

A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF UNIVERSITY CENTER MODELS IN MICHIGAN

by

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ABSTRACT

To attain a financially comfortable life and to compete and flourish in society, a college degree is critical, particularly a baccalaureate. Earning a baccalaureate may seem almost impossible for students facing the challenges of place- and time-bound circumstances. With continued decrease of student enrollment and reduced state funding, higher education institutions are experiencing significant shortfalls, shaking the sustainability of higher education institution. Community colleges and four-year institutions have collaborated to create what is often referred to as University Centers to address these issues.

This qualitative research study examined University Center models in Michigan with the purpose to describe, analyze, interpret, and understand the perceived and actual operations through the perception of the host college's leadership. The first goal of the study was to define the design model for the University Centers in Michigan. The second goal examined the purpose of University Centers and focused on these key roles: (1) increasing opportunity for student access and success, (2) providing financial stability for the host community college and its partners, (3) making positive community impact, and (4) ensuring a continuum of education.

The third goal of the study was to explore the success of the partnerships between the community college and four-year institutions. Four conclusions were fostered from this exploration: (1) University Centers are serving an important purpose and have been successful across Michigan; (2) University Centers are addressing the needs of local students; (3)

University Centers provide a level of financial stability to both partner institutions; and (4)

University Centers provide a means to make a positive community impact.

KEY WORDS: University Center, Community College Collaborations, University Partnerships, Student Barriers, Degree Completion, Student Access and Success

DEDICATION

This journey is dedicated to my mom, Nobuko Higa Cook, who taught me through her life that positive perseverance brings good life.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

As early as 500 B.C., Confucius said, “Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope. Hope breeds peace” (Central Asia Institute, 2017, para. 5). Confidence is to believe that one can achieve and can be successful in building a better life for oneself and for those we love. Learning and understanding builds confidence which will ignite inspiration and hopefulness for a better world, for peace (Central Asia Institute, 2017, para. 5). In 2016, Geoffrey Canada, Founder and President of Harlem Children’s Zone, articulated in a conversation, “the ability to provide for your needs, your family’s needs, and your community’s needs has always been tied to education” (“Unmistakable Tie,” 2016, para. 2).

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In the late 1980s, highly regarded, community entities in the greater Grand Traverse Area of Michigan, led by the Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce, commissioned an economic development study known as the Battelle Study to identify what requirements were necessary for economic development success and growth for the region (Cotto, 2005, p. 149). The study was to discern what critical gaps may exist. Of the five critical gaps identified, the study identified the lack of baccalaureate and advanced degree options in the five counties of the Northwest Region of Michigan as one of the significant issues in luring industries. The study specifically looked toward Northwestern Michigan College (NMC), a comprehensive regional

community college, and stated that it was NMC's responsibility to take the lead to solve the limitation of associate-only educational options for the region (M. Cotto, personal communication, May 9, 2018). As a result, in 1995 NMC became one of the first community colleges to formalize its interpretation of the University Center model, partnering with 11 four-year institutions. Through these partners, the NMC University Center provided and continues to provide both baccalaureate and graduate level degrees.

Upon opening its doors in 1995, the typical student body of the NMC University Center had the following characteristics: 34 years old, 60% female, 70% full-time employee, 60% had families, and 80% said returning to school was career related (Cotto, 2005, p. 151). Of these descriptors, *I fell within this student body*. I was a full-time, local government employee in a leadership role, married, parent of a toddler, and responsible for an aging mother. I have personally experienced the value the University Center model because, in 2001, I graduated from one of the NMC University Center four-year partners, earning my Master of Science in Administration. My pursuit and completion of a graduate degree would not have been possible without the NMC University Center. Subsequently, in 2011, Ferris State University, a long-time university partner of NMC since 1976 and one of the original partners of the NMC University Center in 1995, hired me to serve as the Ferris State University – Northern Region Director as an administrator to bring baccalaureate and graduate degrees to Northern Michigan. Of significance to point out is that this position required a minimum of a master's degree. This topic is important to me because, if not for the NMC University Center, I would not have had the necessary credential to apply for this director position.

I earned my undergraduate baccalaureate degree from Ferris State University many years prior as a traditional student on its main campus in Big Rapids, Michigan, and then returned to school at the NMC University Center as a nontraditional, adult student. Serving in this director position confirmed what I already knew because I had walked in the shoes of those students who were place-bound and time-bound, working full time with family responsibilities, a delicate balance. The University Center model is necessary and effective to bring educational opportunities to a population that may not otherwise have that opportunity. I have come to recognize the impact this model has on the financial stability of the higher education institutions involved. Specifically, the community college serves as the host and developed the site which allows several four-year institutions to co-locate, share resources, and enhance enrollment to reduce overall costs and enhance revenue as described by Cotto (2005, p. 151).

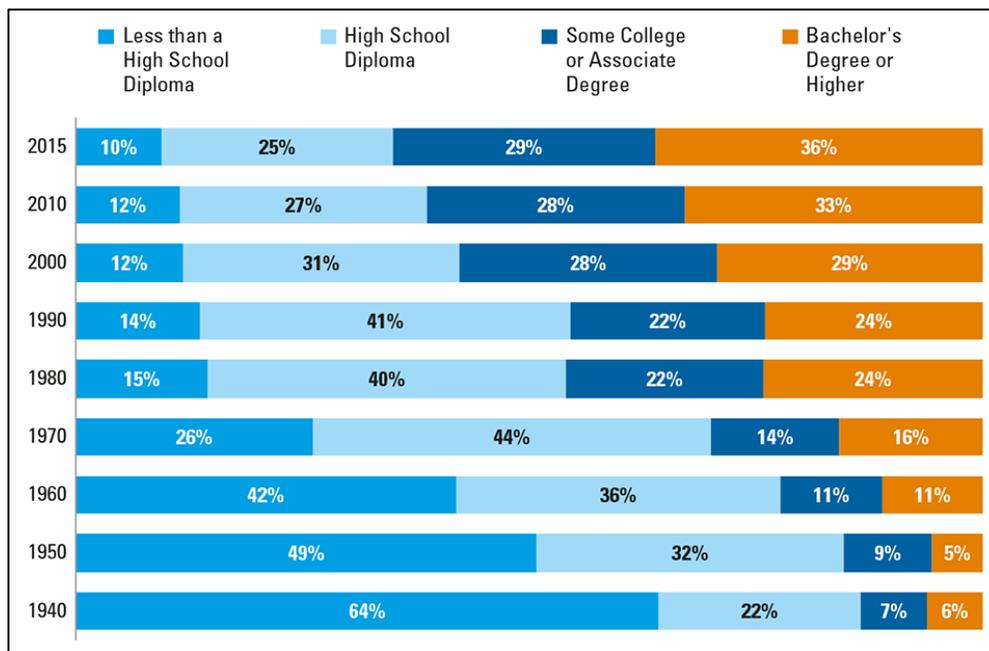
I have insight into the operations and financial impact of the NMC University Center; however, I have limited knowledge of the operations of other types of collaborations of community colleges and four-year institutions that may exist in Michigan. Further, my insight is based upon the viewpoint of a university partner and not from the viewpoint of the host community college. This environment places me in somewhat of a bubble, causing my desire to investigate the various collaborations which have come to be referenced as University Centers in Michigan from the viewpoint and perception of the host community college leader. As a way of foundation, I begin with the value of higher education.

VALUE OF A HIGHER EDUCATION

Today, to attain a financially comfortable life and to compete and flourish in society, a college degree is critical, particularly a baccalaureate. Figure 1 illustrates the increase in

baccalaureate degree attainment in the United States from 1940 to 2015. In 1940, 86% of the individuals ages 25 to 34 had no postsecondary education with only 6% having earned a baccalaureate or higher degree. In 2015, 35% within this age group had no postsecondary education with an increase to 36% having earned at least a baccalaureate degree or higher. Earnings potential and monetary wealth is often the focus of the primary benefit of higher education. Attaining a baccalaureate or graduate degree opens the door to higher earnings, lower unemployment rates, and career opportunities and additionally may have an impact on societal and health benefits because education influences the skills, attitudes, and thought patterns which may lead to increase in civic engagement and in responsible, health-related behaviors, such as a decrease in smoking and increase in exercise, as examples (Ma et al., 2019, p. 36–37).

Figure 1. Education Level of Individuals Age 25 to 34, 1940 to 2015



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Educational Attainment in the United States, 2015*, Table A-1.

There has been much publicity and rhetoric questioning the need or value of a baccalaureate degree. These highly educated individuals are sometimes described as graduates who do not have a career in their field of study, but rather they are ridiculed, for example, as the film major who walks dogs for a living or a history major who is a tour boat narrator. They are viewed as boomerangs, living in their parents' basement, signifying the value or no-value of a college degree (Petillo, 2015, para. 1). The financial turmoil of The Great Recession 2007–09¹ caused great concern among college graduates because of the stagnating job growth rate and the high-profile talk about the worth of a college degree considering the dollar investment. Yet, a closer look shows that 85% of those who were employed full time earned an average salary of \$52,000, and by the end of 2014 their unemployment rate decreased to 3.4% as opposed to 10% of those with a high school diploma or less (Petillo, 2015, para. 4).

Researchers of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco find that with a \$20,000 annual tuition cost, a college graduate can recover that investment by the age of 40. Once that investment is paid off, it continues to pay out dividends for the rest of his or her life. They go on to say that the gap between earnings of a college graduate and a high school graduate may continue such that over the student's lifetime a college graduate at retirement age can expect to earn around \$800,000 more on average than the high school graduate (Daly & Bengali, 2014, para. 1). While there are stories of those who achieved financial success without going to college, most Americans' pathway to financial success involves a baccalaureate degree, and the

¹ As referenced by the Federal Reserve History, The Great Recession 2007–2009 was the longest recession since WWII. (Rich, n.d.)

worth of a college degree ranks high and still significant (Daly & Bengali, 2014, Conclusion, para. 1).

There is a growing demand for baccalaureate degrees where we observe that employers are *upcredentialing*, meaning employers are requiring higher educational attainment as compared to the educational profile of current employees. Employers are seeking employees with degrees or credentials in positions which did not previously require them, and the focus is on the middle skills position described as the group lying between entry-level and upper-level management positions (Lederman, 2014, para. 1). Burning Glass Technologies (2014), a Boston-based employment firm that studies job postings, did an analysis with a finding that employers are seeking baccalaureate skills for positions which were previously sub-baccalaureate (p. 1). See Figure 2. These educated employees are presumed to be the most productive during this information economy (Fain, 2015, para. 5).

Figure 2. Credential Gap by Middle Skills Occupational Family

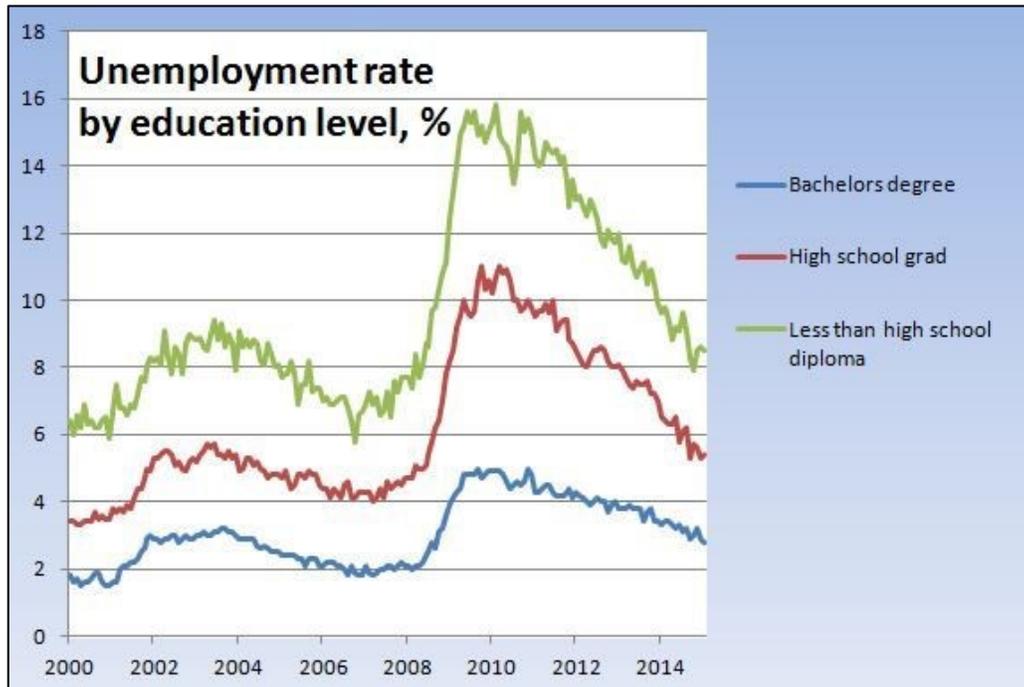
Occupational Family (+ Top Titles)	Credentials Gap	%Job Holders with BA+ (Source: American Community Survey)	% Postings Requiring Bachelor's Degree (Source: Burning Glass)	2013 Job Postings in Middle Skills Occupations (Source: Burning Glass)
Management - Production Supervisors - Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	26%	42%	68%	710,652
Office and Administrative Services - Executive Secretaries and Executive Assistants - Insurance Claims Clerks	25%	20%	45%	865,134
Business and Financial Operations - Employment, Recruitment, and Placement Specialists - Training and Development Specialists	21%	51%	72%	535,921
Computer and Mathematical - Computer User Support Specialists - Computer Network Support Specialists	21%	39%	60%	226,240
Sales and Related - Wholesale and Manufacturing Sales Representatives - Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	13%	43%	56%	1,391,113
Architecture and Engineering - Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technicians - Mechanical Drafters	10%	26%	36%	73,431
Healthcare Practitioners - Registered Nurses - Radiologic Technologists	0%	33%	33%	888,539

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Unemployment rate for those holding at least a baccalaureate degree in 2015 was at a low of 2.8%, much lower than those with a high school diploma or less than a high school diploma (Figure 3). The impact of COVID-19 pandemic² accentuates this. Data revealed that 65% of workers with a baccalaureate degree or higher teleworked and that 22% of workers with high school diploma or less had teleworked (Daly et al., 2020, p. 3). The unemployment rate jumped for employees through all education levels, but those employees with a baccalaureate degree or higher had a lower spike in the unemployment rate. See Figure 4.

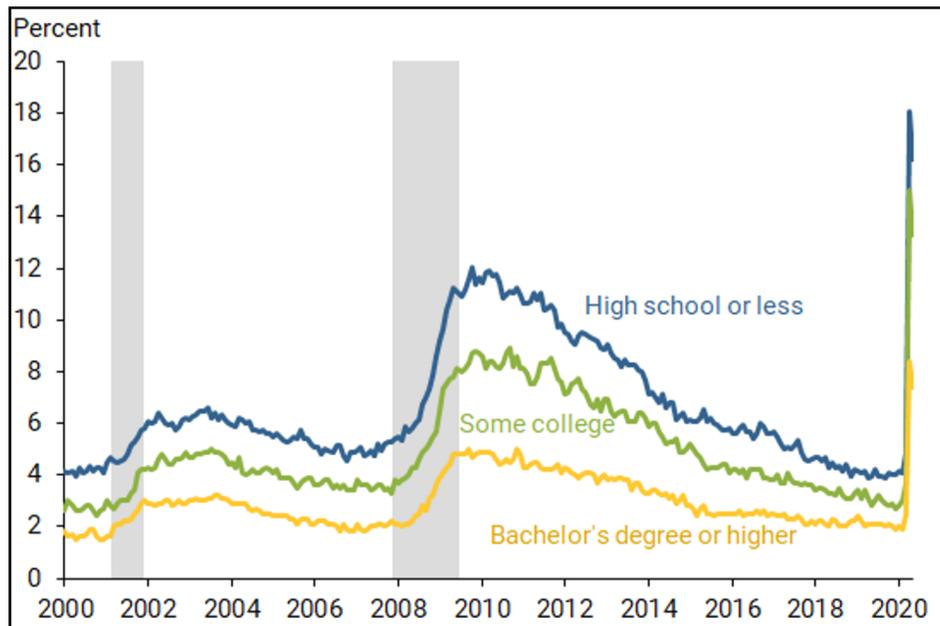
² John Hopkins Medicine explains the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) as an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), and the first case was identified in 2019 and caused a worldwide pandemic of respiratory illness (Sauer, n.d.).

Figure 3. Unemployment Rate by Education Level, %



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Figure 4. Unemployment by Education Level Following COVID-19 Outbreak



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, Gray bars indicated NBER (National Bureau of Economic Research) recessions.

From a societal viewpoint, Laden (2005) asserts that an increase of educated employees is needed because those who have at minimum a baccalaureate degree is necessary to meet needs for our ever-expanding *knowledge economy*, an economy where growth relies on quality, quantity, and access to information as opposed to production (p. 3). A college education has a non-monetary value as well. According to Petillo (2015, para. 10), 86% of millennial college graduates describe their employment as a career or steppingstone to their career, while 57% of millennial high school graduates more often express employment as just a job to pay the bills; and it is difficult to quantify the value of self-satisfaction and sense of purpose of an individual with meaningful employment. College enriches the lives of the students individually as well as society as a whole because an informed society is integral to a democratic society (Petillo, 2015, para. 11).

Although earnings and employment outcomes are highlighted, it is not the sole measure of the value of higher education. College Board report, *How Colleges Shapes Lives: Understanding the Issues*, technical knowledge and applied skills provide a level of expertise in a certain field, but higher education also leads to the imperative *soft skills* and *noncognitive skills* which help build confidence, a self-confidence to have a) the capacity to resolve unfamiliar issues, to complete unfamiliar tasks, and to solve unfamiliar problems and b) the ability to communicate and work well with others (Baum et al., 2013, p. 9). These soft and noncognitive skills are not just fundamental to career success and highly desired by employers, education provides people with opportunity to develop confidence, their own sense of being and

relationship to their environment, their intellectual engagement, and their understanding of one's own capability and influence (Baum et al., 2013, p. 9).

AT ISSUE

Student Access and Success

Fundamental outcomes of education to earn a good living is a prerequisite to achieving a lifetime of benefits and to transforming lives in positive ways to face many options and choices which may not otherwise have been (Baum et al., 2013, p. 9). In Michigan, learners make up a broad range of traditional to nontraditional learners, and changes in demographics and technology create opportunities but also challenges for students (Michigan Association of State Universities, n.d., para. 2). Barriers to access and success to higher education should be breached for the citizenry to help create a nation where all have access to education with the support and resources necessary to help plot their course to reach their educational and career goals (American Association of Community Colleges, n.d.; Ma et al., 2019; Michigan Association of State Universities, n.d.). Time, effort, and money can be barriers.

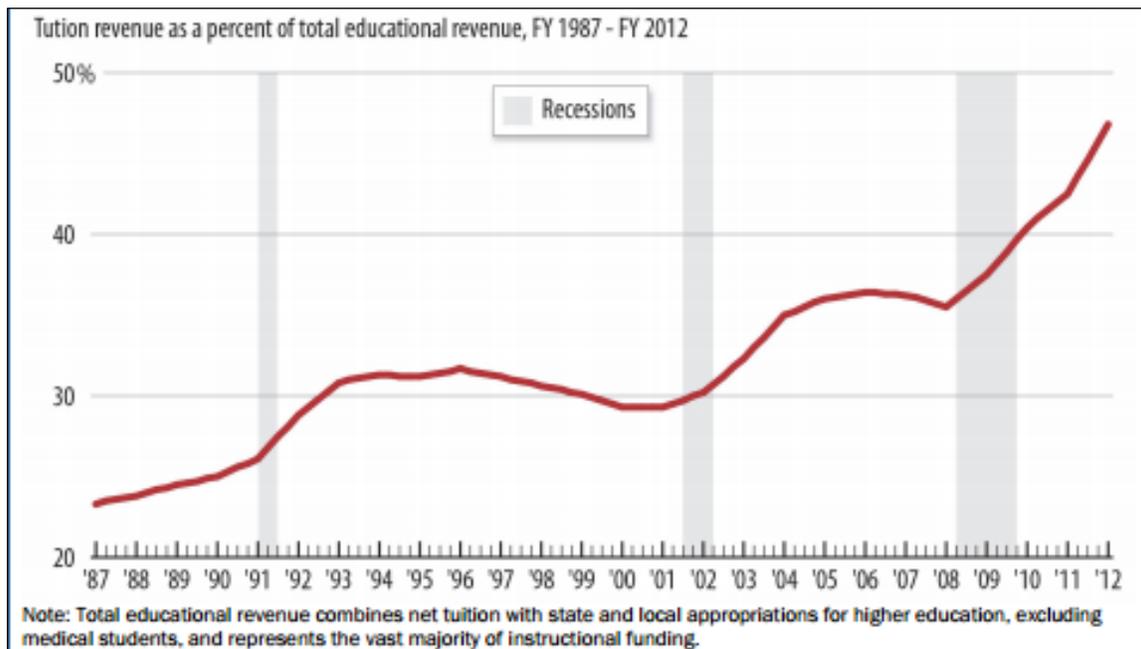
Affordability is crumbling while student debt mounts ever higher; and with The Great Recession 2007–09, the decline of support and reduced spending for higher education may create a frightening and overwhelming funding shortfall to the detriment of accessibility to those who need it most (Teahen et al., 2012, p. 1). Several authors describe these students as those who have a delicate balance within their lives to face these obstacles and barriers. One small change in work schedule, a sick child, or a broken-down vehicle can quickly shatter their dream of a better life and opportunities through education. Students are both place-bound and

time-bound for a variety of reasons: The student or family who does not have the resources for the student to move away and attend full time at a university; the student who has a family or family dependents, not just children but perhaps a chronically ill parent; the student who works full time and wants to maintain their employment position; the student who is not ready emotionally or academically to move away from home to attend a four-year institution; the student who has transportation issues and long travels are a worry; and/or the student who may be rooted in their geographical location due to its natural environment or recreational opportunities to meet their lifestyles, rural or urban (DeGan-Dixon, 2014; King, 2012; Shields, 2004; Snyder, 2015; and Sponsler & Hillman, 2016).

Financial Stability of Higher Education Institutions

Both four-year institutions and community colleges have been experiencing significant shortfalls, financial stress, and competition for limited resources. There are various contributing factors such as declining enrollment due to drop in high school graduates and demographic changes, the loss of higher education state funding, and the rise of costs in the labor-intensiveness of higher education (Butrymowicz & D’Amato, 2020; Mitchell et al., 2017; Wolcott, 2019). With higher ed institutions already facing financial stress, the recent COVID impacts have strained higher education budgets and students even more (Butrymowicz & D’Amato, 2020, para. 1–2.). Greater dependence falls upon the student, which closes the portal of access to many students. See Figure 5.

Figure 5. Students are Shouldering a Larger Share of the Cost of Funding Public Higher Education



Source: *State Higher Education Financing FY 2012*, State Higher Education Executive Officers Association.

UNIVERSITY CENTERS

In Michigan, community colleges and four-year institutions have come together to create a *University Center* to address these two issues (1) to serve an under-served student population by bringing baccalaureate opportunities to locales to best fit the needs of the student and the needs of the community, whereby making it easier for students to earn their associate degree at the two-year institution and subsequently to transfer to the four-year institution as a junior without leaving their community and (2) to help lessen the institutions' financial burden by co-locating, sharing resources, and enhancing enrollment to reduce overall costs and increase revenue (Davis, 2009; Cotto, 2005; deCastro & Karp, 2009; Oxford, 2017). University Centers may also provide the continuum beyond the baccalaureate to the graduate level degree to further meet the needs of the community and economic growth as was the impetus in the Grand Traverse Region and in my own case.

Generally, the two-year institution provides the freshman- and sophomore-level classes, and the four-year institution provides the junior- and senior-level classes, not only to address student needs for fulfilling a credential, gaining a skill, or acquiring more knowledge, but also to provide affordability to the student in minimizing or reducing student debt to earn a baccalaureate degree. This partnership is accomplished through collaboration and often through what is called a *consortium* of the institutions in packaging their financial aid and strategically aligning courses so that the student is paying two years' worth of credits at the community college tuition rate and two years' worth of credits at the four-year institution's tuition rate. Also, the financial structures are strengthened for both the two-year institution and the four-year institution by combining resources and sharing the cost of facilities and faculty as well as to stabilize and increase their enrollment. In some cases, specific degrees are created for the University Center location that are not offered at the main campus due to demand, which makes good financial sense to both institutions to meet a specific locational demand and increase enrollment (Davis, 2009, p. 4).

University Centers may vary in their makeup, structure, and operations and, at what depth, is described in this work. There are six different University Center models which Lorenzo (2005) has identified: Co-Location Model, Enterprise Model, Virtual Model, Integrated Model, Sponsorship Model, and Hybrid Model (p. 78). See Table 1.

Table 1: Six University Center Models with Description

MODEL NAME	DESCRIPTION
Co-location Model	Share same physical space but little connection otherwise with services provided by the four-year.
Enterprise Model	Form a collaborative entity for governance including operational and financial responsibilities.

MODEL NAME	DESCRIPTION
Virtual Model	Upper-level courses delivered fully online by the four-year.
Integrated Model	Co-location model expanded to a full level of cooperative relationships.
Sponsorship Model	Community college has a significant influence on determining the academic programs provided by the four-year.
Hybrid Model	Merges the university center programming with the community college which also offers a community college baccalaureate.

Source: Derived from The University Center: A Collaborative Approach to Baccalaureate Degrees by A. L. Lorenzo, 2005, in D. L. Floyd, M. L. Skolnik, & K. P. Walker, (Eds.), The Community College Baccalaureate: Emerging Trends and Policy Issues (pp. 73–93). Stylus Publishing, LLC.

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

With the University Center model, the community college provides the support that some students need to complete their degree to help them transform, succeed, and transfer to the four-year institution while the four-year institution brings to the student locally the same high-quality baccalaureate degree offered at its main campus. Most of the University Center models are located within specific geographical areas to serve the community and the place-bound and time-bound students. Through the University Center model, the four-year institutions are located close to these students and uniquely positioned to jumpstart these students in their transformation to a successful career. The University Center models are becoming home to the *new* traditional students. These are not the full-time, recently graduated high school students. Rather, these are displaced workers, veterans, employees seeking promotion, and single parents.

