiously the data and interviewee responses. I was able to synthesize responses and connect critical points in the admission policy change. I was able to code and categorize the data in a more constructive manner with this method. To compare the data findings against Kezar’s framework of evolutionary change, I used inductive analysis methods prescribed in *Qualitative Data Analysis* (Miles et al., 2014). After reading the interview transcripts and reflecting on the data, I began to identify salient points from the research questions.
Coding Analysis

After transcribing, analyzing and coding the interviews, I identified 50 In Vivo Codes, 46 Open Codes, and 15 Axial Codes in the data—see Appendix E. From the coding analysis, six themes emerged: lead from mission, adaptive change in response to external forces, planned change – foster an environment where change can live, allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization, communication, and leadership.

After first reading through the interview transcripts, I counted nearly 150 mentions of the In Vivo Codes from the interview participants. Through a process of narrowing and synthesis, I focused the In Vivo Codes into Open Codes and further into Axial Codes where the themes emerged. A coding guide is offered for each research question and is displayed in Appendix E. First Cycle coding was used to identify the In Vivo Codes. This allowed me to break the large amount of interview data and transcripts into smaller, more manageable segments (Miles et al., 2014).

Moving forward in the analysis, Second Cycle coding allowed me to group these more manageable segments of data into Open and Axial Codes (Miles et al., 2014). Ultimately, coding guides for each research question were developed listing the themes that emerged through the gradual process of filtering the data into groups. This method of pattern coding allowed for themes to emerge so I could analyze the data against Kezar’s framework (Miles et al., 2014). The In Vivo Coding allowed me the opportunity to use the participants own words gathered during interviews to form codes (Miles et al., 2014).

To develop a narrative, I then used participant quotes highlighting the themes to synthesize and compare the findings against Kezar’s framework. Furthermore, I used
tables to visually represent the process of narrowing the findings and amplify the narratives and participant quotes. Tables from the In Vivo Coding, Open Coding, and Axial Coding are offered as a visual supplement to the narrative and participant quotes.

For validity, and to ensure accuracy, the transcripts and notes were shared with each interviewee and additional research was conducted to corroborate the interviewee responses. The participants from Metropolitan University all reviewed their interview transcription and communicated back any changes. From all six interviews there were minimal grammatical changes. As part of the analysis process, I also listened to the interviews while reading the transcripts prior to and during coding. The process of member checking gave me confidence in my analysis of the transcripts. While waiting to complete the member check process, I completed a summary of reflective notes for each question. This process, under Appendix C, allowed me to synthesize the responses from each of the interviewees.

I then continued moving forward with the process of data analysis and synthesis. Appendix D contains a contact summary statement for each respondent with transcription page and line numbers, salient points, and key aspect. In its entirety, this process allowed me to complete a coding guide. Appendix E lists six themes that emerged from the data.

Data Analysis

I used Kezar’s framework in analyzing the data and used inductive analysis to evaluate the findings against evolutionary change theory (Creswell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014). I prepared and analyzed the data after the interviews with senior enrollment management division officers. Understanding the complexity of Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division and the number of functional areas this
particular admission policy change impacts is critical for thorough understanding. Moreover, interpreting the data from the perspective of diverse values, viewpoints, and communities within the division is also critical in gaining a comprehensive understanding (Creswell, 2013).

I coded the data in an effort to understand how the change process at Metropolitan University fits in Kezar’s evolutionary framework (Hatch, 2002; LeCompte & Schensul, 2010; Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Ultimately, coding guides for each research question were developed listing the themes that emerged through the gradual process of filtering the data into groups. This coding process allowed for new themes to emerge that enhanced the theoretical framework of evolutionary change in higher education (Eisenhardt, 1989). In analyzing the research findings, I was able to understand if the manner in which the enrollment division implemented this policy change was adaptive or generative, proactive or reactive, active or static, and planned or unplanned change (Kezar, 2001).

As an instrumental, qualitative case study focusing on a bounded system, it is appropriate to focus the data findings around thick descriptive narratives (Stake, 1995). Before the researcher can develop narratives; codes and themes need to emerge and be developed through analysis and synthesis. After transcribing the interviews, I used First Cycle coding to identify In Vivo Codes. This allowed me to break the large amount of data into smaller segments (Miles et al., 2014). Moving forward in the analysis, Second Cycle coding allowed me to group the smaller segments of data into Open and Axial Codes (Miles et al., 2014). Coding guides for each research question were developed listing the themes that emerged through the gradual process of filtering the data into
groups. This method of pattern coding allows for themes to emerge so the researcher can analyze the new data against a framework (Miles et al., 2014). From the coding guide, contact summaries, post-interview observations, and causal chain, I was able to conduct inductive analysis to observe how this admission policy change at Metropolitan University either fits or does not into Kezar’s evolutionary change theory (Miles et al., 2014).

**Strategies for Validating the Findings**

For this instrumental case study, I accounted for validity a number of different ways: piloting the interview questions, member checking, and triangulation (Creswell & Miller, 2000). These steps also ensured that I conducted data gathering and analysis in an ethical manner (Merriam, 2009).

I used the lens of the researcher and participants to validate the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The use of a critical paradigm assumption, my personal reflexivity, and collaboration of study participants ensured validity through the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Prior to conducting the interviews at Metropolitan University, I emailed the interview protocol to two institutions to pilot the questions (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 2013). Piloting the interview protocol allowed me to revise some of the interview questions before sitting down with senior leadership of Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division. The interview protocol was emailed to two institutions who recently changed their admission policy to test-optional and their feedback allowed me to refine the interview questions (Creswell, 2013).

Through bracketing, suspending my experiences, accounting for and understanding my biases as a former member of the enrollment management community,
I acknowledged and described my professional viewpoint and work to suspend those beliefs during the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Stake also outlines the importance of triangulation with a case study. Triangulation allows for the convergence of information from multiple sources to validate the data collected in the case study (Stake, 1995). In addition, by thoroughly understanding, believing and trusting in the research, data collection and procedures, I was confident in the validity of the study.

Research also supports member checking to be a critical component to the validity of a bounded case study (Stake, 1995; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Throughout, and at the conclusion of the interviews, I allowed the study participants to member check my findings for accuracy and descriptive validity as this is a key procedure in verifying accurate representation of participants’ realities (Creswell & Miller, 1995). I provided the interviewees (members) my account of the interview transcription as a manner for checking the validity of the findings (Creswell, 2013). After transcribing the interviews and analyzing them for emergent themes, allowing the study participants to check the findings ensures that my bias and potential misinterpretation does not enter into the data findings. Furthermore, sharing the coding guide and post-interview observations with the study participants acted to validate the findings; a significant step as the enrollment management community is a relatively close group of professionals who share a common goal of serving the needs of prospective students. As such, taking the findings, data, and interpretations back to the participants for review of the study was a natural process of efficacy for this case study. This allowed the participants to provide credibility and validity to the study.
Reflection during this study ensured the perspective of the researcher is flexible and open to new ideas as various aspects are unveiled during the process. By monitoring my actions and thoughts during data collection, analysis and review, my personal self-reflection could expose personal constructions on my worldview and values relative to college admissions, change, and test-optional policies. This action helped maintain consistency throughout the research study (Hardcastle, Usher, & Holmes, 2006). This bracketing process allowed the opportunity to set aside personal experiences and view the admission policy change to test-optional admissions with a fresh perspective.

I personally transcribed the interview recordings to allow for a deeper understanding of the salient points. I also offered the participants an opportunity to review and validate the interview transcripts. Contact summaries for each interview were prepared to uncover salient points and open codes. Member checking also served as a validation process for the data integrity in the study. Through triangulation, I conducted a cross-case analysis evaluating the data for reoccurring codes and emerging themes from the interviews (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Creswell, 2013). Once the data were evaluated by each case study participant, the recordings were destroyed for the purpose of confidentiality and anonymity. A coding guide and causal chain allowed me to synthesize and compare the data findings against Kezar’s evolutionary change framework. In summary, post-interview reflective notes, contact summaries, a coding guide, member checking, and forming a causal chain allowed me to thoroughly process and analyze the data.

The opportunity to personally transcribe the interviews allowed for a deep understanding of why, to what degree, and how this admission policy change occurred at
Metropolitan University. Offering the completed interview transcripts back to the participants for member checking served as a validation point in the data analysis. In addition, I was able to further validate and triangulate the interview findings through supplementary research and follow-up questions with one particular interviewee.

**Ethical Considerations**

In conducting this case study, I made a conscience effort to approach the process with integrity and resolute transparency. From an ethical perspective, I made certain to always have the best interest of the participants and potential benefactors in mind when conducting this case study. I made certain to not become involved in the issue, the participants or the situation. I also maintained participant confidentiality during the study, observed participant anonymity and protected the data collected during the study. As a former professional member of the enrollment management community, I made certain to act as a consummate professional in a manner becoming of a senior administrative officer and as a member of the graduate student research community. These various steps, checks and balances, ensured that I moved forward on the correct ethical path.

More formally, a University of Nebraska Institutional Review Board (IRB) form was submitted for committee approval. Furthermore, each participant in the study received a copy of the IRB and informed consent letter for his or her records. Moreover, I offered participants the opportunity to review the interview data and to keep a copy should they desire.

A principal researcher must always consider a number of critical matters when conducting a case study. Situations may arise when a researcher can become too
immersed in the issue, people or situation thus clouding researcher judgement. The researcher must always maintain confidentiality during the study, observe informant anonymity, and protect who has access and control of the collected data (Stake, 1995). What is most critical for the researcher in a case study is to keep the best interests of the informant in mind as this guides the researcher on the correct ethical path. As such, the researcher must ensure that the informant review and sign the informed consent letter and keep a copy for their personal records (Stake, 1995). In addition, concerning ethics in a case study, a researcher should allow the informant to review the data and keep a copy should they desire.

**Reporting the Findings**

After reading the interview transcripts and reflecting on the findings, I started to identify the salient points. In Vivo Coding looks for common phases and reoccurring comments from the interviewees so the researcher can group findings of similar meaning. Subsequent filtering through Open Coding and Axial Coding allowed me to narrow the findings to core themes (Miles et al., 2014). In Vivo Coding allows the researcher to use the participants own words gathered during interviews to form codes (Miles et al., 2014). To develop a narrative, I then used participant quotes highlighting the themes to synthesize and compare the findings against Kezar’s framework. Then, I used tables and figures to visually represent the process of narrowing the findings and amplify the narratives and participants’ quotes.

**Summary**

For this study, I interviewed six senior leaders in the enrollment management division at Metropolitan University. All six interviewees were contacted via email and
sent a copy of the IRB form and informed consent prior to agreeing as participants in the study. These individuals were recommended as they were central to the admission policy change in the enrollment management division at Metropolitan University.

The interview times and location were scheduled through the divisions administrative assistant over a two-day period. The enrollment management division is located in one of Metropolitan University’s downtown office buildings. The building, an ordinary, non-descript city office structure, constructed of metal and glass would not be identified as a university building to the casual observer. I had to sign-in at a front desk and receive a visitor pass in the lobby before taking the elevator to the 17th floor. Upon arrival, I was greeted by the division’s administrative assistant and escorted to a large conference room where the interviews would take place. The conference room was an enclosed interior space with no windows. It was finished with multimedia, interactive technology, professional appointments and clean finishing’s. I was offered bottled water and coffee and a direct line to the administrative assistant in the event I needed any support. At the center of the conference room, there was one large wooden table with room for close to twenty people. I settled in the conference room space and setup my notes, interview protocol, laptop computer, and recording device. The interviews lasted between 40 minutes and 90 minutes and five of the six occurred on the first day. All the interviewees sat across from me with a recording device between us and my laptop opened in front of me for reference and noting taking. I prepared copies of the informed consent and interview protocol should any of the participants ask for a copy. All the interviews were recorded with my mobile phone on an application designed for interview
recording. Each interview received a date stamp and I was able to create a file and name each participant recording at the conclusion.

Once all the interviews were complete, I started to transcribe the interviews myself. While this process took almost eight weeks, personally transcribing the interviews allowed me to engage with the data on a deeper level. While this required a significant time commitment, it allowed me to better understand, further internalize, and synthesize the interviewee responses. After transcribing the interviews, I began a process of identifying reoccurring statements and answers to my research questions. Refining and filtering the interview transcripts through In Vivo Coding, Open Coding, and Axial Coding allowed me to build out the salient themes from interviewee responses (Miles et al., 2014).

