

A CASE STUDY OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES UTILIZED TO
INCREASE NATIONAL RANKINGS OF AN HBCU THROUGH STRATEGIC PLANNING

by

Titilayo Evans

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University

2022

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APPROVED BY:

Ellen Ziegler, EdD, Committee Chair

Patty Ferrin, EdD, Committee Member

Abstract

The purpose of this single instrument case study was to explore the transformational leadership practices utilized by university leaders in the implementation of a strategic plan first executed in 2011 at Pride University, a pseudonym used for the setting of the study, a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). The central research question of this study was, “How were transformational leadership strategies utilized in the execution of the strategic plan implemented at Pride University?” Over the years, transformational leadership has been commonly embraced by organizations and has worked well for leaders and followers alike. Although there has been much research about transformational leadership practices in organizations using the business model, there has been little research regarding the usage of this model in higher education, particularly at an HBCU. This study focused on the transformational leadership practices applied during the implementation of the strategic plan and how they relate to the components of Bass’ transformational leadership theory and the methods of exemplary leadership practices identified by Kouzes and Posner. The strategic plan was designed to shape the strategic course of the university and propel the organization to a competitive position among its institutional peers. It reflects the vision of university stakeholders (board of trustees, administration, faculty/staff, students, alumni, and community partners) who collaborated to review the current state of the university, identify the needs, and set goals for the future. Multiple forms of data collection were completed to increase validity and produce triangulation: (1) semi-structured individual interviews with a sample size of 12-15 participants, (2) review of relevant documents, (3) and electronic surveys.

Keywords: case study, HBCU rankings, higher education, leadership styles, strategic planning, transformational leadership

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Dedication

I dedicate this manuscript to my five heartbeats. Everything I have done since I was 17 years old has been for you, so why should this be any different? You all are my WHY!

Bria: My ace, my first child, my number one, having you changed my life. You are a born leader with such a passionate zest for life! You are a free spirit living without fear. God knew I needed you. Thank you for always reminding me that God blesses our efforts.

Jaylan: My light! God gave me you to teach me more about His love than I have ever known. You are truly an inspiration and the definition of living your purpose. You are a shining light in my life, and I am infinitely grateful to have you.

Karrington: F1, I cannot thank God enough for trusting me to guide you in this life! He gave you such a sweet spirit and talented mind. You are one of one with a heart of gold. Don't let the world change that. You have so much to offer; change the world!

Kennedy: My mini me! God gave you a personality that is going to take you anywhere you want to go in life! You are so considerate of others, making anyone you encounter feel like they have at least one friend in this world. The world needs more of you!

Ezra: My baby. You are my hustler. And I like putting a positive spin on that word for you because you were born with an entrepreneurial spirit. God gave you a business mindset that cannot be learned in a classroom. You inspire and motivate me to be a boss! =) I have always said that it seems like you have been here before; I thank God for sharing you with me this time!

I love you all more than life, and I could not be prouder of who you all have grown into! I am so grateful that God chose me to be your mother! I just pray that He is pleased with my efforts.

Acknowledgments

My first acknowledgment is to God. He kept me through this entire doctoral journey. Every time I wanted to give up, He let me know that I can do all things through Him.

To Dr. Ziegler: God gave me you as my chair. Your guidance throughout this process has been priceless. Your positive spirit and encouragement made all the difference in the world for me, and I cannot thank you enough.

To Dr. Ferrin: Thank you for your guidance and expertise in properly formatting this qualitative case study. You made it all click for me, and I thank you!

To my mom: Thank you for being the strong woman that you are setting an example for me to live by, pushing this teen mother to stay in school even when I did not feel like it.

To my sister, brother-in-law, niece & nephews: Thank you for being there for me offering encouraging words to let me know I can do this.

To my love: You consistently encouraged me to write, and I thank you for that. I experienced writer's block in a manner that I never had before during this process, and there were many times when I was distracted. Thank you for helping me to refocus time and time again. I am grateful for you, and I appreciate your unwavering support!

To my additional family & friends: Thank you for every word of encouragement and support! Trust me when I tell you that every one of them was needed. Just when I wanted to give up, God would send one of you to check in on me. Thank you for listening to His voice!

To my colleagues: Thank you for speaking Dr. Evans into existence! Your positivity, understanding, and support pushed me a little further toward the finish line with each act of kindness.

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List of Abbreviations

Historically Black College or University (HBCU)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

Predominantly White Institution (PWI)

U.S. News and World Reports (USNWR)

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This single instrument case study explored the leadership practices utilized in executing a strategic plan developed for Pride University in 2011 with a continuation in 2020. Pride University is the pseudonym used to protect the privacy of the institution chosen to conduct the study. This chapter highlights the background information for this study through the historical, social, and theoretical context while providing a brief review of current literature on leadership in higher education. The problem and purpose statements are presented to define my motivation. The importance of this research is highlighted through the empirical, theoretical, and practical significance of the study, central research question, and sub-questions. Research of this nature, particularly at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU), can significantly add to the current literature on leadership practices.

Background

The strategic plan implemented at Pride University, an HBCU, was designed to shape the strategic course of the university and propel the organization to a competitive position among its institutional peers. It reflects the vision of university stakeholders (board of trustees, administration, faculty/staff, students, alumni, and community partners) who collaborated to review the current state of the university, identify the needs, and set goals for the future. The strategic plan established six university-wide strategic goals aligned with the university's vision, mission, and core values: (a) Intellectual Climate; (b) Excellence in Teaching, Research, and Engagement; (c) Premier Research, Science and Technology – Focused Institution; (d) Entrepreneurial Spirit and Engagement; (e) Diverse and Inclusive Campus Community; and (f) Academic and Operational Excellence. Through these goals, Pride University envisioned a future

dedicated to enhancing scholarship through interdisciplinary research, exceptional undergraduate and graduate education, innovative leadership, and purposeful community service and engagement. This qualitative case study sought to explore the leadership practices utilized at Pride University to implement the strategic plan.

Historical Context

HBCUs are land-grant institutions that were established through the Second Morrill Act of 1890. According to the U.S. Department of Education (1991), HBCUs were established before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 specifically to provide for the educational needs of Black Americans who were denied admission to traditionally White institutions. Although HBCUs were founded as a result of racism and were not designed to succeed, they have managed to exceed expectations (Hardy et al., 2019). HBCUs only represent 2.3% of postsecondary degree-granting institutions in the United States, as there are only 101 out of the 4,313 higher education institutions (NCES, 2020). However, despite being small in number, HBCUs conferred 48,200 degrees in the 2019-2020 academic year, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2020). Also, the U.S. Department of Education (1991) boasts accomplishments of the institutions noting that HBCUs have (a) awarded more than 80% of all Black Americans who received degrees in medicine and dentistry, particularly from Howard University of Meharry Medical College; (b) provided undergraduate training for three-fourths of all Black Americans who have earned doctorates and Black military officers and four-fifths of Black federal judges; (c) lead all other institutions in awarding baccalaureate degrees to Black students in the STEM areas, and (d) continued to rank proportionately high regarding higher education graduates who pursue and complete additional professional training.

Although many notable achievements are recorded for HBCUs, those accomplishments have not been achieved without challenges. Since their inception, HBCUs have been challenged with underprepared students, low-income students, inadequate management, insufficient financial resources, and low enrollment (Hardy et al., 2019). In the past, the leadership of HBCUs has been questioned due to many of the complications. Evans (2002) asserted that leadership styles and practices had been a source of many difficulties on HBCU campuses.

Social Context

Higher education is facing substantial financial and social challenges globally, particularly at HBCUs (Strategic Plan, 2011). Achievement and regulation of higher education institutions depend on the quality of leadership they possess (Freeman & Palmer, 2020). Many in and around the higher education community have questioned HBCUs' current state of affairs with concerns surrounding leadership, enrollment, and sustainability (Wood, 2019). Considering the challenges that HBCUs face, it is imperative for leaders to develop a course of action to assist with obtaining the goals and objectives of their academic institutions while also focusing on growth and development (Kramer & Swing, 2010). The strategic plan implemented at Pride University is the strategic course of action developed by leadership at Pride University to realize the institution's mission, vision, and core values (Strategic Plan, 2011).

Theoretical Context

For more than a century, the characterization and classification of the leadership theory have been consistently developed and transformed by researchers as they conceptualize various dimensions and divisions of the term (King, 1990). Components of the leadership theory have evolved and been compiled to create a centralized meaning indicating that leadership is a process in which the leader utilizes influence to seek the voluntary participation of followers to reach

shared organizational goals with a group or individuals (Northouse, 2021). Effective leadership is defined by the ability of a leader to consistently advance and persist followers to an established common destination or goal (Northouse, 2021). Specifically, where a leader collaborates with teams to identify necessary change, creates a vision to facilitate the change through motivation, and accomplishes the change in tandem with dedicated members of an entity is transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Northouse, 2021). Transformational leadership happens when a leader's behavior encourages followers and stimulates them to achieve beyond their perceived capabilities. It motivates people to perform with increased integrity and inspiration and attain unexpected or extraordinary results. Since it was first introduced, the transformational leadership theory has evolved considerably. Bass (1985) expanded the theory by identifying four "I's" of transformational leadership (a) Idealized Influence, (b) Inspirational Motivation, (c) Intellectual Stimulation, and (d) Individual Consideration indicating that transformational leaders typically exhibit those behaviors. Leithwood and his colleague's conceptual model of transformational leadership bridged the work of Burns and Bass to the field of educational administration, expanding the knowledge base for understanding school leadership and how it affects the school environment (Stewart, 2006). And most recently, Kouzes and Posner (2017) have identified the five exemplary practices of leadership that are derived from the transformational leadership model (a) Model the Way, (b) Inspire a Shared Vision, (c) Challenge the Process, (d) Enable Others to Act, and (e) Encourage the Heart. According to Turner (2018), transformational leadership practices have proven instrumental in positive changes on HBCU campuses fostering increased student diversity, improved economic revenue, and enriched community relationships. The transformational leadership practices utilized in implementing the strategic plan at Pride

University were explored in this single instrument qualitative case study through behaviors, relationships, and experiences.

Problem Statement

One of the significant problems facing HBCUs today is that although they have accomplished many notable achievements, they are not recognized along with Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) for providing innovative leadership and high-ranking intensive interdisciplinary research. According to Hardy (2019), despite significant evidence of accomplishment, HBCUs have long been considered scholastically inferior to PWIs (Abdul-Alim, 2016; Gasman & Bowman, 2011; Malveaux, 2013; Prince, 2014) because they tend to underperform on measures conventionally utilized to assess colleges and universities (Gasman, 2013; Lee & Keys, 2013). The *U.S. News & World Report* (USNWR) Best Colleges Ranking is an annual set of rankings of American colleges and universities published by U.S. News and World Report and is the most widely quoted listing of its kind in the United States. A review of the 2021 list revealed only one HBCU in the top 100 national universities (U.S. News, 2021). The “2019 Annual Report of the Top American Research Universities by the Center for Measuring University Performance” ranked four HBCUs in the top two hundred (Lombardi et al., 2019). Pride University was not on either list, although it is essential to note that USNWR provides a separate ranking list for HBCUs and recognizes Pride University as the number one public HBCU (2021). The strategic plan implemented by Pride University was designed to change the overall national ranking by shaping the strategic course of the university and propelling the organization to a competitive position among its peers. Falluca (2018) cites that leadership behaviors and characteristics directly influence engagement in an organizational environment that evokes change (Druker, 1999; Gilley, 2005; Howkins, 2001). This qualitative

case study explored the transformational leadership behaviors and practices utilized to implement the strategic plan at an HBCU.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this single instrument qualitative case study was to explore the transformational leadership practices utilized by university leaders in the implementation of a strategic plan first executed in 2011 at Pride University. Transformational leadership is generally defined as a methodology of leadership that ideally creates valuable and constructive change in individuals and organizations, ultimately developing followers into leaders (Burns, 1978). The theory guiding this study was the transformational leadership theory first established by Burns in 1978, further developed by Bass (1985), identifying four “I’s” of transformational leadership: (a) Idealized Influence, (b) Inspirational Motivation, (c) Intellectual Stimulation, and (d) Individual Consideration, and bridged together by Leithwood and his colleague’s for educational administration, expanding the knowledge for understanding school leadership and how it affects the school environment (Stewart, 2006). And most recently, Kouzes and Posner (2017) have identified the five exemplary practices of leadership derived from the transformational leadership model (a) Model the Way, (b) Inspire a Shared Vision, (c) Challenge the Process, (d) Enable Others to Act, and (e) Encourage the Heart.

Significance of the Study

This single instrument qualitative case study is significant in that it adds to the body of literature that not only explored leadership practices in higher education but particularly those at an HBCU. With the leadership challenges in higher education, specifically at HBCUs, exploration of the strategic plan highlights the importance of significant leadership at HBCUs to allow for competitive recognition amongst peer institutions. The strategic plan implemented by

Pride University was designed to change the overall national ranking of the university by shaping the strategic course and propel the organization to a competitive position among its peers.

Falluca (2018) cites that leadership behaviors and characteristics directly influence engagement in an organizational environment that evokes change (Druker, 1999; Gilley, 2005; Howkins, 2001).

Empirical Significance

The impact of transformational leadership practices on various organizations has been well documented. However, most studies on transformational leadership in higher education have been quantitative (Jyoti & Bhau, 2016). There is a scarcity of qualitative research addressing transformational leadership practices in higher education, despite the positive impact on school, student, and teacher outcomes (Sun et al., 2017). Banks (2019) asserts that leadership challenges intensify the issues facing HBCUs because research indicates that strategic leadership is critical for the existence and preservation of colleges and universities (Adair, 2010; Fiedler & Garcia, 1987; Morrill, 2011). Due to the perception of futile and unsuccessful leadership practices at some HBCUs, this qualitative study adds to the literature demonstrating positive and effective transformational leadership practices in higher education, specifically at an HBCU.

Theoretical Significance

Since being introduced, the leadership theory has experienced more than 100 years of expansion and development. Definitions of leadership have progressed continuously during multiple eras, influenced by many factors, including global and political affairs to the specific disciplines in which leadership is studied (Northouse, 2021). Rost (1991) examined leadership theory materials written from 1900 to 1990, discovering more than 200 definitions of leadership. His assessment offers a concise record of how the leadership theory has been identified and

progressed throughout the previous century (Northouse, 2021). Since being introduced, the transformational leadership theory has experienced 30 years of expansion and development in academia. It is said to be the most examined and explored leadership theory of the 21st century in relation to various types of organizations (Tal & Gordon, 2016). Berkovich (2016) reinforced the effectiveness of transformational leadership in education and called for additional research and development in the administrative aspect of educational leadership. This study further expands transformational leadership research with administrators in educational leadership at HBCUs by exploring the successful implementation of a university strategic plan.

Practical Significance

According to Banks (2019), leadership challenges intensify the issues facing HBCUs because research indicates that strategic leadership is critical for the existence and preservation of colleges and universities (Adair, 2010; Fiedler & Garcia, 1987; Morrill, 2011). Few qualitative studies have addressed transformational leadership in higher education, specifically at an HBCU (Sun et al., 2017). However, transformational leadership has become a prevalent form of leadership to successfully adapt to significant challenges and changes in higher education. When visioning the strategic plan (2011), serious matters were considered regarding the student's needs, the geographic areas served, and the requirements necessary to enhance transformational research. This study positively affects other higher education institutions' structural, strategic planning, especially HBCUs.

Research Questions

The purpose and central question of this single instrument qualitative case study was to explore the leadership practices utilized in the execution and implementation of the strategic plan. The research questions that follow guided this study.

Central Question:

How were transformational leadership practices utilized to execute the strategic plan implemented at Pride University?

Sub-questions:

SQ1: How did leaders model the way to execute the strategic plan?

SQ2: How did leaders inspire a shared vision in implementing the strategic plan?

SQ3: How did leaders challenge the process in executing the strategic plan?

SQ4: How did leaders enable others to act while executing the strategic plan?

SQ5: How did leaders encourage the heart during the strategic plan implementation?

Definitions

1. *Challenge the process* – an exemplary leader challenges the process by searching for and seizing opportunities, capitalizing on the initiative looking for innovative ways to improve while experimenting and taking risks, consistently generating small wins, and learning from the experience (Kouzes & Posner, 2017)
2. *Enable others to act* – an exemplary leader enables others to act by fostering collaboration, building trust, and facilitating relationships while strengthening others through the promotion of self-determination and competence (Kouzes & Posner, 2017)
3. *Encourage the heart* – an exemplary leader encourages the heart by recognizing contributions and individual excellence while celebrating values and victories by creating a spirit of community (Kouzes & Posner, 2017)
4. *Followers* – people whom leadership is targeted (Northouse; 2021)
5. *Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)* – land-grant established through the Second Morrill Act of 1890 specifically to provide for the educational needs of Black

Americans who were denied admission to traditionally White institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 1991)

6. *Idealized Influence* – when the leader leads by example (Burns, 1985).
7. *Individual Consideration* – when the leader establishes a strong relationship with followers (Burns, 1985)
8. *Inspirational Motivation* – when the leader inspires others to achieve (Burns, 1985)
9. *Inspire a shared vision* – an exemplary leader inspires a shared vision when they envision the future by creating exciting and enabling possibilities while enlisting others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations (Kouzes & Posner, 2017)
10. *Intellectual Stimulation* – when the leader encourages followers to think for themselves (Burns, 1985)
11. *Leader* – a person who engages in leadership practices (Northouse; 2021)
12. *Leadership* – a process in which the leader utilizes influence to seek voluntary participation of followers to reach shared organizational goals with a group or individuals (Bhatti et al., 2012; Northouse, 2021)
13. *Leadership Practice* – a process in which a leader utilizes influence to seek voluntary participation of followers to reach shared organizational goals with a group or individuals (Bhatti et al., 2012; Northouse, 2021)
14. *Model the Way* – an exemplary leader models the way when they clarify values, affirm shared values, and set an example by aligning actions with those shared values (Kouzes & Posner, 2017)

15. *Transformational leadership* – a leadership style that utilizes teams within the organization to identify the need, create a vision, and execute a plan for change (Burns, 1978)

Summary

The purpose of this single instrument qualitative case study was to explore the leadership practices utilized in the implementation of a strategic plan at Pride University. According to Northouse (2021), leadership is a process in which the leader utilizes influence to seek the voluntary participation of followers to reach shared organizational goals with a group or individuals. Effective leadership motivates people to perform with increased integrity and inspiration and attain unexpected or extraordinary results (Burns, 1978). This strategic plan was implemented due to one of the significant problems facing HBCUs today. HBCUs are not widely recognized along with PWIs for providing innovative leadership and high-ranking intensive interdisciplinary research. This study further expands the research on the leadership practices utilized during the strategic plan implementation. It may have significant implications and influence other institutions of higher education, especially HBCUs.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

A comprehensive review of the literature was conducted to explore the transformational leadership practices utilized to implement the strategic plan developed for Pride University in 2011. Pride University is the pseudonym used to protect the privacy of the institution chosen to conduct the study. This chapter will present a review of the current literature related to the topic of study. The theories relevant to transformational leadership in higher education will be discussed in the first section, followed by a synthesis of recent literature regarding leadership styles and practice, strategic plans, and HBCUs. A gap in the literature will be highlighted by identifying how this research can add to the current body of literature on transformational leadership practices, particularly at a HBCU.

