

THE IMPACT OF PERFORMANCE BASED  
FUNDING AT WOODLAND HILLS  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate College of the  
Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for  
the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May, 2007

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank God for providing me with the patience and perseverance. Many times during this process highs and lows were experienced, and while there were many times of self discovery and jubilation, there were also many times of self doubt and stress, and I am thankful to God for the determination to see this through.

Second I would like to thank my family and my wife, Lisa for assisting me with moral support all along the way. Lisa entered my life near the end of the doctoral process and was nothing but patient as I endlessly rambled about frustrations, accomplishments and light bulb moments. Sometimes household chores took back seat to the dissertation research and I couldn't have asked for more support. To my parents who never doubted that I would finish and always listened when I needed it, and provided moral support and an amount of child care support for those long school nights when Keeli needed a babysitter while dad was gone. I am thankful to my daughter Keeli, who between ages one through four might not fully understand the difficult decision to see this through as a single dad raising a daughter. I know there were many times a journal article took priority over a game of Chutes and Ladders, and for that I am sorry.

To all of my co-workers, and colleagues that served as sounding boards for scholarly chatter, or just outright whining about the trials and tribulations

endured. I would especially like to thank Oklahoma State University for the cohort experience during the past six years. I was blessed with the opportunity to enter a cohort that already existed, and as those finished up I was able to enter a new, smaller cohort in whom individual friendships were made that will last a lifetime. Many times these friends were there to offer their support, encouragement and advice when it was needed most. There are too many colleagues to list, but Alan, Alicia, Blake, Lori, Molly and Russell provided more assistance, friendship, and support than they will ever know, and for that I am very grateful.

I would like to thank Dr. Al Carlozzi, Dr. Jesse Mendez, and Dr. Ed Harris for agreeing to serve as my Committee Chairman and for providing insight and the recommendation of Dr. Mathers to serve as my Dissertation Advisor. A very special thank you goes to her for being nothing less than a consummate professional throughout the entire process. She provided listening skills when desired, encouragement when sought, and redirection when needed. I appreciate the insight she provided, and her ability to move me from stagnation when I encountered roadblocks through this dissertation process.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to give myself a pat on the back for completing this project. It actually started 20 years ago when I was a young 18 year old fresh out of high school coming to OSU to begin my college education. However, life had not quite prepared me for this collegiate experience, and by the end of my second year, I completely dropped out of OSU and entered the mainstream workforce at Wal-Mart at the assumed bewilderment

of my family. Later, realizing the most important thing I needed to do was receive my college education, I gradually made it back to college attending other institutions and receiving undergraduate degrees. Now, my college education has come full circle and brought me back to where it all started, at OSU. I am both happy and proud of what I've accomplished.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Purpose of the Study.....	6
Research Questions.....	7
Theoretical Framework .....	7
Definition of Terms .....	9
Limitations to the Study.....	10
Significance of the Study.....	11
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	14
History of Community Colleges .....	14
National Call for Accountability.....	17
Performance Based Funding.....	20
What Other States are Doing .....	20
Performance Indicators .....	23
Who Determines the Indicators .....	26
Money Tied to Performance Indicators .....	27
Implementation at the State Being Studied .....	29
Summary of the Literature Review .....	32
III. METHODOLOGY .....	34
Research Design.....	34
Selection of Participants.....	36
Interview Process .....	37
Documents .....	41
Observations.....	42
Analysis of Data .....	44
Summary.....	46

IV. PRESENTATION OF DATA.....	48
Implementation of Performance Based Funding .....	48
Introduction of Participants.....	55
Theme 1: Pressure for Accountability .....	60
Theme 2: Shame Factor.....	62
Theme 3: Re-Focus .....	64
Theme 4: Comparing Apples to Apples.....	66
Theme 5: Who are our Students .....	69
Theme 6: Culture of the Institution .....	74
Theme 7: Getting them to Connect .....	81
Theme 8: New Programming .....	83
Conclusions.....	90
V. FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS .....	92
Findings.....	92
Research Question #1.....	92
Stakeholders Position .....	93
Weaknesses .....	96
Strengths .....	100
Summary .....	103
Research Question #2.....	107
Changes on Programming .....	108
Changes on Instruction .....	124
Summary .....	126
Research Question #3.....	126
Campus Culture .....	127
Summary .....	133
Conclusions.....	133
Conclusions Within the Framework of Theory.....	135
Implications of Study .....	138
Recommendations .....	139
Final Thoughts .....	143
REFERENCES .....	147
APPENDIX .....	155
Appendix A: Request for Permission Letter.....	156
Appendix B: Request for Interview Letter.....	158
Appendix C: Informed Consent .....	160
Appendix D: Contact Summary Sheet.....	163
Appendix E: Interview Questions .....	166
Appendix F: Member Check and Thank You Letter .....	169
Appendix G: Overview of Interview Participants.....	171

Appendix H: Finish What You Start Marketing Campaign.....	173
Appendix I GradMax Feelings Indicator .....	175
Appendix J GradMax Life Survey.....	177
Appendix K: Woodland Hills CC Student Characteristics.....	179



## LIST OF TABLES

1. Common Performance Measures used in Higher Education.....	25
2. Performance Based Funding Indicators .....	31
3. Comparison of First-Time, Full-Time Student Retention Rates .....	52
4. Comparison of First-Time, Full-Time Student Graduation Rates.....	54
5. Peer Institutions Used for National Benchmarking .....	95
6. State Retention and Graduation Rates .....	102
7. Orientation Program Overview .....	110
8. College Orientation and Academic Strategies Objectives .....	113
9. Fall 2005 Student Characteristics .....	118
10. Character First 49 Key Traits .....	121
11. Woodland Hills Community College Staff Changes .....	145

LIST OF FIGURES

- 1. Top Six State Agencies Funding for Fiscal Year 2002 ..... 30
- 2. Fall 2005 Student Classifications ..... 107
- 3. Woodland Hills Community College Organizational Chart ..... 129

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Located just off the interstate, it's difficult to tell that a vast opportunity for higher education awaits potential college students. Nestled on 116 acres with twenty-one buildings, Woodland Hills Community College first opened its doors in the fall of 1970 to 1,767 students seeking to better their lives through higher education. It should be noted that all names have been changed in this study to provide anonymity to the participants and the institution involved. This includes pseudonym changes to citations and references listed in the bibliography.

Today, lush landscape fills the center mall with a variety of trees, shrubs, flowers, fountains, and memorials. On a small grassy knoll located in the mall area stands a sign that reads "Finish What You Start." Just over the hill stands a larger sign that also reads, "Finish What You Start." To the right, hanging just above the entrance to the student center building is a banner that reads "Finish What You Start", as well as signs posted on doors at each entrance, and card board cut-outs once you enter the building. At first glance, it becomes clear that Woodland Hills Community College is on a mission to get students to finish what they start. Although thousands of students will see these signs daily, very few will ever know what brought those signs to the campus, and why they are located everywhere on campus.

In today's economy, community college administrators are faced with budget constraints and shortfalls that have them critically evaluating programs, facilities and personnel. As priorities are established and strategic plans are implemented, the community college president is accountable for seeing that the campus follows its mission. However, more often, an institution's accountability is directly tied to the amount of funding it receives. Most commonly known as performance based funding, this form of an accountability policy rewards institutions for meeting or exceeding pre-defined performance indicators. Although not new to higher education, performance based funding has experienced renewed interest due to policy-maker's ongoing interest in accountability and programmatic outcomes in higher education (Layzell, 1998).

With competing demands for public dollars coming from runaway health costs; an aging population; deteriorating transportation and utility infrastructures; increasing social service costs; escalating prison costs; and frequent state and federal mandates, it is no wonder lawmakers scrutinize new budget requests (Ashworth, 1994). This has prompted a demand for accountability by an ever-increasing knowledgeable citizenship in all facets of business, both private and public.

In the late 1980s, public awareness focused on questions of quality and accountability in higher education due in part to increased competition for state funds and diminishing trust in higher education (Freeman, 2000). As taxes increased, so did state spending, and public and lawmakers alike felt a need to hold institutions of higher education accountable for student learning and

outcomes. One of the programs developed during this time as an accountability measure was performance based funding. Performance based funding is a program that ties specified state funding directly and tightly to the performance of public campuses on individual indicators, and focuses on the distribution phase of the budget process (Burke & Minassians, 2001). By implementing performance based funding, it appears to meet a need for assuring public accountability in a decentralized era of managing for results rather than controlling by regulations (Burke & Minassians, 2001).

Performance based funding was pioneered by the state of Tennessee in 1979 (Shaw, 2000; Mayes, 1995). Although Tennessee was the first state to implement this model, 14 other states had employed it by 1996, and by 1997, 23 states used performance measures to distribute funds (Mize, 1999). While this is a significant number of states moving toward using performance based funding, it was still too soon to determine if this program was a trend or a fad (Schmidt, 1998; Burke & Minassians, 2001). By 2001, survey results from the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government indicated it was definitely a trend that was here to stay for a while. What remained in doubt was the favored and perhaps final form of the linkage between a campus's performance and individual states budgets (Burke & Minassians, 2001).

This linkage differs from state to state, just as the actual performance indicators do. For those that use performance based funding, roughly 5% of the state's budget for higher education is earmarked as incentive bonuses for institutions that meet or exceed state and self-defined goals (Carneveale,

Johnson & Edwards, 1998). This may differ between states, with some using less than 1% of its total funds and others ranging from 6% to 10%. Most states do not tie more than 10% of its budget to the policy because it creates a feeling of budget instability or uncertainty (Mize, 1999). Most of the states that have begun to use performance based funding have started with a very small percentage, and then gradually increased to 5% of their overall higher education budget over a period of a few years.

In the state where this study took place, the desire for increased accountability in higher education was emphasized in the 1997 report of the Citizen's Commission on the Future of the State's Higher Education. The Commission recommended that the State Regents develop a consumer-based set of quality indicators of institutional performance to aid students, parents, employers and policymakers in their personal, business and governmental decisions about the State's higher education (<http://www.highered.org/whatsnew/archives/performance-funding.html>). This call for accountability was the foundation for the implementation of performance based funding for the State. By 2001 the program was fully implemented and higher education institutions within the State were able to receive monetary rewards for meeting or exceeding any of the five criteria of the performance indicators as decided on by the State Regents for Higher Education.

The program faced immediate criticism from community college presidents because the five performance indicators used heavily favored traditional residential campuses, with traditional student bodies. However, the policy was in

place and higher education institutions in the State faced the decision of how, and to what extent they would work towards meeting the prescribed measures.

### Statement of the Problem

In some states, performance based funding for higher education institutions is individually based and determined by local governing bodies. In this state where the research study takes place, two-year colleges, four-year colleges, and comprehensive research universities originally were measured using the same performance indicators. However, the two-year community college operates very differently and serves different purposes than the four-year colleges and comprehensive research universities. In addition to providing freshman and sophomore level courses that prepare students to transfer to four-year colleges and universities, community colleges provide career training, occupational retraining, developmental coursework, continuing education programs and contract training for business and industry, as well as a variety of other education offerings for special populations (Mayes, 1995). Therefore, it may not be logical or equitable for a community college to be held accountable by the same criteria that are used to hold four-year universities and comprehensive research universities accountable.

Nationally, a significant amount of data exists on programs in other states. Although performance based funding was implemented five years ago in the State being studied, there is very little data available to determine if it has been successful both at the state level, as well as within the individual institutions in the State. It is unknown if institutions are going through the motions for the sake

of monetary reward, or if they are implementing changes to policy and practice that truly assist students (Gray, 2003). A survey conducted by the Rockefeller Institute of Government found that performance funding tends to become invisible on campuses below the level of Vice Presidents, because of the failure to extend performance funding to internal allocations on campus (Serban, 1997). Research needs to be conducted to determine if performance based funding is being used to help institutions, students, or both.

Performance indicators can vary from institution to institution and dramatically by states (Mize, 1999). When the state being studied implemented performance based funding in 2001, it created five indicators with which to measure all public two and four-year institutions. With diverse campuses in diverse geographical locations come diverse missions for each State school. Research is needed to determine if measuring all schools by the same criteria constitutes equitable practice and policy, and if the policy is having any impact at the institutions.

In summary, performance based funding is being used as an accountability measure in higher education performance, and is being used to allocate the funds. What we don't know is 1) if the policy is effective in assisting institutions, students, or both, and 2) if the measures are equitable across institutions, and 3) what impact the use of the policy had on institutions.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of performance based funding at Woodland Hills Community College since its implementation in



2001. Specifically this research will (1) explore the effects of performance based funding on the campus, (2) discover if this policy is managed only at the top administration levels, or (3) if it has permeated the campus and has become a part of the culture.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- 1) What is the perception of campus stakeholders regarding the new policy as a measure of accountability?
- 2) What have been the effects of performance funding policy on instruction, programs and administrative functions?
- 3) To what extent has performance based funding become a part of the institutional culture at Woodland Hills Community College?

### Theoretical Framework

Systems theory will be used to gain perspective on how performance based funding has impacted Woodland Hills Community College. Systems theory establishes that no organization is self-sufficient; all depend for survival on the types of relationships they establish with the larger systems of which they are a part (Scott, 1981). Systems theory also posits that organizations are systems of interdependent activities linking shifting coalitions of participants; the systems are embedded in the environment in which they operate (Scott, 1981). Therefore people affect the organizations in which they work. How they function, communicate and perform all effect the overall organization. This includes institutions of higher education, but is not limited only to employees of the

institution. Rather, this theory suggests any stakeholder that interacts with the campus can affect the organization. These stakeholders include visitors, students, parents, lawmakers, civic leaders, and tenants of surrounding businesses. To understand this relationship, one must also consider sub-systems of the organization. This will emphasize more specific characteristics and relationships in the social organization, and provide a new “contingency view” (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972).

A second theory guiding the research is that of a hierarchical model. This theory posits that vertical relationships are stressed within the organization and a high level of accountability exists between leaders and external sponsors (Bush, 2003). Packwood (1989) explains that in a hierarchical model, authority to prescribe work passes from senior to junior roles, while accountability for the performance of work passes in the reverse direction from junior to senior.

A higher education institution’s structure is set up in this manner from the campus President or Chancellor, to the part-time hourly employee. The only exception that can be seen in the higher education environment is at the faculty level where they typically have autonomy in the classroom that other professionals in the institution do not possess. Bush (2003) acknowledges this as a possible limitation, and suggests that at the faculty level, the model may shift from a formal hierarchical model to more of a “restricted” collegiality model (p.50).

Only after conducting the participant interviews, making personal observations, and conducting document analysis could it be determined if the

hierarchical model fits this study, even if Burke and Minassians (2003) are correct when they suggest that knowledge and therefore decisions all stop at or within one level of the president of a campus and do not trickle down into the campus culture. This is important since an important tenant of the hierarchical model is accountability.

### Definition of Terms

#### *E&G Funds:*

The Educational and General (E&G) Budget is the principal operating budget of the institution. It includes the primary functions of instruction, research and public service, as well as the activities that support these three main functions (SRHE, 2005).

#### *Performance Based Funding:*

Performance based funding ties specific sums of money directly to the achievements of public colleges and universities on individual indicators (Burke, 1998).

#### *BrainGain 2010:*

Statewide initiative that calls for 28 % of the State's population age 25 or older to hold a bachelors degree or higher by the year 2010, and 10 % of the State's population to hold an associates degree (SRHE, 1999).

#### *First Time, Full Time Cohort:*

Includes students who enrolled full-time, were degree/certificate-seeking, and were classified as first-time freshmen at an institution during the fall term. Academic activity of the cohort group is tracked for years to determine

persistence rates and graduation rates

(<http://www.highered.org/oeis/student/definitions.html>).

*GradMax:*

Computer web-based retention intervention system that provides a very efficient and effective way to develop relationships with students that focuses on improved communications, at risk student identification, and student satisfaction (<http://www.corvusllc.com/campustoolkit/features/gradmax.php>).

#### Limitations to the Study

Although this research study examined the national movement of performance based funding in higher education, and specifically its impact on a single institution, it was delimited to its impact at Woodland Hills Community College. Due to this focus on a single institution, results of this study cannot necessarily be generalizable to all institutions of higher education or to all community college settings.

Also potentially limiting in this study is the employee/employer relationship held with the institution being studied. While I have been employed at Woodland Hills Community College for the past seven years, the department in which I work, Continuing Education and Community Services, is located one-quarter mile from the main campus, separating it from the main campus not only figuratively but literally. The function of the Continuing Education and Community Services department is to offer the citizens of the surrounding communities' personal enrichment non-credit activities. This is done year round primarily serving the

youth and senior citizens in the surrounding community. Therefore a large amount of bias is removed due to the limited “insider” role of the researcher.

However, while the role [insider] might have been limited, it still existed. I will never fully know if by being an insider, a totally open and honest exchange existed during the interview process, where facts, thoughts and speculation seemed easily communicated because of the comfort level that existed, since the participants and I were colleagues. The opposite could also have existed in that facts, thoughts and speculations may have been hidden or undisclosed during the interview process. Since a relationship existed between the interview participants and myself, a hesitancy or fear may have existed without actually being uncovered. Because of this, it is unknown if this was beneficial to the study or limiting.

#### Significance of the Study

A study of the impact of performance based funding on a community college is significant for several reasons. At the core of performance based funding implementation is the desire for citizens in the State to become more educated. Specifically this was from a Citizen’s Commission on the Future of Higher Education as a part of a statewide plan called *Brain Gain 2010*. The BrainGain 2010 plan called for the State to have more adults age 25 and older to obtain bachelors and associate degrees by the year 2010. While several professional journal articles and related studies have been conducted on performance based funding, few have focused on a single institution. At the time of this study, there were no dissertations that focused solely on a single

institution with the State being studied. By doing this it allows for an understanding of individual perspectives of the program and if it is really making a difference on the campus in meeting the greater call for accountability by graduating more students.

Seeking to hold higher education institutions more accountable, the State rewards the institutions for meeting or exceeding certain pre-defined performance indicators. It is important from a higher education administrator's point of view to determine what role the most influential stakeholders play in implementing the performance program and seeking improvement and the importance of working together. This research is also important to policy makers in a variety of ways. While this research is not intended to be generalizable to any other higher education institutions, lessons can still be learned.

Policy makers are able to look at the results of the policy on this institution and gauge the results against their intended desires. It also allows policy makers to learn from this study by identifying what one campus did in response to the policy implementation, and to what extent this individual campus responded. It is also valuable to policy makers to understand the feelings of the staff that are judged by the implemented policy. It is said that it is beneficial to walk a mile in another's shoes, and for this institution, this is possible if lawmakers really want to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the policy at this institution. Finally, dissemination of the results of this study may be significant for community members, parents, and constituents who invest in the local college with their money and time by providing the public with valuable insight about how

their tax dollars are being spent to improve student success. It can also be beneficial for parents with children that are considering attending Woodland Hills Community College to gain a perspective of some of the new programs and services offered to help students succeed in college.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review begins with a brief history of the two-year community college to show how they began, and their role in the higher education system. It then addresses the call for accountability nation wide in higher education both in general terms and as budget requests increased. States that have implemented similar performance based funding programs are addressed, identifying strengths and weaknesses including what performance indicators are most used and how much money is tied to those indicators. Finally the literature review focuses on the performance based funding in the State being studied since being implemented in 2001.

#### History of Community Colleges

The two year community college beginning dates back to the 1800s and has grown significantly since the first campuses opened their doors. Started originally as a school to educate local citizens, the true purpose of these institutions were to educate clergy for the church (Medsker & Tillery, 1971). Soon families of clergy began to attend the college and the mission developed into a desire to educate youth, spread their religious beliefs, while still sustaining the clergy base (Henderson, 2006).



As institutions continued the model for preparations of clergy, other scholars in higher education began to take notice and saw a need for the community college to assist in the university's needs. In 1852, Henry Tappan, President of Michigan University, lobbied for community college's to teach the first two years of college to beginning students instead of the university (Brick, 1964). While the idea was not acted upon at the University of Michigan, it was considered an option that was debated for years, and discussions of this grew throughout the United States. In 1892, nearly four decades after Tappan's idea, William Rainey Harper from the University of Chicago felt that the university would be better suited to educate the majors working in their chosen field, while a community college could prepare the student in their first two years. Rainey divided the University of Chicago into the junior college for freshmen and sophomores and the senior college for juniors and seniors (Brick, 1964). This two-year college, Joliet College, served that purpose. Over the next several decades, other community colleges opened their doors to provide education basics for students before they went on to four-year universities for their major studies.

In 1920, the American Association of Junior Colleges was formed to serve as a voice for the rising number of junior colleges across the nation. By 1925 the Association changed their definition of a junior college from institutions offering two years of instruction at the collegiate level, to an institution that may develop a different type of curriculum suited to the larger and ever changing social, religious, civic, and vocational needs of the community in which the college is

located (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). This marked the beginnings of the relationship the community college could serve with its surrounding communities needs.

During the next two decades the junior college's role was to prepare students for the university and assist in their local communities needs. However, shortly after World War II, President Truman called for a network of community colleges that would provide education and training to veterans returning from war, at a low cost (Dunlop-Loach, 2000). At this point in history the focus of the community college shifted to include workforce development. During this time, the community college developed its own niche and solidified its role as an essential link in higher education (Henderson, 2006). Since this time the junior college has encountered changes and adaptations from the vision of their creators. The name changed from junior college to community college to better represent its commitment to the local community. Community colleges have also transformed to meet the needs of other niches including technical colleges, university branch campuses, transfer preparation centers, and community development agencies (Dunlop-Loach, 2000).

Beginning in the mid-to-late 1960s, the nation began to see the development and implementation of two-year institutions growing at an astounding rate (Henderson, 2006). Today there are over 1,100 community college in the United States (American Association of Community Colleges, 2006), with over 11 million students being served. Throughout history, the community college has adapted to serve the needs of its student which makes it unique yet vital in today's higher education system.

## National Call for Accountability

With rising costs in higher education, increasing tuition and a more educated society, higher education would have to look for more money, and no one was going to volunteer this money without making certain it was a good investment (Freeman, 2000). This investment is a well-rounded education for adults, but many parents are left to absorb the rising costs of tuition, which has risen by about 80 % since 1980 (Gaither, 1998). In addition to raising tuition at campuses across the nation, institutions were asking for new money each year from state legislators. With competing demands from other state entities, lawmakers began to question the need for increases. Many legislators across the country were frustrated by the difficulty of getting colleges to limit their programs and mission and to operate more efficiently. Viewed as hiding under the umbrella of academic rigor, it has often been said that higher education is uncontrolled and not responsible to anyone (Folger, 1984).