This chapter summarizes the qualitative methodology for this case study. A review of the rationale, strategy and data collection method outline provide context for the purpose. I selected this unique case to study, and used recommendations from the enrollment management division leader to identify those individuals most impacted by Metropolitan University’s admission policy change. Purposeful sampling was used to identify the case study participants as delimitations narrowed the options for this research (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2013). Methods for data analysis and transcription were outlined along with a thorough description of the validation process and ethical considerations.
CHAPTER FOUR
REPORT OF FINDINGS

Interviews

This case intended to understand the decision to change Metropolitan University’s admission policy to test Optional. Personal interviews with senior leadership in the enrollment management division uncovered why the change occurred, the degree of change, and how the change occurred. This research study used Kezar’s evolutionary change theory as the framework to study the change at Metropolitan University. I wanted to understand how external and internal forces impacted the enrollment management division leadership to introduce this admission policy change. In reporting the findings, the intent was to understand whether or not this case study fits Kezar’s evolutionary change framework. To do so, I used inductive coding to analyze the findings. To be precise, the research questions at the center of this instrumental case study are:

1. Why did the enrollment management division change to a test Optional admission policy?
2. Was the degree of change in the test Optional admission policy first or second order for Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division?
3. How did the change to test Optional admissions occur?

Research Question #1

This section reviews the specific findings for research question one in this case study; why this change happened. The key findings from question one indicate that Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division made this change because they examined their own data, evaluated the external market and made a planned change
that lived within the institutional mission statement and responded in a way to the external environment that would support their pro-growth enrollment agenda.

Metropolitan University’s mission statement was the most consistent point of reference shared from every interview participant as to why this admission policy change occurred. The test-optional policy supports Metropolitan University’s mission statement, but that is not what prompted the enrollment management division to make this policy change. The external forces of shifting demographics, less emphasis on the ACT and SAT test, the adoption of an IB curriculum in the metropolitan public school system and a pro-growth enrollment agenda better frame the question of why this admission policy change was adopted. Table 4.1 lists two overarching themes that emerged from question one: lead from mission and adaptive change in response to external forces. Subthemes that support lead from mission include access and diversity. Subthemes that support adaptive change in response to external forces include external forces, external change, shifting climate, and increase enrollment.
Table 4.1

Findings Why Metropolitan University Changed to Test-optional

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lead from mission</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Metro U. is grounded in Mission</td>
<td>Mission-based change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mission is to serve marginalized populations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Institutional culture promotes access and diversity</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promote access and diversity for students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive change in response to external forces</td>
<td>External forces</td>
<td>Market pressure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>External change</td>
<td>IB curriculum and public school changes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shifting climate</td>
<td>Less influence on SAT and ACT test scores</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More students of color</td>
<td>Changing demographics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase enrollment</td>
<td>Capacity to grow</td>
<td>Internal pressure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition dependent revenue source</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pro-growth enrollment agenda</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Compiled from Coding Guide for Research Question 1—Appendix E.

**Themes and Subthemes for Research Question #1**

After analyzing the interview transcripts, the following two key themes emerged from question one: *lead from mission* and *adaptive change in response to external forces.*

Mission was a consistent comment across all interview participants. When I analyzed the transcripts, I counted “mission” 14 times and variations of the importance of mission, e.g., access and diversity, where mentioned five times. The role of mission emerged
from all the participant interviews. As stated by Jennifer below, living into the mission is not just about serving students, but a meaningful reason why some employees work at Metropolitan University. Jennifer shared:

I think it has to do, this is my own perspective, think it has do with our mission. We have a mission to serve the underserved first-generation students. That’s big here and we realize that, you know, tests aren’t always accurate predictors of success and we know that we have a lot of first-generation employees at the university, so I think people have a heart for it. (Jennifer)

Furthermore, as Steve commented, the mission is not a statement evaluated or reviewed on a set timeline for superfluous reasons, but rather, it is a significant, core belief that drives decision-making in the division. Steve expressed the following:

That’s not just rhetoric or some mission statement that’s on a website, a feel good mantra that we pass around. But in fact it should shape the way that we make any number of decisions not the least of which is how we manage the admission process. (Steve)

More simply put, Jennifer referenced the mission and the division’s commitment to keeping the statement relevant in the operation. She shared how the mission attracted employees to Metropolitan University and in her view, is a reason the institution is unique. Jennifer commented:

I just thought it was interesting (the admission policy change to test-optional) because it related to our mission. Um, and, we’re really committed to the mission. I think everyone on my team is – it’s just what draws people to this place. It’s a really unique place. (Jennifer)

As demonstrated, while every interviewee shared the importance of Metropolitan University’s mission, Steve best validated everyone’s thought and feeling around the mission statement with the following:

There is a deep-seeded commitment at the university to a mission of access and opportunity and diversity. So it was, there was a context we were aware of that
this wasn’t going to be an uphill slog on this because the overall culture and mission and the success we’ve had here. (Steve)

In addition, participants commented on the connection between the institutional mission statement, access and diversity as noted in quotes about first-generation and low income student enrollments. Given the institutional objective of a pro-enrollment growth agenda, senior leadership in the enrollment management division began to wonder if their admission policies were limiting enrollments from a student population with a direct connection to the mission statement. As noted by Abby, they started to examine data and research to determine if a test-optional admission policy would open access to more students who fit the institutional mission. To this point, Abby offered the following:

So given that first-generation low income students are explicitly a part of our mission, the question began to circulate is there, is there something we’re missing? Are there students that were missing who are not applying to the university precisely because what they perceived to be the barrier of test scores? (Abby)

Senior leaders also discussed how they could change the operation to fit within the mission, or consider changing the mission statement. They looked at what the data showed and the changes occurring with prospective student demographics. The leadership team at the center of the test-optional admission policy change used this opportunity to reaffirm the mission and align the operation to meet institutional enrollment goals and serve educational needs of students in close proximity to campus.

All the interview participants shared this sentiment, but Jennifer summarized it best when she stated:

And so we said either we take some action to think about how we do admissions and think about how we can do it differently, or change the mission. And, so there was considerable discussion about how mission fits into what we do. How
important the population is, what the future of that population was from the demographic standpoint. (Jennifer)

In researching public information through *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, I was able to validate and corroborate findings from the interviews this policy change was grounded in institutional mission (Hoover, 2011a; 2011b). Furthermore, in follow-up questions with an interviewee I was able to confirm a prior president at Metropolitan University emphasized the international mission on a consistent basis in both public and private fora and made the mission statement a keystone in a prior university strategic plan.

Moreover, I substantiated the mission statement findings through several sources on the Metropolitan University homepage. First, the institutional homepage offers a callout of the mission statement (Metropolitan University Homepage, 2017). Of particular interest to this theme is Metropolitan University’s Office of Mission and Values. The office has a professional staff of 13 members led by a senior executive for university mission (Metropolitan University Office of Mission and Values, 2017). The institutional mission statement, adopted by the board of trustees in 1985 and revised in 1991 and 2016, is a four-page document with delineated sections for core purposes, students and faculty, and unique points of distinction (Metropolitan University Office of Mission and Values, 2017). Providing service to the local geographic area for the Public Good is mentioned six times in the mission statement. Access, diversity and meeting the educational needs of first-generation and underserved cultural and ethnic groups from the local geographic area is referenced five times (Metropolitan University Office of Mission and Values, 2017). The senior executive of mission and values also published a speech
that engages the viewer in a compelling experience about mission, diversity, inclusion, access and impact (Metropolitan University Office of Mission and Values, 2016).

While the external environment helped move the change forward, leadership within the division developed a culture and workplace where employees could think proactively about strategies and be innovative when opportunities were presented. During his interview, John talked at length about culture and the stresses many universities today are experiencing relative to enrollment growth and diversity. To a limited degree he referenced the interplay of external and internal forces noted in Kezar’s (2001) research, however, the leadership’s belief in evidence-based, empirical data and use of outside experts and research allowed the division to take a wider view of these pressures. John stated the following:

I am very conscious of the cultural pressures on universities, to stress one thing as opposed to another in what they’re looking at. So you’ve got those constraints, those cultural constraints, and they’re very hard for people to see, I think, unless you step outside of your culture. (John)

During the interviews and after reviewing the transcripts, it was apparent the leadership team was well-connected and networked with enrollment management professionals and colleagues across the country. To this end, they were well aware of the test-optional admission policy movement. Abby commented about the leadership team’s desire to be one of the early adopters in their peer and aspirant institutional set to implement test-optional admissions.

We were aware that not many institutions like us were doing something like this, so let’s take a leadership role if you like. We weren’t the first institution to get into (test-optional) by any means, but, but among the bigger institutions—we were. (Abby)
While this external force was not the primary factor in Metropolitan University’s move to adopt a test-optional admission policy, it is clear from John’s statement below they used this planned strategy change to grow enrollment in the context of a highly competitive student recruitment landscape. This is evident in John’s following comment:

This is the direction that things were gonna go (test-optional) and we wanted to be early out in front of our competitive set in introducing and something like this. The demographic changes we face in this region are clear. We draw very strongly from the urban center here and we would be continuing to create barriers and roadblocks if we didn’t do something like this (test-optional). (John)

Specific to the external environment and its impact on why this change occurred, the interviewees tell the story of external forces and change, increased competition, a pro-growth enrollment agenda, and other schools adopting a test-optional admission policy as the reason to move forward with this policy change. In Metropolitan University’s immediate geographic recruitment market, interviewees commented on changes in the advanced curriculum in the public secondary school system. In their own internal analysis of students enrolling at Metropolitan University from these high schools, evidence supported the claim that ACT or SAT test scores did not best predict the success of students at Metropolitan University. Robert’s position on the external environment and a very simplistic method for planning the policy change is shared below:

You could clearly see the writing on the wall. More and more institutions (external competition) were moving into this space (test-optional) and we like to be a little ahead of the curve. So Steve put together a plan and a proposal, and politically, worked it very cleverly as a pilot. (Robert)

Furthermore, given the pro-growth enrollment agenda and Metropolitan University’s capacity to grow, the enrollment leadership team did not want to exclude student populations critical to the mission because of ACT or SAT test scores. The
adoption of the test-optional admission policy would ensure those students would not be overlooked in the admission process. Robert goes on to explain the complexities involved in admission application proliferation and how that mechanized process can work against students on the lower end of the test score spectrum. If admission application numbers continued to grow, by traditional operational processes, students who might otherwise be successful at Metropolitan University would be excluded based on ACT or SAT test score performance. In the quote below, Robert shared how the test-optional admission policy would help prevent this from happening:

And as we start looking at the numbers, what we noticed was that as we got more selective, and applications grew, the logical conclusion would be that students who were on the low end of the academic scale as measured by test only, and the low-end of the socio-economic scale, who are essentially the same students, were the ones who are going to be squeezed out. And so we said either we take some action to think about how we do admissions and think about how we can do it differently, or change the mission. (Robert)

When asked about enrollment target goals for different student populations, it was clear from all the interview participants, there was no defined target or benchmark the division set to achieve. The test-optional admission policy did not come with a caveat of enrolling any certain percentage of a given student population. The policy was a planned strategic change to help ensure enrollment growth. As I asked more pointed questions about enrollment targets, John’s comment below best summarized reactions from all the interviewees.

It’s not as if we said we wanted to have X percent (enrollment) from this area and X percent (enrollment) from that area. It’s not like that was written anywhere, but I think there was a concern that was articulated around this table and other parts of the university that we’re not growing the same way in the city as we were outside (of the city regarding enrollment)—and is that an issue. (John)
To learn why the enrollment management leadership made the test-optional admission policy change, I had to ask the interview participants about external and internal forces impacting the division. They all shared the unique convergence of external competitive forces and changing student demographics with an internal pro-growth enrollment agenda as the foundation for this planned change. Through the data analysis, two key themes emerged from question one: lead from mission and adaptive change in response to external forces.