Theoretical Framework

The term transformational leadership was first presented by Downton (1973); however, the concept did not gain worldwide credibility and acknowledgment until the publication of Burns' book *Leadership* in 1978 (Mcdowelle, 2009; Reza, 2019). This was when researchers shifted their attention to leadership models consistent with developing trends in educational reform such as empowerment, collective leadership, and organizational learning (Hallinger, 2003). Transformational leadership is the principal leadership model demonstrating the aforementioned characteristics (Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1997, 1998; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Reza; 2019; Silins & Mulford, 2002; Stewart, 2006). Some of the scholars most closely associated with transformational leadership are James MacGregor Burns, Bernard M. Bass, Bruce J. Avolio, and Kenneth Leithwood (Reza, 2019; Stewart, 2006).

Particularly, Burns's (1978) definition of transformational leadership is when a leader collaborates with teams to identify necessary change, creates a vision to facilitate the change through motivation, and accomplishes the change in tandem with dedicated members of an entity. Transformational leadership happens when a leader's behavior encourages followers and stimulates them to achieve beyond their perceived capabilities (Burns, 1978; Stewart, 2006). It motivates people to perform with increased integrity and inspiration and attain unexpected or extraordinary results (Burns, 1978; Stewart, 2006). Burns suggests that leadership must originate with a shared purpose. At the same time, influential leaders must be evaluated based on their propensity to make social changes, indicating that the role of the leader and follower be conceptually integrated (Stewart, 2006). This type of leadership creates a mutual relationship that develops followers into leaders and leaders into moral agents. The moral leadership concept was introduced as a way for leaders to take responsibility for their leadership practices and seek to satisfy the needs of their followers. According to Burns (1978), leaders are neither born nor made; they form from a structure of inspiration, values, and goals (Stewart, 2006).

Additionally, the transformational leadership theory has evolved considerably since first introduced. Much of Bass' (1985) research evolved from deficiencies found in Burns' early work on the theory (Stewart, 2006). Bass found agreeable evidence that transformational leadership was compelling and influenced followers beyond expectations and found that leaders' behaviors raise the level of dedication from followers (Stewart, 2006). In their research, Bass and his colleagues expanded upon the transformational leadership theory by identifying four components of transformational leadership, indicating that transformational leaders typically exhibit those behaviors: (a) Idealized Influence where leaders are considered role models who have a clear vision, are willing to take risks and are respected, admired, and emulated by their followers (b)

Inspirational Motivation where leaders communicate expectations, demonstrate a commitment to goals and a shared vision while motivating challenging, and generating enthusiasm among others (c) Intellectual Stimulation where leaders stimulate creativity for new and innovative ideas and avoid public criticism or correction of followers, and (d) Individual Consideration where leaders pay attention to the needs and the potential for developing followers establishing a supportive climate where individual differences are respected. Interactions with followers are encouraged, and the leaders are aware of individual concerns (Bass, 1998; Reza, 2019; Stewart, 2006).

Leithwood and his colleague's conceptual model of transformational leadership in educational administration has generated extensive empirical studies and investigation over the past decade and has been highly influential in bridging the work of Burns and Bass to the field, expanding the knowledge base for understanding school leadership and how it affects the school environment (Stewart, 2006). Leithwood et al. (1994) defines transformational leadership as a significant change in the form, nature, function, and potential of some phenomenon; applied to leadership. Thus, the primary objective of transformational leadership is to enhance the individual and collaborative problem-solving abilities of organizational members; such capacities are involved in identifying goals to be attained and methods to be used in their attainment (Stewart, 2006).

Moreover, Leithwood (1994) identified seven dimensions used to define transformational leadership with specific leadership practices: (a) building school vision and establishing school goals; (b) providing intellectual stimulation; (c) offering individualized support; (d) modeling best practices and important organizational values; (e) demonstrating high-performance expectations; (f) creating a productive school culture; and (g) developing structures to foster participation in school decisions (Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood et al., 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi,

2000). Leithwood (1994) believes that earlier models of transformational leadership disregarded essential transactional elements vital to the organization's stability, including staffing, instructional support, monitoring school activities, and community focus as additional management components.

Most recently, Kouzes and Posner (2017) identified five exemplary practices of leadership which are grounded on the moral foundations of transformational leadership in *The Leadership Challenge* (Ajanaku et al., 2021). The five practices are: (a) Model the Way, where leaders clarify values, affirm shared values, and set an example by aligning actions with those shared values, (b) Inspire a Shared Vision, where leaders envision the future by creating exciting possibilities while enlisting others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations, (c) Challenge the Process where leaders search for and seize opportunities, capitalizing on the initiative looking for innovative ways to improve while experimenting and taking risks consistently generating small wins and learning from the experience, (d) Enable Others to Act where leaders foster collaboration, build trust, and facilitate relationships while strengthening others through the promotion of self-determination and competence, and (e) Encourage the Heart where leaders recognize contributions and individual excellence while celebrating values and victories creating a spirit of community (Ajanaku et al., 2021; Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

While the transformational leadership theory has experienced 30 years of expansion and development in academia since it was first introduced, it is said to be the most examined and explored leadership theory of the 21st century in relation to various types of organizations (Tal & Gordon, 2016). Berkovich (2016) reinforced the effectiveness of transformational leadership in education and called for additional research and development in the administrative aspect of

educational leadership. This study further expands the analysis of transformational leadership with administrators in educational leadership at HBCUs.

Related Literature

Leadership is one of the most broadly examined collective influence practices in the behavioral sciences because the success of all organizational structures depends on the competent and practical guidance from the leaders of these structures (Barrow, 1977). With an abundance of research on leadership, there is a surplus of ambiguous and ill-defined concepts and theories on the topic. The all-encompassing topic of leadership has included such diverse perspectives and issues that hardly anyone can determine what leadership is nor how it should be defined (Stewart, 2006). Despite the extensive literature on leadership, an agreed-upon definition of leadership does not exist (Stewart, 2006). Burns defines leadership as leaders encouraging followers to act to obtain specific goals that represent the leaders and followers' values, motivations, wants, needs, aspirations, and expectations (Burns, 1978, Stewart, 2006). However, a collective definition that many scholars can agree upon is an instrument utilized to influence followers in an organization to work actively toward goal achievement, specifically identified for the common purpose (Barrow, 1977; Bass, 1990a; Cyert, 2006; Northouse, 2021; Parris, 2013). Great leaders develop a vision for an organization, convey and create a shared vision with followers, and then generate a path to accomplishment (Banutu-Gomez & Banutu-Gomez, 2007; Kotter, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Parris, 2013).

Still, leadership has been and will continue to be a primary focus in school accountability and reform (Stewart, 2006). The current literature on leadership will be presented in this section. Several types of leadership are discussed, demonstrating the evolution and utilization of the term

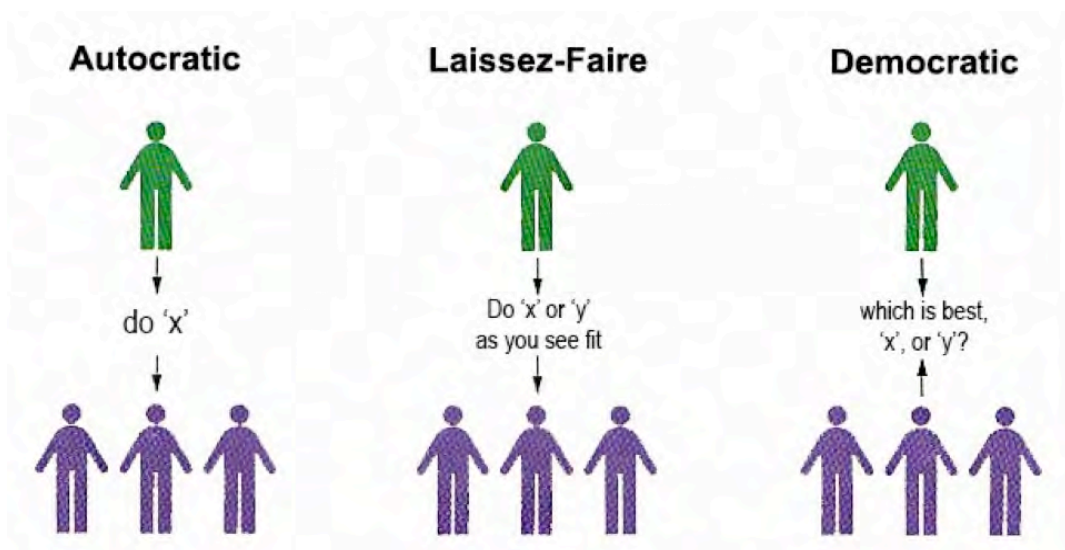
from its origins to the New Leadership Paradigm. Specifically, the focus will be on using leadership for strategic planning of higher education and how it impacts HBCU rankings.

Origins of the Study of Leadership

Early emphasis of the study of leadership focused on leaders' personal attributes or traits, indicating a specific set of physical and personality characteristics, competencies, and values (Bryman, 2013; Fleenor, 2006). The trait approach views leadership exclusively from the perception of the individual leader. Inherent in this theory is the notion that traits generate consistent behavior patterns across situations. The trait approach declares leadership traits to be enduring characteristics that leaders are born with and remain relatively stable over time (Fleenor, 2006).

Yet, it was not until the late 1940s that organizations shifted away from studying the 'traits' of leaders to their 'style' or behavior (Bryman, 2013). Several factors seem to have contributed to this change of emphasis, including a lack of consistent findings. The general psychological work on leadership seemed to be moving toward examining what leaders do and leadership styles (Bryman, 2013). The three primary leadership styles, authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire, were identified by Lewin et al. (1939) as patterns of behaviors between leaders and followers that gained prominence in the late 1940s (Bhatti et al., 2012). An authoritarian, also known as an autocratic leadership style, is conceptualized as a leader's behavior that declares unquestionable authority and control over followers and requires absolute compliance (Bodla et al., 2019; Cheng et al., 2004; Chukwusa, 2018; Harms et al., 2018). Authoritarian leaders characteristically make choices based on their ideas and judgments (Cherry, 2006; Lewin, 1939, Malos, 2012). Authoritarian leaders: (a) set goals and make decisions individually with little to no input from followers, (b) engage primarily in downward

communication and control discussion with followers, (c) dictate interaction, methods, and work processes (Cherry, 2006; Malos, 2012; Martindale, 2011). Conversely, in stark contrast to the autocratic leadership style, the laissez-faire leadership style, also known as delegative leadership, does not involve much influence from the leader; it is a non-interference strategy that allows a high degree of autonomy and self-rule to followers with no specific method of obtaining goals (Bhatti et al., 2012). Laissez-faire leadership allows followers freedom to make decisions concerning completing their work. Researchers have found that this is generally the leadership style that leads to the lowest productivity among followers as it can sometimes result in a lack of cohesiveness and satisfaction (Johnson & Hackman, 2018). Lastly, democratic leadership, also known as participative leadership, is a leadership style in which followers take a more active role in decision-making. It influences followers consistent with fundamental democratic standards and values, such as inclusiveness, independence, and intentionalism (Dahl, 1989; Fishkin, 1991; Gastil, 1994). Researchers have found that this leadership style is usually one of the most effective and leads to increased productivity, contributions from followers, and group morale (Cherry, 2006; Malos, 2012; Yang, 2015). Democratic leaders: (a) encourage followers to share ideas and opinions, (b) offer guidance to followers but allow them to feel more engaged in the process, (c) reward and encourage creativity (Cherry, 2006; Kilicoglu, 2018; Lewin, 1939; Lin, 2018; Malos, 2012; Peker et al., 2018).

Figure 1*Three Primary Leadership Styles*

Note. The three primary leadership styles are autocratic, laissez-faire, and democratic. Figure 1 demonstrates a visual representation of the philosophy of each leadership style. The authoritarian leadership style provides specific instruction to followers; the laissez-faire leadership style provides followers the autonomy to make decisions. The democratic style is inclusive, with the leader and followers working together to make decisions (Leadership Styles, 2021).

Overall, the three primary leadership styles identified in 1939 are the foundation for the situational and behavioral leadership styles to follow. As current leadership styles derive from the primary leadership styles, they vary in theory and practice. Many of the leadership styles utilized today, such as (a) authentic, (b) servant, (c) adaptive, (d) transactional, and (e) transformational, are all part of the “New Leadership” paradigm (Northouse, 2021).

Authentic Leadership

The authentic leadership theory characterizes three types of authenticity: an individual’s authenticity, a leader’s authenticity, and authentic leadership as a phenomenon (Alvensson & Einola, 2019; Caza & Jackson, 2011; Elrehail et al., 2018; Gardner, 2021; Iszatt-White &

Kempster, 2019; Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Yammarino et al., 2008;). These three types of authenticity are contended to be conditionally inclusive. An individual must be personally authentic to be an authentic leader, and authentic leadership is impossible without the involvement of an authentic leader (Caza & Jackson, 2011; Gardner et al., 2005). Harter (2002) highlighted two components of authenticity based on the origins of the term in ancient Greek philosophy: (a) knowing one's true self and (b) acting in accordance with one's true self. Subsequently, authenticity is a subjective and reflexive process experienced only by the individual (Caza & Jackson, 2011; Erickson, 1995). If an individual believes she is being authentic, then by definition, she is (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Caza & Jackson, 2011; Harter, 2002). Kernis (2003) identified authenticity as consisting of four components: (a) complete consciousness and acceptance of self; (b) impartial processing of information applicable to self; (c) action consistent with true self; and (d) a relational orientation that values honesty and truth in personal connections. George (2003) focuses on the characteristics of authentic leaders in a practical way through essential qualities. In addition to the aforementioned qualities, George added one additional characteristic to develop the five crucial elements of authentic leaders: (a) a strong sense of purpose, (b) strong values, (c) establishing trusting relationships, (d) demonstrating self-discipline and act on values, and (e) sensitive and empathetic to others (Northouse, 2021).

Merging the perspectives of Harter, Kernis, and George, authentic leadership, scholars define authenticity as being fully aware and knowledgeable about oneself in all aspects and exhibiting behavior that demonstrates that awareness (Caza & Jackson, 2011; Gardner et al., 2005; Ilies et al., 2005). Expounding on this definition, authentic leaders display four interactive characteristics through both thoughts and actions: (a) full consciousness as total awareness of

self; (b) interpersonal clarity as an accurate depiction of self to others; (c) impartial processing of relevant, objective information that may challenge one's existing principles; and (d) an internalized ethical assessment of self-regulation and self-determination (Gardner et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Most authentic leadership theory researchers suggest that anyone lacking any behaviors is not an authentic leader (Avolio et al., 2009; Caza & Jackson, 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Figure 2

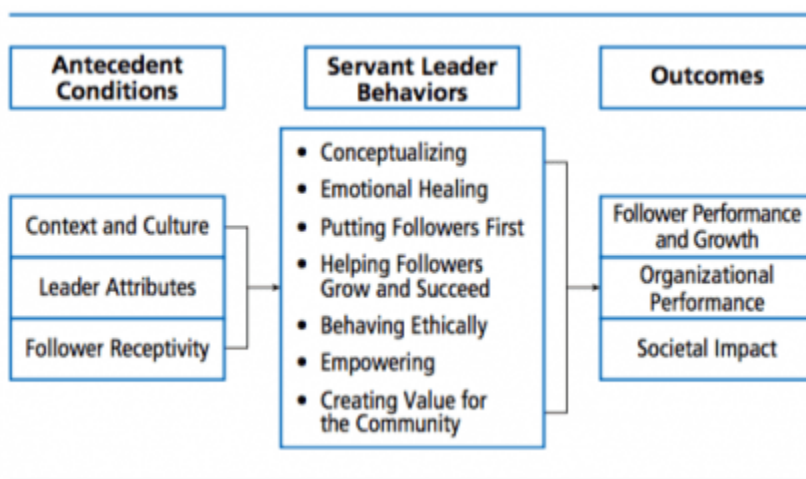
Model of Authentic Leadership Characteristics



Note. Figure 2 identifies the five dimensions of authentic leadership (purpose, values, relationships, self-discipline, and heart) in addition to related characteristics that individuals need to be authentic leaders (Northouse, 2021).

Servant Leadership

The servant leadership theory is considered a leadership style helpful to organizations and followers by engaging and developing people as whole individuals with heart, mind, and spirit (Northouse, 2021). Servant leaders highlight the organization's objectives, its purpose in society, and the individual purpose of the followers (Aboramadan et al., 2020; Bao et al., 2018; Eva et al., 2019; McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001; Pawar et al., 2020; Van & Patterson, 2018). In a servant-led organization, culture is created with reflexive opportunities to learn through information gathering and sharing, allowing followers to experience a safe space for continuous development. Servant leaders focus on building a community of trust and togetherness by emphasizing strong interpersonal relationships within the organization (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001a; Van & Patterson, 2018). Two unique tenets of the servant leadership theory indicate that a servant leader: (a) is genuinely concerned with serving followers and has a high moral focus consistent with the attention that shifts from the organization to the followers (b) acts as a follower-focused steward who holds the organization in trust and does not use power to accomplish goals but persuades staff with the power of service (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018; Greenleaf, 1977; Greenleaf, 1998; Parolini et al., 2009; Reinke, 2004; Stone et al., 2004; Van & Patterson, 2010). Leaders are generally driven by self, the organization, or others. With the servant-leader being cognizant of all three, they go beyond self-interest and are motivated by an others-interest approach (Parolini et al., 2009; Van & Patterson, 2010).

Figure 3*Model of Servant Leadership*

Note. Figure 3 demonstrates the three antecedent conditions (context and culture, leader attributes, and follower receptivity) of servant leadership that impact servant leader behaviors and outcomes (Northouse, 2021).

