

1-1-2015

An Assessment of Enrollment Management at Community Colleges in Mississippi

Jamilah Ruffin

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An assessment of enrollment management at community colleges in Mississippi

By

Jamilah Ruffin

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of
Mississippi State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Community College Leadership
in the Department of Educational Leadership

Mississippi State, Mississippi

December 2015

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2015

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The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which enrollment management exists within the 15 community colleges in Mississippi. This study also obtained specific information on enrollment management implementation, as well as the benefits and barriers to that implementation.

Analysis of the data collected in this study indicated the five major findings. First, enrollment management concepts and practices have been implemented to some extent within the 13 community colleges surveyed. This was evident by the use of the word “enrollment” within several of the titles of participants that were surveyed. Another enrollment practice revealed was the enrollment management structure used by the majority of the community colleges that participated in the study. The majority of the colleges reported either using the coordinator model, in which a midlevel manager oversees enrollment management, or the division model, in which a vice-president is responsible for overseeing enrollment management. The study also revealed that the majority of the community colleges reporting did not have a long-term enrollment plan in place. Only a small percentage of the reporting institutions reported using any type of

formal plan, and an even smaller percentage reported having a long-term enrollment management plan in place. Second, all reporting institutions reported that improved graduation rates and student retention had been the received benefits of their current enrollment management structure. Third, all reporting institutions reported understaffing and limited financial resources as a barrier to effectively implementing enrollment management within their institution. The fourth major finding was that of the strategies listed within the survey, 100% reported using an increased collaboration with high schools as a strategy to increase enrollment. This strategy was followed in frequency by the expansion of online courses and the presidents placing an emphasis on the importance of enrollment management. The fifth major finding was that the majority of the reporting institutions felt that their current enrollment management structure had met or exceeded their enrollment management expectations.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Lettie Ruffin, for her unconditional love and her prayers; my father, Earl Ruffin, for teaching me that I was capable of reaching any goal that I set in my mind to do; my husband, Aaron S. Pou, for believing in me; my sons, Roydashious Gathright, Javian Gathright, Elroyn Gathright, and Aadon Pou, for the successful Godly men they will become; my sister, Shronda Turner, whose love and support made this journey possible; my brother-in-law, Clifton Turner for always finding the silver lining of any situation; my friend, Elroy Gathright, who always supports me; and countless family and friends that gave me unwavering support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank God for giving me the opportunity, knowledge, and strength to complete this quest. God, I want to thank you for the written confirmation that the race is not given to the swift nor the strong but unto them that endure to the end. This dissertation would not have been possible without the support of many people. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my dissertation director, Dr. Arthur Stumpf. As an advisor, he gave me the direction and guidance that I needed to make this goal obtainable. Dr. Stumpf taught me that good was not enough, because what was required was my best. I would also like to express appreciation to the other members of my dissertation committee, namely Dr. Stephanie King, Dr. James Davis, and Dr. W. Martin Wiseman, for their support and guidance during the writing of my dissertation. Dr. King, your guidance and smiling face were my rainbow after the storm on many occasions.

I would like to thank my husband and children for their love and support. To my mother and sister, I thank you for your constant prayers. I would like to express a special thank you to Charlotte Lockett, Dr. Valerie Williams, Eric Brooks, Ullisa Colburn, and Portland McCreary for their support and encouragement that helped me to overcome the setbacks and to continue on this journey. I would also like to thank my classmate Edea Baldwin for her editing and critiques that were invaluable to the completion of this degree.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A prevalent topic among higher education professionals is enrollment management, the act of using planned strategies to enroll an optimal level of the student population (Dolence, 1993). Although enrollment is still a much-discussed topic today, it has been an issue for as long as schools have been providing educational services (Jones, 2003). “Demographic shifts, the emergence of the Information Age, technology advances at a pace unlike any the human race has experienced heretofore, increased reliance on enrollment-generated revenue, and a highly competitive recruitment environment are among the market forces that have led to enrollment management as a concept and as a profession” (Black, 2001, p. i). The concept of enrollment management, (EM) was coined during the 1970s and the 1980s when institutions experienced enrollment declines due to a decrease in educational funding from the federal government (Hossler, 1986).

Henderson (2005) suggests that Jack Maguire was “the father of EM” and wanted to bring cohesion to disparate functions in admissions, financial aid, and student retention (p. 3). Hossler (1986) defined EM as a process or activity influencing the size, shape, and characteristics of a student body by directing institutional efforts in the areas of marketing, recruitment, and admissions, as well as pricing and financial aid. Dolence (1993) expanded the concept of EM to include strategic enrollment management (SEM),

in which he included a more comprehensive process that identifies goals within EM that would help the institution obtain and maintain optimal enrollment.

Bryant (2013) observed, “While community colleges have always managed enrollment, they have not engaged in the kind of strategic enrollment planning practiced by more competitive 4 year institutions” (para. 1). Bryant (2013) also stated that the “if we build it, they will come” approach may have worked before, but it is far too passive for today’s pressurized and ever-changing higher education environment (para. 2). EM has added value to the educational institution. “Enrollment management is viewed by many as a solution to some institutional imperative (e.g., revenue production, institutional reputation, student diversity, student quality, student retention)” (Black, 2001, p.i).

In order to maximize strategic efforts, enrollment managers also must anticipate environmental shifts and assess the impact of these changes on enrollment objectives at their respective institutions (Cope, 1981). During the recession of the late 2000s, community college enrollment was at an all-time high, but as the economy started to recover, many of those students went back to work (Lederman, 2012). Effective EM plans are designed around adaptability and resistance to change within the environment of the institution (Wilkinson, Taylor, Peterson, & Machado-Taylor, 2007). “The process of strategic identification of, movement toward, and maintenance of optimal enrollment has become the hallmark of a successful institution” (Black, 2001, p. 35).

Resource Dependency Theory provides a clear understanding of the evolution of EM. The Resource Dependency Theory, developed by Hossler and Hoeszee, explains how the evaluation of the organizational structure is important for continuous improvement

(2001). Under Resource Dependency, organizations are dependent upon a specific resource. In regard to community colleges, this resource is student enrollment. As state funding continues to decrease, SEM will play a larger role with institutions' ability to capitalize on their resources. Because there is uncertainty in their environments, universities and colleges look to acquire additional resources by establishing unique connections with the external environment to manage their dependence.

Statement of the Problem

Enrollment at community colleges is declining at an alarming rate (Lipsky, 2013). As federal and state funding continues to dwindle, the implementation of SEM planning could play a significant role in the survival of community colleges into the 21st Century by enhancing their ability to capitalize on their resources. Although EM was developed in the 1960s, the research to date on specific attributes and the extent of its usage among community colleges is quite limited. While many colleges use the term "enrollment management," to what extent are community colleges implementing and utilizing it? This study addressed the question, "To what extent has EM been implemented within the 15 community colleges in the state of Mississippi?"

Purpose of the Study

Although most colleges and universities engage in some form of EM, the majority of the literature is based on 4-year institutions. The purpose of this research was to investigate how EM has been implemented in the 15 Mississippi community colleges. The desired outcome of this study was to obtain information on the extent to which these 15 community colleges have implemented EM, as well as the benefits and barriers to that

implementation. This study surveyed the enrollment managers at 13 of the 15 institutions to find out distinctive characteristics of EM at their institutions, including staff and faculty involved, level of formal planning, marketing strategies, and overall satisfaction with the current EM structures. Knowing the specific characteristics of the colleges' EM set-up and design will add to emerging literature on how EM is being applied at the community college level.

Research Questions

Research questions arising from the purpose include:

1. What aspects of EM currently exist at community colleges in Mississippi?
2. What benefits have been received by institutions that are actively engaging in EM?
3. What are the barriers to engaging in EM at the community college level?
4. What SEM strategies are community colleges utilizing to increase enrollment?
5. Have the EM structures met expectations?

Limitations

1. The results of this study depict only the views of survey respondents who served in the position of enrollment manager in the year in which the study was performed.
2. The information collected was self-reported and subject to the individual biases of each enrollment manager's perception of his or her current level of enrollment managing.

3. Researcher bias may impact any research that contains qualitative data.

Delimitations

1. The enrollment managers surveyed in this study were limited to managers that were selected based upon job description and their geographical location.
2. The study measured the extent to which community colleges engaged in EM at a specific point in time.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in that it reveals information about the current level of EM engagement among community colleges and the specific characteristics of that engagement. This study will inform discussion that could lead to an increase in participation in EM among community colleges across the nation. By doing an assessment of EM implementation, an in-depth knowledge will be gained on the extent to which community colleges are utilizing EM, along with the characteristics of their individual plans and model types. The results from the study will contribute to the body of knowledge on EM planning among community colleges and offer a resource to enrollment managers for future planning. Research on SEM has proven it to be an effective tool in enrollment maintenance. As community colleges face the challenges of the 21st Century, effective EM could prove to be beneficial in securing optimal enrollment results.