**Research Question #2**

This section reviews the specific findings for research question two in this case study; the degree of change. The key findings from question two indicate that Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division was fortunate that not much of their internal operations had to change. This was possible because of a previous non-cognitive assessment project that was introduced into the admission process a few years prior to the test-optional policy adoption. The non-cognitive assessment project laid the technical infrastructure for the admission policy change to test-optional and allowed for scalability of their systems; however, there were back-end, technology enhancements required to ensure the system and database could manage this change. In addition, this admission policy change required volunteer application readers for the change to occur. The enrollment management division had to consult with outside experts and provide staff training to effectively launch this new policy. Table 4.2 lists two overarching themes from question two: planned change – foster an environment where change can live and allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization. Subthemes that support planned change – foster an environment where change can live include
innovative workplace and empirical support. Subthemes for allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization include internal processes and changes to the operation.

**Table 4.2**

*Findings to What Degree Metropolitan University Changed to Implement Test-optional*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planned change – foster an environment where change can live</td>
<td>Innovative workplace</td>
<td>As an innovative workplace, most processes did not have to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empirical support</td>
<td>Leadership used empirical data to drive decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Evidence-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization</td>
<td>Internal processes</td>
<td>Change was communicated systematically throughout the division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>An open call for volunteers to be readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>New readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Admission officers and readers had to be trained on the new review process</td>
<td>A lot of training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New supplements offered in place of SAT and ACT</td>
<td>New short answer essays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applicants are now read twice by admission officers</td>
<td>Double-blind reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to operation</td>
<td>Need to build awareness in the marketplace</td>
<td>New marketing collateral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT had to develop some new systems</td>
<td>Technical changes to the routing process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Compiled from Coding Guide for Research Question 2—Appendix E.*
Themes and Subthemes for Research Question #2

After analyzing the interview transcripts, contact summaries and coding analysis the following two key themes emerged from question two: **planned change – foster an environment where change can live** and **allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization.** In particular, this case was planned change from the enrollment management division supported by an innovative workplace environment that fosters change. A result of having planned for this change over the course of several years, the impact to the division’s operation was minimal. Jennifer best captured this sentiment with the following quote:

The only thing that changed is that my staff might have been trained to be readers. (Jennifer)

Responses from multiple interviewees demonstrated Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division as a place where change can live. Because of this division culture and management philosophy, their evolving nature allowed the test-optional admission policy to naturally integrate into the operation with minimal obstruction. Steve shared the following when asked what had to change in the division to implement the new policy:

Really nothing (technical), it (the test-optional policy) grafted (sic) quite naturally into the (application) review. It took a lot of change to introduce our non-cognitive assessment because I see a lot of parallel and we had such support for the non-cog philosophy and that kind of innovation. We had tremendous support from our IT division to come up with a really sophisticated system for grading the essays. Grading them, allowing readers at their desk to be able to review, rate, and route. Once it’s read once, it goes to a second reader and if those two scores were significantly different, then a third reader. A manager could sit there at her console dashboard and know exactly where we were backlogged. (Steve)
The senior leadership prefers to be ahead of the curve relative to their peers in being early adopters, and they believe in research-based, strategic enrollment management policies and procedures grounded in empirical evidence supported with data. Their internal, pro-growth agenda coupled with external forces of changing demographics and a sizeable increase in test-optional admission policy adoption allowed for this opportunity to exist.

From the top down, the enrollment management division at Metropolitan University is a place where innovation takes place and change is supported. The leadership and culture use empirical data to help drive decisions and the information technology department within the division ensures systems and processes are available and in place to support innovative changes. The division is aware of breaking developments in the industry and is well networked with colleagues in the enrollment profession where they can solicit help and feedback when making a transformational change.

As noted in the participant interviews, the enrollment management division’s innovative workplace fostered an environment where change can live. Employees felt empowered to think proactively about strategies to ensure continued enrollment growth amid the swirling external forces. The enrollment management division was fortunate that a non-cognitive assessment project initiated a few years prior to the test optional admission policy allowed for an easy test-optional policy adoption and integration into their operation. Had the non-cognitive project not taken place, it is possible the test-optional policy change would have been more disruptive and cumbersome for the division to integrate. John offered excellent insight into the process of inviting outside
experts and developing a network of contacts staff members could connect with going forward as Metropolitan University implemented the test-optional admission policy. This process offered the enrollment management division employees valuable resources as the policy was introduced. John shared this perspective when he stated:

When we started on the road to the non-cognitive process we did bring Sedlacek in to talk with us about his perspective and research on non-cognitive variables in admission. We brought in Oregon State people to train us on their process. We were building this support system, network of contacts, and awareness of the literature. My functional department did research on how schools implemented the non-cognitive process. Test-optional, in contrast, was a decision to be implemented. A co-worker did connect with a lot of individuals working with test-optional policy and was also touching base with other schools. So we did have information from other schools. We were getting feedback and testing out our ideas and getting some idea of what it was going to look like for us. (John)

Where the division had to make a significant investment in time and energy was the adoption of new admission file readers. This was compulsory for the division as the new test-optional admission policy added a writing supplement to the admission application in lieu of ACT or SAT test scores. As such, the division would need a larger number of file “readers” to help with the anticipated workload the test-optional policy would create. This had a significant impact on Lynn’s department and she most directly had to manage the new process of training and managing the new file readers and the process involved in this step. She commented:

We had to send people to training and take time to do the reading and volunteer for that, and some people really liked it and some didn’t. We had a lot of meetings about (application) reviewing. (Lynn)

From a broader perspective, Steve, commented on the interrelated components of the policy and their impact on the division as a whole. He shared the following comment:

We had great volunteers, rigorous training, testing of interrater reliability measures and all this stuff, so that really required a lot of work to introduce. The
test-optional from an enrollment management point of view, it was just far more bounded. It just had to do with how the admissions office was going to review those students who opted for it. (Steve)

Furthermore, the new group of readers had to be trained on understanding their biases and what to look for in a qualified applicant now that test scores were omitted from the application review process. As Abby shared, new readers, from outside the admission department, had to be trained and a process established for making admission decision recommendations. Abby best summarized this step in the policy adoption process with the following comment:

There was a call for who would like to do this and then they had to be trained...there was a whole like series of trainings and education about what this was (reading essays for non-submitters) and what we were trying to achieve. I remember you would sign up and sit there in a group and it would be like, we’re going to read this case...to get a sense of what we’re looking for and to get a sense of potential for (student) success. Everybody has their own personal bias when they’re reading something and being aware your bias; I remember that was something we talked a lot about. So it was just a really interesting training. (Abby)

When asked specifically what had to change in the enrollment management division to fully adopt the policy, individual interviewees shared perspective from their functional department, but John best summarized the division change process with the following statement:

There was a training in this room. We brought in people from another university and did sort of a training on their process. That led to a little pilot project at Metro U. where we used what was really an adaptation of a non-cognitive assessment. We didn’t use exactly that instrument. We played around with some questions. We had William Sedlacek come in from Maryland. He did some consulting with us very briefly on his stuff. We read his stuff, we read other stuff, and a group of us wrote a series of four questions. Sort of a simplified version of a non-cognitive assessment. Some of the questions we thought were important to put in there that were consistent with what Sedlacek had been talking with us about. I think we ran it by him before we went any further, that I’m forgetting,
but I think we probably did. We tried to build, and we did build the technology. So, this got incorporated into the admission process in an electronic way. (John)

In order to discover the degree of change required by the enrollment management leadership to implement the test-optional admission policy, I asked the interview participants about the process they used to adopt the policy. To a large extent, the division culture and working environment allowed for the successful acceptance of the policy. However, the leadership team built an organizational system were planned change was able to exist because of their innovative and supportive climate. The two themes that emerged, planned change – foster an environment where change can live and allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization, created an organization and structure where the process of new policy implementation was seamless.

Research Question #3

This section reviews the specific findings for research question three in this case study; how the enrollment management division implemented the test-optional admission policy. The key findings from question three indicate that Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division made this change possible through communication and leadership. While the enrollment management division at Metropolitan University is a large complex system with nine functional areas and over 250 employees, their hierarchical structure and systemic internal communication plan allowed this policy change to inculcate throughout the division. In addition, an external communication plan regarding the test-optional admission policy, as noted below in Table 4.3, was critical to the successful launch of the policy. Moreover, this all would not have been possible without the leadership in the enrollment management division. Table 4.3 lists two
overarching themes from question three: communication and leadership. The key findings from question three indicate that this change was possible through communication with key constituents, developing wide-spread support, sharing information, a top-down approach to implementing the policy change, and leadership in the enrollment management division. Subthemes that support communication include included key constituents inside and outside the division. A subtheme for leadership includes senior leadership.
Table 4.3

Findings How Metropolitan University Changed to Implement Test-optional

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Informed key constituents</td>
<td>Public relations campaign to develop support</td>
<td>Faculty support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guideline counselor support for the change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Went to faculty committee to vet and solicit feedback for the proposed change</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used relationships to building support for the change</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support was developed across campus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continuous communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informed key constituents in the division</td>
<td>Functional areas within the division were ready for the change</td>
<td>Internal support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Functional areas in the division were debated about the change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal and informal conversations about the change occurred throughout the division</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purposeful conversations with leadership about the change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal understanding and buy-in first</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Senior leadership</td>
<td>From the top down</td>
<td>Initial group was small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To guarantee faculty support and approval the leadership team offered a pilot phase first</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Division leader respected as a change innovator</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open-minded, innovative thinkers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respected opinion across campus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respected division</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Compiled from Coding Guide for Research Question 3—Appendix E.
Themes and Subthemes for Research Question #3

After analyzing the interview transcripts, contact summaries and coding analysis, the following two key themes emerged from question three: communication and leadership. Steve pointed to a key strategy of communicating to the faculty:

We needed to involve faculty council in terms of how this would be rolled out and managed to get support there, but on the condition that we studied the heck out of it and that we have come back with regular reports. (Steve)

In this case, Steve, was able to lead a “public relations” tour and speak with any constituents across campus who was “willing to listen” about the planned policy change.

One key factor attributable to the success of Metropolitan University launching their test-optional admission policy was the adoption of the pilot program. The senior leadership proposed a pilot phase of the test-optional policy because they did not think they would be able to move a change in policy through the faculty council in time to when the public announcement would have the most significant impact on the upcoming enrollment cycle. Poor timing would put the enrollment management division at a competitive disadvantage as prospective students would not be aware of the new policy in advance of formulating their college choice sets. So the enrollment management division took the following approach:

1. The pilot phase was not permanent;
2. They would report to faculty council annually;
3. If there was a problem with the admission policy, they could cancel the test-optional process immediately;
4. They would conduct a very thorough research to test the assumption that students could be admitted without test scores.
Senior leadership in Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division embraced the process of collaboration and buy-in by welcoming a member of faculty council to participate in the design of the test-optional admission policy pilot.