The purpose of the study was to describe, analyze, interpret, and understand the perceived and actual operations of the University Center model from the perspective of the host community college leaders in Michigan. I included the various characteristics of these University Center models, specifically, their operations, their relationship between the

community college and the four-year institutional partners, and the roles and responsibilities of the host community college and the four-year institutional partners.

The literature review provided various characteristics of the University Center model and the various pathways to baccalaureate degree attainment through a nationwide lens and provided a long history of the relationship between community colleges and four-year institutions with a key mission of community colleges to prepare graduates for transfer to the four-year institution. The literature focused more generally on the advantages of degree completion, student support, and overall structure of University Centers. There was limited information and details specific to Michigan relating to student success, relationships between the partner institutions, and operational and structural details and effectiveness. I interviewed the leadership of the host community colleges of the 13 Michigan community college collaborations with four-year universities referenced as a *University Center* or similar name. These community colleges included partnerships or collaborations with one or more four-year institutional partners. The population was the administrative leaders of the community colleges whose responsibilities include the operation and management of such a collaboration because these leaders would be accessible and have the direct experience with such University Centers. The interview included inquires to the following: type/level of degrees offered (certificates, associates, and baccalaureate), approval authority to be a part of the University Center and offer programs, facility ownership, governance structure (community college board, joint board, new board), and partnerships (what do they look like).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The goal of the research was to examine the following questions through the vantage point and perspective of the host community college leadership responsible for the operations of the University Center:

1. What are the University Center models in Michigan?
2. What is the purpose of the University Center?
 - Does it provide opportunity for student access and success?
 - Does it provide financial stability to the host community college and partnering institutions?
3. What is the relationship between the host community college and four-year institutional partners?
 - What is the role of the host community college?
 - What is the role of the four-year institution?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

University Center collaborations are essential for both student access and success and financial stability of higher education institutions. Earning a college degree can seem almost impossible for some students. The barriers to their success can be money, readiness, insecurity, family life, and jobs. University Centers were created to address these issues and to provide stability to the partnering educational institutions. This study seeks to increase our knowledge to understand how these University Centers are structured and how they meet such needs of the students and to understand the relationships of the higher education institutional partners from the point of view of the host community colleges because they are integral to the foundation of the University Center model.

This investigation provides additional information to those higher education institutions that are currently within a University Center structure, to evaluate their own structure by questioning what is working and what is not, identifying better approaches, and questioning whether their structure should be revamped. This investigation will provide information to those higher education institutions that are not within a University Center structure to consider initiating such a collaboration whether it be from the point of view of the two-year institution or the four-year institution.

ACCREDITATION, A FACTOR FOR UNIVERSITY CENTERS

The higher education accrediting body, in this case the Higher Learning Commission, plays an integral role in assuring that the programs and services provided to students at the University Center are equal to that which is afforded to the main campus students. The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) is an independent corporation covering the North Central Region of the United States, which includes 19 states, one of which is Michigan. It accredits degree-granting higher education institutions (HLC, n.d., p. 1). The HLC is required to perform an on-site visit at least every five years to any institution with three or more off-campus locations (HLC, 2015, p. 1)

As a timely example, in the 2018 Fall Semester, the HLC a performed Multi-Location Visit at six of the Ferris State University's off-campus locations, one of which was at the NMC University Center in Traverse City, Michigan, where I had served as Director (see Appendix C, HLC Letter dated May 29, 2018, to Ferris State University President Eisler). This location underwent a comprehensive on-site review by an HLC peer reviewer, which required the university to complete a multi-location visit Institutional report to include such details as

governance, evaluation and planning, staffing, budget and revenue, and instructional delivery methods and to submit the report to the peer reviewer 30 days prior to the visit. The HLC peer reviewer subsequently interviewed the dean and other administrators within the Extended and International Operations of Ferris State University who oversee administration and operations of the off-campus locations. The peer reviewer then proceeded to perform an on-site evaluation, which included interviews of location and academic leaders, faculty, and students. Additionally, the peer reviewer inspected the facilities and access to academic and support services such as classroom, labs, library facilities, and computer and internet access points (HLC, 2015, p. 3). The purpose of these visits is to confirm a continuing and effective oversight by the university of its additional locations at the University Center (HLC, 2015, p. 1).

To further elaborate on student services and support at the University Center, the resources provided to students are significant and under scrutiny by the Higher Learning Commission through this formal HLC accreditation process as described above. The mode of delivery may vary by which University Center partner and at which University Center site. Using Ferris State University as an example (the one with which I have experience), Ferris Statewide and Online highlights a “tight-knit crew of local faculty and staff” to provide students with services and with all the resources of the main campus at their disposal (Ferris State University, n.d.). Integral services including advising, tutoring, financial aid/scholarship services, writing center, disability resources, health services, career counseling, library services, internet access, and computer labs are provided through a variety of modes. Some are in-person on a walk-in or appointment basis. With significant investment in eLearning staff and resources, student services are also provided online, virtually, by phone call or email, working closely with main

campus to ensure that student needs are met. It is recognized that there are some limitations. Some main campus services and student activities cannot be provided locally due to logistics, such as access to athletics/recreational facilities, student groups and organization, or walk-in health clinic (Note: the activity fee is not charged to off-campus students). In many cases, the University Center model helps to fill the gap. While the student is concurrent/dual enrolled at the community college and University Center partner, most community colleges allow students access to the community college student services and activities.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms are defined to have a complete understanding of their meaning as used throughout the study.

Traditional student. A traditional student is described most often as being 18 to 22 years old, financially dependent upon parents, recent high school graduates who leave home soon thereafter, live on campus, and enroll into classes full-time (Pelletier, 2010; Baum et al., 2013).

Nontraditional student. A nontraditional student has been the topic of discussion; often over the age of 24 has been a significant characteristic capturing a large group of people as adult students attending college part time, who have work and family obligations, as well as other life occurrences which may interfere with completion of educational goals (U.S. Department of Education, 2015, p. 1).

New traditional student. In reviewing data and demographics of the current student body, some believe the definition of traditional has or should be changed; the nontraditional student is now the new traditional student, with only 16% of college students meeting the definition of the 18 to 22 years old and 47% of college students currently attending are older than 25 (Pelletier, 2010, p. 1).

Place-bound students. This term has become familiar to those within higher education as those students who remain in their community. It is frequently defined as students living at home with their parents while attending college, but students do not always meet this definition. The definition is broader to include those who do not live with their parents and remain in their community for a variety of reasons. Such a student may have family responsibilities and cannot uproot and move the family to a university location, have

strong family ties to the area having lived in the region for generations, have a career/job in the region, or simply prefers to remain in the geographical location based upon its physical place such as a rural/urban area, natural environment, or recreational opportunities (DeGan-Dixon, 2014; King, 2012; Shields, 2004; Snyder, 2015; Sponsler & Hillman, 2016).

Time-bound students. This term refers to those students who have time as a barrier to access higher education, making it difficult to pursue higher education caused by significant geographic distances, transportation issues, or daytime only classes (DeGan-Dixon, 2014, p. 9).

Community college. This term includes any not-for-profit regionally accredited institutions such as a junior college, two-year college, or city college including technical institutes that award the associate in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree (Cohen et al., 2014, p. 5). Some community colleges have been authorized to confer baccalaureate degrees in certain fields. In such case, those will be noted as the need arises within the research.

Host community college. This term includes the community college that has created the University Center by providing the physical structure or housing of the center and has established the requirements and responsibilities of both itself and the partnering four-year institutions.

Four-year institution, college, or university. This term includes public and private colleges or universities that provide baccalaureate and/or advanced degrees. In Michigan, two examples would be Walsh College as a private, four-year college and Grand Valley State University as a public, four-year university.

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

As discussed more fully in Chapter Three, with any research study, there are limitations and delimitations due to a variety of factors and circumstances, within and outside of the researcher's control. The research data was collected during the summer semester of 2018 from University Centers located within Michigan. The primary data was ascertained through in-depth face-to-face interviews of community college leadership on a completely voluntary basis and were purposively selected. Their responsibilities included operations of a University Center. The leadership had a variety of titles with different hierarchical levels, and the University

Centers were located at different regions within the lower peninsula of Michigan in rural and urban areas. I, as researcher, worked in higher education within a university system rather than a community college system, which may have introduced some bias.

SUMMARY

With education comes problem solving skills to become innovators of solutions and effective communicators to resolve conflict, and with education comes independent thinking to question and make sense of the world, to become leaders (Central Asia Institute, 2017, para. 6–8). I introduce this chapter with the overall importance of higher education and my personal experience on the necessity to bring baccalaureate and graduate degree programs to those students who may not otherwise have that opportunity, specifically for those nontraditional students who are place-bound and/or time-bound. The literature cited expounds on the foundational importance of higher education on the individual and society, highlighting access for all. I go on to describe the educational access and opportunity through the collaborations of community colleges and four-year institutions referred to as University Centers, with the resulting and necessary opportunity for financial sustainability and viability for those institutions within the collaboration. The University Center may be described as an interwoven, interdependent impetus for student access and success and institutional financial sustainability.

This chapter introduced and briefly described the University Center model. Chapter Two provides a comprehensive review of the literature on collaborations between community colleges and four-year institutions to bring baccalaureate and graduate degrees to underserved populations beginning with different pathways to attain a baccalaureate degree and then shifting the focus on the necessity and benefits to serve the nontraditional students

specifically through the University Center model. The chapter then focuses on the six different forms of the University Center model. Chapter Three provides the research methodology as a qualitative approach, focused on the community college leadership's perception of the University Center including the research setting and analysis strategy. Chapter Four presents the analysis of the data to include the findings presented based upon the alignment within the six forms of University Center models and subsequent emergent themes generated. And finally, Chapter Five provides reasonable conclusions based on the findings and possible applications for initiating or modifying such a collaboration.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

In Michigan, acting as allies and not competitors, close to half of the 28 public community colleges listed within the Michigan Community College Network website have collaborated with four-year institutions in the form of a University Center model. The purpose of this study was to describe, analyze, and interpret the perceptions of community college leadership of the University Center model in its mission to enhance access and degree attainment for the under-served student populations and to stabilize institutional financial resources. There are different means by which a baccalaureate degree may be obtained, one of which is by using the University Center model. There is limited research as to what type of University Center models exist in Michigan and their impact on student access and institutional financial stability. Earning my master's degree through the offerings at the Northwestern Michigan College (NMC) University Center in 2001 allows me a unique and intimate perspective of the phenomenon of a University Center relating to access, affordability, success, and opportunities. This additional education opened greater career opportunities and promotions for me and those in my cohort. We were place-bound and time-bound where we could not or chose not to relocate.

As a member of the NMC University Center Coordinating Committee, the four-year institutional partners had been reaching out to community leaders to help bring awareness of

the baccalaureate opportunity afforded locally through the University Center. These leaders expressed that they see the value and affordability of the University Center. I had attended several community forums, such as the Traverse Connect Annual Gala, Northern Michigan Policy Conference, Traverse City NewTech, and Grand Traverse Area Manufacturing Council, where there were discussions about attracting talent and bringing better jobs and employers to the Grand Traverse Region. A goal of TraverseCONNECT (lead economic development organization the region) 2020–23 Organizational Strategic Plan is to increase baccalaureate degree attainment in the region as was presented at the 2019 Northern Michigan Policy Conference (TraverseCONNECT, 2020, p. 7). To meet this goal, some envision baccalaureate attainment increasing through *new talent attraction* to the area, meaning those persons moving to the area are already credentialed with their baccalaureate. I see the University Center model perfectly positioned to help reach this goal through increasing baccalaureate attainment for the *current population and work force* in the greater Grand Traverse Region. The University Center can increase baccalaureate degree attainment and beyond by providing a nurturing environment through the community college, by providing a streamlined and smooth transition via the relationship with the four-year partners, by providing it affordably, and by providing a wide spectrum of degrees to develop and retain local talent and skills.

Discussion of this chapter begins with a review of the relationship of community colleges and four-year institutions, the need for baccalaureate degrees, and an overview of the various means by which baccalaureate degrees are attained. Then, I will focus on the University Center model that is the subject of the literature review and go on to discuss the two primary goals of the University Center model: (1) to expand baccalaureate degree access and

attainment to students who cannot attend a four-year college or university, bringing the degree completion opportunity to the student and (2) to strengthen the financial stability of both the community colleges and the four-year institutions, growing and maintaining enrollment for operational economic benefit. I will describe the characteristics of the students who are served by the University Center model and then proceed to focus on and describe the different collaborations that fall within the University Center model, the structure of each, and the characteristics of each, including the co-location, enterprise, virtual, integrated, sponsorship, and hybrid models.

RELATIONSHIP OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

Historical

According to Cohen et al. (2014), certain university presidents as early as 1851 proposed that the community college's role was to serve the local community and prepare the students with the lower-level division courses for the first two years, and the university's role was to provide the upper-level division courses and confer the baccalaureate degree (p. 6–7). Although the university presidents proposed this distinction, the universities did not relinquish the lower-level division courses. Into the 20th century, community colleges flourished to meet the demands of their neighborhood community by providing open admission to all who sought higher education and who otherwise might not have had attended a college or university.

Transitions and Enhancement

A key mission of community colleges was to prepare graduates for transfer to the four-year institution, which is the root of their relationship. There is a history of collaborating

through transfer preparation and support to students (Buhi et al., 2018; Cohen et al., 2014; Trainor, 2015). Cohen et al. (2014), deCastro and Karp (2009), and Lorenzo (2005) described enhanced collaborations over the years to evolve into partnerships where upper-level division courses were brought to the campuses of community colleges in the form of partnerships (referenced as joint-use and concurrent-use facilities model). This form was embraced by various states since the 1960s with their mission to bring baccalaureate attainment in partnership with community colleges.

While these partnerships were effective and still exist today, the University Center model concept came into being during this same time period, as community colleges and universities collaborated more extensively to increase capacity. Cohen et al. (2014), deCastro and Karp (2009), Lorenzo (2005), and Walker (2005) discussed that community colleges as early as 1985 began partnering with universities to offer baccalaureate degrees, with some community colleges offering programs on their campus or at the university campus and some community colleges forming University Centers housed at the community college campus or at a nearby location partnering with multiple universities. The University Centers and efforts of collaboration between four-year institutions and community colleges have developed on community college campuses throughout the United States, such as Macomb Community College in Michigan and North Harris Montgomery Community College in Texas³. In 1995, in

³ In 2008, North Harris Montgomery Community College name was changed to Lone Star College according to the college's website (Lone Star College, n.d.).

Michigan, the Northwestern Michigan College (NMC) University Center, which is located a few miles away from its main campus, was established and included several four-year institutions. Ferris State University (Ferris), Big Rapids, Michigan, began as a partner with NMC in 1976 to bring degree completion to the Grand Traverse Region and subsequently joined this NMC University Center in 1995 along with several other four-year institutions. Demonica & Ogurek (2005), Lorenzo (2005), Floyd (2006), Townsend, Bragg, & Rudd (2008), McClure (2010), and Walker (2005) explained that the term *university center* is a term appearing in the 1980s and is now commonly used to describe a variation of two-year college and four-year institutional relationships.

Interdependence

Community colleges and universities have transitioned to recognize that there is an institutional interdependence and that reliance on the relationship can enhance enrollment and stability (deCastro & Karp, 2009; Koch et al., 2014; Labov, 2012). Their work suggested and provided guidance that, through such collaborations, educational institutions may work together in partnership to address budgetary and regulatory issues. Cotto (2005), Kisker (2007), and Fliegler (2008) stated that collaboration has become central to ensure sustainability of postsecondary education; there is interconnection between community colleges and four-year institutions that should be pursued to the utmost benefit of their relationships to sustain and to flourish; and there is great potential to determine solutions when the abilities and competence of higher education institutions work together. There is an understanding on the part of higher

education that it is necessary to create collaboration, not just for the interest of the region, but for the long-term best interest of the institutions themselves.

According to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, *Knocking at the College Door* (2016), Michigan is experiencing and is projected to continue to experience a decline in the number of high school graduates (Bransberger & Michelau, 2016, p. 78). With this decline, community colleges and four-year institutions have increased their drive to work together. Within the NMC University Center, Ferris State University and other university partners meet with NMC faculty and program chairs to better align programs and look for opportunities for collaboration.

There is mutual reliance in this partnership, as exhibited through recent statements by Central Michigan University (CMU). CMU explains that due to the decline in high school graduates, it is pushing to grow enrollment away from its main campus, targeting adult market, which is the largest growing market, through online and specifically highlighting its *satellite* locations (Davies, 2019, Section 2, para. 4). CMU is a four-year institutional partner with several University Center models that took part in this study. Another example of interdependence is the recent collaboration between Ferris State University and Lone Star College in Texas. In January 2018, Ferris State University became a partner at the Lone Star College University Center in Texas offering a doctoral degree (Ferris State University, 2018, p. 1). The University Center model was established in both Texas and Michigan at about the same time, but it is interesting to note that currently Texas University Center models appear to be stronger in terms of active students and programming than Michigan's. This increased activity may be attributable to the number of high school graduates in the nation. Not only are the number of

high school graduates in Michigan decreasing, but the overall number across the midwest is decreasing. In contrast, the south and west are seeing a significant growth in high school graduates with the south expected to gain 47% of the nation's high school graduates by 2025 (Bransberger & Michelau, 2016, p. 19). This growth may be a factor as to why the University Centers in Texas appear to be flourishing and surpassing those in Michigan.

Tension and Elitism

Tension and academic elitism have existed between community colleges and four-institutions, some in the form of academic elitism among administrators and faculty (Cohen et al., 2014; deCastro & Karp, 2009; Handel, 2010; Trainor, 2015). The community college in the late 19th and early 20th century were thought of as secondary. They were designed to be open access and to provide the first two years of education. Its role was to separate students for the primary four-year institutions to filter the students allowing high achieving students to transfer to the four-year institutions (Cohen et al., 2014; deCastro & Karp, 2009; Handel, 2010; Trainor, 2015). Often times there is rift between faculty members, with the four-year institutions often viewing the community college courses as not being equal in rigor to their own institutional courses. Faculty from both sides also often have trust issues in developing course equivalencies with neither side wanting to be told what to do (deCastro & Karp, 2009, p. 4).

As an example, academic elitism was demonstrated during the initial process to develop the new Transfer Portal at Ferris State University. There were concerns expressed by academic leadership and faculty, specifically questioning the numbering system and course equivalencies from community colleges on face-value, rather than pausing to evaluate course learning

objectives and outcomes. Four-year institutional administrators also do not necessarily think about community college or transfer students until they have difficulties meeting enrollment targets (Handel, 2010, para. 12). Ricketts (2009) highlighted, in fact, that President Obama's statement stressing the value of community colleges was dismissed, with the view that community colleges were the stepchild in higher education with the spotlight on elite four-year institutions (para. 1). In Michigan, Lansing Community College President Steve Robinson has led efforts to take on the issue and stop the outdated view that community colleges are second class by the creating the social media campaign #EndCCStigma in 2019 (Jaschik, 2019b, p. 1).

Espenshade (2012), Bailey (2012), and Whitmire (2019) discussed the selection process of many four-year institutions and stated that even with the community college supporting with additional services, care, and encouragement for every student to enroll in a four-year institution, universities did not open the doors to all students. At times, the growing demand for higher education helps the universities to become more selective, instead of encouraging them to open their doors. Some administration and faculty are conditioned to exclude, not include, students when their institutional status is based on how many students are not admitted compared to the number of applications received. Additionally, numbers of transfers students are often times lightly regarded or not included by universities in their counts (Bailey, 2012; Espenshade, 2012; Whitmire, 2019).

Not only is academic elitism at play, but there also exists the mindset of socioeconomic elitism: the higher the tuition rate and the lower acceptance rate, the better the quality of education (Jaschik, 2019b; Turk, 2019). Since the 1990s, a sizable portion of students admitted and enrolled in selective colleges came from upper-middle and upper-class families with the

size of the bank account still playing a significant role in the influence of access according to Espenshade (2012) and Turk (2019). Recent college admissions scandals are viewed by many as another example of socioeconomic elitism with parents who would pay huge sums of money (hundreds of thousands of dollars) to illegally ensure their children are admitted to a highly selective institution (Jaschik, 2019a; Smith, 2019; Turk, 2019). This tension and turf-protection are forms of elitism and become barriers to many students.

KNOWLEDGE AGE

As described in Chapter One, the United States' economy has changed from an *industrial economy* to a *knowledge economy*, causing an increase in the need for earned baccalaureate degrees for individual success. Technological and economic changes are happening at an accelerating pace in the *knowledge age*, and the baccalaureate degree and access to higher education are necessary for career promotion, job mobility, and economic success (Fain, 2015; Laden, 2005; Mense et al., 2018). Fain (2015) and Laden (2005) shared the concern that employers may soon face a shortfall of four-year college graduates seeking employment. Full employment for those holding a baccalaureate degree may be a reality as the demands for jobs in the knowledge economy increased by 3% per year, while higher education grows only by 1% (Fain, 2015, para. 9). The American Association of Community College (n.d.) specifically recognizes in its Mission Statement its role to assist its members and the nation as it transitions from the 20th century industrial era to the 21st century knowledge-based society (para. 7). Additionally, with the departure of the baby boomers, Lindegren (2015) foresees a growing shortage of talent, asserting there may be a flight of human capital of those highly skilled and highly educated (para. 1–2).

OVERVIEW OF BACCALAUREATE ATTAINMENT

Relating to the necessity of baccalaureate degree attainment as mentioned in the previous section and in Chapter One, the literature discusses the different means by which students may do so. The traditional approach to attain baccalaureate degrees is the *Going to College Model* as termed by Baum et al. (2013 p. 10) where recent high school graduates leave home, go to live in dormitories on a campus of a public or private four-year college or university, and enroll into classes full-time. The students begin as freshmen and continue to complete their baccalaureate degree. However, Baum et al. (2013) further explain that going to college is not exclusive to these recent high school graduates described above because it may include students who remain at home or in their hometown and adult students who enroll at their local community college (p. 10).

Articulation Model

Baccalaureate attainment can be completed through another method, known as the articulation model. The community college and four-year institution enter into an articulation agreement with the goal to ensure that the courses taken at the community college are aligned with and automatically transfer to the four-year institution. This pre-arranged agreement gives students a roadmap and some comfort that the credits they have earned at the community college will apply to the baccalaureate degree at the four-year institution and helps the students to understand what is expected academically (AACRAO, 2019; Davis, 2009; deCastro & Karp, 2009; Floyd, 2005; McKinney & Morris, 2010). Of significant benefit to the student is affordability. The courses taken at the community college during the first, second, and

sometimes third year are at the community college with its lower tuition rate. Students may, in most cases, have lower room and board costs because they are living at home during these initial years as opposed to living on-campus at the four-year institution with housing and meal plans costs for the entire four years. In 2019, I helped to facilitate discussions between faculty and staff for the Spring 2019 Articulation Agreement between Northwestern Michigan College (NMC) Engineering Technologies Division and Ferris State University College of Engineering Technology whereby an NMC engineering technology student would automatically transfer into the Bachelor of Science Manufacturing Engineering Technology. Some course modifications were made by each institution to better align the programs for a streamlined transfer. The student is required to attend Ferris State University in Big Rapids to complete the degree. Most articulation models require students to complete their degrees at the four-year institutions home campus. Therefore, these agreements do not necessarily provide baccalaureate access for a place-bound students. A student who cannot leave family and work to travel to a university cannot continue with the baccalaureate degree, particularly in the example given above of the technical degree where virtual or online courses may not be feasible.

Partnership Model

A community college and a four-year institution may enter into a partnership agreement to provide baccalaureate completion degrees at or near the community college. This type of partnership agreement may take on various forms. It may be specific to include just certain areas of need such as articulation alignment, space sharing, academic support, or professional development (deCastro & Karp, 2009, p. 16). One such Partnership Model may be described as

an exclusive partnership where one four-year institution provides the courses delivered at or near the community college for the baccalaureate attainment. Often, the four-year institution has entered this exclusive arrangement to include a long-term commitment and/or capital investment. In 2016, such a partnership was celebrated between Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) and Ferris State University (Ferris). In 1991, GRCC and Ferris came together in the development of the Applied Technology Center (ATC) on the campus of GRCC, a \$27 million project at the time including state funding and a capital campaign, one of the first of its kind (Grand Rapids Community College, 2016, p. 1). This partnership offers student several options for baccalaureate attainment through Ferris with maximum transferability and cost effectiveness because of this intimate partnership and commitment. The upper-level courses are delivered in the ATC facility. However, in this model, student baccalaureate options are often limited to what the four-year institution can, and will, provide because the community college is restricted from partnering with other four-year institutions to increase degree options for their students. From the perspective of the four-year institution, this exclusivity may be a favored model.

University Extension Model

Also referred to as *branch campuses*, the four-year institution provides baccalaureate options at sites separate from its main campus. This model was established decades ago, and locations may be near or far from its home campus and may or may not rely on local partnerships (Floyd, 2005; Fonesca & Bird, 2007; Geiser & Atkinson, 2010; Kiley, 2012; Laden, 2005). The extension campus was often located on the community college campus or nearby

for the university to deliver baccalaureate degrees. Floyd (2005), Laden (2005), Fonesca and Bird (2007), and Kiley (2012) said that the extension campus began as a separate location from its main university campus to offer baccalaureate degrees to outreach to potential students, such as working adults who wish to complete their baccalaureate degree but cannot enroll in the traditional university schedule. Although the tuition rate may be equal to its home campus and higher than the community college tuition rates, the extension model can serve place-bound students who are restricted from opportunities because of financial matters, family responsibilities, or lifestyle choice. Often the university extension campus is smaller and provides limited or specialized programs at the site. The program offerings may be different from its main campus and may have limited options for place-bound students. In Michigan, the University of Michigan has two extension campuses, University of Michigan – Dearborn and University of Michigan – Flint, both partnering extensively with nearby community colleges, Henry Ford College and Mott Community College, respectively.