Definition of Terms

1. Academic Benefits – The strengthening of the academic profile of students, and increased graduation and retention rates (Henderson, 2005).
2. Community College – In the context of this research, a community college is a public 2-year institution where the highest degree awarded is an associate degree (Cohen & Brawer, 2003, p. 5).
3. Enrollment Management – “The institutional effort to influence the characteristics and the size of enrolled student bodies by directing the activities of the offices of admission, financial aid, new student orientation, career planning, retention, and a number of other student affairs areas” (Hossler and Bean, 1990, p. xiv).
4. Enrollment Manager – “Works with unit leaders to examine goals, develop enrollment plans, coordinate efforts to achieve them, and prepare assessment programs” (Stewart, 2004, p.22).
5. Marketing – An integration of promotional activities with programs designed particularly for certain population segments and offered at times and places convenient to those groups (Johnson, 1979).
6. Optimal Enrollment – “Optimal enrollment is the number of students that enables the institutions to achieve fiscal stability and maintain optimal quality” (Dolence, 1993, p. 17).
7. Strategic Enrollment Management Plan – An institutional-wide responsibility and the central focus of the institution’s overall strategic plan (Wilkinson et al., 2007, p. 6).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of relevant research and literature about EM. A variety of research studies were reviewed to provide a framework for understanding the need for EM and the challenges related to implementing it. The literature review will begin by outlining the various definitions of EM and the different model types. Following the different types of enrollment models will be a section on enrollment challenges that community colleges are currently facing. Finally, the last section will explain the need for EM. A wide range of research and literature on EM was reviewed to provide an explanation for the importance of EM.

The Evolution of Enrollment Management

The history of EM dates back to 1973 at Boston College. According to Maguire & Bulter (2008), “During this time frame institutional crisis gave rise to some powerful insights about how synergies among previously isolated functions and activities might hold the key to institutional renewal” (p. 1). At that time, Boston College was in serious financial trouble, and administrators charged two faculty members, Jack Maguire and Frank Campanella, with conducting research and analyzing complex data to create a new organizational structure – a cohesion among admissions, financial aid, research, customer service, and marketing (Maguire & Butler, 2008). Their efforts paid off as enrollment

numbers grew, and the term “*enrollment management*” was born. It was during the 1980s and 1990s that EM began to evolve: “Colleges and Universities began to employ more comprehensive approaches to EM which went beyond marketing, recruiting, and financial aid to include sophisticated financial aid strategies, research, and retention efforts” (Bontrager, 2002, p. 3). According to Owens (2001), this evolution has been one of the most significant developments in higher education.

Community colleges are unique institutions and often require unique strategic planning tailored to the specific needs of the college. According to Lipsky (2013):

Students packed community colleges during the recession, as enrollment hit a historic high, but when the economy began to recover many would-be students went to work. Even though more students put pressure on facilities and resources, they came with tuition dollars—a growing share of total revenue as state monies dwindled. Now community colleges face a new stress: Keep the tuition coming in by managing enrollment like never before. (para. 1-2)

As stated earlier, a strategic enrollment plan is an institutional-wide responsibility and the central focus of the institution’s overall strategic plan (Wilkinson et al., 2007, p. 6). This plan usually includes short-term and long-term goals centered on the mission of the college. Institutions utilize past and current data as well as research to develop their SEM plans. According to Kerlin (2014), “There is no strict recipe for developing a SEM plan; a college’s unique culture, opportunities and challenges should drive its formulation” (para. 1). There are many resources that are available to guide institutions through creating enrollment plans, but they often do not get into specific challenges. Material or literature related to challenges facing EM at community colleges is scarce but can be

found with some effort (Pollock, 2006). SEM can be characterized as “A comprehensive process designed to help an institution achieve and maintain the optimal recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of students, where optimum is defined in the academic context of the institution” (Dolence, 1993, p.16). According to Henderson (2005), the major focus of SEM has been for institutions to establish EM organizational structures within the institution, usually realignment within the division of student affairs, to address issues of recruitment and retention. According to Henderson (2005), “SEM encompasses a cradle-to-endowment mentality that starts with recruitment before students even know they want to come, flows into retention, and renews itself with satisfied alumni ready to contribute to the institution” (p. 35).

Enrollment Management Models

Many institutions utilize different organizational models to meet their needs in regard to EM. Currently, there are 4 model frameworks in use: EM committee, staff coordinator/director of EM, EM matrix, and EM division. These 4 models represent the typical set-up of EM models used at various educational institutions. Although these are the four main models, some institutions may employ a slight variation or combination of these models. Hossler (1990) expanded on the four EM models first introduced by Kemerer, Baldrige, and Green in 1982. Hossler (1990) described these models as basic frameworks colleges and universities can use if they are interested in implementing an EM system. The next section will provide detailed information about the four enrollment models commonly found in higher education institutions.

Enrollment Management Committee

This EM model involves the entire campus community in the recruitment and retention process. The committee is composed of various members from departments knowledgeable about enrollment and directly involved in the enrollment process. The EM committee involves the director of admissions, director of financial aid, dean of students, and faculty members. The EM committee is advisory and has no direct authority over decisions related to its findings. Typically, the EM committee is formed to: (a) define primary and secondary markets for recruitment efforts, (b) evaluate yields on applications for admission, and (c) research the effects of student life and other environmental factors on student success and retention (Kemerer et al., 1982).

The EM committee model has advantages and disadvantages (Kemerer et al., 1982). One advantage of this model is that the committee brings together key players in the enrollment, recruitment, and retention process. Another advantage of this model is that because key members are involved in this process, more staff members are knowledgeable and abreast of the current enrollment issues. A major disadvantage of the EM committee is that it is only advisory in nature. It cannot elevate priority issues to the top of the organization through formal processes or channels (Black, 2004).

Staff Coordinator or Director of Enrollment Management

A second EM organizational approach is the designation of a staff coordinator or director of EM. This person is employed to coordinate campus marketing activities (Fram, 1975). According to Fram, the staff coordinator works in nine areas: admissions, public relations, retention, counseling, academic program development, alumni relations, career placement, institutional research, and development.

With this model, success lies in the coordinator's role, which requires strong interpersonal skills. Success is based on the coordinator's leadership and ability to persuade the leadership in these areas to change and make efficiencies (Kemerer et al., 1982).

The staff coordinator model has some advantages and disadvantages (Kemerer et al., 1982). One of the advantages is that this model does not require restructuring. A second advantage is that this individual is appointed and is responsible for EM activities directly rather than indirectly, as in the EM committee model (Hossler & The College Board, 1986). The disadvantages of the staff coordinator model are that it is difficult for the enrollment manager to get concerns in front of senior management, and the manager has no authority to address the concerns.

Enrollment Management Matrix

The third EM model used at institutions is called the EM matrix. The matrix model typically does not require major changes in institutional restructuring. This model requires creating a new position at the vice-president level. This senior administrator functions similarly to the "staff coordinator," but with authority and responsibility (Kreutner & Godfrey, 1980).

The advantage of this model is that similar functions are grouped together; this can lead to additional resources to meet EM goals. The second advantage is increased communication within the system (Hossler & The College Board, 1986). Kemerer et al., (1982) wrote that the major disadvantage of this matrix model involves limits on the amount of time that the senior-level administrator can dedicate to the EM effort.

Enrollment Management Division

The EM division is the fourth organizational model. Typically, the institutions that use this model identify a vice-president (VP) for institutional advancement, a VP for student enrollment, or a VP of EM. This position, whether the VP for institutional advancement, student enrollment, or EM, is the authority on enrollment related functions and policy decisions (Hossler & The College Board, 1986). Caren and Kemerer (1979) suggested that successful EM requires this type of restructuring. They recommended using the enrollment division organizational model because it aligns resources and service areas more closely together than do any of the other models.

This model is advantageous because vice-presidents have influence in policy making. This official can ensure that enrollment issues are addressed in a timely manner and that adequate resources are available (Kemerer et al., 1982). The main deficit of this EM model is that it changes organizational lines. This model requires a significant investment to establish a new administrative position, and this change could create turmoil on campus when departments are moved from their established reporting lines to a new organizational unit.

The table listed below depicts the difference of the organizational models. It outlines the degree of restructuring necessary as well as the authority associated.

Table 1

Difference in Enrollment Management Organization Models

Model	Degree of restructuring necessary	Authority
Committee	Low	Influence
Coordinator	Some	Networks
Matrix	Moderate	Cooperation
Division	High	Direct

Source: Penn, G. (1999). Enrollment management for the 21st Century: Delivering institutional goals, accountability and fiscal responsibility. George Washington University, Graduate School of Education and Human Development, Washington DC: (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report Volumes 25, No. 7).

As stated before, there is no best model for EM, and each institution must adopt the model that best fits its needs. Regardless of the structure chosen, the most important aspect for success is the relationship between the unit leaders and the ability of those units to contribute to the EM process (Hossler, 1990).