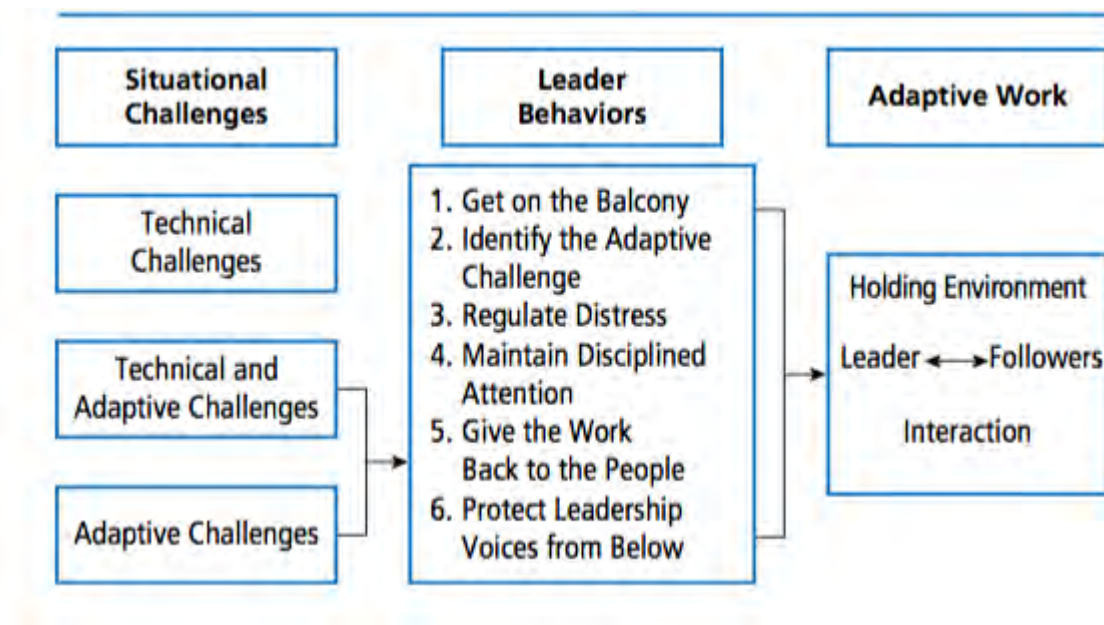
Adaptive Leadership

The adaptive leadership theory promotes people's adaptive capacities, focusing on the leader's ability to encourage followers to address challenges without hierarchical authority through mobilization, motivation, organization, and focusing attention (Ali et al., 2020; Bagwell, 2020; Goode et al., 2021; Heifetz, 1994; Heifetz et al., 2009; Khan, 2017; Miller, 2016). The fundamental tenet of the theory is its emphasis on the actions of adaptive leaders rather than individual characteristics (Khan, 2017; Northouse, 2016; Northouse, 2021; Miller, 2016). However, the theory involves three components: (a) the challenging situation, (b) the adaptive work, and (c) the leader's actions (Heifetz, 1994; Northouse, 2016). Based on the research of Heifetz and his colleagues (Heifetz, 1994; Heifetz et al., 2009b; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997; Heifetz

& Linsky, 2002), Northouse (2016) created a visual representation of the adaptive leadership model as follows.

Figure 4

Model of Adaptive Leadership



Note. Figure 4 is a visual representation of adaptive leadership that begins with situational challenges. The situational challenges, typically technical in nature, determine the leader's behavior and necessary adaptive work (Northouse, 2021).

Consequently, one of the greatest leadership errors is not properly diagnosing the challenge as technical versus adaptive as truly adaptive leaders identify the context and alter actions to match the environment (Miller, 2016; Northouse, 2021; Snowden & Boone, 2007).

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership is when goal attainment and organizational stability are maintained between leaders and their followers through agreements for reward or corrective action based on expected behaviors and performance (Alrowwad & Abualoush, 2020; Arenas,

2019; Avolio, 2011; Ghaus, 2017; Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2019). For transactional leaders, the focus is on optimizing performance systems, accomplishing organizational tasks, and meeting guidelines and expectations (Arenas, 2019; Avolio, 2011). The components of transactional leadership are (a) contingent reward, (b) management by exception—active, and (c) management by exception—passive (Arenas, 2019).

Namely, a contingent reward is a process whereby the leader leverages constructive transactions or exchanges with followers by mutually establishing expectations and rewards for goal attainment to reinforce positive behaviors and performance. Contingent reward was initially developed from a principle of educational psychology that believed people tend to repeat behaviors when they are rewarded (Arenas, 2019; Bass & Riggio, 2006).

However, management, by exception, is labeled as a corrective transaction and is usually not as effective as a contingent reward (Arenas, 2019; Avolio, 2011). Whether the management by exception component is considered active or passive is based on when corrective action is taken. Active leaders monitor and control the followers' behaviors through compliance with rules and regulations in an ongoing manner to anticipate challenges, take early intervention to provide detailed instruction, and promptly correct as warranted before major complications to improve organizational efficiency and productivity (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Sosik & Jung, 2011). Passive leaders typically delay taking any corrective action until standards have been violated, generally focusing on negative performance, which garners a lack of trust or respect for the leader (Arenas, 2019).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is one of the most current and popular approaches to leadership (Ghaus, 2017; Northouse, 2021; Reza, 2019; Siangchokyoo et al., 2020).

Transformational leadership is a leadership style that evokes change through a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders. Specifically, transformational leadership occurs when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their followers through influence to accomplish more than expected by tapping into their emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals (Asbari, 2020; Bass, 1990b; Reza, 2019).

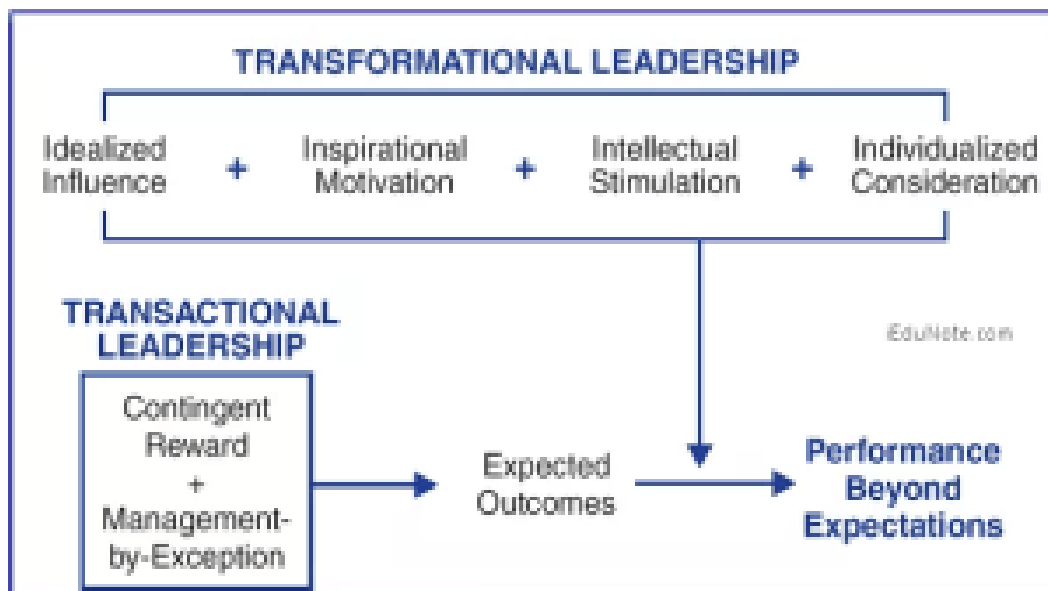
Transformational leaders motivate followers through awareness and acceptance to surpass their own interests for the collective mission and purpose of the group by stimulating confidence, admiration, allegiance, and respect amongst their followers (Barbuto, 2005; Feinberg et al., 2005). According to Bass (1985), influential transformational leaders exhibit four behaviors: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration.

Specifically, idealized influence is when the leader acts as a role model for followers to emulate, generating confidence and trust among the group by prioritizing their needs (Bono & Judge, 2004; Hay, 2006; Reza, 2019; Simic, 1998; Stone et al., 2004). This type of confidence in the leader provides an avenue for acceptance with little resistance to organizational change. In addition, inspirational motivation is when leaders set high but reasonable goals for their organization and inspire followers to achieve them. Transformational leaders clearly articulate the organization's vision and create an appealing view of the future, offering followers the opportunity to see meaning in their work, motivating them extrinsically and intrinsically. They inspire followers to become part of the overall organizational culture and environment (Hay, 2006; Kelly, 2003; Reza, 2019; Stone et al., 2004). Similarly, intellectual stimulation involves creating awareness and encouraging followers to assess challenges and problem solve independently (Bono & Judge, 2004; Kelly, 2003). Transformational leaders create learning

opportunities by questioning assumptions and beliefs and encouraging followers to be creative, considering old challenges in new ways (Barbuto, 2005; Hay, 2006; Reza, 2019). They inspire followers by encouraging them to propose innovative and controversial ideas without fear of ridicule or reprimand, promoting growth and improvement within the organization (Hay, 2006; Reza, 2019; Stone et al., 2004). Lastly, individualized consideration involves the leaders establishing a solid relationship with their followers by responding to their specific, unique needs while ensuring they are included in any changes throughout the organization (Hay, 2006; Reza, 2019; Simic, 1998). The transformational leader must understand what motivates followers individually to develop and support them to reach their full potential (Chekwa, 2001; Hay, 2006; Reza, 2019; Simic, 2003; Stone et al., 2003). Collectively, the four main behaviors of transformational leadership are symbiotic and yield performance beyond expectations (Gellis, 2001; Hall et al., 2002; Hay, 2006; Kelly, 2003; Reza, 2019).

Figure 5

A Model of Transformational and Transactional Leadership



Note. Figure 5 demonstrates how to achieve expected outcomes and performance beyond expectations utilizing transformational and transactional leadership (Northouse, 2021).

The Leadership Challenge

Kouzes and Posner's (2017) leadership model suggests that leadership is a collection of practices and behaviors outlined as the five exemplary practices of leadership that serve as guidance for leaders to achieve or exceed expectations. The five exemplary practices of leadership were developed through intensive research on current leadership practices and seemed to align with the essential components of transformational leadership (Abu-Tineh et al., 2008; Taylor, 2002; Walker, 2019). The practices are: (a) Model the Way, (b) Inspire a Shared Vision, (c) Challenge the Process, (d) Enable Others to Act, and (e) Encourage the Heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Model the Way

According to Kouzes and Posner (2019), the most influential leaders in higher education are those who most frequently Model the Way. Modeling the Way encourages leaders to identify their philosophy by clarifying their own values to build and affirm shared values regarding goals and objectives with their followers to build credibility (Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Vito et al., 2014). Exemplary leaders possess high standards for organizational measurement. They create programs of excellence, set examples, and build commitment through daily acts that make consistent progress and momentum. When followers were surveyed to question how often their leaders engaged in the six behaviors associated with Model the Way on the *Leadership Practices Inventory* (LPI), the analysis showed that the effectiveness ratings of leaders by their followers increased by 63% as they engaged more frequently in the behaviors associated with Modeling the Way.

Inspire a Shared Vision

Exemplary leaders believe that they can make a difference through envisioning the future and creating a distinctive and exciting image of what the organization can become, thus inspiring a shared vision. Inspiring a shared vision is essential in motivating leaders and followers to commit to and pursue the shared vision they seek to produce (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

According to Kouzes and Posner (2019), the most influential leaders in higher education are those who most frequently Inspire a Shared Vision. After surveying followers to determine how often their leaders engaged in the six behaviors associated with Inspire a Shared Vision on the *Leadership Practices Inventory*, there was an 85% increase in effectiveness for leaders who engaged more frequently in the behaviors related to inspiring a shared vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2019).

Challenge the Process

The most effective leaders in higher education most frequently challenge the process (Kouzes & Posner, 2019). Challenging the Process is consistent behavior for transformational leaders demonstrated by searching for and seizing opportunities, capitalizing on the initiative looking for innovative ways to improve while experimenting and taking risks, consistently generating small wins, and learning from the experience (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Kouzes and Posner (2019) asked followers how often their leaders engaged in the six behaviors associated with Challenge the Process on the *Leadership Practices Inventory*, and rates increased significantly by 84% for leaders observed engaging with behaviors of Challenging the Process.

Enable Others to Act

The most effective leaders in higher education most frequently Enable Others to Act (Kouzes & Posner, 2019). Exemplary leaders also Enable Others to Act by fostering collaboration and empowerment, building trust, and facilitating relationships while strengthening others through promoting self-determination and competence. It involves allowing followers to realize their full potential, participate in planning, and give them freedom of choice in the decision-making process (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Kouzes and Posner (2019) questioned followers on how often their leaders engaged in the six behaviors associated with Enable Others to Act on the *Leadership Practices Inventory*. The analysis showed that the effectiveness ratings of leaders by their followers increased by 40% as leaders were observed engaging more frequently in the behaviors associated with enabling others to act.

Encourage the Heart

Successful leaders have high expectations for themselves and their followers. Followers often need inspiration and motivation to accomplish the goals of the organization. An exemplary

leader Encourages the Heart by recognizing contributions and individual excellence while celebrating values and victories by creating a spirit of community. Because they are the most prominent personality in the organization and serve as a model, exemplary leaders play a vital role in celebrating individual or group achievements. When leaders encourage their followers through recognition and celebration, they inspire better performance (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). The most effective leaders in higher education most frequently Encourage the Heart. When followers were asked how often their leaders engaged in the six behaviors associated with Encourage the Heart on the *Leadership Practices Inventory*, the analysis showed that the effectiveness ratings of leaders increased by nearly 63% when observed engaging more frequently in the behaviors associated with Encouraging the Heart.

Although not much research has been completed to measure the usage of the five exemplary practices in higher education outside of Kouzes and Posner, Sullivan (2017) conducted a study of two community college department chairpersons and concluded that Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership model should be incorporated into the community college settings through professional development workshop for leaders due to the influence on student achievement. Four themes: (a) modeling the way; (b) developing cooperative relationships; (c) giving praise; (d) promoting professional growth, emerged from the research and highlighted the importance of utilizing the five exemplary practices of leadership on a daily basis (Sullivan, 2017).

Figure 6*Leadership Challenge Model*

Note. Figure 6 is a model of the Leadership Challenge indicating the five exemplary practices (model the way; inspire a shared vision; challenge the process; enable others to act; encourage the heart) of an exemplary leader (Majacakarun, 2021).

Strategic Planning in Higher Education

The development of strategic planning in higher education formed in the 1980s and corresponded with the difficulties experienced throughout education as enrollments were inconsistent, student demographics shifted, and funding fluctuated. Guided by an ennobling mission, at its beginning, the strategic plan in post-secondary education was viewed as a tool that allowed institutional leaders to articulate institutional mission and vision, help prioritize resources, and promote organizational focus through a series of prescribed steps. From the 1980s through the end of the century, the academy's visibility and volume of strategic planning continued to ascend. By the 1990s, accreditors were touting strategic planning as a *sine qua non*

of organizational effectiveness. Accreditation commissions began to require institutions to have a strategic and assessment plan to meet accrediting requirements. Institutions began to find themselves under serious scrutiny during their reaccreditation processes if they did not have a working strategic plan and some form of assessment plan in place. With the reduction in student populations and funding, most post-secondary institutions competed for extremely limited resources. Identifying and developing the assessment measures necessary to support the case for institutional self-determination and continued funding created an environment that led to the rise of campus strategic planning offices (Dooris, 2004; Hinton, 2012; McCaffery, 2018).

Primarily, contemporary strategic plans contain multiple components: (a) a foundation that includes the mission statement, (b) supporting factors, values, vision, and institutional goals, and (c) a strategic outline of goals, objectives, and implementation plan. These components are necessary planning tools developed to ensure the individual components are aligned with and support each other. The mission statement serves as the foundation for the strategic plan because everything in the plan must be aligned with the mission. In addition to the foundation of the strategic plan, it must also contain supporting components that provide specific points of guidance to help establish the context in the planning process, such as a vision statement, institutional goals, and an optional values statement. The vision statement is based on examining the institution's environment while including the institutional goals to offer a system for tracking progress toward the vision (Hinton, 2012).

Figure 7*Components of a Strategic Plan*

Note: Figure 7 includes the components of a strategic plan (foundation, supporting components, and strategic plan) in addition to elements of the plan to be included in each component (Hinton, 2012).

The impact of institutional culture on strategic planning cannot be overestimated. In fact, if ten different institutions implemented the same strategic plan, each institution would interpret the plan differently. Those differences are typically the result of at least three critical factors: the institution's unique environment (including the institutional mission and history of the organization), the composition and competency of the institution's administrative staff, and the development of staff dedicated to planning (Hinton, 2012).

Significance of HBCUs

What makes an HBCU relevant in today's educational climate? For years, there has been an ongoing debate questioning if HBCUs are still relevant (Crawford, 2022). These land-grant institutions were established through the Second Morrill Act of 1890 prior to the Civil Rights

Act of 1964 specifically to provide for the educational needs of Black Americans who were denied admission to traditionally White institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 1991).

Although HBCUs were founded as a historical by-product of systematic discrimination and were not designed to succeed, they have managed to exceed expectations producing the highest number of African American engineers, educators, nurses, and doctors (Evans et al., 2002; Palmer et al., 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 1991).

Specifically, a unique quality of HBCUs is that with a high percentage of Black faculty and administrators, students are afforded a distinctive opportunity to engage with and receive mentorship from faculty and peers who have familiar backgrounds (Palmer et al., 2017; Stewart et al., 2008; Strayhorn, 2019). HBCUs have been found to foster higher interaction with peers and diverse faculty who are noted for being accessible and possessing a sincere willingness to form supportive relationships with students challenging them to work to their maximum potential (Palmer et al., 2017; Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Stewart et al., 2008). As a result of the supportive environment, Black students who attend HBCUs report success in persistence to graduate despite rigorous curriculums (Flowers, 2002; Palmer et al., 2017).

Notably, the most recent Gallup-USA Funds Minority College Graduate Report (2015) indicates that Black students who graduate from HBCUs generally feel more supported, successful, and satisfied than those who graduate from other institutions, further highlighting the research emphasizing the ability of HBCUs to foster supportive environments, impact student outcomes, overall success, and satisfaction, in addition to career attainment (Allen, 1992; Gasman, 2013; Palmer et al., 2017). More recently, researchers have persisted in discovering evidence of positive environments that foster interpersonal relationships, wellness, and a sense of family for Black students at HBCUs (Allen et al., 1991; Palmer et al., 2017; Stewart et al., 2008).

These associations are fictive kinships, relationships between individuals who are not related biologically but refer to each other as relatives (Brooks & Allen, 2016). These types of relationships are influential strengths within the African American community. A qualitative study that was conducted to research the impact these cultural influences have on academic and social integration for African American college students indicates that African American students found value in developing a sense of religion in addition to fictive kin relationships with peers, university faculty/staff, and church members (Brooks & Allen, 2016).

To some degree, HBCUs empower members of the Black community through a rich history, legacy, culture, and familial nurturing environment that is often affordable to most students (Freeman & Cohen, 2001; Palmer et al., 2017). They provide welcoming atmospheres that encourage Black students to engage in self-exploration, understanding, and identity development without exposure to distress and burdens associated with a non-minority campus (Watts-Martinez, 2015). They have the freedom to be themselves without judgment, but with the academic and social support from educators, families, and community members who help to shape their views of the institutions learning culture and influence their persistence (Watts-Martinez, 2015).

Challenges of HBCUs

Although many notable achievements are recorded for HBCUs, those accomplishments have not been achieved without challenges; both externally imposed and self-inflicted challenges have been highlighted in the literature (Palmer et al., 2017; Taylor, 2020). As W.E.B. DuBois (1930) and others have argued since inception, HBCUs have been significantly challenged with underprepared students, low-income students, inadequate management, insufficient financial resources, and low enrollment (Nichols, 2004; Taylor, 2020). In the past, the leadership of

HBCUs has been questioned due to many complications. Evans (2002) asserted that leadership styles and practices had been a source of many difficulties on HBCU campuses (Anderson et al., 2019; Broussard et al., 2019; Freeman & Palmer, 2020; Hotchkins, 2021; Palmer, 2019).