Another reason is a variation on the attack on government generally or government workers specifically as being inefficient, incompetent, and unproductive (Ashworth, 1994). This is to say that state and government workers are not capable in their jobs, and are not as competent as those in private industry where fiscal responsibility is paramount to its success. This is all too revealing when managers spend their remaining budget allotments just prior to cut offs in the fear of not getting it back in the following fiscal year, a practice caused by the zero-based budgeting methods universally used by public institutions.

The challenge of performance measures is to find meaningful ways to measure whether a college or university is improving the education it provides, while simultaneously rooting out waste and administrative bloat (Carnevale, et al., 1998). Through strategic plans, quarterly fiscal reporting and the need to stay in the “black”, this is what private business does since their livelihood is based on tight fiscal control and open communication with the stakeholders. Ashworth (1994) says that colleges and universities might need to voluntarily cut back programs, live within their resources, set some self-imposed constraints, and postpone some of their ambitions, buildings, or expansion plans. Performance based funding is viewed as just one small way to bring institutions into the twenty-first century of business, and to serve as a tool to show accountability.

This attitude was not only prevalent in public policy circles, but was beginning to spread to the public as well. The general thought was summed up by Chester Finn (1994), former Assistant Secretary of Education when he wrote, “We have essentially no means of gauging how well American Higher Education as a whole is doing with respect to student learning” (p. 4). Although this was targeting towards the K-12 system when he introduced “A Nation at Risk”, it has the underpinnings of a need for true accountability in education. With this, institutions could no longer hide behind the cloak of academia. The call for accountability was growing and no one could escape it. The old view of accountability was that the presence of a qualified faculty, a carefully selected library, a well equipped physical plant, and an adequate financial base were

guarantors of quality (Freeman, 2000; Bogue, 1997). Now the question is whether students really learned and changed in the presence of these resources (Bogue, 1997). This call for accountability continues today as most noted by the 2006 Spellings Report. This report by the new Secretary of Education also concludes that despite achievements throughout history, higher education needs to improve in dramatic ways (Spellings Report, 2006).

Although the assessment of institutional effectiveness is not a new concern, it has received increasing attention in recent years (Mayes, 1995). Historically, campuses have not been required to report directly to the State, only to its own board or local governing body. It was assumed that faculty and administrators were best suited to determine institutional effectiveness and to the extent to which they were educating students (Folger, 1984; Boyer, 1987). However, with competing demands for state dollars, changes are occurring in how institutions receive their money. Many institutions receive state monies through funding formulas that are based on the number of students enrolled in credit hours. Referred to as full time equivalents (FTE's), this basic funding formula is one method of funding with a goal of showing parity among smaller and larger institutions. Each year this amount grows due to fixed costs such as health insurance, workers compensation, and utilities. In addition to the fixed costs, additional requests are made to implement new programs, hire additional staffing, and to provide raises for current staff. As the funding requests grow each year, so does the demand for accountability. One method of addressing the funding and accountability concerns is with a policy called performance

based funding. However, trying to understand performance based funding and its effect on higher educational institutions may prove to be challenging.

### Performance Based Funding

Performance based funding is used to give institutions monetary rewards for meeting or exceeding pre-defined performance indicators. Similar programs that tie specified state funding to performance indicators has long been recognized in state government, K-12 education, and higher education. However, the reasons for implementation of performance based funding are as varied as the individual states and institutions that have embraced it.

Most states typically use an enrollment-based formula for funding their public institutions. While it may vary from state to state, campus enrollment is the primary focus for allocating money. However, Bogue (1980) contends this funding method is limited because it provides no incentive for improved performance, since increases are primarily based on quantity rather than quality. Proponents of performance based funding argue the policy is incentive that is needed for higher education institutions to seek improvement and for policy makers seeking fiscal responsibility.

### What Other States are Doing

Tennessee was the first state to introduce performance based funding. When they first began to discuss performance based funding in 1974, the intent was to earmark additional funds for institutions that focus on performance outcomes (Bogue & Saunders, 1992). By 1979, the first version of the policy was drafted and ready for implementation. This marked the first time in higher

education that funding would be tied to quality rather than quantity. The goals of this new program were explicitly stated by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (1997) in the purpose statement for the program:

The Performance Funding Program is designed to stimulate instructional improvement and student learning as institutions carry out their representative missions. Performance funding is an incentive for meritorious institutional performance and provides the citizens of Tennessee, the Executive branch of state government, the legislature, education officials, and faculty with a means of assessing the progress of publicly funded higher education. By encouraging instructional excellence, the Performance Funding Program contributes to continuing public support of higher education and complements academic planning, program improvement and student learning. (p.11).

Contained within Tennessee's purpose statement is a call for accountability, inclusion of government and legislators, and instructional excellence within the faculty ranks. In addition, this was a way to reward institutions for quality rather than quantity, as enrollment on campuses had begun to stabilize, which did not allow for additional revenues to be generated (Shaw, 2000).

Initially it began with a set aside budget of \$500,000 and campuses could earn a portion of this new money by meeting or surpassing five criteria or performance standards. The five criteria were:

- 1) Proportion of eligible academic program accredited;

- 2) Performance of graduates on a measure of general education outcomes;
- 3) Performance of graduates on measure of specified field outcomes;
- 4) Evaluation of instructional programs by enrolled students, recent alumni, and community/employers; and
- 5) Peer evaluation of academic programs. (Bogue, 1980).

The policy was implemented on 11 campuses in the state of Tennessee, and although changed several times, performance based funding is still in use today.

In 1996, Virginia, Florida, Kentucky, and South Carolina implemented similar programs. By 1998, fourteen states were using some type of performance based funding mechanism for its colleges and universities (Schmidt, 1998), and all but five states indicated that they are likely to link some funding to performance within five years (Mize, 1999). By 2001, nineteen states were using performance based funding (Burke & Minassians, 2003). While this constitutes rapid growth, the growth did not occur without its setbacks and lessons learned.

When South Carolina's legislators first implemented their program in 1996, the original plan was to tie 100% of state's higher education funds to the performance indicators. \$265 million were appropriated the first year as the plan was implemented, and the total state funding of \$700 million was appropriated in the second year (Armstrong, 1999). The program was based on 37 performance indicators in which the state legislature set the categories and the South Carolina State Higher Education Commission set the criteria within the categories (Armstrong, 1999; Schmidt, 1999).



Immediate criticism arose from all areas of higher education with the South Carolina system. Officials complained that the system put unfair burdens on some colleges, especially those with unique missions (Schmidt, 1999). Their claim was that schools would be forced to abandon programs that didn't fit within the 37 indicators, and focus solely on those that did. One glaring inequity came from the small campus of Carolina Coastal College. One of the 37 measures called for an increase of in-state enrollment for all schools in the state system (South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, 2001). However, the small Coastal College had 33 % out-of-state enrollment, which generates additional revenue from out of state tuition and fees. Many of these students come from outside the state to study in the renowned marine biology program. For Coastal Carolina to attempt to admit more in-state students and thus meet the performance measure, they would actually lose much more revenue from out-of-state tuition than they would gain in state aid (Schmidt, 1999).

After several states began to implement performance based funding, the diversity of how the programs were implemented began to emerge. Questions emerged as to (1) what are the performance indicators, and how many should be used, (2) who should define the performance indicators, and (3) how much money should be tied to the indicators.

#### Performance Indicators

A potential problem with performance based funding is the indicators used to reward the campuses. The indicators, also referred to as performance measures, are tied to the financial reward. Therefore, it is imperative that

indicators be chosen thoughtfully and used in ways that won't harm institutions. If an institution is able to have input in determining their measures, that might serve as a new mode of generating money during financially difficult times (Zarkesh & Beas, 2004). This would give institutions a chance to be rewarded for measures they excelled at. However, most of the time indicators are too narrow, and are decided upon by governing boards or legislatures without much input from the institutions. Also, the number of performance indicators varies drastically by state. For example Florida has 40 indicators, South Carolina has 37, Colorado has 28, Arkansas has 14, Kentucky has 13, Tennessee has 10, Minnesota and Missouri have nine, and California has five (Mize, 1999). Layzell (1998) warns that having too many indicators can often create conflicting goals and results by rating items that directly oppose each other, such as high freshman access rate (open door policy), and high graduation rates. However conflict may exist if only a few indicators are used, since this could eliminate individual strengths of institutions. Regardless of the number of performance indicators used, it is more important to establish the correct measures; measures that reward student success as displayed by the institutions. The most common of these indicators revolves around measuring an institution's success with graduating students. According to Mize (1999), graduation rates and transfer rates are the two most used indicators for states utilizing performance based funding. Others like Texas incorporate remediation and minority student enrollment (Ashworth, 1994). According to Mize the most common performance measures for accountability as show in Table 1 are:

Table 1

## Common Performance Measures used in Higher Education

<i>Performance Measures</i>	<i># of States</i>
Graduation rates	32
Transfer rates	25
Faculty workload/productivity	24
Follow-up satisfaction surveys	23
Amount of external/research funds received	23
Remediation	21
Pass rates of professional licensure exams	21
Degrees awarded	20
Placement data on graduates	19
Total students credit hours	18
Number and percent of accredited programs	13

*Note.* Adapted from Mize (1999).

Another issue that opponents attack is the weight the performance indicators carry in awarding the money. In the State being studied, graduation and retention rates are two of the five indicators used when the policy was first implemented in 2001. However, they are weighted at 45% each, making up 90% of the total reward criteria. Tennessee, on the other hand only allows 20% of weight for the same two measures. This broad application and weighting of measures is partially why campus administrators feel performance based funding can favor traditional campuses over non-traditional institutions, thus diminishing

campus diversity (Mize, 1999). This weighting of indicators can diminish the accomplishments of an institution if they do not excel at the indicators that are more heavily weighted.

#### Who Determines the Indicators?

Because the public expressed concerns about accountability, the public believed they were justified in wanting to be more involved in the decision making process. However, critics claim that campus presidents know best and educators should set indicators. The division between the indicators favored by campus leaders and those prized by government officials demonstrates the difference between academic concerns and capital desires (Burke & Modarresi, 2001).

Government officials tend to use more of a blanket approach in defining what constitutes rewarding performance, defining it as something that is good for the State, the economy and appeases the constituents. However, campus leaders tend to champion individual approaches that favor the uniqueness and diversity of their campuses. Performance funding is not likely to diminish because it has become a crucial part of the management revolution sweeping America's manufacturing and service sectors, the health care industry, government and now education (Mize, 1999). Therefore it is imperative that state lawmakers and campus leaders work together with their governing boards to make informed decisions regarding the reward of these earmarked funds. The stakeholders are many and all have their own ideas and perceptions about the purpose of higher education, who it should serve and what indicates success.

These stakeholders include the federal government, state government, local businesses, taxpayers, voters, students, parents, faculty, volunteers, governing boards, and nearly any other group located within close proximity to an institution of higher education. Most of the stakeholders historically while working with institutions were ultimately at the institution's mercy in terms of mission, vision, community programs, and economic outreach. However, as the cry for accountability increased, combined with decreasing state funding, some states have seen their legislatures mandate parts of performance based funding. To meet the needs of state's economic demands, government organizations pressure colleges and universities to demonstrate greater efficiency and accountability in the use of public resources (King, 1998).

#### Money Tied to Performance Indicators

Compounding the decision to implement performance based funding is the decision on how much money should be tied to the performance indicators. Performance based funding has many college administrators concerned about institutional autonomy, since the tying of money to performance indicators could represent millions of state dollars. Specifically administrators worry about the autonomy and how the new policy could infringe on the mission of the institutions when a large amount of money is used as a carrot stick. When Tennessee first began planning their performance-funding model in 1974, they started with a budget of \$500,000, acquired from a variety of federal, state and private sources (Mayes, 1995). Currently, other states like New Jersey appropriate as much as \$8 million towards performance funding (New Jersey Commission for Higher

Education, 2001). Some research indicates the higher the rewards, the more attention the performance indicators will receive by higher education institutions. Burke and Minassians (2001) more accurately account for this stating their belief that the maxim of what gets funded can attract attention on college campuses and in state capitols and affect higher education performance.

Most other states that have implemented performance based funding generally tie between \$2 million and \$20 million to the reward process. Washington's \$10.6 million (Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2000), Missouri's \$17.5 (Missouri State Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2001), Florida's \$12 million (Policy Analysis & Government Accountability, 1998), and Illinois \$5.4 million (American Association of Community Colleges, 1999) all show a commitment to the model without much financial risk. A larger state population generally means more institutions of higher education and more money to tie to performance based funding. However, the general trend in higher education funding has seen only modest increases over the past five years.

Most states tie approximately 5% of the budget to incentive bonuses for the institutions that meet or exceed the defined goals (Carnevale, Johnson, & Edwards, 1998). If too much money is tied to the performance of an institution, it can lead to instability. If too little money is tied to the program, then it would not be seen as a serious effort at performance funding by the legislature and the governor, and failure to demonstrate a bona fide effort might subject the schools to some far worse solution (Ashworth, 1994). This potentially could lead to

accreditation issues, and unresolved tension between the academic intuitions and the state higher education systems.

#### Implementation at the State Being Studied

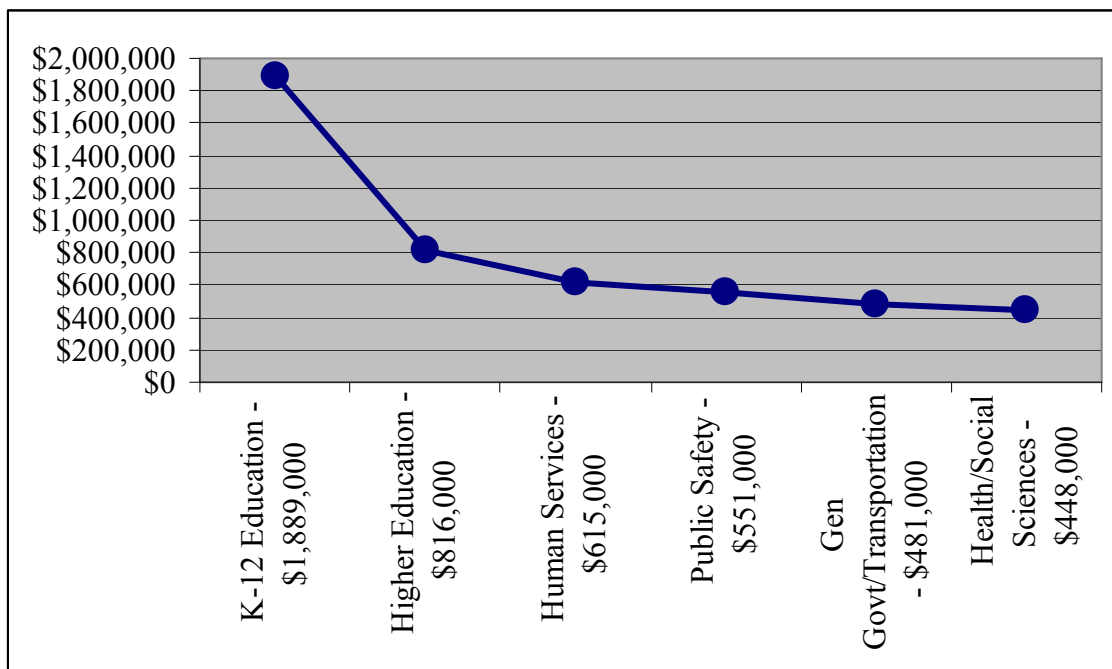
In the state where the research was conducted, both the economy and a 221% increase in educational funding since 1980 has made it more competitive for State agencies to receive any significant new funding (State Regents for Higher Education, 2002). The idea of performance based funding allows legislators to see improvements for the money rather than to fund programs based on future projections only. They [the State] decided to implement performance based funding in 2001 as a small component of a larger State initiative called “BrainGain 2010.” This initiative calls for 28 % of the State’s population age 25 and older to hold a bachelors degree or higher by the year 2010, and 10% of the State’s population to hold an associates degree (SRHE, 1999). This goal established by the State Regents for Higher Education in collaboration with the Governor is based on the construct that a highly qualified college-degreed workforce will lead to new business and industry growth that in turn will strengthen the State’s economy.

In May 2001, the State Regents allocated \$2 million for performance based funding for fiscal year 2002 (July 2002 – June 2003) and expressed intent to increase annual allocations of institutional education and general (E&G) funds (SRHE Meeting Minutes, 2003). E&G funds are monies from the State government and represent the majority of money the institutions receive, with

other sources of income including tuition, grants, endowments, and secondary services such as community education, athletics and auxiliary services.

The goal of reaching 2% is substantial considering the total amount given to higher education in fiscal year 2001 was \$816 million. This was second only to K-12 education, and more than Human Services, Public Safety, General Government & Transportation, and Health & Social Sciences. Figure 1 below represents the top six State agencies and their funding levels from July 2001 – June 2002.

Figure 1. Top Six State Agencies Funding for Fiscal Year 2002.



Note. State Senate (2001).

One-half of the \$2 million set aside for this program was distributed to the 25 public institutions, and the other \$1 million was rewarded based on the



following five criteria for 2001. Table 2 below presents the five criteria used by the State.

Table 2

Performance Based Funding Indicators

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No.	Indicator
1	Brain Gain funding for degrees: Associate and bachelor's degrees conferred in an academic year.
2	20 credits earned in one year: Number of students earning at least 20 cumulative credit hours including remedial courses.
3	30 credit hour threshold: Number of students reaching 30 cumulative credit hours excluding remedial courses.
4	Retention rate within the state: All first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students in the Fall semester who returned to the same or another Oklahoma institution during the next year.
5	Graduation rate within the state: All first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students in the fall semester who graduated from the same or another Oklahoma institution within six years.

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These indicators have received criticism from community college presidents as being too limited and counter productive to many things that a community college represents. Community colleges often have a broader mission than four-year universities. In addition to providing freshman and

sophomore level courses that prepare students to transfer to four-year college and universities, community colleges provide career training, occupational re-training, developmental coursework, continuing education programs, contract training for business and industry, and a variety of other educational offerings for special populations (Mayes, 1995). It is these differences that make community colleges unique and therefore cause some to believe it is unfair to be judged by the same indicators as the four-year institutions.

### Summary of the Literature Review

Accountability has become a common term in higher education over the past three decades. The public's concerns over rising tuition costs and their child's success, combined with government's desire to see results for the tax dollars spent, has created new mechanisms of achieving accountability. Performance based funding is one such mechanism being used throughout higher education today. A key issue of this accountability policy is determining who decides on the performance indicators that schools will be evaluated by. This is a delicate task since policymakers tend to implement what they believe as perceived indicators of student success. But campus administrators may view other strengths of their individual institutions that should be used for measurement. Schools in different states have had their own problems with each of these key issues including this State being studied. It is suggested that only by creating performance indicators through a blended model can institutions address areas that lead to better student learning that the administrators seek, and the fiscal efficiency lawmakers seek.

A second key issue with the performance based funding policy is how much money will be tied to the indicators. If too little money is used, institutions may not pay attention to the policy and that could lead to tension between the institutions and their governing boards or legislatures. If too much money is tied to the indicators, then there is a risk of institutions losing their identity as they change their missions to seek the financial reward that comes with meeting the indicators. A final issue with implementing the policy is the decision on how many indicators to use. Too few indicators may alienate institutions with unique missions, but too many indicators may create confusion and end up with indicators that oppose each other. A close look has to be made between all of these mechanisms to create a policy that is valued by campus leaders, governing board and governmental officials.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of the performance based funding policy at Woodland Hills Community College since the policy's inception in 2001. The research questions that guided this inquiry were:

- 1) What is the perception of campus stakeholders regarding the new policy as a measure of accountability?
- 2) What have been the effects of performance funding policy on instruction, programs and administrative functions?
- 3) To what extent has performance based funding become a part of the institutional culture at Woodland Hills Community College?

This chapter provides detailed information on the steps taken to gain access at Woodland Hills Community College and the precautions used to preserve anonymity and protect the participants. Finally it also explains how the data was collected and analyzed to provide answers to the overall research questions.

#### Research Design

A qualitative case study approach was used to explore the impact of performance based funding at Woodland Hills Community College. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is

meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit (Patton, 2002). Creswell (1994) defines qualitative research as “an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting”(p.1). Because individual interpretation is involved, multiple realities will exist and based on my interpretation of the data and interaction with the participants, this is my reality of the impact of performance based funding at Woodland Hills Community College. Creswell (1994) goes on to explain that “it is the goal of qualitative research to understand and interpret these realities by interacting with those being studied... to minimize the distance between the researcher and those being researched” (p.1). Once these perspectives are collected through the various forms of data, common themes begin to emerge. These common themes are then used to make verifiable meaning about the subject in its context (Freeman, 2000).

The case study method was chosen for this research study since it allows for an in-depth look at how the policy of performance based funding has been accepted, implemented and championed within the setting of a single institution. A case study is a preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real life context (Yin, 1994). As described in the Chapter II, performance based funding is a complex phenomenon sweeping higher education in the United States, but very little in-

depth research on its impact within an individual State public or private institution has been completed.

The interview was the primary method of inquiry used in this research. This type of data collection was invaluable in forming an accurate assessment of how the performance based funding policy had an impact on Woodland Hills Community College and to answer the research questions posed in this study.

#### Selection of Participants

Burke and Minassians (2003) contend that a fatal flaw in performance based funding at higher education institutions is that it is increasingly invisible below the level of Vice President (p.20). With this in mind I was worried about who might agree to participate in the research study, and who might decline based strictly on the topic. If Burke and Minassians findings were correct at Woodland Hills Community College, this would only yield four to five interviews by the President and Vice Presidents, but more interviews were needed to gain a broad perspective as to the full impact of the policy implementation.

When deciding on whom to interview, I first started with the President's Executive Council. This group of five administrators represented the top tier of decision makers at the institution. Knowing that more than five interviews were needed to gather important data, I next looked at the personnel just below the Executive Council and identified an additional nine participants that all serve on the President's Academic Council. The participant list now included 14 administrators and academicians. Once interviews began, an additional four employees were recommended by the participants as people that might be able

to provide valuable information that could benefit the research study. This gave me a list of 18 total participants to begin looking at how the performance based funding policy has permeated Woodland Hills Community College and to what extent has it become a part of the culture, what staff think of the policy, and what changes have been made because of the policy. These 18 interview requests included the President, Vice Presidents, several Associate Vice Presidents, several Deans, Faculty, Coordinators, and Recruiters.

Knowing that the quantity of interviews was not nearly as important as the quality of the interviews, I was ready to begin. With 18 potential participants, I hoped the information gained would be rich and fruitful, providing knowledge of the policy and how it has had an impact at Woodland Hills Community College.

#### Interview Process

Before interviews could begin, permission had to be granted to conduct the research at the institution. Before proposing the study I had received verbal permission but now I needed it more formalized. A request letter was sent to the President of Woodland Hills Community College (see Appendix A).