Recruitment and Marketing

According to Hossler (1990), the admission office is typically responsible for the recruitment and marketing strategies that identify and eventually influence prospective students to inquire, apply, and enroll at their institutions. Community college institutions must understand the wants and needs of prospective students and know what which techniques will gain their attention. Marketing and recruitment are considered essential components of the EM process. Kotler and Fox (1995) defined marketing as analysis, planning, implementation, and control of carefully formulated programs designed to

bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets to achieve institutional objectives. Dolence (1993) simplified the definition of marketing as putting the right product in front of the right audience at the right price. Community colleges have to find the unique combination of marketing tools that not only attract the desired type of students, but also produces optimal enrollment. One model that institutions of higher education utilize in marketing, and that research has proven to be beneficial, is called the 4Ps model (Anderson & Taylor, 1995). The 4Ps coined in 1960 by Jerome McCarthy, are product, price, place, and promotion. This concept has since been widely used in both the business and academic domains. Colleges and universities search for prospective students, develop products (courses, programs, on-campus living), price them (tuition and fees), place them (online, on campus, and off-campus sites) and promote them (brochures, websites, social media, and college fairs). Competition in higher education has become more competitive than ever. Community colleges must be able to use a marketing mix that not only catches the eye of the student, but that also influences that student to enroll at their institution.

Recruitment is defined as the active process undertaken by an institution to favorably influence a prospective student's decision to attend the institution (Dolence, 1993). Institutions utilize a variety of activities to entice prospective students to their campus (Hossler, 1990). Recruitment encompasses more than just enrolling a desired number of students. Dolence (1993) suggested that "The recruitment program is the primary vehicle for changing an institution's student profiles and is therefore a strategic tool of institutional management..."(p.14). Both the marketing and recruitment departments must be flexible and capable of adapting to the constant changes in the

environment. A recent study conducted by Ruffalo Noel-Levitz in 2013 on marketing and student recruitment practices listed the following as the top three marketing and recruitment strategies by 2-year public institutions: Encouraging prospective students to apply on the admissions website, academic programs within high schools for students to earn college credit (dual enrollment), and campus visit days for high school students. Although there are similar marketing strategies and recruitment techniques being used in the higher education realm; each institution must decide which marketing mix will produce the desired enrollment outcome.

21st Century Enrollment Challenges

As President Obama suggested in the January 26, 2011, State of the Union Address, “We know what it takes to compete for jobs and industries of our time. We need to out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the rest of the world.” Furthermore, “because people need to be able to train for new jobs and careers in today’s fast-changing economy, we are also revitalizing America’s community colleges” (Obama, 2011). The demands of the 21st Century have brought about new challenges to the community college arena. New technology, the increasing need for skilled labor, and the need to compete in the international job market are just some of the tasks at hand for community colleges. With the retirement of many community college presidents, new presidents are left to meet the complex challenges not previously experienced by their predecessors (Shults, 2001). “As the twenty-first century continues to unveil new challenges for higher education, enrollment planning and management strategies offer a pathway for community and technical colleges to sharpen their focus, optimize their resources, and achieve enrollment goals that support the health and viability of their enterprises”

(Kerlin, 2014, para. 1). With the drastic change in workforce development and the innovation of emerging technology, the enrollment and graduation rates among community colleges are important to the future of our nation. The process of identifying the current challenges faced by community colleges and implementing successful strategies to combat them is critical to our nation.

Community colleges are unique institutions. “The dynamic nature of the community college, their place in the higher education system, and their extremely diverse student bodies make community colleges unique institutions of learning” (Piland & Wolf, 2003, p. 3). “Due to its open access and low tuition policies, it depends on public funding more than any other type of postsecondary institution” (Pusser & Levin, 2009, p. 7). Gorski (2010) made the following statement: “Grappling with soaring enrollment and plummeting state support, community colleges are grateful for the higher profile but disappointed money has yet to materialize to help them keep up with demand, let alone meet ambitious Obama administration goals to make the U.S. the global leader in college graduates again by 2020” (p. 3). Currently, the colleges face many diverse challenges, such as lowered funding levels, budget cuts, constantly changing technology, and an attack on their mission of open access to all. According to the American Association of Community Colleges 21st Century report (2012), “No matter how significant the contributions of community colleges in the past, the ground beneath their feet has shifted so dramatically in recent years that they need to rethink their role and mission” (p. 2). There is a current need for educational institutions to refocus and transform into institutions that meet the need of 21st Century workforce development and global competition. As the 21st Century brings about new changes and challenges, community

colleges must be prepared to combat the issues at hand with strategy and skill. Complex issues often require thoughtful solutions and meticulous strategic planning.

In the wake of an abundant amount of challenges facing community colleges, the new Pell Grant requirements passed by Congress in June 2012 have added a new dilemma (Nelson, 2012). Given the stricter requirements to receive Pell Grant funding, it appears that this new legislation may become a barrier to college access and prevent the opportunity for success for some students. The Pell Grant makes it possible for many students to pursue a college degree or a technical certificate when they may not have otherwise been financially able to further their education.

According to Nelson (2012):

Students who wanted to attend college, but didn't have a high school diploma or GED, used to be able to get federal grants and loans through a back door: either take a basic skills test to prove their "ability to benefit" from a college education, or successfully complete six credits. This year's federal budget, in an effort to trim spending on Pell Grants, shut off both routes. As of July 1, newly enrolled students are required to have a high school diploma or GED in order to receive federal financial aid. College administrators say they worry the new policy will shut out older students seeking training to find a new job, immigrants, and students in states where money for basic adult education has been cut in budget crises. (para. 1-2)

According to Nelson (2012), "Either those students will turn to riskier private loans, they say, or -- more likely -- they'll just give up on pursuing higher education" (para. 3). In the past, students who wanted to attend college but did not have a high

school diploma or General Education Diploma (GED) were able to get federal grants by making a suitable score on placement exams. As of July 1, 2012, students that do not have a high school diploma or a GED cannot receive federal financial aid. As stated by Nelson (2012), “82,000 community college students at two year public colleges nationwide don’t have a high school diploma or GED” (para.6). These changes have and will continue to have a negative impact on students that are already at a financial disadvantage.

A recent three-state study (Alabama, Arkansas, and Mississippi), titled *The Impact of the New Pell Grant Restrictions on Community Colleges* has already put into perspective the impact that the changes are having on students enrolled at community colleges in the Deep South (Katsinas, Davis, Friedel, Koh, & Grant, 2013). The study surveyed 100% of community college financial aid administrators and came up with a surprising number: 16,979 students will soon lose their Pell Grant eligibility (Katsinas et al., 2013). The study found that full-time equivalent enrollments declined in Fall 2012 compared to Fall 2011 at most community colleges in the Deep South. In Alabama, 18 of 25 community colleges, or 72%, report an enrollment decline; in Arkansas, 20 of the state’s 22 2-year colleges report enrollment declines, or 91%; while 9 of Mississippi’s 15 community colleges, or 60%, report an enrollment decline (Katsinas et al., 2013, p. 6). With enrollment numbers declining at community colleges, some thought will have to go into finding ways to get these students back. A drastic decrease in college enrollment would have a dire effect on states that already have a struggling economy. With little being known about the community colleges’ current level of engagement in EM, this research will provide insight into the extent to which they are utilizing EM.

College Enrollment and the Economy

Community college enrollments have long been considered somewhat countercyclical; that is, they tend to rise as the economy worsens (Betts & McFarland, 1995). The human capital theory implies that as direct and indirect costs increase, enrollment in college will decrease (Adams, 2009). “At the peak of the 2008 recession, when layoffs became all too common, many people turned to an alternative to job-hunting — enrolling at their local colleges” (Faddoul, 2014, para 1). Alex Rosaen, director of public policy and economic analysis at Anderson Economic Group, a research and consulting firm, made the following statement:

People weigh the costs and benefits of returning to school. “One thing we observed is just that through the recession there was just a continuous increase in enrollment,” he said. For the unemployed and those fearing layoffs during the recession, returning to school seemed like a viable option that would provide opportunities for work, job security and advancement. However, the recovering economy has caused a drop in the unemployment rate, more job openings and flatter adult enrollment. (Faddoul, 2014, para. 6-7)

“In general, it’s a very common cycle that when unemployment increases so does enrollment,” said Cathy Sandeen, vice-president for education attainment and innovation at the American Council on Education (Faddoul, 2014. para. 13). As the U.S. economy improves, more high school graduates are choosing work over college. According to Faddoul, just under 66% of the class of 2013 was enrolled in college last fall, the lowest share of new graduates since 2006 and the third decline in the past 4 years (2014).

Among all 16- to 24-year-olds, school enrollment experienced its biggest decline in at least two decades.

A most recent discussion involving the community colleges impact on the economy revolves around the *America's College Promise Proposal* introduced by President Barack Obama. If passed by the legislature, *America's College Promise Proposal* would provide free tuition for the first two years of community college for students that are willing to work for it (The White House, 2015). According to the White House, the *America's College Promise* program would partner the federal government and states with an overall goal of increasing economic growth by widening access to education (2015).