Community College Baccalaureate Model

Floyd and Walker (2008), McKinney and Morris (2010), and Geiser and Atkinson (2010) stated that the community college baccalaureate model provides a means to provide greater access to four-year degrees to place-bound students who would not otherwise be able to do so and to help meet the demands in specialized fields and in the growth of jobs which require a baccalaureate. There is no credit transfer necessary to attain the baccalaureate degree because this model does not include any partnership with a four-year institution. The community college confers the baccalaureate, and the student attains the baccalaureate without leaving the

community. In Michigan, baccalaureate degrees were authorized for community colleges through the state legislature in 2012 and may be offered only in the following four fields: cement technology, maritime technology, energy production technology, or culinary arts (Community College Act, 1966). This limited baccalaureate model allows degree programs in narrowly defined applied fields and does not provide a wide spectrum of choices for the student.

This model has been contentious among community colleges and universities for some time and has faced criticism from both four-year institutions and community colleges as discussed by Cohen et al. (2014), Geiser and Atkinson (2010), and Jenkins (2014). It has faced “mission creep” criticism, accusing two-year colleges of expanding their roles to become four-year colleges. There has also been the concern that, in this model, public funds and already limited resources would be siphoned from the better equipped, four-year institutions. In addition to criticism from four-year institutions, not all community colleges have supported this model; they have concerns that this model would change their mission to be open door to all and community based.

As this model was being adopted, tensions arose in many areas. For example, the long-standing partnership between Northwestern Michigan College (NMC) and Ferris State University (Ferris) became strained. These two institutions had a relationship since the mid-1970s when Ferris partnered with NMC to bring degree completions to the Grand Traverse area region and then entered as one of first partners in the NMC University Center in 1995. Around 2010, the NMC President became a vocal advocate for Michigan community colleges to offer community college baccalaureate, and the Ferris President strongly opposed this change. Prior

to this community college baccalaureate authorization, NMC and Ferris partnered to create a specialized Bachelor of Science in Business Administration – Maritime, where students were dual enrolled and earned their NMC Great Lakes Maritime Academy credentials and Coast Guard Licensure while earning a Ferris bachelor's in business administration. The emphasis of this joint degree was to enhance students' long-term career opportunities, providing a broad education and critical thinking skills for future management positions such as port managers and shipping industry administrators. After the state authorization for community college baccalaureate programs, NMC discontinued the joint bachelor's degree, causing strain on the partnership. NMC currently offers Bachelor of Science – Maritime with three different programs (Northwestern Michigan College (n.d.a).

University Center Model

For purposes of this study, the term “University Center model” and the commonly used title University Center will be used to describe the physical location and relationship where the host community college houses and/or supports the baccalaureate degree completion programs. Originally, the term University Center was used more generally to describe a group of universities and colleges that came together, typically upon the invitation of the local community college, to create a central location for offering upper-level division courses, and became a popular term for describing the logistical relationship for delivering a variety of baccalaureate degrees to underserved areas (Cohen et al., 2014; Lorenzo, 2005; Geiser & Atkins, 2010; McClure, 2010; Townsend et al., 2008). In this original relationship, the student begins at the local community college for the first, second, and sometimes third year and

subsequently transitions seamlessly into a baccalaureate degree offered by a four-year institution with classes held either in community college facilities or nearby. The four-year institution conferred the baccalaureate and retained the control for academics, administration, and fiscal responsibility. Further, in this early iteration, the University Center provided an effective and efficient model to bring educational opportunities to an underserved area or population of place-bound and/or time-bound students to help students meet their goals and perhaps overcome their challenges and barriers in earning a baccalaureate or advanced degrees. From the perspective of the community college, the University Center model was significant because it offered students the greatest selection for baccalaureate attainment at the local level.

ACCESS FOR STUDENTS

Giannino-Racine (2009) and Ma et al. (2019) emphasized that access to education is more significant than ever, stating that for hundreds of years education has played an impactful role in allowing people to pursue and reach their hopes and dreams not only to provide a career with financial security but also to be a good citizen and an asset to the community, society, and economic growth. Education in its truest form teaches critical thinking, open-mindedness, and self-examination, thus encouraging new ways of understanding to be able to be sensitive and alert citizens of the world, paying in a big way for the individual and society (Trostel, 2015, p. 67). “Education is the great equalizer,” as stated by Horace Mann (1976–1859), a pioneer in American education, with Massachusetts appointing him as the Education Secretary, the first state to appoint such a position (Rhode et al., 2012).

The most influential factor to higher education access for students is the proximity of the institution to its student population, and institutions render most of their enrollment from within a local radius. Location is integral because a significant population of students are time-bound and either geographically limited in the selection of colleges or busy adults who cannot travel (Cohen et al., 2014; Demonica & Oguerck, 2005; McClure, 2010). Many students are place-bound, created by financial restrictions, family obligations, lifestyle priorities, personal traits, and often a combination thereof. They often are working full time and balancing these responsibilities while attending college becoming increasingly both place-bound and time-bound. The day-to-day lives of these students impact their possibility to attend college (Fonseca & Bird, 2007; Gose, 2017; Sponsler & Hillman, 2016). McClure (2010) asserts that students enrolling through a University Center model are more likely to continue pursuing and completing their baccalaureate degree based on a variety of factors (p. 59). Those factors may include, for example, when the baccalaureate degree can be attained through their local community college location, a familiar and comfortable location. University Centers provide ease of entry into baccalaureate programs for the students who are not only place-bound and time-bound but need to begin with a more nurturing environment of the community college; this environment helps build a bridge for students to cross their great divide between the two-year and four-year institutions (Lorenzo, 2005; Geiser & Atkinson, 2010). University Centers are a common mechanism to bring baccalaureate degree to the community college service area as stated by the Community College Baccalaureate Association (n.d.), Floyd (2005), Floyd and Skolnik (2005), and Geiser and Atkinson (2010).

Along with providing access, some programs of both the host community college and the University Center partners provide programs in a cohort model. The design is thought to benefit the adult or non-traditional learner because they often work full or part time and have family responsibilities. A cohort model is generally understood to be a program where a group of students begin the program together as a cohort class, taking courses in required sequence and completing the program at the same time. The reasoning for this model is to enhance student retention rate and the educational experience where students may learn from one another and engage with faculty members as a group (Bista & Cox; 2014; Lei et al., 2011; McCarthy, Renga, & Weiner, 2005). For these students, they can rely on course sequence and specific times and days offered, they build friendship and societal ties, and a group cohesion may develop where the students experience peer pressure in the form of support and camaraderie to stay in the program (Bista & Cox, 2014; Lei et al., 2011; McCarthy et al., 2005). This also helps the institutions in the sequencing of classes and faculty assignments along with the budgeting of the program.

While the cohort model is beneficial for these reasons, there may be some drawbacks to consider. Many adult students are very familiar with the saying *life happens*. Because the adult student has multiple priorities, balancing not only work and education but also family responsibilities complicate their educational needs, and the cohort model may be too restrictive. Some may benefit from a program that is more fluid and allows students to enter or re-enter the program at different points. Other students experience unexpected financial shortfalls or family health issues that require them to stop out for a year or two. The ability to re-enter a program may better suit these students' needs and may also encourage completion.

Another possible drawback to the cohort model is when interpersonal conflicts or a dominant group emerges, where one or several students can negatively influence or impact other students, an influence that then carries through the entire program to diminish the cohort experience (Bista & Cox; 2014; Lei et al., 2011; McPhail et al., 2008). I can attest to such an occurrence. Although my experience was not within a strict cohort model at a University Center, the program was scheduled as a two-year program with students entering and graduating at the same time. The multiple personality conflicts became so intense that they inhibited the learning experience of other students, causing multiple university departments to become involved to help resolve the issues.

The University Center model provides not only physical access but economical access to a range of educational opportunities allowing students to retain full-time employment and/or live with their families. Students earn a majority of their credits at the community college tuition rate, much lower than the four-year institutional rate. A cost comparison is discussed in detail in Chapter Five. Thus, the University Center model has been effective in expanding baccalaureate degrees and beyond to those students who would not otherwise have that opportunity because of financial reasons.

OPERATIONAL ECONOMIC BENEFIT

During challenging economic times, operating budgets are often underfunded and state appropriations decreased. According to Amey et al. (2007), deCastro and Karp (2009), and Fain (2014), this environment encourages institutions to determine ways to share and pool their resources. The struggling higher education environment plays a role to create the partnerships; state mandates, declining enrollment, reduced revenue, options to share in costs, and unused

infrastructure are just some of the examples and reasons for institutions to collaborate to positively impact sustainability. Such collaborations can increase enrollment. Davis (2009) asked why create a University Center model or enter into a partnership or collaboration, and went on to answer the question by stating that the University Center model can take many forms, with the ultimate goal to bring access and opportunity to the baccalaureate degree to the student (p. 3). Davis (2009), deCastro and Karp (2009), and Oxford (2017) further elaborated that the University Center model just makes good business sense because there is cross-institutional use of facilities and equipment and the sharing of these huge costs. Fain (2014) expounded that these partnerships are not just about a social conscience to elevate and expand educational opportunities to an underserved region or population, but there is a financial benefit with a healthy margin at times, where both the community college and four-year institutional partners do well financially (para. 12). Such partnerships are beneficial to all institutions involved because they may secure a student population for both schools, as both institutions can share resources as well as recruit and market simultaneously. For example, University Center partners may recruit and market at the community college recruiting events and new student orientation sessions to promote baccalaureate completion at the University Center.

Wyner et al. (2016) and Demonica and Oguerck (2005) asserted that a visual presence of a university on the campus of a community college is an investment with a high return. They go on to say that the University Center creates an excitement of the presence of a university on the community college campus, and an investment of financial and institutional resources for a University Center model signifies that transfer students are valued and deserve the same opportunity to earn their baccalaureate degrees as those who attend the main campus. It is a

symbol of high-level success between higher education institutions, giving comfort and a tangible goal to the students that they have a place to attain their baccalaureate. Although there is often required additional or re-purposed staff and faculty and new processes, that investment pays off as it often increases retention rates for students to continue and complete their baccalaureate degrees (Wyner et al., 2016, p. 9). Fliegler (2008) also pointed out that universities and community colleges can share not only students, but also share faculty, a very valuable and expensive resource (Making Connections, para. 3). This can be done better together than separately. As described in Chapter One, often four-year institutions reach out to community college faculty to hire them to teach as adjuncts and/or serve as advisors for the four-year institution and vice versa. DeCastro and Karp (2009), Fliegler (2008), Lorenzo (2005), and Wyner et al. (2016) said resource-sharing can be a focus of the University Center model, such as joint use or cross use of facilities, computer labs, study areas, library systems, equipment, and staffing. Such sharing has an immediate, positive effect on revenue by increasing resources and spreading costs, and such partnership can allow group rate purchases for equipment or facility improvements. This model often includes joint use of the community college facilities located at or near the community college; thereby, the University Center model is more cost efficient as compared to independent sites for the four-year institution.

DeCastro and Karp (2009) gave specific examples illustrating this collaboration stating that four-year institutions often use the community college buildings to deliver their courses, such as Macomb Community College in Michigan (p. 11). Some arrangements provide a fee structure for the four-year institutional partner to be housed on the campus, and other arrangements provide that the partner pays a per student fee to allow student use of different

facilities such as the health center, library, recreational facilities, and cafeteria, an expense a four-year institution could not afford to provide separately. Bemmell (2008) described that by using the University Center model, the community college infrastructure is subsidized by the four-year institution. At the same time, the four-year institution can capitalize on the community college's pliability and responsiveness (p. 31). Lorenzo (2005) stated that the University Center model makes good financial sense to fill this gap as this approach is more practical and cost effective for state governments than increasing the university systems (p. 86).

DESCRIPTION/CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENT POPULATION

The student population served by the University Center, most often described as nontraditional students, were identified by both their place-bound and time-bound characteristics for a variety of reasons and, thus, are similarly vulnerable to the challenges for degree attainment (DeGan-Dixon, 2014; King, 2012; Shields, 2004). Brown (2007), Mills and Plumb (2012), and Baum et al. (2013) elaborated on the descriptors of the nontraditional student to include older students who commute to school, attend part-time, have a goal to sharpen or retool their labor market skills, or plan to pursue a promotion. Digging deeper into the characteristics and descriptions of these nontraditional students, a study by the U.S. Department of Education described the nontraditional student as a person who has any one of the following characteristics: delays postsecondary enrollment education, attends part time for at least part of the academic year, works full time while enrolled, is considered financially independent, has dependents, is a single caregiver, or does not have a traditional high school diploma (U.S. Department of Education, 2015, p. 1). Nontraditional students self-identified that they were employees first and students second according to Bragg and Ruud (2012, p. 73).

Nontraditional students are constituting an ever-increasing and substantial portion of those students enrolled in post-secondary education. Many within this group were professionals who want to earn a master's degree to attain careers that will provide a better way of life, both economically and socially, for themselves and their families, but with a career and children, they could not commute to a graduate school two hours away (Demonica & Oguerck, 2005; Grabowski et al., 2016; Hout, 2012; Markle, 2015). Students often shared their motivation, specifically, that a promotion or management position requires a baccalaureate degree or that employer reimbursement was offered if they continue their education.

UNIVERSITY CENTER MODELS IDENTIFIED

As described in Chapter One, I have knowledge of the Northwestern Michigan College University Center that has provided increased access to many in this region both from a student perspective and institutional perspective. Access is the predominate reason for developing a University Center model, and the ability to offer more choices of educational degree programs at an affordable cost is integral to such access. The University Center model can provide access without major disruption to the student's environment and can attract four-year institutional partners with keystone programs, so that the community college does not have to reinvent the wheel and endure an expensive start up to offer similar programs (Cotto, 2005; Demonica & Oguerck, 2005; Lorenzo, 2005). McClure (2010) stated that collaborations and partnerships that fall within the category of the University Center model are similar in their goal to bring education to those who may not otherwise be able to earn a higher-level degree (p. 58).

University Centers' goal aligns cleanly with the mission of the host community college, and this should be expected as, in most cases, the community college is the host. More

precisely, in the examples examined for this study, the community college is the lead and/or creator of the University Center. As a specific example of mission alignment, Northwestern Michigan College's mission is to provide "lifelong learning opportunities to our communities" (Northwestern Michigan College, n.d.c, p. 1), and the mission of the NMC University Center is "to facilitate the delivery of high-quality programs and course offerings beyond the associate degree level to northwest Michigan as deemed desirable by the citizens of the region" (NMC University Center, n.d.a, p. 1). The University Center's specific statement describing "offerings beyond the associate degree level," "desirable by the citizens of the region" clearly aligns with Northwestern Michigan College's statement of "lifelong learning opportunities" "to our communities" (NMC University Center, n.d.a, p. 1; Northwestern Michigan College, n.d.c, p. 1). Although some University Centers do not have a specific mission statement on their website, most appear to have a strong alliance with the host community college where the University Center is described and explained. Mott Community College University Center is an such an example of a descriptive alignment. Mott Community College's mission is to provide "high quality, accessible, and affordable educational opportunities and services that cultivate student success and individual development and improve the overall quality of life in a multicultural community" (Mott Community College, n.d.a, p. 1). Its University Center describes itself as a "unique partnership that allows students to earn a bachelor or master's degree from a major university, right on MCC's campus in Flint" (Mott Community College, n.d.b, p. 1). This University Center description links and aligns with Mott's mission of quality, accessible, and affordable educational opportunities (Mott Community College, n.d.a, p. 1).

While the goals are similar among University Centers, the models can take on different forms and each can be unique. As described in Chapter One, there are six different University Center models: co-location model, enterprise model, virtual model, integrated model, sponsorship model, and hybrid model. I will proceed to delve deeper into the characteristics of these University Center models to provide the theoretical framework for discussion.

The Co-location Model

The co-location model is a collaboration where the partners share the same physical space to offer programs as identified by Lorenzo (2005) and described by Locklear et al. (2009) and Geiser and Atkinson (2010). Lorenzo (2005) described this model as including the arrangement where the four-year educational institution delivers its programs and holds classes at the same location as the community college. Often times the classrooms and support services are provided by the four-year on the main campus of the community college or at another site exclusively provided for this model (p. 78). The co-location formation can range from short-term agreements to use certain classrooms and offices, to joint-use facilities, to long-term agreements with a comprehensive shared campus where some partners may own a structure on community college land.

Although the institutions share space, Lorenzo (2005) and Locklear et al. (2009) clarified that there is little connection beyond that space sharing, and that it resembles more of a landlord-tenant relationship. The classrooms and administrative offices are owned by the community college, and the four-year institution provides degree programs and curriculum along with its own support staff and faculty. Lorenzo (2005) and Locklear et al. (2009) both

emphasized that co-location institutions are operationally and academically independent from one another.

The Enterprise Model

The Enterprise model includes the arrangement among several institutions to form a collaborative entity or union with collaborative governance, including operational and financial responsibilities among all as identified by Lorenzo (2005, p. 78). The community college and the participating four-year educational institutions share responsibilities for the operation of the University Center, usually with participation and responsibilities aligned with its proportion of providing programming. The collaborative governance structure is usually established by the partners and consists of a governing or advisory board with representatives from the educational institutions as well as the community college as detailed by Lorenzo (2005, p. 78). Geiser and Atkinson (2010) also described this model as a multi-institutional consortium model; the two- and four-year institutions co-exist on the same campus as a higher education center, working together to manage shared services, facilities, and other resources in an efficient way (p. 27). McClure (2010) said that the collaborative governance process, also referenced as a higher education center, especially if executed with a large governing board, can bring political issues and challenges that can at times be chaotic and inhibit attempts to move forward (p. 59).

The Virtual Model

Lorenzo (2005) and Geiser and Atkinson (2010) stated that, although similar in being collaborators as described in other models, the Virtual Model differs in that upper-level courses are delivered fully online by a four-year institution and not offered on site. In this model, the

community college is fully engaged with students from first-year courses through their upper-level courses and then to graduation. This model is unique because it has one significant characteristic not held by other models: the baccalaureate degree is conferred by the community college, rather than the four-year institution. Lorenzo (2005) stated that this model is available to almost any community college with a willing four-year institution, depending upon state law (p. 80). However, in recent years, with the growth of online programs available through four-year institutions, the virtual model now more closely follows the other University Center models where the baccalaureate is conferred by the four-year institutions not the community college.

Friedman (2018), Lederman (2018), and Nguyen (2019) discussed the increase in online degrees as they meet the needs of the non-traditional student of access and flexibility because, for although students may enroll into fully online or partially online courses and programs, many desire the support and student services to be available in person. They want the connection with their advisors and instructors at times, while also expecting enhanced online services. A 2018 study of online students indicated that a majority were staying close to home and were taking courses from institutions within 100 miles of their home (Magda & Asianian, 2018, p. 50). For students wanting the benefits of online courses for their schedule flexibility and the benefits of personal access to support services, the University Center model can play a key role because their locations provide additional student access points beyond the main campus location. While the four-year institution could maintain student services support, such as advising and assisting with student issues, the University Center often provides those students similar services either face to face or online. The University Center also meets the

needs of students for whom virtual learning may not be the most effective pedagogical strategy and learning environment for some students or for all courses; some students still prefer in person classes for subjects they may find more difficult (Friedman, 2016).

The Integrated Model

The Integrated Model is the co-location model expanded beyond shared space and facilities. This model provides an expanded and enhanced cooperative relationship between the community college and a single four-year institution or with several as identified by Lorenzo (2005, p. 78). The two-year and four-year programs typically interfuse and are completely merged into the entire campus life along with student services. The community college is integral in planning and determining needs and commits staff members to manage the space, course offerings, and information technology support according to Lorenzo (2005, p. 78). This model typically offers a variety of degree options, from baccalaureate to graduate degrees, and the facilities, which are also shared, can range from a few classrooms to an entire separate University Center building (Lorenzo, 2005, p. 78).

The Sponsorship Model

In the Sponsorship Model, the community college takes the lead in determining the degrees and programs that may be offered and also establishes, operates, and manages the functions of the University Center as identified by deCastro and Karp (2009) and Lorenzo (2005). Often the community college seeks multiple partners, including both public and private institutions, to share space and to offer an extensive line of baccalaureate and graduate programs, offering classes during the day, evenings, and weekends (deCastro & Karp, 2009;

Lorenzo, 2005). In this model, according to Lorenzo, often the University Center is a stand-alone facility; the community college has a significant influence on determining and evaluating the academic programs provided at the University Center; the community college hires full-time staff to manage and operate the Center; and the community college provides access to higher level degrees (2005, p. 82). This model provides the community college with a greater influence and control over what programs are being offered at the location, and students have access to high quality programs provided by the four-year institutional partners and access to services and resources from both the community college and the partners (Lorenzo, 2005, p. 82). Floyd (2006) and Cotto et al. (2006) said that when the community college plays a lead role in the partnership, it is a creative and inventive partnership, describing it as the “embedded baccalaureate model,” spotlighting learning outcomes, curricular alignment, and shared advising responsibilities for a seamless transition graduating students with both an associate and baccalaureate degrees, from the community college and the four-year institution, respectively.

The Hybrid Model

As defined by Lorenzo, the Hybrid Model merges a University Center model with the community college that also offers a community college baccalaureate (2005, p. 82). The Southern Regional Education Board describes the hybrid model as associate/baccalaureate institutions because the community college’s primary focus is granting associate degrees, but according to Cohen et al. (2014), Floyd (2005), and Lorenzo (2005), the college also awards baccalaureate degrees. Floyd (2005) states that it is a hybrid because it can be a cross or

composite of the other models described above with one significant difference: the community college also confers certain baccalaureate degrees (p. 39). This allows additional opportunities for students by providing cooperative baccalaureate and advanced degrees through the university partners while also providing baccalaureate degrees directly through the community college (Lorenzo, 2005, p. 83).

CLARIFICATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY CENTER MODEL

Cotto (2005), Demonica and Oguerck (2005), and Lorenzo (2005) clarified the University Center model as relates to the role and responsibilities of the partners: (1) The baccalaureate degree and advanced degrees are conferred by the specific partnering four-year institution and not by the University Center or the community college host, with the exception of the integrated model and some virtual models. Therefore, the program requirements and curriculum are approved by the partnering four-year institution for the program to align with the degree requirements; (2) The four-year institution usually has a residency requirement of credits to be earned directly from its courses; (3) The partnering four-year institution most often accept more credit hours than the typical credit requirement for an associate degree; (4) Some programs allow students to enroll into both the community colleges classes and four-year institution classes simultaneously; (5) The partnering four-year institutions are responsible for advising the students within the upper-level classes but most often work collaboratively with the advisors for the lower-level classes and have a good understanding of the courses and transfer equivalences of the community college courses.

POPULAR PRACTICES FOR UNIVERSITY CENTERS

University Centers have similar characteristics or popular practices which seem to surface when reviewing various models. The community college and the four-year institutions collaborate to bring their best to the table, assuring that each partner is a contributor. All efforts are made to put the students first by providing a variety of program offerings most often to complement the other institutional partner offerings and select baccalaureate degree-completions and graduate degrees as deemed desirable by the student and community (Davis, 2009; NMC University Center website, n.d.b).

The community college and the institutional partners may often provide coordinated advising, with the community college providing advice for lower-level division students and the four-year institutional partner providing advice for upper-level division students (Lorenzo, 2005, p. 84). For example, at the NMC University Center, Northwestern Michigan College and Ferris State University hold a joint advisors' meeting twice per school year, one at the end of the fall semester and one at the end of the spring semester to discuss changes and updates to programming. Often, lead faculty as well as student service representatives attend these meetings (see Appendix A and Appendix B). This collaboration ensures a smooth transition for the student academically and economically by ensuring students take proper classes and by promoting early contact with the upper-level course advisor. This collaboration also may enhance a concrete and valuable working relationship between the community college and four-year institutional advisors, resulting in a benefit to the students throughout their educational pathway.

Faculty may often teach at both the community college and the four-year institutional partner. By serving in both roles, they can encourage students, introduce career and degree options early on, and be available to students in their hometown. This faculty overlap may help students transitioning from being community college students to being four-year institution students. This cross-relationship can spur discussions of degree completion and transfer to the student due to the overlapping faculty, shaping the students to be better prepared and comfortable (Buhi et al., 2018; Lorenzo, 2005).

Although partnering institutions recruit and market their individual programs at the University Center, the community college may often assist with some marketing and recruitment, such as providing information on its website and connecting with links to the partners. Often community colleges and four-year institutions assist with some reciprocity in marketing and recruitment activities with student events, local community events, billboards, radio/television talk shows, and chamber of commerce events (Davis, 2009; Lorenzo, 2005; NMC University Center, n.d.b.; Northwestern Michigan College, n.d.b.). This reciprocity is cost effective and enhances the connection and awareness of the access to baccalaureate degrees.

In order to ensure that the same, high-quality education is provided by the four-year institutional partners at University Centers as would be provided at its main campus, University Centers complete thorough reviews of the curricula and transfer equivalencies from the partnering community college to the four-year institutions and work collaboratively with the faculty of the community college and the faculty of four-year institution. As a recent example, a review of the Ferris State University Accountancy Program with Northwestern Michigan College determined that some of the outcomes of the community college courses did not meet the

equivalencies of the Ferris State University courses and were, thereby, no longer transferrable into the baccalaureate. Realizing the negative impact for the student as well as the programs of both institutions, the lead faculty from both institutions came together to resolve the differences. In a collaborative spirit over multiple semesters, faculty adjusted the community college courses and included regular updates to the advisors from both institutions, thus meeting the needs of the students as well as enhancing the quality of the program and relationship between the two institutions.

Overall University Center students have access to a variety of student services, either on-site or online. Student services are often provided at the University Centers and range from comprehensive and personal services to basic enrollment services, such as assisting students at time of application, registering students for classes, helping with financial aid questions, and troubleshooting for specific situations. Students have access to a financial aid officer through a variety of methods, in person, telephone, and via email along with access to main campus financial aid assistance.

The community college and four-year institutions may partner in special ways to provide special services, such as a special consortium agreement to help students with financial aid packaging. Within these special agreements, students are considered dual enrolled and may be eligible to receive financial aid through the four-year institution to cover their required community college courses, which will then transfer seamlessly into the baccalaureate degree.

