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Higher Education Alumni Associations and Political Advocacy

Richard N. Buchli
Lindenwood University

Higher Education Alumni Associations

and Political Advocacy

by

Richard N. Buchli

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A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

Higher Education Alumni Associations

and Political Advocacy

by

Richard N. Buchli

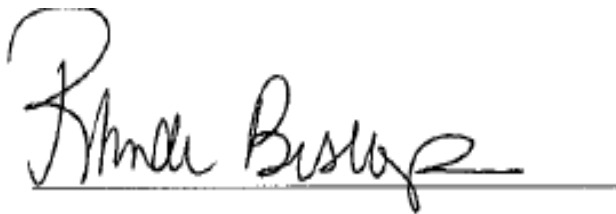This Dissertation has been approved as partial fulfillment

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Lindenwood University, School of Education

Rhonda Bishop   _10-22-15_

Dr. Rhonda L. Bishop, Dissertation Chair   Date

Sherry C. DeVore   _10-22-15_
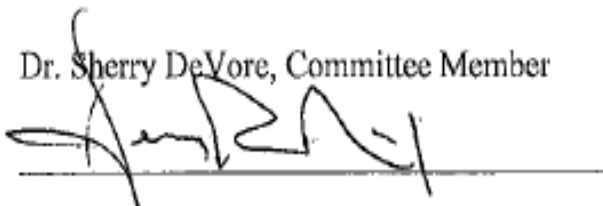
Dr. Sherry DeVore, Committee Member   Date

Terry Reid   _10-22-15_

Dr. Terry Reid, Committee Member   Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

Full Legal Name: Richard N. Buchli

Signature: _____ Date: 10/22/15

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Abstract

Political advocacy is comprised of speaking on the behalf of a cause or participating as part of a political action group (Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010). Because state financial support for public higher education has not been maintained at previous levels, higher education (HE) institutions have been recruiting alumni in an attempt to win state appropriations. As discovered by Avery (2012), very little research exists on the role of alumni associations in political advocacy efforts. In this study, a quantitative research approach was conducted to gather data on D1 public college and university alumni associations. The instrument utilized in this study was an online survey. Executive directors of alumni associations were invited to partake in the political advocacy survey over a 30-day period. The majority of alumni association executive directors reported their alumni association played a minor role in political advocacy. The largest group of alumni directors stated their associations had been politically active for more than 20 years. The most used tactic in political advocacy efforts was email. The least used tactic was to organize and hold public demonstrations. Data were collected for alumni associations nationwide and were compared by region of the country where each alumni association primarily operated. A majority of alumni directors said they did not collaborate with other colleges and universities. Even fewer alumni directors admitted collaborating with non-profit organizations or corporations. Alumni directors were asked to rate their level of support from the two major political parties in state legislatures. Ratings were assigned for political parties, HE committee members, and party leaders. Overall, Democrats and Republicans were rated somewhat similar except in the descriptive options of very supportive and unsupportive.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter One: Introduction

Affordability and funding are two major issues threatening American higher education (HE) (Clausen & Page, 2011). States once made it a priority to fund public colleges and universities, but this is no longer the case (Clausen & Page, 2011). Some experts in HE believe the days of strong state support for public HE are over (Fethke & Policano, 2013). According to Clausen and Page (2011), HE administrators must either allow the quality of education to decline or increase student tuition and fees to counter the losses in state dollars. In almost half of the 50 U.S. states, students pay a larger share of HE costs than do state governments while just a decade ago, students paid only a third of the costs (Hebel & Blumenstyk, 2014).

Special interest groups fiercely compete to protect their slice of the state government financial pie (Potter, 2003). Evidence indicates HE can be successful at winning state appropriations for achieving its mission (Tandberg, 2010). Part of HE's strategy may include use of alumni associations. Pennsylvania State University's alumni association has established the Penn State Grassroots Network, a roster of some 30,000 volunteers to advocate for the interests of the university ("Penn State Grassroots," 2015). Pennsylvania State University, along with the University of Minnesota, and the University of Tennessee all emphasize the role of alumni advocacy in their institutions' strategic plans (Johnson, 2011). Many universities value the collaborative roles played by governmental relations and their alumni associations (Johnson, 2011).

Because HE faces obstacles in its efforts to maintain significant levels of state appropriations, alumni are advocating politically before state legislatures (Potter, 2003). Examining HE lobbying efforts is appropriate, and so are the factors, which have led to

decreased spending on public HE (Tandberg, 2010). Political polarization, emphasis on the business model known as neo-liberalism, performance-based funding, and competing special interest groups have all had a detrimental effect on HE appropriations (Clausen & Page, 2011; Dar, 2012; Dougherty, Natow, Hare, Jones, & Vega, 2011; Tandberg, 2010). Public HE has utilized governmental relations specialists, HE administrators, and increasingly, alumni associations in its lobbying efforts (Potter, 2003).

Background of the Study

From the 1950s through the late 1970s, HE could expect steady increases in state appropriations, but this is not the situation anymore in nearly any state (Doyle & Delaney, 2009). Even in difficult economic times, state legislatures maintained a level of support that allowed for lower tuition costs and financial aid (Tandberg, 2010). In fact, state spending on HE at times was countercyclical, meaning HE appropriations would increase as states' economic conditions worsened (Doyle & Delaney, 2009). However, the pattern of strong state support for public HE has begun to change as funding levels becoming more inconsistent (Doyle & Delaney, 2009).

In HE, more business executives are being recruited to serve as university presidents and there is more dialogue of running HE like a business (Clawson & Page, 2011). Some critics of HE question the idea of HE being treated as a public good, and other state programs have begun to outcompete HE for state funding (Hebel & Blumenstyk, 2014). According to St. John and Parsons (2004), unless HE can "claim a special role or privileged position in society" it will be seen as just one of many special interests "feeding at the public trough" (p. 226).

State legislatures have shifted their emphasis on funding to programs such as pensions, K-12 education, and Medicaid (Fethke & Policano, 2013). According to the National Association of State Budget Officers, HE only accounts for 10% of state budgets whereas K-12 education accounts for 20% and Medicaid accounts for nearly 25% (Kelderman, 2014). Over the past 20 years, state support for public HE has declined as a percentage of total costs (Avery, 2012). Doyle and Delaney (2009) purported state legislators looked at HE as providing money to students who were not considered the states' neediest residents. Thus, state funding for HE has been reduced and student fees and tuition costs began to rise (Fethke & Policano, 2013).

Higher education supporters have argued in order to compete with other special interests, HE needed to mobilize and speak out for its budgetary needs (Potter, 2003). Not only have college administrators been faced with budget funding shortfalls, but students and parents have been forced to shoulder a higher percentage of the burden of attending college (Clausen & Page, 2011). Milton Greenberg (2013), emeritus professor of government at American University, said, "Considering that higher education is one of the most important and most costly enterprises affecting the entire country, it should be a lobbying force for its interests" (p. A72).

For approximately the past 25 years, HE officials have known they must compete for state funding (Burgess & Miller, 2009). Most universities have either paid in-house lobbyists or contracted outside lobbyists who attempt to influence state legislators and impact state appropriation levels (Tandberg, 2010). Paid lobbyists are officially registered with the state in which they operate and many lobbyists are former legislators or staffers who know the legislative process (Princeton Review, 2014). These

professionals are hired because it is believed they can open doors and gain the attention of politicians (Schmidt, Shelley, & Bardes, 2015).

Higher education administrators also attempt to influence government officials (Avery, 2012). In most cases, administrators cannot officially lobby, but attempt to educate state decision makers into adopting policies beneficial to public HE (Potter, 2003). Higher education administrators provide information to state legislators and avoid crossing the legal boundary for lobbying (Avery, 2012). Higher education officials may try to influence legislators by providing them with free meals and inviting them to special events such as college basketball and football games (McDermott & Moskop, 2014). Additionally, college officials emphasize the importance of their institutions to the economy and the relevance of having well-educated workers (Kelderman, 2014).

Higher education lobbying efforts include alumni as well (Avery, 2012). Potter (2003) referred to alumni and students as citizen lobbyists. Citizen lobbyists conduct public relations campaigns, organize rallies, and contact legislators through phone banks or large scale demonstrations to increase awareness of a school's needs (Potter, 2003). Unlike labor unions for teachers and corrections officers, groups representing HE "tend not to be active in partisan politics" (Doyle & Delaney, 2009, p. 60). Nonetheless, there are cases of HE taking steps to become more involved in the electoral process (Richardson, 2009). In Nevada, HE has a political action committee (PAC) that provides funding for candidates who are seen as pro-higher education (Richardson, 2009). This PAC represents the interests of Nevada's HE community (Richardson, 2009).