This proposal has been met with criticism as well as praise. Despite the criticism some higher education administrators are rallying behind the cause. Supporters such as Martha Kanter, a professor of higher education at New York University and former U.S. Undersecretary of Education, said she's hoping to get a lot of people to rally around the idea that funding at least a 2-year college degree is worth it and will create a healthy economy (Smith, 2015). Noah Brown, president and chief executive officer for the Association of Community College Trustees, stated "It's a good idea and we want to promote the idea to engage a larger conversation across all of the states about shifting the resource model so community colleges can serve more students and more successfully (Smith, 2015, para. 10)." Smith's article also mentioned that an *Inside Higher Ed* survey of community college presidents, conducted by Gallup, revealed 39 % felt their legislatures would back Obama's free community college tuition plan with federal support (2015). That number decreases to 13 % without federal support. Many critics

worry that the 60 billion dollar price tag attached to the proposal would only increase the nation's deficit.

The Need for Enrollment Management

No one can predict the future, but by engaging in EM and utilizing strategic planning, educational institutions can compute an approximation of anticipated enrollment. In 1990, Hossler and Bean defined EM as an “organizational concept and a systematic set of activities designed to enable an educational institution to exert more influence over its student enrollments” (p. 5). EM includes the use of institutional research to determine market position relative to competitive institutions. Data collected and analyzed by institutional research offices can be used to predict what types of students persist. Marketing strategies and potential pricing implications can also be determined by using institutional research. There are 3 major agencies that attempt to predict college enrollment: the Western Interstate Commission (WICHE), the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB), and the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). These agencies use data such as high school graduating class size and standardized testing scores to assist in making predictions about college enrollment. Although these methods offer a good basis for prediction, a method has yet to be developed to predict the enrollment of transfer students or nontraditional students (Prescott, 2008).

The American Association of Community College's 21st Century report (2012) has called for a “reinvent of institutional roles” and a “reset of the systems to create incentives for student and institutional success.” The question that arises from the call for reform is whether the community colleges will be able to implement effective

institutional strategies for continued success in spite of decreased funding or other roadblocks. Gnage (2013) observed, “At the heart of these reforms is our ability to reimagine the community college model. It’s not about changing the mission, it is about finding new ways to achieve it, to serve our communities, and to earn and retain our place as the community’s college” (p. 8).

In spring 2014, the national enrollment data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) shows a decline in enrollment at public 2-year institutions of 2.7%, higher than the overall decrease of 0.8%, but smaller than the 3.1% decrease the preceding period between spring 2012 and 2013. However, the decrease in the enrollment of community college students over the age of 24 is 5.9%, more than double the overall decline in these institutions (NSC, 2014).

Hughes (2005) noted that:

Enrollment management helps postsecondary institutions meet challenges of increased competition and reduced funding . . . few colleges can afford to operate status quo, but must aggressively recruit and retain students . . . the basic need to manage enrollment from initial contact through graduation has become evident. (p. 19)

“As the twenty-first century continues to unveil new challenges for higher education, enrollment planning and management models offer a pathway for community and technical colleges to sharpen their focus, optimize their resources, and achieve enrollment goals that support the health and viability of their enterprises” (Kerlin, 2014, p. 1). Bontrager (2004) provides a comprehensive list of the benefits of EM which clarifies the need for it among community colleges:

- Establishing clear goals for the number and types of students needed to fulfill the institutional mission;
- Promoting academic success by improving student access, transition, persistence, and graduation;
- Determining, achieving and maintaining optimum enrollment;
- Enabling the delivery of effective academic programs;
- Generating added net revenue for the institution;
- Enabling effective financial planning;
- Improving service levels to all stakeholders: prospective and current students, other institutional departments, other institutions and coordinating agencies;
- Creating a data-rich environment to inform decisions and evaluate strategies;
- Creating and continuously strengthening linkages with functions and activities across the campus;
- Increasing process and organization efficiency.

Kemerer et al. (1982) saw EM as both a concept and a procedure. Conceptually, it provided institutions with the steady supply of students necessary to maintain instructional validity. According to Kemerer et al. (1982), it was “a set of activities to help institutions interact more successfully with their potential students” (p. 3). EM is an organizational concept and a systematic set of activities designed to help institutions strategically make informed decisions in regard to student enrollment. Decades of research show that EM has the capability to help academic institutions make educated,

data-driven decisions about enrollment. As financial assistance decreases and competition increases, EM can be an essential tool in combating the community colleges' EM issues.

Summary

Over the past 30 to 40 years, EM has evolved. Planning and management initially were developed by the business sector. As successes were realized, support grew even more. Eventually, EM trickled over into higher education. As federal and state funding began to dwindle, institutions of higher education began to face even more EM challenges. As funding decreased, higher education institutions began to aggressively utilize EM to exert more control over environmental changes. Research suggests that initially the community colleges may not have engaged in EM to the extent in which the 4-year institutions did. To add more background to the concept, EM's definitions, concepts, and practices were outlined. In a more detailed outline, the four common EM models found in the literature were also presented: committee, coordinator, matrix, and division. The literature did emphasize that EM models vary by institution and that institutions must implement models that fit the needs of their educational culture. The literature went on to discuss some of the challenges impeding EM during the 21st Century. Listing the unique challenges of the colleges gave context for why EM is perceived to be beneficial to the continued success of the college. The section ended by elaborating on the need for and the benefits of engaging in EM.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Introduction

This study was designed to identify the extent to which community colleges located in Mississippi engage in EM. This chapter sets forth the study's research design and procedure. The chapter will begin with a discussion of the research design, followed by a description of the participants in the study. Next, the chapter will lay out the instrument used and the data collections procedure. The final chapter will conclude with a discussion of the statistics used to analyze the data.

Research Design

The descriptive research method employed in this study was survey research. According to Gall, Borg, and Gall (1989), "descriptive research is primarily concerned with finding out what is" (p. 331). In this study, the descriptive survey method was used to investigate the extent to which community colleges are engaged in EM. The design of this educational research survey is cross-sectional. A cross-sectional design allows research to be collected at a single point in time (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). The survey used is the Assessment of Enrollment Management at Community Colleges Survey, which can be found in Appendix C. The survey research method was determined to be viable for identifying information to answer research questions and hypotheses.

Study Participants

A purposive sample was used for the participant selection in this study. A purposive sample population is when the subjects are selected because of some characteristic. For this study, that characteristic will be the participants' job descriptions and employment locations. The participants will be selected based on the knowledge of the population and the components of the study. For this study, the participants were the individuals that each community college deems to be its designated enrollment manager. The title of the person designated to carry out the enrollment manager role may vary by institution. This person may carry the title of dean of student affairs, vice-president, enrollment manager, or some other title. Some community colleges will have a person that is strictly dedicated to EM while others include this assignment as an additional duty of a designated staff member. The enrollment manager or enrollment manager designee from each of the community colleges located in Mississippi were targeted study participants. By accessing the community college locator on the American Association of Community College's website (www.aacc.nche.edu/pages/ccfinder), the researcher was able to verify that there are 15 community colleges located in Mississippi.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study was adapted from *The CCEU Enrollment Management Survey* (Schuttinga, 2011), which focused on SEM usage and effectiveness for the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. This survey was modified with additional questions related to this study focusing on community colleges. Questions added to the survey were numbers 3, 5, 6, and 8. The additional survey questions were created based upon the research questions and the defining problem in the study. In

response to the validity and reliability of the instrument, Schuttinga (2011) piloted the instrument, which underwent test-retest measures for reliability. Schuttinga derived her survey from a 1984 study on Successful Strategic Management in Small Private Colleges by Chaffee. Chaffee's career spans over both public and private higher education, as well as extensive research and publication. Past president of two universities and two national professional associations, she has led executive, academic affairs, student affairs, research, and equal opportunity areas. Dr. Chaffee is a senior fellow at the Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities (AGB). Chaffee has published numerous books and dozens of articles in refereed journals. Chaffee earned a Ph.D. in higher education administration and policy analysis at Stanford University. Permission will be requested from both Schuttinga and Chaffee to use a modified version of the instrument for this study (see Appendix A). The instrument was designed to address the following questions:

1. What aspects of EM currently exist at community colleges Mississippi?
2. What benefits have been received by institutions that are actively engaging in EM?
3. What are the barriers to engaging in EM at the community college level?
4. What SEM strategies are community colleges utilizing to increase enrollment?
5. Have the EM structures met expectations?

Data Collection Procedures

The first step of the data collection process was to acquire IRB approval from the Mississippi State University Office of Regulatory Compliance and Safety and the

Mississippi Community College Board. Upon approval, each community college located in the Mississippi was contacted to find out the name of its coordinator of EM, as well as that person's email address, mailing address, and phone number. A letter was sent to the participants by email informing them of the study and requesting their participation. The actual administration of the survey was conducted through Survey Monkey with an electronic survey link dispersed to all participants through email. A reminder email was sent to all participants who have not responded within a two-week time frame. After the survey window closed, the data was collected for analysis.