SUMMARY

History describes educational attainment as integral to individual's successful work lives and financial stability, and community colleges and four-year institutions have had a long

history of collaboration, acknowledging the importance of higher education, specifically student access to the baccalaureate degree. Tension between community colleges and four-year institutions, however, has been evident throughout these collaboration, reflected in both academic elitism and socioeconomic elitism. The baccalaureate degree may be attained through several pathways: (1) going-to-college model, (2) articulation model, (3) partnership model, (4) university extension model, 5) community college baccalaureate model, and 6) University Center model. Given the urgency of access and opportunity for students to attain the baccalaureate degree and the urgency of financial stability and sustainability of higher education institutions, the University Center model provides easy access, enhances smooth transitions for the student, and leads to cost savings and best use of resources.

The six forms or models of University Centers are unique in their structure but similar in two primary goals: (1) to expand degree access, affordability, and attainment for students who would not otherwise have the opportunity and (2) to strengthen the financial stability of both the community colleges and the four-year institution. As individuals continue to seek better lives for themselves and their families through educational attainment, the nontraditional student population will continue to grow. Thus, the literature review demonstrated the need for baccalaureate attainment, the need for greater access to the baccalaureate beyond the main campus, and the various pathways and means to earn a baccalaureate degree.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

In the broadest view, research is a methodical and structured process influenced by intellectual intrigue in a phenomenon, with the mission to inform and expand knowledge of the phenomenon and to explore areas not yet comprehensively researched (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016). This chapter illustrates the research methodology; specifically, a qualitative approach was used in the collection and analysis of data to explore the different collaborations and relationships between community colleges and four-year institutions (both universities and colleges) within Michigan, often referred to as University Centers. The focus of this study was to gain a comprehensive understanding of University Center structures, their various collaborations, their operations, and their purpose. The study was framed through the lens of the six different models of University Centers identified in Chapter Two, with the potential to discover new or modified models. Interviews were conducted with community college administrators, whose responsibility is to operate and manage University Centers, to acquire a deep understanding of their perceptions of the University Center and the community college's relationship with the four-year institutional partners along with the place-bound and time-bound students served.

The purpose of the study was to describe, analyze, interpret, and understand the perceived and actual operations of the University Center model from the perspective of the

host community college in Michigan. I examined these University Centers to define the different models used in Michigan and how they address and fulfill the needs of the students, communities, community colleges, and four-year institutions and how they address the financial issues faced by many higher educational institutions. The study examined the following questions:

1. What are the University Center models in Michigan?
2. What is the purpose of the University Center?
 - Does it provide opportunity for student access and success?
 - Does it provide financial stability to the host community college and partnering institutions?
3. What is the relationship between the host community college and four-year institutional partners?
 - What is the role of the host community college?
 - What is the role of the four-year institution?

As previously mentioned, this country is a nation where access to higher education is the foundation to provide for financial security and to be productive citizens within their communities; however, earning a college degree may seem almost impossible for students facing the challenges of place- and time-bound circumstances. Secondly, with continued decrease of student enrollment and other factors such as the loss of higher education state funding and the rise of costs in the labor-intensiveness of higher education, community colleges and four-year institutions are experiencing significant shortfalls, shaking the financial stability and sustainability of higher education institutions, and are seeking alternatives such as these University Center collaborations to look beyond the typical main campus student to address the

issues of student enrollment and retention and financial stability (Amey et al., 2007; Fain, 2014; Fonseca & Bird, 2007). University Centers are not just about a social conscience to provide educational access and expand educational opportunities to a population who may be underserved, there is a financial benefit with cost effectiveness and sustainability, where both the community college and the four-year institutions do well financially (Davis, 2009; deCastro & Karp, 2009; Fain, 2014; Oxford, 2017). University Centers benefit both the community college and the four-year institutional partners by increasing and/or sustaining enrollment by recruiting and securing a student population together and highlighting baccalaureate attainment locally.

This chapter begins with an explanation of this work as qualitative. This is followed by the methodology selected. Specifically, a qualitative approach was appropriate to use for this study and will be discussed. Then, the research design is described as an exploratory case study following up with a description of epistemology. The research setting is then discussed describing the participants of the study including the population and the sample, followed by the description of the collection and analysis of the data, and then a discussion of validity and reliability and researcher bias and assumptions. Ethical consideration, limitations, and delimitations conclude the chapter.

METHODOLOGY SELECTED

A qualitative approach was selected as the most appropriate because it provided rich and in-depth information of the experiences of the participants to gain a deeper understanding from the perceptions and viewpoints of the community college leadership as relates to the phenomenon of the University Center (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016). This approach was to explore and understand the meaning as attributed by the participants with the

emergence of questions and with the data collected in the participant's own environment and then analyzed, with the researcher interpreting the meaning of the data collected (Creswell, 2014, p. 32). This approach allowed the study to be fluid, evolving, and kinetic enabling a connection to and development of a relationship with the participants, seeing it from their point of view (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 5). I saw firsthand the value of the work that is produced because I accepted to be the research instrument and to work through any ambiguity. Through this approach, it was my desire to go beyond what I know and step into the world of the participants, these community college leaders; and by doing so, discoveries were made to contribute to the knowledge base (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Merriam, 2009). As described by Corbin and Strauss (2015), Dudovskiy (2018), and Yin (2016), the qualitative approach involves studying the meaning of the participants' lives, as experienced under their everyday roles or shared through their own words, feelings, and emotions; and the interactions occurred with minimal intrusion, participants saying what they wanted to say and not be limited by a questionnaire or survey. Also, priority was given to represent their views and capture their perspectives to allow for emerging ideas to represent the meanings given by them through their inner experiences and not by my preconceived ideas (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Yin, 2016). This allowed the research to be discovery-oriented and to create and deepen relationships with participants to solicit thick description of information directly from the participants; and their comprehensive understanding of the actual operations of the University Center models provided data of richness, breadth, and depth (Glesne, 2011; Seidman, 2013; Yin, 2016). This research approach allowed for the foundation for development of empirical knowledge as described by the

participants through their personal experiences and provided information-rich perspectives of the population being studied to gain a deep understanding of the complexity of University Centers (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Merriam, 2009). This approach helped to discover their underlying motivations, viewpoints, and opinions for the structure, creation, and purpose of the University Centers as we were exposed to their specific words and descriptors from their perspective to share their feelings and knowledge (Dudovskiy, 2018; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016). A quantitative approach would not have been appropriate because such approach would describe and measure occurrences with questions of how many or how often, perhaps through a survey involving large volume of responses and analyzed by reducing data to numbers, and it would focus mainly on relationships of numerical calculations or a cause-and-effect relationship (Dudovskiy, 2018; Glesne, 2011; Yin, 2016).

In education, the work of educators has often been interested in specific environments for understanding a phenomenon not based on testing theory but rather on theory from inductively analyzing a social occurrence (Dudovskiy, 2018; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016). This approach, as an educational exploration, is a discovery-oriented study where the determinations are made in the real-world environment to happen naturally (naturalist inquiry) by observing the phenomenon rather than arranging for it to happen in a laboratory (Dudovskiy, 2018; Guba, 1978; Yin, 2016). The basic strategy is inductive, rather than deductive, and is comparative beginning with interviews, then, from those interviews, moving to comparing and contrasting them with other data to recognize themes and patterns; the data was collected, and analysis continued throughout the research (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Packer, 2018; Yin, 2016). The process was inductive by gathering data, seeing patterns; and the

research was focused on the generation and discovery and not verification (Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Packer, 2018).

RESEARCH DESIGN

The exploratory case study design allowed me, as the Researcher, an environment to secure qualitative data from the community college leaderships' perceptions of their University Centers and comparing their responses to one another. I, as the researcher, was the explorer to provide a perspective to carry out the social investigation. The exploratory case study method was selected because there is no predetermined outcome and my intent was to bring insight and ideas for an extensive and in-depth description and understanding of the phenomenon from the perspective of the community college leadership (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Dudovskiy, 2018; Yin, 2016). Exploratory research is not to provide conclusive evidence but rather to focus on a better understanding and meaning of the phenomenon; its focus is on discovery, from the beginning and throughout the research, a virtue of the qualitative approach during the collection process (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Stebbins, 2001; Yin, 2016). Yin (2016) specifically quotes Bromley (1986),

The value of the case study approach is that it deals directly with the individual case in its actual context...Case studies get as close to the subject of interest as they possibly can, partly by means of direct observation in natural settings, partly by their access to subject factors (thoughts, feelings, and desires.) (p. 68).

It was my intent to describe the specifics of these perspectives. The participant's abilities and individual experiences are unique to them, and generalization was not necessarily sought. Because of the exploratory nature of the study and the multiple locations being studied, there may have been some generalizability through analysis of the perspectives

shared; and any identified popular practices or benefits could possibly be applied or transferred to other University Centers or other community college and four-year institution collaborations (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009).

Exploration was driven by the need to increase knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon by exploring University Centers as described and perceived by the participants; and by examining the words and describing the views of these participants created a holistic account (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2016). I conducted the data collection and analysis to better understand and identify which models may be at play relating to the University Centers in Michigan; and specifically, the data was collected from the perception of the participants and their direct experiences as it relates to the purpose of the University Center, the role of the community college, the role of the four-year institutions, the needs of the students served, and other issues which the participants may have pointed out (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2016).

The readers of this paper are assumed to be those in leadership roles within a community college or four-year institution. Of those readers who are currently within a University Center structure, this research may spark interest for them to evaluate their own structure to determine in which of the six models they may be aligned, to discover new or modified models, and to consider modification or confirmation of their structure. Of those readers who are not within a University Center structure, this research may spark interest for them to consider initiating such a University Center collaboration whether it be from the perspective of the two-year institution or the four-year institution. The readers may also analyze their own motivation for establishing a University Center, whether it be for student

accessibility and success or the financial sustainability and stability for their institution, or both. This exploration was from the host community college leadership perspective and may lead to additional research from other perspectives, such as the four-year institutions partners or the student.

This exploratory case study was bounded by the 28 public community colleges in Michigan. To determine which community colleges had created and housed a University Center, I reviewed the 28 public community colleges as compiled by the Michigan Community College NETwork (Michigan Community College NETwork, n.d.). My data collection began with a review of the website of each of these public community colleges to determine those which had partnerships and relationships with four-year institutions on its community college campus providing baccalaureate degree completion, followed by a specific review of the characteristics of each partnership and relationship to determine those which aligned with the characteristics of a University Center model as described in Chapter One. As a result of this review, 14 community colleges were identified and contacted. Of the 14, 13 responded to participate in this study. The exploration continued with personal interviews. Interviews and observations are integral in qualitative approach because these individuals have the distinct experience to share in the phenomenon being explored (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016). The interviews were conducted at the physical location of each community college because it allows the study of the phenomenon within its natural setting (Creswell, 2014; Dudovskiy, 2018; Guba, 1978; Yin, 2016). An original, developed set of interview questions was used not relying on instruments developed by others (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Freundlich, 2016). (See Appendix D.)

The data comes from these community college leaders through the individual face-to-face interviews and from their descriptions of the environment as well as what I observed during the interview process. The focus was on what the participants held as their belief of the University Center and paying attention to emerging data (Creswell, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Yin, 2016). Interviews with the leadership of the host community colleges provided integral insight about the structure and operation of the University Centers allowing a comparison of their responses to other community college leadership to identify their perceptions about the University Centers to better understand how their specific University Center may have aligned with the identified University Center models with the potential to discover new or modified models (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2016).

RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

I examined 13 University Center models through the lens of the community college leadership as an exploratory case study. It provided an understanding and an interpretative approach and possesses epistemological assumptions, which is based on how things really are based upon their and my reality of University Centers (Jabareen, 2009, p. 51). Epistemology is a branch of research philosophy which addresses sources of knowledge and is concerned with the nature and the possibilities, as well as limitations, of knowledge in a discipline or field of study and focuses on what is known to be true as classified by me as the researcher (Dudovskiy, 2018; Packer, 2018; Patel, 2015). Epistemology creates a more holistic view of how I, as the researcher, see and accept the knowledge. A key aspect is the researcher's view of what is acceptable knowledge and how I, as the researcher, see myself in relationship to the knowledge; and what and how I know sets my path for data collection and analysis of the

phenomenon (Dudovskiy, 2018; Glesne, 2011; Packer, 2018; Patel, 2015). As defined by Yin (2016) and Packer (2018), my standpoint epistemology has influenced my interest in this study of University Center models, and what I know from my experiences have influenced the study design and the research procedures and have guided me. My interest in this study is attributed to my view and knowledge of having served as a Director of a NMC University Center institutional partner as well as a student who had graduated from an institutional partner at this University Center (Dudovskiy, 2018; Packer 2018; Yin, 2016). I have specific experiences through this position which may give me some in-depth perspective and may provide additional knowledge on the operations of the University Center to influence my research. Additionally, as a former student of the NMC University Center graduating from one of the university center partners also attributes to my standpoint epistemology. Together through personal face-to-face interviews and observations at the sites, there was deeper understanding; and the case study was my best access because of my relationships and my world in the context University Centers (Dudovskiy, 2018; Freundlich, 2016; Patel, 2015). As the researcher, I approached the data collection to include the method of face-to-face personal interviews with community college leaders. My standpoint is socially situated and may have placed me in a better position of knowledge to develop and ask the applicable and deeper questions in this exploration (Dudovskiy, 2018; Freundlich, 2016; Packer, 2018). I believe my standpoint opened the access to the participants because either I already had a professional relationship with them, or Ferris State University already had a presence at their University Center. At minimum, Ferris State University is known within the Michigan community college network to be transfer friendly. My role as mid-management at a university and former University Center student may have given

more comfort to the participants to openly share with me their in-depth perspective and feelings because I was approaching them to learn, as opposed to viewing me in a higher academic position, such as a Dean, where the position may unintentionally be viewed as an evaluator or critic instead of a learner (Dudovskiy, 2018; Freundlich, 2016; Packer, 2018).

RESEARCH SETTING

The research was conducted in the summer semester of 2018 within the environment of the University Centers in Michigan to allow me, as the researcher, to meet face-to-face with the participants and on site of their community college campus to interpret and understand the meaning of the phenomena as constructed by the participants within such collaborations (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). With the participants describing their individual thought processes, the words used in their descriptions of their perceived operations is the grounded qualitative research upon which this exploration will rely. I constructed perspectives and meanings based upon this interaction with the participants and gained knowledge through their reality as shared with me (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Yin, 2016). The phenomenon being explored were the University Centers within the state of Michigan. Face-to-face interviews were conducted; however, telephone interviews would have been conducted if face-to-face interviews could not be accommodated. The interview was estimated to take 45 minutes to an hour. The interview was held at the community college campus and the specific setting was determined at the convenience and comfort of the participant and included but was not limited to the participant's office. The interviews were electronically recorded with permission by the participant. As the researcher, I maintained neutrality and rapport during the interview, observed and experienced the

reactions of participants, and interacted with them within their own environment which added depth and breadth to the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Yin, 2016). Viewing and observing the physical location of the University Center in relation to the community college campus along with classrooms, student service areas, parking, and other characteristics added clarity to the interview.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Population

The population for the research was selected based upon the criteria of a collaboration between community colleges in Michigan which have partnered with one or more four-year institutions to create what is often referred to as a University Center or similar terminology as described in Chapter One. The community college served as the host of the University Center because it invited or allowed the four-year institutions to provide baccalaureate degree completion on its campus. Specifically, the distinct partnership was delineated by the community college providing the community college courses which transfer to the four-year institution; and the four-year institution provided the remaining upper-level courses at the site of the community college which led to a degree, certificate, or credential conferred by the four-year institution.

As delineated by Integrated Post-secondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the university extended sites or centers are geographically located outside the boundaries of the main campus; the courses offered are part of the degree program at the main campus; and the sites are not considered to be temporary (U.S. Department of Education, 2020, p. 14). The

selection criteria used to be included in this study are as follows (DeGan-Dixon, 2014; HLC, 2015; Lorenzo, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

1. The community college serves as the host college at the University Center with one or more four-year institutions.
2. The community college provides administrative support for the University Center.
3. The four-year institution provides administrative support for the location.
4. The community college provides the lower division courses which transfers into a degree, certificate, or other educational credential.
5. The four-year institution provides the upper division courses at the location in the educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other educational credential.
6. The University Center location may be housed at the community college main campus or ancillary site.
7. The four-year institution is considered a branch or extended site at the University Center and is geographically apart from its main campus and is not considered a campus of a multi-campus district campus system.
8. The four-year institution confers the four-year degree, certificate, or credential.
9. The conferred degree is considered the same degree as conferred at the four-year institution's main campus.
10. The University Center is considered permanent at a physical location as opposed to a short-term lease of office space or hotel space.
11. The four-year institution has its own faculty or designated faculty to teach its courses, separate from the community college faculty. Such faculty may simultaneously teach for a community college and four-institutions but separately and individually employed by the entities.

Sample

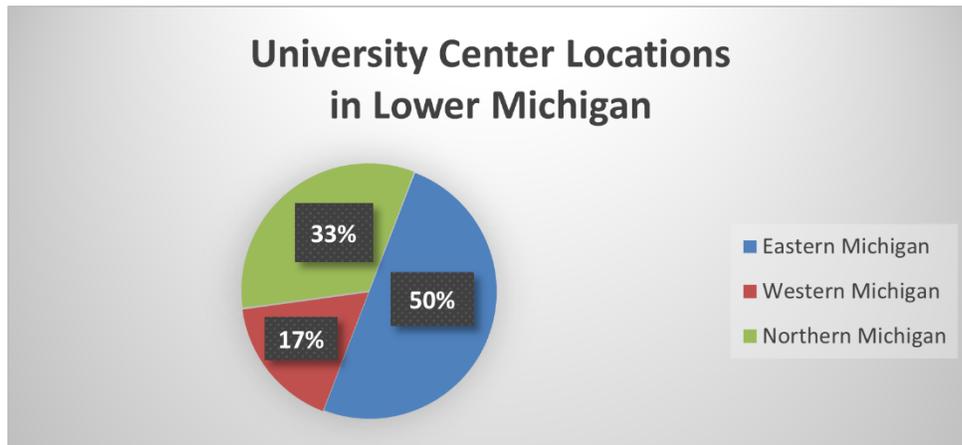
In qualitative research, the sample is not a probability. It is a purposive sampling, intended to be a group of participants who will have plenty of information for this study as well as the broadest range of perspectives and knowledge of the topic of study, specifically,

participants who will produce the most relevant data of the University Center model characteristics (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Glesne, 2011; Yin, 2016). The selection was not random; but rather, the reasoning to select these participants is grounded in the value of their knowledge and was purposive to access information-rich data; and in-depth interviews and observations are most frequently used to collect data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Glesne, 2011; Yin, 2016). It was intended to conduct interviews of community college administrators whose responsibility include the operation and management of a University Center as they are accessible and have the distinct experience to share in the phenomenon being explored (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 2014; Dudovskiy, 2018; Yin, 2016).

Based upon the population selection criteria as described above, the qualitative sample identified consisted of 14 University Centers in Michigan. However, as described more fully under Data Collection, one participant did not respond to the interview invitation after multiple attempts; and a second participant, during the interview, self-identified that its collaboration with four-institutions was no longer considered a University Center. Therefore, the number of participants used in this analysis was changed to 12.

Participants were located throughout the lower peninsula of Michigan, depicted into three major regions as indicated below. Of the participants, 33% are located in the Northern region of Michigan (North of US 10), 17% in Western region (South of US 10 and West of US 127) and 50% in Eastern Region (South of US-10 and East of US-127). See Figure 6.

Figure 6: University Center Locations Grouped by Regions



It is imperative to secure anonymity of the participants including the individuals interviewed and the community colleges which they represent. The community college participants were labeled in a simple format: CC1, CC2, CC3 and so forth. The code numbering was issued through random selection process. Table 2 shows each University Center with its number of four-year institutional partners and regional location.

Table 2. University Centers with Number of Partners and Regional Location

UNIVERSITY CENTER	# FOUR-YEAR PARTNERS	REGIONAL LOCATION
CC1	7	Northern
CC2	3	Eastern
CC3	11	Eastern
CC4	3	Eastern
CC5	5	Eastern
CC6	6	Eastern
CC7	2	Western
CC8	3	Western
CC9	4	Eastern
CC10	2	Northern
CC11	2	Northern
CC12	4	Northern

DATA COLLECTION

I am the primary collector of the data using interviews as the primary data collection tool (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009; Packer 2018). As mentioned earlier, this was a purposive sampling, not random. The participants were the administrative leaders of the community colleges within the University Center and were selected to be interviewed because these leaders have direct experience, perceptions, and opinions relating to the operational functions and responsibilities of such centers (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016). Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim serving as the prominent data collection mode; and field notes were developed, websites were studied, and email inquiries were also utilized in the data collection (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016).

The 14 administrative leaders were identified based on the research of each University Center website or my professional knowledge such as the Northwestern Michigan College University Center. If I could not clearly determine the administrative leader from the website, I made an inquiry via email or phone call to a respective community college administrator or Ferris State University administrator with whom I had a professional relationship within the context of a particular University Center. All participants were contacted through a personally addressed email directly from me as an invitation to participate. The invitation identified the purpose of the study and logistical details such as anticipated length of the interview and an on-site visit. If necessary, I had planned a follow-up email or phone call to be made about a week thereafter to schedule the specific interview. (See Appendix E.) While visiting the physical sites, brief field notes were made describing activities, behaviors, and actions of participants as well as the physical setting of the interview (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016). The

physical setting of the University Center was noted including a description of the surroundings, buildings, classroom location, and landscaping. Most of these details were described by the participant during the interview.

Although 14 participants were initially identified, the number of participants for data collection was 13 and the number of participants for analysis was 12. After several contacts, one particular University Center administrator explained that the invitation had to be forwarded to a different level of the community college leadership for consideration. After several follow-up contacts, no final response was received; and my invitation was neither accepted nor denied. Therefore, I proceeded to schedule interviews with the remaining 13 participants who accepted the invitation. Once the interview was scheduled, a second email was sent to the participant to confirm the time and date of the interview. (See Appendix F.) Of the 13 participants, one participant, during the actual interview, self-identified that it was no longer a University Center and described the relationship as simply solidified partnerships with certain four-year institutions to offer degree completions on site. Therefore, the analysis consisted of 12 participants.

Before the interview began, the research project was described, confidentiality and anonymity were explained, and permission to record was received from the participant. It was further explained that such recording would be used for reference purposes only. The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and a smartphone recorder for backup. I explained that it was my intent to transcribe the recordings of the interviews; and if a transcriptionist was hired, I explained that a confidentiality agreement from the transcriptionist

would be obtained agreeing to maintain full confidentiality of the audio recordings and identification of the participant and related institution.

Interview

Packer (2018) says that interviews have become popular permeating our daily lives, from talk shows, Internet, and evening news; and we live today in a society where we view, listen, and read about interviews each day (p. 55). Although the interview is frequent and common in society, it is different in data collection. It is a systematic approach and technique in qualitative research and is used frequently because interviews provide the richest source for data and to be aware that interviews can be shaped through the questions asked and body language such as pauses, facial expressions, and other verbal and nonverbal communication (Corbin & Strauss 2015; Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009; Packer 2018). Throughout social sciences, collecting data through interviews is universal; and although researchers using a qualitative approach work in a variety of perspectives and study in many ranges of phenomena, the overall technique used for data collection is the interview, the method of choice because it allows the drilling down into understanding of the phenomenon according to Packer (2018, p. 56). There are three types of interviews: unstructured, semi-structured, and structured (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Merriam, 2009; Packer, 2018; Yin, 2016). The semi-structured interviews were primary and were conducted with each participant along with a short, structured interview. The interview was conducted face to face at the location of the host community college leadership at the University Center; and telephone interviews would have been conducted if face to face could not be accommodated.

The interview began with an interpersonal tone to carry into a substantive conversation. At the beginning of the interview, a structured format was used for two reasons: first, to provide an environment of comfort, often referenced as *break the ice* with the participant, and second, to obtain factual information such as location, size of the community college and the University Center, years in existence, number of University Center partners, and other statistical information (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016). Although some of this information could have been obtained through National Center for Education Statistics – IPEDS or perhaps online, this structured format was used to obtain this more stagnate information obtained through closed-ended questions and enhance the comfort. The structured interview was ended because they do not cover or allow the emergence of what is meaningful and paramount to the participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 39).

The interview then transitioned into the semi-structured format, what Yin (2016) refers to as the qualitative interview (p. 141). The interview was not strictly scripted as there was no complete list of questions; but rather, it was more of a conversing mode (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Packer, 2018; Yin, 2016). Packer (2018) says that the semi-structured interview is the work horse of qualitative research because the researcher has a general plan, the participants are allowed a great deal of leeway in the way they answer and the length of their answer, and the participants are encouraged to answer or share in their own words (p. 56). Following a conversational mode, the interview was individualized to each of the participants varying from University Center to University Center, requiring intense listening skills (Merriam, 2009; Packer, 2018; Yin, 2016). As explained earlier in the chapter, a digital recorder was used during the interview for assistance.

During the qualitative interview, the interview questions were developed to identify the administrator's view and perception of the University Center operations; open-ended questions were used to explore the phenomenon to allow the participant to answer from their perspective and give rich, thick descriptions; and the responses provided by those who oversee such University Centers provided a deeper, more complex understanding of the issue (Packer, 2018; Seidman, 2013; Yin, 2016,). The qualitative interview was used to discuss and converse on questions relating to the study to allow flexibility and emergence. This allowed me, as the researcher, to see through the eyes of the interviewee, to see their perspective; and this firsthand experience allowed me to be discovery-oriented and inductive with the participant (Glesne, 2011; Seidman, 2013; Yin, 2016). This detail was established by discussing directly with such administrators within their own environment, which was anticipated to have a direct implication of the type of University Center model enjoyed at that particular site or perhaps discovery of a new or modified model (Creswell, 2014; Glesne, 2011; Yin, 2016).

Some follow-up interviews may have been conducted for clarification and may have been done via telephone or email due to logistical and scheduling challenges and convenience. Each participant gave permission to contact them at a later time for clarification or further questions. As mentioned previously, qualitative interviews with open-ended questions allow for flexibility and emergence and may lead to additional inquiry or questions arising from a subsequent participant which may not have been asked of a participant who was interviewed early on. It may have been necessary for me, as the interviewer, to follow up with a previous participant for a response to a subsequent emerging idea. Also, some participants may have wanted an opportunity to answer questions at a later time if they did not feel they had the

information at hand or knowledge to do so during the interview. For example, they may have been relatively new to their position and did not have the historical or institutional knowledge of the University Center.