However, several of the challenges that HBCUs face are a by-product of their reason for existence. They were founded due to racism and discrimination to educate a population that was considered inferior (Taylor, 2020). HBCUs have remained true to their mission of serving the most disadvantaged groups in American society. HBCU students are often underprepared for college and come from families lower on the socioeconomic scale resulting in low retention and graduation rates (Gasman & Commodore, 2014; Kim, 2002; Prince & Ford, 2016; Taylor, 2020). Current trends with retention, attrition, and persistence among Black students aim to reveal core intrinsic motivators of Black student learners. Of the percentage of students who persist beyond high school, Black students are 11% more likely than Whites to enroll in a college or university despite unbalanced opportunities (Perna, 2000). According to the NCES (2020), between 1976 and 2017, Black enrollment at HBCUs increased by 19%, but overall, HBCU Black enrollment fell to 9% in 2010, with little change until 2017. However, after years of decline brought on by more stringent admission criteria and strict requirements for student loans, HBCU enrollment is increasing. Specifically, Pride University has reported a significant increase in enrollment for several consecutive years, indicating, “For the third consecutive year, Pride University has enrolled its largest student body in university history, as well as what is likely its most academically accomplished” (Pride University, 2018, n.p.).

Studies indicate that HBCUs tend to have far fewer institutional resources such as faculty, facilities, available academic programs, and opportunities for advanced studies than PWIs (Allen et al., 1991; Gasman & Commodore, 2014; Mitchell, 2018). HBCUs are often

dependent on limited state and federal tuition because of small endowments (Chandler, 2006; Crawford, 2017; Gasman, 2009; Gasman & Commodore, 2014). According to Toldson and Cooper (2014), 14 HBCUs have endowments of less than \$2 million, and the combined endowments of all other HBCUs are approximately 1.6 billion (Crawford, 2022). In addition, alumni donations at HBCUs are relatively low at 10% (Robinson, 2012), compared to the national average of 27% (Council for Aid to Education, 2015). With all resources considered, even with support from corporations and philanthropists, many HBCUs find it challenging to maintain due to a lack of resources, including disproportionate state funding decreases (Palmer et al., 2017; Williams & Davis, 2019). Between 2002 and 2012, ten HBCUs had their state funding decreased by more than 15%, with the losses ranging from 15% to 89% (Palmer et al., 2017; Toldson & Cooper, 2014).

HBCUs have the added pressure of constantly receiving criticism regarding inadequate leadership practices (Freeman & Palmer, 2020; Gasman, 2012; Schexnider, 2017; Stuart, 2016, 2017; Watson, 2013). Specifically, the media frequently discusses the monolithic view of HBCU leadership struggles and challenges of HBCU presidents (Harris, 2017; Stuart, 2016, 2017; Watson, 2013). Likewise, scholars may have inadvertently propagated the narrative of inadequate leadership among HBCU presidents indicating that the instability of leadership among HBCU presidents has prompted concerns among HBCU stakeholders (Freeman & Palmer, 2020; Kimbrough, 2016; Morris, 2016). On average, HBCU presidents stay at their institution for three years in contrast to PWIs, where they stay an average of seven years. Revolving doors in the president's office are a product of the same fundamental problem, finances (Freeman & Palmer, 2020). In an interview with *Diverse Issues of Higher Education*, Walter Kimbrough, President of Dillard University, indicated that 38 HBCUs have hired new

presidents since 2011. As of 2014, nine of those were no longer in position (Transforming Leadership, 2015). Additionally, in 2016 at least four HBCU presidents were fired or resigned due to matters regarding the efficacy of their leadership. Lomotey and Covington (2018) examined not only the challenges of successful leadership for HBCU presidents but also presented strategies the presidents should execute to be effective in their roles, including fundraising, hiring the right people, and avoiding an autocratic leadership style said to be a critical problem with many HBCUs (Freeman & Palmer, 2020; Palmer et al., 2017). Dr. James A. Anderson, chancellor of Fayetteville State University in North Carolina, says HBCUs “need to engage in a strategic planning process that defines what it means to be competitive and relevant in the 21st century” (Arnett, 2014, n.p.).

U.S. News & World Report Ranking Process

The U.S. News & World Report (USNWR) Best Colleges Ranking is an annual set of rankings of American colleges and universities published by the U.S. News and World Report that began in 1983. This ranking is the most widely quoted listing of its kind in the United States, but how do they produce the rankings? The USNWR utilizes a weighted formula to rank institutions, with 75% of the ranking focusing on six performance areas: (a) faculty resources, (b) fiscal resources, (c) student selectivity, (d) graduation/retention rates, (e) alumni giving, and (f) institutional graduation rate performance (the difference between an institution's actual and predicted graduation rate (Alsmadi et al., 2020; Jaschik, 2018; Jones, 2016; Walton, 2011), an outcome-based formula which results in lower ranks for HBCUs without much consideration to the populations served (Jaschik, 2018). The remaining 25% is calculated from the institution's peer reputation survey score. The USNWR collects ratings of the quality of the undergraduate programs from college/university presidents, provosts, and admissions officers at peer

institutions. A score of “1” represents an institution believed to have marginal academic programs, while a score of “5” represents institutions believed to have distinguished undergraduate academic programs. Many believe this ranking system is why HBCUs are generally ranked much lower than non-HBCUs (Kamara, 2007b; Walton, 2011).

In recent years, HBCU supporters have become increasingly vocal in their concerns about the methodology for the USNWR rankings. Many in the HBCU community believe the rankings are inherently biased against Black colleges (Kamara2007a; Walton, 2011) as the methodology used by USNWR benefits institutional characteristics such as fiscal resources, graduation rates, and student selectivity. These are low-performing areas for HBCUs compared to PWIs due to their mission to accept the underserved (Franke & DeAngelo, 2018; Gasman, 2013; Lee & Keys, 2013; Walton, 2011). Consequently, HBCUs have regularly placed low in the USNWR rankings.

Pride University Strategic Plan Implemented

Progression 2020 (2011) was a strategic plan implemented at Pride University, an HBCU, designed to shape the strategic course and propel the institution through 2020. It reflected the vision of university stakeholders (board of trustees, administration, faculty/staff, students, alumni, and community partners) who collaborated to review the then current state of the university, identify the needs, and set goals for the future. Keeping in the standard of the components of a strategic plan, Progression 2020 (2011) established six university-wide strategic goals that aligned with the universities vision, mission, and core values: (a) Intellectual Climate; (b) Excellence in Teaching; (c) Research, and Engagement; Premier Research, Science and Technology – Focused Institution; (d) Entrepreneurial Spirit and Engagement; (e) Diverse and Inclusive Campus Community; (f) Academic and Operational Excellence.

Mission

Pride University advances knowledge through scholarly exchange and transforms society with exceptional teaching, learning, discovery, and community engagement. An 1890 land-grant doctoral research institution with a distinction in STEM and a commitment to excellence in all disciplines, North Carolina A&T creates innovative solutions that address the challenges and economic needs of North Carolina, the nation, and the world.

Vision

Pride University is a preeminent land-grant institution where high-achieving scholars are engaged in transformative teaching and learning, civic outreach, interdisciplinary research, and innovative solutions to global challenges.

Goals and Strategies

Goal #1 – Create an intellectual climate that encourages the creative exchange of ideas and increases the quality of the professional environment.

- Instill a passion for academic excellence and lifelong learning by creating a learning-centered environment with dynamic intellectual exchange.
- Enhance the quality of the faculty and staff through aggressive recruitment and continuing support of talented leaders in their disciplines.
- Enhance the student experience through faculty-student interaction, distinctive co-curricular activities, engaging undergraduates in research activities, and expanding high-quality living-learning communities through the use of effective instructional technologies.
- Create a stimulating discovery-driven academic environment that provides financial support to attract graduate students who are competitive at leading research institutions
- Maintain an environment that upholds ethical values, honor, respect, and integrity

- Recruit and retain gifted students by providing an academically challenging environment
- Enhance intellectual environment through creative use of physical and virtual space

Goal #2 – Commit to excellence in teaching, research, public service and engagement

- Create and sustain a culture that supports teaching excellence across all academic units
- Increase recognition of quality and distinction among top research universities
- Provide greater support for faculty development opportunities to enhance innovative instructional methods, course design, and curricular development
- Develop university-wide systems to encourage and promote nationally recognized faculty achievements in teaching, research, and public service
- Enhance faculty use of systems to effectively monitor student progress and facilitate early interventions to improve academic excellence
- Strengthen the educational impact of international opportunities and experiences for university students, faculty and staff

Goal #3 – Position the university to be a national, premier research-intensive, doctoral, science and technology-focused learning institution

- Enhance and develop new relationships with research entities to broaden the university's research portfolio and increase related funding
- Expand the breadth of faculty and student involvement in funded research
- Enhance and leverage the active engagement of faculty technology transfer and translational research
- Promote a vigorous STEM-oriented academic environment and increase the number of students entering STEM careers

- Strengthen the capacity and quality of STEM-oriented graduate/professional degree programs and the number of overall graduate student enrollment

Goal #4 – enhance an entrepreneurial spirit that intentionally engages university and community partners to expand economic development and civic engagement

- Become a driver of regional revitalization in economic development, health, education, culture, and civic quality
- Actively participate and leverage the intellectual portfolio of the university to facilitate capacity building within local communities and to create replicable models for long-term growth
- Become a recognized regional leader to support critical clusters related to biological, life, and environmental sciences in the Piedmont Triad technology corridor
- Create programs that support educational credentialing of adult workers
- Engage in research, teaching, and community outreach activities that strengthen programs for K-12 education in the region
- Strengthen strategic relationships with community colleges and other educational partners
- Encourage support and recognize the high-quality interdisciplinary entrepreneurial endeavors of students, faculty, staff, and administrators

Goal #5 – Foster a more diverse and inclusive campus community by promoting cultural awareness, collegiality and by cultivating respect for diverse people and cultures

- Encourage the development of programs that demonstrate the value of varied global perspectives and supports international collaborations, research alliances, and partnerships

- Graduate our students with global credentials through experiences abroad, international studies, and domestic and international relationships
- Develop curricula that imparts global relevance in a manner that increases knowledge of people's cultures and nations
- Exhibit and enhance educational and workplace practices that exemplify an acceptance of differences in the heritage and beliefs of others and supports opportunities to achieve professional and personal goals

Goal #6 – Achieve excellence in academic and operational effectiveness and efficiency

- Enhance institutional research to facilitate effective data-driven decisions with dashboard measurements for tracking performance
- Enhance and expand the performance-based management system for faculty, staff, and student employees
- Utilize best practices and technological enhancements to improve program effectiveness and efficiency
- Develop and implement transparent and consistent policies to enhance the recruitment, retention, and graduation of students
- Improve front-line capabilities to fulfill the university's commitment to quality service and responsiveness
- Enact process to create an environment that is accessible and welcoming to students, staff, faculty, retirees, alumni, and the greater community

Through these goals, Pride University envisioned a future dedicated to enhancing scholarship through interdisciplinary research, exceptional undergraduate and graduate education, innovative leadership, and purposeful community service and engagement

(Progression 2020, 2011). Since implementing the university strategic plan, the university has reached multiple key indicators outlined each year in an executive summary. The executive summary includes an annual review of eight key metrics utilized to measure and track achievement toward strategic goals (a) enrollment, (b) student success, (c) faculty, (d) research and innovation, (e) financial resources, (f) reputation and rankings, (g) athletic success, and (h) diversity.

Table 1.

Compilation of Annual Executive Summaries

Key Indicators	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	Goal
Enrollment										
Fall Enrollment	10,795	10,636	10,561	10,725	10,852	11,177	11,877	12,142	12,566	13,500
Undergraduate	9,151	8,923	8,872	9,203	9,353	9,668	10,341	10,629	10,709	10,000
Graduate	1,644	1,713	1,689	1,522	1,499	1,509	1,536	1,513	1,464	3,500
Master's	1,338	1,460	1,390	1,212	1,158	1,058	1,070	1,059	1,027	3,000
Doctoral	204	253	299	310	341	381	409	401	437	500
New Freshman SAT	895	906	919	920	918	933	1021	-	1053	1,040
New Freshman ACT	19	19	18	19	19	19	20	-	20	22
New Freshman Avg GPA (Click to expand)	3.04	3.25	3.34	3.4	3.39	3.48	3.51	-	3.56	3.4
New Transfer Enrollment	419	409	430	675	641	730	822	817	795	1,500
Research and Development										
Contract and Grant Award \$ (millions) (Click to expand)	\$60.14	\$56.70	53	53	\$60	\$61.51	\$64.26	\$64.40	\$60.85	\$85
New US Patent and License based on NCAT Research yearly	1	2	3	2	8	3	6	4	6	14
Royalties yearly (thousands)	\$1.70	0	\$2	\$33.50	\$24	\$60	\$28	-	-	\$250
Student Success %										
First Year Retention Rate	72%	73.60%	79.80%	79%	75%	75.13%	78.60%	77%	79.40%	85%
Four Year Graduation Rate	15%	20.20%	20.40%	19.40%	17%	24.05%	25.40%	27.50%	33.90%	35%
Six Year Graduation Rate	38%	42.20%	42.90%	47%	44%	43.33%	53%	51%	52%	55%
Number of Renowned Scholars	0	8	17	5	1	1	2	-	-	5
Number of National Fellowships	0	3	12	10	5	3	6	-	-	5
Degrees Awarded by Fiscal Year	1,726	1673	1798	1907	1766	1987	1992			2700
Bachelor's	1,349	1286	1313	1394	1292	1504	1531	1689	1959	2000
Master's	356	538	456	470	428	434	408	409	387	645
Doctorates	21	29	40	43	46	49	53	59	66	55
STEM Disciplines	397	601	534	645	528	663	642	720	779	500
Athletic Success										
# of MEAC Championships	0	1	1	2	3	4	8	-	-	5
Graduation Success Rate for Athletes	50%	56%	59%	63%	67%	68%	71%	-	-	65%
Financial Resources										
Endowment Market Value (Millions)	\$24.01	\$34	\$40.20	\$48	\$50	\$51	\$60	\$68.40	\$73.80	\$75
Alumni Participation Rate		8.80%	6.58%	8%	8%	8%	8%	9.20%	10.90%	
Human Capital (Faculty Staff Recognition)										
Number of Members in National Academies	0				0	0	0	-	-	2
# of Members receiving National and International Awards	2	27	16	13	7	3	0	-	-	8
Number of Endowed Professorships	4	10	12	5	5	5	5	-	-	8
Highly Cited Staff scholarly works	0	41	27	28	25	20	22	-	-	10
Rankings and Recognition										
US News Best College (Overall Rank)	Unranked	Not Publ	Unranked	Not Publ	2nd Tier	RNP	RNP	231-301	281	1st tier
US News Best College (HBCU Rank)	12	11	8	10	10	10	8	-	-	TOP 5
Diversity (Click to expand)										
Student Demographic-% African American	87.00%	85%	82%	80%	79.52%	77.77%	77.90%	77.90%	77.50%	70%
Student Demographic-% Non-African American	13%	15%	18%	20%	20.48%	22.23%	22.10%	22.10%	21.50%	30%

Note. Table 1 demonstrates the data collected to measure the annual progress of the strategic plan. It includes the 2010 baseline for where the university began with the key indicators (enrollment, research and development, student success, athletic success, financial resources, human capital, rankings and recognition, and diversity) in addition to the 2020 goals.

College enrollment is a topic that has been widely studied. While it is expected to be affected by broad and non-economic factors (Baek, 2021; Koch & Swinton, 2022; McDonald & Needham, 2020), enrollment has increased significantly at Pride University since implementing the strategic plan. During that time, the university has become the nation's largest historically Black university, setting institutional records in 2017-18 in both enrollment and academic profile of the entering freshman class (www.ncat.edu). The 2017-18 undergraduate enrollment of 10,341 exceeded the goal outlined in the strategic plan three years ahead of schedule, as did the GPA of that same class averaging 3.51 (www.ncat.edu).

Increasingly, student success in higher education is measured based on retention and graduation rates (Chenier, 2019; Farmer et al., 2019). Understanding the factors that impact student success can assist university leaders in areas of focus for strategic planning (Millea et al., 2018; Perkins, 2018; Strayhorn, 2019). Pride University decided to measure student success, emphasizing retention and completion using the four-, five-, or six-year graduation rates and degrees awarded. Although the 2020 goal of an 85% first-year retention rate was not met, significant improvements were made toward student retention since the 2010 baseline rate of 72%. By 2020, the first-year retention rate increased to 79.4%, coming in slightly under the 2020 goal. In addition, the four-year graduation rate more than doubled, and the six-year graduation rate improved by 36.8%. There was also a significant increase in the number of degrees awarded.

In an attempt to respond to the teaching demands of today's world, universities seeking to transform science, technology, engineering, and mathematics programs often strive for participating faculty to be leading innovative researchers with demonstrated teaching practices to train critical thinking problem-solvers (Lane et al., 2020; Santos et al., 2019). Pride University is no different in that faculty or human capital is an essential key metric measured by the faculty recognition and accomplishments. Indicators monitored by the strategic plan and exceeded the goal include but are not limited to the number of faculty members receiving national and international awards, number of endowed professorships, and highly cited scholarly works. Research and development are also closely aligned with faculty metrics. It was measured by the contracts and grants awarded that exceeded \$64 million for two consecutive years and approved patents and licenses. Since the execution of the strategic plan, the university was awarded 34 new U.S. patents and licenses, surpassing the 2020 goal of 14.

One of the most critical components of ensuring the quality of higher education lies within the financial resources (Barr & McClellan, 2018; Cernostana, 2018), which is why Pride University listed it as a key indicator in the strategic plan. Pride University measured Financial Resources by the endowment per student ratio, the market value of the endowment, and alumni participation rate. As stated previously, 14 HBCUs have endowments of less than \$2 million (Crawford, 2022; Toldson & Cooper, 2014). However, the university endowment increased by 207% since the strategic plan's 2010 baseline amount of 24 million. By the end of the 2019-20 academic year, the total university endowment was nearly 74 million, just missing the 2020 goal of 75 million. Although alumni participation increased to almost 11%, it is still relatively low (Robinson, 2012) compared to the national average of 27 percent (Council for Aid to Education, 2015).

Since the 1990s, USNWR has published an annual ranking of American colleges and universities, and these rankings garner noteworthy recognition among students, faculty, and administrators alike. The USNWR rankings can influence the quality of students and faculty that a university attracts and strengthen competitiveness in obtaining research funding and other forms of investment (Yeung et al., 2019). As a result, reputation and rankings were utilized as a measurement tool through diversity and the rankings among the USNWR overall and HBCU lists. To increase the diversity at the university, the 2020 goal was set to admit more non-African American students. Although the university did increase enrollment of non-African American students by 65%, it was 8.5% below the 30% goal. They also fell short of being ranked a first-tier institution on the overall national list by USNWR; however, they were ranked as the number one public institution on the HBCU list for several years in a row. It is important to note that other private institutions were ranked higher.