Approximately one week after submitting the request, the letter was returned with the President's approval and signature to proceed.

The next step was to get approval from the participants selected for the study. Although I was hopeful all 18 participants would agree to be interviewed, I was also fearful that I wouldn't be able to handle that many interviews in a short amount of time. During the research process I was also still working full time and had pre-arranged certain timeframes to take time off work for research.

Therefore eight participants were selected to start with, and letters seeking permission to be interviewed were sent (see Appendix B). Attached to the interview request were two copies of an informed consent explaining their roles in the research and my commitment to conceal and protect their identity (see Appendix C). One of the informed consents was to be returned to me with their signature, and the other was for them to keep for their files. Also included with the interview request letter and informed consents was a list of the interview questions (see Appendix D). It was suggested by the President in an informal conversation that the interview questions be included to help assist any employee that might be unsure about performance based funding and unsure if they could be beneficial by participating. While I was worried that giving the participants the questions in advance would allow them to prepare canned responses, I also was grateful for the President's permission to conduct the study on campus and therefore honored his request.

Of the first eight interview requests, all eight were returned with permission to proceed. Seven of the eight informed consents returned to me allowed for permission to audio-tape the interview. The lone declination for audio-taping came from the President. At the time of the request, the exact reason the President did not wish to be audio-taped was unknown, but it was interpreted to mean that he wanted to be able to speak freely about the policy, but with nothing recorded that could be misused. Seven of the eight interviews occurred in June 2006 with the lone exception again coming from the President.



Initially his interview was to occur first, however he became ill on the interview date and his secretary cancelled without scheduling a make-up date.

All seven of the first interviews were conducted at Woodland Hills Community College at locations specified by the participants. This was an attempt to allow for a more comfortable setting for the interviewee so that responses would be open, honest and candid. While each participant had the option of selecting a location off campus, each chose to hold the interview in or near their own office on campus. As the first seven interviews were being conducted, the second round of interview request letters, two informed consents and interview questions were sent to the remaining 10 participants. Of the 10 requests sent out, four of the respondents declined participation in the study citing lack of knowledge on the subject. Four other participants never responded, leaving two of the 10 with positive responses. These final two interviews were conducted in early July 2006.

During this time the President's office re-scheduled his interview which made it the last one completed. During the six weeks that spanned the timeframe for the other interviews, the President had submitted his resignation after serving in higher education for 30 years, the last ten being served at Woodland Hills Community College. When I arrived in his office for the interview, I had brought my tape recorder even though he indicated on his original informed consent that he did not wish to be audio-taped. This time he gave verbal permission and the taping began. Although I did not ask him why he changed his

mind, it was assumed to be because of his announced retirement. This concluded the interview process with ten subjects participating in the study.

Immediately after each interview, I left the interviewees office or meeting room and went to a secluded area to write notes on the interview process and what had transpired. These notes included visual observations made while waiting for the participants and other cues noted during and after the interview. These notes created after the interviews were written on a contact summary sheet (see Appendix E) to quickly summarize and document information while the interview was still fresh in my mind. The summary sheet created by Miles and Huberman (1984) was adapted to meet the needs of this study and was used to summarize emergent themes, questions and items that might need a follow-up. By using this technique of debriefing after each interview, it helps to uncover areas of ambiguity or uncertainty to be uncovered (Patton, 2002). After this was completed, I downloaded each interview from the digital recorder onto a laptop computer and then transcribed the interviews into a word document to be used later for data analysis. Once the file was downloaded onto a computer, the interview was deleted from the digital recorder. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant and the computer files were saved with the pseudonym so only I knew which interview was tied to each participant.

Once the transcription of each interview was complete, a copy of the text was sent to each participant along with a member check and thank you letter (see Appendix F) so that each participant could make clarifications, revisions, corrections, or provide additional comments to ensure the entire interview was

correct and valid. This also allowed for the participant to include anything else deemed important that might have been left out or misstated in the original interview. Completing the member check helped to ensure validity in the interview and documentation process, and to authenticate the data. The member check also helps to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings by taking the data back to the participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate (Creswell, 2003).

Of the 10 member check letters and transcripts sent out, three were returned with no comments or corrections, and two were returned with corrections and further explanations. To verify the information received I contacted both participants by phone to review the new material for clarification. I also offered a time to conduct a second follow-up interview, but neither one of the two participants felt a need for an additional interview.

#### Documents

The documents gathered in this study were used to corroborate information gained from the interviews. When the interview was scheduled with each participant, I asked if they had any supporting documents related to performance based funding that could be provided. Several of the participants either provided some documentation at the interview, or their secretaries mailed items to me after the interviews had ended. This created a duplication of several items, but also yielded several key documents needed for analysis. The documents that were used for the purpose of this study included, but were not limited to the following items:

- College Board of Regents meeting minutes
- Institutional strategic plans
- College administrative council minutes
- College president's council minutes
- College academic council minutes
- College academic affairs minutes
- College outreach committee minutes
- College retention and graduation committee notes
- State Regents documents
- Course catalogs
- College schedules and brochures
- Inter office memos and emails
- Mission and vision statements
- Annual performance reports
- State Regents reports
- State Regents agendas
- Curriculum notes
- BrainGain 2010 reports
- Marketing and promotional pieces

#### Observations

Throughout the entire research project, observation techniques were utilized to gain additional insight into the impact of performance based funding. During interviews, observations can enhance the meaning of the interviewee,

providing further insight. Observational techniques are able to note body language and other gestural cues that lend meaning to the words of the person being interviewed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). When arriving for an interview, an attempt was made to observe the physical aspects of the office including the staffing, the set-up and layout, and the interactions made with students and other staff entering or exiting the office. Although it was my desire to enter the office and sit quietly while taking in the surrounding environment, this was not always possible since I knew many of the staff located in each office. Many times I was greeted with enthusiasm immediately upon entering a participant's office, and conversations developed that ranged from work related chatter, to home life and eventually questions about my current studies. Concerned at first that I would not be able to observe the participant's surroundings as the "fly on the wall", I quickly found that this friendly interaction I was a part of was its own form of observation, giving valuable insight as to each participant's work environment and the settings in which they conduct their daily business. Other observations were used during the interview including paying close attention to the participant's body language, tone or inflection of their voice when answering questions.

Additional observations were conducted outside the interview process around the campus. These were valuable, as a considerable amount of time was spent on the campus to observe visible signs of student success as a goal of the institution. It was important for me to view the campus and the environment to provide additional data for this study and to view the campus as a student views it, observing things such as the location and availability of services and personnel

to assist students and the image the school portrays to the students. Particular attention was made in observations of material available to the students and the message being sent to students through the various forms of media. A final observation was made first hand, as one of the participants allowed me student access to a new computer program provided to assist students in their campus endeavors and to improve retention. This program, called GradMax, and my personal experience with the program is explained in further detail in Chapter IV and V of this study.

### Analysis of Data

After conducting thorough interviews, collecting documentation, and making personal observations, the next step was to begin analyzing the data. For this, analytic induction was used. This involves the scanning of interview transcripts for themes or categories, developing a working scheme after examination of initial cases, and modifying and refining it on the basis of subsequent cases (Taylor, 1994).

Immediately after each interview, a contact summary sheet modified from Miles and Huberman (1984) was used to record important notes, themes, comments or observations made during the interview. Although the interviews were recorded, it was an important part of my role as the researcher to immediately reflect on the interview and make these reference notes. These documents were then put aside as I began my data analysis of the interview transcripts.

With 10 interviews conducted, over 130 pages of data was available to sort through and analyze. The first step was to re-read each transcript to refresh my memory of each participant's responses to the interview questions. As comments began to mirror each other, I began cutting out the quotes and taping them to 3x5 inch note cards and sorting them under each emerging theme. I continued this process throughout all 10 interviews, coding the cards as themes emerged. Once the coding was completed, I reviewed the notes I had previously made on the contact summary sheets to determine if other themes existed that had been overlooked, or if the current themes could be combined.

The final step in the analysis of data was to thoroughly familiarize myself with the documentation and look for further emerging themes. On many occasions during an interview, a participant would refer to a particular document or they would paraphrase information from a certain memo. By following up with these document references, I was able to strengthen my knowledge and the validity of this study. By carefully analyzing the interview data and the contact summary sheets during and after the collection process and comparing it to documents obtained from campus administrators, this provided for an opportunity for triangulation when combined with my personal observations. This allowed for further emerging themes and reduced the risk of distortion of any one individual method (Bickman & Rog, 1998).

The data analysis became clearer when viewed through the hierarchical model because of the linear path data developed. Documentation clearly took on a hierarchical flow as memos, strategic initiatives, and program changes

occurred in a top down fashion. These initiative and program changes then had basic subordinate progress reporting requirements from bottom to top. This was a basic tenant in the hierarchical model presented by Bush where work passes from senior to junior roles, and then progress is reported back from junior to senior positions. Another analysis that occurred during data collection was the hierarchical form the interviews represented through acceptance of and the declination of the interview request.

### Summary

This qualitative case study was designed to determine the impact of performance based funding at Woodland Hills Community College through interviews, personal observations and document analysis. To gain an understanding of this phenomenon, I approached the study with an interpretivist assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit (Patton, 2002). Participants were selected for this study based on their role within the President's Council and Administrative Council on campus. Individual interviews were conducted with 10 subjects, with eight declining or not responding. Combined with personal observations and analysis of documents, themes emerged that began to explain the performance based funding policy and its impact at Woodland Hills Community College.

In Chapter IV that follows, I introduce document analysis that sheds more light on the policy's implementation at the State level, and changes that have occurred since 2011. I then introduce data from the document analysis and the



10 participants, and share their statements made during the interviews and the themes that emerged.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION OF DATA

This chapter presents the data that developed over the course of interviews, document analysis and observations. Document analysis showed how performance based funding was implemented both in the State being studied and at Woodland Hills Community College. Also presented are the descriptions of the participants that were interviewed as well as the themes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews. The information is intended to give the reader an idea of the general policy, the participants, and the settings in which the interviews took place. The themes presented are representative of the participants view on how performance based funding has impacted Woodland Hills Community College. An outline view of each participant in this study is available in Appendix G.

#### Implementation of Performance Based Funding

In 2000, a new buzz could be heard through all four top ranking campus committees of Woodland Hills Community College; academic council, president's council, administrative council, and executive council. This buzz was over a new program implemented at the campus called Performance Based Funding. Emanating from the office of the State Regents for Higher Education and fueled by the BrainGain 2010 plan, Woodland Hills Community College was preparing

for this new accountability program. Information first went from the Regents office to the President of each institution and then slowly flowed hierarchically through the ranks as administrators learned about and prepared for the changes. Implemented in 2001, performance based funding was a new concept to higher education in the State. The call for a measurement of performance was thrust on academia in an effort to hold institutions publicly accountable. Woodland Hills Community College faced a decision with the new program which focused on graduation and retention rates. They could continue business as usual, or they could embrace the new policy and accept the challenge and changes it would bring.

In 1997, a citizen's commission on the future of the State's higher education system was formed by the Governor's office to begin looking at the state of higher education as a whole. In October of 1997, they issued a report outlining recommendations that all colleges and universities could improve on to provide for the State's future needs. One of these recommendations was the beginning of what is now called performance based funding:

The State Regents should develop a consumer-based set of quality indicators of institutional performance to aid students, parents, employers, and policymakers in their personal, business, and governmental decisions about the State's higher education (SRHE Agenda, April 1999).

By 1999, the State Regents for Higher Education accepted the Commission's recommendations and created a program titled BrainGain 2010: Building the State through Intellectual Power. It was determined that the State's future economic prosperity rested more on its intellectual capital than on any other single factor (BrainGain 2010). As a part of the BrainGain 2010 program, the State Regents adopted three major strategies to achieve the BrainGain 2010 goals of having more college graduates in the State's population:

- 1) Production of more college graduates
- 2) Keeping more college graduates in the State
- 3) Attracting more college graduates to the State (SRHE Board Agenda, June 2002).

While the Regents have direct and indirect ties to State government, businesses and other private sectors, it is the first of these three strategies that ties performance based funding to public institutions.

For the State to move forward and grow, the public colleges and universities needed to educate and graduate more citizens. The goal of BrainGain 2010 was to increase the percentage of associates and bachelor's degree holders in the State to a level above the national average by the year 2010 (SRHE agenda, December 2002). To do this, every public institution needed to re-examine its efforts to recruit students, keep them on campus, and see them graduate with a degree. The goal behind this aggressive plan was to better position the State to compete in a global economic landscape (SRHE

Report Card, 2001). By educating more citizens and keeping them in the State, the State would further prosper in its socioeconomic development.

Although several thousand students enroll each year in the 25 public institutions across the State, many of these students do not graduate. Woodland Hills Community College was not the only institution struggling with graduation rates. In an executive summary produced by the State Regents for Higher Education, research showed the entire State lagged behind the nation for degree attainment of citizens 25 years or older at both the associates degree level and at the bachelor degree level or higher, and the State was also not keeping up with the national rate of increase for degree attainment (BrainGain 2010, January 1999).

In addition to pressure building in the State due to the low graduation rates, there was also pressure building at the federal level. What direct impact this pressure may have had on the State's decision to implement this accountability policy is a topic for further research, but federal funding keeps increasing and so does the federal call for accountability. Increases in federal funding have occurred not just at this institution, but at institutions nation-wide and pressure to show real results accompanied the increased spending.

For Woodland Hills Community College, the new focus on accountability meant looking closely at an area that historically produced low numbers. This was when compared both nationally and to other institutions from within the State. When comparing the retention rates of Woodland Hills Community College to the State averages, each year's average is just slightly below the

State average. For the performance based funding policy in the State being studied, the only data that is reported and able to receive funding is students entering college for the first time, and enrolled full-time. It should be noted that the data in both Tables 3 and 4 are based on this first time entering freshmen cohort in which they are allowed three years for graduation and data is not yet available for 2005 – 2007.

Table 3 below shows first-time, full-time retention rates from 1994 – 2004 for the institution and the State.

Table 3

Comparison of First-Time, Full-Time Community College Student Retention Rates

Academic Year	Woodland Hills Community College	Within the State	Difference
1994 - 95	50.3	52.8	-2.5
1995 – 96	46.4	49.1	-2.7
1996 – 97	48.7	52.6	-3.9
1997 – 98	52.9	54.4	-1.5
1998 – 99	46.4	53.1	-6.7
1999 – 00	52.6	54.9	-2.3
2000 – 01	56.4	53.5	2.9
2001 – 02	49.9	54.4	-4.5
2002 – 03	51.4	56.1	-4.7
2003 - 04	47.4	53.0	-5.6

*Note.* SRHE Student Data Report 2002-2004.

While some might assume retention rates and graduation rates would parallel each other in terms of growth or decline, it is not always the case for community colleges. While Table 3 (above) shows Woodland Hills Community College's retention rates are slightly lower than the State average by a margin typically between 1% to 6%, this does not mean those student go on to graduate.

Graduation rates are not typically high for community colleges, and being in an urban setting with no residential housing only compounds the problem. The data in this study suggest the students that attend Woodland Hills Community College are unique, and may only need to receive additional training as it relates to their job. This additional training doesn't always mean it is a student's goal to come to college to get a degree. Many students only need to complete a few classes to meet their goal. They may only desire to take a few courses before transferring to a four-year university, or take a specialized course that will assist them in their current job. This type of student benefits from the college, but the college is not allowed to report the student as a graduate because they are not a part of the first-time, full-time cohort, or because they did not attain the degree in the reportable three-year time frame.

Other students may begin college full time, but drop out before graduating because of the need to seek full time employment, or they experience other difficult life challenges. The college's location near a military base also brings atypical students to the campus, but since military personnel are often relocated to other areas of the world for training, tour changes, or to serve in war areas,

they may not be able to complete a degree while on campus. While these students may return to the college at some point, it also may not be within three-year timeframe to graduate as reported to the State to meet the performance policy. Therefore the institution does not receive performance based funding monies for these students. Because of this and other factors that impact the campus, the graduation rate at Woodland Hills Community College has consistently been lower than the State average. It should be noted that the data in Table 4 is based on a first time entering freshmen cohort in which they are allowed three years for graduation and data is not yet available for 2005 – 2007.

Table 4 below presents a comparison of the graduation rates of Woodland Hills Community College and the average State graduation rate.

Table 4  
Comparison of First-Time, Full-Time Community College Student  
Graduation Rates

Academic Year	Woodland Hills Community College	Within the State	Difference
1995 – 96	4.4	14.3	-9.9
1996 – 97	1.8	14.4	-12.6
1997 – 98	3.4	15.0	-11.6
1998 – 99	3.9	17.6	-13.7
1999 – 00	4.5	18.0	-13.5
2000 – 01	6.5	19.6	-13.1



Table 4 (continued)

Comparison of First-Time, Full-Time Community College Student

Graduation Rates

Academic Year	Woodland Hills Community College	Within the State	Difference
2001 – 02	8.3	18.5	-10.2
2002 – 03	6.4	19.4	-13.0
2003 - 04	11.5	20.7	-9.2

*Note.* SRHE Student Data Report 2002-2004.

The graduation rates listed above indicate that Woodland Hills Community College consistently ranks lower than the State average. Therefore, the need to improve this number weighed heavily on the campus administrators. The State reports showed Woodland Hills Community College administrators that improvements could be made.

Introduction of Participants

*Clint.* Clint is a Caucasian male in his late 50s and is known as a very sharp dresser. His brown hair is peppered with gray, which only adds to his distinguished look. Upon entering his secretary’s office he immediately came out to greet me and offer a soda or bottle of water. I declined the offer, thanked him, and after shaking hands he led me into his office where we sat at a small round table away from his desk. His office was lined with awards, certificates and mementos from various groups and agencies he had been associated with throughout his professional career. Clint has worked in higher education for over

35 years, with the last 10 at Woodland Hills Community College in an administrative role.

His quick movements seemed to indicate he was in a hurry, but when the door closed he calmly took off his suit jacket and sat down. After a minute of chatter, he asked if I was ready to begin. Throughout the interview, Clint would often stare out of his window, which overlooked several other buildings on campus as if he was pondering to make sure he was giving me a worthwhile interview. Many times he would remember things from previous questions and would backtrack to add additional insight he felt might be important.

*Bobby.* Bobby is a Caucasian male in his early 60s with white hair and thin rimmed glasses. He has worked at the campus for 35 years beginning first as an English professor, and then advancing his way through administrative positions. With a thin frame and white hair, his greeting and smile provided a sense of comfort and relaxation as he welcomed me in for the interview. He asked his secretary to hold his calls and showed me the way to a small conference table located in his office. As with Clint's office, Bobby's office also features large ground to ceiling windows displaying a well-groomed courtyard lined by other buildings of the institution. While just outside his window the campus was full of movement and activity,, and unlike Clint, Bobby sat with his back to the window and provided his complete attention throughout the entire interview.

*Brent.* Brent is a Caucasian male in his late 40s with light brown hair cut as though he came straight from the military. His thin framed wire glasses and

clean shaven face gives him a more youthful look than his age would suggest. Worried about noise, and distractions in his busy office, Brent ushered me down the hall to a small meeting room where he felt we would not be disturbed during the interview. The meeting room had a small conference style table with only one small window with mini-blinds, which were closed. This allowed for very little natural lighting to enter the room, and the hum of the fluorescent lighting above gave this interview a more sterile atmosphere than past interviews.

Brent has worked for the institution for nine years, all in administrative roles. While his entire professional career has been in higher education, he also had part time jobs early in his career as a disc jockey. His radio voice comes through loud and clear in his conversations and during the interview.

*Haley.* Haley is a Caucasian female in her mid 50s with wavy dark blonde short hair, with gray or frosted highlights. She has worked at the campus for over 25 years, beginning as a professor in the Business Division and then advancing into administrative positions. Although worried that she had limited knowledge of the subject she was being interviewed about, I found her to be candid, insightful and relaxed during the interview which was conducted in her office. Seated at a small round table in her office, she got up to double check statements and data on two separate occasions to make certain she was providing accurate information.

*Frank.* Frank is a Caucasian male in his mid 40s with short brown hair. He began at the institution as a student and was hired shortly after completing his degree. His 20 years at the campus include time spent as a history

instructor, and he now serves an administrative role. The interview was conducted in his office with Frank sitting behind his desk and the door closed. Large windows allowed natural lighting in, but because of east-facing windows, the blinds were kept closed to limit the glare of the sun. His slow speech and soft voice matched his calm and relaxed demeanor. Twice during the interview, he stopped speaking as lawnmowers raced past his windows outside, as if he was aware his voice was no competition for the noise emitted from the mowers.

*Kent.* Kent is a Caucasian male in his late 30s or early 40s with short, brown hair. His tidy office, starched shirt and scent of cologne indicated he takes pride in his appearance. Kent offered me a cup of coffee as I arrived for the interview, but I politely declined as we walked into his office. A small table sat near his desk where we both sat and exchanged small talk for a few minutes before beginning the interview. From his second story office window is a view of a large green, grassy field revealing the two main roads that intersect and lead to and from the campus.

*Mary.* Mary is a Caucasian female in her mid 40s with black shoulder length hair. Her big bright smile hid her concern she verbally shared with me regarding the interview topic, as she asked me to take a seat in one of the chairs in her office. Mary's first interaction with the institution was as a student and a part time employee. After graduating, she was hired full time and recently completed her 25th year. She has served in a variety of roles on campus, and now works in the Division of Student Affairs.

*Terri.* Terri is a Caucasian female in her late 40s, and has shoulder length wavy auburn brown hair. Since she was running a few minutes late for the interview, I took a seat in the hallway just outside her office. Shortly after taking a seat, I saw her walking down the hall. As she drew near, she apologized several times and opened her office to invite me in. Her round face was almost a non-stop smile as she continued her apologies and fumbled with her keys. In her office sat stacks of books on her desk, on the bookcase, on the small office refrigerator and even on the floor. Papers and files covered the other areas of her desk that were not covered by books. After sitting down, she flipped through a stack of papers searching for the interview questions as if she was searching for a student's report. Within seconds she found it and was ready to begin the interview. Although cramped by a lack of physical space and clutter, the interview was relaxed in the tight quarters.

*Wilma.* Wilma is a Caucasian female in her early 50s with short blonde wavy hair. Her career has taken her to several institutions of higher education, with her last eight years being served at the current institution in administrative roles. A comfortable leather chair and couch flanked by a small table located in her office was the setting for the interview, which provided an additional measure of comfort not seen during other interviews. She came prepared with papers and a folder full of reports that she referred to often during the meeting. At the conclusion of the interview she graciously handed over all of her materials in case they could be useful in the research project, and for that I was very thankful.