There are several forces present that can be seen as having a negative impact on HE funding. One of these is political polarization (Dar, 2012). According to Dar (2012),

increased polarization of state legislatures has made bipartisan cooperation less frequent. In a polarized environment, both Democrats and Republicans will look at HE from the redistributive dimension over the public good dimension (Dar, 2012). When the redistributive dimension takes precedent, the expectant outcome of polarization is decreased funding for HE at the state level (Dar, 2012).

Tandberg (2010) researched various political factors that impacted state appropriations for HE. The one political factor analyzed by Tandberg (2010) of most relevance to this study, is the role of interest groups and the lobbying efforts they carry out. Tandberg found "having a larger proportion of state higher education interest groups relative to the total state lobby had a positive impact on state support of higher education" (Tandberg, 2010, p. 434).

Conceptual Framework

Tandberg's Fiscal Policy Framework (FPF) served as the primary conceptual framework for this study (2009). Tandberg (2009) developed his model in an attempt to understand and possibly explain the process of state appropriations for HE. As cited in Tandberg (2010), FPF is related to Institutional Rational Choice discussed by March and Olsen (1984) which supported the perspective of state funding reflecting the most influential forces in state legislatures. March and Olsen (1984) asserted, "meanings and preferences develop through politics…through a combination of education, indoctrination, and experience" (p. 739). Furthermore, Tandberg's (2009) findings were similar to HE policy research conducted by McLendon, Hearn, and Mokher (2009) who discovered a statistically significant relationship between state appropriations and nearly all political factors in their study.

The conceptual framework for this study also encompassed coalition theory devised by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993), sometimes referred to as the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) defined advocacy coalitions as "actors from a wide variety of institutions who share policy core beliefs" (p. 130). Policy core beliefs serve as the glue to hold coalitions together (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Supporters of ACF understand the importance of a particular problem in society, and know the reasons a problem exists (Stachowiak, 2013). Advocates of ACF support specific solutions to a societal problem and society's ability to solve the problem (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Since Tandberg (2010) claimed political factors matter in state appropriations, it would seem to conclude groups working closely together in coalitions could exercise more influence in state capitals.

Political factors do matter, and thus, interest groups need to be studied further (Tandberg, 2010). According to the commonly accepted definition, higher education is indeed classified as an interest group (Tandberg, 2010). The HE lobby contains alumni associations (Johnson, 2011). Increasingly, HE is turning to grassroots organizing for help (Potter, 2003). Colleges and universities are working with their alumni associations as part of their governmental relations operations (Potter, 2003). Alumni associations add numbers to a university's lobbying efforts (Johnson, 2011). Along with registered lobbyists and university administrators, alumni associations are playing a greater role on behalf of the HE lobby (Potter, 2003).

Traditionally, alumni associations have been responsible for charitable giving (Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010). Alumni associations from early times have labored on special projects such as financing new football stadiums for the alma mater (Thelin,

2011). What has been mostly overlooked, however, is the role college and university alumni play in political advocacy (Avery, 2012). The primary focus of this study was the role and tactics used by alumni associations in HE lobbying efforts. Whether HE alumni associations created partnerships or formed coalitions with other organizations in order to advance the interests of HE was examined as well.

Statement of the Problem

State-funded programs, such as Medicaid, and spending for departments of corrections presented threats to HE funding (Clausen & Page, 2011). Clausen and Page (2011) noted more state funding was allocated per prisoner than per public college student. Unless state policy changes were implemented, public HE would be forced to confront more frequent budget shortfalls, resulting in cutbacks in university services, more demands for private fundraising, and/or more frequent increases in tuition and fees (Clausen & Page, 2011). Not only will HE administrators be faced with greater challenges, but students and their families will be forced to pay more out of pocket to attain a college degree (Clausen & Page, 2011). Robert Meister, a political theorist, referred to student debt, which has reached $1.2 trillion, "Add up the lifetime debt service that former students will pay on $1 trillion, over and above the principal they borrow, and you could run a very good public university system for what we are paying capital markets to fund an ever-worsening one" (Appel & Taylor, 2015, p. 35). If tuition costs continued to rise, more students would be unable to afford a college education (Doyle & Delaney, 2009).

In this study, college and university alumni associations' efforts to win state appropriations were examined. Moreover, factors that have had a negative impact on HE

appropriations were reviewed. Political polarization, emphasis on the business model, performance-based funding, and competition from other programs were all considered. Ultimately, how HE alumni associations participated in college and university lobbying efforts were explored in depth.

Purpose of the Study

Weerts et al. (2010) observed the subject of HE alumni involvement was largely understudied. The primary focus of this study was the role played by college and university alumni associations in political advocacy. In this study, college and university alumni associations who partook in political advocacy for HE before state legislatures were looked at closely. Approaches alumni association used in their efforts, the professional relationship they had with the two major political parties, and how their lobbying efforts varied from one region of the country to another, were also examined. Since the role of alumni associations in lobbying had not been the focus of past studies, the results of this study would hopefully fill a void in the literature.

Higher education utilized three sets of players in the realm of governmental relations (Avery, 2012). First, were paid lobbyists or, so called governmental relations specialists (Avery, 2012). Paid lobbyists are professionals who are required to officially register their activities with state government agencies (Princeton Review, 2014). Institutions of higher learning could have lobbyists on staff or contracted out with lobbying firms (Avery, 2012).

The second group represented the interests of HE were senior college and university administrators, which included professionals with such titles as college or university president, chancellor, and vice-chancellor, among others (Avery, 2012). In

most cases, HE professionals could not officially lobby since most states prohibited lobbying by public university officials (Potter, 2003). However, HE administrators did make trips to state capitols to visit members of the state legislature (Potter, 2003). While meeting state legislators, HE administrators inform legislators about the accomplishments of their various institutions and the importance of continued public funding for colleges and universities.

The third group that participated in governmental relations was college and university alumni (Avery, 2012). Alumni associations were the major focus of this study. As reported by Avery (2012), the advocacy role of alumni has been mostly overlooked. Therefore, specific research in this study was conducted on the role of college and university alumni associations in political advocacy.

Research questions. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What political advocacy efforts do alumni association executive directors report using when lobbying state legislatures?

2. How do alumni association lobbying efforts on the behalf of public higher education differ from one region of the country to another?

3. What is the described professional relationship between public college and university alumni associations and Democratic and Republican members of state legislatures?

Definitions of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

Appropriation(s). Legislation authorizing the expenditure of a specific amount of public money for a particular purpose (US Legal.com, 2014).

Business cycle. Alternating periods of economic expansion and contraction (p. 155, The Macro Economy Today 13th edition (Schiller, Hill, & Wall, 2013).

Coalition. Explicit working relationships among groups for the purpose of achieving a public policy goal (Berry, 1977, p. 254).

Conservatism. Political philosophy which supports traditional lifestyles and values, a limited role for the national government in helping people, and a cautious approach to change in society (Schmidt et al., 2015). American conservatives are dominant in the Republican Party (Schmidt, Shelley, & Bardes, 2011).

Division One (D1). Institutions of higher learning with generally the largest student enrollments, managing the biggest budgets for athletics, and offering the best scholarships (NCAA, 2015). There are almost 350 public and private colleges and universities that make up the D1 classification (NCAA, 2015).

Governmental relations (Lobbying). An attempt to influence government action through oral or written communications (National Conference of State Legislatures, [NCSL], 2015).

Higher education. Education beyond the secondary (high school) level; especially education that one acquires at a college or university (Higher Education Act, 1965)

Interest group. An organization made up of members who act together to influence public policy in order to promote their common interests (McClain & Tauber, 2010).

Liberalism. Political philosophy that supports an activist government in supporting civil rights, improving the general welfare, and acceptance of social change

(Schmidt et al., 2015). American liberals are influential in the Democratic Party (Schmidt et al., 2011).

Lobbyist. An individual either paid or unpaid who regularly communicates with members of a legislative body regarding pending legislation (NCSL, 2014).

Neo-liberalism. A political viewpoint advocating the best approach to manage and organize social arrangements is through the free market (Clausen & Page, 2011). Neo-liberals believe government needs to be reduced in size and power since they believe it is a source of problems in society (Clausen & Page, 2011).

Performance based funding. State funding traditionally based on number of full-time students enrolled at the beginning of the semester but many states are moving towards a funding model aligned more with state goals and priorities (NCSL, 2014).