In recent years, intercollegiate athletics has reached new heights. Student-athletes are being held accountable at a significantly higher rate in the classroom and on the playing field, most commonly among student-athletes attending National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I institutions (Nichols et al., 2019; Wrisberg et al., 2009). Specifically, Pride University, a Division I institution, measured Athletic Success by the number of Mid-Eastern Atlantic Conference (MEAC) championships received and the graduation success rate for student-athletes. When the university entered the implementation of the strategic plan, there were no recent championships. By 2020, they held 19 championships across all sports. Students were reaching new heights and being accountable on and off the field as the graduation success rate for athletes also improved by 42%. Rates have surpassed the 2020 goal of 65% since 2015.

Pride University's strategic plan has proven transformative since its implementation producing significant increases in key indicator metrics such as enrollment, student success, and financial resources. The metrics are success indicators toward the six foundational goals of (a) Intellectual Climate; (b) Excellence in Teaching; (c) Research and Engagement; Premier Research, Science and Technology – Focused Institution; (d) Entrepreneurial Spirit and Engagement; (e) Diverse and Inclusive Campus Community; (f) Academic and Operational Excellence identified for the strategic plan. This qualitative case study explored the transformational leadership practices utilized at Pride University to execute the strategic plan.

Summary

The origins of the study of leadership date back to the early 20th century with the trait theory. Since then, the evolution of the term has taken many shapes and continues to be redefined but primarily by leadership styles. The initial primary authoritarian, laissez-faire, and democratic styles are still applied in various settings. Still, the democratic style has been additionally developed into the new leadership paradigm utilized in many organizations today. Examples of types of leadership styles included in the New Leadership Paradigm are (a) authentic, (b) servant, (c) adaptive, (d) transactional, and (e) transformational (Northouse, 2021). All these styles focus on the “we” aspect of leadership. Specifically, transformational leadership happens when a leader's behavior encourages followers and stimulates them to achieve beyond their perceived capabilities (Burns, 1978). It motivates people to perform with increased integrity and inspiration and attain unexpected or extraordinary results (Burns, 1978).

This qualitative case study used Kouzes and Posner's (2017) leadership model, which highlighted the exemplary leadership practices to determine if transformational leadership was utilized to implement a strategic plan at an HBCU. One of the significant challenges facing some

HBCUs today is futile leadership practices (Palmer & Freeman, 2020). Although there has been much research about transformational leadership practices in organizations using the business model, there has been little research regarding the usage in higher education, particularly at an HBCU (Kassim, 2019). This study further expands the analysis of transformational leadership with administrators in educational leadership. It may have positive implications for other institutions of higher education, especially HBCUs, by examining the behaviors, relationships, and experiences of leadership involved in the transformational leadership and strategic planning process at Pride University. The focus of this study is the leadership practices utilized since the implementation of the strategic plan and how they relate to the exemplary leadership practices identified by Kouzes and Posner (2017).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This qualitative case study used the single instrument design to explore the transformational leadership practices utilized by university leaders in the execution of a strategic plan first implemented in 2011 at Pride University. The focus of this study was the leadership practices utilized in the implementation of the strategic plan. This chapter outlines the research design, research questions, setting and participants, researcher positionality, procedures, data collection plan, and trustworthiness.

Research Design

Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, the phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Creswell and Poth (2018) indicate that in a single instrument case study design, the researcher focuses on one case to illustrate an example of one particular issue. A qualitative case study design is the preferred methodology of research to implement when the focus of the study is not historical but contemporary; the researcher has little to no control over interactive occurrences and seeks to examine why or how questions (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018), a qualitative case study design leader, has defined a qualitative case study as a detailed empirical inquiry that explores a current phenomenon in a real-world context. Additionally, he explains that an extensive case study examination depends on various sources of substantial evidence where the data converge in triangulation. This qualitative case study used the single instrument design to explore the transformational leadership practices utilized by university leaders in the execution of a strategic plan first implemented in 2011 at Pride University, a pseudonym used to describe the study site. The qualitative case study design was appropriate for this research as it involved

studying the transformation of a single organization within a tangible contemporary setting (Yin, 2018).

Research Questions

Central Research Question

How were transformational leadership practices utilized to execute the strategic plan implemented at Pride University?

Sub Question One

How did leaders model the way in the execution of the strategic plan?

Sub Question Two

How did leaders inspire a shared vision in implementing the strategic plan?

Sub Question Three

How did leaders challenge the process in the execution of the strategic plan?

Sub Question Four

How did leaders enable others to act while executing the strategic plan?

Sub Question Five

How did leaders encourage the heart during the implementation of the strategic plan?

Setting and Participants

The site for this case study is Pride University, located in the southern United States in Prideville, North Carolina. Pride University is a land-grant institution established in 1891 and is a peer institution in the University of North Carolina School System. According to U.S. News and World Report (2020), Pride University is a public historically Black college or university with 54 undergraduate, 35 graduate majors, and a current enrollment of 12,142 students. Because this qualitative research explored the leadership practices utilized by university leaders during

the implementation of the strategic plan, it was essential to use purposeful sampling to identify the participants. The participants consisted of 12-15 upper-level administrators who have held critical leadership roles since the inception of the strategic plan and were directly involved in executing the strategic plan.

Site

Pride University is a public historically Black college or university located in Prideville, North Carolina, that is a peer institution of the University of North Carolina System, a multi-institution university overseeing the state's 16 public universities (www.northcarolina.edu). It boasts 54 undergraduate and 35 graduate majors and a current enrollment of 12,142 (USNWR, 2020). Pride University was chosen for this qualitative case study to examine the university's strategic plan, first implemented in 2011. The Chancellors Executive Cabinet, which is comprised of the chancellor, provost, and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs, vice chancellor for business and finance, vice chancellor for human resources, vice chancellor for research and economic development, vice chancellor for student affairs, vice chancellor for university advancement, vice chancellor for information technology services, general counsel for legal affairs, chief of staff, and athletics director, along with deans and chairs were charged with implementing the strategies established and engaging university stakeholders in the process (Pride University, 2020).

The strategic plan established six university-wide strategic goals that aligned with the university's vision, mission, and core values: (a) Intellectual Climate, (b) Excellence in Teaching, Research, and Engagement, (c) Premier Research, Science and Technology – Focused Institution, (d) Entrepreneurial Spirit and Engagement, (e) Diverse and Inclusive Campus Community, (f) Academic and Operational Excellence. Noted key indicators for development

included but were not limited to enrollment, student and athletic success, ranking and recognition, and diversity (Strategic Plan, 2011). I identified this site because of the unique opportunity to examine a case of transformational leadership through strategic planning in higher education, particularly at an HBCU.

Participants

Patton (2015) labeled the sampling procedure for a qualitative case as purposeful sampling where the researcher intentionally selects cases that will highlight the question being investigated by their nature and substance. A maximum variation sampling of study participants was identified according to advance criteria that differentiate them and the perspectives they have to offer (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Because this qualitative research explored the leadership practices utilized during the implementation of the strategic plan, it was important for the purposeful sampling to include members of leadership who were directly involved in the execution of the strategic plan. The participants consisted of 12-15 upper-level administrators who have held critical leadership roles since the strategic plan was implemented. Participants were engaged only after acquiring preliminary approval from the university and Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Researcher Positionality

A researcher's worldview involves ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions and an interpretive framework that enacts individual beliefs (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Holmes, 2020). The interpretive framework and assumptions provide insight into the researcher's belief system regarding the nature of reality, knowledge, and environmental interaction (Holmes, 2020). As a pragmatist conducting a qualitative case study, I must acknowledge that my motivation for this research is a direct result of my leadership experience

when the strategic plan was implemented. I personally witnessed and experienced the transformation of Pride University from a lower-level administrative perspective. I am interested in conducting this research to explore the transformation from the perspective of faculty, staff, and upper-level administration/leadership who executed the strategic plan.

Interpretive Framework

The pragmatic worldview is based on three core methodological ideologies that shape the framework of the theory: (a) focus on actionable knowledge, (b) acknowledgment of the connection with the action, experience, and knowledge, and (c) research as an exploratory process (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). According to Kelly and Cordeiro (2020), pragmatism is a valuable paradigm for exploring organizational practices. Pragmatic research acknowledges that individuals in communal environments, such as organizations, can experience action and change differently. A researcher conducting a study with a pragmatist lens accepts that there may be casual relationships between action, knowledge, and experience, but the relationships are transitory and hard to identify (Yin, 2016). While researching leadership at Pride University from a pragmatist worldview, it is important to note that my knowledge and experiences have influenced the belief that transformational leadership was utilized while implementing the strategic plan. However, I also recognize that the experiences of others may have been different. This qualitative case study sought to explore the experiences of others through a pragmatism lens.

Philosophical Assumptions

According to Yin (2016), a researcher must acknowledge the qualities of the researcher's research lens and the inability to avoid serving as a research instrument. In presenting my reflexive self, I identified and revealed as many lens qualities as possible through philosophical

assumptions. Cultural orientation, relevant personal attributes, motivation, and prior interests, in addition to my connection to the real-life setting, can all impact the research (Yin, 2016).

Ontological Assumption

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), ontological assumptions relate to the “nature of reality and its characteristics” (p. 20). Ontological foundationalism states that a researcher must be clear about reality and its characteristics to make the right methodological choices (Maarouf, 2019). Although I believe that transformational leadership was utilized when the strategic plan was implemented, I understand that there are multiple realities, and other employees at the university may have experienced a different reality. According to Robert Yin (2014), the researcher can “acknowledge multiple realities having multiple meanings with findings that are observer-dependent” (p. 17). I was interested in conducting this research to explore the transformation from the perspective of other faculty, staff, and upper-level administration/leadership who executed the strategic plan.

Epistemological Assumption

According to Yin (2018), epistemological location involves the beliefs of the researcher that may be impacted by environmental interaction. From an epistemological perspective with controlled biases, it is important to appreciate differences in leadership practices. However, I was particularly interested in exploring the leadership practices utilized to execute the strategic plan at Pride University (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To minimize the distance and connect with the research participants as much as possible, I conducted the study in the field. Although the interviews were conducted virtually on the campus of Pride University, they were scheduled during a convenient time for the participants. Because I am also an employee at Pride University, participants may have been more accessible.

Axiological Assumption

An axiological assumption is that all researchers bring value to a study while acknowledging personal values and biases led to my choice of research because of my connection to the topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I am a Black female who is a product of Pride University, who earned my bachelor's and master's degrees there in 2002 and 2003. Obtaining my education from Pride University gave me a sense of accomplishment because of the rich history and pride embodied at the university and my family legacy. Both of my parents earned degrees from Pride University, along with other family members. In addition to being an alumna, I have now been an employee for almost 15 years. With a combined education and employment experience, I have had a connection to the university for nearly 25 years. During those 25 years, I have witnessed several transitions in leadership and the leadership practices that have been utilized to implement change at the university. By far, the most significant changes at the university have been since the implementation of the most recent strategic plan.

Researcher's Role

As a human instrument collecting and assessing data for this qualitative research case study, it is essential to note that my connection to Pride University is twofold. I am a two-time graduate of the university, who obtained my bachelor's degree in 2002 and my master's in 2003. In addition to being an alumna of Pride University, I hold an administrative position there as the Director of Student Services in the School of Nursing. I have been a full-time employee of the university for 15 years. I have a professional working relationship with all of the participants. As a researcher, in preparation for completing field-based research, I had to acknowledge that my own biases, predilections, preferences, and choices may seep into the picture (Yin, 2016). Although I have a professional working relationship with the participants, I obtained all

approvals, consents, and permits responsibly and ethically. I maintained the confidentiality of each participant by using pseudonyms (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To prevent any bias in my research, I bracketed as much as possible to set aside my experiences and take a fresh perspective on the examination. I bracketed my experiences by recording a documented personal reflective log of my thoughts and feelings before proceeding with the experiences of others.

Procedures

This qualitative case study explored the transformational leadership practices utilized while implementing a strategic plan. To properly conduct the study, site permission was granted from Pride University. After site permission was obtained, IRB approval was requested from Pride University and Liberty University. Once approved, multiple forms of data collection were completed to increase validity and produce triangulation: (a) semi-structured individual interviews with a sample size of 10-12 participants, (b) review of relevant documents, (c) and electronic surveys. This section details the procedures completed with this qualitative case study.

Permissions

Before recruiting any participants, I requested permission from the Pride University chancellor to explore the transformational leadership practices utilized to execute the strategic plan. After university permission was granted, the next step was to request approval from the IRB (see Appendix A). IRB approval is critical as any study of a contemporary phenomenon in its natural setting and context requires the researcher to conduct it according to ethical guidelines necessary in empirical research (Yin, 2018). IRB approval was obtained from Liberty University and Pride University (see Appendix A & B). I acquired informed consent forms (see Appendix C) from each of the desired participants after IRB approval to prove that the study design adheres to their criteria for ethical research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Informed consent forms serve as a

formal invitation to participate in the study.

Recruitment Plan

Patton (2015) labeled the sampling procedure for a qualitative case as purposeful sampling where the researcher intentionally selects cases that will highlight the question being investigated by their nature and substance. A purposeful sampling of anonymous members of leadership who were directly involved in the execution and implementation of the strategic plan was used to identify study participants. It is important to note that there is not a direct link to leadership between me and any of the participants. The participants include upper-level administrators, deans, and chairpersons who have held critical leadership roles during the execution of the strategic plan. To prepare for any declinations, letters requesting participation and consent forms were emailed to 25 leaders to obtain the desired sample size of at least 10 participants. Individual email addresses were obtained from the Pride University website. Preventive measures were taken to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of participants by securing data in a locked unit. A proposal was submitted for departmental approval and was shared with the IRB that (a) detailed the methods in the project related to how selection, access, and consent for site and individuals was obtained; (b) how selection sampling and collection strategies for data was executed; (c) and how recording, storage, and use of the information was managed (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Collection Plan

Robert Yin (2018) classified six sources of evidence for case study research: (a) interviews, (b) archival records, (c) documentation, (d) participant observations, (e) direct observations, (6) and physical artifacts. Several methods of data collection were completed for this study to increase validity and produce triangulation: (a) semi-structured individual

interviews, (b) documentation, and (c) surveys. To certify the validity of the findings, I: (a) generated a case study database comprised of notes, documents, tabular materials, and initial narratives regarding the data, (b) created a chain of evidence, (c) practiced additional caution with electronic documents, and (d) triangulated data (Yin, 2014). All data collected were coded and secured in a locked unit and a password-protected file for electronic documents.

Individual Interviews

According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), the qualitative research interview is explained as an effort to comprehend the world from the subjects' perspective, understand the significance of their experience, and discover their lived world. Before the participant interviews, interview questions were piloted with a small group of university faculty and staff outside of the case study to confirm the clarity of questions, approximate length, and conversational mode of the interview. Interviews were approximately 20-30 minutes. Virtual interviews were conducted and recorded through a virtual meeting application, ZOOM, and scheduled at the participants' convenience using the semi-structured format to allow additional information pertinent to the study. Follow-up interviews were conducted as necessary by email or phone.

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to me as if we just met one another. CRQ
2. How long have you been at the university? CRQ
3. What is your current position at the university? CRQ
4. Please provide a brief description of your duties and responsibilities. CRQ
5. Please describe any other positions you have held at the university. CRQ

Questions one through five are knowledge questions, which are non – threatening questions that assist the researcher with developing a rapport with the participants (Patton, 2015).

6. In your opinion, who are the university stakeholders? CRQ
7. What is the strategic plan of the university? CRQ
8. Explain the goals of the strategic plan? CRQ
9. What role did you have in implementing or executing the strategic plan? CRQ

Questions six through nine are preliminary foundational questions about the case that set the interview in motion (Patton, 2015).

10. Describe the best leadership style you have experienced as a follower and explain how it influenced your leadership style? CRQ

James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner (2017) named Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership in their book about transformational leadership titled, *The Leadership Challenge: Making Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations*. The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership are (a) Model the Way, (b) Inspire a Shared Vision, (c) Challenge the Process, (d) Enable Others to Act, and (e) Encourage the Heart. I would like to know if you can relate any of those practices to your leadership style utilized in implementing or executing the strategic plan. For the following five questions, I will define the exemplary practice and inquire about how you may have utilized that practice while executing the strategic plan.

11. The first exemplary leadership practice is to Model the Way. An exemplary leader models the way when they clarify values, affirm shared values and set an example by aligning actions with those shared values. In executing the strategic plan, how did you clarify values and set an example for university stakeholders? SQ1
12. Inspire a Shared Vision is the second exemplary practice. Leaders inspire a shared vision when they envision the future by creating exciting and enabling possibilities while enlisting others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations. How did you

envision the future and enlist others to act on the common vision of the strategic plan?

SQ2

13. Another exemplary leadership practice is to Challenge the Process. Exemplary leaders challenge the process by searching for and seizing opportunities, capitalizing on the initiative looking for innovative ways to improve while experimenting and taking risks, consistently generating small wins, and learning from the experience. How did you search for opportunities, take risks, and generate small wins while executing the strategic plan? SQ3

14. Exemplary leaders also Enable Others to Act by fostering collaboration, building trust, and facilitating relationships while strengthening others through promoting self-determination and competence. How did you foster collaboration and strengthen others while working toward the strategic plan's goals? SQ4

15. Lastly, an exemplary leader Encourages the Heart by recognizing contributions and individual excellence while celebrating values and victories by creating a spirit of community. How did you recognize contributions, celebrate the values and victories of others, and create a spirit of community while executing the strategic plan? SQ5

Questions 10-15 address sub-questions one through five regarding how the strategic plan relates to the transformational leadership model described by Kouzes and Posner (2017) in the Leadership Challenge. In their decades of studying transformational leadership, they have found that "individuals who guide others along pioneering journeys follow surprisingly similar paths with identifiable behaviors and actions that make a difference" (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 12).

16. How has your involvement in the execution of the strategic plan influenced your leadership approach and style? CRQ

Question 16 is an inquiry about the impact of transformational leadership on their leadership style. According to Kouzes and Posner (2017), “exemplary leader behavior makes a profoundly positive difference in people’s commitment and motivation, their work performance, and the success of their organizations” (p. 156).

17. Is there any additional information you would like to share regarding your leadership practices utilized during the implementation of the strategic plan? CRQ

Question 17 is an open-ended follow-up question that will allow the participant to provide additional information deemed relevant to the interview.