The enrollment management leadership started the process by sharing information and published reports concerning the test-optional movement. All the participants expressed how the division leadership shared information and research findings about test-optional admissions to educate the staff, but Steve’s following comment best encapsulated the process:

We circulated a lot of work, you know, whitepapers like the fair test group on the success (of test-optional)…we really worked with our faculty committee to keep them apprised of the fact that we were on the, we were going to be on the right side of history. (Steve)

Then began the discussion of the policy change both formally and informally across the division. Functional department leaders would discuss the policy change with their direct reports and share-out feedback to the senior leadership. Depending on the position of each interviewee, their perspective varied on this theme, but as the divisional leader, Robert best articulated how the leadership communicated and shared information about exploring and implementing the policy change:

We have annual division-wide meetings and what I do at those meetings is highlight some things we’re doing to try to create the integration of effort. Here’s some research, here’s some information that’s shaping strategy, and here are the highlights of some innovative things underway. So even at an early incubator stage, we were talking about test-optional and the non-cognitive just as a here’s what we’re working on that represents an innovative shift so everybody knew within the division what was percolating throughout. And then the fact that we launched it as a pilot made it perfect to give regular updates. (Robert)

Once the internal enrollment management division had agreed to the policy change, the senior leadership could take the policy change out to external constituents.
Knowing in advance faculty council would be a hurdle for the change, the senior leadership communicated and shared as much information and data about test-optional admission as possible. Steve, in fact, approached this process as an opportunity to educate the campus community about why this policy change made sense for Metropolitan University. While all the participants commented about the level of communication demonstrated by the division to ensure a successful policy implementation, Steve best captured the theme with the following:

For the next eight months I was on a public relations tour to any group that would listen. Presidents council, the deans, associate deans, student government, advisory boards, high school guidance counselors, pretty much anybody who would listen or have us or who was interested in the topic. Employee groups at the university, they were all very intrigued by it (the test-optional policy) so that was our implementation on it, that was our experience. (Steve)

As noted, a key strategy to the successful launch of the test-optional policy was the idea to pitch it as a pilot program the enrollment management division would run, collect data and report back out to the faculty council on the success of the policy. As Robert shared, the leadership team constructed a plan for how this policy change would be presented as a pilot to assuage any hesitation with the policy change:

Steve put together a plan and a proposal and politically worked it very cleverly as a pilot project to get faculty support to demonstrate how we ought to be doing this to work in a thoughtful, analytic, empirical kinda way. We had to test our assumptions, we knew what we needed to do to implement it, and we did that over time and that’s what we’ve done. (Robert)

In addition, over their tenure, enrollment management division leadership established themselves as a respected group of professionals who make data-informed decisions driven by empirical research. Steve best summarized this sentiment with the
following comment about the divisions ability to drive continuous change based on a track record of proven results:

Enrollment management probably takes on greater importance and greater stature within the organization precisely because if it didn’t, we’d be vulnerable. And so, when EM talks about something, there’s a lot of respect for what we put forward. We don’t do fly-by-night or the latest fad. What we do is highly research driven and numbers-based. So I think that contributed a lot to the success and the buy-in from other divisions. When we say something people tend to listen. (Steve)

To determine how the test-optional admission policy change occurred, I asked the interview participants about the process they used to implement the policy. Enrollment management division leadership commented extensively about their communication within the division and more broadly to the entire campus community. A proven track record of success helped validate to campus constituents why and how the division would implement the policy to meet institutional goals. The two themes that emerged, communication and leadership, ensured a successful policy integration into the division’s operation.

Findings

What began to emerge during the interview process was the decision to change the admission policy of Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division was grounded in the institution’s mission. There was no mention of internal forces or pressure from other administrative units at the university to adopt this policy. While the external environment and forces moved this policy change forward, this was still a planned change that was born internally, grounded in mission, and facilitated by the senior leadership in the enrollment management division. Multiple respondents noted how the enrollment management division likes to be innovative and ahead of the industry
curve. In total, mission, or some slight variation of mission-based, was mentioned 14 times between all interviewees. Moreover, innovation, or taking a position of leadership as early adopters regarding admission policy change, was mentioned a total of seven times. In discussing the question of why this policy change occurred, it became clear that this was the result of a convergence of several key moments in enrollment management history at Metropolitan University:

1. First, the implementation of a non-cognitive assessment a few years’ prior in the admission process at Metropolitan University;

2. Second, ensuring access and equity in the admission process for underrepresented minority students;

3. Third, the adoption of an International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum in local secondary schools and the identification of those students as success stories at Metropolitan University;

4. Fourth, a pro-growth agenda in the enrollment management division.

To operationalize this policy change, the enrollment management division leaders had to ensure a seamless admission process for prospective students. The technical capabilities and structural components had to be scalable given the division’s pro-growth agenda; the non-cognitive project completed a few years’ prior offered the technical framework that helped lay the foundation for this policy implementation.

While reviewing the themes to understand how this policy change occurred, the following findings emerged:

1. The policy change was driven from the top down by a senior leader in the division;
2. The change required extensive communications and coalition building;

3. The policy was first established as an admissions pilot program to establish credibility with key university constituents.

Summary

For this case, six themes emerged as critical to the admission policy change at Metropolitan University and could be used as a lens to evaluate change in similar complex organizations.

*Lead from the mission* was the first theme to emerge. While a confluence of factors including external forces coupled with internal guidance, brought about this admission policy change, it is clear from the findings that this was grounded in the mission of Metropolitan University. Senior leadership was aware of the external forces of changing demographics coupled with a pro-enrollment growth agenda for the university. They also knew the students most likely to be pushed out of the enrollment picture where those at the lower end of the academic spectrum. The leadership team could have lowered admission standards to admit more prospective students; however, they came back to the university mission to serve underrepresented and marginalized student populations (Metropolitan University Mission & Values Homepage, 2017). They did not want to deny students the opportunity to enroll at Metropolitan University simply because of an ACT or SAT test score. Especially in light of data collected internally and research demonstrating high school GPA along with non-cognitive factors as a stronger predictor of college persistence and success than ACT or SAT test scores alone (Schaffner, 1985; Geiser, 2002; Astin & Oseguera, 2005; Zwick & Sklar, 2005; Geiser & Santelices, 2007; Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009; Epstein, 2009).
This admission policy change served the university mission and as a result did not push against the office culture. While all the interview participants personally and passionately believed in the mission, Lynn best shared how Metropolitan University’s mission is ingrained in the institution and one of the reasons employees are connected to Metropolitan University:

What struck us was at the very time when that population of mission students was getting bigger especially because of new immigrants and other sorts of things, we would be shrinking our pool and our population at the university. That struck a lot of people as anti-mission and antithetical to what we do with how we do it. So that was really the genesis of it (the change to test-optional admissions). (Lynn)

*Adaptive change in response to external forces* was the second theme to emerge. While the university’s mission is grounded in serving marginalized populations, it also promotes access and diversity. The shifting student demographics pointed to a change in future enrollment patterns and the divisional leadership knew that change had to occur (Mortenson, 2007; Prescott & Bransberger, 2012; Hussar & Bailey, 2014; Bransberger & Michelau, 2016). A shifting cultural climate with less influence on ACT and SAT tests from the test-optional movement meant this change policy would not be met with an inordinate amount of resistance. Furthermore, leadership in the enrollment management division had empirical data and research to support the admission change policy. The capacity to grow Metropolitan University’s overall enrollment served as an internal driver to support this change initiative. The division had been experiencing unprecedented enrollment growth in the years leading up to this change and this policy presented another opportunity to achieve the pro-growth enrollment agenda. As supported in the data findings, while most of the interviewees were well aware of the
external forces and market pressure, Steve best articulated using this policy as a strategy in response to the external environment with the following:

In terms of the undergraduate strategy, it is just one more, it’s (test-optional) just one more step in trying to remain market responsive and that’s really all. (Steve)

He also shared historical perspective how Metropolitan University has reacted over the years to shifts in the marketplace and the division use of data to make informed decisions:

This university sees itself, I suppose, as very responsive to (external) shifts. We’ve had a long history of looking at the data and trying to be on top of that. (Steve)

As reinforced in the data findings, all the respondents clearly articulated their supportive workplace culture and environment that drives innovation, grounded in data and evidence, but Robert demonstrated this best with the following:

So we have a focus on integration, we have a focus on information. It’s very data driven—an empirically minded division and a focus on innovation. So it’s the three I’s: integration, information, and innovation. (Robert)

**Planned change – foster an environment where change can live** was the third theme to emerge. A result of having planned for this change over the course of several years was minimal impact to the division’s operation. The organization’s culture, management philosophy and their evolving nature allowed the test-optional admission policy to naturally integrate into the operation with minimal obstruction. All interview participants shared how the senior leadership prefers to be ahead of the curve relative to their peers in being early adopters, and they believe in research-based, strategic enrollment management policies and procedures grounded in empirical evidence.

Insomuch as the process of change to the new admission policy was well planned and
executed, what did require extensive work was staff training. All the interview participants shared details about the extensive training that took place and Lynn best summarized the respondents with the following:

We had to send a lot of people to training and take time to do the reading and volunteer for that, and some people really liked it and some didn’t. We had a lot of meetings about (application) reviewing. (Lynn)

*Allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization* was the fourth theme to emerge. As uncovered in the findings, because of an earlier non-cognitive project, the enrollment management division was well prepared to integrate this admission policy change due to technology already in place; readers for the new test-optional applicants just had to be trained. The non-cognitive assessment project gave the division much of the technology requirements necessary to easily overlay the new test-optional process into the current operation. This was possible because senior leadership in the enrollment management division structured an organization to facilitate internal procedural change.

Senior leadership consulted industry experts to gain the expertise needed for seamless integration into their operations. Leadership also consulted with the division information technology experts to make sure they could operationalize what they wanted to happen with the policy change; there was no disconnect between the leadership plan and technical scalability. Once the leadership set forward on this path of change, they clearly communicated the planned change to the entire division and the necessary training that would need to take place. Abby stated how the planned training was rolled out to the staff and broader campus community:
There was a call of who would like to do this and then they had to be
trained...there was a whole like series of trainings and education about what this
was (reading essays for non-submitters) and what we were trying to achieve. I
remember you would sign up and sit there in a group and it would be like, we’re
going to read this case...to get a sense of what we’re looking for and to get a
sense of potential for success. Everybody has their own personal bias when
they’re reading something and being aware your bias, I remember that was
something we talked a lot about. So it was just a really interesting training.
(Abby)

*Communication* was the fifth theme to emerge. While this theme is not a major
break from change literature, there are lessons to be learned from how the leadership
team at Metropolitan University communicated this admission policy change. Senior
leadership knew early in the process that involving and informing faculty would be
critical to successfully launching this policy. Moreover, the policy was pitched as a
“pilot” program requiring less oversight from faculty council. As such, the enrollment
division would present, share data, and could end the program if the admission and
enrollment results were not favorable for test-optional applicants. The enrollment
division also worked to inform and develop support for the policy change with key
influencers in the college enrollment process—high school guidance counselors. The
leadership team went to faculty to vet the idea and actively engaged them in the process
by soliciting their feedback. All the interview participants expressed the wide-spread
support, sharing of information and data, and leadership from the top needed to make the
implementation possible. While support for change within the division was clear and
well communicated, the leadership also had to consciously work with constituents across
campus to develop support for the policy change as demonstrated by Steve:

The first thing that we had to do was, before we even took it to the Faculty
Council, we did some informal polling with key members of the constituencies:
faculty members, the deans, and other people at the university. (Steve)
Steve also shared:

So we always presented this first or two, or three times maybe, as a pilot. We just never went out and said we’re test-optional now. And maybe, probably, that’s how it was received. But we’re piloting a test-optional policy here and that’s how we thought about it internally. And how I think we felt we had to communicate it internally to faculty to other administrators. (Steve)

*Leadership* was the sixth theme to emerge. Leadership knew that to guarantee faculty support, launching this policy change first as a “pilot” was necessary. While the initial group leading this change effort was small, from the top down in the division, the lead change agent was respected as a leader and change innovator. Leadership in the enrollment management division was also highly regarded and respected across campus; they were able to approach the policy change process from a position of power. The division had conducted all their necessary research, consulted with industry experts and presented the policy with data and empirical research. Across the division, there was senior-level buy-in and a clear understanding where the division was headed with the admission policy change. As the data findings show, this was not about what the enrollment management division did, rather how they did it that ensured their success.

As shared by Robert:

I think the best long-term consequence is it’s not what we did but how we did it. That we introduced something as a pilot basis trying to bring it to scale in steps. Get some baseline data to start, evaluate the effectiveness, and, and be willing to change wherever the evaluative data take you. (Robert)

To review, the key themes that emerged were *lead from mission, adaptive change in response to external forces, planned change – foster an environment where change can live, allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization, communication and leadership*. These themes were supported with the following subthemes: access
diversity, external forces, external change, shifting climate, increase enrollment, innovative workplace, empirical support, internal processes, changes to operation, informed key constituents, informed key constituents in the division, and senior leadership.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

With the interviews completed, findings reviewed and data analyzed, I determined how the findings related to the evolutionary change literature. Chapter five begins with an abbreviated review of the purpose and case study questions. I analyzed the findings for fit against Kezar’s evolutionary change framework through inductive analysis (Miles et al., 2014). I then move into reviewing the significance and limitations of the study, followed by a discussion for future practice, recommendations for future research, and I close with a summary and conclusion.

Initial Study Purpose and Question

The purpose of this study was to examine why the enrollment management division at Metropolitan University, a private, urban, tuition-dependent, baccalaureate institution, changed their admission policy to test-optional. Specifically, through this qualitative research I sought to understand the why, to what degree, and the how of the admission policy change. The following research questions, based on Kezar’s evolutionary change framework, were at the center of this case study.