Data Analysis

This study was designed to address the extent to which community colleges are engaged in EM. The *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) was used to report the findings through descriptive statistics for questions 1-8. All of the survey items yielded nominal or ordinal results. The data analysis for the descriptive statistics was conveyed using percentages and frequencies. Therefore, the analysis involves determining percentages and frequencies to describe the results of the survey results (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2005).

Research Question #1.

What aspects of EM currently exist at community colleges? The analysis for Research Question 1 involved finding out the different aspects of the community colleges' EM in order to find out the characteristics of EM taking place within the community colleges. Survey items 1, 2, 3, and 4 will be used in the analysis for Research Question 1. The results from these questions will allow the researcher to discover various

aspects of EM, such as common titles of enrollment managers, the participants' years of experience in the position, strategic management plan types, and the types of enrollment oversight models being used. The responses to these questions will be broken down into frequencies and percentages.

Research Question #2.

What benefits have been received by community colleges that actively engage in EM? The computation for Research Question #2 will be derived from survey item number 5. Item number 5 allowed participants to select the benefits received by their colleges as a direct result of actively engaging in EM. The answer choices for this question are composed of a list of possible perceived benefits. The answers received from the question were analyzed by using percentage and frequency.

Research Question #3.

What are the perceived barriers to utilizing SEM to manage enrollment at the community college level? The computation for Research Question #3 will be derived from survey item number 6. Item number 6 allowed participants to list the perceived barriers to effectively implementing EM and will be analyzed using percentage and frequency.

Research Question #4.

What SEM strategies are community colleges utilizing to increase enrollment? Survey item number 7 provided the data for Research Question #4. The respondents were given a checklist of different marketing strategies that can be used in an effort to increase enrollment and asked to check all that apply to their respective institution.

Research Question #5.

Have the EM structures met expectations? The analysis for question #5 was derived from survey item number 8. The analysis was completed by using a 3-point Likert-type scale to determine respondents' level of met and not-met expectations in regard to enrollment structures. A descriptive summary using percentages was used to indicate if the respondents feel that their enrollment structure has met their expectations as well as the level of satisfaction with that enrollment structure.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the data collected by the researcher based on the research questions presented in the study. The purpose of this research was to investigate the extent to which EM has been implemented among the community colleges in Mississippi. A survey was electronically transmitted to enrollment managers at the 15 community colleges. This chapter presents the results of the study in a descriptive format. Information presented within Chapter IV includes a description of the sample, data related to each of the research questions, and the chapter summary.

Descriptive Data and Demographics

The report of findings in this section is based on a usable response rate of 87%, representing responses from 13 of the 15 community colleges in Mississippi. The 13 community colleges were represented by the persons deemed to be enrollment managers responding on behalf of their respective colleges. Findings are presented by research questions and survey items.

Research Question 1

The research question asked the following: What aspects of EM currently exist at community colleges? The analysis for Research Question 1 involved finding out the

different aspects of the community colleges' EM in order to learn the characteristics of EM taking place within the community colleges. Survey items 1, 2, 3, and 4 were used in the analysis for Research Question 1. The results from these questions allowed the researcher to discover various aspects of EM, such as common titles of enrollment managers, the institutions' current enrollment oversight model, details about strategic planning, and specific EM strategies. The responses to these questions were broken down into frequencies and percentages. These survey items requested such information as position and title (survey item 1), the number of years within the current position (survey item 2), status of the current strategic enrollment plan (survey item 3), and the current enrollment plan oversight model (survey item 4). The titles of the enrollment managers have been identified and are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Title of Enrollment Managers

Title	<i>f</i>	%
Dean of Student Affairs	1	7.7%
Director of Admissions	3	23.1%
Vice President of Enrollment	1	7.7%
Enrollment Manager	1	7.7%
Vice President of Student Services	2	15.4%
Registrar	1	7.7%
A.V.P. of Planning and Research	1	7.7%
Director of Institutional Research	1	7.7%
V.P. for Admissions and Records	1	7.7%
A.V.P. of Enrollment Management	1	7.7%
Total	13	100%

The data revealed that there is a significant difference in the type of faculty given the task of EM. Out of the 13 respondents that identified themselves as their respective institutions' enrollment managers, there were 10 different titles being used. As reported in Table 4, 23.1% of the 13 reporting respondents reported that their title was Director of Admissions. Another 15.4% reported that their title was Vice President of Enrollment. 7.7% identified themselves as the Dean of Student Affairs while another 7.7% listed their title as Enrollment Manager. In the "Other" position category, respondents listed their

title to be Vice President of Student Services, Registrar, Assistant Vice President of Planning and Research, Director of Institutional Research, Vice President for Admissions and Records, and Associate Vice President of EM. The results revealed a total of 10 different titles, 4 of which include the word “enrollment.” The use of the word enrollment within the title signifies that some of the community colleges in Mississippi do recognize EM as a profession, and that they have assigned a person to manage enrollment efforts.

Survey item 2 directly related to Research Question 1 through the identification of the number of years the participants had served in an enrollment manager capacity. Participants were asked to identify the number of years they had served in their current position. Table 3 reports findings from the survey item.

Table 3

Number of Years in Current Position

Number of Years	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
1-3	3	23.1
3-5	3	23.1
6-8	4	30.8
9-11	2	15.4
12-15	0	0
16-18	1	7.7

The data in Table 3 shows that over 50% of the participants have been in their position for over 5 years. The data also shows that only one of the participants has over

15 years of experience. The data presents an almost even split between respondents with less than 5 years of experience and respondents with over 5 years of experience. Survey item 3 added additional clarity on Question 1 by asking respondents if their respective institution has a SEM plan and, if so, what type. Table 4 contains the results.

Table 4

Strategic Enrollment Management Plan (SEM)

Strategic Enrollment Management Plan	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes, my institution has a written, long-range (three to five years) enrollment management plan	4	30.8
Yes, my institution has a written, short term (one to two years) enrollment plan.	1	7.7
Yes, my institution has a written annual marketing plan.	0	0.0
Yes, my institution has a written annual recruitment plan.	3	23.1
No, my institution does not currently have a strategic enrollment management plan.	5	38.5

Of the 13 reporting institutions, 38.5% reported that they do not have a SEM plan in place. 30.8% reported that they do have a long-range plan in place, while only 7.7% have a short-term plan in place. 23.1% reported having an annual recruitment plan, while 0% had an annual marketing plan.

Survey item 4 inquired to the type of EM oversight model being used among the colleges. The reported findings are listed below in Table 5.

Table 5

Enrollment Management Oversight Models

Model Type	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Committee- serves to raise awareness related to student marketing, recruitment, and retention. The committee may include representatives from admissions, financial aid, student affairs, academic affairs, and institutional advancement	1	7.7
Coordinator- midlevel manager or an individual who serves on the senior level leadership team but who guides primarily the admissions function of student recruitment.	6	46.2
Matrix- responsibility and decision making for enrollment efforts are assigned to a senior-level administrator such as a chief academic officer.	0	0.0
Division- A Vice President who is responsible for enrollment efforts and the majority of the following functions: recruitment and marketing, admissions, financial aid, academic advising and career advising, institutional research, orientation, retention programs, and student services	6	46.2
None of the above.	0	0.0

The respondents were asked to identify one of the 4 EM structures described by Kemerer et al. (1982) that was most similar to the one utilized in their respective institution. The EM oversight structures included Committee, Coordinator, Matrix, and Division. The respondents were also able to select “none of the above” if none of the listed models defined their current EM oversight structure. The data showed that the majority of the respondents indicated that their institution uses either the Coordinator or the Division type model; 46.2% identified with the Coordinator type model, while 46.2% identified with the Division model. Only 1 out of the 13 respondents indicated that his/her institution utilizes the Committee model, and none of the respondents indicated the use of the Matrix model.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 was designed to illuminate what the respective institutions believe to be benefits received by actively engaging in EM. The computation for Research Question #2 was derived from survey item number 5. Item number 5 allowed participants to select the benefits received by their colleges as a direct result of actively engaging in EM. The answer choices for this question were composed of a list of possible perceived benefits. Answer choices included increased student enrollment, improved student retention, improved graduation rate, increased student satisfaction, improved institutional academic support services, enhanced marketing capability of instruction, and increased the quality of new students. Respondents were allowed to check all that applied to their respective institution. The answers received from the question were analyzed by using percentage and frequency. Table 6 represents the findings from survey item number 5.

Table 6

The Benefits Produced by Actively Engaging in Enrollment Management

Benefits Produced	<i>f</i>	%
Increased student Enrollment	9	69.2
Improved student retention	10	76.9
Improved the graduation rate	10	76.9
Increased student satisfaction	6	46.2
Improved institutional academic support services	6	46.2
Enhanced the marketing capability of instruction	6	46.2
Increased the quality of new students	5	38.5

The benefits that the respondents selected with the highest frequency were improved student retention along with an improved graduation rate. The benefit with the lowest frequency was increased quality of new students.