18. Please provide me with the contact information of three of your followers who can speak to your leadership style?

Question 18 is a follow-up question for additional data collection. The followers will be surveyed as observers utilizing the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) 360 Online by Kouzes and Posner (2017) to assess the behaviors of their leader. Kouzes and Posner indicate that it is essential for leaders to receive feedback on their behaviors to ensure their words and actions align.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

Before the participant interviews, interview questions were piloted with a small group of university faculty and staff outside of the case study to confirm the clarity of questions, approximate length, and conversational mode of the interview. Virtual interviews were conducted and recorded through a virtual meeting application (ZOOM) and scheduled at the participants' convenience using the semi-structured format to allow additional information pertinent to the study. The ZOOM recording was set for automatic transcription, and I reviewed the transcription for accuracy and made necessary corrections after each interview. In addition, I

recorded reflective memoing after each interview to assist in analyzing the data. Follow-up interviews were conducted as necessary by virtual meeting application (ZOOM), email, or phone to solicit additional feedback once transcribing and reflective memoing were completed. Atlas ti software was used to import, transcribe, organize, and explore data collected from each interview participant. Coding the data in Atlas ti allowed me to discover emerging patterns and themes within the interviews.

Document Analysis

Document review is an important aspect of case study research as it is a process that can provide an understanding and offer specifics that validate evidence from other sources (Yin, 2015). Documents can expose prior events to the study while uncovering tensions, relationships, and decisions that may not have been revealed during the interview (Patton, 2015). However, relevancy of archival evidence may be determined based on the conditions under which it was produced, with most being created for a specific purpose and audience (Yin, 2018). Specifically, for this study, a review of archival records provided a historical reference to the purpose and implementation of the strategic plan, accomplishments along the way, and plans looking ahead for the future.

Document Analysis Review

I reviewed any available documents online before visiting the physical archives in the Pride University library. Documents that were collected include, but are not limited to (a) mission and vision statements to determine the philosophy of the university, (b) copies of strategic plans, current, and past, to review and determine what is different about the strategic plan, (c) scholarly and newspaper articles about the university to obtain peer and community perspectives, (d) and annual executive summaries that will include tables, charts, and figures to

review annual achievements toward the strategic goals (Patton, 2015). A review of these types of documents dating at least back to 2010, one year before the strategic plan was implemented, provides an overall frame of reference for the status of the university before the implementation of the strategic plan, in addition to an annual review of progress made toward goal completion. Moreover, it reveals the university's continued plans for future goal attainment as a continuation of the initial strategic plan was introduced in 2020.

Document Analysis Data Analysis Plan

Documents were gathered and collected from the Pride University archives, as it was essential to note milestones and achievements since the strategic plan was implemented. The documents collected were imported a case study database, Atlas ti for organization, transcription to query text searches, word frequency, and themes found within the documents collected. Document analysis provided a historical review of the strategic planning process at Pride University and its outcomes. I noted the annual progression toward the achievement of each strategic goal in addition to the final outcome of 2020. The university scorecards were used as checklists for progress made toward the eight key indicators: (a) enrollment, (b) student success, (c) faculty, (d) research and innovation, (e) financial resources, (f) reputation and rankings, (g) athletic success, and (h) diversity.

Surveys/Questionnaires

The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) is a 30-question assessment that measures the frequency that leaders engage in exemplary leadership practices. It encompasses five categories for each of The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership identified by Kouzes and Posner (2017): (a) Model the Way, (b) Inspire a Shared Vision, (c) Challenge the Process, (d) Enable Others to Act, and (e) Encourage the Heart. Each category has six questions with a 10-point Likert

response scale (see Appendix F & G). Permission to utilize the assessment was granted by Wiley Publications (see Appendix E). Survey participants are the leaders who participated in the semi-structured interviews and the followers the leaders recommended. The surveys were sent electronically through a third-party platform (Survey Monkey) to the participants.

Survey/Questionnaire Questions

The leaders completed the LPI Self-Assessment (see Appendix F), and the followers completed the LPI Observer-Assessment (see Appendix G). The surveys assisted in determining the alignment of the exemplary practices of leadership performed and experienced by the leaders and followers during the execution of the strategic plan. The data gathered by the survey assisted with sub-questions 1-5 regarding the critical components of transformational leadership identified in the strategic plan. Specially, the data collected from the LPI Self-Assessment completed by the leaders assessed if they provided transformational leadership by engaging in the five exemplary practices of leadership while implementing the strategic plan. Conversely, the LPI Observer-Assessment provided data from the followers' perspective to indicate if they experienced transformational leadership through the five exemplary practices of leadership while the strategic plan was implemented.

Survey/Questionnaire Data Analysis Plan

The surveys were sent electronically through a third-party platform (Survey Monkey) to the participants to assist in determining the alignment of the exemplary practices of leadership performed and experienced by the leaders and followers during the execution of the strategic plan. The 30-question online assessment measured the frequency that leaders engaged in exemplary leadership behaviors practices. It encompasses five categories for each of The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership identified by Kouzes and Posner (2017) : (a) Model the Way,

(b) Inspire a Shared Vision, (c) Challenge the Process, (d) Enable Others to Act, and (e) Encourage the Heart. Each category has six questions with a 10-point Likert response scale. The LPI rating scale was used to analyze the data to determine the experiences of the leaders and followers surveyed. The LPI assessment results were shared with the leaders to solicit any additional feedback regarding the findings. In addition, the surveys were imported into Atlas ti to compile, organize, and code the data. Atlas ti is used to identify patterns and themes, and create visual displays of convergence (Woolf, 2017), while descriptive statistics were used to create a narrative for the central tendency of the data set.

Data Synthesis

Data analysis in qualitative research involves arranging and classifying the data for analysis, combining the data into themes through coding and reducing the codes, and finally organizing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data analysis began when the first data were collected; it was an ongoing process that guided me in answering the research questions (Yin, 2014). The qualitative data from this case study was synthesized by (a) reflective memoing and transcribing interviews, (b) rating the Likert surveys utilizing the LPI rating scale, (c) assigning codes to data based on recurring patterns and themes, (d) and creating a case study database to organize all documentation collected (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014).

Artifacts were used for historical reference. As Miles and Huberman (1994) described, one coding method began with a list of categories before conducting any fieldwork. The initial categories were the five exemplary practices of leadership. Additionally, code trees were developed during the data analysis process to identify hierarchies within the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Each set of data was imported into Atlas ti, reviewed multiple times, and organized into dominant themes of triangulation.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a way of building credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Methods of increasing trustworthiness include but are not limited to external audits, peer expert review, member checks, and triangulation (Yin, 2014). This section details my efforts to maintain trustworthiness throughout the research process. An external audit, or peer expert review, forced me to rethink composition, strengthening the research (Yin, 2016). Member checks allowed for feedback from the participants. Triangulation was confirmed when the data from the documents, interviews, and surveys converged to confirm that transformational leadership was utilized to execute the strategic plan.

Credibility

Credibility is the process of establishing that the research results are believable and appropriate (Mills, 2010). The credibility of this qualitative case study was confirmed with two validation methods: member checks or respondent validation and triangulation. Survey results were shared with each leader participant for feedback. Triangulation provided credibility for the convergence of evidence from different sources (Yin, 2015). Transcription provided a verbatim account of data collection; therefore, the case study database created in Atlas ti also increased the study's validity as other researchers can review or inspect the electronic files at a later date.

Member Checks

One method to verify credibility was through member checks. Member checks allowed participants to review the researcher's interview interpretation to confirm and clarify any misinterpretation providing any necessary feedback to the researcher (Creswell, 2013). Once interviews were transcribed, leaders had the opportunity to review the transcribed interview to clarify anything that may have been unclear or ambiguous, improving the validity of the study

(Guest et al., 2012). Additionally, the leaders and followers were surveyed utilizing the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) 360 Online by Kouzes and Posner for self and observer to assess the behaviors of the leaders. The LPI assessment results were shared with the leaders to solicit any additional feedback regarding the findings. Kouzes and Posner (2017) indicate that it is essential for leaders to receive feedback on their behaviors to ensure their words and actions align.

Triangulation

In addition to member checks, the study's validity was confirmed through data triangulation. The triangulation principle relates to the goal of seeking at least three ways of confirming, verifying a process, piece of data, or outcome (Yin, 2018). The original triangulation theory was derived from navigation; three different reference points were used to pinpoint the location of an object, producing intersectionality and triangulation (Yin, 2018). Throughout data collection, I sought ways to develop converging lines of inquiry within my research. To obtain an ideal confirmation by triangulation, multiple data sets, including documents, interviews, and surveys, were analyzed, and dominant themes emerged certifying triangulation. If analyzed properly, convergent data should validate findings (Guest et al., 2012).

Transferability

By definition, transferability relates to analytic generalization and acknowledges the uniqueness of local conditions in the initial qualitative study (Yin, 2018). It refers to the researcher's duty to appropriately define the case study enabling the audience to determine the similarity of the case study to its findings (Patton, 2015). This case study will be transferrable through documentation of analysis steps and detailed explanations of my account regarding experiences during data collection, in addition to the thick descriptions of the design, site, and

participants (Guest et al., 2012; Yin, 2018). The descriptions I used to detail the information obtained regarding the leadership styles utilized in implementing the strategic plan may apply to other studies regarding leadership styles, further expanding the transferability as the generalization may conclude as a working hypothesis.

Dependability

Dependability addresses the researcher's duty to certify that the research process is visible, rational, and well documented (Patton, 2015). Transparency of the process is critical to increasing the study's validity (Guest et al., 2012). If the procedural steps of the research are dependable, replication of the study should be consistent in similar conditions, even with the possibility of a different outcome (Stenfors et al., 2020). The detailed descriptions of the data collection and analysis procedures will allow another researcher to reproduce this study at any institution of higher education that has implemented a strategic plan. Although detailed descriptions and documentation do not guarantee validity, it allows others to formulate a knowledgeable analysis regarding the credibility of the research findings (Guest et al., 2012).

Confirmability

Confirmability is a level of objectivity or the extent to which the findings of a study are formed by the participants and not researchers' partiality, motive, or interest (Amankwaa, 2016). It refers to the degree to which the outcomes of the study can be substantiated by others, which involves the researcher presenting the report so that the audience can connect declarations, outcomes, and explanations to the data (Patton, 2015). I memoed to produce a digital audit trail that can be recovered and inspected (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using the Leadership Challenge survey measured with the Likert scale allows for confirmability and verification, preventing bias from the findings.

Ethical Considerations

I addressed any ethical considerations involved in completing this study. Consent was obtained from all participants and the IRBs at Liberty and Pride University. Confidentiality was maintained for the participants and the case study site with the use of pseudonyms. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants could have withdrawn at any time. Physical data were secured in a locked unit or by password protection for electronic resources. All data, physical and electronic, will be maintained for three years after publication. After three years, physical data will be shredded, and electronic data will be deleted and purged from all storage devices, including the backup copies of computer files.

Summary

This qualitative case study used the single instrument design to explore the transformational leadership practices utilized by university leaders in executing a strategic plan first implemented in 2011 at Pride University. The focus of this study was the leadership practices utilized since the implementation of the strategic plan and how they relate to the exemplary leadership practices identified by Kouzes and Posner (2017). A variety of methods were used to collect and analyze the revealing dominant themes, increasing validity and emerging into a triangulation of qualitative data: (a) semi-structured individual interviews were transcribed and arranged into identifying themes, (b) relevant document review for historical reference, (c) and electronic Likert surveys analyzed utilizing the LPI rating scale. The data were organized and transcribed into a case study database and analyzed based on recurring patterns (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this single instrument case study was to explore the transformational leadership practices utilized by university leaders in the implementation of a strategic plan first executed in 2011 at Pride University with a continuation in 2020. The qualitative case study design was appropriate for this research as it involved studying the transformation of a single organization within a tangible contemporary setting (Yin, 2018). This case study was guided by the central research question: How were transformational leadership strategies utilized to execute the strategic plan implemented at Pride University? This chapter includes descriptions of 12 interview participants, the results of the study, themes, subthemes, outlier findings and data, research question responses, and a summary.

Participants

Because this qualitative research explores the leadership practices utilized during the implementation of the strategic plan, it was important for the purposeful sampling to include members of leadership who were directly involved in the execution of the strategic plan. Individual email addresses were obtained from the Pride University website before emailing letters and consent forms to 25 university leaders. The goal was to obtain a sample size of at least 10 leader participants; 12 leaders participated in the study. The 12 leader participants obtained consisted of upper-level administrators who have held critical leadership roles since the strategic plan was implemented. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the leaders included in the study. See Table 2 for demographic data.

Table 2*Leader Participants*

Leader Participants	Gender	Years at University	Current Position
Victor	M	26	Associate Dean
Donna	F	22	Assistant Vice Chancellor
Diana	F	15	Associate Vice Provost
Rhonda	F	19	Associate Vice Provost
Issa	F	10	Associate Dean
Andrew	M	26	Associate Chairperson
Justin	M	25	Chairperson
Zackary	M	16	Chairperson
Amanda	F	5	Director
Bobby	M	14	Vice Chancellor
Allison	F	12	Assistant Dean
Elise	F	12	Dean

All 12 leader participants are currently employed at Pride University as upper-level administrators. The participants are made up of five males and seven females, including a

director, chairpersons, deans, vice chancellors, and vice provosts who have tenure at the university ranging from five to twenty-six years.

Results

The focus of this single instrument case study was to explore the transformational leadership practices utilized by university leaders in the implementation of a strategic plan first executed in 2011 at Pride University. This qualitative case study was guided by the central research question and five sub-research questions. Several data collection methods were completed for this study to increase validity and produce triangulation: document review, virtual interviews conducted with 12 leader participants, and electronic surveys completed by the leaders and three recommended followers of each leader. A total of 11 Leadership Practices Surveys (Self) were collected from the leaders, and 21 Leadership Practices Inventory surveys (Observer) were collected from followers.

The qualitative data from this case study was synthesized by (a) reflective memoing and transcribing interviews, (b) rating the Likert surveys utilizing the LPI rating scale from “almost always” to “almost never,” (c) assigning codes to data based on recurring patterns and themes, (d) and creating a case study database to organize all documentation collected (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014). Artifacts and documents were used for historical reference. As Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested, I began using one coding method with a list of categories before conducting any fieldwork; the initial categories identified were the five exemplary practices of leadership. As the data were analyzed, two practices emerged as more dominant than others, indicating frequent usage of that behavior. Additionally, code trees were developed during the data analysis process to identify hierarchies within the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Each data set was also

imported into Atlas ti, reviewed multiple times, and organized into dominant themes of triangulation.

Table 3

Themes and Subthemes for all Triangulated Data Sources

Theme	Subthemes
Encourage the Heart	Praise People for a Job Well Done Get Personally Involved in Recognizing People and Celebrating Accomplishments Develop Cooperative Relationships Among People at Work
Enable Others to Act	Ensure People Grow in Their Jobs by Learning New Skills and Developing Themselves

Encourage the Heart

The first theme identified during data analysis, encourage the heart, aligns with several strategies outlined in the strategic plan: (1) Develop university-wide systems to encourage and promote nationally recognized faculty achievements in teaching, research, and public service; (2) Encourage, support, and recognize the high-quality interdisciplinary entrepreneurial endeavors of students, faculty, staff, and administrators; and (3) Enact processes to create an environment that is accessible and welcoming to students, faculty, retirees, alumni, and the greater community (Progression 2020, 2011). The leader interviews and Leadership Practices Inventory surveys (Self and Observer) indicate that the leaders encourage the heart most frequently by getting personally involved in recognizing people celebrating accomplishments, and praising people for a job well done. Five leaders had Encourage the Heart to emerge as the dominant exemplary leadership behavior they exhibited most frequently from the Leadership Practices Inventory (Self).

Get Personally Involved in Recognizing People and Celebrating Accomplishments

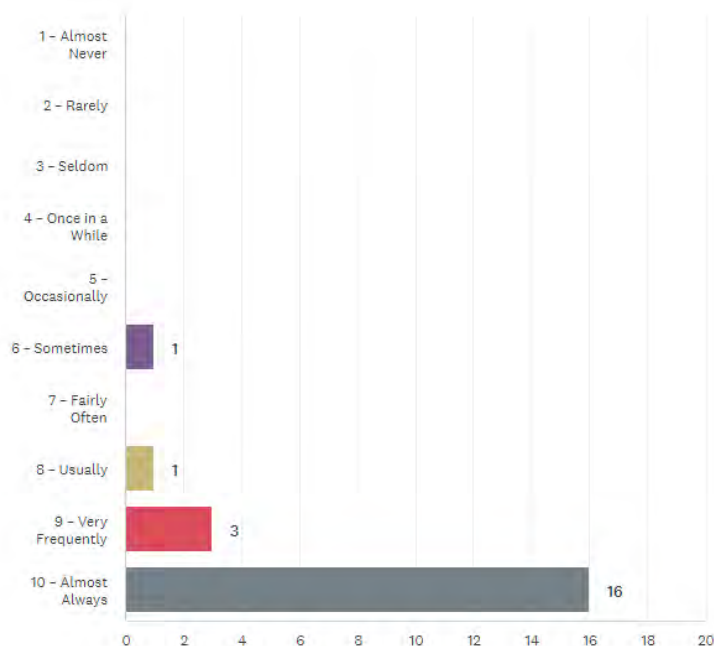
The first sub-theme identified under Encourage the Heart was getting personally involved in recognizing people and celebrating accomplishments. Nineteen followers indicated that they “almost always” or “very frequently” experience this behavior from their leader. Four leaders gave an example of this behavior when asked how they encourage the heart. Donna shared multiple examples of how she encourages the heart. “Because EHRA employees do not get comp time, I try to be flexible with hours and remote opportunities, to allow staff to work from home when needed.” She then elaborated on the specific ways she celebrates staff. “Going out to lunch, or even just sending thank you emails and thank you cards, going out celebrating each other’s birthdays, or doing a Christmas gift exchange,” Donna expressed the importance of “making staff feel like they are part of a team, that they are supported, valued, and appreciated.” Diana indicated that she likes taking a personal approach with her unit by “going by and saying good morning every morning...It’s a conscious decision for me to ask about the kids or plans for the weekend...just making sure they know I have interest in their lives outside of work.” Rhonda and Amanda both described team building activities included in office celebrations. Rhonda indicated, “The office is going through a transformation right now...the victory is that we got through one year...and it was time to celebrate everyone on the team because some days didn’t feel like that was a victory.” Amanda stressed the importance of work-life balance, for staff “to be happy at work and with colleagues.” She said she wanted to create opportunities for relaxation or create a sense of community. “I tried to be really intentional to bring us back together, focus on activities, not necessarily geared toward work, but towards team building. And look for opportunities that can help develop each other, support each other, and understand each other.”

Figure 8

Leadership Practices Inventory Results (Observer) – Get Personally Involved in Recognizing People and Celebrating Accomplishments

Get personally involved in recognizing people and celebrating accomplishments.

Answered: 21



Note. Figure 8 demonstrates the Leadership Practices Inventory (Observer) survey responses for “Get Personally Involved in Recognizing People and Celebrating Accomplishments.” Nineteen followers indicated that they “almost always” or “very frequently” experience this behavior from their leader.