*Owen.* Owen is an African-American male in his early 50s and stands well over six feet tall. Although his large frame and firm handshake could be intimidating, he also displayed an infectious smile that could put anyone at ease. With a strong, booming voice, he welcomed me in and asked me to have a seat in a chair facing his desk. Sitting behind the desk, he somewhat hurriedly started talking about performance based funding so I quickly retrieved my digital device and began recording. His answers to some of the questions were somewhat short and although he was gracious and pleasant, I had the feeling he was running late for something else.

#### Theme 1: Pressure for Accountability

A common theme identified early in the interviews revolved around the call for accountability by state and federal legislators, the public and the State Regents. When asked why the State Regents decided to implement the policy, several of the participants indicated the need for accountability. Frank stated, “I think it is just public accountability” and Haley added that “It really was a response to legislative pressure and federal pressure for accountability.” Frank stated, “With the State’s overall higher education budget at nearly \$1.5 billion and tuition rates rising each year to go to college, there is a desire for more accountability.” Brent suggested, “When they [lawmakers] spend that kind of money, then you have to be held accountable and show results.” Bobby recalled:

When I as a Vice President of Instructional Technology in the 1990s ... we were probably getting around \$3 million of federal financial aid total for our

students ... now with about the same enrollment, same kind of population, we are receiving approximately \$15 million.

He continued:

The total financial aid for the institution is 15 million, so you get Congress looking at the number of dollars ... and multiply that times 3,300 colleges and all of a sudden they see a big bunch of money out there and now they want us to document that we are actually providing the performance.

Frank added:

I actually fear the federal government's move to accountability more than the state ... I'm afraid lawmakers will come in with more of a rubric asking how many books do you have in your library, how many did you have graduate, and it won't be very holistic which could be detrimental to us and other community colleges.

Those lawmakers are the ones that make decisions on appropriations for higher education at the state and federal level. Frank stated "At the federal level there's billions of dollars, and at our state level now we are exceeding one billion of dollars...and that's a great deal of money to invest in something that your seeing 10% [students] graduating." He continued "I guarantee if you had a 90% loss on your mutual fund, you'd be asking your broker some questions, but of course we are dealing with humans, so we always got that dynamic."

Kent also viewed it as a measure of production and said:

If you look at the number of graduates that are out there and where we stand nationally as a state, it's not good ... compared to the number of

people within the State, so I think it's more than just a matter of production.

That production comes in the form of producing college graduates and Wilma felt "They wanted to have more degrees in the State because ... we're in the lowest one-third of the states giving a college degree and ... I think it was a noble cause to get us focused on the graduation and retention."

Clint agreed and said:

Sometimes you just need to be reminded that people are really watching the outcome ... I don't think there is ever going to be a time in the foreseeable future where we step back from accountability ... and they say, lets not peer into what they are doing ... let's not check up on them.

He continued, "Whether in the form of performance based funding or some other initiative, measures of accountability in higher education are here to stay." It is this measure of accountability that has caused Woodland Hills Community College to evaluate their retention and graduation rates. Bobby stated "I think if they hadn't put the pressure on us, we wouldn't have looked at it as closely and we wouldn't have begun to push our numbers of graduation rates up like we've been able to do."

## Theme 2: Shame Factor

Guiding the performance based funding policy is the desire for increased student retention and more college graduates in the State. As an urban, two year community college, Woodland Hills ranks among the lowest in the State in graduation rates. Clint spoke about this during the interview and said, "I know



this is a great institution, and I didn't like being perceived as being the worst because of that graduation rate." Frank also claimed "We [Woodland Hills Community College] don't like being reminded that we are doing a bad job as they define it." Clint stated "People think you're just a bad institution if you don't fix it and we'll worry when the time comes with the negative press."

Although there are monetary gains to be made by improving the graduation rates, Brent agrees that "The fear of negative press is much greater than the benefit of 16-30 thousand dollars we might receive." Frank agreed with this thought of embarrassment and concluded, "I think it was a shame factor, not the money factor that's changed the conversation on the campus." He continued that "I think that if the President hadn't had bought into the conversation, then there wouldn't have been the attitude of folks talking about it." Frank stated:

We don't like being on a list that is dead last for the State in graduation ... you don't like the documents ... you don't like the news articles ... you don't like to show up to a meeting every month and hearing it.

Wilma continued: "For us it definitely was a shame thing ... when someone points out how bad you are doing, you don't like being told you are bad ... so you make improvements". Frank summed up the shame factor with this analogy:

Dale Earnhardt had a wonderful description for second place, and it's the first loser. If second place is first loser, then what is last place? So we were last place so I think the shame factor was more of a catalyst for some of these institutions than anything else because we had always felt we were doing a good job.

### Theme 3: Re-Focus

When asked if the performance based funding policy was good for the campus, several of the interviewees claimed it caused the campus to re-focus on student success. Haley said, "That's what this kind of initiative does, it does help you focus." Owen also emphasized, "It allowed or enabled us to focus more on what we were doing as far as recruiting and retention is concerned, and I think we were already headed in that direction but I think it [policy] just sharpened our focus."

Clint and Bobby also agreed that the policy caused a re-focus for the campus. Bobby stated:

One of our primary purposes is to get people to the degree ... if they hadn't put the pressure on us, we wouldn't have looked at it and we wouldn't have begun to push our numbers of graduation rates up like we've been able to do.

He continued, "We're still not that great in first time, full time percentage, but our numbers of graduates is being pushed forward and that's a good thing." Clint continued on saying "This is a good thing for the institution ... it helps people focus on our prime function which is student learning to success." Wilma stated:

I think the strengths are it made us re-think about graduation and retention ... it made us maybe get focused back on it. It was already a part of our strategic plan ... but I think it brought us back to think a little more about that and to try to develop some new programs ... it maybe made us think a little broader about them and

how we could reach the group and how we could keep the students here, which is quite frankly a problem.

Brent went so far as to say it helped statewide, when he said, "I think it did cause the State and institutions to focus ... to do some focusing of who they are."

Wilma said:

I do think it made us get more focused and it also made us think about every program we were implementing, how can we help students? How can we reach them? How can we get them before they get in trouble and drop out? How can we make them be successful?

This re-focus on student success helped guide new programs. Kent shared:

In terms of day to day kind of programs that we offer ... the way we go about trying to achieve those objectives, I've seen some changes, in what we do and now we have a number of programs that are designed specifically to help with gradation and retention rates.

When asked if this re-focus had led to any changes in the mission, Bobby stated "We've kind of restated our core values of learning, excellence, integrity and service, but not the mission." Campus-wide Wilma felt:

I think the only thing that's changed is it has made people talk more about it because it was brought to the institutions attention ... and it made everybody talk ... have discussions and we talked more about it in the recruitment and retention committee than we might have.

When asked about this re-focus, Kent had somewhat different feelings "We probably would have done them anyway." He continued, "Would there have

been as much attention or focus or would it have been top priority? Reality is probably no. Probably not, I hate to say it, but probably not.”

#### Theme 4: Comparing Apples to Apples

A common theme arose when questioning the participants about the problems with the policy. It revolved around the way the institution was judged in order to receive additional performance funding, which involved being compared to other types of institutions. Bobby stated “If they [State Regents] want our graduation rates to be as high as a residential campus and then make us compare ourselves to a residential campus, then that will hurt us.” Bobby continued stating:

It’s unfair in the sense that it is still based upon what the bureaucrats see as a college education which is based upon their experience at the bachelors level on a four year residential campus ... so many of what they measure us on is based upon their experience, which is not necessarily pertinent to the community college.

Clint agreed and offered, “The criteria I think needs to be established based on trying to compare apples to apples, because you can’t compare rural and urban institutions.” Owen also agreed with making the same apples to apples comparisons by saying “We serve students, who are much more at risk because we are the true American dream, and we really open up our doors and give everybody a chance and so it’s not really like comparing apples to apples.”

Kent viewed it more on a personal level and how the performance has to be viewed individually by the student’s goal. He stated:

It's all about being successful with certain students in achieving their goals and that's why I don't like the whole performance based funding because its not based on the actual students objectives, it's based on the objectives ... the State believes graduation and getting a degree is the best thing for people and some of these students out there don't ... that's not why they come to college here.

Bobby summed it up this way:

How many certified people are we putting out there, how many people are we just giving basic training that industry wants and industry is hiring them away immediately? So to just put too much emphasis on the first time, full time cohort is not going to help us if our first time, full time cohort comes in with an average ACT of 18 and the State's biggest university's first time, full time comes in with and averages ACT of somewhere between 25 and 30, which group would you expect to succeed ... they have them 24 hours a day ... we have ours just when they are here, a that hurts us ... same way the pressure helps us do better with graduation. If they don't really look at the overall function of the community college, it's not just to graduation. It's to graduate people, it's to training, it's to prepare the community, it's economic development, it's community service, it's so many other elements.

Wilma also said "Those institutions that are able to be very selective such as our main State University will have great success rates because they

are only taking the very top students in the entire State.” Kent stated, “Not many students go to our main State University just to pick up a few hours to bump up their marketability, their ability to be promoted in a job or something.”

During the first three years, institutions were compared using the same indicators, but eventually the Regents allowed for institutions to select peer institutions to be compared to. Clint stated:

When Bobby was trying to find our peer institutions we pulled up institutions that were in an urban setting by a large metro population, had at least 35% of students receiving financial aid, had a high minority enrollment, is within 25 miles of a four year comprehensive university, and had no dormitories.

Now that a better comparison of “apples to apples” was occurring, this gave administrators a chance to look closely at similar institutions. Clint stated, “The graduation rate for these 10 institutions ranged from 2%-12%, so to see that made us feel better about the job we were doing even though we were the lowest in graduation rates in the State.”

Bobby said “Although the original indicators have changed since 2001, they still heavily favor four-year residential campuses.” Frank also added “By focusing and rewarding institutions that do well on graduation rates and student retention rates, the funding policy automatically alienates any institution that is not a comprehensive four-year residential campus.” Bobby continued “This was very important...to be able to show that we are unique, and to have national data

to corroborate the fact that the type of student[s] we have aren't always goal oriented, and are just coming to explore."

#### Theme 5: Who are our Students?

A theme that emerged quickly and often during the interviews dealt with the type of students any community college accepts and how that is unique to the higher education system. Clint said, "They are just working a couple of jobs and trying to make it and it takes them 5-7 years for the average student to graduate." Mary reminded me "Being a two year college, people come and go" and that, "Our average adult population is 27-28 years old and most of those people have jobs and they want to take one or two or three classes to enhance their career, they are really not out, I feel, not out to get a degree at all." Wilma concurred, stating that "They jump from school to school ... they come in and their specific cause is maybe one class they need for their job, and they come to a community college without necessarily even wanting a degree." Haley said, "I think a lot of people attend college here that never did [intend], they don't want a degree, or maybe they've already got a degree and what they are looking for is re-training for a job." Owen agreed with Haley's assessment by adding, "We have unique students here on campus; ones that need to retool and get equipped as it relates to their job."

If the student is not looking for job re-training, they may be looking for just a few credit hours before transferring to a four-year university. Brent said:

The State Regents policy is set up where a student that is not initially admissible to our two [comprehensive] universities or one of the regional

institutions, can come to a two year college and complete 24 credit hours at a 2.0 GPA and then transfer ... so we have a lot of students that come here to get their 24 hours and then leave and that was their goal. Have we served them as individuals? Yes. Have we served them at all according to the State Regents performance indicator? No.

Frank added, "Some may come here seeking an associate's degree, but the majority of our students are here for one or two classes to transfer to a four-year institution, or to get a class that will help them with their current job".

One weakness identified in the policy because of the types of students and programs Woodland Hills Community College serve was in the court reporting program. Brent explained, "Our court reporting program requires 225 typed words per minute for graduation, but the State certification is only 200 words." He continued:

Students come here and start their education, and then get certified and hired at \$40,000 per year, but never meet the 225 word per minute standard, and we lose them as far as graduating and reporting to the State Regents for the performance policy.

Bobby agreed, "They have to have 225 ... it kind of a catch 22 .... It is costing us grads because we are very low in grads for the court reporting field."

Another unique aspect of the community college and its students was shared by Wilma:

As a community college ... we have open door, so we take all students and we serve all students regardless of ACT, we take them all ... those



institutions that are able to be very selective such as our states two comprehensive universities, well sure they will have great success rates because they are only taking the very top students in the entire State, but that's not who we get.

Without trying to sound insulting, Bobby said, "I think the greatest weakness our students have is ... we don't get the cream of the crop." Clint also acknowledged that "At urban institutions you have higher risk students coming out, maybe they're not doing well in high school, or not getting through high school, which is our stock and trade anyway."

Owen attributed some of the problems encountered with the performance funding policy to the students as well as the campus by saying:

That's just the nature of us being a community college without dormitories and the type of student we serve, we serve very mobile, transient type students ... they're not going to stay here usually long enough to graduate. So really the function that we perform here is quite different than a residential institution where you don't have as many adult students and the transient type population.

When speaking of campus problems, Wilma also added that, "If you look at the average graduation rate of urban, its quite low and it can be anywhere from 7% to 12% for the urban but for the rural it's much higher because they don't have anywhere else to go and they're not jumping around."

While student differences and campus issues were discussed, respondents also place emphasis on the families of the students being served.

Frank explained:

With increasingly single parent families who sometimes are not ... investing the time and attention, getting involved in the students education, so we arrive with students that are often very ill prepared for the challenge they're about to face ... particularly I think with the lack of college educated community in our area ... their kids are coming to school ... they don't know what the experience is going to be and they don't have that support.

Frank goes on to lament his dissatisfaction with the lack of family involvement stating:

I hear it all the time, the attitude from the parents ... they perceive the kids responsible for paying for college. It's not mine; it's not my responsibility. The kids are working full time, going to school full time ... I'm really troubled by the attitudes of the parents in the community ... I'm not even sure performance funding is going to change the behavior, because some of the behaviors we can't change until the disposition of our students change. It's an attitudinal shift in our society that has to occur. You can beat the mule with the two-by-four all you want, I just don't think we can change it until the pipeline changes ... that pipeline is K-12.

Wilma addressed the lack of family involvement and shared how that can lead to a student being ill prepared for college and needing to take remedial courses just to catch up. She said “Their family background, many are low income and high risk students because our remediation rate for students from our 13 primary feeder schools is 59%, but the State average is 37%, so we have 20% more of our students that have to have remediation.” Brent agreed, “Students we have are those students that come in with around two, three, four or more remediation needs.” Clint explains more about the remedial concerns saying:

If someone has to take a remedial course, they are not ready for college algebra, college English or whatever, shouldn't we get some credit if they pass those courses and subsequently take a college level course and pass it, and maybe even get 30 credit hours ... they never go to college again, what have we done?

What's been our service for society? Isn't that why the two-year schools were created to elevate the educational level and enhance their employability?

Although students should receive their preparatory education in high school, Brent is quick to point out that “Remember that at this level, our job is not weeding people out, but helping them grow for themselves and for society.”

Frank shared his concern for what type of student attends Woodland Hills Community College by sharing, “800 first-time, full-time students are the ones

that we are constantly beat up on and judged by, but we are serving another 8,000 that is not a part of how we are measured by this policy.”

#### Theme 6: Culture of the Institution

To determine how the policy was being accepted and implemented at the institution, several questions were asked to gain a perspective about the culture of the institution and whether the policy and increased graduation and retention had permeated that culture from top down. Owen said “It is not what we preach as much as even if we didn’t have it we would be still preaching and would be making sure that idea permeated throughout the college campus to retain students and to encourage them to graduate.” Kent agreed that:

It’s not talked about that much anymore as it was a couple of years ago at least, in our talk day to day ... going back to serving the students and being successful at doing that. That’s what’s talked about ... all these programs we’ve designed are focused on doing that ... if we’re successful at doing that, then retention and graduation rates, retention particularly and graduation rates will fall right in line. So I think that is why it’s not talked about so much as is student success.

Bobby eluded to how the policy has impacted research and the use of data by saying “It’s been good in that it’s made us more conscious of institutional research...and its beneficial in that I think it has slowly changed the culture here so that we will put more emphasis on ‘let’s graduate some people.’” Wilma said “It was already number one in our strategic plan, but it brought us back to think a

little more about that [graduation] and try to develop some new programs, and to think a little broader.” Bobby said “When everybody starts talking the same language like faculty and staff, putting their mind to a common goal to help student’s graduate, you can’t help but to push that number up, it just happens, it’s a cultural thing.” Wilma said:

I think we’ve done a good job of culturally campus wide, letting people know how good it is for students to graduate, and for them to be successful, through the classified staff, the professional staff, the faculty association and you have the administrative council, you have the planning council, you’ve got a lot of councils here ... I think we’ve shared it with all of them.

Brent agreed that the topic had reached a number of different groups on campus by saying:

I’ve been on five college campuses in my career and this one has the most structure, most organizational structure I’ve ever seen as far as having an executive group, having an administrative council, having a presidents council, and I know all of those folks have received presentations on what we’re doing and what we’re after.

Kent said “In the way we try to go about achieving the objectives of increasing graduation and retention, I have seen some changes in what we do.” Bobby agreed, “I think we have more faculty now talking about getting students to graduate, but it’s very hard to get it into that level, so you try with in-service programs and such.”

To begin to become a part of the culture, a commitment and belief in the policy of performance based funding first has to start at the top. This was found to be true starting with the top administration at this institution. Brent stated “What’s important to the President somehow becomes very important to everyone else.” Bobby also said:

What he [the president] thinks in that area, greatly influences ... he’s got the way that we are going ... he has to have ways of making it very pertinent to me and you ... what we will do and what he’s trying to do right now is to convince the campus ... he’s got to convince the campus that his attitude there is very critical.

Wilma concluded that:

I don’t know that there’s any person anymore important on an institution than the President ... the President’s got to have the vision and his attitude towards the performance funding is going to impact the team. He obviously has the position to pull everybody, to align the units, to get the resources and to start to move forward towards the projects. So I think a positive attitude from the President is vital ... I think he has talked about it in every opening speech to all the faculty, staff development day... everyone of those groups. He’s talked about graduation, he’s talked about retention, he worked with Pepsi to get a deal to get them to pay for the student’s graduation fee, since community college students aren’t known for having the money. I think the fact that he’s worked

on that. I think he has a lot of ideas and I also think he [the President] had already began to work on this long before it was called PBF, when he was Executive Vice President. He prepared the policy and procedures and the strategic plan for the campus. I think he already had the vision.

Permeation of the campus includes its largest and arguably the most important group of employees; the faculty. The faculty have the daily contact with the students and respondents addressed their perceptions and concerns about the policy knowledge and implications at the faculty level. Frank begins this discussion by saying “I do think we as an institution are also beginning to have a dialog, not sure how far along we are into that dialog, but I think we’re having a dialog about teaching methodology and maybe the format.” He continues by saying:

I see more movement towards these hybrid courses where we have students sitting on their rumps for three hours a week, a professor lectures to them. Might have worked 700 years ago, certainly doesn’t work now. So the focus of lectures ... doing some things online, interactivity, we’ve to increasingly use those models or we will lose them pretty quickly.

Bobby also considers there to be a cultural change by saying “I think we have more faculty now talking up...let’s finish, let’s graduate more than we did have.” As a professor, Terri agrees that it has reached the faculty ranks:

It was quite a hot topic back when I was in the senate because we were pushing project success and other things so I think the word

was getting out. We still have a long way to go. I think getting the word, getting everybody in the faculty to address it in their class. I know we worked on trying to address it in the division as far as just word of mouth. Tell your students; repeat to them over and over that finish what you start is important. Why it is good to go ahead and get your associates degree ... I think most of them know that by know, but they don't know that an associate's degree is a good thing to have.

Brent agrees that it is at the faculty level, but not without some re-educating. He said "To be honest I think for 25 years, our faculty here didn't see graduation necessarily as something as they were pushing." He continued "If their student was 45 hours out, say in engineering or something, then they would encourage that student to transfer but I think that we are trying to do some re-education to show why it's important to graduate."

While Brent may think it takes re-educating, Frank has a somewhat different approach, "I wished I could figure out a way click the lever and start getting faculty to actively interact with students." While this "lever" does not exist, it is important that this interaction occurs and Brent shared his doubts about it occurring campus wide:

I would think it is fairly deep, I would say at least faculty senate wise, but whether or not its down to every individual faculty, I would



be remiss if I said it was because we have some faculty, frankly who would prefer not to be involved.

While it's impossible to expect every faculty member to participate, there are very good reasons why they may not be involved in the dialog and discussion of increasing retention and graduation rates. Bobby acknowledged this by saying:

All that kind of things we can see at the administrative council level and we can talk about it in academic affairs, if you have a teacher out there teaching five ... six classes of just basic education, day in and day out ... they tend to push all of that rhetoric aside because they're focused on that classroom, so its very hard to get into that level.

The difficulties in trying to reach the ranks of the faculty were not the concern shared by Clint. He worried about just how far the finances of an institution should ever reach the classroom. Clint stated:

What makes it a challenge and high risk is that if a faculty at the two-year school decide to dumb it down so more people pass, then what happens, is yea, we can get people to graduate, but how low, how much do you want to have the dollar drive academic decisions, decisions of academic integrity.

While discussing faculty involvement, Frank shared concerns about the relation of faculty and academic affairs with student affairs. He said "I feel like the campus expects students affairs to fix it and we can't fix it." Frank continued by saying:

You [student affairs] have a 20 minute interaction with an academic adviser, admissions can't fix it ... Kent can only make their experience better in student life if they get involved and motivated to do it, we can't fix it. We can be a partner in it, but I don't think faculty have bought into that they are part of the problem ... I'd like to just go back to the way it was seven or eight years ago when we all thought we were doing a great job when graduation rate was 7%, and we all thought we were doing a great job. I'd rather go back ... ignorance is bliss, and I'd like to go back and be blissful.

While research suggests improving retention and graduation rates has to occur through a joint effort between academic affairs and student affairs, Frank is not sure that is happening at Woodland Hills Community College. He claimed "I don't know how they [student affairs] would be expected to change it, so it has to be a student affairs and academic affairs partnership, and I'm not sure we are quite there yet."

Although concerns existed about the joint effort of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, Brent contemplates his reasons for being in higher education, specifically at a two-year community college, and his commitment, by sharing:

We've moved from State funding to State supplemented ... we may be getting closer to State located ... but I honestly believe we were put on this earth for egalitarian access ... we can't shut out a major segment of the population ... especially those folks that are

underrepresented in higher education ... that's the reason I'm at a two-year college.

Clint also allowed for an amount of self-discovery and his view of the culture of the campus and its students, "We're not necessarily a choice for them, we are their only option ... and I think that's civic education, academic education, and I think that the future of free society and democratic society rest with the community college."