1. Why did the enrollment management division change to a test-optional admission policy?
2. Was the degree of change in the test-optional admission policy first- or second-order for Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division?
3. How did the change to test-optional admissions occur?
Deductive and Inductive Analysis

Based on Kezar’s evolutionary change framework, I pre-assigned categories and codes to this case study (Miles et al., 2014). From her literature, the external environment would lead to why the change occurred; the process, or degree of change, would be slow, adaptive and gradual over time; the outcomes of the change would be first-order structures (Kezar, 2001). Given the frameworks emphasis on external forces, this change would be unplanned, objective and shaped by the environment (Morgan, 1986; Kezar, 2001). This followed Kezar’s findings that the external environment has demonstrated to be a factor in creating change at a college (Kezar, 2001). Table 5.1 displays a deductive causal chain based on Kezar’s evolutionary change framework.

Table 5.1

Deductive Causal Chain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>External environment</td>
<td>Slow, adaptive, gradual change over time</td>
<td>First-order, structural change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>influences change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


However, from the research findings and coding analysis, this instrumental case is more than just an example of evolutionary change. From the data, it is clear that this was also a policy decision grounded in mission for the enrollment management division at Metropolitan University. While Kezar notes that change results from external and internal force interplay, the enrollment management division grounding and focus on institutional mission allowed for a clearer path to the policy change. Though external
forces may have prompted this change, it was slow and adaptive allowing the senior leadership in the enrollment management division to be deterministic and approach the policy change objectively (Morgan 1986; Kezar, 2001). Through inductive analysis, I was able to analyze new elements not included in Kezar’s evolutionary change framework (Miles et al., 2014). Table 5.2 displays an inductive causal chain based on the data findings from the interviewees.

**Table 5.2**

**Inductive Causal Chain**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lead from Mission</td>
<td>Adaptive change in response to external forces</td>
<td>Planned change – foster an environment where change can live</td>
<td>Allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From the inductive causal chain table above, the enrollment management division’s evolutionary change process differs from Kezar’s framework. The evolutionary change literature presented different pre-assigned categories and codes than what were found in this instrumental case study. Most notably, the internal force of Metropolitan University’s mission statement is a clear factor. While alone, this internal force would not exclude the evolutionary change framework, other factors and themes demonstrated this case is a combination of change frameworks. In particular, this case was planned change from within the enrollment management division and supported by
an innovative workplace environment that fosters change. Responses from multiple interviewees demonstrated Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division as a place where change can live. The senior leadership prefers to be ahead of the curve relative to their peers in being early adopters, and they believe in research-based, strategic enrollment management policies and procedures grounded in empirical evidence supported with data. Their internal, pro-growth agenda coupled with external forces of changing demographics and a sizeable increase in test-optional admission policy adoption allowed for this opportunity to exist.

From the evolutionary change literature, Kezar (2001), notes evolutionary change as unplanned, adaptive, idealist, technical, deterministic, objective, and more systematic. The process of change is slow and shaped by the environment (Morgan, 1986). While many of the characteristics in this case fit this framework, there are substantial outliers leading to the conclusion that Metropolitan University supports the claim that this case is a combination of change frameworks. In fact, a combination of frameworks is the strongest approach to support change (Kezar, 2001). When evaluating how well this case may or may not fit Kezar’s evolutionary framework, given the outliers, it is important to consider how these findings do not fit other frameworks of cultural, lifecycle, dialectical/political, and social/cognitive (Kezar, 2001).

Teleological change is planned change that is usually a response to external forces while the impetus is typically internal (Kezar, 2001). This particular change is deliberately shaped by the organization (Kezar, 2001). While time can only tell in the case of Metropolitan University, the early indication is this is a second-order, transformational change for the enrollment management division and institution. Themes
related to Kezar’s teleological change framework represented in this case include mission-based, strategic planning and leadership (Kezar, 2001). In this case, the change was slow, adaptive, of second-order magnitude, and a combination of Kezar’s evolutionary and teleological frameworks.

To find the exact combination of change frameworks, I had to review and consider the aforementioned change frameworks noted in Kezar’s research (Kezar, 2001). For example, lifecycle change relates to phases and focuses more on people within an organization (Levy & Merry, 1986; Kezar, 2001). Lifecycle, however, does not note the importance of training which was a critical component in successfully launching Metropolitan University’s test-optional admission policy. Unfortunately, training in the lifecycle model refers more to individual development and change that results from training (Levy & Merry, 1986; Kezar, 2001). Political change frameworks generally ignore the external environment while social/cognition change frameworks deemphasize the external environment (Morgan, 1986; Kezar, 2001; Bolman & Deal 2003). Cultural change framework generally results in a new culture from responses to changes in the human environment; these are typically long-term, slow and unpredictable (Kezar, 2001; Morgan, 1986).

According to available literature, an effective enrollment management practice needs to be grounded in institutional mission and vision, where decisions are driven by empirical data, and managed with effective communication (Hanover Research Council, 2010). In The Practical Guide to Strategic Enrollment Management Planning in Higher Education, Wilkinson, Taylor, Peterson, & Machado-Taylor (2007) define strategic enrollment management as:
A comprehensive approach to integrating all of the university’s programs, practices, polices, and planning related to achieving the optimal recruitment, retention, and graduation of students with “optimal” defined by the mission, academic vision, and strategic plan of the institution (p. 8).

Strategic enrollment management should be grounded in empirical, data-informed research processes while supported with robust technology mechanisms that offer efficiency and accuracy (Hossler & Kalsbeek, 2013). Hossler and Kalsbeek (2013) also recognize the need for a successful strategic enrollment management office to be responsive to the rapidly changing external environment. In specific terms, they note the critical challenges of costs, access, financial aid, discounting tuition, changing demographics, economic and competitive challenges, retention, persistence and student graduation that must be managed by today’s enrollment leaders (Hossler & Kalsbeek, 2013). In summary, Hossler and Kalsbeek (2013) conclude that “enrollment management is a set of strategies, practices, and perspectives that can help an institution more effectively achieve its mission and goals” (p. 22).

**Significance**

The results of this are significant because it is not what the enrollment management division did in their admission policy change, but rather how they did it. This case is an exemplar for how complex organizations can plan and enact change. The enrollment management division leadership planned this change over the course of several years, looked at their data, and made this change that lives into the institutional mission statement. To quote the Robert, “I think the best long-term consequence is it’s not what we did, but how we did it.” Following Kezar’s belief that change is best supported by a combination of frameworks, this case demonstrated that evolutionary and
teleological change effectively establish the external and internal force interplay and support for making change possible because of environmental forces. Regardless, even if the enrollment management division was aware of all the external forces, if they did not have the internal structure, culture and leadership in place to support and foster change, the policy implementation may not have been successful. Furthermore, Kezar’s (2001) teleological change framework emphasizes the mission as a critical component at the impetus of a change process. In her findings, Kezar (2001) notes that higher education systems are best evaluated through the lens of cultural, social/cognition, and political frameworks. However, this case is unique as it references an admission policy in a division of a comprehensive baccalaureate university. Kezar (2001) notes a lack of performance indicators are a challenge to evaluating change in higher education. However, the case of Metropolitan University and the enrollment management division’s admission policy change can be evaluated for performance based on enrollment numbers, persistence rates, and graduation rates of students admitted under the new policy.

Limitations

There are a number of different limitations with this study. To begin, there was only one principal investigator and in a qualitative case study it is critical to account for researcher bias. I made a conscious effort to reset my mindset and approach each subsequent interview without any bias or preconceived thoughts from the prior interview. I made notes after each interview to bracket my personal belief and support for test-optional admission policies. These notes allowed me to consciously move from one interview to the next in an objective manner. Noted in Miles et al. (2014), when more than one researcher works in a team to conduct a study, the findings, data, analysis, and
coding becomes sharper. Having only one researcher for this case study is another limitation as a team of researchers may have enhanced and clarified data analysis and acted as a reliability source (Miles et al., 2014).

A second limitation is the findings are not generalizable to a broad community. Going forward, a consideration for future research is to interview participants at multiple private and public institutions of similar characteristics in order to triangulate data across institutional types and find common themes between the grouped institutions. At that point, researchers could possibly generalize the findings by Carnegie classification, i.e., public, private, high research, low research, etc. and uncover how their respective process of change either supports or establishes new archetypes for organizational change literature. The opportunity to generalize study findings would afford different types of colleges and universities facing recognizable external and internal forces a framework and strategy to enact new policy change. A multiple case study as a form of qualitative research has the added benefit of increased potential for generalizability (Miles et al., 2014). A cross-case study and analysis also allows for researchers to gain a deeper understanding and meaning behind the data (Miles et al., 2014).

Another limitation is I only interviewed six key leaders in the enrollment management division at Metropolitan University. This division at Metropolitan University consists of nine operational units with more than 250 employees, so it is possible with more expansive interviews that different themes could emerge based on employee rank and responsibility.

Several primary limitations relative to the case study site need to be noted. I only considered one four-year, baccalaureate institution that changed to a test-optional
admission policy in the last five years for this study. I only considered a four-year, baccalaureate institution that previously relied on ACT or SAT tests as a tool in the admission process for this study. Due to the changing nature of high school student demographics, baccalaureate institution financial pressures, and tuition revenue dependency, I only considered a tuition-dependent, urban college or university for this study.

A final limitation was restricting the interview participants to the enrollment management division. Even though this case study focused on a policy change within the enrollment management division, it is possible that interviews with other employees outside the division who were impacted by this change could also uncover new findings and themes. Other institutional stakeholders impacted by this change policy, e.g., faculty, staff, students, etc., were not considered or interviewed for this case.

**Discussion for Future Practice**

Based on the findings, when considering future practice, it is critical to consider time, place, and setting of this particular instrumental case. This study was conducted at a time when the level of scrutiny and enormity of external forces and pressure now facing institutions of higher education was unprecedented. The place where this study was conducted is unique; it was an urban university with a rich tradition of serving the educational needs of students in close proximity to campus. Metropolitan University faced a difficult challenge of declining enrollment under a pro-growth enrollment agenda, and shifting student demographics to more underrepresented, minority student populations. These challenges coupled with external forces of increased competition and the rise of the test-optional movement allowed the enrollment management division to
plan a change in their admission policy to grow enrollment, maintain and increase the
diversity of their student population, and better serve the educational needs of students in
close proximity to campus. The setting in Metropolitan University’s enrollment
management division is another point to consider as the senior leadership was able to
foster an environment and culture where change can live. Senior leadership in the
enrollment management division are highly regarded as experts in their field and well
respected across campus at Metropolitan University. Their innovative, empirically-
focused and data-centric division allowed a change agent to lead this effort.

This site is of particular interest given its urban, diverse geographic location.
While most institutions who have adopted a test-optional admission policy are smaller,
liberal arts institutions in rural locations, Metropolitan University is the largest, private
university in an urban location to implement a test-optional admission policy (FairTest, 2016). Furthermore, Metropolitan University, already a diverse student population, used
this strategy to ensure enrollment from diverse racial and ethnic minority students;
whereas rural institutions may use a test-optional admission policy strategy to attract
racial/ethnic minority student enrollments (Schaffner, 1985; Shanley, 2007; Mulugetta,
2015). As findings show, Metropolitan University is also an exemplar case where the
adoption of a new strategy does not run counter to the institutional mission statement.

Other institutions of higher education considering a change to test-optional
admissions can learn from this particular case how to navigate a complex system with
many different stakeholders. The leadership of Metropolitan University’s enrollment
management division demonstrated this is how to conduct planned change. As
organizations look at change, a key is to consider the level of planned change necessary
based on available data, meaningful analysis of the external environment, the forces and sources of internal and external elements, and the organizational culture.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

A qualitative case study of enrollment management leaders from multiple private and public institutions who recently changed to a test-optional admission policy should be conducted. Future research on test-optional policy change specific to institutional type and mission-centric institutions is recommended. Grouping the case study participants together by similar institutional characteristics such as enrollment size, student profile, and geographic location would allow the researcher(s) to triangulate the data and find common themes. With such a study, findings could be generalizable to the broader community and help impact admission policy change for enrollment management divisions at varying institution types. Future research could include a collective case study to discover similar and disparate processes of admission policy change to test-optional for multiple universities.

Based on the study findings, culture and change literature, I recommend future research to focus on culture and institutional change, examining the following:

1. How likely is change to occur if it goes against the organizational culture;
2. How far can a respected leader or change agent move change forward when it is diametrically opposed to the organizational culture and ethos of the institution?