Praise People for a Job Well Done

The second sub-theme identified under Encourage the Heart was praising people for a job well done. Twenty followers indicated that they “almost always” or “very frequently” experienced this behavior from their leader. Three leaders gave an example of this behavior when asked how they encourage the heart. Victor said, “At our year-end celebrations, during

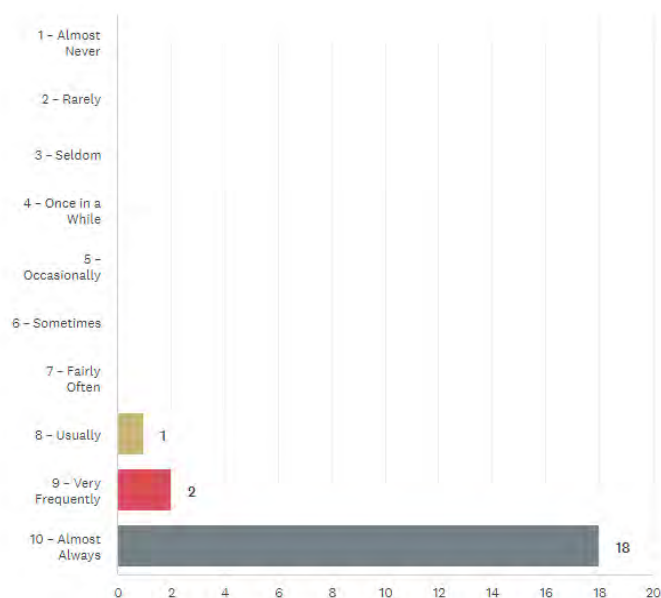
commencement time, I ask professors for their achievements...and then in the newsletter, we recognize folks for things they've done.” Zackary and Justin indicated that they offer immediate praise and congratulatory remarks to faculty on their successes. According to Zackary, “Acknowledging other people’s contribution is key to keeping interaction and overall functionality of the department.” Zackary said he “recognizes all contributions, no matter how small. Justin takes his acknowledgments a step further to seek “departmental and university recognition” for faculty accomplishments. “For every Teaching Excellence Award, for every Advising Excellence Award, for every Research Excellence Award, we have a nominee.”

Figure 9

Leadership Practices Inventory Results (Observer) – Praise People for a Job Well Done

Praise people for a job well done.

Answered: 21



Note. Figure 9 demonstrates the Leadership Practices Inventory (Observer) survey responses for “Praise People for a Job Well Done.” Twenty followers indicated that they “almost always” or “very frequently” experience this behavior from their leader.

Enable Others to Act

The second theme identified during data analysis, enable others to act, aligns with multiple strategies listed in the strategic plan: (1) instill a passion for academic excellence and lifelong learning by creating a learning-centered environment with dynamic intellectual exchange; (2) maintain an environment that upholds ethical values, honor, respect, and integrity; (3) provide greater support for faculty development opportunities to enhance innovative instructional methods, course design, and curricular development; (4) strengthen strategic relationships with community colleges and other educational partners; and (5) improve front-line capabilities to fulfill the university's commitment to quality service and responsiveness. The leader interviews and Leadership Practices Inventory surveys (Self and Observer) indicate that the leaders enable others to act most frequently by developing cooperative relationships among people they work with and ensuring people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves. Five leaders enabled others to act to emerge as the dominant exemplary leadership behavior they exhibit most frequently from the Leadership Practices Inventory (Self).

Developing Cooperative Relationships

The first sub-theme identified under enable others to act was developing cooperative relationships among people they work with. Nineteen followers indicated that they “almost always” or “very frequently” experience this behavior from their leader. Five leaders gave an example of this behavior when asked how they enable others to act. Diana indicated that when she sees potential in someone, she creates opportunities for them. “If I see an opportunity for them to get out of the box and start meeting people and getting a different skill set, I am going to make those introductions, or I’m going to have someone come sit with me at a meeting...at least start making those connections to help them build.” Donna stresses the importance of social

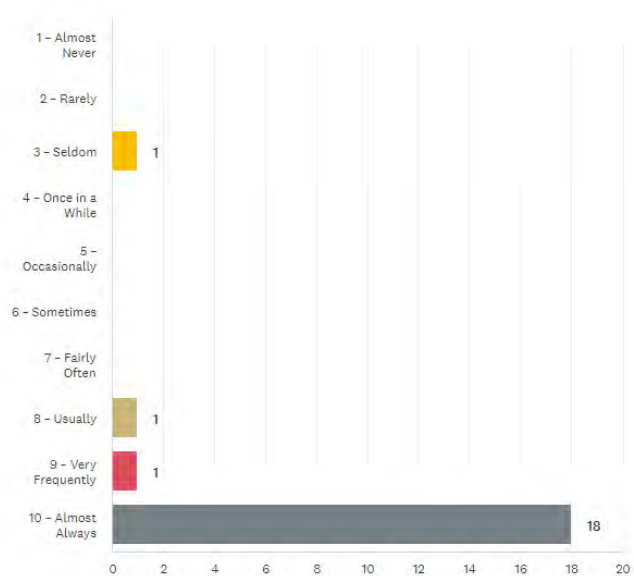
capital. “Social capital is big for me. And I steadily preach that to new staff who’ve been here to continue to build relationships across campus, across all the HBCUs.” Amanda revealed, “I made sure, as a leader, I had a group of followers that were strategically part of my team that knew what the vision was...We use collaborations across campus...to meet both the needs of the [department] and the university.”

Figure 10

*Leadership Practices Inventory Results (Observer) – Develops Cooperative Relationships
Among the People She/He Works With*

Develop cooperative relationships among the people he/she works with.

Answered: 21



Note. Figure 10 demonstrates the Leadership Practices Inventory (Observer) survey responses for “Develop Cooperative Relationships.” Nineteen followers indicated that they “almost always” or “very frequently” experience this behavior from their leader.

Ensure People Grow in Their Jobs

The second sub-theme identified under enable others to act was ensuring people grow in their jobs. Fourteen followers indicated that they “almost always” or “very frequently”

experience this behavior from their leader. Three leaders gave an example of this behavior when asked how they enable others to act. Rhonda said when she began in her unit, “I immediately interviewed everybody in the unit. Spending time with each one was a priority to really understand where everyone was, what their thoughts were, and how they felt about where they worked.” Elise stated,

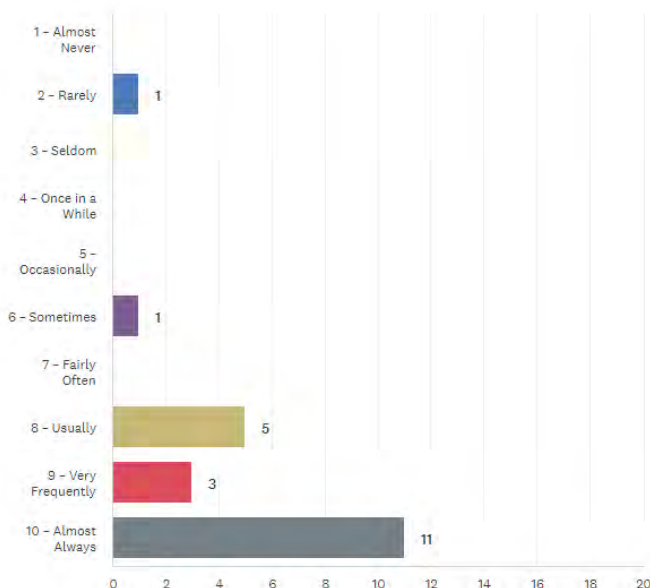
I tend to recognize people’s abilities and promote them into those positions or encourage them to take positions of leadership. Because we are only as strong as the parts that make us, and it doesn’t matter how excellent I am if other members of my team don’t have the opportunities for growth.

Figure 11

Leadership Practices Inventory Results (Observer) – Ensure People Grow in their Jobs by Learning New Skills and Developing Themselves

Ensure that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.

Answered: 21



Note. Figure 11 demonstrates the Leadership Practices Inventory (Observer) survey responses for “Ensure People Grow in Their Jobs.” Fourteen followers indicated that they “almost always” or “very frequently” experience this behavior from their leader.

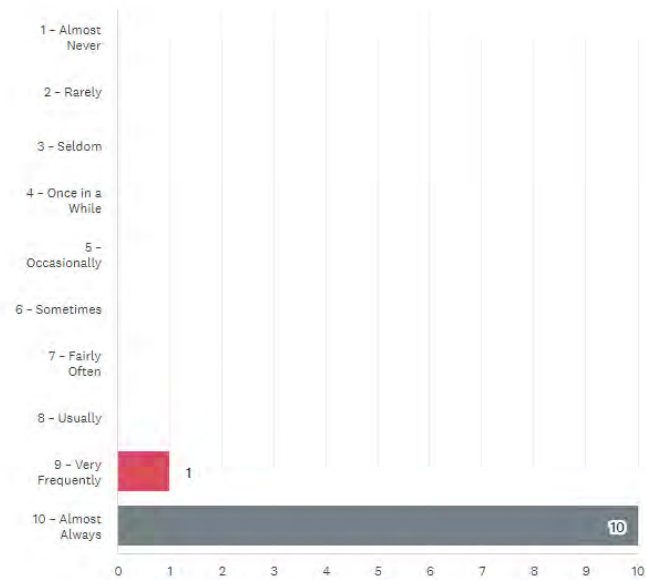
Outlier Data and Findings

The outlier in this study is a behavior identified by all leader and follower participants as “almost always” or “very frequently” exhibited or experienced: treat others with dignity and respect. However, this behavior was not explicitly stated by any of the leaders when asked how they enabled others to act. In addition, there was one leader participant who did not complete the Leadership Practices Inventory (Self).

Figure 12*Leadership Practices Inventory Results (Self) – Treat Others with Dignity and Respect*

I treat others with dignity and respect.

Answered: 11

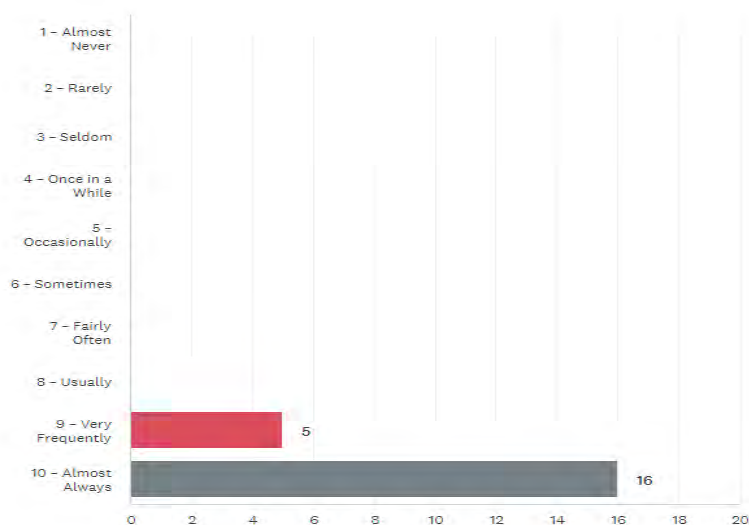


Note. Figure 12 demonstrates the Leadership Practices Inventory (Self) survey responses for “Treat Others with Dignity and Respect.” Eleven leaders indicated that they “almost always” or “very frequently” exhibit this behavior.

Figure 13*Leadership Practices Inventory Results (Observer) – Treat Others with Dignity and Respect*

Treat others with dignity and respect.

Answered: 21



Note. Figure 13 demonstrates the Leadership Practices Inventory (Observer) survey responses for “Treat People with Dignity and Respect.” Twenty-one followers indicated that they “almost always” or “very frequently” experience this behavior from their leader.

Research Question Responses

This qualitative case study is guided by the central research question and five sub-research questions. The research question sought to answer how transformational leadership strategies were utilized to execute the strategic plan implemented at Pride University. Through data collection, analysis, and triangulation, two exemplary practices of leadership emerged as dominant themes indicating that those behaviors are exhibited most frequently. The first theme is encourage the heart with two recurring sub-themes: getting personally involved with recognizing people, celebrating accomplishments, and praising people for a job well done. The second theme is to enable others to act with two recurring sub-themes: developing cooperative relationships

among people they work with and ensuring people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.

Central Research Question

How were transformational leadership strategies utilized to execute the strategic plan implemented at Pride University? This central research question was designed to explore the transformational leadership practices utilized while implanting the strategic plan. While the data indicate that leaders at the university utilized all five exemplary practices of leadership, two emerged as dominant, indicating frequent usage: encourage the heart and enable others to act.

Sub Question One

How did leaders model the way in the execution of the strategic plan? This sub question was designed to explore how leaders at Pride University exhibited behaviors that model the way. Leaders modeled the way most frequently by (a) setting a personal example, (b) ensuring people adhere to principles and standards agreed upon, and (c) building a consensus around a common set of values. Amanda explained how she transitioned into leadership while completing a major project in her unit.

So, when I became the leader, I also engaged myself as I would as a follower. And I think the followers at the time seeing me knowing how I acted as a follower not as a leader...were easily receptive to joining in meeting in meeting the collective goal.

Bobby gave the example of how he had to model the way during a time when the university experienced annual budget reductions. "It was incumbent upon me to [demonstrate] how to deal with the budget reductions, yet not compromise the classroom...[my team] knows that my expectation is that we serve our students and that we take care of our students." Diana said, modeling the way was extremely important for her in her unit. "I think it was important to let

them know that there was no task that was too minimal for me to be in that office and achieving right beside them.”

Sub Question Two

How did leaders inspire a shared vision in implementing the strategic plan? This sub question was designed to explore how leaders at Pride University exhibited behaviors that inspire a shared vision. Leaders inspired a shared vision most frequently by showing others how their long-term interests can be realized by enlisting in a common vision and appealing to others to share an exciting dream of the future. Elise emphasized that she is extremely optimistic and believes she does a good job of spreading optimism because she is able to share her personal experience and say,

I know we can because I am here, and I succeeded within this limited environment. I tell people to look at where we've come from. I am at an HBCU. Understand what is possible...I want to make the future better for those coming behind us.

Amanda shared that she inspired a shared vision by “getting more engaged myself in research and helping build collaborations across campus, encouraging faculty to pursue research and grant opportunities that support the university’s goal.” Bobby and Amanda both express creating the thought of envisioning the future. Bobby asks,

What does the future look like? And so it was my role to help the team work through that and create that vision for us...my biggest contribution was really kind of setting the mindset that we're not second to anybody. We are better than or as good as anybody.

Sub Question Three

How did leaders challenge the process in the execution of the strategic plan? This sub-question was designed to explore how leaders at Pride University exhibited behaviors that

challenged the process. Leaders frequently challenged the process by seeking out challenging opportunities and challenging people to try innovative ways to work. Bobby said leaders must do a better job of “rewarding people to take calculated risks” while ensuring that people are not punished for taking those same risks. “We need to get better as far as that is concerned because it’s not going to work for people to be scared to take risks because they are scared of the repercussions.” Elise challenges people not to settle for what is easy. “I refuse to settle for the standard. I just know everybody has the potential to do better. And I push my team.” Donna said, “We’re always seeking innovative ways to partner with community partners or some corporations to bring some to or for our students.” For example, “We got a call from the Grammys; they want to do something with our students...we are steadily getting opportunities to bring exciting things to our students.”

Sub Question Four

How did leaders enable others to act while executing the strategic plan? This sub-question was designed to explore how leaders at Pride University exhibited behaviors that enabled others to act. This behavior emerged as a dominant theme for frequent behavior in data analysis. Leaders enable others to act most frequently by developing cooperative relationships among people they work with and ensuring people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves. As the university works toward the strategic plan goal of positioning the university to be a national, premier research-intensive, doctoral, science and technology-focused learning institution (Progression 2020, 2011), Victor discussed the way he encouraged faculty to set goals that increased research. “I would negotiate their goals...so they would also move the department, so if they needed more research, I wanted less service for them. If they are not mired down with service, they could focus on their research.” Allison shared that she starts with

“authentic conversations, and just really making connections with people at different units, taking time to engage in meaningful conversations and seeing how, in our separate worlds, we have these pieces that fit together to benefit these different spaces.” Bobby said that he realized the importance of collaboration a long time ago. “It all ties together. One of the things you will hear the chancellor say is it all ties together, and so it’s important that we collaborate and work closely together.”

Sub Question Five

How did leaders encourage the heart during the implementation of the strategic plan? This sub-question was designed to explore how leaders at Pride University exhibited behaviors that encouraged the heart. This behavior emerged as a dominant theme for frequent behavior in data analysis. Leaders encouraged the heart most frequently by getting personally involved in recognizing people and celebrating accomplishments and praising people for a job well done. Andrew said, “I think I was good at encouraging chairs, encouraging directors, encouraging faculty, to just keep pushing.” Issa indicated that she likes to celebrate everyone’s success. “It shows how successful we are as a team. It also encourages people to want to build on that success.” Allison stated that she is extremely intentional about creating opportunities to acknowledge accomplishments.

Last year, I implemented a component where we nominated and celebrated some of our female faculty and had different categories to recognize them...This year, we took the time to nominate and celebrate some of our undergraduate and graduate females who are often silenced and overlooked.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the transformational leadership practices utilized at Pride University during the implementation of the strategic plan. The theory guiding this study was the transformational leadership theory first established by Burns in 1978. It was expanded most recently by Kouzes and Posner (2017) as they have identified the five exemplary practices of leadership derived from the transformational leadership model (a) Model the Way, (b) Inspire a Shared Vision, (c) Challenge the Process, (d) Enable Others to Act, and (e) Encourage the Heart. Through data collection, analysis, and triangulation, two exemplary practices of leadership emerged as dominant themes indicating that those behaviors are exhibited most frequently. The first theme is encourage the heart with two recurring sub-themes: getting personally involved with recognizing people and celebrating accomplishments and praising people for a job well done. The second theme is to enable others to act with two recurring sub-themes: developing cooperative relationships among people they work with and ensuring people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this single instrument qualitative case study was to explore the leadership styles utilized in the implementation of a strategic plan at Pride University. The theory guiding this study was the transformational leadership theory first established by Burns in 1978. It was expanded most recently by Kouzes and Posner (2017), identifying the five exemplary practices of leadership derived from the transformational leadership model (a) Model the Way, (b) Inspire a Shared Vision, (c) Challenge the Process, (d) Enable Others to Act, and (e) Encourage the Heart. This chapter consists of five discussion subsections: (a) Interpretation of Findings; (b) Implications for Policy or Practice; (c) Theoretical and Empirical Implications; (d) Limitations and Delimitations; and (e) Recommendations for Future Research. This chapter concludes with an overall summary.

Discussion

This study explored the leadership practices utilized in the implementation of a strategic plan at Pride University. Through the triangulated data sources presented in Chapter Four, the dominant leadership practices that emerged were: encourage the heart and enable others to act. This discussion provides an overview of the study's findings in relation to the dominant themes and supports the interpretation of those findings with theoretical and empirical literature, along with narrative quotes from interview participants. The discussion section has five major subsections, including (a) Interpretation of Findings; (b) Implications for Policy or Practice; (c) Theoretical and Empirical Implications; (d) Limitations and Delimitations; and (e) Recommendations for Future Research.