Polarization. A wide ideological division between two competing political parties making compromise difficult (Dar, 2012).

Political action committee (PAC). A committee created by and representing a labor union, special interest group or a corporation that raises campaign donations for candidates (Schmidt et al., 2015).

Political advocacy. Actions by which one contacts government officials or serves on a political action team (Weerts et al., 2010).

Limitations and Assumptions

The following limitations were identified in this study:

Population. This particular study focused on political advocacy of higher education alumni associations. This study was limited to state-funded public colleges and universities because it was these institutions that were most dependent on state

appropriations. The study was further limited to larger colleges and universities referred to as Division One (D1). D1 institutions tend to have the largest enrollments and the biggest budgets (NCAA, 2015). Public D1 institutions possess the greatest resources such as number of students, alumni members, and funding to make lobbying efforts plausible. Over 200 American public colleges and universities are classified as D1 (NCAA, 2015). In addition, the study was limited to respondents who were executive directors of alumni associations or other administrators officially responsible for activities classified as political advocacy. Since not all institutions were expected to participate, the results of the survey could not be concluded for certain to reflect the activities of all colleges and universities in the United States. Nevertheless, the more D1 institutions responded, the more confident the researcher could be of the survey's accuracy.

Instrument. For this particular study, the instrument consisted of an emailed, self-administered survey. The survey was distributed to all the D1 public colleges and universities in the United States. The executive directors of the institutions' alumni associations were asked to participate. Most questions were closed-ended to provide consistency. The closed-ended questions had a rating system such as very effective to very ineffective. There were a limited number of open-ended questions as well to allow the executive directors to expand on the closed-ended questions and thus provide valuable information that may otherwise be missed.

Researcher bias. According to Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012), bias results when a study's design favors particular outcomes. The primary researcher in this study

worked in higher education and may have brought a pro-higher education bias to the research approach.

The following assumptions were accepted:

1. The questions were written in such a way to be deemed objective and thus free of bias.

2. The responses to the survey given by alumni association executive directors were honest and accurate.

Summary

State funding of HE has not kept up with either enrollment growth or with inflation (Hebel & Blumenstyk, 2014). Competing interests in many instances have won out over HE when it comes to state tax dollars (McLendon et al., 2009). Declining state appropriations for HE in the past were primarily cyclical (Doyle & Delaney, 2009). Spending would be reduced during economic downturns only to be revived when the economy improved (Doyle & Delaney, 2009). State funding of HE has become less reliable and more volatile especially since the 1990s (Doyle & Delaney, 2009).

State appropriations for HE have been reduced relative to spending in other areas such as Medicaid (Tandberg, 2010). Many HE professionals have conceded lower state appropriations as a permanent reality (Fethke & Policano, 2013). Nevertheless, HE has begun to implement lobbying efforts used by other special interest groups (Greenberg, 2013). Politics matters and these lobbying efforts have been proven effective (Tandberg, 2010).

This study was comprised of an in-depth examination of HE alumni association lobbying efforts. The conceptual framework of this study was based primarily on the

Fiscal Policy Framework developed by Tandberg in 2009. FPF attempts to explain the state appropriation process for HE (Tandberg, 2010). The conceptual framework also included coalition theory developed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith in 1993. According to coalition theory, policy core beliefs are the glue that holds coalitions together (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993).

College affordability and public funding are major issues. The cost of HE has been shifting away from state governments and more to students and their families (Hebel & Blumenstyk, 2014). Furthermore, about 50% of state governments in the United States are more polarized than the U.S. Congress (Shor, 2014). According to Dar (2012), polarization in state governments leads to reduced funding for public HE.

The intention of this study was to examine the political advocacy role of alumni associations. Political advocacy is defined as techniques used to contact government officials or serving on a team committed to political action (Weerts et al., 2010). This study incorporated an online survey of alumni association executive directors to acquire data on their organizations' lobbying techniques. Additionally, executive directors were asked whether such techniques included collaboration with other organizations in coalition efforts. The survey was utilized in an attempt to answer research questions such as what lobbying techniques alumni associations utilized, how such techniques varied from one part of the country to another, and what professional working relationship alumni association executive directors described having with members of the Democratic and Republican parties in state legislatures.

Chapter Two to follow will provide a review of the literature. The chapter contains a history of interest groups and lobbying in the United States. An understanding

of American HE funding through the years will be furnished. Furthermore, an explanation is presented as to why HE lobbying efforts are being implemented more often and more vigorously.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

The focus of this literature review will be HE lobbying and is divided into three sections. The history of interest groups and lobbying in the United States will be examined in the first section. A discussion of trends in American public HE funding and factors impacting such funding will be presented in the second section. The third portion of the literature review will include a close look at public HE lobbying efforts, the role played by alumni associations, and scholarly thoughts and recommendations on future funding of public HE.

History of Interest Groups and Lobbying in the United States

Sharing fundamental beliefs drives people together to form interest groups in an attempt to influence policy (Turner, Stephenson, Bresler, Freidrich, & Karlesky, 2013). As cited in Farnsworth (2010), Tocqueville was credited as saying part of the great American tradition was to know how to get together to make things happen. Interest groups and lobbying are long established traditions in the United States (Turner et al., 2013). Although such terms as lobbying do not appear in original U.S. government documents, they are implied by James Madison in his writings in Federalist Paper No. 10 (Schmidt, Shelly, & Bardes, 2015). Madison defined the term faction as:

> …a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or the permanent and aggregate interests of the community. (Schmidt et al., 2015, pp. 363-364)

In addition to Federalist Paper No. 10 (Ginsberg, Lowi, Weir, & Tolbert, 2013), the U.S. Bill of Rights refers to people coming together to promote their

particular interests to government officials (Ginsberg et al., 2013). In Amendment I of the United States Constitution, Congress is not allowed to prevent the people from petitioning the government "for a redress of grievances" (Ginsberg et al., 2013, p. A14).

The purpose of interest groups is to attempt to gain access to government officials and ultimately influence government policy (Schmidt et al., 2013). Interest groups employ specialists called lobbyists who are often former legislators or members of legislative staffs (Jacobson, 2003). Legislative specialists, who have experience in governmental relations, are sought out for employment because of their government connections (Turner et al., 2013). Lobbyists are considered experts in their field and their advice is valued by many policymakers (Schmidt et al., 2013).

Lobbying is a direct technique of interest group strategy (Schmidt et al., 2015). According to McClain and Tauber (2010), an interest group is a private organization made up of members who come together to influence public policy with the intention to promote their own common interests. In 1835, the support of interest groups and lobbying were noted by French observer Tocqueville (Sidlow & Henschen, 2013). As cited in Sidlow and Henschen (2013), Tocqueville said, "In no country of the world has the principle of association been more successfully used or applied to a greater multitude of objectives than in America" (p. 121). The Encyclopedia of Associations in 2013 listed over 23,000 different national groups and over 100,000 state and local organizations active in lobbying efforts (Turner et al., 2013).

The term lobbying in U.S. history can be traced back to a time when private citizens would petition legislators by standing in the lobbies of legislative chambers and attempt to make their cases to legislators as they passed by (Sidlow & Henschen,

2013). Lobbyists received their less than stellar reputation in the second half of the nineteenth century when industrial and railroad representatives publicly bribed state legislators to pass legislation beneficial to their particular interests (Schmidt et al., 2013). The majority of contemporary lobbyists are considered professionals (Schmidt et al., 2015).

Lobbyists act in a variety of ways. Lobbyists may meet privately with government officials to explain concerns of the lobbyists' clients and furnish needed information officials could not acquire simply on their own (Schmidt et al., 2015). Lobbyists testify before committees in favor and opposition to pending legislation and help bureaucrats and legislators in writing and preparing regulations and bills (Schmidt et al., 2015). Often lobbyists furnish advice on the specific details of legislation (Schmidt et al., 2015).

Lobbyists monitor regulations and rules implemented by government and meet with public officials or mobilize public opinion if their interests are threatened (Turner et al., 2013). Lobbyists invite legislators to social occasions, such as parties and other events, including conferences in distant places believing such tactics bring success (Schmidt et al., 2015). Representatives of interest groups, also referred to as lobbyists, have developed such a close working relationship with legislators and government bureaucrats they are known as one of the three sides of the iron triangle of U.S. politics (Turner et al., 2013).