#### Theme 7: Getting Them to Connect

Arguments can be made about the amount of impact Academic Affairs versus Student Affairs may have on the decision of a student to stay in school until graduation. While Academic Affairs typically engage the student in class, it is Student Affairs that typically tries to engage the student outside of the classroom. One of the themes apparent during questioning is the desire to "connect" the students to the campus. Many of the staff interviewed spoke of this need to connect as a way to help in the retention and graduation of students.

Brent stated:

If you think that you're going to impact the student through student affairs beyond 5% of their time, you've missed it ... on a community college campus 95% of their time is spent in the classroom. So if you don't have faculty involved you've missed a major portion of your opportunity. On this campus the scariest place on campus is typically between 9:00 and noon out in the parking lots, because so

many of our students carry on a thirty-five to forty hour a week job.

They have families, and so in they're in here and out.

Frank shared another view on this connection when he said "We've got to bond them to the campus early, we've got to make them feel that they are a part of something." Kent stated "We even host pep rallies and homecoming ceremonies with a student led mascot ... as an attempt to keep them here and active on campus". Frank goes on to discuss this bonding with the following analogy that so clearly states his view of the student affairs role with students:

It needs to be developmental, not transactional. If it's transactional...well I can buy my Dr. Pepper at 7-Eleven or Conoco, but if I have a relationship with the clerk at 7-Eleven, I probably won't go to Conoco. We don't have that alumni legacy; we don't have the perception of a terminal institution where people come here to get their basics. It's transactional. That's the biggest challenge we've got. I suspect it will continue to be for some time.

Although the students spend more time in a classroom than anywhere else on a non-residential commuter campus, Kent feels "Other things like leadership, socialization and those kinds of things ... means student affairs is going to have to play a bigger role in the overall development of the students over time." Kent summed up the connectedness issue by admitting an intense effort is needed:

A student can go anywhere and get the content, he can go online ...anytime ... so what that means is over time, it's going to be more and

more important that the other kinds of things are emphasized more in the whole learning process.

#### Theme 8: New Programming

In 2001 a new marketing campaign was introduced in an attempt to get students to stay in school and graduate. Wilma stated, "That really was an effort to put it first in the minds of the students as well as the faculty and staff." She continued, "Kent, Frank, and myself ... we went to the University of Denver ... and we were working on some retention ideas at that point ... and developed a finish what you start program." She continued, "Something to make them think about and get their attention somehow." Mary added, "We try to use that theme in anything that we can possibly do ... recruiting high schoolers ... because they increase our numbers." She continued, "It's important to remind them to finish what you start meaning that you can come here for a 2 year college degree ... and go on to a 4 year college." Frank stated, "I think that gives us a little focus with that theme or motto."

Although this started out as a marketing campaign, the programs implemented to assist students to finish what you start were also a part of the master plan. Wilma stated, "The marketing part is only one aspect to the program ... it also includes the advisement, orientation, GradMax, student leadership, and a few others we are planning."

In the fall of 2003 two orientation programs were added to the services provided for students. Mary stated, "Our family orientation is always the Saturday prior to the first day of classes in the fall." The aim of this program is to

help new students navigate their way around campus and to understand all the services available to assist them. This program includes a section entirely devoted to the student's family. Kent explained, "We want to make sure parents know they have a role in encouraging their child to stay in school, and if we can get them on campus with the students, maybe they will feel more connected too." While the family orientation is not required, the second orientation implemented at Woodland Hills Community College is.

The second orientation class was implemented for all incoming students in the fall. Mary stated, "That was implemented for the first time last fall, of course to continue on every fall to help keep the first-time, full-time numbers up." She continued, "This class has every topic that a student might need from financial aid to the library services to student clubs, wellness, emergencies and security." Kent also stated, "It is important to make sure all of our new students understand what all we can offer them outside of the classroom, and how we can help them achieve their goals."

Throughout the past five years since the implementation of performance based funding, several new student leadership programs were created. Dean spoke about the entire leadership program stating, "Their scholarshipped [sic], we get them involved in the student senate, they form personal relationships with us and they graduate .... It's not accidental." He continued with his personal thoughts;

When your "dad" for two years ... and we're even pretty good for setting them up for transfer .... These kids have got that path laid out for them ...

the tragedy is we can't do that for all of them, but we can drive our graduation rates.

Kent explained;

There are 4 student leadership groups ... President's Leadership Class, Legacy, the Ambassador Program, and then our Student Senate .... All four are leadership groups, and all of them are a little bit different in what they do and what their objectives are.

Frank explained more about the President's Leadership class by stating, "The Presidents Leadership Class was a very specific effort to try and seed the campus with students that would drive our graduation rates up." Clint continued, "Maybe if we "buy" the best and brightest and say here is your job ... get these things going and to be active in this."

In addition to the President's Leadership Class, another program created was the Ambassadors Class. Mary explained, "The ambassador program's purpose is to go out and help me recruit. It's a scholarship program ... they go out and recruit ... bring the students here, make them feel comfortable with tours." She continued, "We're kind of focusing on the first time, full time which is normally high school students .... New students at Rose state can relate better to the students we are trying to attract."

Mary also added, "We have them keep their ears open as to what's happening at the High schools .... Can we get a table there ... can we speak to a group, classroom, or club ... show up for open house?"

The Legacy class was also implemented as student leadership program, as Clint explains, “Then we created the Legacy Scholars ... so they can help with the retention effort by contacting students and so forth.” He added, “It’s always better to have a student to student relationship ... that’s peer mentoring ... it’s always better for the student to call another one and say “hey, how are you doing?” Jay agreed, “Their designed to really kind of be a peer mentor to other incoming students.”

To help drive the graduation rates, students filled the leadership positions quickly. Kent explained;

Each of their specific objectives are a little different ... Legacy is peer mentoring ... Ambassadors really help with recruiting, sell the school ... PLC is the premier leadership group ... that learn from the President ... and all of those things you could say, or the motivation behind some of those things was performance based funding.

With the new leadership programs in place, administrators felt graduation rates would increase. Frank stated;

If you take our graduation rate, first-time, full-time cohort ... look at the students ... those are the students in our leadership program ... our graduation rate would be very poor if we weren’t seeding the first time, full time cohort with people we felt would be likely to graduate.

He continued, “PLC, Ambassadors, and Legacy will count for half of our graduation rate ... I serve as their personal academic advisor for those 60 students ... I case manage those students ... there is no way they shouldn’t



graduate unless they go loopy.” Wilma agreed, “When you seen your first time, full time cohort like that then it’s likely that you can get those people graduated.”

In the fall of 2005 another step was taken to help students stay in school. Counselors from the main counseling office were placed into each of the five main academic divisions, giving each main classroom building their own advisor for students with declared majors. Bobby stated, “Moving the counselors into the division is certainly a direct result of the President thinking that will help with graduation if the students have someone always to go to.” Wilma added, “The blended advisement was a part of the finish what you start program where we were trying to look at a better way to serve students.”

While these advisors focused on student majors, new students could still go to the academic advisement center where counselors remained to help first time entering students, or students still deciding on a major. Wilma expressed, “I think it’s much more effective because you’ve got general advisement and then you send them to the academic areas to get specific advisement.” Clint agreed, “If you have a professional there ... then they can get to know the faculty ... there’s trust then ... and that is always the key to utilization.”

In the summer of 2006, the college conducted a pilot program for new students to help remove remedial needs before they enter college courses. Labeled as the “Bridge Program”, Clint shared, “We have these kids out of local schools ... they are going to give it their best shot ... but it gets pretty frustrating when they’ve got one, two, three semesters and not up to college algebra yet.” Brent continued, “We know the highest risk students we have are those students

that come in with two, three, four or more remediation needs.” This programs goal was to help remove at least one remediation level before actually beginning their college career in the fall. Terri explained;

There are four developmental math courses that we teach ... so students are looking at least five semesters of math if they test in the lowest level.

She continued, “This does not get them through very fast, and most students don’t want so spend five semesters in math and might drop out.

While to programs goal is to remove deficiencies, campus administrators weren’t unrealistic in their expectations. Brent stated, “I think if we can just move them a step or two .... Where they only have two to make up instead of five or maybe we can move them a couple of spots.” Terri, agreed, “We’re hoping at least they can get out of one and maybe two levels.” With the program lasting six weeks, time does not allow for a complete removal of deficiencies. Brent stated, “Hopefully for some the light bulb comes on ... they can move a little faster.”

Although it is a pilot project and results are not known at the time of this study, administrators are already looking ahead to next year. Kent stated, “I think it will work well, and it will expand next summer.”

One of the new programs implemented as a part of the Finish What You Start campaign is Gradmax. Brent explains, “GradMax is a software system that is an early awareness program to help student before they get in trouble.” Wilma goes on to explain;

Students log on and tell you kind of how their day is .... from a 0-10 and if they have problem areas ... if it is financial aid ... if they are thinking about dropping out, then somebody from financial aid would contact them. In an effort to find alternative methods to communicate with students, this web based system allows for students that might not want to talk directly to a counselor or professor, to identify the areas they are struggling in. Wilma stated, "It is all done online so they didn't have direct contact, and so they might say a lot of things in the GradMax program that they might not say in person." Mary added, "If it was a personal issue ... if it was a faculty issue ... we could send the problem right to a particular staff member so they could get back to that student."

As with any system, it is not without its faults as Frank explains, "If students don't log in then we can't help them." Frank continues, "However, if they will communicate with us, then we can attempt to try and identify challenges and correct problem areas for students, but how do you make students go into GradMax?" While this may not be the choice of communication for some students, it may be beneficial for others.

Other programs are also being planned in an effort to increase student retention and graduation rates. Wilma stated, "We have some new ideas that are in the forefront we are working on ... I really can't discuss yet because they don't have final approval, but their going to be happening."

When asked why the focus on full-time students, Wilma responded, "Those are students that you can specifically look at ... we have so many part time students, 63% are part time ... so you have to focus on some group." She

added, "I think probably the initiative from the State Regents made us focus on that group a little more ... If you had to pick a group, that was as good group to start with as any." Kent added, "We want students to succeed, and it's tied so closely to retention." Mary agreed, "We are trying to raise the first time, full time entering students." She continued, "All of our numbers we want to raise, but the main focus is the first time, full time entering students." Kent claimed, "We can be as creative as we can, like when the President got Pepsi to pay for the \$15 graduation fee ... It's just another hurdle removed for the students so they can graduate."

### Conclusion

The data presented in this chapter indicate the commonalities within the interview data concerning performance based funding and its impact at Woodland Hills Community College. Several themes emerged from the data including how the policy is seen as an accountability measure by the staff interviewed, and most agree that accountability issues will only increase over time whether from the state or federal government. Another common theme was that the policy's focus on retention and graduation rates brought an amount of shame to the campus since historically Woodland Hills Community College had low retention and graduation rates. However, it was indicated that this also allowed administrators to re-focus on those rates and seeks ways to improve them.

A common complaint about the policy pertained to the type of students that typically enroll at Woodland Hills Community College, and how they are not

the typical student coming out of high school seeking a degree. This theme led to another theme that indicated the policy should make sure to compare “apples to apples”. Since community colleges are very different from four-year universities, they should not be compared using the same performance criteria. Two final themes indicated by the participants included a desire to get students to connect to the campus outside of the classroom. To do this the campus needed to embrace the idea and that involved a deep understanding and commitment at all levels of staff to create a new culture of at the institution.

In Chapter V, findings from the study are presented to show the impact of the policy at Woodland Hills Community College and how the data provided answers to the research questions.

## CHAPTER V

### FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents findings based on interviews, observations, and document analysis, as well as recommendations and conclusions. Guiding the findings are the three research questions posed in this study:

- 1) What is the perception of campus stakeholders regarding the new policy as a measure of accountability?
- 2) What were the effects of the funding policy on instruction, programs and administrative functions?
- 3) To what extent has performance based funding become a part of the culture of the institution?

This chapter also includes recommendations for future studies regarding performance based funding in higher education as well as my final thoughts and conclusions regarding this study.

#### Findings

##### *Research Question #1*

As data was gathered, and themes began to emerge, the overarching resolve was to answer the three research questions posed in Chapter I. The first research question was;

1) What is the perception of campus stakeholders regarding the new policy as a measure of accountability?

*Stakeholders Position.* The performance based funding program in the State has both strengths and weaknesses as perceived by campus administrators. As stated in Chapter II, the program was initially based in 2001 on five performance indicators on which all public institutions in the State were evaluated. The indicators increased from five to seven as institutions were allowed to select two criteria that were specific or unique to their own campuses.

In April 2004, the plan was modified again and two of the original five indicators were eliminated. The two measures eliminated were:

1. Twenty credits earned in one year: number of students earning at least 20 cumulative credit hours including remedial courses.
2. Reaching 30 credit hours threshold: number of students reaching 30 cumulative hours excluding remedial courses (SRHE Agenda, April 2004).

It was decided that although these two measures provide some understanding of the progress students were making toward graduation, they are subsumed under the overall retention and graduation rates (SRHE Agenda, April 2004). This left the original indicators of graduation rates, retention rates, and number of degrees conferred, plus the two new institutional specific indicators, that were allowed by the Regents office after the Council of Presidents insisted some measurement that was institution specific. While graduation and retention rates remained the primary indicators, campuses could now be financially rewarded through the

performance based funding policy by choosing two indicators to show strengths that might be unique to their institution.

During this time another change was implemented to allow comparisons to be made to other similar institutions in reaching the goals of the indicators that was viewed favorably by campus administrators. During the first three years of the funding policy, schools were all evaluated by the five criteria. Instead of all institutions being compared with each other, the new change allowed for campuses to be viewed as different, with varying functions and students. This change allowed for each institution to find other institutions that were similar, and established a set of benchmarks to be compared to. Analysis of the data shows this effort helped eliminate a comparison of apples to oranges within the State.

This was one of the first changes made to the policy that allowed Woodland Hills Community College to be recognized for the unique types of students they serve, and programs they offered, allowing opportunity for parity. Analysis of data showed that to find institutions that had similarities to Woodland Hills Community College, administrators searched the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Campus administrators identified the unique factors that applied to their campus and the students they serve. By using this criterion, it allowed for the administrators at Woodland Hills Community College to locate other institutions that were similar in the type of students served. Using these criteria, the search yielded 10 different institutions to use for benchmark data. This data was important because it gave administrators a chance to see comparable institutions that identified the same unique qualities in the campus,



students and community. Table 5 below presents the peer institutions used for national benchmarking.

Table 5

Peer Institutions used for National Benchmarking

Peer Institution Name	Location
Arapahoe Community College	Littleton, CO
Cape Fear Community College	Wilmington, NC
Chandler/Gilbert Community College	Chandler, AZ
Chattanooga State Community College	Chattanooga, TN
Cincinnati State Community College	Cincinnati, OH
Ivy Tech State College	Indianapolis, IN
Jefferson State Community College	Birmingham, AL
Lee College	Baytown, TX
Nashville State Technical Community College	Nashville, TN
Pueblo Community College	Pueblo, CO

*Note.* [www.nced.ed.gov](http://www.nced.ed.gov)

Comments taken from interviews suggested the ability to use this kind of benchmark system allowed Woodland Hills to feel better about their institutional efforts while still seeking ways to improve their retention and graduation rates. Armed with data that compared Woodland Hills Community College with institutions with similar characteristics, would allow for college personnel to

review programs these comparable schools have implemented to assist in the retention and graduation of their students.

*Weaknesses.* Three weaknesses were identified in the data analysis. These weaknesses were viewed as areas that made it unfair to Woodland Hills Community College when trying to meet the prescribe performance criteria.

First, a common problem with the program was in the funding mechanisms of the policy. In the State where this study took place, the legislature appropriates money for all State agencies. For higher education, a lump sum is awarded to the State Board of Regents, who in turn allocate funds to each of its 25 public institutions, as well as to the Regents for departmental and program expenses. Analysis of the data suggested that performance based funding is an unfunded mandate, and that the money used for [its] implementation is taken directly off the top of the allotted money for all institutions. To a campus administrator, this is a weakness because data suggests they feel under funded to begin with. In 2002, the State did not receive the tax revenues it was expecting, which in part was caused by the 9/11 bombing of the World Trade Centers in New York City. Late in 2002, campuses across the State had to cut budgets, and at the time of this study, higher education still had not been funded back to the level of 2001.

A second weakness found in the data is in how the college is evaluated to receive performance money. Although the performance indicators have changed since the policy was first implemented in 2001, they still heavily favor four-year

residential institutions. This is due in part to the type of student that typically attends a four-year residential campus versus a commuter community college.

The comprehensive four-year residential campus is typically the type of institution that attracts students who have a goal of graduating with a four-year degree. Universities typically require a high ACT score from entering students whereas Woodland Hills Community College does not. Because ACT scores are not required, combined with other factors, administrators contend that Woodland Hills Community College is quite the opposite of the four-year residential university. Located in an urban setting, with no dormitories, Woodland Hills Community College attracts commuter students whose reasons for choosing a community college mirror the continuing purpose of the two-year colleges: To welcome all who desire to learn, regardless of wealth, heritage, or previous academic experience ([www.aacc.nche.edu](http://www.aacc.nche.edu)). Many students whom enter Woodland Hills get sidetracked by life's challenges and struggles, which sometimes keep them from completing their degree. These students are typically older than traditional students with families, multiple jobs, children and mortgages.

When implementing the performance based funding policy, the State Regents for Higher Education decided to use data from first-time, full-time cohorts. This is a student who regardless of age is entering college for the first time and is enrolling in at least 12 hours, which is considered full time. Data analysis shows the tracking of these first-time, full-time students begins in the fall semester and can be tracked through their entire higher education experience in

the State by the State's Unitized Data System (UDS). For Woodland Hills Community College, this represents approximately 800 students each fall semester that are considered first-time, full-time. Therein lies a weakness in the policy as described by some of the participants interviewed, since the campus enrolls nearly 9,000 total students each semester.

This means that the institution is being judged by this policy that is designed to measure accountability and success, but focuses on only 10% of Woodland Hill's students, while the other 90% of the student body that does not fit the first-time, full-time classification are not addressed by this policy. It is this weakness that some administrators argue undermines the program and brings into question just how much the institution should worry about it.

Woodland Hills Community College, like all other State community colleges, has an open door admissions policy. Therefore when a campus opens its doors to anyone seeking higher education, there will likely be attrition and dropouts for reasons as varied as the students entering the doors. Most two-year institutions, especially those in urban settings, are non-residential and a great majority of their students are older, employed while in college, and have multiple obligations that constrain their involvement in college (Tinto, 1994). A common theme identified in Chapter IV was that many of the students that come to Woodland Hills Community College either are not sure what they want to do as a career, are taking specific classes for a job, or had test scores that were too low to enter the comprehensive universities. Whereas, larger comprehensive universities that require a high ACT score create a very educated first-time, full-

time cohort for the university since many of these students often excelled in high school, usually ranking near the top of their class. Data from interviews suggest the belief is those top students usually are better prepared for the challenges they will face in college. They usually also have a much better support system at home and on campus.

A third weakness identified as how the performance based funding policy inherently puts Woodland Hills Community College at a disadvantage as viewed by campus administrators is in the court-reporting program. This is a small example since it only impacts about 20 to 25 students per year, but it is valuable in showing the uniqueness of some programs offered by Woodland Hills Community College. As indicated in Chapter II, Carolina Coastal College faced a similar situation in how the South Carolina performance based funding policy rewards campuses based on an individual performance measure. For Woodland Hills Community College this degree program prepares students to work in the field of court-reporting within all levels of the state and federal judiciary system. The court-reporting program accepts approximately 20 students each fall semester. The students enter the program full time and are usually first time students, which classifies them in the first-time, full-time cohort. This means they are a part of the reportable data for performance based funding by the State Regents, although some of these students may be older adults returning to school for a career change. As students develop their knowledge and skills by participation in the program and complete credit hours to apply towards their degree, many make business contacts along the way and begin receiving job

opportunities while they are still in school. However, the problem with this as it applies towards the policy of performance based funding is that the national accrediting agency for court reporting requires students to type 225 words per minute to be eligible for graduation. But the State certification requirement is only 200 words per minute, and most employers look for potential employees to be certified rather than hold an associates degree. In other words, the State certification and employment is valued more than the associate's degree.

Several students each year meet their educational goal of getting certified and gaining employment, but the college lost potential funding increases through performance based funding because the students never completed the degree requirements for graduation. This is just one small example in which Woodland Hills Community College campus administrators shared during their interviews that the institution is hindered by the current performance based funding policy.

*Strengths.* During the interviews, participants were asked about the strengths of the policy as it applied to Woodland Hills Community College, and administrators indicated strengths existed. As the program completes its fifth year, the program has already gone through several revisions. Data suggested these revisions have helped the college eliminate the comparisons to other campuses, and have allowed for changes that reflect their individual identity.

A second strength identified was that performance based funding caused Woodland Hills Community College to re-focus more on what was being done to retain students and get them to graduation. Analysis of the data indicated improving graduation rates at a two-year community college located in an urban

setting with no dormitories or residential life is not an easy task. With more than 10 other higher education campuses and career technological training centers located within a 12-mile radius, students have several options. Because of this and online educational options, they can also become very transient to meet their own educational needs. To re-focus attention towards improving graduation and retention rates, new programs and services were implemented to improve the retention and graduation rates on campus.

A third strength of the program is that it also caused the State Regents to evaluate their service to the institutions. The State Regents made a commitment to follow through and assist the institutions in reaching the State goals as prescribed in the BrainGain 2010 plan. The Regents assisted in two capacities to help institutions in their efforts to increase retention and graduation. First they helped colleges and universities become fiscally responsive by constantly reviewing fledgling programs. Colleges and universities have cut administrative costs to levels far below the national average and made great progress in eliminating low priority programs and redirecting resources to high priority programs and services (H. Brish, SRHE Report, May 2000). Since, as a whole, the State lagged behind in graduation and retention rates when compared nationally, it was imperative that the State governing body that implemented the policy, also sought improvement themselves. Second, they appointed the Higher Education Task Force on Student Retention in February, 2000. The concept behind this task force was to bring together minds from all public institutions in the State as well as Regent's staff to take a look at the retention problems facing

the State, and to develop ways to improve it (SRHE, Report of Task Force, 2002). Although the committee's title indicates a focus on retention, it also had as one of its charges to increase statewide college graduation. As stated earlier, the assumption that higher retention rates leads to higher graduation rates is not necessarily true, and each function should be treated separately.

One of the first things the retention committee produced was a report on the status of retention and graduation rates. Table 6 presents the comparison from that report.