Interpretation of Findings

This section provides a summary of the thematic findings revealed in Chapter Four, followed by a series of interpretations of those findings. Through data collection, analysis, and triangulation, two exemplary practices of leadership emerged as dominant themes of the study, indicating that those behaviors are exhibited most frequently by the 12 leader participants. The first theme is encourage the heart with two recurring sub-themes: getting personally involved with recognizing people and celebrating accomplishments and praising people for a job well done. The second theme is enable others to act with two recurring sub-themes: developing cooperative relationships among people they work with and ensuring people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.

Summary of Thematic Findings

Through the triangulated data sources presented in Chapter Four, the dominant leadership practices that emerged as themes were: encourage the heart and enable others to act. The themes aligned with the theoretical framework of this qualitative case study. Encourage the heart included two recurring sub-themes: getting personally involved with recognizing people and celebrating accomplishments and praising people for a job well done. The second theme, enable others to act, also included two recurring sub-themes: developing cooperative relationships among people they work with and ensuring people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.

Transformational Leadership. The theory guiding this study was the transformational leadership theory first established by Burns in 1978 and expanded most recently by Kouzes and Posner (2017) identifying the five exemplary practices of leadership derived from the transformational leadership model (a) Model the Way, (b) Inspire a Shared Vision, (c) Challenge

the Process, (d) Enable Others to Act, and (e) Encourage the Heart. According to Turner (2018), transformational leadership practices have proven instrumental in positive changes on HBCU campuses fostering increased student diversity, improved economic revenue, and enriched community relationships. The findings of this study contribute to the body of literature highlighting positive changes at an HBCU campus through transformational leadership. This study reveals that transformational leadership is an effective leadership practice for implementing and executing strategic planning, specifically at HBCUs. Although encourage the heart and enable others to act proved to be the dominant leadership practices exhibited during the implementation and execution of the strategic plan, all of the leadership practices were exhibited or experienced by both leaders and followers. Bobby indicated in his interview that he realized the importance of collaboration a long time ago. “It all ties together. One of the things you will hear the chancellor say is it all ties together.” All of the leadership practices “tie together” to embody exemplary leadership. Through a strategic plan executed and implemented utilizing transformational leadership practices, Pride University has experienced significant growth in all of the areas initially identified as key indicators: (a) enrollment, (b) student success, (c) faculty, (d) research and innovation, (e) financial resources, (f) reputation and rankings, (g) athletic success, and (h) diversity.

Value People. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the leadership practices utilized during the implementation and execution of the strategic plan at Pride University. Since implementing the strategic plan, the university has reached multiple key indicators outlined each year in an executive summary demonstrating the overall success of the plan. Falluca (2018) cites that leadership behaviors and characteristics directly influence engagement in an organizational environment that evokes change (Druker, 1999; Gilley, 2005;

Howkins, 2001). The findings of this study indicate that the most dominant exemplary leadership practices utilized were to encourage the heart with the most frequent behaviors as getting personally involved in recognizing people and celebrating accomplishments and praising people for a job well done, and enable others to act with the most frequent behaviors as developing cooperative relationships among people they work with and ensuring people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves. Because the qualitative case study centered around the strategic plan, my initial hypothesis as the researcher, predicted the prevailing leadership practices would be to model the way and inspire a shared vision. However, the triangulated data indicate that the key to inspiring a shared vision is to genuinely invest in and value the people who make up the organization. According to Kouzes and Posner (2017), “People work together most effectively when they trust one another. Asking for help and sharing information then come naturally. Setting a common goal becomes almost instinctive” (p. 206). Although it did not emerge as a dominant theme, as it was not explicitly stated by the leaders when asked how they enabled others to act, it is also important to note the outlier finding here. All participants in this study indicated that they “almost always” or “very frequently” exhibited or experienced: treat others with dignity and respect. The findings of this study reveal that although structure, vision, and performance are all vital to the success of an organization, people will share the vision of the organization if they feel valued, supported, and encouraged.

Implications for Policy or Practice

The findings of this qualitative case study revealed potential implications for policy and practice for utilizing transformational leadership at HBCUs. These recommendations are intended to support higher education institutions through strategic planning processes. The subsections below include the implications for policy and practice.

Implications for Policy

Strategic leadership is critical for the existence and preservation of colleges and universities (Adair, 2010; Banks, 2019; Fiedler & Garcia, 1987; Morrill, 2011). Leadership has been and will continue to be a primary focus in school accountability and reform (Stewart, 2006). On average, HBCU presidents stay at their institution for three years, in contrast to PWIs, where they stay an average of seven years. Revolving doors in the president's office are a product of the same fundamental problem, finances (Freeman & Palmer, 2020). Considering the challenges that HBCUs face, it is imperative for leaders to develop a course of action to assist with obtaining the goals and objectives of their academic institutions while also focusing on growth and development (Kramer & Swing, 2010). The strategic plan implemented at Pride University, designed to shape the strategic course of the university and propel the organization to a competitive position among its institutional peers, is the strategic course of action developed by leadership at Pride University to realize the institution's mission, vision, and core values (Strategic Plan, 2011). It reflects the vision of university stakeholders (board of trustees, administration, faculty/staff, students, alumni, and community partners) who collaborated to review the current state of the university, identify the needs, and set goals for the future. This study on the leadership practices utilized in implementing a strategic plan has highlighted the importance of a university strategic plan and having effective leadership at the helm to inspire a shared vision. The first practical implication of policy is that the university Board of Governors may consider strategic planning experience when selecting university leaders. Achievement and regulation of higher education institutions depend on the quality of leadership they possess (Freeman & Palmer, 2020). Secondly, as accreditation commissions require institutions to have strategic and assessment plans to meet accrediting requirements, other institutions of higher

education, specifically HBCUs, may choose to use Progression 2020 as a model when structuring and developing plans for their campus.

Implications for Practice

The strategic plan implemented by Pride University was designed to change the overall national ranking of the university by shaping the strategic course and propelling the organization to a competitive position among its peers. Lomotey and Covington (2018) examined not only the challenges of successful leadership for HBCU presidents but also presented strategies the presidents should execute to be effective in their roles, including fundraising, hiring the right people, and avoiding an autocratic leadership style said to be a critical problem with many HBCUs (Freeman & Palmer, 2020; Palmer et al., 2017). The first practical implication for practice is that universities may consider providing training for leaders to be more intentional with demonstrating exemplary leadership practices, particularly encourage the heart and enable others to act, the two dominant themes identified in the data. The first theme is encourage the heart with two recurring sub-themes: getting personally involved with recognizing people and celebrating accomplishments and praising people for a job well done. The second theme is to enable others to act with two recurring sub-themes: developing cooperative relationships among people they work with and ensuring people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves. Secondly, when structuring and developing strategic plans, universities, specifically HBCUs, may consider including measurable strategies for demonstrating value, support, and encouragement to faculty and staff.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

Theoretical Implications

The theory guiding this study was the transformational leadership theory first established by Burns in 1978. It was expanded most recently by Kouzes and Posner (2017), identifying the five exemplary practices of leadership derived from the transformational leadership model (a) Model the Way, (b) Inspire a Shared Vision, (c) Challenge the Process, (d) Enable Others to Act, and (e) Encourage the Heart. Transformational leadership happens when a leader's behavior encourages followers and stimulates them to achieve beyond their perceived capabilities. It motivates people to perform with increased integrity and inspiration and attain unexpected or extraordinary results. Few qualitative studies have addressed transformational leadership in higher education, specifically at an HBCU (Sun et al., 2017). However, transformational leadership has become a prevalent form of leadership to adapt successfully to significant challenges and changes in higher education. According to Turner (2018), transformational leadership practices have proven instrumental in positive changes on HBCU campuses fostering increased student diversity, improved economic revenue, and enriched community relationships. This study explored the leadership practices utilized during implementing and executing a strategic plan at Pride University. It expanded transformational leadership research with administrators in educational leadership at HBCUs through the successful implementation of a strategic plan.

Empirical Implications

The impact of transformational leadership practices on various organizations has been well documented. However, most studies on transformational leadership in higher education have been quantitative (Jyoti & Bhau, 2016). There is a scarcity of qualitative research

addressing transformational leadership practices in higher education, despite the positive impact on school, student, and teacher outcomes (Sun et al., 2017). Banks (2019) asserts that leadership challenges intensify the issues facing HBCUs because research indicates that strategic leadership is critical for the existence and preservation of colleges and universities (Adair, 2010; Fiedler & Garcia, 1987; Morrill, 2011). This study may help to dispel the perception of futile and unsuccessful leadership practices at HBCUs. It is my sincere hope that this study may add to the body of literature demonstrating positive and effective leadership practices in higher education, particularly at an HBCU.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses of the study that cannot be controlled. Several limitations were revealed in this study. The first limitation was that all interviews were conducted virtually on ZOOM. Due to safety concerns with the COVID-19 pandemic, I had no face-to-face interaction with any participants in the study. Another limitation is that the study only yielded 12 leaders for interviews. Recruitment letters were distributed to 25 leaders at Pride University. Lastly, completion of the electronic survey collection was also a limitation. Eleven out of the twelve leaders interviewed, and twenty-one of the thirty-six followers completed the survey.

Delimitations are purposeful decisions the researcher makes to limit or define the boundaries of the study. The first delimitation of the study was that the leaders interviewed had to be current employees of Pride University. There were several leaders with recent separations who may have been valuable resources for the interview. Another delimitation was only interviewing the leaders. It may have been helpful to speak with the followers to hear their voices and opinions regarding the leadership they experience.

Recommendations for Future Research

This qualitative case study sought to research how transformational leadership strategies were utilized to execute the strategic plan implemented at Pride University. The participants in this study consisted of 12 upper-level administrators who have held critical leadership roles since the implementation of the strategic plan and were directly involved in executing the strategic plan. Future research may expand the study to explore transformational leadership practices at other universities, including additional HBCUs and PWIs. In addition, this study was conducted as a single instrument qualitative case study that focused on one phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018), but phenomenological research may yield different results.

Conclusion

The purpose of this single instrument qualitative case study was to explore the leadership styles utilized in the implementation of a strategic plan at Pride University. The theory guiding this study was the transformational leadership theory first established by Burns in 1978. It expanded most recently by Kouzes and Posner (2017), identifying the five exemplary practices of leadership derived from the transformational leadership model (a) Model the Way, (b) Inspire a Shared Vision, (c) Challenge the Process, (d) Enable Others to Act, and (e) Encourage the Heart. Triangulated data collected through document review, individual leader interviews, and electronic surveys were used to answer one central research question and five sub-research questions.

The 12 leader participants of the study, upper-level administrators who have held critical leadership roles since the strategic plan was implemented, shared examples of how they have exhibited the five exemplary practices of leadership. Electronic Leadership Practices Inventory surveys were completed by the leaders (Self) and three recommended followers (Observer) of

each leader. The findings of this study indicate that the most dominant exemplary leadership practices utilized by leaders were to encourage the heart with the most frequent behaviors as getting personally involved in recognizing people and celebrating accomplishments and praising people for a job well done and enable others to act with the most frequent behaviors as developing cooperative relationships among people they work with and ensuring people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.

The findings of this study reveal that people will share the vision of the organization if they feel valued, supported, and encouraged. The key to inspiring a shared vision is to genuinely invest in and value the people who make up the organization. In addition, the findings of this study contribute to the body of literature highlighting positive changes at an HBCU campus through transformational leadership. This study reveals that transformational leadership is an effective leadership practice for implementing and executing strategic planning, specifically at HBCUs.

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Appendix A
IRB Approval (Pride University)

July 28, 2022

Ms. Titilayo B Evans
Liberty University

Dear Ms. Evans,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), permission is being granted for you to conduct your Liberty University IRB approved research study entitled "*A CASE STUDY OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES UTILIZED TO INCREASE NATIONAL RANKINGS OF AN HBCU THROUGH STRATEGIC PLANNING*". We understand that the scope of work to be performed will include participating as subjects, providing contact information, providing participants with study information as well as participating in study procedures. Inform site IRB when data collection has been complete.

Any modifications to protocol, adverse events, and/or personnel changes must be reported immediately to the IRB Administrator.

If there are any questions that we can answer, feel free to contact our offices.

Sincerely,

Research Compliance Officer/ IRB Administrator
Division of Research and Economic Development

Appendix B
IRB Approval (Liberty University)



July 15, 2022

Titilayo Evans
Ellen Ziegler

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY21-22-1159 A CASE STUDY OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES UTILIZED TO INCREASE NATIONAL RANKINGS OF AN HBCU THROUGH STRATEGIC PLANNING

Dear Titilayo Evans, Ellen Ziegler,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: July 15, 2022. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Appendix C Participant Consent Form

Consent

Title of the Project: A CASE STUDY OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES UTILIZED TO INCREASE NATIONAL RANKINGS OF AN HBCU THROUGH STRATEGIC PLANNING

Principal Investigator: Titilayo Evans, Doctoral Student, Liberty University, School of Education

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a university employee impacted by the strategic plan implemented in 2011. You must also be a leader (e.g., a person who engages in leadership practices) at the university, such as an upper-level administrator (e.g., chancellors cabinet members, vice provosts, deans, chairs, and high-ranking faculty). Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to explore the transformational leadership practices utilized by university leaders in the execution of the strategic plan first implemented in 2011 at [REDACTED]

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Leaders will participate in an audio- and video-recorded, 17-question interview via Zoom (20-30 minutes).
2. Complete the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) Self-Assessment online (10 minutes).
3. Refer at least 3 employees to the researcher. They will be asked to anonymously take the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) for observers online (10 minutes).
4. Review your interview transcripts and survey results and offer any additional clarity or feedback.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from participating in this study.

Benefits to society include an expansion of the research for transformational leadership practices in higher education. Transformational leadership practices have proven instrumental in positive changes on HBCU campuses fostering increased student diversity, improved economic revenue, and enriched community relationships.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Leader participant interview responses will be kept confidential through the use of a number coding system. Interviews will be conducted virtually via the Zoom application in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or [REDACTED]. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Titilayo Evans. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Ellen Ziegler, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, [REDACTED].

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix D Individual Interview Questions

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to me as if we just met one another. CRQ
2. How long have you been at the university? CRQ
3. What is your current position at the university? CRQ
4. Please provide a brief description of your duties and responsibilities. CRQ
5. Please describe any other positions you have held at the university. CRQ

Questions one through five are knowledge questions, which are non – threatening questions that assist the researcher with developing a rapport with the participants (Patton, 2015).

6. In your opinion, who are the university stakeholders? CRQ
7. What is the strategic plan of the university? CRQ
8. Explain the goals of the strategic plan? CRQ
9. What role did you have in implementing or executing the strategic plan? CRQ

Questions six through nine are preliminary foundational questions about the case that set the interview in motion (Patton, 2015).

10. Describe the best leadership style you have experienced as a follower and explain how it influenced your leadership style? CRQ

James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner (2017) named Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership in their book about transformational leadership titled, *The Leadership Challenge: Making Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations*. The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership are (a) Model the Way, (b) Inspire a Shared Vision, (c) Challenge the Process, (d) Enable Others to Act, and (e) Encourage the Heart. I would like to know if you can relate any of those practices to your leadership style utilized in implementing or executing the strategic plan.

For the following five questions, I will define the exemplary practice and inquire about how you may have utilized that practice while executing the strategic plan.

11. The first exemplary leadership practice is to Model the Way. An exemplary leader models the way when they clarify values, affirm shared values and set an example by aligning actions with those shared values. In executing the strategic plan, how did you clarify values and set an example for university stakeholders? SQ1
12. Inspire a Shared Vision is the second exemplary practice. Leaders inspire a shared vision when they envision the future by creating exciting and enabling possibilities while enlisting others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations. How did you envision the future and enlist others to act on the common vision of the strategic plan? SQ2
13. Another exemplary leadership practice is to Challenge the Process. Exemplary leaders challenge the process by searching for and seizing opportunities, capitalizing on the initiative looking for innovative ways to improve while experimenting and taking risks, consistently generating small wins, and learning from the experience. How did you search for opportunities, take risks, and generate small wins while executing the strategic plan? SQ3
14. Exemplary leaders also Enable Others to Act by fostering collaboration, building trust, and facilitating relationships while strengthening others through promoting self-determination and competence. How did you foster collaboration and strengthen others while working toward the strategic plan's goals? SQ4
15. Lastly, an exemplary leader Encourages the Heart by recognizing contributions and individual excellence while celebrating values and victories by creating a spirit of

community. How did you recognize contributions, celebrate the values and victories of others, and create a spirit of community while executing the strategic plan? SQ5

Questions 10-15 address sub-questions one through five regarding how the strategic plan relates to the transformational leadership model described by Kouzes and Posner (2017) in the Leadership Challenge. In their decades of studying transformational leadership, they have found that “individuals who guide others along pioneering journeys follow surprisingly similar paths with identifiable behaviors and actions that make a difference” (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 12).

16. How has your involvement in the execution of the strategic plan influenced your leadership approach and style? CRQ

Question 16 is an inquiry about the impact of transformational leadership on their leadership style. According to Kouzes and Posner (2017), “exemplary leader behavior makes a profoundly positive difference in people’s commitment and motivation, their work performance, and the success of their organizations” (p. 156).

17. Is there any additional information you would like to share regarding your leadership practices utilized during the implementation of the strategic plan? CRQ

Question 17 is an open-ended follow-up question that will allow the participant to provide additional information deemed relevant to the interview.

18. Please provide me with the contact information of three of your followers who can speak to your leadership style?

Question 18 is a follow-up question for additional data collection. The followers will be surveyed as observers utilizing the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) 360 Online by Kouzes and Posner (2017) to assess the behaviors of their leader. Kouzes and Posner indicate that it is

essential for leaders to receive feedback on their behaviors to ensure their words and actions align.

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August 24, 2021

Titilayo Evans:

Thank you for your request to use the LPI®: Leadership Practices Inventory® (the "LPI") in your research. This letter grants you permission to use the print LPI [Self/Observer/Self and Observer] instrument[s] in your research Subject to your payment of a \$100 fee, a discounted one-time cost of purchasing a single copy. If you prefer to use the electronic distribution of the LPI you will need to separately contact Gabriel Sims (Lpiapproval@wiley.com) directly for further details regarding product access and payment. Please be sure to review the product information resources before reaching out with pricing questions. You shall have access to the LPI for 1 year and will receive a copy of the LPI Observer form and/or Self form.

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you, in the event we conclude, in our reasonable judgment, that your use of the LPI is compromising our proprietary rights in the LPI.

Best wishes for every success with your research project.
Cordially,

Gabriel Sims

Appendix F

The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) Self-Assessment



BY JAMES M. KOUZES & BARRY Z. POSNER

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LPI: LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INVENTORY SELF

Your name: _____

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ISBN: 978-1-119-39751-9

Printed in the United States of America

Printing 10 9 8 7



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LPI: LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INVENTORY SELF

Appendix G

The Leadership Practices (LPI) Observer Assessment



BY JAMES M. KOUZES & BARRY Z. POSNER

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LPI: LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INVENTORY OBSERVER

Name of Leader: _____

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LPI: LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INVENTORY OBSERVER

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ISBN: 978-1-119-39755-7

Printed in the United States of America

Printing 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

ISBN 978-1-119-39755-7



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Appendix H
LPI 10-Scoring Sheet

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