Research Question 3

Research question 3 was designed to explore the perceived barriers to effectively implementing SEM to manage enrollment at the community college level. The computation for Research Question 3 will be derived from survey item number 6. Item number 6 allowed participants to list the perceived barriers to effectively implementing EM and will be analyzed using percentage and frequency.

Table 7

Perceived Barriers to Effectively Implementing Enrollment Management

Perceived Barriers	N=12	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
High costs involved	3	25.0
Time constraints	4	33.3
Limited financial resources	8	66.7
Understaffing	9	75.0
Lack of support from administration	2	16.7
Lack of communication	4	33.3

As reported in Table 7, the barriers with the highest percentage are understaffing at 75% and limited financial resources at 66.7%. Time constraints and lack of communication were both tied at 33.3%. According to the data, lack of support from administration came in last at 16.7%.

Research Question 4

Research question 4 was proposed to peer into the specifics of what EM strategies community colleges are utilizing to increase enrollment. Survey item 7 provided the data for Research Question #4. The respondents were given a checklist of different marketing strategies that can be used in an effort to increase enrollment and asked to check all that apply to their respective institution. Survey items 9 and 10 were added to gain some

perspective on two new trending enrollment topics, which are free community college initiatives and dual enrollment students. Table 8 depicts the results of survey item 7.

Table 8

Strategies Implemented to Increase Enrollment

Strategy	Yes	No	Don't Know
Made efforts to increase student employment on campus	18.2	63.6	18.2
Made efforts to increase the number and/or amounts of financial aid awards	72.7	9.1	18.2
Increased the awarding of no need merit scholarships	63.6	9.1	27.3
Made aggressive attempts to keep tuition increases at a minimum	100.0	0.0	0.0
Expanded the days and times when courses are offered	72.7	27.3	0.0
Increased collaboration with local high schools in order to increase dual enrollment	100.0	0.0	0.0
Added required courses to the curriculum	45.5	45.5	9.1
Added new applied programs	72.7	18.2	9.1
Offered courses at new locations off campus	63.6	36.4	0.0
Added courses primarily to serve the immediate surrounding community	36.4	36.4	27.3
Expanded online courses	81.8	18.2	0.0

Table 8 (continued)

Strategy	Yes	No	Don't Know
Added staff or additional funds to market and promote the college	36.4	45.5	18.2
My institution's president has stressed the importance of strategic enrollment management to all senior level administrators	81.8	18.2	0.0
Budget or staff for academic support services for at-risk students in reading, math, and writing	72.7	18.2	9.1
Fundraising efforts have been made with constituents to solicit gift money to reduce the reliance on tuition income	54.6	18.2	27.3

The data represented in Table 8 represents the type of EM strategies being used among the community colleges. The two strategies that stand out the most are aggressive attempts to keep tuition increases at a minimum and collaboration with high schools to increase dual enrollment, both with 100%. These strategies were followed by expanded online courses and the presidents' expressing the importance of EM to senior level administrators, both representing at 81.8%. The strategy with 0% implementation was hiring consultants in areas that affect student enrollment. Survey item number 9 sheds light on an additional strategy proposed by state and federal government to increase community college enrollment by making community colleges tuition-free. The results of

survey item number 9 are shown below in table 9. Survey item number 10 shed light on the strategy that all the respondents reported using, which is dual enrollment. Table 9 gives a breakdown on what percentage of total enrollment is comprised of dually enrolled high school students.

Table 9

Free Community College Initiatives Effect on Current Enrollment Strategies

	N=11	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Effect on Current Enrollment Strategies		
Drastically	2	18.2
Moderately	3	27.3
Slightly	1	9.1
Not at all	5	45.5

Table 10

Dual Enrollment Percentages

Dual Enrollment	N=11	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Less than 5%	4	36.4
Less than 10%	4	36.4
Less than 25%	3	27.3
Less than 50%	0	0.0
More than 50%	0	0.0

One of the respondents left the following comments about the effect that a free community college tuition initiative may have on the current EM strategies:

I do feel the impact would be very significant, somewhere in between slight and drastic. Although this option won't have much bearing on the low income and remedial students that we serve, I am very hopeful it would have an impact on our middle income families that do not receive federal grants. These students many times receive 0-1 scholarship and MTAG but do not have enough funds to cover all of their tuition and fees. So, their families may still take out a loan. I know, as a community college, we are always going to get the remedial students, many of which qualify for full Pell Grant. They know their college is already paid for, and they don't have university options. But our goal is to recruit higher achieving students. Of course, these students have more college options than remedial students. The lure of absolutely free tuition could sway a student's decision between a community college and a university. And, although I'm very uncertain about the approach my college would take to this, the situation leaves the question of what do we do with our scholarship funds currently being awarded? Do we offer scholarships to an even larger number of students in smaller amounts that would be book stipends or dorm scholarships? Do we reallocate that money back to the general fund? We also have around 10% of our enrollment slated as dual enrolled students, some which graduate high school with 30 or more credit hours. They are able to go on to their university as a sophomore. The free tuition would also be a selling point in having these students come to the college one more year to finish their AA. I'm not sure how the public and families who are

accustomed to paying out of pocket for college would respond, but I can't help but think many middle income families would want to take advantage of this, and there are some possibilities with rethinking the way the college spends current scholarship dollars. This could also change the way universities award scholarships. If CC enrollment increased, transfer scholarships could be more lucrative.

Another respondent commented, "Costs for students in Mississippi community colleges are already low - if students attend free, it will negatively impact their work efforts and persistence."

Research Question 5

Research question 5 asked the participants if their EM structure has met their expectations. The analysis for question #5 was derived from survey item number 8. The analysis was completed by using a 3-point Likert-type scale to determine respondents' level of met and not-met expectations in regard to enrollment structures. A descriptive summary with percentages was used to indicate if the respondents felt that their enrollment structure met their expectations, as well as the level of satisfaction with that enrollment structure. Table 11 depicts the findings.

Table 11

Has Your Current EM Structure Met Expectations?

N=11		
Expectation	<i>f</i>	%
Exceeded Expectations	2	18.2
Met Expectations	7	63.6
Has Not Met Expectations	2	18.2
Total	11	100%

When asked if their current enrollment structure has met their expectations, 63.6% of the respondents reported that their current structure had met expectations. The remainder of the respondents reported at 18.2% that expectations had been exceeded by their current structure and at 18.2% that their current structure had not met their expectations.

Summary of Findings

The results of this study indicate that the majority of the community colleges in Mississippi do engage in EM, but the extent to which it is implemented varied among colleges. The data revealed that of the 13 community colleges represented in this research, the extent of EM was diverse and unique to each institution. Although the study revealed several levels of uniqueness, it also revealed commonalities. There were commonalities in the areas of EM strategies, barriers impeding effective EM

implementation, and the benefits received. The data also revealed that very few community colleges in Mississippi have a long-term EM plan in place.

This chapter presented the findings from the quantitative results of this research study. Chapter V provides an analysis of the findings, draws conclusions, and makes recommendations based on this study, including recommendations for future research regarding EM in Mississippi community colleges.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research investigation examined the extent of engagement in EM at community colleges in Mississippi. The study was founded on the literature supporting that “As the twenty-first century continues to unveil new challenges for higher education, enrollment planning and management models offer a pathway for community and technical colleges to sharpen their focus, optimize their resources, and achieve enrollment goals that support the health and viability of their enterprises” (Kerlin, 2014, para.1). Questionable, however, is to what extent EM has been implemented, specifically among community colleges in Mississippi. The purpose of this research was to investigate how EM has been implemented and the extent of that implementation. The desired outcome of this study was to obtain information on the level to which these 15 community colleges have implemented EM, what that organizational structure looks like, and the benefits and barriers to that implementation.

The literature reviewed in support of the purpose of this research addressed the following topics: the role of the community college, the evolution of EM, 21st-Century enrollment challenges, types of EM models, marketing and recruitment and the need for EM. The literature revealed that the community colleges may not have engaged initially in EM to the extent in which the 4-year institutions engaged. According to the literature, EM can be a great tool to assist post-secondary institutions in reaching optimal student

enrollment when implemented effectively. The literature also revealed that for EM to be effective, formalized planning is vital. The EM plan should integrate with the institution's strategic plan and provide a comprehensive framework to move the institution forward. As the literature indicates, one of the benefits to implementing EM principles is to help identify and manage strained resources. The effectiveness of community colleges ultimately depends on a collaborative EM methodology that aligns EM, student services, marketing, and academic initiatives to address internal and external environmental changes that are impacting today's community colleges.