Table 6

State Retention and Graduation Rates

Fall 1998	Student Retention Rates		Graduation Rates*	
	State Data	National Data	State Data	National Data
Comprehensive	79.9%	80.0%	49.7%	55.6%
Regional	67.1%	76.1%	29.3%	43.6%
Two-Year	59.8%	52.0%	17.6%	32.4%

*Note.* Comprehensive and regional graduation rates reflect the 1994 cohort. Two-year graduation rates reflect the 1997 cohort (SRHE, Report of Task Force, 2002).

Although student retention rates at Woodland Hills Community College were respectable when compared to national statistics, the graduation rates were almost one-half the national average. Earlier in this chapter, Table 4 indicated that Woodland Hills Community College ranged from 1.8% to 11.5% graduation



rates compared to a 17.6% State average of all two-year colleges in the State. However some of the data indicated previously that community colleges were different and shouldn't be compared to other four-year universities, the lower than average graduation rates occurring at Woodland Hills Community College has not been explained.

After nearly two years of meetings, planning and research, the task force produced their report to the Regents. This report included national and State statistics as well as recommendations and initiatives to improve retention at all State colleges and universities. Many of the initiatives provide a general framework for benchmark programs at institutions around the nation. Specific new programs implemented by Woodland Hills Community College to address retention and graduation concerns are discussed later in this chapter.

*Summary.* In 2001 the performance based funding policy was implemented at all 25 State public higher education institutions. This new accountability measure was a result of a task force committee's recommendation and a part of the State's new BrainGain 2010 plan. Campus administrators at Woodland Hills Community College had varying perceptions about the policy and its changes, both in general and as it applied directly to the campus. Strengths and weaknesses were identified as it relates to the students at Woodland Hills Community College.

While researching the literature before beginning this study, it seemed that prior literature was overwhelmingly against performance based funding in public higher education because of the difficulties of applying a broad policy to evaluate

several unique institutions. Several studies have been conducted identifying strengths and weaknesses of the policy in higher education. Other studies have focused on the origination of the policy by legislature mandates or by governing bodies and more studies have concentrated on the performance indicators and the money tied to these indicators. However, a central theme in literature suggests most higher education administrators do not like the policy as an instrument of public accountability. In this current study, a theme emerged from the data that suggests campus administrators at Woodland Hills Community College felt the policy had been beneficial for the institution overall. As stated earlier in Chapter IV, one of the benefits of the policy was that it caused campus administrators to re-focus efforts on improving student retention and graduation rates.

The question concerning the Woodland Hills Community College administrators and other community colleges around the nation is to what degree should graduation and retention be the top two guiding indicators for this policy as a definer of accountability? For this State being studied, the dollar amount that is awarded to each institution is marginal compared to the institution's overall budget, but if those funding figures increase to a point where programs, personnel and facilities are dependant on the funding each year, then a close examination will be needed to determine fair indicators for each institution and what changes would need to be made.

While each participant had their own ideas on changes that could be made to make it more equitable for the community college, only one participant

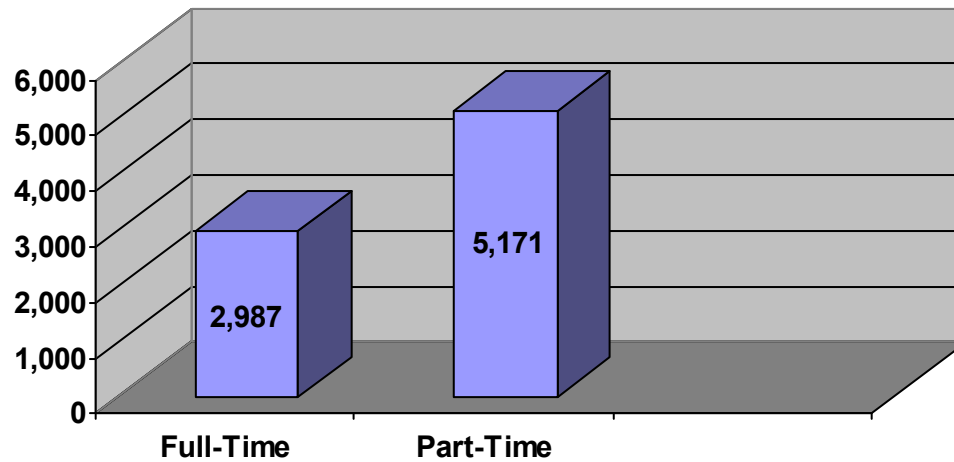
interviewed recommended the complete termination of the policy. This participant was very quick to answer and very open in sharing why he opposed the policy. Several of the changes that have occurred in staffing, job duties, and new programming are designed to target the traditional type of student. This is a student typically between the ages of 18-22 years of age, and attending college for the first time taking a full load of classes usually right out of high school. As stated earlier in this study, this is not accidental, but very intentional since this is the measure the State Regents office uses to determine student retention and graduation rates. This particular individual was concerned with the amount of time, personnel and fiscal resources that are being devoted to these approximately 800 first-time, full-time students, and are the benefits worth all the costs. With the campus serving nearly 9,000 total students each semester, the concern appears valid considering what might be a lack of focus on those other 8,200 students that aren't first-time, full-time.

Other administrators argue that if these new programs implemented create the connectedness they are seeking and it benefits these [seeded] students, then those same benefits apply to some degree to all students on campus. While that might be true for some of the new programs implemented such as blended advisement, GradMax and orientation, it does not mean this is a benefit for the majority of students. It was acknowledged by a couple of participants that regardless of services and programs offered for students, there will always be a large group of students that attend Woodland Hills Community College that just won't become connected in this way. Some of these students

are in the military, have kids, have more than one job and may commute from more than 20 miles just to get to their class. They just don't have the time or the need for what might be viewed as extracurricular activities offered by the school. Again, these difficulties aren't seen as much with more traditional college students. Therefore, questions should be asked by campus administrators regarding money being spent from State funds and student fees. Specifically they should ask if these expenses are effective and if it could be better utilized in ways that don't necessarily cater towards the traditional younger, full-time student seeking graduation.

Other questions should be asked to see if the campus is doing everything it can to retain the students that do not fit into the first-time, full-time cohort. This study only focused on the impact of performance based funding at Woodland Hills Community College. It did not address any programming, instruction, or attitudes towards students that do not meet the description of first-time, full-time. Some of the programs discussed in Chapter IV can benefit all students regardless of their classification as a student. However, most were intended for full-time students and specifically those enrolling for the first time in a fall semester. This is important to note as potential problem with this policy and how it is addresses at the college. Since nearly 90% of their student body does not fit into this reportable data for funding. Figure 2 below shows the disparity between full-time and part-time students for the fall 2005 semester.

Figure 2. Fall 2005 Student Classifications



It should also be noted that although this figure shows 2,987 full-time students, only 839 of these students are considered in the first-time, full-time cohort. This means the other 2,148 full time students either were not enrolled for the first time in their life, or they have attended school somewhere else before attending Woodland Hills Community College. This, added to the 5,171 part time student means that 7,319 students in the fall 2005 semester are attending Woodland Hills but are not a part of the reportable data required by the State Regents that allows the campus to be eligible to receive performance based funding monies.

*Research Question #2*

As data was gathered, and themes began to emerge, the overarching resolve was to answer the three research questions posed in Chapter I. The second research question was 2) What were the effects of the funding policy on instruction, programs and administrative functions? One of the outcomes of the policy, and the campus's desire to have more students succeed was to

implement new programs. Specifically programs were designed to help students through their college experience both in and out of the classroom.

Performance based funding initially received significant attention of administrators at Woodland Hills Community College when it was implemented in 2001. Although there was not a significant amount of funding tied to the program compared to the overall campuses budget, the President of Woodland Hills Community College knew the Regents and State leaders were serious about improving student retention and graduation rates. Regardless of the type of students being served by the college, graduation was to remain an important goal within the mission of the institution.

Organizational changes and new programs were immediately put in place when the initial implementation began. The first-time, full-time cohort was seeded with young student leaders. Orientation programs welcomed and guided new students and parents alike. Advisors were moved out of a centralized counseling system and placed within each Division building, the place where students and faculty engage. Signs, banners and posters decorated each campus building and entryway to remind students to finish what they start. A mascot was selected and tryouts held to determine which student[s] would get to lead the cheers at the campus home basketball games. Homecoming activities and pep rallies were planned in hopes to provide a sense of excitement that rarely exists at urban two-year commuter campuses.

*Changes on Programming.* In 2001, the college launched the “Finish What You Start” campaign. This campaign was a marketing tactic used to get

the students attention and remind them to finish what they start [graduation] with their college education. Scattered throughout the campus were life-sized cardboard cutouts of various adult students and professionals from all walks of life (see Appendix H). Most noticeable of the images were the unusually large heads that sat atop the cardboard bodies. This concept's design was to capture the attention of students passing by, and then to get them to stop and read the captions. Each *"big head"* had a slogan that read "Finish What You Start." Each also included some kind of statement telling readers why it is important to obtain a college degree. One particular big head reminded students that Woodland Hills Community College graduates earn an average of \$276,898 more in a career than a person without an associate's degree. Any of the six different big heads could be found throughout nearly every building on campus. One located right next to the admissions information desk was a big head wearing a graduation robe and holding a college degree. The big head image wore a graduation cap, but the face was blank, with the words "This Could Be You" filling the void image of the face. With the big heads standing tall in each building on campus, students took notice, and began using the phrase "Finish What You Start" in interviews with the campus newspaper, speeches in class and in the community, and at student senate meetings.

The "Finish What You Start" campaign appeared as a marketing concept, but it was only one small piece of the entire program. The complete "Finish What You Start" campaign consisted of several new programs aimed to improve student retention and graduation. Woodland Hills Community College received

an exemplary initiative award for the “Finish What You Start” campaign by the National Council of Instructional Administrators (HLC Presentation notes, 2006).

One of the programs recognized in this award was student orientations.

Beginning in the fall semester of 2002 and held every fall semester since then, the Student Affairs department invited all incoming freshmen students and their families to the campus for an informal learning session about the campus and its services and programs. This four-hour event held on the Saturday before classes begin informed the students about everything the campus offers to help them succeed in and out of the classroom. Data and document analysis suggested that, too often, students attend classes at Woodland Hills Community College but rarely learn about all of the secondary support services provided for them. The focus of the orientation program was to assist in the integration of these new students into the mainstream of the thousands of returning students. This head start also was an attempt to educate them to areas that can assist them when they [students] need assistance outside of the classroom. Table 7 shows the specific areas covered in the orientation program.

Table 7

Orientation Program Overview

Department	Services Offered
Financial Aid	Scholarships, Pell grants, and financial aid.
Gymnasium	Wellness center, aquatics center, and intramural sports.



Table 7 (continued)

Orientation Program Overview

Department	Services Offered
Student Center	Student clubs, athletics, student senate, cafeteria, bookstore, campus newspaper and the internet café.
Learning Resources Center	Tutoring, mentoring, testing center, electronic media and WebCT.
Student Affairs	Counseling, degrees, transferring, enrollment.
Admissions & Records	Transcripts, grades, student records

This program also allowed the Student Affairs department a chance to establish a bond with student's families who might not have ever visited the campus, and to get them excited about student success. Administrators felt this was an important part of the orientation program since family members can have a direct impact on the support system students need when facing the challenges of pursuing a college degree. While some families attended, the student and family orientation was voluntary and not all students chose to attend.

In 2005 another orientation program was implemented with a more narrow aim at reaching students that were entering the college with deficiencies. With their open admissions policy, and no ACT test score required for admission to Woodland Hills Community College, many students come to the campus not ready for the rigors of college classes. To assist counselors in placing these students in their appropriate classes, students that do not possess an ACT test

score are required to take a placement test. This test, called the COMPASS test is used only to place the student in the appropriate level of class and is not an admission test, and has no effect upon acceptance as a student ([www.whcc.edu/cstudent/testcntr/comp.htm](http://www.whcc.edu/cstudent/testcntr/comp.htm)). If a student's COMPASS test score indicated they have a deficiency and are in need of a remedial class, they are then required to enroll in a full semester orientation class. The goal of this new orientation class was to introduce them to services available at the college that they may not have otherwise ever known about. Specifically the program's aim was to help aid these students with knowledge on how to succeed while in college, and to assist them in creating a connectedness to the campus outside of the classroom. Unlike the shorter version of orientation for students and families this orientation is a class that meets throughout a semester and attempts to address all facets of a student's college experience. Stated in the course syllabus, it is described as an orientation course that assists new students in the transition to college life by providing the support and information necessary to make reasonable decisions about educational, career, and life goals (Orientation Syllabus, fall 2005). Throughout the semester several campus professionals, faculty and support staff are invited in to speak to these new students in an attempt to acclimate them to campus life. They also try to provide a level of comfort for the students and try to remove any misconceptions about college. This 16 week course includes assignments, tests, and attendance is graded. Table 8 below contains the course objectives as listed in the syllabus.

Table 8

College Orientation and Academic Strategies

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Objectives

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- Increase awareness of the value of education.
- Enhance the new students responsibility and accountability for their college education.
- Develop an awareness and understanding of pertinent college terminology and procedures.
- Increase the student knowledge of the many campus resources designed to assure a successful college experience.
- Develop goal setting skills that help the student envision what they want from their college experience, set goals and achieve completion of academic plans.
- Familiarize new students with GradMax, a system designed to improve the communication of academic concerns to appropriate support personnel before bigger problems develop.
- Increase the new student's support system by aiding in the development of meaningful relationships with peers, professors, mentors and advisors.
- Encourage on-campus and community involvement.
- Assist new students in the understanding and application of critical thinking skills to academic and social situations.
- Ensure students have the basic computer skills needed to enroll on line, check grades, contact professors, and research on the Internet.

Table 8 (continued)

College Orientation and Academic Strategies

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Objectives

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- Increase awareness and knowledge of career fields.
- Explore academic programs and assist in the selection of a major.
- Assist in the development of an academic plan that outlines the student's course of study through graduation.
- Assist in the development of organizational skills that save worry and stress and free-up time for study and other obligations.
- Assist students in becoming self-directed learners and decision makers.
- Increase the student's awareness of college rules and academic conduct codes and familiarize them with the consequences of noncompliance.
- Provide information that will assist students in making smart decisions regarding drug use, sexual practices, and money management.

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*Note.* Fall 2005 Orientation Syllabus.

Data from interviews indicated that staff felt as though the classes were successful, and that improvements and changes will be made as student's needs change. Creating and implementing freshman orientation programs was one of the specific recommendations of the statewide retention task force.

Administrators felt strongly if a student is informed of the services available to him or her, then there is a greater chance the student will utilize that service when they encounter problems, concerns or have questions.

In 2003, another program was implemented as a part of the “Finish What You Start” campaign. This program called GradMax is a web-based computer program that allows students to log on and explain how their college experience is developing. Implemented as an early awareness indicator, the GradMax program allows for the Student Affairs department to help individual students, and assist them in getting over daily obstacles before they become roadblocks causing them to leave school. Self proclaimed on their website, GradMax is a “Dynamic retention intervention system that provides a very efficient and effective way to develop relationships with students that focuses on improved communications, at risk student identification, and student satisfaction” (<http://www.corvusllc.com/campustoolkit/features/gradmax.php>). To get a firsthand experience of this program and the benefits it can provide to students, a request was made to the Student Affairs department so that I could be allowed personal access to the GradMax system to see what the student sees. Kent’s secretary provided me with a password and soon I was navigating my way around the site exploring every option, and viewing everything a student can experience.

Upon logging in, I was greeted by a yellow face identical to the bouncing Wal-Mart smile used in their price cutting commercials (See Appendix I). However this smile is missing the mouth, and at first I thought the webpage had frozen before the page could be completed. As I read further down the page, I was presented with a sliding bar to move with the computer mouse to the left or to the right. Moving the bar left created a very upset face, and sliding the bar all

the way to the right created a very happy face. The instructions were to slide the bar to display a face that represented how my day was going. As I slid the bar across the screen, several faces appeared ranging from very upset to very happy. After submitting my answer, several other screens similar to this appeared allowing me to visually depict all aspects of my work life, family life and social life (See Appendix J).

Interspersed through all of the questions about stress, and life in general were multiple-choice questions about academic endeavors and classroom progress. Near the end of the list of questions was a text box where I could type anything not covered in the previous questions that I felt like sharing. There was also a list of services offered by the college that can be requested by the student ranging from tutoring, counseling and financial aid. To the left of the page, back on the original start page, there were several other links for students to use. These included a customizable calendar, email access, institutional documents needed, resources lists and a coach contact ([www.gradmax.com](http://www.gradmax.com)). The coach contact is an employee at Woodland Hills Community College that has been assigned to that particular student and lists a short biography about the coach, complete with all of their contact information. If contact with the coach is desired, this can be done through email or office phone to allow for whatever makes the student feel most comfortable.

Designed as an early intervention program, data suggested a drawback found with the GradMax program was in trying to get the students who could benefit from it to actually use it. Therefore this programs success is completely

dependant on the student and their desire to log in regularly and participate. The goal of the staff administering the program is to get the students comfortable with the functions of GradMax on a regular basis, and when warning indicators are triggered by the software package, it alerts the coach assigned to the student. But if a student is contemplating withdrawing from their classes, or having problems with their studies, administrators worry if students would take their time to log in one time just to talk about it.

One of the larger programs implemented in the fall of 2000, was a new student program created by the President of the institution. This program titled the President's Leadership Class had a principle focus of growing and cultivating student leaders (HLC presentation notes, 2006). However, it also had an indirect focus to assist in the first-time, full-time cohort retention and graduation rates. With the two closest research universities requiring high ACT scores for admission, many students won't reach those high ACT admission requirements. Therefore administrators felt this left several competent and eager high school graduates looking for a way to get their basic education at a small campus before transferring to a larger institution. For Woodland Hills, this meant recruiting more high school seniors rather than the older adults who were only seeking to re-enter college for a career change. Even though these older students are more like the typical community college student, and specifically more like a Woodland Hills Community College student. Not only are Woodland Hills student's older, a majority of them only enroll part-time which does not meet the requirements of the performance based funding policy. Many of them also enter the campus as

non-degree seeking as they are only interested in transferring to a four-year university. To gain a better understanding of the type of students that attend Woodland Hills Community College, Table 9 shows a sampling based on the fall 2005 semester for entering students. For a complete list of all student characteristics that are tracked by the college, see Appendix K.

Table 9

Woodland Hills Community College Student Characteristics – Fall 2005

Semester		
General Characteristics	Number	Percent
All Students (Unduplicated)	8,178	100.00%
Full-Time	2,994	36.61%
Part-Time	5,184	63.39%
First-Time, Full-Time	839	10.25%
Male	3,126	38.35%
Female	5,042	61.65%
Military Affiliation	109	1.33%
Veterans	469	5.73%
GED	668	8.17%
Non-Degree Seeking	1,720	21.03%
Undecided Major	98	1.20%
Residence In-District	2,441	29.85%
Residence Out-of-State	5,737	70.15%



Table 9 (continued)

Woodland Hills Community College Student Characteristics – Fall 2005

Semester

General Characteristics	Number	Percent
Average Student Age	27	---

*Note.* Adapted from Woodland Hills Community College Student Characteristics – Fall 2005.

For Woodland Hills Community College to actively recruit students that fit the “traditional” student classification meant they were going to recruit against their average age, and the average type of student. Analysis from data in Chapter IV and from the findings from new programs implemented suggest administrators felt those type of students will persist until graduation, which helps Woodland Hills Community College in the current performance funding policy.

Specifically, the students entering the Presidents Leadership Class must have a minimum ACT score of 22, have an overall high school grade point average of 3.25, and have documented involvement in high school curricular, extracurricular, and community activities (HLC presentation notes, 2006). These students received full tuition waivers, and book stipends to cover additional fees and textbook costs, and administrators hoped if this would help recruit them to the campus, then graduation and retention rates would increase.

Near the same time the Presidents Leadership Class was being implemented, two additional leadership programs were created with a similar goal of connecting students and getting them involved to increase retention and graduation. The Ambassadors program and Legacy scholars program as

outlined in Chapter IV served the purposes of assisting in the recruitment of high school students, and peer mentoring new and current students to help with retention efforts (HLC presentation notes, 2006).

The students selected for all three leadership programs are required to take a minimum 12 credit hours each semester, and participate in a variety of other meetings, workshops, training seminars, and special events as class assignments. One program all students were required to participate in was the critical thinking skills model developed by Edward DeBono from his “Six Thinking Hats” book. This method instructs decision makers to view their decisions from all angles to make sure they see all sides of the problem before making final decisions. Debono (1999) likens this concept to four people standing, looking at a house where one person is in back, one in front and one on each side where each see their own view and feel it is the correct one, when they need to rotate and view all four sides before making decisions on what the house looks like (p.4). By developing skill sets for this type of critical thinking, it was hoped that students in leadership positions would understand and appreciate opposing views, and not limit their thinking as the only acceptable solution to a problem or scenario. A final common lesson in the leadership curriculum is the Character First program. This program consists of 49 character traits each student is introduced to as listed in table 10 below.

Table 10

Character First 49 Key Traits

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Individual Traits

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Alertness	Attentiveness	Availability
Benevolence	Boldness	Cautiousness
Compassion	Contentment	Creativity
Decisiveness	Deference	Dependability
Determination	Diligence	Discernment
Discretion	Endurance	Enthusiasm
Faith	Flexibility	Forgiveness
Generosity	Gentleness	Gratefulness
Initiative	Joyfulness	Justice
Loyalty	Meekness	Obedience
Orderliness	Patience	Persuasiveness
Honor	Hospitality	Humility
Punctuality	Resourcefulness	Responsibility
Security	Self-Control	Sensitivity
Sincerity	Thoroughness	Thriftiness
Truthfulness	Virtue	Wisdom

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*Note.* 2004 Character First Institute ©

These character traits are covered throughout the school year with the student leaders to develop a strong sense of ethics and leadership for school, work and in life. The goal of this program was to get the students involved in the

leadership programs that aid in increasing the graduation and retention rates, but also to prepare them for success at the next level. That next level may be to enter the workforce after graduation in a technical program, or to enter a four-year bachelor degree program at one of the State's four-year universities.

Another new program was implemented in 2005 when the State Board of Regents for Higher Education allocated \$4 million for performance based funding, of which \$1.8 million was set aside for BrainGain improvement grants (SRHE agenda, October 2005). While \$2.2 million was still dispersed based on the original funding formula and the five performance indicators, this additional \$1.8 million was only to be used to supply institutions grant money for any new programs. Specifically the \$1.8 million was to support campus-based initiatives designed to enhance college's retention, graduation and degree-completion efforts as well as innovation and creativity (SRHE Newsletter, retrieved via web, [www.statehighered.org/newsletter/stories/archieves/07-05-srhe-braingain.html](http://www.statehighered.org/newsletter/stories/archieves/07-05-srhe-braingain.html)).