Sometimes, interest groups come together and work as coalitions (Phinney, 2010). Coalitions are classified as "Explicit working relationships among groups for the purpose of achieving a public policy goal" (Berry, 1977, p. 254). Since HE may form

coalitions in order to influence legislative policy, coalition theory serves as part of

this study's conceptual framework. Developed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993), the

premise of coalition theory is coalitions are tied together by agreement over fundamental

policy beliefs (Stachowiak, 2013). Coalition theory or Advocacy Coalition Framework

(ACF), can be utilized if coalitions recognize and appeal to diverse groups with similar

fundamental policy beliefs (Stachowiak, 2013). Advocates of ACF believe policy change

happens through coordinated activity among individuals and organizations outside of

government (Stachowiak, 2013).

Trends in Public Higher Education Funding

In the early twentieth century, American universities were small and relatively

underdeveloped (Schuh, Jones, Harper, & Associates, 2011). In the Midwest and West,

state legislators began to support taxation for great universities "as a symbol of state

pride" (Schuh et al., 2011, p. 11). California progressives believed the way to build a

society of informed and capable citizens and state leaders was through an affordable and

sound state university charging no tuition (Thelin, 2011). The California approach

to HE emphasized character and public service (Thelin, 2011). An excellent example of

serving the public in the United States has been through military service.

During World War II, the U.S. Congress intended to help returning servicemen

transition successfully back into the civilian workforce with the passage of the

Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly referred to as the GI Bill of

Rights (U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, 2013). Thousands of returning servicemen were

now financially able to attend institutions of higher learning, and as a result, there grew a

need for increased access and capacity in HE (Farnsworth, 2010). Moreover, the GI

Bill assisted in creating the modern American middle class (The City University of New York, 2015).

College enrollments have increased substantially from 1.5 million students in 1940 to nearly 20 million students in 2013 (Lapovsky, 2013). Corresponding with these enrollment increases, the number of institutions serving college students has grown from about 1,000 institutions in 1940 to more than 4,400 regionally accredited colleges and universities, in addition to more than 10,000 other institutions of postsecondary education, primarily referred to as vocational schools (Lapovsky, 2013.

In the mid-twentieth century, public HE in states studied received strong and consistent support from state governments (Doyle & Delaney, 2009). Higher education usually received increased funding in good economic times and in some cases when the states were going through difficult times (Doyle & Delaney, 2009). State appropriations for HE more recently have not returned to the strong levels of support as seen in earlier decades (Doyle & Delaney, 2009). McLendon et al. (2009) disclosed, "At some research-oriented flagship institutions, state revenues have declined to as little as one-third or even one-tenth of total institutional revenues" (p. 686). Even though there has been an increase in total state appropriations for HE operating expenses, overall state investment in HE has declined considerably relative to modifications in HE enrollment, wealth of states, and growth of institutional budgets (McLendon et al., 2009).

State budget analyst Harold Hovey (1999) called public HE the "balance wheel in state finance" p.19). In hard economic times, state legislators would target HE for greater budget cuts than other state services (Doyle & Delaney, 2009). Hovey (1999) noted HE was singled out because colleges could collect their own

revenues through tuition. Moreover, most students came not from poor families but from

upper and middle-class families not considered the states' neediest citizens (Doyle &

Delaney, 2009).   As cited by Tandberg (2010), earlier research conducted

by Layzell and Lyddon and Rizzo indicated state appropriations for HE were based on

such factors as the age of the state's population and the economic condition of a state. If

a state had a large number of younger residents, state officials would consider passing

appropriation levels matching demographic demands (Tandberg, 2010).

     Economics was also considered a factor in that HE funding levels would reflect

the ups and downs of the business cycle (Doyle & Delaney, 2009). The business cycle is

comprised of several stages in which economic activity fluctuates (Schiller et

al., 2012). Fluctuations in the business cycle meant HE received more money during

economic expansions and less money in times of recession (Doyle & Delaney, 2009).

     However, according to Tandberg (2010), politics appeared to play a role in

determining the share of state expenditures devoted to HE. Tandberg (2010) contradicted

the findings of Layzell and Lyddon. In his research, Tandberg (2010) found numerous

political factors played a statistically significant role in the level of state appropriations

made available to public HE. The political factor of most relevance to this study was the

role played by interest groups in state appropriations. Tandberg's analysis demonstrated

having a larger proportion of state HE interest groups relative to the total state lobby had

a positive impact on state support of HE (Tandberg, 2009).

     As stated in Tandberg (2010), the presence of many active non HE interest groups

in a state makes it more difficult for HE to be heard thus limiting its

impact. Tandberg's (2010) Fiscal Policy Framework follows the concept of institutional

rational choice promoted by March and Olsen in 1984. March and Olsen (1984) stated, "Political institutions affect the distribution of resources which in turn affects the power of political actors, and thereby affects political institutions" (p. 739).

McKeown-Moak (2013) found due to the most recent economic recession rather than additional funding to maintain quality and educate more students, HE faced reduced funding. Kelderman (2014) detailed how lobbyists in HE advocated modest budget proposals, citing efforts that limit funding reductions rather than promoting actual spending increases. According to an interview conducted by Kelderman (2014), Daniel C. Holsenbeck, vice president for university relations at the University of Central Florida, described the funding situation by saying, "the new budget is a no-reduction budget" (p. A6). It would appear from the findings of McKeown-Moak (2012) and Kelderman (2014) lobbying successes are limited by the reality of a state's fiscal condition.

Program competition. Much of the decline in support for public HE is due to the substantial growth in spending on programs such as Medicaid (Tandberg, 2010). In relation to the National Association of State Budget Officers, one in ten state dollars went to Medicaid in 1987, but in 2012, close to one in four dollars reached this program (Hebel & Blumenstyk, 2014). In addition, pressures continue to mount on legislators to fund other programs like primary and secondary education, healthcare, and welfare (Doyle & Delaney, 2009). Public HE continues to work in a "fiscally-challenged environment" (American Association of State Colleges & Universities [AASCU], 2013, p.3). Although state revenues are expected to increase from the latest recession, state budgets will continue to be reflective of structural

imbalances caused by under-funded state pension programs, growing Medicaid costs, narrowing tax bases, and other funding responsibilities (AASCU, 2013). Furthermore, there are factors such as binding citizen initiatives placing limits on tax levels and court decisions requiring specific K-12 funding stipulations (Doyle & Delaney, 2009). McLendon et al. (2009) noted the analysis of Hovey (1999) had shown that the aforementioned competing interests tend to win scarce funding at the expense of HE.

McLendon et al. (2009) studied state spending from 1984 to 2004. The analysis garnered strong empirical evidence between state appropriations and political variables, including interest groups (McLendon et al., 2009). The analysis conducted yielded a significantly positive relationship between legislative professionalism and appropriations as state legislators acquire greater analytical capacity, they invest more in HE (McLendon et al., 2009). Moreover, Republican legislative strength and Republican gubernatorial control tended to suppress state spending on HE (McLendon et al., 2009). State appropriations over the past two decades have declined the most where Republicans have exerted greatest strength in the legislature and where they have held the governor's office (McLendon et al., 2009).

In addition, "for every additional lobbyist registered for higher education in a given state, appropriations for higher education rise by about $0.05 per $1,000 of personal income" (McLendon et al., 2009, p.701). The appropriations findings of McLendon et al. (2009) aligns with Tandberg's (2010) conclusions which also found the size and density of a state's higher education interest group community influences state financial support for HE. Nonetheless, McLendon et al. (2009) also

found state economic and demographic conditions played a role in shaping public investment in higher education.

      Neo-liberalism. There is a growing trend toward a concept called neo-liberalism, which calls for privatization or marketization of HE. Neo-liberals advocate running HE like a business (Clausen & Page, 2011). The basic principles of neo-liberalism favor market approaches to public policy issues, meaning privatization of public services (Martinez & Garcia, 2014). In addition, neo-liberals support eliminating the concept of the public good in favor of personal responsibility (Martinez & Garcia, 2014). State policymakers who advocate neo-liberalism favor moving away from the public funding model towards a private model where lower state funding will translate into higher tuition costs for students (Tandberg, 2010). According to Hebel and Blumenstyk (2014), some politicians and taxpayers purport a college degree should be regarded as a private good intended mostly to provide monetary and societal benefits to an individual. The opponents of tax-funded HE see shrinking HE budgets as a sign of progress and not a sign of crisis (Hebel & Blumenstyk, 2014).