Although intensive interviews have strengths, there are some limitations. Some participants may not be equally articulate, perceptive, or knowledgeable depending upon their position level or experience; and at times persons who agree to be interviewed have little to say once the interview begins because they may be uncomfortable and need a little encouragement (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Packer, 2018). Interviews are not necessarily neutral instruments to collect data because of the interaction and rapport of the interviewer and the interviewee or perhaps because of the context in which the interviews are happening. For example, the interviewer determined the topic and the questions which could be interpreted as the interviewer is dominating or influencing the interview (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018; Roberts, 2020; Seidman, 2013). Therefore, it was crucial to develop an original set of interview questions to address the research question. As stated previously, an original set of interview questions was developed to carry out the purpose of the study not relying on instruments developed by others, and given the researcher was socially situated was integral in developing the questions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Freundlich, 2016). In keeping with the conversational mode, it was essential to be courteous, to listen, and to refrain from asking too many questions so as not to interrupt the participants or refrain from directing their answer (Creswell, 2014; Packer, 2018; Yin, 2016). Each question included subsequent probing notes to collect the complex and intricate details which address the topic of study, and interviews were transcribed creating a verbatim record

which is the significant data base for analysis because it is a form of representation of what the participant said and insight into their meaning and not a representation of what the interviewer may have written down and inferred a meaning (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016).

Field Notes, Website, and Email Inquiries

Field notes were made as a reference tool for recording and transcription and to describe the research setting at the specific University Center where the phenomenon was naturally taking place. Field notes described the structure of the University Center (its location on the community college campus or ancillary facility), its physical environment (the campus, classrooms, and parking), the participants (who is present, how many, their roles), and activities and interactions (what types of activities are happening and is it typical) (Merriam, 2009, p. 130). Field notes, websites, and email inquiries were also used to describe the makeup and operations of the University Center such as number of four-year institutional partners, their location, residency requirements, and cost degree analysis. During data collection, the interview and field notes were minimally blended. These additional modes of data collection were secondary because the audio recording is the prominent data collection mode as the interview was critical to provide in-depth and rich information (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016).

DATA ANALYSIS

A thematic analysis approach was used because the primary data consists of verbatim transcripts of each face-to-face interview. The secondary data consists of brief field notes along

with website review and email inquiries. The data is managed and organized early by constructing categories as suggested by Creswell (2014), Corbin and Strauss (2015), and Packer (2018). The data analysis is conducted simultaneously with the data collection because data is surfacing unexpectedly, emerging, and needs to be analyzed continuously in terms of further questions which may arise (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016). The first step in analysis is to describe each phenomenon in substantial detail while continuing with the constant comparative method, and it may compare what they have in common or on the differences as described by the participants (Flick, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Packer, 2018). This method involves the comparing of data from one portion of data to another to determine similitudes and contrasts with data then grouped on a similar dimension (Flick, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Packer, 2018). The dimension is then identified by name and becomes a category, with the overall goal to analyze and determine themes within the data. Constant comparative method is concerned with generating and ostensibly suggesting categories and properties of the data not necessarily providing evidence or proof (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Packer 2018; Yin, 2016). Constant comparative method begins with the interviews and moving from those to comparing and contrasting them with other data to recognize patterns and themes.

The analysis begins with XYZ University Center. I selected to begin with XYZ for three reasons: first, it is the University Center of which I am most familiar and served as a director of one of its four-year institutional partners; second, it is one of the earlier University Centers to be established, 1995; and third, for convenience because it is easily geographically accessible. After XYZ, I proceed with a second University Center, the data of which was compared to the XYZ University Center. Then, a third center is analyzed, the data of which is compared to the

first and second University Centers. This pattern continues throughout the analysis. As stated earlier, inductive strategy will be used overall to glean patterns and common themes to determine which of the University Center models is characterized by the data; and it may also be used to analyze the relationship with the four-year institutional partners and the place-bound and time-bound students served at the University Center (Dudovskiy, 2018; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016). To improve the analysis, the literature relating to Michigan University Centers along with literature nationwide is reviewed as a comparison.

Coding is initiated early on while doing data collection so it may be retrieved at a later time, and each interview transcript is reviewed by the researcher multiple times to assure coding is thorough as they relate to each research site (Merriam, 2009, p. 178). A word processing program is used. The researcher codes each transcript to be presented in two segments: model analysis - the data will be presented based on the alignment of its operational characteristics with each of the six models of University Center models identified and described in Chapter One; and purpose analysis - the data will be presented based on patterns, categories, and subsequent themes which emerges relating to the purpose of the University Center.

Model Analysis

Researcher analyzes each participant transcript and compares the descriptions with each of the characteristics of the six models as described in Chapter Two. The words and phrases are generated by the participants. For example, the first model is co-location model. Each transcript is analyzed to determine if it meets the characteristics of this model.

1. Share same physical space?
If yes, then I on to the second characteristic.

2. There is little connection otherwise?
If yes, then I indicate this UC meets the characteristics of this model.
If no, then I indicate this UC did not meet the characteristics of this model.

In other words, this same analysis is made of each University Center about its characteristics and whether it does or does not align with the characteristics of the model. After reviewing all transcripts and noting my analysis, I then totaled the number of University Centers which appear to meet the characteristics of a particular model. During analysis of the data, additional characteristics which may be shared by the community college leaders which I could not align with any of the six models will be identified as additional models; and those models will be more fully presented in Chapter Four.

Purpose Analysis

The two primary purposes of the University Center are asserted in Chapter One as (1) provide opportunity for student access and success and (2) provide financial stability to the host community college and partnering institutions. The words and phrases are generated by the participants; and the researcher reviews each transcript and categorizes them by color code as the participants share their perspective of purpose. A pattern occurs which went beyond the two purposes asserted in Chapter One. The codes are then compiled into four major themes as described below and will be more fully presented in Chapter Four.

Students First – Access. (Pink) Many different phrases and words are generated by the participants and explained to be more comprehensive than just student access and success.

Phrases relate to student services, student driven, guide the students, culture did not allow females to leave home, cohesive community of discipline, dual enrolled.

Financial Stability. (Green) Many different phrases and words are generated by the participants and explained differently in what financial stability meant. Phrases relate to enrollment, feeder, retention, be the best host community college.

Community Impact. (Blue) Many different phrases and words are generated by the participants and explained differently. Phrases relate to students staying in the community, University Center is a community asset, in-kind sponsorships, students become good citizens.

Evolution of the University Center. (Orange) Many different phrases and words are generated by the participants and explained differently. Phrases relate to institutional priorities changes, look at virtual modes, technology changes quickly, and what we will look like in the future.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Validity and reliability are often questioned in qualitative research and may be a point of contention. Researchers involved in such qualitative work make great effort to understand the depth of knowledge that comes with visiting face-to-face with the participants and spend much time to obtain the meaning from the words and descriptions of the participants by clarifying statements or asking probing questions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Dudovskiy, 2018). These perspectives of validity and reliability are viewing qualitative validations in terms of a quantitative system; and it is my role as the researcher to address such contention and questions of validity and reliability by explaining that the qualitative approach is most appropriate for an exploratory case study (Creswell, 2014; Dudovskiy, 2016; Merriam, 2009; Yin

2016). Corbin & Strauss (2015) prefer the term *credibility* instead of *validity and reliability* because these terms carry too many quantitative implications, where validity is the accuracy of the measure and reliability is the consistency; and using the term *credibility* denotes that the findings are trustworthy and believable in reflecting the participants experiences with the phenomena (p. 346). Yin (2016) uses the same term and suggests several ways to strengthen the *credibility* of the study (p. 85). Assurance is made as the data was properly collected and analyzed during the design stage and during the exploration rather than after the data was collected (Yin, 2016, p. 85). The specific and direct engagement by me in data collection and transcription of interviews are useful strategies so that findings feel complete (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Merriam, 2009). Through purposive sampling, information-rich data was collected through these in-depth interviews with community college administrators; and the interviews were transcribed verbatim and not a representation of what the interviewer may have written down or inferred, thus, achieving reliability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016). It is invaluable and a useful strategy to be sensitive to the viewpoint of the community college perspective, and feedback and clarification was requested during the interview from the community college participants on whether the interpretation was accurate (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016). Often in quantitative research, inter-rater reliability (IRR) is established to enhance reliability and is described as a process which involves multiple researchers and examiners to establish how much they generally agree on how the data was collected and interpreted, and IRR is at times recommended in qualitative research as well (Armstrong et al., 1997; Belotto, 2018; McDonald et al., 2019; Syed & Nelson, 2015). Because I was the only researcher, feedback from the

participants was later intensified; and this was done to devise and calibrate IRR from the participants themselves. I reached out to the participants to ask for their review of the four conclusions which were fostered through the narrative data collection. This feedback may also be considered a validity strategy through member checking as described by Creswell through taking these conclusions back to the participants to determine support (2014, p. 251). The result of that feedback is presented as a form of IRR and is detailed in Chapter Five.

As an external validity, generalization of this study to University Centers within Michigan may be limited due to their geographical location and may be limited to those populations that share similar characteristics of the participants. Urban versus rural locations provide a uniqueness to each University Center as they relate to student demographics, competition variations to other four-year institutions, transportation access, population density, use of adjunct instructor and full-time faculty or combination thereof, and how classes are delivered. According to Corbin and Strauss (2015), Merriam (2009), and Yin (2016) in qualitative study, generalization is not necessarily sought; but generalization may be possible through analysis and discovery of patterns and processes which may be distilled during the study and may be transferable to higher ed institutions who wish to develop or improve student access and success to baccalaureate degree completion and increase collaboration between community colleges and four-year institutions. Additionally, findings may not be directly representative of other state systems due the varying structures of state educational systems.

Findings and information cannot necessarily be replicated. However, methods can be replicated and compared in other areas of the country. In this type of qualitative research, replication should not be an issue. With this type of exploratory case study, situational

interactions between the participants and the researcher have many moving and connecting parts at any given time (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Guba, 1978; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016). As in this study, the participants and I seeing or discussing the same situation at a later time may be forced to come away with different interpretations and conclusions. Observations which are done at a later time may have a different meaning of the situation as compared to when the observations initially occurred, making replication difficult (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Guba, 1978; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016). Replication is often referenced in quantitative research by conducting an experiment in a controlled environment to have the same conclusion or outcome; and qualitative work is not interested in this type of cause and effect but rather how the participants look to the meaning and make sense of their environment (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Guba, 1978; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016).

Care and consideration were given, particularly when using similar vernacular, as we may think we are communicating and assume that the terms are essentially same, which may not be the case; therefore, follow-up questions were used for clarification learning from the participant (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2016). Accuracy of the data collection was demonstrated by highlighting that, as the researcher, I was the direct data collection instrument with other University Centers throughout the state, reflecting the direct conversations with other participants, rather than interpretation through third-party sources, for example, another University Center partner's perception.

Focus was on building trustworthiness throughout the exploration by being transparent in the selection of the study topic and participants and by explicitly documenting and reporting the data collected and any issues which may have arisen and how they were addressed

(Bloomberg & Volpe; 2012; Corbin & Strauss; 2015; Yin, 2016). Conducting face-to-face interviews at the physical locations of the University Center enhanced trustworthiness and believability and demonstrates authenticity of the work and the strength of the data sources; and in this study, the participants are the data source (Yin, 2016, p. 86).

RESEARCHER BIAS AND ASSUMPTIONS

As the researcher, my role having served as a university director of an off-campus regional site in a University Center collaboration as well as a being a former student at a University Center institutional partner is attributable to my interest in this study and had guided my pathway to findings and conclusions. At the same time, I acknowledged possible bias early on due to this role. Being aware of my own social situation and my own bias will help to minimize bias and perhaps maximize objectivity (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Freundlich, 2016; Packer, 2018). Because I am the human instrument for this study with biases and subjective assumptions, I must monitor and be mindful of them and how they may influence the collection or interpretation of the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Merriam, 2009). As the primary collector of the data, I did not state personal opinions, suggestions, or directives during the interview process. The perspective of the community college leadership was my primary focus and interest. I may also be approaching the data collection specifically from the perspective of my employer at that time, a university, viewing other University Center partners as competition, attributable to my standpoint epistemology (Packer, 2018, p. 362). My only experience is this one site, Northwestern Michigan College University Center, with some peripheral understanding of other sites within the Ferris State University's other community college partners throughout the state. I shared my position with the participants and constantly

self-reflected and cross-examined myself for heightened self-awareness of assumptions and embedded knowledge to focus on the elimination of assumptions (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Freundlich, 2016; Packer; 2018). The research was conducted methodically, while allowing room for unanticipated events and discovery which will help to demonstrate to the reader my authenticity as well as the authenticity of the data collected (Yin, 2016, p. 86).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As the researcher, I know the identity of the participants in the study. It is serious and an obligation to keep confidentiality and anonymity of the participants to the readers of this study. Participants were invited and allowed to decide whether to participate in this study. It was made clear that their participation was voluntary. Prior to each interview, I secured permission to record the interview and assured confidentiality, as well anonymity to protect the confidentiality of the shared information. I believe my role had a positive impact of trust. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan, reviewed my application for using human subjects in this study and determined that it does not meet the Federal definition of research on human subjects because the unit of analysis is not on human subjects but on University Center models. See Appendix G, IRB Determination.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations are potential weaknesses of the study, are inherent in most studies, and are external conditions which are out of the control of the researcher which may affect the outcomes (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Dudovskiy, 2018; Merriam, 2009). It is necessary to acknowledge the limitations. Because the study was completely voluntary, all invited

community college leadership may not choose to participate. The community college leaders interviewed have different titles, hierarchical rank, and responsibilities. Some may not be equally articulate, perceptive, or knowledgeable depending upon their position level or experience. The economic conditions and funding mechanisms of the University Centers as well as their locations, urban versus rural, as mentioned earlier may create different or additional operational and structural challenges and requirements. The data collected reflects only one side of the University Center model, that being from the community college leadership perspective. Still, this type of exploratory case study and intensive interviews provides a richer and deeper understanding of University Centers. As explained earlier in the chapter, a digital recorder was used during the interview for assistance. The interview questions were developed to identify the administrator's view and perception of the University Center operations, and open-ended questions were used to explore the phenomenon to allow the participant to answer from their perspective to give rich, thick descriptions. I, as the researcher, conducted the interview in a conversational mode to create comfort and individualized the interview to each of the participants requiring intense listening skills and asking for clarification (Merriam, 2009; Packer, 2018; Yin, 2016). As stated earlier, any popular practices and benefits discovered may be transferable to and shared with other University Center host community colleges and four-year institutional partners.

DELIMITATIONS

Delimitations are the boundaries or confines in which the researcher does have control and has established to meet the goals of the study, and it is necessary to explain the boundaries established (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). Because this was an

exploratory case study of Michigan University Centers, it is bounded by the geographical boundary of Michigan. The research data was collected from public community colleges within the state of Michigan which serve as the host community college for a University Center and selection was purposive. It was based upon the criteria of its collaboration with four-year institutional partners and with those partners being both public and private four-year institutional partners as delineated in this chapter. Findings may not be generalized statistically as done in quantitative study based upon probability and sampling. In qualitative study, generalization is not sought; but generalization may be possible through analysis and discovery of patterns and processes which can be extracted during the study and may have application and transferability to University Centers within Michigan and may or may not be directly representative of other state systems because of the uniqueness of state systems (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016). The administrative leaders of the University Centers were the key in this study because they have the direct experience, perceptions, and opinions relating to the operational functions and responsibilities of such University Centers (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016).

SUMMARY

This chapter provided the details of the exploratory case study and was defined and discussed as a qualitative approach. The University Center models within Michigan were explored through the perspectives and opinions of community college leadership. The state of Michigan was described as the geographical boundary of the study, and the criteria to select the participants were outlined. The data collection in the form of interviews, field notes, website review, and email inquiries were discussed assuring confidentiality and anonymity

followed by the data analysis procedure. Validity and reliability were discussed supported by disclosure of researcher bias and assumptions, concluding with ethical consideration, limitations, and delimitations. The following Chapter Four will explain the execution of the research design and analysis of the data collection.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results and analysis of the data obtained through a qualitative exploratory case study approach to identify and explore the collaboration between community colleges and four-year educational institutions described as University Centers within the state of Michigan. The purpose of the study was to identify and examine such collaborations, their operations, and their purpose for existence to determine how they align with the six different University Center models identified in Chapter Two, with the potential for new or modified models, and to determine how the University Center models address the issues of student access and success and the financial stability of higher education institutions. The goal of the research was to answer the following questions from the vantage point of the community college participants:

1. What are the University Center models in Michigan?
2. What is the purpose of the University Center?
 - Does it provide opportunity for student access and success?
 - Does it provide financial stability to the host community college and partnering institutions?
3. What is the relationship between the host community college and four-year institutional partners?
 - What is the role of the host community college?
 - What is the role of the four-year institution?

The initial stages of this exploratory case study required the researcher to collect data related to those collaborations between community colleges and four-year institutions that aligned with the definitional criteria of University Centers. The purposive sample consisted of 12 University Centers in Michigan. The researcher collected and examined the perceptions, experiences, and opinions of administrative leaders of community colleges by conducting face-to-face interviews on the site of each of the host community college campuses, conducted within their own environment. The in-depth interviews provided the integral insight about the structure and operations of the University Center allowing the researcher to interpret, understand, and analyze the data. The findings are based upon the researcher's understanding and elucidation of the data as collected from the participants. The interview commenced with a structured interview seguing into a semi-structured interview, and the interviews were individualized and in depth. The results from these explorations will be presented in three segments: first the data will be presented based on the alignment of its operational characteristics with each of the six models of University Center models identified and described in Chapter Two; second, the data will be presented based on patterns and themes that emerged relating to the purpose of the University Center; and finally, the data will be presented describing the roles of the community college and four-year institution within the partnership.

As described in Chapter Three, this was an exploratory case study of Michigan University Centers, and it is bounded by the geographical boundaries of the state of Michigan and of those public community colleges that serve as host of a University Center. Therefore, these delimitations required the data to be collected from only public community colleges within the state of Michigan; selection was purposive. Findings may not be generalized statistically as in

quantitative studies based upon probability and sampling. However, generalizations may be possible through analysis and discovery of patterns, processes, and themes that may be extracted during the study and may have application and transferability to University Centers within Michigan.

FINDINGS: UNIVERSITY CENTER MODELS IN MICHIGAN

Below is a summary listing each model, aligned with the characteristics of the specific model as identified by the literature, followed by the number of participants, supporting Research Question 1. This will be discussed more fully, later in the chapter.

- Co-Location model: One participant meets the criteria for this model.
- Sponsorship model: Seven participants meet the criteria for this model.
- Hybrid model: Three participants meet the criteria for this model. Note that each of these three participants also meet the criteria of one of the other models described above which will be fully discussed later in the chapter. Therefore, this number of participants (three) identified as this hybrid model are not counted as additional to 12 participants because they are already included in the count.
- Enterprise model: No participant meets the criteria for this model.
- Virtual model: No participant meets the criteria for this model.
- Integrated model: No participant meets the criteria for this model.
- Additional models: During the interviews, several participants shared characteristics that did not align cleanly with the six models described above.

During the analysis of the data, these characteristics were distinctive and, therefore, identified as “additional models” and will be fully discussed later in the chapter. Titles were assigned to each of them using the terms shared by the community college leaders: (1) shared responsibility/governance model: two participants meet the criteria for this model; and (2) transfer-out model: two participants meet the criteria for this model.

FINDINGS: PURPOSE OF MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY CENTERS

The purpose of University Centers was determined, supporting Research Question 2:

1. to provide opportunity for student access and success
2. to provide financial stability to the host community college and partnering institutions as supported by the literature.

Two additional themes emerged:

3. to provide a positive impact on its community
4. to address the future needs of students, community college, institutional partners, and the community.

FINDINGS: ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTION

The role of the community college and four-year institutions were determined largely by which University Center model they aligned with, supporting Research Question 3. Overall, the community college is primary and has significant influence and authority of the operations and management of the University Center. The four-year institution has authority relating to its degree completion and necessary services related to this function, and it generally enjoys only a persuasive authority relating to operations and management of the University Center. This will be more fully described later in this chapter.

PARTICIPANTS

Before full discussion of the results, it is integral to attain a clear perception on the characteristics of the leaders who were interviewed and where the interviews took place. By gaining insight of how and where the interviews were conducted along with the leadership characteristics will help the reader to attain understanding of the participants' perceptions and opinions relating to the operations of the University Centers. During the interview, participants

mentioned the names of their four-year institutional partners or their own community college; however, the names of the institutions will not be used in this chapter’s descriptions. Rather the institutions will be referenced by the following the simple format: XXXX followed by bracketed description such as [university]. This format will be used for all variation of partnerships, whether private or public and whether a college or university.

Participant Roles

The community college host leader who was interviewed varied in position titles and responsibilities; no two were identical. Such titles included director, vice president, dean, manager, and provost. Table 3 lists the job titles in random order with no reference to the community college coding to protect anonymity as to the content information. This method protects the anonymity of the host community college. In 100% of the responses, the operational responsibility of the University Center was a part of the participants’ overall job duties. All participants had a variety of additional responsibilities such as business and workforce partnerships, finance and budget operations, academic affairs, advising, articulation and transfers relationships, and student services.

Table 3. Research Participant Job Titles

STUDY PARTICIPANTS: COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP JOB TITLES
Director of Counseling/Advising & Career Services
Vice President of Academic Affairs and Student Success
Vice President of Academic Affairs
Vice President of Business Services and Chief Financial Officer
Dean of University Relations
Manager of Office of e-Learning University/Workplace Partnerships
Vice President for Lifelong and Professional Learning

STUDY PARTICIPANTS: COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP JOB TITLES
Dean of Students
Vice President of Strategic Business and Community Development
Director of University Center and Transfer Initiatives
Interim Director of Advising
Provost and Executive Vice President

The participants were asked to identify their position titles and the number of years their University Center had been in existence. Four participants held mid-level administrative positions (associate or assistant dean, director, manager). Eight participants held senior-level administrative positions (president, provost, vice president, dean). Table 4 provides a summary of leadership positions by administration level (mid-level and senior) and the corresponding number of years the University Center has been in existence. Eight University Centers and five with longevity (21+ years) appear to fall within the responsibility of senior-level administrators.

Table 4. *Research Participant Leadership Position and University Center Longevity*

PARTICIPANT'S LEADERSHIP POSITION	YEARS THE U.C. HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE	% OF PARTICIPANTS
Mid-Level Administration (Associate or Assistant Dean, Director, Manager)		33%
	1–10 years	CC6, CC9
	11–20 years	CC2
	21+ years	CC5
Senior Administration (President, Provost, Vice President, Dean)		67%
	1–10 years	CC4, CC7, CC11
	11–20 years	None
	21+ years	CC1, CC3, CC8, CC10, CC12

Interview Locations

Ten of the 12 participants were interviewed in their office or in a nearby conference room located on the same campus as the University Center. Two of the participants were not interviewed in their offices but were interviewed in an office or conference room within the University Center. In these two cases, their offices were located at a separate physical site.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Models of University Centers

Each transcript was examined multiple times and the participant's description was compared to the characteristics of each model of the six University Center models as described in Chapter Two. Questions 4-7 of the research tool sought to obtain characteristics of the University Center model, and notes were made of each University Center's characteristics and their similarity to the model. Some of the interviews elicited additional characteristics that did not align cleanly within the six models. Although many of the characteristics were similar and fell within the six models, additional characteristics were significantly unique that I identified two additional models. I will discuss those two last, assigning titles to each of them using the terminology used by the community college leaders.

To legitimize the alignment of the data with the models, I share verbatim statements made by the participants that reflect the characteristics of the models. The statements are grouped for ease of understanding. Ellipses are used to reflect omitted words or phrases.

Co-Location Model

For the Co-Location Model, institutions share the same physical space either at the community college's main campus or at another site exclusively provided for the University Center, but beyond the location, there is little connection with the community college, and services are provided by the four-year institutions. All 12 University Centers included in this study are co-located with the partner four-year institution and share the same physical space either at the main campus or at another site. Eleven of the 12 participants indicated that the host community college specifically has a connection with the four-year institutions; specifically, the host community college has a formal, connected, and influential relationship with the four-year institutions. Participants described their connection in the following ways:

It's my job, my focus to maintain those relationships which we have with the four-year partners overall... My staff also oversees the office of articulation and transfers. So, anything that has to do with articulation and transfers here at XXXX [community college] comes through this office as well. (CC3)

My leadership style, I would say is, be all inclusive. It's so important to work as a team, as opposed to, "you, I want you to do this; and you need to do this." We share the success as a team, but we also share the failures as a team. I hope there are very few; but if we do fail, we learn from that and move on. (CC5)

One of the 12 participants indicated that it has no connection and is more of a landlord-tenant type of relationship. This participant is coded as CC10 and aligns with the characteristics of the co-location model. The host community college and the partner four-year institution are co-located. They share the same main campus location. The community college owns the facility and rents the classroom and office space to the four-year institution; and in this case, the four-year institution is a university. The university has its office space in one building, and classes are held in two separate community college campus buildings. The university provides

an on-site administrator who advises students and schedules the classes. In contrast with the above statements, this participant described its role and responsibilities of the University Center in the following ways:

Very minimal. Our UC only houses XXXX [university]. And so, I really have minimal, zero to none, contact with them. They run their own operation; they require absolutely nothing from us other than housing and a place to set up their site. That's the honest truth. I have no conversation or anything with them other than if I see the administrator in the hall. I'll say, "hello." That's about it... There's no staff by our college... They do their own staffing... They are independent. (CC10)

While one study participant meets the criteria for the co-location model, this participant also offers a community college baccalaureate along with the University Center programming. This additional characteristic then transcends this participant to meet the criteria of the hybrid model, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Enterprise Model

Within the Enterprise Model, institutions form a collaborative entity for governance. This arrangement allows several institutions to form a separate entity or union for governance including operational, financial, and programming responsibilities. One of the 12 participants, CC10, described as the co-location model, indicated no governance collaboration. Eleven of the 12 participants indicated some form of collaboration among the community college and partners. While, in these cases, there is collaboration and a relationship with each partner, there is no large governing board or shared responsibilities for the operations of the University Center and not to the extent as defined within the enterprise model.