Proposals were received from 19 institutions, and Regents staff reviewed each proposal for its likelihood of success (SRHE agenda, October 2005). Woodland Hills Community College submitted a grant proposal requesting \$50,000 for a new program that would help students entering college for the first time, reduce the amount of remediation that would be needed. The State Regents awarded Woodland Hills Community College \$33,963 for the summer program (SRHE agenda, October 2005). The program allowed for 100 students to be accepted based on ACT and COMPASS test scores which advisors use to base determinations for remediation courses. Although the program was not

limited to students planning on attending Woodland Hills in the upcoming fall semester, most of the students attending were in fact planning on attending Woodland Hills Community College, or were waiting to enroll based on results from this program.

The goal of the program was to take those students who would be entering college for the first time and who showed at least one deficiency in math, English or reading and assist them in reducing that remediation need. Because Woodland Hills has an open access admissions policy, data indicated it is not uncommon for students who enroll, are in need of all four developmental classes in the discipline of mathematics. While this perseverance and learning by the student completing those remedial courses is to be commended, it put the college in jeopardy of not getting the student graduated in three years, or six semesters which the Regents require to receive performance based funding dollars.

A final program implemented in fall 2005, was a significant change in the service to students occurring within the Counseling and Advisement department. In an effort to assist students better, office staff was reduced in the Student Affairs building, and each of the five academic divisions received one counselor for their respective buildings. By doing this, it allowed for each of these five counselors to focus on the degrees and classes maintained within their respective division they were assigned. General questions could still be answered, but could also be referred back to the counselors that remained in the Student Affairs building. Data analysis suggested that this move was a direct

attempt to identify majors and assist those majors in their division with hands on counseling and assistance to get them to graduate.

By providing a counselor in each division, this allowed for students with declared majors to develop a relationship with their counselor and hopefully a sense of trust to help make their future educational decisions. It was also to develop a connectedness between the advisor and the faculty within the Division offices. By having the counselor in the division building it is a chance for dialogue to develop between the counselor and the faculty that see the students daily. Through coordinated meetings, potential enrollment or transfer problems and questions can be addressed before students encounter those kinds of road blocks in their path toward completion of their degree. For the faculty member, this allows for easier advisement with the counselor that is right down the hall from his or her office.

*Changes on Instruction.* Nearly all of the new programs and changes noted above were geared more towards reaching students outside of the classroom. This answers the research question on the effects of the performance based funding policy on programs and administrative functions, but it does not address the question of changes that may or may not have been made on instruction.

Because Burke and Minassians contend that a flaw of performance based funding is that it never reaches the faculty ranks, very few faculty members were asked to take part in this study and no additional faculty were recommended by the 10 participants interviewed as potentially good candidates for valuable insight

into the study. Of the 18 interview requests, eight of the individuals had some amount of teaching load that is a part of their position, and specifically three of those eight individuals were classified as full time faculty. However only one of those eight agreed to participate in the study, which drastically reduced the amount of data received from individuals that were in the classroom daily and have a direct impact on student success in the classroom. The only data provided by the one faculty member interviewed related only to the new summer bridge program that was discussed in detail earlier in this chapter. Beyond that program, the participant had very little knowledge of the performance based funding policy.

A common theme garnered from the administrative interviews was that it was hoped that the financial aspect of the policy didn't change anything in the classroom so that complete academic freedom still existed in the classroom without worrying about the campus earning extra money. Specifically the President of the college did not want any thought of the college, and its ability to receive more money if the marginal students they teach can be pushed until graduation. This may also explain why there was a lack of involvement from the academic Deans and faculty members that were requested to interview for this study. If it was the President's desire to intentionally keep the policy out of the classroom, then those on the academic side of the campus may truly not have known enough to participate in the study. As mentioned earlier in Chapter III, five of the six administrators with the title of Dean declined the request for an interview, or did not respond at all. The only Dean that did respond to be

interviewed worked in the Division of Student Affairs and has no direct contact with faculty. Of the three faculty members requested to interview, only one decided to participate only when I included a desire to learn more about the summer bridge program.

While the actual effects of this policy reaching the faculty level is a question to be debated, anecdotal comments left me to believe the faculty certainly know that if a student is unsure about their major, the best thing the student can do is continue classes and get their associates degree. By doing this, they eliminate the risk of losing credit hours due to transfer issues with other four-year institutions within the State.

*Summary.* Since the implementation of the performance based policy at Woodland Hills Community College in 2001, several new programs have been created aiming to help retain students and get them to reach graduation. These programs were a part of the “Finish What You Start” campaign and included, student and family orientations, Gradmax, student leadership classes, the summer bridge program, and blended advisement. However, data indicated that the policy created very few changes on instruction in the classroom. Instead it had created a renewed focus on student success. While this was a broad term, for the administrators at Woodland Hills Community College, this became a focus on retaining students, and assisting them through graduation.

### *Research Question #3*

As data was gathered, and themes began to emerge, the overarching resolve was to answer the three research questions posed in Chapter I. The



third research question was 3) To what extent has performance based funding become a part of the culture at the institution? If the policy was to be taken seriously by campus administrators, it would take a campus-wide effort to focus on the goals of student retention and gradation.

*Campus Culture.* To impact the culture of the campus, the performance based funding policy would have to be topic of discussion throughout the campus, and for a prolonged period of time. It would also have to slowly start appearing in important college documents such as strategic planning, the mission statement and the College vision. Listed below are the mission and vision statements for Woodland Hills Community College as found throughout printed literature on campus and on their website:

#### Mission Statement

Woodland Hills Community College exists as a publicly created and sustained open-admission, associate degree-granting college to provide comprehensive lower-division programs of higher education and effective community services.

#### College Vision

By constantly creating and improving learning programs and services that are measurably effective and keenly matched to the needs of our students and community, Woodland Hills Community College will be recognized as one of the nation's premier two-year colleges, distinguished by:

- 1) Superior student retention and success rates;

- 2) A growing multi-cultural and multi-generational student body;
- 3) Development and efficient use of fiscal resources, and
- 4) Exceptional quality and diversity of programs and personnel ([www.whcc.edu](http://www.whcc.edu)).

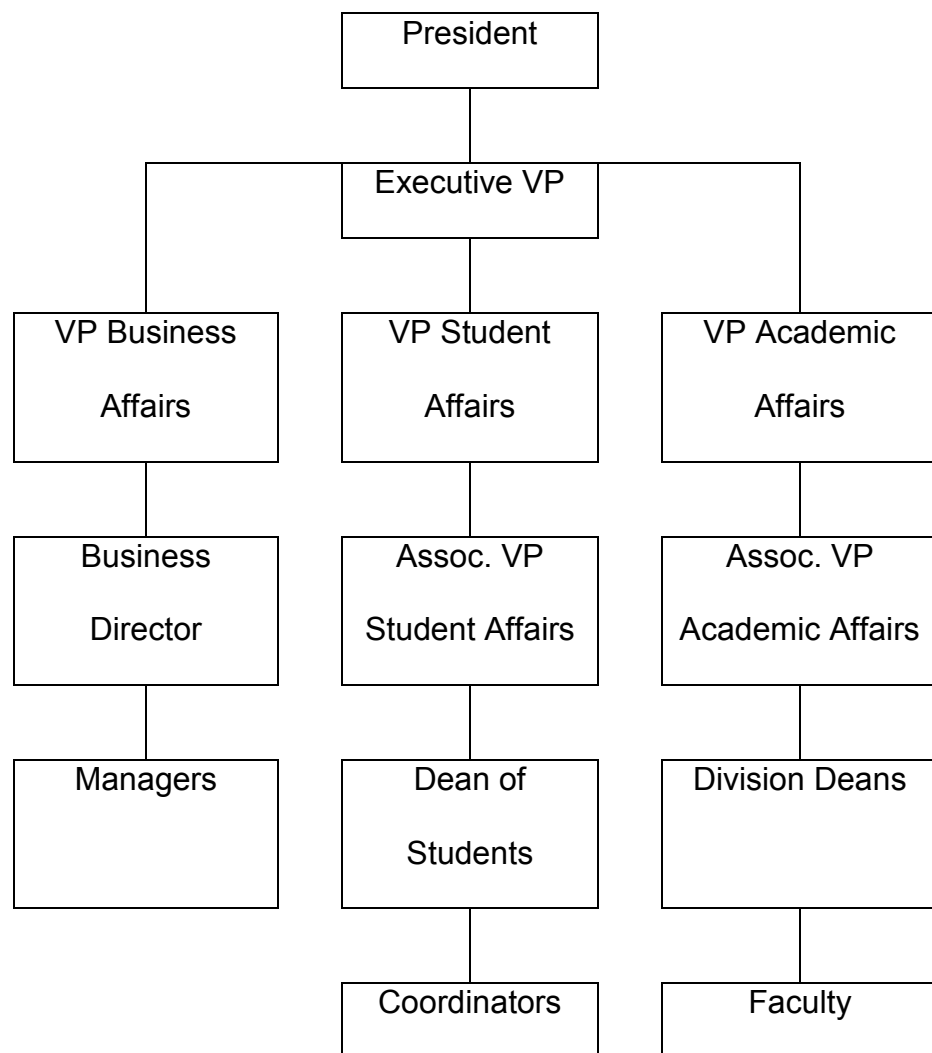
Data indicated that although the mission had not changed at Woodland Hills Community College, several functions and services had changed to measure success. Student retention and graduation did become a part of their vision statement, and again the term success rates appear to be used synonymously with graduation rates. To carry out these functions, services and programs that have changed, as well as the renewed focus on retention and graduation, the campus would have to embrace the direction, and develop a deep cultural understanding and commitment.

To understand if the culture of the campus had been impacted by the performance based funding policy, one must first understand the hierarchical structure of the institution. At Woodland Hills Community college, the campus is led by the college President, and reporting directly to him are three Vice Presidents and an Executive Vice President. From the Vice President's position, the organizational chart broadens through the next two levels including Associate Vice Presidents, Deans and Directors. When a funding policy such as performance based funding is implemented statewide, it is typically the President of the institution that leads this type of change. As the individual in charge of the direction a campus will take during his or her tenure, it is imperative that the

President have a broad vision of goals, and the ability to motivate others to see those goals become reality through strategic planning. To better illustrate the hierarchical structure of Woodland Hills Community College, Figure 3 shows the organizational chart:

Figure 3

Woodland Hills Community College Organizational Chart



To follow the vision and reach the goals the college sets, campus staff and faculty would have to understand and embrace the goals for student success. However, getting an entire campus to embrace changes to strategic planning can be a difficult task. With most student contact time coming from interaction with the professor, it is important that the goals of increasing student graduation and retention move beyond administrative ranks, and deep into the culture of the faculty. In Chapter IV two themes emerged dealing with a re-focusing of efforts towards retention and graduation, and a thought towards developing a campus culture. Data conflicted depending on which interviewee was being asked the questions. While some felt performance based funding had permeated the campus culture, others felt it wasn't talked about as much, but rather a new focus on student success was permeating the culture.

As interviews began, I received my first glimpse at determining if performance based funding had become a part of the culture at Woodland Hills Community College. Hierarchically speaking, the first five interviews conducted were with the top five administrative officials within the institution, with the exception of the President. As indicated earlier the interview with the President was to be the first interview, but on the day of the interview, I received a phone call from the President's secretary to inform me he was ill, and that the interview would have to be postponed until a later date. The defining emergent theme that seemed to resonate in each of the first five interviews was that of a re-focus for the campus. Each participant in their own words expressed that throughout the strengths and weaknesses of the policy, the program caused Woodland Hills

Community College to re-focus on the goal of student retention and graduation. Each of the first five participants worked at the college in an administrative role when performance based funding was implemented. However, the general tone of the interviews was about student success rather than the policy. With each question, participants would veer from the original question and began providing information as it related to the students and how the college was improving in the areas of student retention and graduation. While these are two components of the policy, rarely was the actually policy brought up in their discussions.

This may be due to two factors. First, the time that had passed since the policies inception, and the time that had passed since new work practices have been incorporated in various levels of the campus. If these interviews would have occurred in 2001 – 2002, it is my belief that the policy would have been on the forefront of the respondent's minds as it was first being implemented. However, with this study occurring five years after implementation of the policy, the focus was not about the policy, but rather student success.

When asked specifically about the policy permeating the culture, the answers varied with each participant. Although they differed from each other, the resounding theme that emerged was that the policy and the term "performance based funding" were not well known, but over time, through the hiring of new personnel and the new programs, the focus on what defines student success had changed. This new definition of student success was a complete focus on improving student graduation and retention rates for the campus.

As the first few interviews were concluding, the second phase of interview requests were distributed. These individuals represented other members of the administrative and academic councils, as well as any other individual names that emerged from the first interviews as listed in Chapter III. Anxiously I awaited the return of the informed consents indicating the participant had agreed to take part in the study. However, over a period of three weeks, responses were not made from four of the potential subjects to be interviewed. Four others contacted me by phone, or in person to let me know they were declining participation due to what they felt was a lack of knowledge regarding performance based funding. One respondent that asked not to be identified stated they had never heard of performance based funding and was unsure why I had solicited them to participate in the study. This meant that only 10 of the 18 participants solicited to take part in the study actually participated by granting an interview. This left me to make an assumption from anecdotal comments that the other 9 subjects whom did not participate either did not have the time, were not interested, or had a lack of knowledge of the subject to participate in the interview.

After considering what the first five interviews yielded, and combining that with the lack of results from the second set of interview requests, it became clear that Burke and Minassians findings that the policy rarely reaches below the level of the Vice President, applied to this study as well. It appeared that at Woodland Hills Community College, the policy of performance based funding made an impact at the highest administrative levels when it was first introduced. However that impact quickly turned into a new definition of student success and the focus

and efforts were geared towards a desire for increased student retention and graduation rates. Before long the term “performance based funding” was rarely used below this top administrative level. This research indicates that performance based funding as a term and as a policy did not permeate the campus culture. However, effects from the policy’s implementation in 2001 have created changes that have permeated throughout the campus.

*Summary.* To determine if the policy of performance based funding had permeated the culture of Woodland Hills Community College; questions were presented to participants about the campus culture and knowledge of the policy. Data indicated that while some felt it had, others felt the policy had not. Throughout the five years since it was first implemented, there has been less emphasis placed on the actual policy, but more emphasis placed on a new definition of student success.

### Conclusions

This chapter has identified several new programs implemented over the past five years aimed at helping students succeed. The policy on performance based funding has also changed over the past five years, which based on data, appears to have benefited Woodland Hills Community College more than hampering it. The policy changes were made in an effort to make it more equitable and fair for each individual institution, all while institutions were conducting their own self-evaluation of how to improve student retention and graduation rates.

The results of this study indicate the policy did have an impact at the institution in the department of Student Affairs. Nearly all of the new programs identified in this study were designed to work with students outside of the classroom. Several of the administrators interviewed referred to what Tinto (1994) calls a “connectedness” to the campus. This “connectedness” was a direct attempt to interact with students and get them involved with other campus activities while they are not in class. Nearly all of the new programs identified in Chapter IV and earlier in this chapter dealt with this secondary contact, and for Woodland Hills Community College, this meant creating a new type of student for them.

Not only did they seek a new type of student, but they also developed a fairly narrow view of the term “student success”. Data indicated that somewhere shortly after the policy’s implementation in 2001, it slowly became invisible below the level of the Vice President, and the effects of the policy began to turn into a desire to improve the retention and graduation rates at Woodland Hills Community College. Throughout interviews the terms “graduation and retention” were used synonymous with “student success”. Because the policy only applies to the college’s first-time, full-time cohort, this is where the attention, resources and energy was spent. The programs, services and opportunities were developed with this group of students in mind. There was no data that shined any light on success in divorce counseling, success in military deployment services, or success in daycare for single parents. In no way am I advocating this is only what a community college represents, but based on data from



interviews, and document analysis these areas seem to be more closely related to the other 8,000 students that attend Woodland Hills Community College.

This focus on student success as it relates to the first-time, full-time cohort and graduation rates, included spending money and attracting young, traditional students that have a strong chance of maintaining good grades and staying in school until reaching graduation. Out of 10 interviews, only one of the participants spoke directly about this when he questioned the money and personnel resources being used to focus on 10% of the student body, but questioned what is being done about the other 90% of the students. This participant spoke about the relational versus transactional climate they are attempting to create in the cohort students, but questions should be raised about how that relational climate can exist with the part time students as well.

One of the few programs detailed in the data that was broad in its application to all students was the program the President of Woodland Hills Community College set-up with Pepsi Cola when negotiating the campus contract. Pepsi agreed to pay the graduation fee students have always been required to pay when making graduation application in their last semester. This was in an effort to remove any barrier possible that might keep a student from graduation.

### Conclusions Within the Framework of Theory

During the design phase of this study, two potential theories were identified. First, systems theory was identified because it supports that no organization is self-sufficient; all depend for survival on the types of relations they

establish with the larger systems of which they are a part (Scott, 1981).

Therefore the system is bigger than all of its individual parts. Most systems theorists stress that interaction with other systems in the environment influences an entity's organizational development (Capra, 1996). This theory appeared to be a good fit when looking at the phenomenon of how the college is dependant on other outside sources for governance and funding such as the State Regents, the state legislature, and the general public and how those relationships are interdependent and affect each other. This theory also could explain the relation that existed between different departments and Division offices within the campus.

Within the systems theory, a second model introduced was the hierarchical model which suggests vertical relationships are stressed within organizations which a high degree of accountability of the leader to external sponsors (Bush, 2003). The hierarchical model is a part of a formal model which is a broad term used for overlapping theories that describe the structure of the organization. Within these formal models, there is an emphasis on the accountability of the organization to its sponsoring body (p. 38). This accountability is found in the relationship between Woodland Hills Community College and its governing body, the State Regents for Higher Education.

Accountability is only one premise that defines the hierarchical model. Another key component is that the organizations are goal oriented and being guided toward success. Everand and Morris (1990) stress this significance:

All organizations, including educational ones, should be actively managed against goals...where there is a clear sense of direction in which the organization is being steered and markers whereby we can assess progress (p. 149).

The performance based funding policy and its implementation at Woodland Hills Community College is a direct example of how the hierarchical model applies to administrative structure, decisions and emphasis.

While systems theory fits this study, I found that the hierarchical model better explained some of the findings or lack thereof. As interviews, observations, and data analysis were conducted, a hierarchical pattern began to develop. When performance based funding was first being implemented in the State, the campus presidents were intricately involved in fine-tuning the details of the policy. They then went back to their own institutions to begin the implementation process with their key administrators. This implementation was dependant on where the campus currently stood in terms of student retention and graduation rates, and the buy-in of each individual president to the concept of the policy. The success of the implementation heavily depended on this buy in as it moved hierarchically down through the organization.

Analysis of the data suggested that recognition of performance based funding in its original form did not reach far beyond the Vice President in Academic Affairs. Although three of the 10 interviews conducted were from Academic Affairs, seven of the eight interview requests that were denied were also from Academic Affairs. Clint spoke of his desire to keep the policy out of the

classroom in fear that it might create a perception that faculty were being pressed to “dumb down” the curriculum and pass students for potential monetary gains for the campus. Bush (2003) also acknowledges this in the hierarchical model as a possible limitation since higher education is somewhat different as a typical organization due to the autonomy needed in the faculty ranks (p.50). While the term “student success” seemed to permeate the campus culture in this study, the policy itself is not well known beyond the vice presidential level. Therefore the transparency of the policy is non-existent on this campus; only the administrators know that several of the new programs originated from the performance base funding initiative.

A stark contrast exists when comparing Woodland Hills Community College and performance based funding policy and the K-12 education system and No Child Left Behind. For K-12, the policy is transparent that nearly everyone on all levels of the K-12 system knows the link between accountability mechanisms and No Child Left Behind.

#### Implications of Study

The implications of this study are far reaching as it applies to higher education and policy analysis and implementation. Literature review suggested that knowledge of performance based funding rarely makes it below the level of Vice President or Chief Financial Officer. This study’s findings conclude that Burke and Minassians were correct as very little policy knowledge was yielded during data analysis when the data pertained to staff below the Vice Presidential

level. This is important as administrators in higher education, and those at the governing board level when deciding on future policy implementation.

Because the findings in this study reflected the same findings as Burke and Minassians, a central question to higher education administrators, board members, and state legislators should be why is this happening, and does that impact the effectiveness of the policy? The core tenant of the policy implemented in the state being studied was to show more accountability, yet in this study data analysis revealed the policy is widely unknown. While the data is subjective and was received through my own inptertivist lens, it might have some generalizability to some degree in the context it was presented. Especially at other institutions that have similar demographic and student characteristics as Woodland Hills Community College.

This generalizability can extend to decisions on how programs are implemented and decisions are made for policy compliance when using the hierarchical model. In the context of this study, the policy is not far reaching and very linear in its approach to improving retention and graduation rates. This study can lend to future research in the limitations of the hierarchical model when broad policies are implemented, but do not reach into the culture of the institution.

### Recommendations

The following section will outline four recommendations that came out of the study. These recommendations are presented as differing ways to conduct future studies that might enhance the data found in this study. The

recommendations also provide for a method to learn more about the impact of performance based funding in higher education settings.

A recommendation for future research on the topic of performance based funding would be to conduct a similar qualitative study within the ranks of the faculty. Since, as literature suggests, that many times performance based funding is not known below the position of the campus president or chief financial officer, this study could only go so far with interviewees. Since the goal of performance based funding for the State focuses on student graduation and retention rates, an interview protocol and research design could be used to determine how the faculty feels the campus improving student success in terms of increasing retention and graduation rates. The current study is limited since many educators do not understand performance funding; therefore most interviews were the view of top administrators only. However, the faculty is where the relationships with students exist and bonds are formed. Rarely does a student look back on his or her college experience and thank an administrator. Instead it is a particular faculty or group of faculty that served as mentors, and provided guidance when needed. It is with the faculty that the student develops critical thinking skills, and has the proverbial “light bulb” moments. A research study looking into the perceptions of faculty member on student graduation and retention at a community college could potentially provide another perspective of what is contained in this study. It might also provide other options that campus administrators have not tried, or are not aware of. In this study, it is unknown what kind of dialog exists between faculty and administrators when it comes to

helping students succeed, and gaining an insight into the faculty perspective could be valuable.