To investigate the extent to which EM exists among the community colleges in Mississippi, a descriptive survey research method was employed to seek answers to 5 research questions. All 13 participants were identified through the Mississippi Community College Board directory. Data were collected through a 10-item survey electronically administered to personnel identified to be the respective institutions' enrollment managers. The study's sample was 13 community colleges located in the state of Mississippi.

Analysis of the quantitative data has provided answers to the 5 research questions that are the focus for this study.

Research Question 1

Research question 1 asked what aspects of EM currently exist at community colleges in Mississippi. Today, EM is becoming recognized as a core operating function for colleges and universities, just like alumni relations and fundraising (Hossler & Bean, 1990). The case for applying EM is evident in a number of ways, but research is limited on the aspects of its implementation. In addition to assuring the institution is meeting the

needs of its mission, resource management, when enrollment patterns shift, helps align program and services, monitors and improves student success benchmarks through continuous quality improvement, and addresses the demand for institutional accountability (Bontrager & Clemetsen, 2009). Enrollment planning and management provides community colleges the opportunity to focus and optimize resources in order to achieve enrollment goals. The results of this study aligned with the research results by showing that community colleges in Mississippi do recognize the importance of EM, and that its importance is being stressed by senior administrators. The data also revealed that the level of implementation is unique to the respective institution. One aspect of EM that showed a significant variation was the actual title of the personnel designated to be the institutions' enrollment managers. The data revealed nine different EM titles ranging from high-level senior administrators' vice president titles to a lower-level position title of registrar. Other aspects revealed through this study were the extent to which formal EM plans were being used at community colleges in Mississippi. Effective EM plans are designed around adaptability and resistance to change within the environment of the institution (Wilkinson et al., 2007). According to the literature community colleges do not engage in EM planning at the same level that 4 year colleges and universities engage. Bryant (2013) observed, "While community colleges have always managed enrollment, they have not engaged in the kind of strategic enrollment planning practiced by more competitive 4 year institutions" (para. 1). It was evident by the data from this study that very few community colleges have a long-term EM plan in place. Only a small percentage of the reporting institutions reported using any type of formal plan, and an even smaller percentage reported having a long-term EM plan in place. 5 schools

responded that they do have a written enrollment plan in place, while 5 schools reported that they do not have a written plan in place. The remaining 3 schools reported that although they do not have a written EM plan in place, they do have a written annual recruitment plan. This study revealed that of the 5 schools that reported having a written EM plan in place, all 5 also reported that their EM structure had met their expectations. Of the 5 that reported that they did not have any type of written EM or annual recruitment plan in place, only two reported that their current EM structure had met their expectations.

Another EM characteristic that was revealed was that the majority of the reporting institutions use either Coordinator model type enrollment structure or Division model type. As stated before, the literature suggest that there is no best model for EM, and each institution must adopt the model that best fits its needs. Regardless of the structure chosen, the most important aspect for success is the relationship between the unit leaders and the ability of those units to contribute to the EM process (Hossler, 1990). The data from this study revealed that the Coordinator model and the Division model are what the community colleges in Mississippi believe to be the most appropriate structure for their organizations. The Coordinator model type is set up with a midlevel manager or an individual who serves on the senior level leadership team, and the Division model type is set up with a Vice President being responsible for enrollment efforts.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 asked what benefits have been received by institutions that are actively engaging in EM. When it came to enrollment benefits received, this study clearly showed a consensus among the participants. The benefits with the highest

response percentage received were improved graduation rate and improved student retention. Student completion and student retention are major challenges for community colleges throughout the nation. The literature suggested that because community colleges have an open access policy, they don't always enroll the highest quality of students. This fact is consistent with the findings of the survey that revealed the improvement of the quality of students to be the benefit with the lowest percentage.

Research Question 3

Research question 3 asked the question what are the barriers to engaging in EM at the community college level. The enrollment managers identified two primary barriers to developing and implementing EM at their institutions. Concerning the barriers that affect engaging in EM, understaffing and limited financial resources were selected with the highest frequency rate. Limited financial resources plague a large majority of educational institutions. Many community colleges try to keep tuition rates as low as possible while funneling financial resources to key components of their operation. The participants' responses also revealed that top administrative support for EM was not a primary barrier to developing and implementing EM. As the literature suggests, in order for EM to be effective, it must be part of a broader strategy that the administration, faculty, and board all support in order to achieve the institutional goals. Only two of the respondents reported administrative support as a barrier.

Research Question 4

Research question 4 asked the question of what SEM strategies are community colleges utilizing to increase enrollment. All of the respondents indicated that their

institution had made aggressive attempts to keep tuition increases at a minimum. All of the respondents also reported that they had increased their collaboration with local high schools in order to increase dual enrollment. This was followed by eleven institutions reporting that they had expanded online courses and that their president had stressed the importance of SEM to all senior level officials. None of the participants selected hiring consultants to assist with EM as a strategy to increase enrollment.

Research Question 5

Research question 5 asked the question have the EM structures met expectations. When it came to the question of whether or not the institutions believed that their current EM structure had met their expectations, the majority of the respondents reported that their current structures had indeed met their expectations. Only a small percentage felt that their current EM structure had either not met or exceeded their expectations. A very interesting correlation was that the respondents who reported that the current structure had met or exceeded their expectations were also the participants that stated they had some type of formal EM plan in place, while only two of the institutions without a formal plan in place reported that their current structure had met their expectations. Conclusions drawn from the study's findings are below.

Conclusion

Through the pursuit of five research questions, several results were found: (a) the organizational structure of EM within the community colleges, (b) the type of formalized plans being used within the community colleges, (c) the type of EM strategies being utilized in an effort to have optimal enrollment, (d) the perceived barriers and benefits of

engaging in EM, and (e) the level of satisfaction of the current EM structure within the institution. Analysis of the data permitted the conclusion that the community colleges in Mississippi all engage in some level of EM and that the characteristics of the engagement are unique to the needs of the respective institutions.

The data also revealed the fact that the majority of community colleges do not have a long-term or short-term EM plan in place. As stated earlier, a strategic enrollment plan is an institutional-wide responsibility and the central focus of the institution's overall strategic plan (Wilkinson et al., 2007 p. 6). This plan usually includes short-term and long-term goals centered on the mission of the college. Institutions utilize past and current data as well as research to develop their SEM plans. The answer to this research question leads to more questions. If planning is essential to EM, then why are community colleges in Mississippi not creating formalized plans? All of the institutions that reported having a long-term or short-term plan in place also reported that their EM plan had met their expectations.

When it comes to EM strategies, the data revealed significant commonalities. Some of these commonalities were that the majority of the reporting institutions reported limited financial resources and understaffing as major barriers to effectively implementing EM. Data collected on the current enrollment strategies showed that the majority of the community colleges are making aggressive attempts to increase enrollment by keeping tuition at a minimum, tailoring the type and course offerings based on demand, and making efforts to increase the number of financial aid awards. The study found that all of the community colleges that participated in the study have increased their collaboration with high schools in an effort to increase dual enrollment. The

colleges also reported that their presidents have stressed the level of EM to all senior level administrators. This study found that the colleges' EM structures are set up as either Coordinator or Division type models.

Recommendations for Community Colleges

Community colleges are complex and multidimensional institutions (Dolence, 1993). According to the literature, there is not one ideal enrollment model; rather, the colleges need to tailor their EM structure to meet the needs of their institution. An EM structure should align with the mission and vision of the college, as well as its strategic goals. Therefore, community colleges will need to utilize data-driven decision making to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of their enrollment structures. The need for research on the extent of EM of community colleges in Mississippi is met with this study as it is a helpful resource to community college administration. It further establishes a baseline from which future research can determine changes in community college EM implementation. The implication of this study is that EM varies by institution but that its effective implementation is vital for optimal student enrollment. Further research is suggested to address administrative perception of EM. Research is further suggested to address the manner in which colleges analyze the effectiveness of their EM structures. Below are guiding questions that universities may find helpful in beginning the dialogue to inform decisions regarding EM implementation and structure. Based on the literature and the quantitative results from this study, the following 7 recommendations are offered for community colleges which are attempting to implement an effective EM framework:

1. A study could be conducted to determine specific successful enrollment strategies that have been implemented at community colleges in Mississippi.
2. A follow-up study could be conducted with community college presidents to find out if there are differences in their perceptions of EM benefits and overall satisfaction, as well as to obtain their recommendation for improvements.
3. Further research could be conducted with community college presidents to find out their perceptions of short-term and long-term formalized plans that address EM.
4. A study could be conducted with community college administrators to find out their perception of the pros and cons of a free community college initiative.
5. Further research could be conducted with community college administrators to find out how the effectiveness of their current EM structure is evaluated.
6. A national comparative study of community colleges and 4-year institutions could be conducted to identify common EM issues.
7. This study could be repeated using a national sample of community colleges to assess how EM is being implemented across the nation.