No participants meet all of the criteria for the enterprise model.

Virtual Model

In the Virtual Model, upper-level courses are delivered fully online by a four-year institution and not on-site, and the community college is fully engaged with the students through their upper-level courses through to graduation. The community college confers the baccalaureate to the students. The four-year institution may or may not have an on-site representative, and the community college is not fully engaged with the students through to their graduation and does not confer the baccalaureate. Once the student begins upper-level courses, the community college may provide onsite student support such as library or cafés, but the four-year institution assumes the academic responsibility and services for the student.

All 12 participants indicated some form of online programming provided by the four-year institutional partners. Some offer fully online classes, while others offer some programs fully online. Two of the 12 participants indicated that they have at least one partner within the University Center who provides all programming online and does not provide any instruction on-site.

No participants meet all of the criteria for the virtual model.

Integrated Model

Within the Integrated Model, institutions share the same physical space as described in the co-location model, with the partnership expanded to a full level of cooperative relationships. The two-year and four-year programs interfuse, along with student services, into the entire campus life.

All 12 of the participants are co-located as described previously in the co-location model. One of the 12 participants, CC10, described as being within the co-location model,

indicated no collaboration. Eleven of the 12 participants indicated some form of collaboration among the community college and partners. While in all of these cases, there is collaboration and a relationship with each partner, there is no interfusion as defined for the integrated model.

No participants meet all of the criteria for the integrated model.

Sponsorship Model

Within the Sponsorship Model, the community college has a significant influence on the operations of the University Center and is more assertive in determining academic offerings, including hiring full-time staff to manage the Center. The community college seeks multiple partners, the University Center is stand alone or designated space, and the community college hires full-time staff to manage the University Center.

One of the 12 participants, CC10, described as the co-location model, indicated no collaboration with the four-year partner. Seven of the 12 participants indicated having a significant influence and authority over the operations and management of the University Center. They indicated they have final authority on determining academic programs and ultimate authority in approving partners and programs that can be included in the University Center. The participants described their role and responsibilities of the University Center in the following ways:

So, what we require of our four-year partners is that they accept the full, two-year degree and they mandate the two-year degree before they go into the UC. Otherwise, so that, generically, what that means is that our four-year schools offer no first- and second-year classes unless we don't offer them. So that way, it's a win for both. It's a win because they get to complete their degree. It's a win for the student because they get to complete their associate degree, and then they go on for their 3rd and 4th year. (CC7)

It would be the (community) college, our final call. As far as, yes, they're bringing in education. All of them have been asked to. What else can you fill as far as it goes around here in the last three to four years...We're going to make sure current partners have a chance to do it first. If they can't or they don't want to, that's fine. There are opportunities there. Try to be fair and support them as best we can to bring it here. (CC12)

We wouldn't take a partner on without establishing an articulation agreement. So then the program would have to be; there'd have to be a program that it would transition to. Because it wouldn't do the partner any good and it certainly doesn't help XXXX [community college] students. (CC9)

Right. We make that call. They will apply for new programs through us; and if we deem that it doesn't compete with another institution here, then they have the ability to run that program. We usually ask some questions about full-time, part-time, how much of it would be run online, how much of it would be run in a physical classroom. How much could be a synchronous, whatever it may be. We start to ask those questions. But at the end of the day, it would be a benefit for them and a benefit, really..., for our students, or our community. (CC3)

Seven participants meet the criteria for this sponsorship model. Two of the seven participants also offer a community college baccalaureate, moving them into the criteria of the hybrid model, which will be discussed next.

Hybrid Model

The Hybrid Model merges the programming of a University Center with a community college that also offers a baccalaureate degree. While the community college focus is primarily on awarding associate degrees, additionally, the institution awards one or more baccalaureate degrees in specialized areas. In Michigan, the Community College Act was amended in 2012 to authorize community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees in the specialized areas of cement technology, maritime technology, energy production technology, or culinary arts (1966). When

a University Center model is used with community colleges that also offer baccalaureate degrees, the model now shifts and becomes the hybrid model.

Three of the 12 participants offer baccalaureate degrees in addition to having the programming of a University Center model; thus, these meet the characteristics of the hybrid model. One of these three participants also meets the characteristics of the co-location model, while the other two also have the characteristics of the sponsorship model. The participants described their role and responsibilities of the University Center in the following ways, specifically mentioning the baccalaureate degree because it is the defining characteristic of the hybrid model:

The baccalaureate was such a specialized pathway in this particular case that we weren't competing with any other institution to bring those students to their baccalaureate piece. (CC1)

We do offer a baccalaureate degree but only in the area of XXXX [title of degree]. You are aware that there are only four areas, cement, marine technology, energy production, and culinary. Now, you know, we are on the front line fighting for the BSN. So, we're hopeful that that can happen. (CC4)

We have one. We have a bachelor's in XXXX [title of degree] We had our first two graduates this year. (CC10)

Nine of the 12 participants did not offer baccalaureate degrees for a variety of reasons.

Given the context of this research, I share the following contrast of opinions of the community college leadership as to why they did or did not offer a community college baccalaureate. The following are examples of contrasting opinions from participants:

We offer a baccalaureate degree.... At the time, we were looking at permissive legislation for community college to provide their own baccalaureate degree. We understood very well that we would be looking at a very select degree in those areas in which we had the distinctive technical expertise and had made a sufficiently high financial investment in staff and equipment that we were most of the way there toward the baccalaureate technical degree, highly specialized.... We were 75% of the way with

100% of the technical curriculum to meet the professions baccalaureate preference. So, in that regard, it just seemed reasonable; we've made the investment; we're so close. We can take them to completion.... We don't believe that it is cost effective to duplicate, which is the whole point of having the UC partnership in that it's not to compete with them; it is to create the unique continuum for distinctive programs. Again, the goal is to reduce duplication and manage the cost of education for the good of society. (CC1)

Honestly, from an economic perspective, you don't make money on those. It really drains resources from other programs. A little community college has no business doing a BSN program. The big ones don't have business doing it either because what they are is a cost hog. So, they're just going to take resources from other things that you want to do. Let the universities have it; that's my opinion. That's what they're good at. Let's serve our role. Let's do the best we can in an associates and certificate level. Try not to be something we don't want to be. Just like, we don't want the K-12s teaching college classes. I have some of our partners that are letting high school teachers teach classes for them and charge them ten dollars. You've just given your work away. Eventually, accreditation standards are going to take care of that and jumping on that one. (CC12)

Shared Responsibility/Governance Model

In the Shared Responsibility/Governance Model, the community college serves as the host; however, the community college and the four-year institutions share equal responsibility and have equal say in the operations of the University Center including over programs, services, facility, and composition of the University Center, specifically as it relates to what institutions may be a partner of the University Center.

Two of the 12 participants self-described their University Center operations using the term *shared governance* or *shared responsibility*. These two participants, however, shared opposite perspectives of what it meant to share responsibilities: CC8 stated that shared governance is necessary, and all should have a voice at the table; CC11 stated the challenges that shared governance may bring. The participants described their role and responsibilities of the University Center in the following ways:

These comments from CC8:

I serve on a group; we have a UC group that meets once a quarter. There's more than one partner.... We decide and talk about programs, talk about services and facility in general and the things we need to do collectively as a group, not to compete against each other and those type of things. We provide the facility. I'm part of a group and we help manage the entire operations. It is kind of a shared responsibility between the Center Directors.

XXXX [university] has some programs here.... But we didn't put them in the University Center because the University Center was already established with the original partners. And, so, they didn't want any other partners to join.

Everybody has to have a voice at the table. If they don't, it gets tough to operate... But if XXXX [university] is the only one at the table, then, guess what? XXXX [university] is going to get all the programs. You've got to have it shared.

These comments from CC11:

The original UCenter Partner Agreement delineated pretty clearly the process. The partner universities would bring to a meeting of the University Center partners their plans to offer a new degree so as to minimize the toe stepping.

It's a vote among the partners.... But a question I've always wondered is this: so, if it is five of the eight decide they're going to do something, is the host community college bound by that? And it appears to me that they are. Honestly, that's been one of the sticky points with us recently here, is achieving agreement on a new MOU among the partners on exactly that ground.

I would love to partner with XXXX, XXXX, and XXXX [universities]. Lots of people have come to the door and say, "hey, we would love to play with you guys." But as long as those UCenter partner agreements are in place, we can't do that. So, in some respects, if all the programs were made really healthy and viable, it's a great thing. But if at some point, one of the partner programs has fallen off in quality, we need to relook at either the quality of the program, or the agreement and break the agreement and let another partner in. That is where we are.

Transfer-Out Model

In the Transfer-Out Model, the community college serves as the host, and there is a close collaboration and some control by the community college. However, the community college has two distinct types of relationships with the four-year institutions that are located on site. The first type is where the four-year institution provides staffing and programs physically at the University Center location; the second type is where the four-year institution provides staffing but does not offer the programs or courses physically at the University Center location. Instead, the community college has provided space for the four-year institutions to reside on its campus by having designated offices with on-site staff to advise and help facilitate students to transfer out to the four-year institution's main campus. The participants sometimes referenced them as "a transfer partner." The community college still approves which four-year institution representatives can and cannot reside on its campus.

Two of the 12 participants described their University Center as providing these two types of four-year educational opportunities to help their students. The participants described their role and responsibilities of the University Center in the following ways as it relates to the four-year educational partners having staff, but no classes offered at the University Center:

Their campus is beautiful now; within walking distance to ours. They are a good partner to have.... It is to their advantage [nearby university] to be here more.... Another University Center partner is here four days per week.... She says she is doing good things here. (CC5)

They like the connection to the students here.... We have to go to the students. The University Center partners know the same thing... To talk with the students when they are just walking by and have a quick question. (CC5)

For the university to have a space here [...] it has to be in the best interest of the student to have a school that we know students may go to. So, we focus mainly on Michigan universities. It's just been the last couple years that, all of a sudden, schools want to be a part of our Transfer Center. People have found out that we have it. It's a marketing tool. (CC6)

So, we are looking at those who we have major articulations with. If they want to design and develop an articulation with us, and not all schools want to do that (I am being very careful)... We said that students would finish as much as they can here, up to 60 credits, and then transfer. (CC6)

Purpose of University Centers

In Chapter One, two primary assertions were made describing the purpose of the University Center: (1) to provide opportunity for student access and success, and (2) to provide financial stability to the host community college and partnering institutions. Questions two and three of the research tool sought to determine the purpose of the University Center, and the findings support these two assertions. In delving into the conversations with the participants, two additional themes emerged further describing the purpose, which I list as (3) the University Center provides a positive impact on its community, and (4) the University Center serves as a key player on a continuum to address the future educational needs of students, the community college, its institutional partners, and the community.

Coding and Analysis Guiding Leading to Themes

The data analysis utilized for examining the data was the analytical process as described by Corbin & Strauss (2015), Glesne (2011), and Merriam (2009). I began by transcribing each interview, allowing me to reexperience the interview slowly and more carefully, and then I proceeded to examine each transcript multiple times. After careful review of the participants' comments, I began with open coding of the entire transcript, jotting down words and notes in

the margin. I, then, returned to conduct analytical coding, reviewing the codes and notes, and grouping together those which seem to have a common meaning. Then, I assigned a color code to reflect the groups. From these groups, themes were identified. I followed the same process and compared each transcript, paying specific attention to the grouping to see where and if they appeared in subsequent transcripts.

While I began with multiple themes that described the Purpose of the University Center, I eventually reduced these to four major themes that emerged from a majority of the transcripts: (1) Students first – access; (2) financial stability; (3) community impact; and (4) evolution of the University Center. These are summarized in Table 5, Themes. Each theme is given a formal title to be in alignment with the purpose this study and influenced by my knowledge and reflection of the deeper descriptors shared by the participants (Merriam, 2009, p. 184–186). To legitimize the themes, I follow with statements made by the participants.

Table 5. *Themes - Purpose of Michigan University Centers*

PARTICIPANT	OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDENTS	FINANCIAL STABILITY FOR INSTITUTIONS	POSITIVE COMMUNITY IMPACT	EDUCATIONAL CONTINUUM
CC1	Yes	Yes, asst 4-Year	Yes	Yes
CC2	Yes	Yes	Yes	
CC3	Yes		Yes	Yes
CC4	Yes	Yes		Yes
CC5	Yes	Yes, asst 4-year	Yes	Yes
CC6	Yes	Yes		
CC7	Yes			Yes
CC8	Yes	Yes, asst. 4-year	Yes	
CC9	Yes	Yes, asst 4-year	Yes	Yes
CC10	Yes	Yes		
CC11	Yes			
CC12	Yes	Yes, asst 4-year	Yes	Yes

Theme 1: The University Center Provides Opportunity for Students

All 12 participants asserted student access and success was the primary purpose of the collaboration to create the University Center. However, this purpose has a deeper meaning to the participants; all expressed passion and empathy for their students and putting students first in ways beyond student access and success. Participants described student access and success in a variety of ways often beginning with its background for the creation of the University Center:

The community college had to solve the limitation of associate only educational options for the region.... When we asked students, prospective students, and community members what mattered most, technology was low on the list. Still to this day, technology is not the preferred mode of learning in degree programs as surveyed in our region.... We were really focused on face-to-face course delivery, which is why we built this facility to house them because students told us that they wanted a social setting where they are learning. What they wanted was the face-to-face engagement with the faculty member, with humans in an office; they wanted staff connection. They wanted all of that. (CC1)

In this county, it's always been a low percentage of our residents who have bachelor's degrees. Partnering with these universities has allowed our citizens to get those degrees because they cannot necessarily move.... That's a huge benefit to be able to stay here for 80-some credits and then transfer on to the university and then possibly only pay for 40 credits at the university level. So that's huge. And that helps with our population as well. Very blue collar, hardworking, and don't have the expendable income to pay for college. (CC2)

We had no four-year presence in the county at that time. There are other institutions, private, non-profit. But really no substantial, university perspective or four-year liberal arts college perspective here in the county. So, the vision was really to build something where we could bring the university, remotely bring them in and have them set up shop permanently, if you will, to have programs here at the UC.... The important aspect is our student success. So, whatever we can do for our students to make them more successful in their pathway transfer.... We really want to get down to the bottom of what the student wants while they're here with us and then where do they want to go? (CC3)

There was a desire for people to get four-year degrees right here locally, physically, and not have to travel. Education was evolving around the state: the UC, dual-enrolled, early college, and these Promise zones. All these things started to unfold over time. The UC was one of those things that unfolded over time around communities that did not have four-year institutions. How do you get four-year institutions in here, so the people that live here locally don't have to travel, can get their advanced degrees, and continue in the local community. That was it: access to four-year degrees locally. (CC8)

If you compare to what's happened demographically, and we've shown that since we've been doing studies because we're up for a renewal. Educational attainment in this county, as compared to what it was before, has gone up substantially. I don't have the exact numbers in my head; but let's just say, directionally, everybody had, 25% of the population had a bachelor's degree, then it went to 35% over these last 18 years. So, there was a big move. Now, was the university center THE reason? Probably not THE reason, but it definitely was a part of that. (CC12)

Participants also conveyed their passion and empathy for their students in understanding the barriers and challenges they face:

As I said earlier, when you're working, you maybe have two jobs, three jobs, because a lot of our students do. You work four hours for this person, six hours for this person; you try to get a full-time job out of that. Your schedule is so chaotic, and then you're raising a family. We have a lot of single mothers and fathers that are raising children and trying to advance their education. So, this is a great opportunity. It pretty much evolved itself just through need. Okay, I got my two year; now what can I do? Well, I can't afford to go away to college. Let's bring college to you. So, it goes back to the student, instead of making the student come to you. (CC5)

Everything we do is demand driven; nothing is ongoing unless there is an explicit demand for the roles and responsibilities. The reason that I think I was tasked with this UC is because it is an external connection for one thing. The focus of the school has been transforming over the last few years to be more focused on the student, instead of more the traditional sense.... One is obviously that they get to complete a four-year without leaving. And in our area, it's the focus. The reason that's important in our area is because a lot of people can't leave. They have families. (CC7)

But really, we take pride in doing outreach for our community college students to make them aware of the opportunities because a lot of times those community college students they're at a community college because they need to stay in that area. It's family responsibilities; they have jobs. They're not that traditional four-year student... where they have a social life. A lot of them are going to class, going to work, juggling this, juggling that. So, we're really cognizant of that here and want to make sure those students know there's a place they can come and finish that bachelor's degree. So, that

probably sounds to you like outreach; and it is. But we're just passionate about our students knowing about us. (CC9)

It was established to help our student population here because we are so far from any other four-year school. And a lot of our students are unable to travel or take up residence at a four-year school. So, in order to further their education, it made sense for us to be able to bring the education to them. And so that's what we did... That was the big reason because we're so remote. And like I said, our students just didn't have the ways and means to travel or take up residence at a four-year school. But they wanted that bachelor's degree. (CC10)

So, to enhance the possibility of a better choice, either before they complete a degree from us or after they complete degree with us, to make that seamless. In some other cases, it's also to provide availability to degrees that we don't offer here that could be at least started here on campus as part of the university center and then the transfer takes place from there.... As all community colleges, we get plenty of people who have no idea of whether or not this going to be something they'll even be able to do. And I think the opportunity to talk to somebody from a four-year who is welcoming, nurturing, who can explain the academic ease that isn't always so well explained on the web. That's huge. And so, we've got a great track record of lots of students who come back and say, "Hey, I started there," but I was able to get out to someplace else based on what you learned. (CC11)

The University Center specifically is just to provide the best educational opportunities for county residents. That's the original paraphrased charter if you want to call it that. This XXXX [community college] is similar but it wants to develop relationships with universities and colleges we host here to give the citizens in the community access to higher education as best they can. That's our focus really is trying to provide as many opportunities as we can to further our education. Now with the community college, we can help fill the gap in that grade 13, grade 14 if you want to call it that. But beyond that, how can we make sure we foster relationships with the programs that'll do the bachelors and graduate degrees and have them here, have a presence here, and offer the citizens in this county and the local surrounding area that opportunity. (CC12)

Theme 2: The University Center Provides Financial Stability for Institutions

Nine of the 12 indicated that the University Center provides financial stability for both the host community college and educational partners. They went on to describe that students are retained at the community college, with the institutions knowing students may continue on to earn the baccalaureate and perhaps a graduate degree in the community, thereby securing

and sometimes enhancing enrollment for both the community college and the four-year institutions. Participants expressed this in a variety of ways to enhance financial stability for the college:

The way these partnerships have worked out is that they encourage the students to get their degrees from us. So that's huge for our retention. There is a reason [for students] to stay for the full 62 credits as opposed to leaving early to transfer. The way funding is possibly determined is based on completion rates; that just helps us.... Enrollment has been issue for colleges across the state, right? So, we're fortunate that we're kind of steady right now. We just want to stay that steady. But it costs more to recruit a new student than it is to retain a student. So, we can retain that student by showing them that end goal. (CC2)

Well, it's supply and demand. And I don't ever see it going away because that's the environment here.... We've been around since 19XX; we've been successful since 19XX. We went through a slump period when a major employer pulled out because that affected a lot of our courses. Again, it's all supply and demand. But we lost a lot of our student base because the employer left, their families left, and they took their children with them, naturally. So, we didn't have as many; but we had geared towards that many, so we had to downsize a little bit. We're still here and were fine.... We still have to offer those people who can't afford to go to a four-year institution. That need is always going to be there too. In fact, I'm a business major, so I will say from a business standpoint, it's just makes good sense. (CC5)

The articulations have been great. Because, again, it brings people from the community who may have completed a child development degree a long time ago and wanted to always complete a bachelors but couldn't and didn't know where to do this. So, the community has found out that, "oh, we have this program," that you graduated from our community college or if you graduated from another institution, you've got to work with our four-year partner, how that will work. If it will or if it won't? [...] Community wise, it's been great because again, we've had people come back in and say, "I hear you have this program." We can explain as much as we can. (CC6)

The community college: if you look at it. If the University Center wasn't here, would it hurt? Yes. Would we die? No. But it's definitely a part of who we are now. After having a presence here for 18, 19 years almost, not being here before and after, we would be smaller without having a presence in the county. So, it's important for us because of logistics now, the college is migrating core operations close by. (CC12)

Five of the nine participants expressed a direct responsibility to assist the four-year institutions to maintain their financial stability:

Part of that is being good stewards of their financial investment into the region.... So, our purposes had a social component, our purpose with the partners had a sustainability component.... The partners, we view their financial engagement as a type of co-investment. Clearly, we are the landlord. We ensure that their lease rates are below the average market values. We quantify this to recognize their commitment by making the financial pieces of that reasonable on both ends of the cycle. (CC1)

They're my customers; they're a paying customer. They have to rent space; they rent the classrooms. So, I do show a partiality to them because they're part of what I'm here for. The other people in the community, you're more than welcome here, but there's certain things that I'm going to do for the partners that I'm not going to do for others. (CC5)

The partners pay for the classrooms, but it's a small amount. It's nominal. But the main thing is to provide the service here in the community. They aren't charged regular rent rates. (CC8)

For the partners, someone else is worrying about the building, the parking, the security. They have none of that. So, they have to do all the recruitment with our help. We do a lot as well. But they have recruitment and running their classrooms and setting up their instructors, which is a lot.... They don't have to worry about all of the infrastructure, internal anything. We handle all, the IT[...] marketing, and outreach. (CC9)

We're really trying to make sure that we're the best resource that we can be.... We're trying to make sure we offer the platform and the resources. We've looked at what each of our partners have needed and listened to them [...] trying to give the best environment that we can.... We were able to find some economies of scale and streamline some operations, not having redundant operations and business systems.... Trying to market to be the best community college partner that we can be.... We're not the one offering those degrees here but how can we help support them as best we can. (CC12)

Theme 3: The University Center Provides Positive Community Impact

The third theme that arose from seven of the 12 participants was the significant influence the University Center has on the overall well-being of the community. The University Center contributes to the economic development of the region, beyond providing financial stability to the community college and partnering institutions. Participants described their University Center as a crucial and significant community asset. Economic development in the

community is enhanced by providing highly skilled employees to meet industry needs. They described the overlapping benefit that graduates stay in the community, obtain better paying jobs, and become responsible citizens who are part of the community and contribute to the community. Participants shared the following:

That's the mission of the community college. Build what you can for the community. And it was really an intensive and deliberative strategy to be able to create something like this so that we could provide those opportunities to not only our students but to the community.... We also opened it up to the community so there is the opportunity to rent space for clients here. But the jewel of it is that there is the opportunity to do a lot of in-kind sponsorships with various organizations in the community and throughout the state in which we can have events here that you would not typically see on a community college campus. But given the space that we have, and the resources that we have, many people identify us as a premier spot to hold those types of events, the UC itself.... We have very diverse events that can happen both culturally, organizationally, industrially.... It's very robust. (CC3)

If you say, "community," that tells you in itself; how can we serve our community? How can we be a one stop to all things? The XXXX County and the surrounding area community, we have dual enrollment, we have continuing ed classes, we have workforce development, we partner with a lot of churches.... These are things to get into.... It's that community need. (CC5)

It's an economic impact because degrees matter. Getting students to complete. The economic impact is that students stay around, and not only do they go to school, but they also live in the larger community, buy groceries, pay bills, rent facilities. It's a whole economic impact. So, you're staying around longer so that means people are here so their services and support comes along with that, that has an economic impact to the larger community.... The economic impact of people just staying local. And all the residual things that go on, living in the community are happening. If they're working, they're paying taxes, and so we're funded. Approximately a third of our funding comes property taxes. (CC8)

Like this computer lab that we run as part of our agreement operations: that's a community resource. Anybody can walk in and use that. Like a public library.... My biggest tenants now are renting for the community.... We rent for a lot of different things in the community, from the Department of Aging to, you name it. They hold meetings here, more than we do classes. We do everything we can to at least be a resource not just for just universities but for community events as well now.... We want to be present... make our presence known here. We want to be in the lobby, want to be where there is traffic. (CC12)

Theme 4: The University Center is on a Continuum

Participants indicated that their University Centers have evolved since their beginning to meet the needs of students, community, and institutional partners. When asked to describe successes, opportunities for improvements, and suggestions to others who may be considering a University Center model, the participants' comments revealed the emerging theme focusing on the University Center's evolution and presence on an educational continuum.

The majority (seven) of the participants foresee the University Center's role as being on a continuum and modifying and changing slowly over time. The participants indicated that their University Centers have developed to meet the ever-changing educational systems because society is going through the technology and knowledge age. They explained that, in the early days, only face-to-face classes were available; then University Centers evolved to include modalities such as telecourses, interactive courses, video courses, and online courses, leading to the question of "what is next?"