This is not to say that culture cannot be challenged, rather leaders need to find a path within the given culture to influence change and move the organization forward.

As outlined in chapter one, the present and looming national demographic changes in K-12 student populations present broad and deep implications for
baccalaureate institutions. Arguably, all of American higher education must plan for and enact change to manage this shift. It is with this in mind, that enrollment leaders and campus administrators at baccalaureate institutions must be keen to enrollment projections at their institutions. Historically homogenous, PWIs, need to ensure their campus climate is warm and welcoming to underrepresented minority students (Sireci, Zanetti & Berger, 2003). Changing demographics and future enrollment patterns for primarily White, baccalaureate institutions have implications for student advising, academic services, student affairs, and academic programming. To the degree that baccalaureate institutions fail in this regard, some will need to seek alternative revenue streams to remain a going concern if enrollment and student success wans. Some baccalaureate institutions will need to admit more students with lower ACT or SAT test scores and admitting the students does not ensure their matriculation or success (Hoover, 2014). Furthermore, a campus climate supportive of underrepresented minority student enrollment needs to be proactive in order to recruit and retain minority students (Sireci et al., 2003).

These changes in student demographics present dramatic implications to institutional identity of baccalaureate colleges. Future research is recommended in this area as administrators and campus leaders will need to further evaluate their mission, admission criteria, and pedagogical practices to ensure that enrolling students are engaged in the campus and successful in their academic pursuits. The rationale for such research relative to institutional mission is the link between educational and civic mission in higher education when racial differences are prevalent in society (Hurtado, 2007).
Time will tell, as critics will look back and evaluate baccalaureate institutions on their ability to welcome, retain, and graduate diverse racial/ethnic student populations.

**Summary and Conclusion**

What moves an institution of higher education to change? Are internal forces or external forces at the epicenter of a change process at a college or university? The system of higher education in the United States is facing unparalleled pressure. Prospective students and their families possess high expectations for employment outcomes, graduate school placement and a return on investment. In addition to their education, students today expect an experience from higher education.

Competition amongst institutions has intensified with declining numbers of high school graduates and changing demographics among the prospective student population. Finances are a concern both for families and administrators leading the hallowed halls of higher learning. The compounding effect of all the forces impacting higher education is change. What is misunderstood is whether this change is born internally or initiated as a result of external forces.

As this case study demonstrated in evaluating why Metropolitan University changed their admission policy, enrollment management leadership looked at their data over a long-term horizon and noticed they were losing applicants and matriculants from their local area. So to not abandon a central component of the institution mission statement, they made a change. Furthermore, internal data demonstrated to the leadership there would not be an inherent risk, regardless of test scores, in recruiting and enrolling local high school students completing the IB curriculum. In fact, local students were performing and persisting at a rate equal to the general student population. The
leadership team in the enrollment management division at Metropolitan University sought to take a holistic approach to admission application review looking beyond ACT or SAT test scores. The case of Metropolitan University’s admission policy change is about planned change and the strategic process leadership used to enact this change.

What should be clear to enrollment management leaders in higher education is the changing student demographics in the United States. By evaluating birthrates, enrollment management leaders can plan and understand how the future student pipeline is evolving. With a declining high school population and projected demographic changes, sustainable enrollment projections may increase in challenge for certain types of post-secondary institutions (Rivard, 2013).

A December, 2016 article from The Chronicle of Higher Education reported for colleges to maintain their enrollments and revenue, they must change how they recruit to reach and retain this diverse student population (Garcia & Serrata, 2016). Demonstrated in figures 5.1 – 5.4, and supported by Garcia and Serrata’s (2016) report, the United States will experience flat or declining high school graduation numbers, while at the same time future higher education enrollments will be from a non-White, diverse student population.
Figure 5.1

*Total U.S. Public and Private High School Graduates, School Years 2000–01 to 2012–13 (Actual) through 2013–14 to 2031–32 (Projected)*

*Note: Knocking at the College Door* (Bransberger & Michelau, 2016).
Projected Cumulative Change in U.S. High School Graduates after School Year 2012 – 13, by Race/ethnicity (White).

Figure 5.2

*Projected Cumulative Change by Race/ethnicity (White)*

*Note: Knocking at the College Door* (Bransberger & Michelau, 2016).
Furthermore, the following data show there is significant regional variation throughout the United States.

**Figure 5.3**

*Total Public and Private High School Graduates, by Region, 2000 – 01 through 2031 – 32*

*Note: Knocking at the College Door* (Bransberger & Michelau, 2016).
Specific to this instrumental case study, the following data show there is significant regional variation throughout the United States.

**Figure 5.4**

*High School Graduates by Region and Race/ethnicity (Midwest)*

Note: *Knocking at the College Door* (Bransberger & Michelau, 2016).

With respect to this case study and the admission policy change at Metropolitan University, it is critical to view these figures through the lens of enrollment management leaders. Given the present economic climate and shifting higher education landscape, postsecondary administrators and enrollment management leaders at private, tuition-dependent, baccalaureate institutions are under pressure to change, adapt and increase net revenue by recruiting, retaining and graduating more students in an increasingly competitive and crowded marketplace (Tierney, 1999; Kezar & Eckel, 2002a; Couturier, 2006; Shapiro, 2009).

As noted in chapter one, a 2005 report showed private, postsecondary institutions relied on tuition for 30 percent of total revenue (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). Moody’s Investors Service report from 2013 noted eight years later in 2011 tuition and auxiliary
revenues accounted for 79 percent of total revenue for private universities (Bogaty, 2013). When such a substantial portion of institutional revenue is generated from tuition, there is reason for concern; Moody’s projected enrollment for fall 2013 to be flat or lower than the year prior (Bogaty, 2013). Using the above figures as a macro look at future student enrollment, it is reasonable to critically examine student enrollment projections at private, baccalaureate, tuition-dependent institutions.

My original study was designed to examine how an institution moved to a test-optional admission policy. After reviewing evolutionary change theory and frameworks that would provide context for the study, I was able to focus the study on why, to what degree, and how an institution made an admission policy change to test-optional. After identifying the institution for this case, Metropolitan University, I began to uncover the specific characteristics of change.

As I continued to narrow my focus for this case study, I utilized the theoretical framework of the evolutionary model of change presented by Kezar (2001). Kezar’s model of evolutionary change uses the lens of external and internal force interplay and the environment to understand why change is occurring, the degree to which change is occurring, and how change occurs (Kezar, 2001; Baker & Baldwin, 2014). While this model of evolutionary change was utilized in a recent study of organizational change to understand how and why institutions change, what makes them susceptible to change and what forces promote the change (Baker & Baldwin, 2014), my study was different as the focus was on change in the enrollment management division given its position as the frontline for student recruitment and tuition revenue.
I discovered with this case study, and as supported by Kezar’s findings, institutional mission should be a focal point when colleges and universities are challenged by internal or external forces (Kezar, 2001; Hartley, 2003; Hartley & Schall, 2005). Kezar’s framework demonstrates that forces and sources impact why change occurs. The two primary sources for institutional change are external forces and internal forces deliberately shaped by the organization (Kezar, 2001; Baker & Baldwin, 2014).

Given the gender balance and racial diversity of Metropolitan University, one may posit the enrollment management division leadership made this planned institutional change as they began to question the usefulness of the ACT or SAT test scores in their admission process. As I learned during the interviews and through the data analysis, all the participants believed strongly in the university mission. They used data to make informed policy decisions and as figure 5.5 demonstrates, a drop in enrollment brought this planned change forward. The enrollment management division evaluated their internal operation and external environment and made a strategic change to drive enrollment, maintain the mission of inclusion, diversity and access.

As the interviews uncover, this change took place over an extended period of years and a non-cognitive admission project that launched in 2008 helped to lay the technical groundwork and infrastructure for the test-optional admission policy change in 2011. Through their own internal data analysis, the divisional leadership could mark the capacity to grow enrollment, they knew they were losing market share from their primary, urban market, and a recent analysis demonstrated that local public school matriculants from the IB curriculum where demonstrating persistence and success at Metropolitan University regardless of their ACT or SAT test score.
The confluence of these forces facilitated the enrollment management leadership team adopt the new test-optional admission policy. Even though total enrollment has continued its decline from an all-time high of 25,398 students in 2011, one year after implementing the test-optional admission policy, Metropolitan University enrolled its largest freshmen class ever, and in 2013 student of color enrollment reached a milestone record 34 percent of total enrollment (Metropolitan University History of EEM, 2017).

**Figure 5.5**

*Metropolitan University Total Enrollment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>24414</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>21363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>20548</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Historical Metropolitan University enrollment data* (Metropolitan University History of EMM, 2017).

Kezar’s (2011) research highlights the primary sources of change in higher education as costs and changing demographics, and I argue the enrollment management division leadership planned this policy change over the course of several years from compounding external forces and a need to maintain enrollment growth.
Central Research Question

This study was guided by research questions to understand the case of Metropolitan University and why it changed to a test-optional admission policy. In this qualitative, bounded, instrumental case study, I examined why, to what degree, and how the admission policy change occurred in Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division. I examined the following questions specific to Kezar’s model:

1. Why did the enrollment management division change to a test-optional admission policy?
2. Was the degree of change in the test-optional admission policy first- or second-order for Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division?
3. How did the change to test-optional admissions occur?

While institutions must be grounded and guided by their mission, they need to continue to seek new ways to fulfill their mission. This case demonstrated the need and success of having data-rich, research-based information to help move policy change forward. This case also demonstrated the importance of market awareness and the external forces that can impede an institution in fulfilling its mission. As Metropolitan University demonstrated, consulting with industry experts who can offer creditability and help train constituents is a valuable part of the change process. For sweeping policy change with broad implications that affect many constituents, this case demonstrated the importance of sharing and communicating vital information, leading from the top-down, and if possible, piloting the policy change.

In a challenging, competitive landscape, difficult decisions need to be made such was the case with Metropolitan University’s decision to adopt a test-optional admission
policy. When the change does not threaten the organizational culture, the change can support institutional identity, its sense of self and purpose (Tierney, 1988; Cowan, 1993; Hossler, Kalsbeek & Bontrager, 2015). When aligned with culture, as was the case with Metropolitan University, change is successful (Kezar & Eckel, 2002a). Organizational culture is a result of senior-level leadership and the effectiveness of an organization is a result of leadership, structure, and culture (Flanigan, 2016). A culture of risk, or innovation, as demonstrated in Metropolitan University’s enrollment management division, allowed employees to feel comfortable in making new choices they would not have made in the past (Kezar, 2001). As the organizational culture changes and evolves, so too should the organizational processes and procedures (Flanigan, 2016). From this case, I learned, as supported in the relevant literature, that culture encourages change (Curry, 1992).

This process has taught me a great deal. Not through the analysis of change frameworks; rather, through the analysis and witness of effective leadership, the importance of culture, guidance by mission and purpose, the value of transparent and meaningful communication, and coalition building. In the end, as was mentioned in one of the interviews, this particular case was not about what changed in the enrollment management division at Metropolitan University, but rather how they went about making the change. There, in those results, meaningful data are available for a broad array of stakeholders to learn from and use as an example about how to bring about change in a division at a college or university.
REFERENCES


Mattern, K., & Allen, J. (2016) *More information, more informed decisions: Why test optional policies do not benefit institutions or students.* ACT Insights in Education & Work.


Metropolitan University History of EMM (2017). Retrieved from https://offices.metropolitan.edu/enrollment-management-marketing/about/history-of-emm-at-metropolitan/Pages/default.aspx

Metropolitan University Homepage (2017). Retrieved from https://www.metropolitan.edu/Pages/default.aspx


APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD MATERIALS

Identification of Project:
Examining change in the admissions policy at a private, tuition-dependent, baccalaureate institution in an urban setting: A qualitative case study.

Purpose of the Research:
The purpose of this project is to study the decision to change the admission policy to test-optional at a private, tuition-dependent, baccalaureate, urban university. The principal investigator seeks to understand why the change was made, the degree of change and what actually changed in the enrollment management division. This research can add to evolutionary change theory literature. This study needs to be conducted because more and more colleges and universities have become tuition dependent as their key revenue source and need to find ways to supplement their revenue. In this particular case study, Metropolitan University has implemented a test-optional admission policy in place of standardized ACT or SAT test exams for college admission. This case study will discover why Metropolitan University made this change in its admission policy and how it has impacted institutional enrollment.