      Privatization of HE funding must be put in context. According to Clausen and Page (2011), "In 1980-81 states put 3.5 times as much money into public higher education as did parents and students; by 2006-07 states were only putting in 1.8 times as much as students and parents" (p. 28). Neo-liberalism can be seen in the report of State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) who found in real dollar amounts, state support for public HE had declined from $8,497 per student to $5,906 per student from 1987 to 2012 (Weiss, 2014). Since 1990, tuition costs at public four-year institutions have increased 112% (Weiss, 2014).

Hebel and Blumenstyk (2014) discovered no evidence of excessive spending by HE as claimed by HE critics. The price tag for HE of $11,000 per student in 2012, was nearly identical when adjusted for inflation as was spent a generation ago (Hebel & Blumenstyk, 2014). According to SHEEO, public funding of HE has decreased rapidly (Fethke & Policano, 2013). Nevertheless, Americans were losing their will to pay for the costs of public HE (Hebel & Blumenstyk, 2014).

Americans still believe a college education is needed for attaining a good job but oppose increasing taxes or spending more state money to educate students in public college and universities (Hebel & Blumenstyk, 2014). For more than a decade, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education and Public Agenda has been polling the American people regarding their attitudes toward HE (Zumeta, 2011). The polling results have shown a strong trend in support towards the assertion that a college education is required for an individual to be successful (Zumeta, 2011). Conversely, the same poll results had ominous news for HE administrators as respondents noted college administrators do not actually care about their students and most respondents said administrators could reduce spending and still uphold educational quality (Zumeta, 2011). Moreover, a 2014 Gallup poll found 89% of respondents saying American colleges and universities need to change to better meet the needs of their students (Calderon & Sorenson, 2014).

Today, almost 60% of the 20 million American college students borrow money each year to help cover expenses (Weiss, 2014). There has been an increase in loan default rates and only about half of the students who start college complete their studies

within six years (Weiss, 2014). Presently, tuition amounts to nearly half of college and university educational revenues, compared to 23% two decades ago (Weiss, 2014).

Tuition continues to rise as does student loan debt and Americans have been asking why college attendance costs as much as it does (Fethke & Policano, 2013). Fethke and Policano (2013) posited the rising costs are a result of declining support from taxpayers for public HE and the failure of HE administrators to accept the real world of contemporary school financing. Moreover, for years, HE was protected by a lack of accountability, excessive program scopes, and a resistance to change in higher education (Fethke & Policano, 2013).

Fethke and Policano (2013) referred to public universities as "public no more universities" (p. 533) whose administrators would have to make difficult choices including moving toward more financial independence and reducing their scopes. The shift to private funding suggests public universities with viable options should adopt some elements of the modern corporation (Fethke & Policano, 2013). The corporate model stresses such ideas as sustainability over the long term, a clear unit of value, and the ability to adjust quickly, among other concepts (Fethke & Policano, (2013).

Due to rising student debt and the affordability of attending college, state legislators are preventing tuition increases at public HE institutions in exchange for modest appropriation increases (Kelderman 2014). Lawmakers are also looking at the manner in which public college and universities are spending their money, an area in which state legislators have little experience (Kelderman, 2014). McLendon and Hearn (2013) believed rapid tuition increases at public universities have raised doubts from state

legislators concerning the ability of administrators in HE in regard to market sensitivity and financial efficiency (McLendon & Hearn, 2013).

Performance-driven policy. McLendon and Hearn (2013) declared there has been a call by state officials for new accountability in HE funding and have divided these efforts into three different categories. The first is performance funding linking state appropriations directly to a performance formula of each campus on several measures (McLendon & Hearn, 2013). The second approach is a performance-budget permitting state officials to consider campus performance measures in determining allocations (McLendon & Hearn, 2013). Performance reporting, the third approach, simply requires an institution or system to provide performance information to the public and policy makers without formerly linking the information to future allocations (McLendon & Hearn, 2013). Since the 1970s, the appeal of these three funding approaches has risen dramatically and virtually every state now has some kind of performance-driven policy in place (McLendon & Hearn, 2013). Specific guidelines are being legislated which tie funding to student performance and colleges and universities are now expected to meet specific academic performance targets set by state legislatures (NCSL, 2014).

Dougherty et al. (2011) reported performance funding systems were not static. Tennessee and Florida, for example, have shown considerable change in performance indicators and levels of funding (Dougherty et al., 2011). The changes have been the result of both external and internal initiatives. Higher education professionals were responsible for internal changes while external changes were the result of elected state officials (Dougherty et al., 2011). According to Dougherty et al. (2011), if more

dramatic changes were to occur to performance funding systems, changes would probably come from external pressures. Dougherty et al. (2011) further noted:

> The key to securing the support of state universities is addressing their fears that performance funding provides an excuse to keep down regular state funding for HE, undercuts autonomy of HE and does not fully recognize their different missions. (p. 160)

There has been a renewed interest in performance-based budgeting as a way to better fund state programs and it is now a trend in state appropriations (Liu, 2011). The performance-based budgeting approach differs from traditional budgeting methods in that "it focuses on spending results rather than the money spent" (Liu, 2011, p. 1522). Liu (2011) predicted there would be more performance based models created throughout the United States but with continued instability.

According to Miao (2012) "performance-based funding (PBF) is a system, based on allocating a portion of a state's HE budget according to specific performance measures such as course completion, credit attainment, and degree completion instead of allocating funding based entirely on enrollment" (p. 1). Miao (2012) found 26 states had experimented between 1979 and 2007 with measures attempting to incorporate performance as a determinant of HE funding. During this same period, 14 states eventually discontinued their performance programs and the states, which continued to have such programs varied widely in their structures (Miao, 2012).

State dissatisfaction was the result of serious design flaws in performance-based funding models (Miao, 2012). Many of these programs were seen as being inflexible and having arbitrary requirements that focused too much on degree completion and did not

reward intermediate progress (Miao, 2012). Many performance-based funding models also failed because no funding was provided to encourage serious incentives for colleges and universities to improve (Miao, 2012). The results of research indicate during the implementation phase of funding based on performance, states must take care to reduce the level of fiscal uncertainty for HE institutions and include a year of learning to help administrators understand the impact of the new funding formula (Miao, 2012).

McKeown-Moak (2013) stated the new state performance funding models are very different from just a decade ago because contemporary models reflect the needs of the states and their students over the needs of public HE. Academic results are now the emphasis of state funding formulas and have promoted the importance of course completion, graduation and cost-effectiveness (McKeown-Moak, 2013). One of the most stable and longest operated performance-based funding programs in the United States exists in Pennsylvania (Hillman, Tandberg, & Goss, 2014). Implementing performance-based funding into Pennsylvania's higher education system "did not yield systematic improvements in college completions for the state" (Hillman et al., 2014, p. 850).

Since more legislators and their staffs possess college degrees than in the past, they are less inclined to defer to HE leaders when it comes to the issue of college costs (Zumeta, 2011). Zumeta (2011) described the situation between HE professionals and politicians and a group of other stakeholders as a stalemate. Higher education professionals would like to regain their historic support from government while their opponents want to see affordable education and reasonable timetables to complete a degree (Zumeta, 2011).

Political polarization. Another factor having a detrimental effect on HE

appropriations is political polarization (Dar, 2012). Most American state legislatures

have become polarized over the past 20 years between conservatives and liberals

and Democrats and Republicans (Shor, 2014). Political polarization is defined as a wide

difference in political party philosophies that makes compromise difficult (Dar,

2012). Shor (2014) concluded Republicans are becoming more extreme at a quicker pace

than Democrats. Republican extremism is occurring in an increasing number of state

legislatures as well (Shor, 2014). Republican governors and Republican-controlled

legislatures are affiliated with less spending for HE (McLendon et al., 2009).

Dar's (2012) results confirmed, "as politicians become polarized, higher

education becomes a loser in competition for state funds" (p. 786). Dar (2012) further

noted political polarization in state legislatures leads to the rise of powerful single issue

groups, which leads to one-dimensional thinking resulting in decreased spending on

HE. A case in point is the state of California where Dar (2012) found a high rate of

polarization in the legislature had led to reduced spending on HE. The reduction in HE

funding is explained by the fact other areas of spending such as Medicaid and K-12

education are seen as greater state funding priorities (Dar, 2012).

In 2013, divided state governments were at the lowest level since 1952 according

to AASCU. Because of polarization and partisan agendas, legislation cannot be

extensively debated and the lack of compromise that results from the existence of divided

government will be evident (AASCU, 2013). Rapoport (2013) contended

Republicans are more successful in polarized legislatures and in Midwest states passed

legislation that was extreme even though Midwest states are considered middle of the

road politically. In research conducted over a 20-year period, McLendon et al. (2009), found an average increase of 1% in Republican state legislative strength translated into a $0.05 decline in HE appropriations per $1,000 of personal income. Dar and Lee (2014) came to the conclusion HE advocates must become more understanding of the current political environment in the United States to lobby effectively.