Among the seven participants, two consistent needs were identified: (1) to keep higher education accessible and (2) to keep the personal connections with the students. However, there was a mixture of opinions among the participants as to what University Centers will look like in the future and how accessibility and student connections will be accomplished and maintained. Participants described their thoughts in the following ways:

Although I am optimistic that this is still the right solution for the types of needs in our community, we also all recognize, wow, this is still going to be really different five years from now.... I have wondered often in the last few years what will indicate that the UC model as we have known it for these years has met the needs of the community.... We thought we could see it and predict it. But so much changes so quickly and institutional priorities also change so quickly. That it's more of a wild card. Trying to read signs that we can't anticipate. (CC1)

Students these days are very savvy. They look at what's convenient for them; they look at time to degree completion; they look at how much is it going to cost them; they look at the impact of their family [...] they look at rigor, and they look at integrity of program and global credibility and all the awards and accolades that they've won. But at the end of the day, that may get outweighed by all of this—family, time to completion, money, what it means to my family.... I think we need to be more attuned to that. The student is your client, and they're going to dictate the market. (CC3)

Rather than invest in brick-and-mortar partnerships where other schools are teaching on our campus, we don't need to do that in this day and age. Let's eliminate their presence on our campus, make it all a virtual relationship so the student finishes their associate degree here. It's already accepted into the bachelor's degree at the other school and completes that online.... There is the change of the rapid evolution of online teaching and learning. (CC4)

We want our students to be successful. How can we make them successful? One of the other things that we did was for e-learning; we realized that with technology constantly changing and at a rapid rate, such a rapid rate. I'm back in the telecourse days and that was a long, long time ago. Technology changes so much and everything is not compatible anymore.... it's always a work in progress. So, what I might do today, worked. But tomorrow, it isn't going to work that way, and I've got to come up with a different plan. Or we have to come up with a different plan. (CC5)

The focus shouldn't be "butts in seats," and I know it is because all the schools are going down in enrollment.... When I first started, because I came from the business, I would say, "our customers" meaning students. They said, "no, they're students." I said, "well, they're our customers. You give them a good product, a good program, and they will come." And I think that's what my message is.... They have life going on the same time that they're trying to further their own education. (CC7)

We have seen a shift.... I attribute a lot of that to online because the schools are telling me they're doing well.... It's not like they've seen this huge dip in enrollment and that's why they've cancelled their classes. It's that the students are telling them, "do you have an online version, I'd rather take it online...." (CC9)

Right place, right time. But to be a University Center anymore, you could do it with quarter the amount of square footage.... it's about being host and promoting your partners' visibility and opportunities, putting them in the right place at the right time. To the community, whether it's physically, marketing, you name it.... The virtual University Center in a way. But you've got to know. A lot of folks, for those who still want the face to face, how do we crack that egg without having to ship them down to XXXX or XXXX [referencing main campus locations]. (CC12)

Roles of the Community College and Four-Year Institutions

Community College Role

The Community College role was largely determined by the University Center model with which the University Center most closely aligned. The majority (seven) of the community college University Centers fell within the Sponsorship Model, and key to this model is the community college's significant influence and authority of the operations and management of the University Center. These seven participants indicated they have final authority on determining academic programs and have ultimate authority in approving partners and programs that can be included in the University Center. The community college's role is to serve as the host and a majority of the participants noted that they provide the infrastructure, including facilities, classrooms, information technology, office space, student lounges, and parking; services including staffing at some level, joint marketing, advising, instruction, joint training, food service, student services; and academics, including courses, associate degree programs, certificates, and some baccalaureate degree programs. The two additional models that were identified, the Shared Responsibility/Governance Model and Transfer-out Model, have a similar community college role as described, except that, in the Shared Responsibility/Governance Model, the community college did not have the final authority to determine the partners of the University Center and the programming offered at the University Center.

Four-Year Institution Role

Subsequently, the four-year institution role was also largely determined by the University Center Model with which the University Center aligned. The four-year institution

provides both academics, specifically baccalaureate degrees and beyond, and services including staffing at some level, marketing, advising, instruction, joint training, and student services. As part of the degree completion process, the four-year institution is responsible for the learning management system, information technology, student records system, and the final conferring of degrees. In all of the models except the Shared Responsibility/Governance Model, the role of the four-year institution is subordinate or secondary to the host community college. The four-institution serves as a persuasive authority in operations and management of the University Center, where approval from the host community college is required.

Two Key Components

Additionally, the host community college largely determines two key components that affect the four-year institution’s role within the University Center, specifically whether partners may offer competing (the same) degrees) and the level of degrees the four-year institution may confer. Table 6 lists these components, as well as whether partner institutions are public or private.

Table 6. *Two Key Components of Four-Year Partner Roles*

UNIVERSITY CENTER	COMPONENT #1		COMPONENT #2 LEVELS OF DEGREES	PUBLIC & PRIVATE PARTNERS
	COMPETE	NON-COMPETE		
CC1	For those grandfathered	x	Bacc, Masters, Certificates	Both
CC2		x	Bacc	Both
CC3		x	Bacc, Masters, Doc.	Both
CC4		x	Bacc, Masters, Certificates	Private
CC5	For partners and CC		Bacc, Masters	Both

UNIVERSITY CENTER	COMPONENT #1		COMPONENT #2 LEVELS OF DEGREES	PUBLIC & PRIVATE PARTNERS
	COMPETE	NON-COMPETE		
CC6	x		Bacc, <i>and up</i>	Both
CC7		x	Bacc	Both
CC8		x	Bacc, Masters	Public
CC9	For popular programs	x	Bacc, Masters, Post-Certificates	Both
CC10	x		Bacc, Masters	Both
CC11		x	Bacc, Masters	Both
CC12		x	Bacc, Masters	Both

Popular Practices

As relates to the roles of the host community college and the partnering four-year institutions, several popular practices as described in the literature review and did surface among the University Center participants: Sharing of faculty, cohesive community of discipline, joint advising, and joint marketing and recruiting.

Sharing of faculty. Often the faculty of the host community college also teach courses for the four-year partners, and the faculty of the four-year partners also teach for the host community college. Faculty often play a formal collaborative role in reviewing and aligning transfer and articulation agreements of programs to ensure effective and efficient transfer of credits.

Cohesive community of discipline. The sharing of faculty creates a cohesive community within the program disciplines, which often helps to guide the student into their careers and makes for a smooth transition for the student from the community college to the four-year partner. This community also enhances the relationship among the faculty in accomplishing the

the tasks within their respective roles within the University Center, allowing them to focus on student needs.

Joint advising. The advisors of the host community college and the four-year institutional partners are often intimately familiar with the program from freshman to senior level, allowing not only for effective sequential advising, but also leading to simultaneous advising to assist the students to their pathway to graduation. At minimum, there is a frequent point of contact and an informal exchange of information through phone calls and emails among the advisors of both the community college and the four-year partner. In some of the more strategic/formal relationships, the advisors of both the community college and four-year partners periodically (semiannually or monthly, for example) meet to discuss changes in program requirements, curricula needs, and financial aid impact.

Joint marketing and recruiting. The community college may also work with the partners to provide joint marketing and recruiting at some level. Some partnerships were more strategic and hosted more plentiful events, including joint transfer days, open houses, and careers days. Host community colleges often termed themselves as “cheerleaders” for the University Center and the four-year institutional partners.

FOUR-YEAR DEGREE COST COMPARISON

As presented earlier in this chapter, the major theme from these results defined the purpose of the University Center, that is, to provide opportunity for student access and success. An influential factor supporting this theme is the cost-effective nature of this access. The community college tuition rate is much lower than the four-year institutional tuition rate; the University Center partnership allows students to complete a majority of their required courses

at the community college tuition rate, providing a cost-effective bachelor's degree and enhancing educational access.

Cost comparison: University Center vs University Main Campus

To illustrate the cost savings of earning a four-year degree at a University Center compared to earning the same four-year degree from a four-year college/university, the Northwestern Michigan College (NMC) University Center will be used for purposes of this comparison, covering just tuition fees. Using tuition rates for 2017-18, tuition for a Ferris State University (FSU) bachelor's degree completed at the NMC University Center would cost a student \$21,903; the same FSU degree earned at its main campus in Big Rapids, Michigan, would cost \$47,876, over twice as much. The difference is attributed to the 90 credit hours earned from NMC that transfer into the FSU bachelor's degree; University Center students pay the community college in-district tuition rate of \$103.70 per credit hour for these 90 credits.

Cost Comparison of Four-Year Institutions at Michigan University Centers

A cost comparison table (see Appendix H) provides additional data illustrating the tuition cost savings from attending University Centers in Michigan to earn a baccalaureate degree from a partner four-year institution. This table does not include four-year institutions who have independent partnerships with a community college but focuses on those associated with a University Center. The costs are based on tuition only and on individual credit hour requirements rounded up to the nearest dollar, and do not include differential tuition, activity fees, books, or other ancillary fees.

Additional cost variables included in these calculations include the following:

- Residency requirement is a key variable, meaning how many credit hours must be earned from the four-year institution in order to earn the baccalaureate degree from that institution. Some universities require 30 credit hours earned from the institution, and the remaining 90 credit hours may be earned from the community college, while others may require 60 credit hours as a residency requirement with the remaining 60 earned from the community college.
- A second variable is the total number of credits hours required to earn a bachelor's degree, which ranges from 120 credit hours (Ferris State University) to 127 credit hours (Walsh College).
- A third variable is the total number of credits that must be earned from a four-year institution (not necessarily the resident four-year institution), which ranges from 30 to 60 credit hours.
- Finally, there is the variable of the community college in-district tuition rate, ranging from \$96 per credit hour (Henry Ford Community College) to \$137.60 per credit hour (Mott Community College).

SUMMARY

This chapter presented the findings in three segments: (1) definition of the University Center models in Michigan, (2) discussion of the purpose of Michigan University Centers, and (3) description of the roles of the community college and four-year institutions. The models to which the 12 University Centers were aligned were determined from the data collected from the participants and analyzed and coded by me as the researcher. Of the six models initially identified and described in Chapter Two, eight university centers aligned with two of the models, The Co-location Model and the Sponsorship Model. Three of these eight University Centers also met the criteria of the Hybrid Model, as they had overlapping features with both the Hybrid Model and one of the other five models.

Four of the 12 University Centers did not fall into any of the identified models; thus, two additional models of University Centers emerged through this research. Titles were assigned to each, using the terms used by the research study participants: (1) Shared Responsibility/

Governance Model and (2) Transfer-out Model. Of the four remaining University Centers, two aligned with the Shared Responsibility/Governance Model and two aligned with the Transfer-out Model.

Four themes emerged from this study as revealed through the research interviews. Two themes addressed and supported the two key purposes of a University Center as defined in Chapter One: (1) enhancing student educational access and success and (2) supporting financial stability of higher education institutions. Two additional themes emerged from the research interviews, expanding on the key purpose of a University Center: (3) creating positive community impact and (4) being a key step on a continuum to address future educational needs. The research found that the roles of the community college and four-year institutions are largely determined by their alignment with the specific University Center model. A final finding focused on the importance of the financial impact of University Centers on students' educational path and student success, providing cost comparisons between degrees earned entirely at a four-year institution and degrees earned with University Center access. Chapter Five will provide conclusions and possible applications for initiating or modifying such collaboration and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the main points of the qualitative exploratory case study of the collaboration between community colleges and four-year institutions often referred to as the University Center model. The chapter begins with a summary of the study findings, then reviews the four conclusions of the study. Based upon those conclusions, recommendations are provided for the community college and four-year institutional leadership, for the students, and for further research.

SUMMARY OF STUDY

The purpose of this research study was to describe, analyze, interpret, and understand the perceived and actual operations of the University Center model from the perspective of the host community college leaders in Michigan. The literature in Chapters One and Two described the issues facing higher education, characteristics of the University Center model and operations, and pathways to baccalaureate degree attainment, all through a national lens. The literature focused on the advantages of degree completion, student support, and overall structure of University Centers, with supporting, although limited, information and details specific to Michigan relating to student success, relationships between the partner institutions, and operational and structural details and effectiveness.

This study extended our knowledge of University Center models in Michigan through in-depth interviews with community college leaders associated with a University Center where specific content was shared passionately. These interviews enabled this researcher to foster the following conclusions and recommendations.

This exploratory case study fostered four conclusions based upon the three major findings and the four themes which emerged under the second major finding. The first finding identified the University Centers in Michigan and the models with which they aligned. University Centers in Michigan aligned with three of the six University Center models as identified in the literature: the Co-location Model, Sponsorship Model, and Hybrid Model. Two new/additional University Center models were revealed (and named) through this research: (1) the Transfer-out Model and (2) the Shared Responsibility/Governance model.

The second finding focused on the purpose of University Centers and resulted in four themes. The first two themes aligned with assertions identified in Chapter One: (1) the University Center provides opportunity for student access and success; and (2) the University Center provides financial stability for the host community college and University Center partners. The last themes that emerged were these: (3) the University Center provides positive community impact and (4) the University Center serves as a step on an educational continuum.

A third finding of this research study identified the role and expectations of the community college and four-year institutions, which were determined largely by which University Center model they aligned.

STUDY CONCLUSIONS

Based upon this research study's findings and emergent themes, I, the researcher, present the following conclusions.

Conclusion 1: University Centers play a significant role in Michigan's higher education system

Twelve University Centers were identified in Michigan. Some were established over 40 years ago and evolved and progressed with changes in modality and access to online educational programs and courses; some were more recently established, as recent as five years ago. The longevity and enduring nature of the University Center demonstrates the perceived value of the University Center and supports this conclusion.

Key to this finding is the dominance of the Sponsorship Model for Michigan University Centers: seven out of the 12 University Centers that were a part of this study fall into this model. The Sponsorship Model places the authority with the community college to align its programming and services for what will best serve the students. While partnership with four-year institutions is foundational, this Sponsorship Model suggests that the host community college preference is to retain leadership and control of the operations of the University Center, resulting in greater influence and control over what programs are offered at the location and effecting a seamless transition, often graduating students with both associate's and baccalaureate degrees. The participants described their role in the following ways:

You bid to come in; usually it's because we have limited space.... XXXX [university] would love to have a presence here. But they don't want to be a partner. They just want access to us; and I said, no. They want to do the same things that we're doing.... And I said, no, this is a partner function. So, there are some perks to being a partner. (CC5)

We meet more as an *ad hoc* [partnership] on the academic side of it. Then, we have a lease agreement/memorandum and.... It's got to show demand, to be a good fit; it's got to be unique. Then, clearly that the university is going to commit to it.... And the success factor again is the articulation that they have to take all of our classes. Not necessarily as electives but as part of the major so that the students truly only have to take the 3rd and 4th year or in case of 3+1, just the fourth year. (CC7)

Conclusion #1 is further supported by the recent creation of a new University Center in Southwest Michigan as Lake Michigan College (LMC) recently soft launched its own University Center. LMC was originally not included in this study; however, because of actions during the course of my research, I held a subsequent interview with Dr. Leslie Kellogg, provost and vice president of Academic Affairs at LMC. She described that LMC recently established its University Center; specifically, her role is to work with the deans to identify programs that are a good fit to allow students to earn their baccalaureate degrees through a University Center at LMC (personal communication, March 4, 2019). Based on Dr. Kellogg's comments, LMC appears to align with the Sponsorship Model as described in this study. Dr. Kellogg is pursuing several four-year institutional partners. She shares the same passion of the rest of the study participants, noting that a University Center can assist students as they juggle multiple responsibilities of work and home life while simultaneously pursuing their education.

This conclusion is further supported by additional University Center partnerships formed during the course of this research study: In 2020, Ferris State University became a new four-year institutional partner at two University Centers, one at Lake Michigan College and the other at Kalamazoo Valley Community College. Leadership from these community colleges had been in discussions with FSU to develop partnerships with their respective University Centers. These new partnerships were approved by the Ferris State University Board of Trustees at its February

21, 2020, meeting, demonstrating support of this conclusion from the vantage point of a university as well as that of community colleges.

Conclusion 2: University Centers Strive to Address the Needs of Students

Based on the comments from the study's participants, in all instances across the state, the University Center appears to serve as the lead or host for the students with face-to-face support and a sense of place where the students can feel connected and seek help and support. All 12 participants asserted that enhancing student access and success was their primary purpose. During the interviews, many participants expressed empathy and a deep connection with their students' barriers and challenges and stressed that the University Center was there to address those barriers and challenges, clearly exhibiting the leadership trait of emotional intelligence. A testament from a University Center student serves as an example from the student's view. Rebecca Sage, a student in the Master of Social Work program at the Northwestern Michigan College University Center, shared that she grew up in the Traverse City area and loves the area. She always wanted to be a social worker to help people and feels very fortunate that she can complete her MSW Program in her hometown (personal communication, October 16, 2019).

Conclusion i#2 is also supported by the additional University Center model identified through this research, the *Transfer-out Model*, which focuses on the importance of serving the student to address educational access and success in earning a four-year degree. In this Transfer-out Model, the host community college — through its University Center partner — provides a support system that allows students to continue their education with a four-year

institution, meeting the students' higher educational goals. These representatives meet and advise students, even when the required classes are not delivered at the University Center. While the actual program and classes may be offered at the four-year institution home campus, the host community colleges place articulation and operational mandates on the four-year institutional partners to allow them to be part of the University Center. This transfer-out model was described by one of the participants as follows:

Students were actually asking.... They're transferring to XXXX or XXXX [universities].... They were looking at [us]: "when was the {university} rep going to be here?"[....]They were doing a lot of back and forth. So, we decided, let's try a small transfer center where we had a couple of schools, and then, like I said, it's just grown from there. So, it was kind of student demand.... We can meet with them. Let's take you over there [university rep] and they tell you what you need to do.... We do have this understanding, underlying articulation that you are going to follow.... So, that again... [students] don't lose credits. (CC6)

Additionally, Conclusion #2 is supported by the implementation of University Centers at other locations across the country; it is an approach that works. The Lone Star College (LSC) – University Center in Texas is an example. LSC's University Center partners with several universities to bring bachelor and graduate degrees to the University Center location so that students do not have to travel to the partner institution's home campus (Lone Star College, n.d.). LSC provides this option, not as a financial resource for itself, but rather to provide access as an option for students. LSC demonstrates the importance of this access by offering scholarship incentives for students who wish to transfer from LSC to a four-year University Center partner; and while being enrolled at both LSC and the University Center partner, the students have access to the four-year educational partner services and receive benefits of being at the four-year such as its library services (Marshall, 2016, para. 6). In its 2019 website, the East Montgomery County Improvement District highlighted local education opportunities by

stating that LSC touts seamless credit transfer programs and “first stop” student services, serving as a critical link for individual opportunity and community development to over 1.5 million citizens in its Houston, North Harris County, and Montgomery County regions (East Montgomery County Improvement District, 2019).

Further, Conclusion #2 highlighting the importance of student access and success is supported through affordability. As described in Chapter Four, access is enhanced through affordability by tuition differential and housing. The four-year degree cost comparison among the four-year institutional partners at Michigan University Centers demonstrates the affordability of earning a four-year degree at the University Center. Although the total cost to earn a four-year degree at each University Center partner will differ by institution, all are more affordable as compared to earning the same degree at the four-year institution’s home campus.

One participant shared this as follows:

Particularly, it’s better for students if they dual enroll. If you enroll in a four-year school, you get financial aid at the home institution. Then you take a class with us and with them. You get the higher end of the dollar for the award. If you start with us, then you’re awarded X number of dollars, the cost of education is much lower. So, you get much lower in terms of an award. Whereas with the university, you’re going to be at a higher cost of education, so you would have a higher award.... It would be to your advantage if you’re going to both institutions and enroll at the higher institution and have that be your home institution. Then you’ll get more money as a student. (CC8)

At the Michigan University Centers, the cost to earn a four-year degree ranged from \$21,150 with Madonna University at the Macomb Community College University Center, to \$35,198 with Western Michigan University at the Northwestern Michigan College University Center. The cost differences are largely due to the residency requirement of the four-year institution and the additional requirement that a certain number of credits must be earned at a four-year institution and not at a community college. For example, Madonna University

requires 120 credits hours for its baccalaureate degree with 30 credits from Madonna; and the remaining 90 may be transferred from the community college (see Table 7). Western Michigan University requires 122 credit hours for its baccalaureate degree with 30 credits from Western and an additional 32 credits to be earned at Western or another four-year institution; and the remaining 60 may be transferred from the community college (see Table 8). Again supporting this conclusion, the cost remains lower if the baccalaureate degree is earned at the University Center as compared to the student earning the degree entirely at the four-year institution home campus. Note that these comparisons do not include the expense for housing and meals at the four-year institution home campus. Students may, in many cases, have lower room and board costs at the University Center if they are living at home during these initial years as opposed to living on-campus at the four-year institution with housing and meal plans costs.

Table 7. Low-End Cost Comparison: Cost Comparison of 4-Year Degree Earned at a UC versus at Institution Home Campus (Madonna / Macomb CC)

MADONNA COLLEGE		MACOMB CC UNIVERSITY CENTER		Total cost
Residency Req	Tuition rate (/credit hour)	Credits	Tuition rate (/credit hour)	
30 credits	\$405	90	\$100	
\$12,150		\$9,000		\$21,150
Degree earned from Madonna College: 120 credit hours @\$405				\$48,600

Note. Derived from University Center websites and University Center partner contact when necessary.

Table 8. High-End Cost Comparison: Cost Comparison of 4-Year Degree Earned at a UC versus at Institution Home Campus

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY (WMU)			NORTHWESTERN MICHIGAN COLLEGE UNIVERSITY CENTER		
Residency Req (WMU)	4-year	Tuition rate (/credit hour)	Credits	Tuition rate (/credit hour)	Total cost
30	32	\$467.34	60	\$103.70	
\$28,975.08			\$6,222		\$35,197.08
Degree earned from WMU: 122 credit hours @\$467.34					\$57,015.48

Note. Derived from University Center websites and University Center partner contact when necessary.

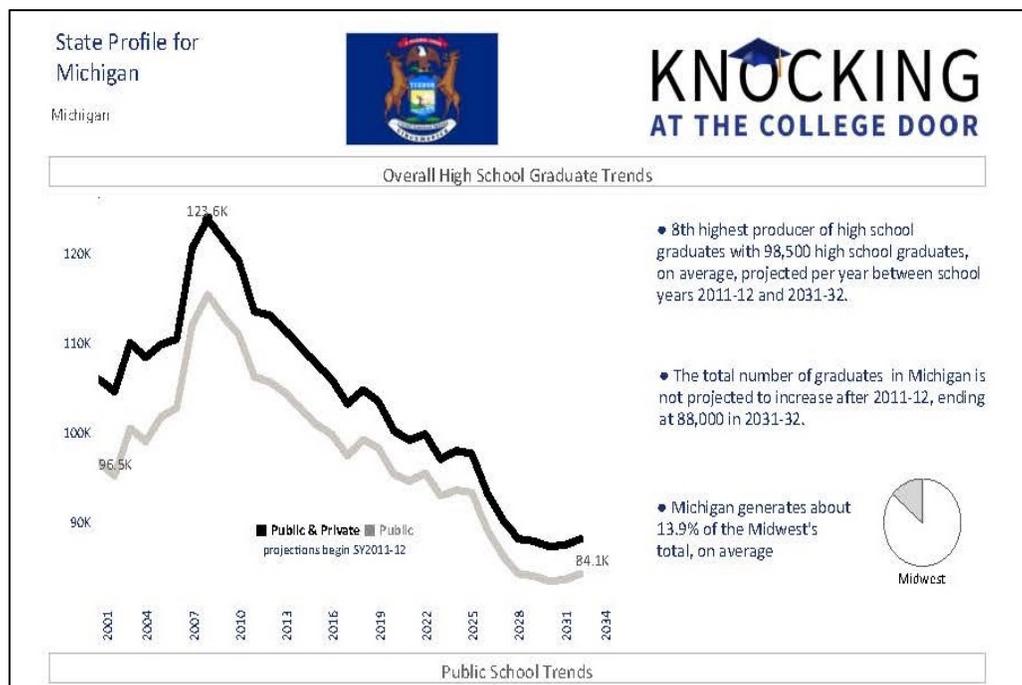
Conclusion 3: University Centers Provide Financial Stability to Institutions

Nine of the twelve participants indicated that the University Center model provides financial stability for both the host community college and the four-year institutional partners. Students are retained at the community college knowing they may continue to earn their baccalaureate and perhaps additional degrees. Participant interviews highlighted that, through economies of scale and shared resources, there is a financial benefit to both the host community colleges and four-year institutional partners. As described in Chapter One, the University Center models are becoming home to the *new* traditional students. As reflected in the literature, University Center students have access to high quality programs provided by the four-year institutional partners and also have access to services and resources from both the community college and the partners.

To further support Conclusion #3, the University Centers are faced with a critical opportunity to stabilize and perhaps enhance the financial stability of both the community college and the four-year institutional partners. With the decrease in number of high school

graduates and the resulting change of demographics across the state, Michigan community colleges and universities face challenges (Wolcott, 2019, Sec. 2, para. 1). The focus is now on the non-traditional or adult market, and for the University Center models, serving this population is nothing new. Four-year institutions are just now realizing that with the decrease in the number of high school graduates, they need to reach out to potential students who did not attend college directly out of high school (Wolcott, 2019, Sec. 4, para. 11). In 2001, 106,000 students graduated from public high schools in Michigan; in 2013, that increased to 111,000 students; however, by 2032, the predictions are that only 88,000 students will graduate from public high schools in Michigan (see Figure 7) (Bransberger & Michelau, 2016, p. 78). Nationally, while the South and West regions project growth in the number of high school graduates, the Midwest region continues to decline, primarily caused by the decline in birth rates (Bransberger & Michelau, 2016, p. 12).

Figure 7. State of Michigan Profile: Overall High School Graduate Trends



Source: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2017, Dashboards, State Profiles.

Therefore, this phenomenon positions the University Centers strategically in both site location and operational experience to serve this population and to enhance their already established targeted students, specifically displaced workers, veterans, employees seeking promotion, and single parents. With its host community colleges and four-year institutional partners already in place as a University Center, they are strategically positioned to reach out together to those adults who have not earned a baccalaureate degree. University Centers can continue to provide financial stability to both the community college and partnering four-year institutions and perhaps enhance financial stability by recruiting in a tag-team format to the area high school student populations to encourage them to continue their education locally by attending the community college and then the four-year institution at the University Center. Clearly, those University Centers who are established have a jump start on those communities that do not have a University Center.