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APPENDIX A
INSTRUMENT APPROVAL LETTER

ellen.chaffee@gmail.com

March 26, 2014

Ellen Chaffee, Ph.D.
9500 66th St NE
Bismarck ND 58503

Dear Dr. Chaffee,

I am currently working on my dissertation as part of a Ph.D. program in Community College Leadership at Mississippi State University. I am writing to officially request permission to adapt your survey instrument used in your 1984 study *on Successful strategic management in small private colleges*.

I plan to conduct research on 15 community college institutions within the state of Mississippi. I have an interest in understanding more about the strategic enrollment management plans among community colleges along with their chosen enrollment strategies. I believe that your instrument will be helpful in finding out if there is a correlation of the enrollment strategies and the enrollment management planning.

Sincerely,

Jamilah Ruffin

I grant Jamilah Ruffin permission to adapt and use the "Successful Strategic Management Survey" from *Successful strategic management in small private colleges*, 1984.

Ellen Chaffee, Ph.D.

3/31/14
Date

APPENDIX B
INSTRUMENT APPROVAL LETTER

Bethany Schuttinga <Bethany.Schuttinga@dordt.edu> Mar 26, 2014

Jamilah,

Thanks for your email. Congratulations on how far you are in your PhD process! Yes, you may certainly use the survey.

Strength to you as you enter this phase of research and enjoy the journey-

Best,

Bethany

Bethany J. Schuttinga, Ph.D.

Vice President for Administration

Dordt College

498 4th Ave NE

Sioux Center, IA

51250

Phone: 712-722-6002

E-mail: bethany.schuttinga@dordt.edu

APPENDIX C
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

An Assessment of Enrollment Management at Community Colleges
Jamilah Ruffin – Mississippi State University

1. Please select a position title that most closely describes your current position at your institution:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dean of Student Affairs | <input type="checkbox"/> Enrollment Manager |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vice President for Enrollment | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Director of Admissions | |

2. How many years have you been in your current position?

3. Does your institution currently have a strategic EM plan; if yes what type?

- Yes
My institution has a written, long-range (three to five years) EM plan
My institution has a written, short term (one to two years) enrollment plan
My institution has a written annual marketing plan
My institution has a written annual recruitment plan
- No

4. Which of the options below most closely defines your current EM oversight model?

- Committee-** serves to raise awareness related to student marketing, recruitment, and retention. The committee may include representatives from admissions, financial aid, student affairs, academic affairs, and institutional advancement
- Coordinator-** midlevel manager or an individual who serves on the senior level leadership team but who guides primarily the admissions function of student recruitment.
- Matrix-** responsibility and decision making for enrollment efforts are assigned to a senior-level administrator such as a chief academic officer.
- Division-** A Vice President who is responsible for enrollment efforts and the majority of the following functions: recruitment and marketing, admissions, financial aid, academic advising and career advising, institutional research, orientation, retention programs, and student services
- None of the above**

5. What benefits has actively engaging in EM produced? (Check all that apply)

- Increased student enrollment
- Improved student retention
- Improved the graduation rate
- Increased student satisfaction
- Improved institutional academic support services
- Enhanced the marketing capability of instruction
- Increased the quality of new students
- Other: _____

6. What do you perceived to be barriers to effectively implementing EM? (Check all that apply)

- High costs involved
- Time constraints
- Limited financial resources
- Understaffing
- Lack of support from the top administration
- Lack of communication
- Other: _____

7. As a strategic decision to increase enrollment, has your institution employed the following strategies?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT STRATEGY			
Made efforts to increase student employment on campus			
Made efforts to increase the number and/or amounts of financial aid awards			
Increased the awarding of no need merit scholarships			
Made aggressive attempts to keep tuition increases at a minimum			
Expanded the days and times when courses are offered			
Added required courses to the curriculum			
Added new applied programs			
Offered courses at new locations off campus			
Added courses primarily to serve the immediate surrounding community			
Expanded on-line courses			
Added staff or additional funds to market and promote the college			
Hired consultants in areas which affect student enrollment			
My institution's president has stressed the importance of strategic EM to all senior level administrators			
Budget or staff for academic support services for at risk students in reading, math and writing			
Fund raising efforts have been made with constituents to solicit gift money to reduce reliance on tuition income			

8. Has your current EM structure met or not met your expectations?

- Exceeded Expectations
- Met Expectations
- Has Not Meet Expectations

APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL FROM THE MISSISSISSIPPI COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD



Jamilah Ruffin <jr121@msstate.edu>

Fwd: Request to Conduct Researchjr121 <jr121@msstate.edu>
To: "Stumpf, Dan" <ads124@colled.msstate.edu>

Wed, Apr 15, 2015 at 2:14 PM

FYI

Sent via the Samsung Galaxy Note 9, an AT&T 4G LTE smartphone

----- Original message -----
 From: Joan Haynes <jhaynes@mccb.edu>
 Date: 04/15/2015 9:53 AM (GMT-08:00)
 To: jr121@msstate.edu
 Cc: Debra West <dwest@mccb.edu>
 Subject: Request to Conduct Research

Good morning Jamilah,

This email will serve as your official notice of MACJC approval of your research request. Please initiate your research by contacting the following individuals at the fifteen (15) community and junior colleges:

Coahoma	Margaret Dixon	Director for Institutional Research	mdixon@coahomacc.edu	662-621-4201
Copiah-Lincoln	Dr. Jeff Posey	Director of Institutional Planning and Research	jeff.posey@colin.edu	601-643-8411
East Central	David Case	VP of Institutional Research	dcase@eccp.edu	601-635-6323
East MS	Diana Prueitt	District Director for Institutional Research and and Effectiveness	dprueitt@eastms.edu	662-243-2875
Hinds	Carley Dear	Director for Institutional Research	carley.dear@hindscc.edu	601-857-3357
Holmes	Dr. Lindy McCain	Vice President of Institutional Research & Student Services	lmccain@holmescc.edu	662-472-9067
Itawamba	Liz Edwards	Director of Institutional Research	stedwards@iocoms.edu	662-862-8265
Jones County	Candace Weaver	Vice President of Instructional Affairs and Institutional Effectiveness	candace.weaver@jcc.edu	601-477-4075
Meridian	Cathy Parker	Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Accountability	cparker@mcc.cc.ms.us	601-484-8799
MS Delta	Rosemary Craven Dill Lamb	Vice-President for Institutional Effectiveness	rlamb@msdelta.edu	662-246-6256
MS Gulf Coast	Brian Burrous	Coordinator of Institutional Effectiveness, Research and Planning	brian.burrous@mccoc.edu	228-897-4375
Northeast MS	Craig-Ellis Sasser	Associate Vice President of Planning & Research	cesasser@nemcc.edu	662-720-7411
Northwest MS	Carolyn Warren	Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness	cwarren@northwestms.edu	662-562-3927
Pearl River	Brenda Wells	Director of Institutional Research	bwells@prcc.edu	601-403-1379
Southwest MS	Lea Touchstone	Director of Institutional Research	ltouchstone@smcc.edu	601-278-3706

As your research has value to our system, the MACJC respectfully requests a link to or electronic copy of your research once it is complete. Good luck on your dissertation!

Let me know if you have any questions.

Joan Davis Haynes, Ph.D.
 Associate Executive Director | Academic & Student Affairs
 Mississippi Community College Board
 3825 Ridgewood Road | Jackson, MS 39211

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/h/10m7gesjmrhuw/?&q=debra+west&msg=14cbe812fd9e...> 9/9/2015

APPENDIX E

IRB APPROVAL FROM THE MISSISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY



Jamilah Ruffin <jr121@msstate.edu>

Study 15-057: An Assessment of Enrollment Management at Community Colleges in Mississippi

nmorse@orc.msstate.edu <nmorse@orc.msstate.edu>
To: jr121@msstate.edu
Cc: nmorse@orc.msstate.edu, ads124@colled.msstate.edu

Mon, Feb 16, 2015 at 2:49 PM

Protocol Title: An Assessment of Enrollment Management at Community Colleges in Mississippi

Protocol Number: 15-057

Principal Investigator: Ms. Jamilah Ruffin

Date of Determination: 2/16/2015

Qualifying Exempt Category: 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2)

Attachments: Stamped informed consent in separate email

Dear Ms. Ruffin:

The Human Research Protection Program has determined the above referenced project exempt from IRB review.

Please note the following:

- Retain a copy of this correspondence for your records.
- An approval stamp is required on all informed consents.
- Only the MSU staff and students named on the application are approved as MSU investigators and/or key personnel for this study.
- The approved study will expire on 12/31/2016, which was the completion date indicated on your application. If additional time is needed, please contact our office. (1 SOP 01-03 Administrative Review of Applications)
- Any modifications to the project must be reviewed and approved by the HRPP prior to implementation. Any failure to adhere to the approved protocol could result in suspension or termination of your project.
- Per university requirement, all research-related records (e.g. application materials, letters of support, signed consent forms, etc.) must be retained and available for audit for a period of at least 3 years after the research has ended.
- It is the responsibility of the investigator to promptly report events that may represent unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.