Higher education no longer benefits from frequent public funding increases (Doyle & Delaney, 2009). Fethke and Policano (2013) have come to the conclusion that trends toward reductions in state appropriations for HE are permanent and college administrators should find alternative ways to compensate for lost state funding. Since the late 1980s, universities have focused more on philanthropic fundraising to help overcome reductions in government funding and to maintain institutional rankings and reputations (Daly, 2013). Throughout the world, institutions of higher learning are looking to utilize philanthropic fundraising to diversify their institutes' incomes (Daly, 2013). With declining taxpayer support, some weaker public universities will fail in their current form, almost regardless to their reorganizing efforts (Fethke & Policano, 2013). Fethke and Policano (2013) believed lobbying on the behalf of HE is not likely to restore cuts made by state legislatures. Higher education lobbying efforts will be looked at more closely in the following section.

Public Higher Education Lobbying

As cited in Tandberg (2010), public HE can clearly be classified as an interest group since it lobbies for and receives substantial funding through the state government. Tandberg (2010) admitted there is a sparsity of literature on HE when it relates to any attempt to comprehend interest groups' roles in policy formulation

for HE at the state level. Most previous studies of state support for HE have ignored

interest groups (Tandberg, 2009). Public college and university officials take an active

role engaging state legislators and state appropriations are still an important source of

public HE funding (Avery, 2012). The grasp of legislative lobbying efforts on the behalf

of HE are outdated and more research should be conducted on contemporary HE

lobbying (Avery 2012).

Institutions of higher learning have utilized lobbying over the years to varying

degrees. To some academics such as Lewis B. Mayhew of Stanford University, the use

of lobbying could be very effective for protecting the interests of colleges and

universities (Greenberg, 2013). An outspoken professor, Mayhew implied more than 40

years ago HE institutions are far from fragile and claimed the university was quite

capable of standing up to political threats (Greenberg, 2013). According to St. John and

Parsons (2004), "If lobbyists want to increase the power of their arguments for public

support of higher education, they need to increase the scope of their social networks"

(p. 227). This statement about lobbyists wanting to increase their power would seem to

support not only the need for HE to increase its lobbying efforts through alumni activity

but also by reaching out to other organizations willing to form coalitions which may

benefit the interests of HE.

Governmental relations are being employed more and more vigorously by

colleges and universities (Potter, 2003). Tandberg (2010) found the percentage of

registered lobbyists representing colleges and universities had a statistically significant,

positive relationship to state funding levels. Tandberg (2010) suggested HE institutions

that have avoided engaging directly in the political process might reconsider their

decision and leaders of such institutions that have limited their lobbying efforts may want to intensify their actions. Former provost Milton Greenberg of American University said, "It is beyond time for higher education to rid itself of any notion that its noble purposes speak for themselves" (Greenberg, 2013, p. A72).

McLendon, et al. (2009) examined the role political factors played in state appropriations for HE and determined political influences shape public choice. Among the factors McLendon et al. (2009) found to be most significant were partisanship, legislative professionalism, gubernatorial power, and interest groups. McLendon, et al. (2009) also indicated HE institutions benefit when state legislators are term limited. A potential explanation for this finding is the less experienced legislators are more likely to be captured by interest groups such as groups lobbying on the behalf of HE (McLendon, et al. 2009). These findings regarding term limits appears to reinforce the conclusions made by Tandberg (2010) that lobbying efforts by HE do make a difference.

Higher education lobbyists. Three groups of players are utilized by HE to help persuade state legislators to provide adequate funding levels for public colleges and universities (Potter, 2003). First are governmental relations professionals (GRPs) or HE lobbyists. Governmental relations professionals are registered with the state as official lobbyists and their backgrounds are varied. Governmental relations professionals come from the ranks of lawyers, former government officials such as legislators or legislative staff members or representatives of other special interest groups (Schmidt et al. 2015). Many GRPs have graduate degrees in political science or public policy, but GRPs have noted their government experiences were much more significant than the use of their advanced degrees in performing their jobs well (Jacobson, 2003). According to

Burgess and Miller (2009), HE officials needed GRPs to effectively explain the activities and requirements of HE institutions to state legislators.

Higher education administrators. The second group participating in governmental relations is classified as HE professionals. HE individuals serve as administrators at colleges and universities and have such titles as college and university presidents, chancellors, vice chancellors, or other high ranking titles (Avery, 2012). When it comes to university presidents, most do not come from the ranks of governmental relations (Jacobson 2003). Although HE professionals are usually prohibited by law from lobbying government officials, they spend much of their time in state capitols "educating" legislators of their institutions' economic impact (Tandberg, 2010).

Alumni and alumni associations. The third groups, which may partake in governmental relations activities, are HE alumni. The term applied to the alumni's particular role is referred to as political advocacy. Political advocacy behaviors include contacting legislators, the governor's office, local politicians, and serving on political action teams (Weerts et al., 2010). Research conducted by Weerts and Ronca (2008) proposed alumni, with increased role identity, may be more likely to support their institutions through volunteering, attending events, making financial contributions, and joining the alumni association.

Determinants of alumni engagement. Alumni have played a major part in college and university events such as football games, particularly those games surrounding homecoming celebrations (Thelin, 2011). Through the years, as alumni associations have grown in number, colleges and universities have begun to sponsor extravagant reunion

parades surrounding commencement (Thelin, 2011). Alumni activities are relaxed assemblies bringing students and alumni together and permitting old grads to act like old boys supporting "the observation that the collegiate life fostered perpetual adolescence" (Thelin, 2011, p. 161).

Making financial donations, volunteering for events, and recruiting new students are just a few of the expectations that have been historically developed by colleges for their graduates to be considered as a supporter of their alma mater (McDearmon, 2013). Over the last decade, research on HE alumni has increased, due mostly to higher education's desire to increase the financial support that can be procured from former students (McDearmon, 2013). Alumni relations programs have become a top priority for institutions across the country (Weerts et al., 2010). Despite the increased saliency of swaying alumni support for HE, the topic of HE alumni involvement continues to go mostly understudied (Weerts et al., 2010)

Weerts et al. (2010) applied three theories to help understand why alumni choose whether or not to become active members in their alumni associations. These theories included social exchange, expectancy, and investment (Weerts et al., 2010). Social exchange theory in HE indicates the costs of serving in roles of volunteer or political advocate are balanced against benefits given to the alumni from the institution currently or in the past (Weerts et al., 2010). Based on this decision, the alumni will decide whether to "give back" to the college or university (Weerts et al., 2010, p.352).

Expectancy theory proposes alumni create expectations regarding happenings in the future and attune their participation around their particular expectations (Weerts et al., 2010). In line with expectancy theory, alumni choose their support based on the type of

support associated most with their individual abilities (Weerts et al., 2010). If an alumnus believes his or her abilities and time are best served by helping to pass a law, he or she will partake in political advocacy (Weerts et al., 2010). According to investment theory, the incentive and manner of volunteerism by alumni is dependent on the satisfaction level in which measure of costs and rewards in the association and the degree the alum has so far invested in the association (Weerts et al., 2010). The premise of investment theory is that alumni choose a certain level of support with his or her institution based on the quality and extent of his or her past with that particular level of support (Weerts et al., 2010).

Researchers have examined student engagement variables to better understand who will contribute in some way to the alma mater (Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Student engagement variables include such factors as students being exposed to diverse viewpoints and interaction with faculty (Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Moreover, providing a high quality educational experience is critical to garnering future support from future alumni (Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Thus, college and universities focus on teaching and learning is essentially "growing their own volunteers" by exposing them to high quality academic experiences (Weerts & Ronca, 2008, p. 289).

Newman and Petrosko (2011) revealed only two statistically significant positive demographic survey variables associated with alumni association membership; awareness of other association members, and the number of semesters spent on campus as a student. In addition, Newman and Petrosko (2011) found the most significant attitudinal variable associated with alumni association membership was perceptions of alumni associations. The perception variable might encourage alumni professionals to work to increase

goodwill and perceptions as this may lead to greater membership support from graduates (Newman & Petrosko, 2011). It is important according to Newman and Petrosko (2011), that alumni association professionals be aware of psychological factors.