Conclusion 4: University Centers Provide Positive Community Impact

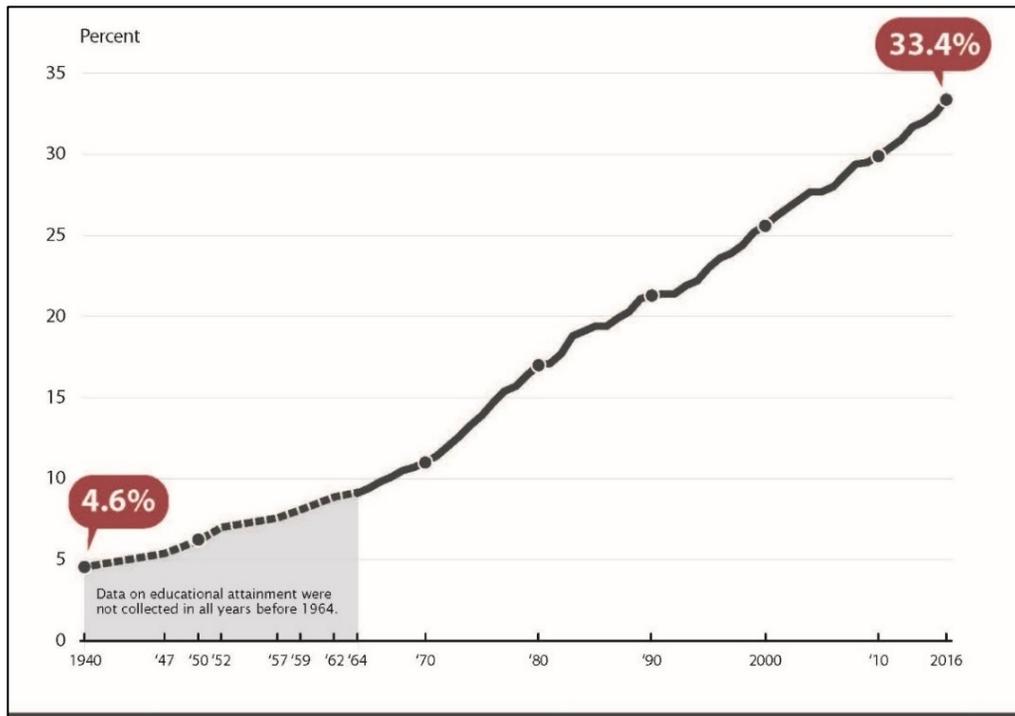
Majority of the study's participants revealed that there was significant influence effected by the University Centers on the overall well-being of their community. University Centers not only contribute regionally to the community and is a community asset as surfaced during the study, but they also contribute to the health of our state by reaching out to business and industry to collaborate in programs and in hiring of students. Educational attainment and outcomes yield benefits for the individuals, their families, their local community, and Michigan and society as a whole (Eisler, 2018; Hurley, 2018; Mack, 2019). A testament from a University Center student serves as an example from the student's view. Lauren Franklin, a student in the

Master of Social Work Program offered at the Northwestern Michigan College University Center, chose to enter this field in Traverse City because she sees the need in her community to be able to advocate for those in her community who may not be able to advocate for themselves (personal communication on October 16, 2019).

Further supporting Conclusion #4, the University Centers are once again positioned to continue to reach out and deliver baccalaureate degrees and beyond for the well-being of their community and to keep Michigan competitive. Talent in the state is essential for the state's economy. At issue is that Michigan will continue to need a workforce with a baccalaureate degree to fulfill needs and to be competitive. Michigan needs 126,000 more workers with an associate degree or certificate, and that need jumps to 171,000 more workers with a baccalaureate degree in the next couple of years (Hurley, 2018, paragraph 4). The "Hot 50" Michigan's High-Demand, High-Wage Careers Report through 2028 shows that at least 38 of these careers will require a baccalaureate or higher according to Michigan Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives (2020, pp. 2–3). Education attainment is essential to Michigan's economy, employers are looking for a well-educated workforce to expand and locate business.

According to the United States Census Bureau (2017), statewide in Michigan, 28.1% of adults have a bachelor's degree or higher; but Michigan is lower than the nationwide level of 33.4%. Slightly over one-third of the nation's population has a baccalaureate or higher. While this is the highest educational attainment levels since 1940, University Center models are positioned to target this market. University Centers can continue this trajectory. See Figure 8. There is a student population yet to be served.

Figure 8. Highest Educational Attainment Levels Since 1940: Adults 25 Years and Older with a Bachelor’s Degree or Higher



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Interrater Reliability: Participant View of Study Conclusions

This qualitative research entailed a considerable number of participant interviews requiring analysis and coding of narratives by the researcher. Relating to validity and reliability as discussed in Chapter Three, a recommended practice is to establish interrater reliability (IRR). IRR is a method often used in quantitative research with multiple researchers or examiners to establish their level of agreement with how the data was coded and interpreted (Armstrong et al., 1997; Belotto, M. J., 2018; McDonald et al., 2019; Syed & Nelson, 2015). IRR may also benefit qualitative research because IRR is acknowledged as a process or method to show transparency, build trustworthiness, build confidence of consistency, and demonstrate rigor in a study (Armstrong et al., 1997; Belotto, 2018; McDonald et al., 2019; Syed & Nelson, 2015).

As a lone researcher, I reached out to the 12 participants and shared the four conclusions to ascertain their level of agreement. Nine of the 12 participants responded. The results are presented here as a form of IRR. All nine respondents agreed with Conclusion 1. Eight respondents agreed with Conclusions 2, 3, and 4. One respondent both agreed and disagreed with Conclusion 2 and did not agree with Conclusions 3 and 4. Table 9 includes the level of agreement both as a total number and a percentage, rounded to the nearest whole percentage point (88.88% to 89%). The percentage was computed based upon the simple percent agreement with a binary response format, where agree = 100% and disagree = 0%. The data indicate that the respondents significantly agreed with the conclusions. Once again, to secure anonymity of the respondents, each respondent was given an identifier based on the order their response was received. These tags are not connected to the previous identifiers.

Table 9. Participant Agreement with Study Conclusions

RESPONDENTS	CONCLUSION 1	CONCLUSION 2	CONCLUSION 3	CONCLUSION 4
R-1	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
R-2	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
R-3	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
R-4	Agree	Agree & Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
R-5	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
R-6	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
R-7	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
R-8	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
R-9	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
Total #	9	8-9	8	8
Total %	100	89-100	89	89

Summary of Participant Agreement with Study Conclusions

Conclusion 1: University Centers play a significant role in Michigan’s higher education system. 100% agreement.

Conclusion 2: University Centers Strive to Address the Needs of Students. Range of 89–100% agreement. The following comments are shared from the respondent, R-4.

Both do not agree and agree. XXXX’s UC does not operate as a transfer center. Only agreed upon UC programs are within scope of our UC partners.

Do agree that there are cost benefits of the UC programs related to (1) tuition from taking 1st, 2nd, and, possibility 3rd year (3+1) courses at XXXX, (2) no redundant classes from university, and 3) avoidance of having to travel outside the area for a bachelor’s degree.

The disagreement seems to reference the additional *Transfer-out Model* identified in this study and the agreement seems to reference some cost benefits to address students need rather than agreement of Conclusion 2 overall.

Conclusion 3: University Centers Provide Financial Stability to Institutions. 89% agreement.

As described in the analysis, nine of the twelve participants indicated that financial stability was provided. It was not unanimous. The following comments are shared from the respondent R-4.

Do not agree (mostly). Financial stability support is not a driver for the XXXX UC, although it does justify the resource presence for the UC partners. The financial benefit to XXXX from UC Programs is that students are mandated to complete our Associate Degree which, in turn, provides improved metrics for state funding justification. While there is general marketing for our UC, it is not a primary recruitment focus or tool.

This response appears to closely align with the review and coding of the transcript and was not recognized within the nine of the initial participants in fostering Conclusion 3.

Conclusion 4: University Centers Provide Positive Community Impact. 89% agreement.

As described in the analysis, a majority of the participants indicated that the UC provides positive community impact. It was not unanimous. The following comments are shared from the respondent R-4.

This conclusion is more collateral impact than intentional, probably due to the relatively small number of UC students compared to other transfer-type programs and direct-hire associate degrees and academies we offer that have a much larger/tighter business linkage.

This response appears to closely align with the review and coding of the transcript and was not recognized within majority of the initial participants in fostering Conclusion 4.

Effect of COVID-19

Although data collection began with no expectation of a global pandemic, COVID-19 has been and continues to be impactful on higher education and deserves mention in this study. The pandemic is suspected to be the subject of many dissertations. The 2019-20 school year began with many classes planned for the classroom, and those classes transitioned to remote learning almost in a flash in response to the pandemic. Where this transition started as a gap fill measure with some institutions lagging in online capabilities, it has proven to be a viable option, and those students and faculty who had experience in online and remote learning/teaching pivoted more smoothly and quickly (Barsotti, 2020; Friga, 2021; Gallagher & Palmer, 2020; Mishra et al., 2020). While higher education was already addressing financial and enrollment challenges including lack of IT and digital investment, COVID entered and compounded the issues by increasing revenue loss, adding COVID expenses, and causing some parents/students to reconsider the value of a college education (Burt, 2020; Friga, 2021; Gallagher & Palmer, 2020). These issues consequently impacted the off-campus sites. Some

classes and student services that were delivered at the University Center are now delivered online and/or remotely, compelling institutions to rethink how to incorporate their online presence, and some programs were eliminated or reduced affecting faculty teaching loads consequently impacting local adjunct instructors where their teaching contracts are first to be cut (Rodriguez, 2020; Krebs, 2020; Schwartz et al., 2020). Some University Center four-year institutional partners have been forced to reduce their physical footprint and appearance at their University Center. A community college leader/participant in this study specifically shared the following:

One of the things the pandemic has taught us is the necessity of operating virtually, which is providing another challenge to the University Center model.... Our experience has shown that all University Center partners have significantly decreased their support of the University Center in the last years in favor of other means of providing student support. (CC 11)

Opposite the dark side, COVID has brought illumination of the strength of student, faculty, and staff and the importance to pivot and parle to meet the needs of students and to believe that we and the institutions will be better for having experienced it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the findings, the themes which emerged, and the conclusions as described, the following are recommendations for community college and four-year institutional leaders, students, and further research.

For Community College and Four-year Institutional Leaders

With the number of high school graduates declining in Michigan, with what appears to be an enhanced awareness by universities to focus on the adult market, with the need to

develop an educated workforce, and for Michigan to remain competitive, the University Center approach appears to already have a foothold. For existing University Centers, the host community college and four-year institutional partners may want to revisit their UC operational structure to determine if it is doing all they can to address the needs of not only their students and their community but holistically viewing Michigan as place to live and work. Several of the participants also shared that there is a surprising community lack of awareness of the existence of a University Center in their community, and the participants find that challenging at times. Perhaps the University Center leadership may want to consider revisiting its structure, including marketing and rebranding through community engagement, to reframe its importance in the community. University Center leadership may also want to consider playing a more active role in economic development discussions to be the higher education of choice in their region to retain talent, grow businesses, and enhance prosperity so all individuals may flourish in their local community. For community colleges and four-year institutions who are not part of a University Center, they may wish to enter discussions of such a collaboration and effort in the University Center model.

For Students

Given the need for a higher-educated workforce and talent in Michigan, students should consider attaining higher education locally through their University Center because (1) through the community college brings open access and a nurturing environment to help students proceed and succeed at the four-year institutional partner with the baccalaureate degrees and beyond, offered locally, (2) through its tuition structure taking a majority of the courses at the

community college at its lower tuition rate and transferring to the four-year educational institution addresses student debt by providing a more reasonable price tag for a baccalaureate degree, and (3) by earning a baccalaureate degree or higher provides a high level of skills, both technical and soft, enhancing employment options for students to stay within their community and Michigan.

The State of Michigan has rolled out significant opportunities to attract and support non-traditional students. These scholarships focus on community college, skilled training credentials, and high school completion programs, all of which can help in continuing education opportunities such as the baccalaureate and beyond. Michigan values education and is ready to ante up and help support education. For example, Michigan Reconnect is a scholarship program providing tuition-free education supporting students 25 years and older attending their in-district community college. Michigan Reconnect also provided a Skills Scholarship up to \$1,500 to help cover the tuition cost at a private training school/program for those 25 years and older. Futures for Frontliners was also offered as a scholarship program for Michiganders without a college degree who worked in essential industries. The program provides tuition-free access to community college so students can earn a skill certificate or associate's degree and also provided a high school completion pathway for students to continue to college. Not surprising, some of these programs are now at full capacity. Potential and interested students are encouraged to sign up for news alerts on education/tuition assistance at:

<https://www.michigan.gov/reconnect/> and <https://www.michigan.gov/frontliners/>

Additionally, some University Centers and four-year partners offer scholarships and financial assistance to students at a University Center. Students are encouraged to contact the

local University Center community college and four-year institutional partners. Scholarships and assistance vary by location, and here are a few examples to assist University Center students:

- Central Michigan University Transfer Scholarships
- Davenport University Partnership Tuition Rate
- Ferris Statewide Adult Learner Life-Changing Scholarship
- NMC University Center Marvin and Luella Rorick Scholarship Endowment
- The Teahen Family Extended Learning Annual Scholarship
- Wayne Advantage-Macomb Scholarships

Recommendations for Further Research

This exploratory case study consisted of in-depth, face-to-face interviews with the host community college leadership and provided vital information of the phenomenon of the University Center from their viewpoint. In Chapter Three, the study's limitations and delimitations described that the data collected reflects only one side of the University Center model, that being from the community college leadership perspective and from those University Centers located within the state of Michigan. The study did not include input from the four-year institutional partners except through casual conversations and happenstance while visiting the University Centers. As described in Chapter One, I have insight into the operations from the viewpoint of a four-year institutional partner because of my role having served as a director of a four-year institutional partner, but that is limited to my viewpoint from one University Center.

This study provided a beginning point into a more thorough understanding of the phenomenon of the University Center. It is recommended that University Centers should also

be examined from the viewpoint of the four-year institutional partners to explore how they perceive and understand the University Center operations. Because of the expected large number of four-year institutional partners of the 12 University Centers identified, a written survey could solicit answers relating the purposes researched here: student access and success and financial stability of both institutions. As an alternative, a case study could be done of one University Center, comparing the four-year institutions' viewpoints to those of the host community college's viewpoint.

This exploratory case study did not include the viewpoint or experiences of the students attending a University Center. A comparison study is recommended based upon the student side relating to student access and success. A case study could be conducted of one University Center examining the student side of recent graduating students from a particular University Center. The research would illustrate similarities or differences relating to student access and success from the student perspective and could include a measurement of degree completion and/or time to completion and gainful employment and/or promotions. The research could include student surveys both written and interviews to expand on their success or challenges.

This study did not address University Center student enrollment and graduates for the four-year institutional partners as compared to their main campus. A comparison study is recommended based upon the percentage of graduating students from a four-year institutional partner at a University Center as compared to the same four-institutional partner at its main campus. The research could include a single four-year institution who may have a presence at multiple University Center sites. The research could include a single University Center site and include all four-year institutional partners at the site.

In this study, one of the conclusions is that University Centers seem to provide positive community impact and is limited as it was concluded from the perception of the host community college leaders. A comprehensive study could be researched from the four-year institutional partners' perception in how they contribute to the community and its regional economy. Again, the research could include a single four-year institution that may have a presence at multiple University Center sites and examine how its presence at the multiple sites impacted the various regional economies that it serves. Or the research could include a single University Center site and include all four-year institutional partners at the University Center site. Each partner would be included in the research to determine impact on the community and regional economy.

Because this exploratory case study provided relevant operational information and popular practices used, it could serve as a basis for further research in a product dissertation, such as a development guide or practitioner guide in creating a new University Center. The research could highlight the different models described, popular practices, pros and cons, different environment and demographics, the student population, joint marketing, governance options, curriculum alignment, and other suggestions/recommendations that participants would share.

CONCLUSION

University Centers are alive and strategically located to serve and cultivate talent and an educated workforce for Michigan. The University Center model is a useful, logical approach for increasing educational access, as attested through the interviews of the community college leadership. The University Centers in Michigan have been in existence for a varying length of

time from long-time, established University Centers spanning several decades and those created within the last five to ten years, to those who are new within the last couple of years. The results of this study indicate that the concept and goal of University Centers appear to have stamina and flexibility to undergo change and continue to meet the needs of the students, as well as help in the financial stability of the higher education institutions; they have been able to evolve as described by several of the participants. Community college leadership continues to believe in the mission and purpose of the University Center model.

The findings of this exploratory case study help to demonstrate the value of University Center. Given the decline in high school graduates in Michigan, the fact that, by 2025, nearly 11.6 million adults will need to earn a higher education credential to meet the talent needs of the nation, and that 5.5 million of them will be earned by returning adults, University Centers appear to be well placed to address these needs and serve this population (Glover, 2018, para. 4). Given, too, that millions of jobs that have been weakened or eliminated by COVID-19 are not predicted to return, requiring a large need for career shifting, retraining, and credentialing, University Centers may be the right pathway for those attempting career shifts (Long, 2021, p. 1). The University Centers, with both the host community college and the four-year institutional partners, now must examine their role and be even more strategic: (1) to improve the health and well-being of their student populations to promote prosperity opportunity for all, (2) to enhance economic growth of their communities to ensure sustainable communities, and (3) to retain, cultivate, and draw talent to maintain and enhance a thriving Michigan.

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APPENDIX A: AGENDA JOINT ADVISORS MEETING



Agenda

Semi-Annual Advisors/Counselors Meeting

Wednesday, December 5, 2018

11:30 AM – 1:30 PM

NMC University Center
Room 213, 2nd floor
2200 Dendinos Drive
Traverse City, MI

Working lunch

1. Introductions.
2. Financial Aid updates, if any.
3. NMC – describe changes/updates in programs.
4. Ferris – describe changes/updates in programs.
5. Other items of interest.

APPENDIX B: JOINT ADVISORS ATTENDANCE SHEET

Advisor/Counselor Biannual Meeting
Ferris State University and Northwestern Michigan College
 Date: December 5, 2018

NMC/FSU	NAME	ATTEND	NAME PLATE	NOTES:
FSU	Michael Berghoef, BSW Coord.			
FSU	Cheryl Bloomquist, ECED			
FSU	Debbra Curtiss, Region Director			
FSU	Kate Esckilsen, CJ			
FSU	Sheri Edstrom, Financial Aid			
FSU	Angela Garrey, Financial Aid			
FSU	Greg Gogolin, ISI Coord.			
FSU	Ronda Grindel, Office Coord.			
FSU	Joanie Hazelton, BSW			
FSU	Adam Hatchew, Business Coord.			
FSU	Lori Jenema, Health Prof.			
FSU	Jimmie Joseph, CIT & CIS			
FSU	Kasey Ninke, Admissions			
FSU	Jason Otting, ISI			
FSU	DeeDee Stakley, Transfer Director			
FSU	Ruthy Ransom, BSW			
FSU	Sandy Stoddard, Transfer Ctr.			
FSU	Wendy Samuels, SCWK Director			
FSU	Janet Vizina-Roubal, MSW Coord.			
NMC	Lindsey Dickinson, Director Adv.			
NMC	Deb Maison, Advisor			
NMC	Taylor Nash, Advisor			
NMC	Kim Schultz, Advisor			
Possible additions:				
NMC	John Velis, CIT/CIS			
NMC	Scott Goethals, CIT/CIS Lead			
NMC	Keith Weber CIT/CIS			
NMC	Brian Heffner CJ Director			
NMC	Jane Zlojutro ACCT Lead			
NMC	Steve Rice ACCT Lead			

APPENDIX C: HLC LETTER



HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500
Chicago, IL 60604-1411
312.263.0456 | 800.621.7440
Fax: 312.263.7462 | hlcommission.org

May 29, 2018

Dr. David L. Eisler
President
Ferris State University
1201 S. State Street
CSS 301
Big Rapids, MI 49307-2737

Dear President Eisler:

Per HLC policy, an on-site visit is required at least every five years to any institution with three or more off-campus additional locations. During the Multi-location Visit, a single peer reviewer will visit a representative sample of an institution's additional locations. The following additional locations have been selected to be visited:

1. Capital Central -Lansing, 210 W. Shiawassee Street, Lansing, MI 48901
2. Grand Rapids - Muskegon, 221 S Quarterline Rd, Muskegon, MI 49442
3. Lone Star College Doctorate, 5000 Research Forest Drive, The Woodlands, TX 77381
4. Metro-Livonia, 18600 Haggerty Road, Livonia, MI 48152
5. Northern - Traverse City, 2200 Dendrin Drive, Traverse City, MI 49686
6. Southwest - Dowagiac, 58900 Cherry Grove Rd, Dowagiac, MI 49047

Available at <http://www.hlcommission.org/Monitoring/locations.html> are the following documents: *Multi-location Visits: Information for Institutions and Peer Reviewers* and *Multi-location Visit Institutional Report Template*. These documents provide basic information on the background of the visit, protocol for the peer reviewer, and guidelines for the report the institution must submit. All visits should be conducted by December 31, 2018; extensions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Action required:

1. Please confirm that all of the locations listed above will be active with students enrolled for Fall 2018.
2. Please identify a contact person who will work with HLC and the peer reviewer throughout the visit process.

Please send confirmation of active locations along with the contact person's name, email address, and phone number to Vince Coraci at vcoraci@hlcommission.org by June 15, 2018.

Any questions may be directed to Vince Coraci (vcoraci@hlcommission.org) or Pat Newton-Curran (pnewton@hlcommission.org). Thank you for your cooperation in arranging the Multi-location Visit.

Sincerely,

Higher Learning Commission

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

The leadership of the community colleges whose responsibility is to operate and manage university centers in Michigan will be interviewed. The following questions will be used to explore the 13 university centers, which have been identified in Michigan, to better understand and analyze these university centers, their operations, and their purpose to determine how they may meet the criteria of the six different models of university centers identified, with the potential to discover new models not yet identified.

1. Please describe your role and responsibilities for the university center.
2. Please describe your university center as relates to number of students served, number of partners, when established, and so on.

[Basic questions to create an environment of comfort.]

3. Please describe the purpose of the university center, why and how it was established?

[Probing or look for areas of students access/retention and financial stability.]

4. Please describe the university center and its overall operations.

[Probing or look for areas on how programs are authorized, how partners may join.]

5. What types/levels of degrees are offered by the partners and by the community college, such as associates, bachelors, masters, certificates, and so on?

[Probing or look for areas relating to course delivery structure, conferred by whom?]

6. Please describe the four-year partner institution's role and responsibilities.

[Probing for governance, staff support, authority.]

7. Please describe the university center facility and ownership.

[Probing for relationship with the partner(s), such as tenant, owner; spaces provided, such as classroom, offices, support services (café, library), faculty offices, and so on]

8. Please describe successes and opportunities for improvement of the university center?

9. What suggestions would you share with a community college which was thinking about establishing a university center?

APPENDIX E: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear _____,

My name is Debra Curtiss; I work for Ferris State University – Northern Region in Traverse City, Michigan.

I am also a doctoral student working on my dissertation as part of the Ferris State University Doctorate in Community College Leadership. I am conducting research for my dissertation regarding university center models in Michigan.

As a community college leader responsible for the _____ University Center, I am hoping you would meet with me for an interview to answer a series of questions relating the operations of your university center. It should take about 45 minutes to one hour; I intend to come to your office if convenient for you.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; and I will use pseudonyms for participants and their colleges to protect the anonymity of all participants.

I would like to call you next week to schedule an appointment. Of course, if you have any questions, please call me or email me at your convenience.

Thank you; I look forward to speaking with you!

Sincerely,

Debra Curtiss



Debra A. Curtiss, Director

Ferris State University - Northern Region

2200 Dendrin Drive, Suite 100

Traverse City, MI 49684

(231) 995-1735 Direct Line

Email: DebraCurtiss@ferris.edu

Web: www.ferris.edu/statewide

APPENDIX F: CONFIRMATION TO PARTICIPANT

Dear _____,

Thank you again for allowing me to interview you next week for my dissertation regarding the operations of your university center.

This is a follow up to confirm our interview for _____, 2018, at ___ am/pm.

I appreciate your help; and again your participation is voluntary.

I look forward to speaking with you!

Sincerely,

Debbra Curtiss



Debbra A. Curtiss, Director

Ferris State University - Northern Region

2200 Dendrinos Drive, Suite 100

Traverse City, MI 49684

(231) 995-1735 Direct Line

Email: DebbraCurtiss@ferris.edu

Web: www.ferris.edu/statewide

APPENDIX G: IRB DETERMINATION



Date: April 10, 2018

To: Sandra Balkema
From: Gregory Wellman, R.Ph, Ph.D, IRB Chair
Re: IRB Application for Review

The Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application for using human subjects in the study, "*University Center Models*" and determined that it does not meet the Federal Definition of research on human subjects, as defined by the Department of Health and Human Services or the Food and Drug Administration. This project does not meet the federal definition of research on human subjects because the unit of analysis is not on human subjects, but on university center models. As such, approval by the Ferris IRB is not required for the proposed project.

This determination applies only to the activities described in the submission; it does not apply should changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities are research involving human subjects, submit a new request to the IRB for determination. This letter only applies to Ferris IRB Review; it is your responsibility to ensure all necessary institutional permissions are obtained and policies are met prior to beginning the project, such as documentation of institutional or department support. Note that quality improvement project findings may be published, but any findings presented or published should be clearly identified as part of a quality improvement initiative and not as research.

Your project will remain on file with the Ferris IRB for purposes of tracking research efforts at Ferris. Should you have any questions regarding the determination of this letter, please contact the IRB.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregory Wellman'.

Gregory Wellman, R.Ph, Ph.D, IRB Chair

APPENDIX H: COST COMPARISON AT UNIVERSITY CENTERS

UNIVERSITY PARTNERS	UNIVERSITY CENTER HOST COMMUNITY COLLEGES					
	ALPENA	DELTA	HENRY FORD	KALAMAZOO	KIRTLAND	LANSING
Bellevue						
Central Michigan						
Davenport University				\$22,050		
Eastern Michigan						
Ferris State	\$24,180	\$22,650			\$22,740	\$21,840
Grand Valley						
Lake Superior						
Madonna University			No response		\$26,992	
Northwood Institute	\$25,353				\$23,881	\$22,961
Oakland University						
Rochester						
Siena Heights			\$21,840	\$22,650		\$22,470
Spring Arbor					\$26,895	
U of Detroit Mercy						
U of M Flint						\$27,379
Walsh College						
Wayne State						
Western Michigan						

UNIVERSITY PARTNERS	UNIVERSITY CENTER HOST COMMUNITY COLLEGES					
	MACOMB	MOTT	MUSKEGON	NORTH CENTRAL	NORTH-WESTERN	ST. CLAIR
Bellevue		No response				
Central Michigan	No response				\$21,843	
Davenport University	\$21,600	No response			\$29,043	
Eastern Michigan						
Ferris State	\$21,570	\$24,954	\$22,020		\$21,903	\$23,100
Grand Valley			\$30,928		\$30,848	
Lake Superior				\$24,210		
Madonna University	21,150					
Northwood Institute	22,685					
Oakland University	35,185					
Rochester	22,656	\$25,815				
Siena Heights						
Spring Arbor				\$37,516	\$26,123	
U of Detroit Mercy	26,100					
U of M Flint		\$29,974				\$28,125
Walsh College	28,900					\$30,294
Wayne State	31,600					
Western Michigan	34,976		\$34,551		\$35,198	

Note. Derived from university center websites and partner contact when necessary.