Test-optional admission announcements typically result in a sharp and immediate increase in a school’s number of applications for admission. These new applications also tend to come from underrepresented minority student populations. I would like to learn more about this phenomenon and understand why and how this specific case changed its admission policy to test-optional.

Procedures:
Participants will be part of qualitative face-to-face interviews. The interviews should take no longer than one hour. The interview will be recorded with your permission.

Risks and/or Discomforts:
There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. In the event of problems resulting from participation in the study, psychological treatment is available on a sliding fee scale at the UNL Psychological Consultation Center, telephone (402) 472-2351.

Benefits:
You may find the information exchange a valuable learning experience as you reflect on the process and decisions made in moving to a test-optional admission policy.
Confidentiality:
Any information obtained during this study which could identify you as a participant will be kept confidential. The data will be stored on thumb drive and on the principal investigator’s laptop computer which is password protected. The data will only be available to the principal investigator and will be destroyed once the dissertation defense is complete. It is possible that the analysis from this research may be published in peer-reviewed journals or presented at professional conference meetings. The audio recordings will be destroyed after transcription and the dissertation defense.

Compensation:
There will be no compensation for participating in this research.

Opportunity to Ask Questions:
You have the right to ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answers before agreeing to participate in or during this study. You also have the right to call the principal investigator at any time, cell phone, (812) 599-1180. If you have questions concerning your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the principal investigator or need to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board, telephone (402) 472-6965.

Freedom to Withdraw:
You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the principal investigator or the University of Nebraska. Your decision will not result in any loss or benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:
You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

__________ Check if you agree to be audiotaped during the interview.

Signature of Participant:

___________________________________ __________________________
Signature of Research Participant Date

__________ Printed Name of Research Participant

Page 2 of 3 Pages 7/29/16
Name and contact information of principal investigator

Chris Gage, Principal Investigator
Office: (812) 866-7028
Cell: (812) 599-1180
cbgage@hotmail.com
Hanover College
Office of the President
P.O. Box 108
Hanover, IN 47243
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

IRB# 20161016364EX
Date Approved: 10/06/2016
Valid Until: 10/06/2017

Identification of Project:
Examining the change process in the admissions policy at a private, tuition-dependent, baccalaureate institution in an urban setting: A qualitative case study.

Purpose of the Research:
This study needs to be conducted because more and more colleges and universities have become tuition dependent as their key revenue source and need to find ways to supplement their revenue. In this particular case study, Metropolitan University has implemented a test-optional admission policy in place of standardized ACT or SAT test exams for college admission. Is it possible the institution used this admission policy change to increase their applicant pool to grow enrollment and as a result increase their tuition revenue? The movement to test-optional admission policies has large implications for the test prep industry: The College Board and ACT Inc. If this trend continues, the need for the ACT and SAT will continue to diminish. Non-cognitive assessment questionnaires also address admission questions surrounding the changing demographics in the United States and level of college preparedness based on testing metrics of underrepresented minority student groups and low socioeconomic families. This case study will discover why Metropolitan University made this change in its admission policy and how it has impacted the institutional enrollment.

Test-optional admission announcements typically result in a sharp and immediate increase in a schools number of applications for admission. These new applications also tend to come from underrepresented minority student populations. I would like to learn more about this phenomenon and understand why and how this specific case changed its admission policy to test-optional. Additionally, further insight can be gleaned if the case participant has data on the persistence and success rates of matriculated students who did not submit test scores.

Procedures:
Participants will be part of qualitative face-to-face interviews. The interviews should take no longer than one hour. The interview will be tape recorded with your permission. The principal investigator will conduct a site visit for non-participant observation.
**Risks and/or Discomforts:**
There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. In the event of problems resulting from participation in the study, psychological treatment is available on a sliding fee scale at the UNL Psychological Consultation Center, telephone (402) 472-2351.

**Benefits:**
You may find the information exchange a valuable learning experience as you reflect on the process and decisions made in moving to a test-optional admission policy.

**Confidentiality:**
Any information obtained during this study which could identify you as a participant will be kept confidential. The data will be stored on thumb drive and on the principal investigator’s laptop computer which is password protected. The data will only be available to the principal investigator and will be destroyed once the dissertation defense is complete. The information and data collected in this study may be published in peer-reviewed journals or presented at professional conference meetings. The audio recordings will be erased after transcription.

**Compensation:**
There will be no compensation for participating in this research.

**Opportunity to Ask Questions:**
You have the right to ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during this study. You also have the right to call the principal investigator at any time, cell phone, (812) 599-1180. If you have questions concerning your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the principal investigator or need to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board, telephone (402) 472-6965.

**Freedom to Withdraw:**
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___________ Check if you agree to be audiotaped during the interview.

Signature of Participant:

______________________________________
Signature of Research Participant        Date

______________________________
Printed Name of Research Participant

Name and contact information of principal investigator

Chris Gage, Principal Investigator
Office: (812) 866-7028
Cell: (812) 599-1180
cbgage@hotmail.com
Hanover College
Office of the President
P.O. Box 108
Hanover, IN 47243
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Examining the Change Process in the Admissions Policy at a Private, Tuition-Dependent, Baccalaureate Institution in an Urban Setting: A Qualitative Case Study

Introduction:

I want to thank you for taking the time to participate in this research case study and for talking with me today. I will be recording and transcribing what we say today. I will ask you to review the interview transcription and notes I make regarding my interpretation of what you say. I ask that you please look at the transcription and notes, make any necessary comments or changes, and return them back to me. It is important that I reflect in my writing what you mean. The transcription will be a verbatim one, so be prepared to see any “uhs” and “ahs” that you say. If I use any quotes in the final written paper, those will not be in the transcription. It is important that the transcription be verbatim so that I do not paraphrase something you have said with an incorrect interpretation. Your privacy will be protected in this interview and transcription, as I will use a non-identifiable number for your data. Once transcribed, the audio recording will be destroyed. This interview will take approximately 60 minutes.

Do you have any questions so far?

I am interested in better understanding the change process in admission policy at your institution. Applicants now have the choice of whether or not to submit an ACT or SAT test score for admission. More specifically, I hope to understand the internal and external forces that prompted this policy change and how it has impacted the enrollment management division operation at Metropolitan University. I am conducting this research to understand why and how the admission policy changed and any results since its implementation. I may also ask you some additional questions as we go along in order to clarify anything that is unclear.

Do you have any questions?
1. Why did Metropolitan University change to a test-optional admission policy?

Probing question – were there any pressures to make this change from outside of the organization? Were there any pressures to make this change from inside the organization?

2. Why did this admission policy change occur?

Probing question – when did the initial internal conversations regarding this admission policy change begin? Were there functional departments within MU’s EM division that expressed concern/support?
3. How was Metropolitan University’s mission statement considered in the change policy?

Reflective Notes:

4. What external and internal forces lead to this policy change?
   Probing question – ask about faculty and staff buy-in.

Reflective Notes:
5. What has been the institutional budgetary result after this policy was implemented and how has the financial health of Metropolitan U. changed? 

Reflective Notes:

6. How has your institutional net tuition revenue changed over the last five years?

Probing question – has MU realized its goal with implementing this admission policy change? Did the test-optional admission policy change work? 

Reflective Notes:
7. How was the decision to change this admission policy relayed to you and how did you explain the decision to staff you supervise?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflective Notes:</th>
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</table>

8. How has this changed the admission process at MU?

Probing question – in your specific area, what roles, functions, responsibilities, actions and practices changed as a results of moving to test-optional admission?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflective Notes:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. How has this policy change influenced the approach your staff takes with prospective students, applicants, admitted students and matriculants?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. What actually changed in MU’s EM division as a result of this admission policy change?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. How has this policy change influenced the way your institution evaluates applicants for admission?

Reflective Notes:

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<th>Reflective Notes:</th>
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</table>

12. Did you consult industry experts on policy change and test-optional admissions?

Probing question – what, if any, outside experts were consulted to help MU move forward with this admission policy change?

Reflective Notes:

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<th>Reflective Notes:</th>
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</table>
13. How did the process of changing your roles, functions, responsibilities, actions and practices occur?  

Reflective Notes:

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14. How do you think this will affect the long-term strategy for your office operation?  

Reflective Notes:

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</table>

15. What has been the public reaction to this admission policy change? Consider alumni, high school counselors, parents of students, higher education leaders, and community based organizations.

Probing question – I am also interested in the internal MU reaction to this policy change. Was there any positive or negative reaction to this change? I am interested to know about internal reaction within the EM division and institutional-wide at MU.

Did senior leadership in MU’s EM division do anything to address the negative reactions?

16. Has this change made an impact on the diversity of your applicant pool, admitted student population and enrolling student population?
## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT CONTACT SUMMARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Salient Point</th>
<th>Key Aspect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>86, line 9</td>
<td>This change was driven by their mission</td>
<td>Mission-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87, line 26</td>
<td>This is an innovative, entrepreneurial place to work</td>
<td>Innovative workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88, line 64</td>
<td>There was a lot of internal support for the change</td>
<td>Internal support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88, line 65</td>
<td>We’re mission-based</td>
<td>Mission-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91, line 107</td>
<td>There was a lot of change and training</td>
<td>Change &amp; training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93, line 143</td>
<td>A call for more volunteers</td>
<td>Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94, line 170</td>
<td>We’re really committed to the mission</td>
<td>Mission-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100, line 262</td>
<td>First there was a pilot period</td>
<td>Pilot period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103, line 307</td>
<td>With major change you need this</td>
<td>Coalition building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103, line 320</td>
<td>Dean’s level discussion and higher up</td>
<td>Senior level buy-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104, line 332</td>
<td>Trained to be readers</td>
<td>Staff was trained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109, line 417</td>
<td>Reaching more of the market while still serving the mission</td>
<td>Marketplace and mission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT CONTACT SUMMARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Salient Point</th>
<th>Key Aspect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>113, line 479</td>
<td>Deep seeded commitment to institutional mission</td>
<td>Mission-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113, line 482</td>
<td>Knowledge of institutional culture</td>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117, line 543</td>
<td>It was consistent with mission</td>
<td>Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117, line 553</td>
<td>More and more institutions moving into this space</td>
<td>Marketplace pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117, line 556</td>
<td>A proposal to pilot the policy first</td>
<td>Pilot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117, line 557</td>
<td>The pilot program assisted with faculty support</td>
<td>Faculty support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118, line 571</td>
<td>We had tremendous support internally</td>
<td>Internal support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119, line 584</td>
<td>We had great volunteers and rigorous training</td>
<td>Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124, line 681</td>
<td>An optimal time to introduce change</td>
<td>Introduce change</td>
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<tr>
<td>125, line 686</td>
<td>External pressure from competition</td>
<td>Market pressure</td>
</tr>
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<td>125, line 691</td>
<td>Create roadblocks if not for this</td>
<td>External changes</td>
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<tr>
<td>125, line 692</td>
<td>Serious about mission</td>
<td>Mission-based</td>
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<tr>
<td>126, line 701</td>
<td>Driven by demographic change and competitive nature</td>
<td>External change &amp; Competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128, line 732</td>
<td>Really worked with faculty committee</td>
<td>Faculty communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129, line 752</td>
<td>Passionate about university mission</td>
<td>Mission-based</td>
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<tr>
<td>130, line 763</td>
<td>Sharing info more than consulting outside help</td>
<td>Sharing info</td>
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<tr>
<td>135, line 851</td>
<td>An empirically-minded division with a focus on innovation</td>
<td>Data-driven &amp; innovative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135, line 860</td>
<td>Sharing information that’s shaping strategy</td>
<td>Sharing strategic thoughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136, line 880</td>
<td>Ongoing dialogue to keep employees informed</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140, line 947</td>
<td>A real challenge that just didn’t happen</td>
<td>No internal battles</td>
</tr>
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</table>
142, line 978 Just one more step to remain market responsive Market responsive
143, line 998 Not what we did but how we did it Introducing change
145, line 1032 Long-term lesson learned Introducing change
152, line 1136 Something we did because of what we hold dear Mission-based
## INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT CONTACT SUMMARY