Newman and Petrosko (2011) interpreted alumni perceptions and experiences with alumni associations as being positively linked to membership and these factors could be controlled in some ways through association events, programs and communications. Finally, on the frequency of involvement scale, Newman and Petrosko (2011) reported those graduates who were involved with programs and events held by the university and alumni association were more inclined to be alumni association members. This involvement factor may motivate alumni professionals to increase the number of or quality of alumni events and programs to increase the likelihood of membership (Newman & Petrosko, 2011).

As cited in Schuh et al. (2011), "The impact of college is dependent upon the characteristics of students before they step foot on campus" (p. 503). The college environment includes such factors as college mission and size or overall campus culture while outputs apply to behaviors or values upon completing college (Weerts, 2011). According to Weerts (2011), the Input-Environment-Output (I-E-O) model developed by Astin is appropriate when applied to alumni giving. Analysis would indicate an alumni's giving behavior is probably the result of long-term formation of civic and philanthropic abilities, behaviors, and stances acquired before and after college (Weerts, 2011).

Charitable giving. Traditionally, alumni have supported their alma mater through charitable giving (Weerts et al., 2010). According to Weerts et al. (2010), colleges and universities in the United States raised an estimated $29 billion in private gifts in 2007 alone. About 28% of this money came from alumni (Weerts et al., 2010). Charitable contributions to colleges and universities in the United States peaked in 2008 with over $31 billion (McDearmon, 2013). Alumni who donate to their alma mater are generally service oriented and civically engaged (Weerts & Ronca, 2008).

Alumni donors were also found to volunteer at other non-profit organizations (Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Investigations indicate alumni giving are more likely among older and wealthier alumni (Newman & Petrosko, 2011). In the present environment of scarce resources, it is not surprising HE professionals are seeking creative ways to increase charitable giving among their alumni (Weerts, 2011). Nonetheless, it can be said, no "magic bullet" exists when it comes to understanding what makes alumni give (Weerts, 2011, p.4).

Recruitment of alumni. It only makes sense for HE officials to look to their graduates for increased levels of support as public support decreases (McDearmon, 2012). To make this happen, advancement professionals must find ways to inform alumni of how important they are to their alma mater, regardless of the length of time the alumni have been away from campus (McDearmon, 2012). Awareness of their significance and helping alumni use this role in their own personal identity development may push American colleges and universities forward into the future (McDearmon, 2012). By utilizing the predictors of alumni association membership, membership professionals can target solicitations to the most likely prospects (Newman & Petrosko, 2011).

One way to find out more about alumni is through phone interviews (Stripling, 2010). Phone interviews are being conducted with alumni to find out how their perceptions in regard to their alma mater and to find ways to make them contribute both financially and physically (Stripling, 2010). Remaining in contact with alumni is challenging when so many alumni would prefer to contact each other through social media than actually attending an on-campus reunion (Stripling, 2010). The major problem facing college officials is seeking out alumni and maintaining contact with them "in a cell phone generation" (Stripling, 2010, p. 2).

Gaier (2001) referred to the relationship between post graduate involvement and the level of satisfaction with the college experience resulting from involvement on campus as a student. Gaier (2001) discussed the creation of student alumni associations and how they could lay the groundwork for future alumni support. The student alumni association according to Gaier (2001) was a useful and fruitful way to educate and communicate with students. By utilizing the student alumni association, alumni officials could explain the mission of the alumni association to students before they become alumni (Gaier, 2001). To maximize financial support from alumni, HE requires procedures be put in place creating positive alumni opinions, perceptions, and relationships which can be made possible by employing alumni associations (Gaier, 2001).

Future alumni activities. According to Rae Goldsmith, vice president of advancement resources at the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, young alumni are more inclined to support global causes (Weerts, 2011). University relation officers might consider ways to make volunteer opportunities more global, especially

when those opportunities involve out of state alumni (Weerts & Ronca, 2008). If future

generations of alumni are attracted to global causes, colleges and universities may have to

remake themselves for graduates to see the institutions as a way to give to serious societal

concerns (Weerts 2011). Public engagement in HE could provide

advancement professionals with models for creating mutually beneficial relationships that

work for alumni, institutions, and society as a whole (Weerts, 2011). Such a strategy

might effectively bring in alumni, connecting them with greater problems for which HE

may help solve (Weerts, 2011).

     Political advocacy. The role of institutional advocacy dates back to the founding

of alumni associations as HE made enormous progress at the end of the 19th century and

public and land-grant universities secured growing shares of state budgets to fuel

American progress (Johnson, 2011). Alumni associations inspired fervent and grateful

loyalists to promote the interests of their alma maters and the quality of life around them

(Johnson, 2011). Some activities involving alumni were narrowly focused on such

projects as funding or land for a new football stadium; other alumni activists helped to

promote more extensive institutional interests (Johnson, 2011).

     For years, colleges have urged alumni to publically advocate for their alma maters

through phone calls and emails (Potter, 2003). Weerts et al. (2010) noted the emphasis

colleges and universities have placed on alumni involvement in charitable giving. The

emphasis on charitable giving has basically blinded practitioners and scholars to

comprehend the significant non-monetary roles college alumni play (Weerts et al.,

2010). Alumni relations professionals have traditionally placed alumni into only two

supportive roles: donors and/or volunteers (Weerts et al., 2010). Concluding, Weerts et

al. (2010) found there to be a lack of literature to substantially frame the ways alumni support their alma maters beyond giving. Weerts et al. (2010) suggested the creation of a third category of supportive alumni called political advocate.

Weerts et al. (2010) found some alumni already acting as political advocates but on their own initiative. Weerts et al. (2010) recommended leaders of alumni associations contact these self-appointed advocates to make sure their messages were in line with the objectives of the university. Communications strategies involving alumni were extremely important and needed to be cautiously designed to express priorities and values of colleges and universities at the state level (Weerts et al., 2010). Lobbying efforts are carried out by colleges through alumni associations using private money so they can lobby legally (Potter, 2003). Lobbying efforts do not work unless there is a close collaboration among alumni associations, university presidents and HE's governmental relations staff (Potter, 2003).

One of the leading alumni groups in the United States is the University of Texas (UT) Austin Alumni Association (Stuart, 2009). The purpose of the UT Alumni Association "is to be an independent voice that champions the University, and to organize alumni and friends into a formidable network to change the world" (Texas Exes, 2015). According to Leticia Acosta, the UT Austin Alumni Association's director of public policy, "There's always this perception that alumni associations are boosters for athletics…That's not what we are about here" (Stuart, 2009, para.24). Not only is the UT Alumni Association responsible for alumni career services and records, but also legislative advocacy (Stuart, 2009).

The UT Austin Alumni Association is one of a few alumni associations with a well-organized legislative network (Stuart, 2009). These collegiate legislative networks can be mobilized quickly to encourage state legislators to act on particular issues of significance to the alumni association (Stuart, 2009). In most cases, alumni association enterprises are separate of the university, even when the association is housed on campus and collaborate with the university's development office (Stuart, 2009).

Since the majority of alumni associations are burdened with problems, not all observers believe alumni associations will have much relevance in the future (Stuart, 2009). Membership in alumni associations has never been a large percentage of the total number of alumni and membership has been declining mostly at universities requiring membership fees (Stuart, 2009). Even though alumni associations face many challenges regarding their relevancy, alumni associations are becoming activists after decades of serving their universities as reliable boosters (Stuart, 2009). There will be more activism on the behalf of college and university alumni associations as such organizations rally around causes of importance to their alma maters (Stuart, 2009).

The degree of activity varies greatly from one alumnus to another (Weerts et al., 2010). Many college and university officials are demonstrating a growing appreciation for strong partnerships between the efforts of GRPs and their alumni associations (Johnson, 2011). At the University of Minnesota, Pennsylvania State University, and the University of Tennessee, alumni advocacy has become the priority of multi-year strategic plans engaging alumni from different generations in their universities in various methods (Johnson, 2011). Alumni who play a large role at their alma maters may be called on to be political advocates for the college or university (Weerts et al., 2010).

Alumni association can be an enormous resource if they are correctly organized and funded (Stuart, 2009). There are opportunities for alumni associations but they must go beyond organizing class reunions to remain relevant (Stuart, 2009). Similar to political and fundraising campaigns, alumni advocacy efforts need structure and centralized cooperation, emphasis on appropriate issues, and consistency of message (Johnson, 2011). Advocacy is a very complex operation utilizing advanced communications technologies such as smart phones, an online presence, and an outreach approach, which is very selective to target supportive alumni (Johnson, 2011).