A second recommendation for research would be to conduct a mixed methods approach to gather both rich, descriptive data along with quantifiable data to look at current graduation and retention rates and determine if improvements exist. Many of the new programs designed were in an effort to improve student success and increase retention and graduation rates. By using a mixed methods approach, quantifiable data could be extracted to determine if retention rates and graduation rates had increased, decreased or remained the same since the implementation of several of these new initiatives like GradMax, orientation, family orientation, and the student leadership programs. This statistical data could then be used in correlation with the qualitative data gathered from interviews, documents and observations. Together, the mixed method approach might confirm what participants shared during interviews, or the numbers may in fact prove these new programs and services are not statistically significant in improving the retention and graduation rates of students at Woodland Hills Community College.

A third recommendation for research would be to conduct a study on the impact of performance based funding at the office of the State Regents of Higher Education. While the current study created a viewpoint about a State mandated program and its impact at a single institution, this may not necessarily be the same view held by staff and administrators at the Regents office where the statewide program was initiated. With a broader view of the funding program at

all State public institutions, data could be gathered to determine if performance based funding is having any impact on the BrainGain 2010 goal established in 1999. The Regents' office perspective could be researched on a micro level within a single institution like Woodland Hills Community College, or a grouping of similar institutions, or it could include a macro view of all higher education institutions statewide. This data could then be useful for other State governing bodies of higher education or lawmakers that are considering implementing similar funding programs or adjusting ones currently in place.

A final recommendation would be to look at the correlation of online programs and the retention and graduation rates. In the 1998-1999 academic year Woodland Hills Community College offered 44 courses using some form of electronic class media, and by the same time the next year in 1999-2000 this had increased by nine courses to 53 (SRHE, Learning Sites & Electronic Media Report, 1998-2000). This has now increased to over 80 classes and even a few associate's degrees are available completely online for student who choose not to drive to campus for traditional classes. A focus on this type of study could determine if the use of online course management and learning management systems increase student retention and graduation rates. A nationwide movement towards online classes and degree programs moved through the State in the late 1990s. If a campus is looking to increase its student retention and graduation rates, this might be an area the might provide reliable data. This is especially important since data can be gathered and analyzed to compare true



online classes with hybrid classes, which involve some amount of web based instruction along with the traditional brick and mortar instruction with a professor.

### Final Thoughts

What started out as an idea for a small class assignment presented nearly six years ago has turned into a full research study. While learning about performance based funding, ideas came and went on what kind of study should be conducted and what benefit it would be to higher education and society as a whole. To understand a phenomenon, one must peel and pick away the layers and look deeply at it, accepting all possibilities. The purpose of this study was to determine what impact performance based funding had on this community college, to try and understand how this mandated policy may or may not have created change in the campus culture and to seek understanding of programs and services that were implemented to meet the challenges of this program seeking more accountability. In conclusion, I feel that performance based funding did have an impact on how Woodland Hills Community College viewed and now reacts to improving graduation and retention rates of their students. Although it can be argued that it is not fair to a college with its particular demographic and socioeconomic surroundings, the impact of this program appears to have been positive for the first-time, full-time students.

For the students, it appears positive because of the new programs and services offered that are designed to help them succeed and get them connected to a campus culture. Several of the new programs implemented also involve faculty interaction with students outside of the classroom which helps students

connect. For the campus, it has been positive because the use of performance based funding forced them [employees] to re-focus on the students. While some programs and services will be stronger than others, it helped put the focus back on student success. To fight an uphill battle, and think outside of the box is exactly what has been done over the past six years at Woodland Hills Community College. A vision led by the President of the campus, and a challenge accepted by key staff, faculty and administrators have provided opportunities to students who may have otherwise fallen through the cracks.

The one question that is left unanswered in this study is to what degree the policy created the changes, versus the degree to which the President of the institution created the changes regardless of the policy implementation. In the year 2000, when performance based funding was first being designed and evaluated by the State Regents for Higher Education to its 25 public institutions, another significant event was occurring at Woodland Hills Community College. In July, 2000 Clint was announced as the 5<sup>th</sup> President after the retirement of the past president who served in the role of president for over a decade.

As Clint accepted the new position as President at Woodland Hills Community College, a domino effect occurred at other high level administrative positions on campus. Rather than hiring from outside the institution, he promoted from within. Table 11 represents the personnel involved from their old positions to their new positions.

Table 11

Administrative Personnel Changes at Woodland Hills Community College in 2000

Name	Old Position	New Position
Clint	Executive Vice President	President
Bobby	Vice President of Academic Affairs	Executive Vice President
Brent	Vice President of Student Affairs	Vice President of Academic Affairs
Wilma	Director of Public Relations	Vice President of Student Affairs
Owen	Director of Finance	Vice President of Business Affairs

This was a total of five position changes that occurred to form the new President's new executive council. The question remains as to how many of these changes in addressing student success might have occurred even without the policy, because of this shuffle in the top administrative positions at the college. Any time an employee accepts a promotion, they enter the position with their own ideas and plans for success in the job. No single interview conducted in this study indicated to what degree the policy assisted in the development of some of the new programs identified; versus the individuals own desire in a new job to improve student success.

It is somewhat fitting that the idea for this study started in 2000 when individual institutions first learned about the new performance based funding

policy, and Clint first took over as President of the college. This study, now six years later, draws to a close and as mentioned earlier in Chapter III, so does Clint's role as the president of the institution as he announced his retirement. Rather than viewing a small slice of his presidential tenure, this study was able to gain insight into his leadership from start to finish as it applies to this policy and an overall theme of student success. While the true impact of performance based funding on this campus and on his administrative decisions regarding full-time and part-time students may remain partially unknown, he leaves the campus with a renewed focus to get students to finish what they start.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Request for Permission Letter

Date

Dr. Clint Jefferson  
President  
Woodland Hills Community College  
1234 College Street  
Woodland Hills, ST 12345

Dear Dr. Jefferson,

As you may be aware, I am beginning my dissertation research and am seeking your permission to study the Impact of Performance Based Funding at Woodland Hills Community College. This research is designed to study the phenomenon of Performance Based Funding since its inception on campus. Specifically it will investigate what changes have been implemented in the areas of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Business Affairs. I would also like to investigate its strengths and weakness as it applies to Woodland Hills Community College.

To accomplish this, I would like to conduct a document analysis of any reports, minutes or other documents you feel might be beneficial to this study. I will also need to interview several stakeholders on campus including members of your administrative council.

This study is significant in that very little research has been conducted on performance based funding in the state in which your institution is located or other states and presently there is no research that provides a case study of its effect on an individual campus.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request. If you would like to discuss other particulars of this study, I can be reached at 229-7366 (cell) or 733-7392 (work).

Sincerely,

Bret Wood  
Dean of Continuing Education & Community Services  
Ed.D. Candidate  
Oklahoma State University

cc:  
Dr. Judith Mathers, Dissertation Advisor  
Oklahoma State University  
314 Willard  
405.744.1480  
judith.mathers@okstate.edu

## APPENDIX B

### Request for Interview Letter



Date

Title

First Name, Last Name

Company

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear First Name, Last Name

Five years ago the State Board of Regents implemented a performance based funding program for all public institutions of higher education. The purpose of this program was to monetarily reward campuses for meeting certain pre-defined criteria. Several other states have used and are using programs similar to this, however very little research exists on the programs impact on campuses.

As a doctoral student in Higher Education Administration at Oklahoma State University, I am interested in the effects this policy. As a part of my research, I am conducting a number of interviews with several stakeholders on campus. I would like to invite you to participate by allowing me to interview you. Your participation will be kept completely confidential. Your input would be of great value to me in this project.

I will contact you by phone within the next two days to schedule an interview time if you are interested. If you have any questions regarding the research project, I can be reached at 229-7366 (cell) or 733-7392 (work).

Thank you,

Bret Wood

Dean of Continuing Education & Community Services

Ed.D. Candidate

Oklahoma State University

cc:

Dr. Judith Mathers, Dissertation Advisor

Oklahoma State University

314 Willard

405.744.1480

[judith.mathers@okstate.edu](mailto:judith.mathers@okstate.edu)

APPENDIX C  
Informed Consent

The Impact of Performance Based Funding at Woodland Hills Community  
College

CONSENT LETTER FOR ADULT PARTICIPANTS

You are invited to participate in a research study on the effects of performance based funding at Woodland Hills Community College. This research study is being conducted as partial fulfillment for the Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration at Oklahoma State University. I am interested in the effects of performance based funding in academic affairs, student affairs, and business affairs, as well as it's inclusive into the culture of the campus. Interviews are being conducted with select administrators on campus. The estimated time for participation is approximately 1 hour.

During the interview, I will take notes for later analysis. With your permission, the interview will also be audio-taped to help in the note-taking process. At the conclusion of the study, the tapes will be erased. In order to protect your identity, I will assign pseudonyms for you. All information collected will be kept confidential, and the list indicating your actual name will be kept in a secure place. Other than me, no other person will be made aware of your identity. The study may result in published articles, dissertations, and/or presentations at professional conferences. Any reporting that arises from this research project will not identify individuals.

If you choose to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time. You may also decline to participate. You will not be penalized for withdrawing or declining. If you have any further questions or concerns, **please contact me using the information below**. Please keep the attached copy of this letter for future reference. If at any time during this study you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Sue Jacobs, OSU Institutional Review Board, at (405) 744-5700, 415 Whitehurst, Stillwater, OK 74078.

Thank you for your participation in this study.

Bret L. Wood  
Ed.D. Candidate  
Oklahoma State University  
bwood@rose.edu

---

Please indicate whether or not you wish to participate in this project by checking a statement below and signing your name. Please sign both copies of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_ I wish to participate in the study, *The Impact of Performance Based Funding at Woodland Hills Community College*, have read this consent form, and agree to be audio-taped.

\_\_\_\_\_ I wish to participate in the study, *The Impact of Performance Based Funding at Woodland Hills Community College*, and have read this consent form, but I do not agree to be audio-taped.

I hereby agree to participate in the above-described research. I understand my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

---

(SIGNATURE)

---

(DATE)

APPENDIX D

Contact Summary Sheet

## Contact Summary Sheet

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What were the main issues or themes that struck you in this contact?
  
2. Summarize the information you got on each of the target questions you had for this contact.

Research Questions	Information
<b><i>Performance based funding in Oklahoma.</i></b>	
<b><i>Strengths and weaknesses of the Oklahoma Program</i></b>	
<b><i>The extent to which performance based funding is influencing decision making</i></b>	
<b><i>Becoming a part of the practice and culture at Rose State College.</i></b>	
<b><i>Impact of instruction, curriculum, student services, practice, and functions</i></b>	
<b><i>Attitudes towards Performance Based Funding by administration</i></b>	
<b><i>Extent of educational change at Woodland Hills Community College</i></b>	
<b><i>Changes in performance based funding policy</i></b>	

Contact Summary Sheet (continued)

3. Is there anything else that struck you as salient, interesting, illuminating or important in this contact?
  
4. What new or remaining target questions do you have in considering the next contact with this person?

(adopted from Miles and Huberman, 1984)

APPENDIX E  
Interview Questions



## Interview Questions

Hello, my name is Bret Wood, and I am working on a research study about the effects of performance based funding at Woodland Hills Community College. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Also I want to reiterate that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and that you may withdraw at any time without penalty to you.

With your permission, I will audiotape the interview session today and transcribe it at a later date. I will change all names on the transcription to protect your anonymity. This interview will take about an hour.

Do you have any questions?

**1. Performance based funding in the state.**

(General areas to cover include: why did the state decide to implement performance based funding?, how were the performance indicators decided on for use in the state system?, how do you view the future of performance based funding in the state?)

**2. Strengths and weaknesses of the state program.**

(General areas to cover include: In your opinion, what are the policy's strengths?, Can you give me an example of how this has helped Woodland Hills Community College?, In your opinion, what are the policy's weaknesses?, Can you give me an example of how this has hurt Woodland Hills Community College?)

**3. The extent to which performance based funding is influencing decision making.**

(General areas to cover include: Are you aware of anything that has changed in the mission or vision of the campus since implementation?, Has the strategic plan changed since implementation?, If so, were changes made in strategic planning to adjust to the prescribed performance indicators?)

**4. Becoming a part of the practice and culture at Rose State College.**

(General areas to cover include: How familiar do you believe the following groups of employees are of the policy and its effects on campus: administration, faculty, professional staff, classified staff, part-time staff, students?, In your opinion, what departments are most affected by this policy?)

5. ***Impact of instruction, curriculum, student services, practice, and functions.***  
(General areas to cover include: How has the performance based funding money rewarded to the campus been used?, Are there any new programs or practices that have been developed to assist with the goals of the funding policy?, Can you expand on these new programs/practices?)
  
6. ***Attitudes towards Performance Based Funding by administration***  
(General areas to cover include: In what ways does the attitude of the President effect how you view performance based funding?, Do you believe this policy is fair to the College?, Can you give me an example, or examples to clarify your response?)
  
7. ***Extent of educational change at Rose State College***  
(General areas to cover include: How will it impact your institution if a larger percentage of state dollars are tied to this new funding plan?)
  
8. ***Changes in performance based funding policy.***  
General areas to cover include: How could this program be improved at the state level or campus level?, Would you recommend changing the policy?, How would you like to change it?, Would you recommend terminating the policy? Why?, Is there anything else relating to performance based funding that you would like to comment on?)

## APPENDIX F

### Member Check and Thank You Letter

Date

Title  
First Name, Last Name  
Company  
Address  
City, State, Zip

Dear First Name, Last Name

Thank you for your participation in my doctoral study on the Impact of Performance Based funding at Woodland Hills Community College.

I have attached a copy of the transcript of our interview session. Please feel free to correct any errors, or concerns. If you have any changes, you can send this back to me in the attached envelope. Once again, thank you for your time and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 229-7366 (cell) or 733-7392 (work).

Thank you,

Bret Wood  
Ed.D. Candidate  
Oklahoma State University

## APPENDIX G

### Overview of Interview Participants

<b>Interviewees Name</b>	<b>Degrees Earned</b>	<b>Position</b>
Clint	B.Ed. M.A. Ed.D.	President
Brent	B.A. M.A. Ed.D.	Vice President
Wilma	B.A. M.S. Ed.D.	Vice President
Owen	B.S. M.B.A.	Vice President
Frank	A.A B.A. M.A.	Associate Vice President
Haley	B.S. M.Ed. Ph.D.	Associate Vice President
Kent	B.B.A. M.B.A. Ph.D.	Dean
Mary	B.A. M.Ed.	Recruiter
Bobby	B.A. M.A. Ph.D.	Executive Vice President
Terri	A.A. B.S. M.S.	Faculty

## APPENDIX H

### Finish What you Start Marketing Campaign

Finish What You Start

Big Heads Campaign

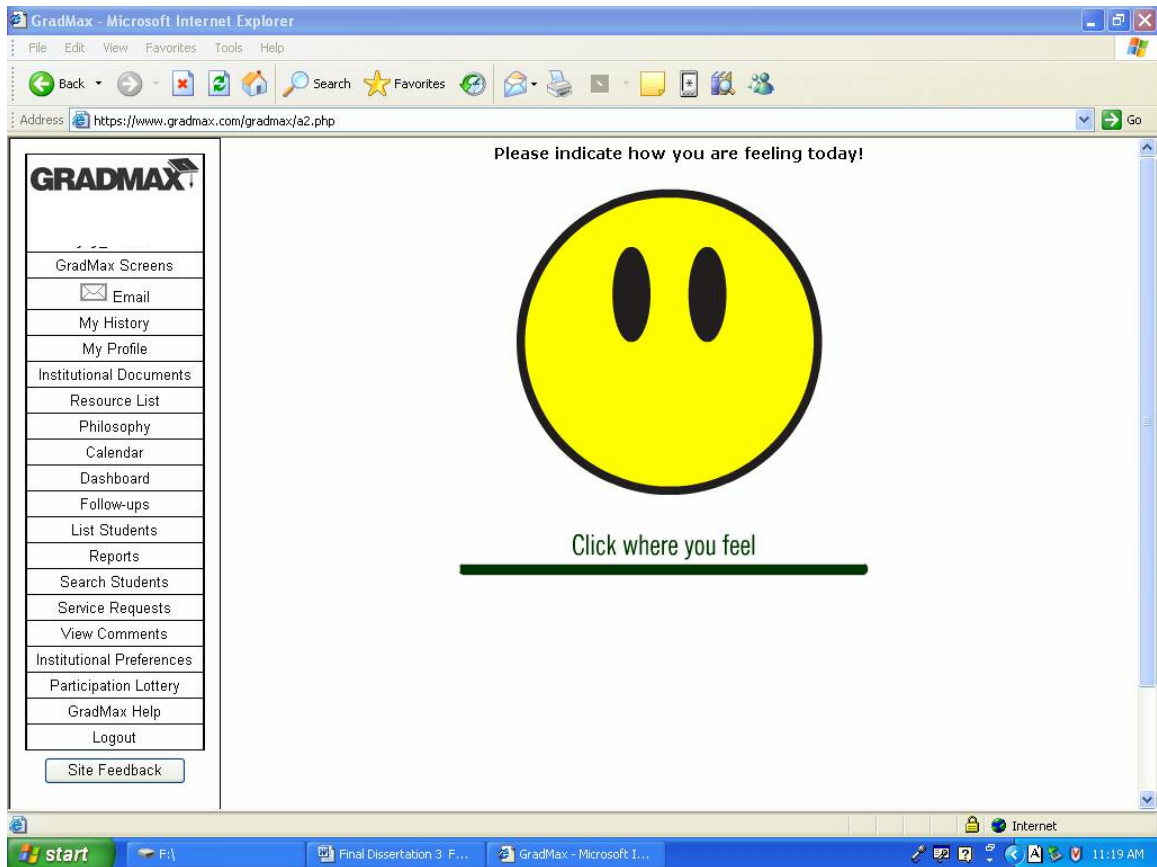




## APPENDIX I

### GradMax Feelings Indicator

# GradMax Feelings Indicator



APPENDIX J

GradMax Life Survey

# GradMax Life Survey

**GRADMAX!**

- GradMax Screens
- Email
- My History
- My Profile
- Institutional Documents
- Resource List
- Philosophy
- Calendar
- Dashboard
- Follow-ups
- List Students
- Reports
- Search Students
- Service Requests
- View Comments
- Institutional Preferences
- Participation Lottery
- GradMax Help
- Logout
- Site Feedback

Looking over the past week, what is really going well for you?  
(check all that apply)

My personal life   Life is happy for me   My grades

My social life   I'm doing okay with my expenses

I'm connecting well with other students

My family is doing well

My classes

The weather is great   I feel I am tracking onto a good career

I am learning a lot   I am healthy

I have my finances under control   My class projects/homework

I'm connecting well with my instructors   Other stuff too   Submit

Done

start   F:\   Final Dissertation 3 F...   GradMax - Microsoft I...   Internet   11:23 AM

## APPENDIX K

### Woodland Hills Community College Student Characteristics

## Woodland Hills Community College Student Characteristics

Woodland Hills Community College Student Characteristics Fall 2005 Semester		
GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS	NUMBER	PERCENT
All Students (Unduplicated)	8,178	100.00%
Full-Time	2,994	36.61%
Part-Time	5,184	63.39%
First-Time, Full-Time	839	
1 <sup>st</sup> time entering WHCC	2,449	29.95%
1 <sup>st</sup> time college student	1,362	16.65%
Male	3,126	38.35%
Female	5,042	61.65%
Military Affiliation	109	1.33%
Veterans	469	5.73%
GED	668	8.17%
High School Graduate	6,956	85.06%
Day Only	3,911	47.82%
Night Only	1,529	18.70%
Day and Night	1,107	13.54%
DIVISION		
Business/Information Technology	1,313	16.06%
Engineering Sciences	863	10.55%
Humanities	1,354	16.56%
Social Sciences	1,251	15.30%
Health Sciences	1,579	19.31%
Non-Degree Seeking	1,720	21.03%
Undecided	98	1.20%
ETHNICITY		
Nonresident Alien	5	.06%
African American	1,311	16.03%
American Native	466	5.70%
Asian/Pacific Islander	201	2.46%
Hispanic	284	3.47%
Caucasian	5,275	64.50%
Multiracial	509	6.22%
Not Available	124	1.52%
EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVE		
Associates in Arts	2,416	29.54%
Associate in Science	1,560	19.08%
Associate in Applied Science	2,344	28.66%

APPENDIX K (continued)

Woodland Hills Community College Student Characteristics  
Fall 2005 Semester

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVE (continued)		
Certificate	32	.39%
Non-Degree	1,720	21.03%
Undecided	98	1.20%
AGE		
Average Age	27	

VITA

Bret L. Wood

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: THE IMPACT OF PERFORMANCE BASED FUNDING AT WOODLAND HILLS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Major Field: Higher Education Leadership

Biographical:

Personal Data:

Education: B.S. Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, Central State University, Edmond, May 1991.

M.Ed. Higher Education, University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, July 2005.

Ed.D. Higher Education Leadership, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, May 2007.

Experience: 1990-1999, Coordinator of Aquatics and Wellness, Oklahoma City Community College, Oklahoma City.

1999-2002, Professor/Coordinator of Aquatics, Rose State College, Midwest City.

2002-2004, Assistant Director of Continuing Education and Community Services, Rose State College, Midwest City.

2004-Present, Dean of Continuing Education and Community Services, Rose State College, Midwest City.

Professional Memberships: Member, American Red Cross Instructional Support Committee.

Member, National Community College Advisory Board, for the Learning Resources Network, LERN.



Name: Bret Wood

Date of Degree: May 2007

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: THE IMPACT OF PERFORMANCE BASED FUNDING AT  
WOODLAND HILLS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Pages in Study: 181

Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major Field: Higher Education Leadership

Scope and Method of Study: The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the impact of performance based funding at Woodland Hills Community College since its implementation in 2001. Performance based funding was a new program to the State that rewards public higher education institutions for meeting or exceeding pre-defined performance criteria including retention and graduation rates. This case study focused on participant interviews, document analysis, and personal observations. Because Burke & Minassians (2003) contends the policy is invisible below the Vice President level, participant interviews included members of the Presidents Executive Council, as well as members of the Academic Council.

Findings and Conclusions: This study shows that performance based funding did have an impact on Woodland Hills Community College. It should be noted that all names have been changed in this study to provide anonymity to the participants and the institution involved. This includes pseudonym changes to citations and references listed in the bibliography. Specifically it had an impact on the programs and services the campus began implementing to assist students that comprised the first-time, full-time cohort, which is the reportable group to the State Regents for this funding policy. However, the policy did not permeate the culture of the campus. Instead, the policy became invisible at some point since it's inception in 2001 and a new definition of student success was created. Respondents spoke about this student success as they gave detailed information about the new programs, services and opportunities that enable the first-time, full-time student to remain at Woodland Hills Community College until graduation. However, this only represents 10% of the total student body on campus, and it has left questions about the programs, services and energy being spent on the remaining 90% of the students that are part-time, non-degree seeking, or transfer students.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Judith Mathers