**Type of contact:** Int.  
**EM leader:** Chris Gage  
**With whom, by who:**  
**Conf. room:**  
**place:**  
**10/24/16:**  
**SITE Metro U.**  
**Coder CG:**  
**Date 12/12/16**

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<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Salient Point</th>
<th>Key Aspect</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>153, line 1159</td>
<td>Data shared a clear trend</td>
<td>Impetus for change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>154, line 1180</td>
<td>Groups explicitly part of the mission</td>
<td>Mission-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156, line 1203</td>
<td>Using data to help drive the evidence</td>
<td>Evidence-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158, line 1244</td>
<td>Mission-centric and mission-focused</td>
<td>Mission-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159, line 1261</td>
<td>Potential student enrollment would be squeezed out</td>
<td>External forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159, line 1266</td>
<td>Discussion about mission and how it fits</td>
<td>Mission &amp; strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>160, line 1274</td>
<td>Shrinking our pool and university population</td>
<td>External forces &amp; mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161, line 1286</td>
<td>What we value and what is important</td>
<td>Change all around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162, line 1303</td>
<td>Time to think seriously about this</td>
<td>Early movers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162, line 1321</td>
<td>Informal polling with key constituents</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162, line 1326</td>
<td>How might this play out and possible objections</td>
<td>Fact finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>163, line 1335</td>
<td>Presenting the findings to key constituents</td>
<td>Vetting process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168, line 1410</td>
<td>Public relations tour</td>
<td>Coalition building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>173, line 1490</td>
<td>Advice and cooperation from important divisions</td>
<td>Internal support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>176, line 1541</td>
<td>When EM speaks, campus constituents listen</td>
<td>Position of power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>176, line 1544</td>
<td>Respect with what we put forward</td>
<td>Respected division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>192, line 1812</td>
<td>Provost was pushing to raise test scores</td>
<td>Other forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Salient Point</td>
<td>Key Aspect</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>193, line 1840</td>
<td>Alternative ways to live out our mission</td>
<td>Mission-based</td>
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<tr>
<td>195, line 1863</td>
<td>Assessments that showed HSGPA was a stronger predictor for success at Metro U</td>
<td>Research-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>196, line 1876</td>
<td>Initiated during an admissions meetings</td>
<td>Initiated internally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>198, line 1912</td>
<td>Communication with my team about why</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>199, line 1937</td>
<td>Change driven by senior leader</td>
<td>Change leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200, line 1951</td>
<td>The division was well down the path</td>
<td>Internal first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201, line 1958</td>
<td>This was offered internally as a pilot first</td>
<td>Pilot after approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>202, line 1979</td>
<td>Sharing information with key constituents</td>
<td>Coalition building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>219, line 2046</td>
<td>Define as having mission characteristics</td>
<td>Mission-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>219, line 2048</td>
<td>A lot of consensus building</td>
<td>Coalition building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>214, line 2175</td>
<td>We brought outside people in to help train</td>
<td>Outside help &amp; training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT CONTACT SUMMARY

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Salient Point</th>
<th>Key Aspect</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>220, line 2264</td>
<td>This was a very natural fit for the institution</td>
<td>Mission-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>226, line 2366</td>
<td>Deliberate discussions around what we planned to do</td>
<td>Deliberate conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>230, line 2431</td>
<td>It starts at the top and disseminated from there</td>
<td>Top down lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>240, line 2611</td>
<td>There has to be some motivation on the part of the institution</td>
<td>Internally driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>240, line 2615</td>
<td>This environment and very competitive market</td>
<td>Competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>241, line 2632</td>
<td>The guy up the street doing it so we have to do it too</td>
<td>External forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>242, line 2642</td>
<td>They are very respected within the institution</td>
<td>Respected leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>246, line 2714</td>
<td>It’s a completely natural evolution</td>
<td>Evolutionary change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT CONTACT SUMMARY

Type of contact: Int.  EM leader, Chris Gage  Conf. room  10/24/16  SITE Metro U.
With whom, by who  place  date  Coder CG  Date 12/12/16

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<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Salient Point</th>
<th>Key Aspect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>251, line 2784</td>
<td>Accessibility and the changing market position</td>
<td>Changing market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>252, line 2802</td>
<td>Limits in terms of the culture</td>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>253, line 2825</td>
<td>Doing this while respecting the mission</td>
<td>Mission-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>253, line 2832</td>
<td>Demographic profile and student mix</td>
<td>Response to external Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>258, line 2910</td>
<td>Outside experts to help with training</td>
<td>Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>258, line 2912</td>
<td>That led to a pilot program</td>
<td>Pilot program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>258, line 2916</td>
<td>Outside scholarly researcher and expert</td>
<td>Outside expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>263, line 2991</td>
<td>It began a formal pilot agreed to by the faculty</td>
<td>Pilot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>269, line 3092</td>
<td>The climate was shifting</td>
<td>Shifting climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>273, line 3161</td>
<td>Reaction to changes in the external environment</td>
<td>Enrollment shifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>273, line 3170</td>
<td>Using data to understand the type of student who was succeeding</td>
<td>Meaningful data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>274, line 3189</td>
<td>Multiple models developing very fast within the city</td>
<td>Changing external environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>280, line 3280</td>
<td>We developed a close relationship with them</td>
<td>Market response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>287, line 3398</td>
<td>We all had to get on the same page</td>
<td>Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>292, line 3474</td>
<td>The pressure in enrollment around rankings</td>
<td>Pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>292, line 3489</td>
<td>We managed to get support there</td>
<td>Faculty support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>292, line 3496</td>
<td>We were piloting the program first</td>
<td>Pilot program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>294, line 3522</td>
<td>I didn’t expect that kind of applause</td>
<td>External support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>299, line 3608</td>
<td>Not the first, but perhaps among schools our size</td>
<td>First mover</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
300, line 3624 Data collection, data analysis, we were looking at the data Data driven

301, line 3645 I think it was probably more top-down Top-down

302, line 3657 We probably had more informal conversations Informal conversations

302, line 3666 That was more internal to a smaller group Smaller group debate

303, line 3676 It was informal than formal discussions Wide-spread informal support

304, line 3692 This did not occur because of other institutional pressures Born internally

304, line 3698 Maintain faithfulness to our mission Mission-based

305, line 3709 We were not being pushed by internal constituents No internal pressure

306, line 3718 We see ourselves as responsive to shifts Market responsive

309, line 3785 You need to step outside your culture Cultural limits

311, line 3808 The annual cycle and pressure Intense pressure
### APPENDIX E

**CODING GUIDES**

**Coding Guide for Research Question 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In Vivo Code</th>
<th>Open Code</th>
<th>Axial Code</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission-based change</td>
<td>Metro U. is grounded in Mission</td>
<td>Driven internally by Mission</td>
<td>Lead from Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Served marginalized populations</td>
<td>Mission is to serve marginalized populations</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Lead from Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access and diversity</td>
<td>Promote access and diversity for students</td>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Lead from Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Institutional culture promotes access and diversity</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Lead from Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External market pressure</td>
<td>Market pressure</td>
<td>External forces</td>
<td>Adaptive change in response to external forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External changes</td>
<td>IB curriculum and public school changes</td>
<td>External change</td>
<td>Adaptive change in response to external forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifting climate</td>
<td>Less influence on SAT and ACT test scores</td>
<td>External change</td>
<td>Adaptive change in response to external forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>More diverse – more students of color</td>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Adaptive change in response to external forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>Capacity to grow</td>
<td>Increase enrollment</td>
<td>Adaptive change in response to external forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-growth enrollment agenda</td>
<td>Tuition dependent revenue source</td>
<td>Increase enrollment</td>
<td>Adaptive change in response to external forces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Coding Guide for Research Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In Vivo Code</th>
<th>Open Code</th>
<th>Axial Code</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innovative workplace</td>
<td>As an innovative workplace, most processes did not have to change</td>
<td>Innovative environment</td>
<td>Planned change – foster an environment where change can live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New short answer essays</td>
<td>New supplements for the SAT or ACT offered</td>
<td>Internal processes</td>
<td>Allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double-blind reading</td>
<td>Applicants are read twice by admission officers</td>
<td>Internal processes</td>
<td>Allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redacted information</td>
<td>Anonymity for the applicant</td>
<td>Internal processes</td>
<td>Allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A new scoring process for applicants</td>
<td>A new matrix was developed to score applicants for scholarships</td>
<td>Internal processes</td>
<td>Allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New marketing collateral</td>
<td>To build awareness in the marketplace</td>
<td>Changes to operation</td>
<td>Allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical changes to routing process</td>
<td>IT had to develop new systems to efficiently route data</td>
<td>Internal processes</td>
<td>Allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot of training</td>
<td>Admission officers and new readers had to be trained on the new review process</td>
<td>Internal operation</td>
<td>Allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New readers</td>
<td>An open call for volunteers to read was offered</td>
<td>Internal operation</td>
<td>Allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic organizational communication</td>
<td>This change was communicated systematically throughout the division</td>
<td>Internal processes</td>
<td>Allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence-based</td>
<td>The leadership team used empirical data to drive decisions</td>
<td>Innovative workplace</td>
<td>Planned change – foster an environment where change can live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical process and back-end work</td>
<td>IT and systems managers were consulted to develop the data transfer process</td>
<td>Empirical support</td>
<td>Planned change – foster an environment where change can live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology updates</td>
<td>Systems were enhanced and updated</td>
<td>Internal processes</td>
<td>Allow for internal procedural change – shaped by the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This was data-driven</td>
<td>The team was objective</td>
<td>Empirical support</td>
<td>Planned change – foster an environment where change can live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Vivo Code</td>
<td>Open Code</td>
<td>Axial Code</td>
<td>Theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot period</td>
<td>To guarantee faculty support and approval the leadership team offered a pilot phase first</td>
<td>Senior leadership</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial group was small</td>
<td>From the top down</td>
<td>Senior leadership</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce change at the right time</td>
<td>It was the right time after the non-cognitive study</td>
<td>Senior leadership</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position of power</td>
<td>Respected opinion across campus</td>
<td>Senior leadership</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respected division</td>
<td>Respected opinion across campus</td>
<td>Senior leadership</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vetting process</td>
<td>Evidence-based research for buy-in</td>
<td>Senior leadership</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research-based</td>
<td>Consulted experts</td>
<td>Senior leadership</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change leader</td>
<td>Division leader respected as change innovator</td>
<td>Senior leadership</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal first</td>
<td>Internal understanding and buy-in first</td>
<td>Informed key constituents in the division</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside experts</td>
<td>Consulted experts</td>
<td>Senior leadership</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respected leaders</td>
<td>Respected leaders across campus</td>
<td>Senior leadership</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberate conversations</td>
<td>Purposeful conversations with leadership about the change</td>
<td>Informed key constituents in the division</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive thinkers</td>
<td>Open-minded, innovative thinkers</td>
<td>Senior leadership</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top down</td>
<td>From the top down</td>
<td>Senior leadership</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal conversations</td>
<td>Formal and informal conversations about the change occurred throughout the division</td>
<td>Informed key constituents in the division</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller group debate</td>
<td>Functional areas debated about the change</td>
<td>Informed key constituents in the division</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity</td>
<td>Ultimately all internal functional areas agreed</td>
<td>Informed key constituents in the division</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty support</td>
<td>Public relations campaign to develop support</td>
<td>Informed key constituents</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External support</td>
<td>Guidance counselor community support for the change</td>
<td>Informed key constituents</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition building to support the change</td>
<td>Used relationships to build support for the change</td>
<td>Informed key constituents</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior level buy-in</td>
<td>Senior level leadership in the division was together</td>
<td>Senior leadership</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty communication</td>
<td>Went to faculty committee to vet and solicit feedback for the proposed change</td>
<td>Informed key constituents</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing objective info</td>
<td>Continuous communication</td>
<td>Informed key constituents</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing strategic thoughts</td>
<td>Continuous communication</td>
<td>Informed key constituents</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition building</td>
<td>Support was developed across campus</td>
<td>Informed key constituents</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal support</td>
<td>Functional areas within the division were ready for the change</td>
<td>Informed key constituents in the division</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX F

### CAUSAL CHAIN

**Deductive Causal Chain**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>External environment influences change</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Inductive Causal Chain**

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lead from Mission</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Adaptive change in response to external forces</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Planned change – foster an environment where change can live</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>