Alumni have become crucial to a college or university's ability to heighten its visibility in every part of a state (Johnson, 2011). Alumni also utilize their contacts in local schools, civic organizations, and the business community to strengthen the economic advantages of HE research and technology transfer to local economies, not to mention the worth of a postsecondary education to career development and workforce quality (Johnson, 2011). In many cases, though, the advantages of generating alumni engagement have yet to be fully explored (Johnson, 2011). The situation in California serves Johnson's point. Despite momentum for the idea of the power of "one" in the 10-institutions University of California system, advocacy efforts are still not centralized (Johnson, 2011). The University of California-Berkeley seems to be the only member of the University of California system with a robust advocacy presence connected to its alumni association (Johnson, 2011).

According to Johnson (2011), the most effective advocates are well-informed, united in purpose, and coordinated in their efforts to attain maximum influence. Although university administrators set policies, it is the alumni association

that has access to the people (Johnson, 2011). Moreover, volunteer lobbyists have an advantage over paid lobbyists in that volunteers can approach legislators in ways prohibited by law to paid professionals (Potter, 2003). As alumni advocacy networks grow, their activities demonstrate how many alumni desire to assist their alma maters by working to shape public opinion in businesses, civic organizations, schools and neighborhoods throughout their states (Johnson, 2011).

Future funding of higher education. Even though HE is not allowed to openly support or fund candidates running for public office, other actors such as alumni and representatives of business interests can (Greenberg, 2013). As noted by Harbour and Wolgemuth (2013):

> We believe that there is a need for a new democracy-based normative vision of a public higher education. Such a vision would prioritize student growth, equity, and access. It could also serve as the foundation for new progressive policies, which would affirm that public colleges and universities are much more than instruments of economic development… (Harbour & Wolgemuth, 2013, p. 252)

Perhaps higher education's political advocacy efforts have not been persuasive enough or too narrow in scope. Tandberg (2009) recognized a link between the number of registered lobbyists and spending on HE by state legislatures. Maybe the link identified by Tandberg (2009) can also be applied to the number of public HE alumni association members taking an active role in political advocacy and the funding provided by state legislatures.

Moreover, adopting a coalition approach advocating the positive attributes of public HE funding and how such funding benefits society overall appears to be the case

presented by Zumeta (2011). The concept of a new social contract would require considerable involvement of many institutions beyond flagship research universities such as HE's K-12 partners (Zumeta, 2011). Clausen and Page (2011) believed there needs to be an updated commitment to the land-grant mission and go so far as to advocate for free HE.

Fethke and Policano (2013) predicted with declining tax dollars appropriated to HE, some public universities will fail in their present form regardless of reorganization attempts. According to Zumeta (2011), the future will be dismal if the country does not develop a way to educate more of its citizens. Like supporters of other government-funded programs who need to justify their public-funding requests, HE has a stronger case to make than advocates of other programs because HE has the power to build wealth and capability (Zumeta, 2011). In similar words, Dar and Lee (2014) emphasized, "Unlike welfare programs, HE can benefit a broader range of socioeconomic groups" (p. 493).

Zumeta (2011) claimed HE leaders have a great story to tell but they have to be diligent and speak out. Successful lobbying efforts may occur if there is a major rethinking of government's role in terms of cost, size, and scope (Hovey, 1999). A possibility is for more people to believe government should do more thus increasing the likelihood of higher taxes and possibly more funding for HE (Hovey, 1999). Clausen and Page (2011) asserted when programs become universal or accessible to all members of society, such programs are considered legitimate and are not likely to be cut.

As of 2013, the overall experience level of state policymakers was at a historic low with more than one-half of officeholders having less than two years of experience

(AASCU, 2013). This limited experience among legislators will require HE leaders to express their funding and policy priorities in a concise, strategic, and effective manner (AASCU, 2013). Additionally, there will be the opportunity to create a new generation of legislative supporters who comprehend the contributions of public HE to states' economic and social well-being (AASCU, 2013). Perhaps higher education's unique role in society and the belief in a greater support role by government will be implemented through the advocacy efforts of HE alumni associations and their like-minded supporters in state legislatures.

Summary

There is a long history of lobbying activities conducted by interest groups in the United States (Turner et al., 2013). At times, interests groups may work together in coalitions to "pursue common policy goals" (Phinney, 2010, p. 38). Since the end of World War II, there has been enormous growth in enrollments at colleges and universities (Lapovsky, 2013). Historically, there had been strong and consistent state government support for public HE, but since the 1990s, support has become much more volatile (Doyle & Delaney, 2009).

Tandberg (2010) found in his studies that political factors played a significant role in funding levels thus contradicting the earlier findings of Layzell and Lyddon who downplayed political factors. McLendon et al. (2009) also found the importance of political factors in their research on HE funding. McLendon et al. (2009) discovered HE loses out to other interest groups in difficult economic times.

Clausen and Page (2011) asserted a paradigm shift has occurred in the United States in favor of neo-liberalism. Neo-liberalism favors free market solutions to public

policy issues including HE (Clausen & Page, 2011). The shift from public good to private responsibility has resulted in fewer state dollar appropriations per student in the period 1987-2012 (Weiss, 2014). During the same time period, performance-based funding had become popular (Liu, 2011). In addition, political polarization has led to fewer dollars for HE (Dar, 2012). Program competition has resulted in declines in HE funding in large part due to Medicaid (Tandberg, 2010). As a result of a difficult funding environment, Kelderman (2014) reported HE officials were willing to accept no cuts to their budgets rather than push for spending increases.

Potter (2003) claimed HE administrators are looking more to their alumni to help in lobbying efforts. Weerts et al. (2010) found alumni active in more than charitable giving alone. Alumni were individually participating as political advocates and Weerts et al. (2010) recommended alumni association leaders inquire about these individual activists for the continuity of message. Avery (2012) revealed the perceptions of state legislators and HE administrators regarding government relations efforts. Of most interest, was the effectiveness of HE as perceived in their efforts to maintain and increase state funding as well as how effectively administrators worked with key legislative leaders to shape HE policy (Avery, 2012). When it came to reporting legislative success to their college governing bodies, Avery (2012) found no uniform system. Legislators confirmed HE's efforts did impact the legislative process and were effective (Avery, 2012). Avery (2012) found there is a positive image of HE in the public's eye and legislators want to be seen as helpful to its mission.

Avery (2012) discovered legislators wanted HE administrators to try more to understand the responsibilities of legislators. Moreover, legislators wanted HE

professionals to stay in contact so legislators knew the actions and concerns of the HE community (Avery, 2012). The desire of state legislators was for HE administrators to speak with one voice (Avery, 2012). Interestingly, state legislators' request of one voice for higher education would seem to imply an approach such as coalition theory promoted by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993).

Avery (2012) identified three players in HE lobbying efforts: professional lobbyists, HE administrators, and alumni. Avery (2012) suggested additional research be conducted on the role of alumni in the legislative process. The role HE alumni associations play in political advocacy was the focus of this research study.

In the next chapter, the research methodology for this study will be applied to the political advocacy role of HE alumni associations. The research design will be presented and the research questions put forward. The questions will include the role played by alumni associations, the tactics utilized, whether coalitions are part of those tactics, and the effectiveness of alumni associations' efforts when advocating before the two major political parties. The questions will conclude with two open-ended questions allowing participants to provide additional information. The population will be discussed along with the research instrument. Moreover, data collection and analysis of data will be expounded.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Institutions of higher learning have developed lobbying efforts to compete with other interest groups (Potter, 2003). One component of HE lobbying efforts is the alumni association (Potter, 2003). Alumni are being motivated to participate in political advocacy because HE is not being funded the same as at past levels (Potter, 2003). A case in point is the SHEEO report that found tuition costs at public colleges and universities had risen 112% since 1990 while government support in real dollars per student declined by more than $2,500 from 1987 and 2012 (Weiss, 2014).

The political advocacy role played by HE alumni associations was the focus of this study. The research questions in this study served as a guide to the collection of data. Furthermore, an analysis of the findings was put forward and expounded. The majority of this chapter is committed to producing a complete explanation for methodology employed in the study. Also included in this chapter is a description of the study's population and sample as well as an in-depth description of instrument design, data collection, and data analysis.

Problem and Purpose Overview

The problem presented in this study is HE is not currently funded at the same monetary levels as it previously had been, and institutions are looking for new revenue streams. University administrators are experiencing shrinking state appropriations requiring students and families to pay more out of pocket to earn a college degree (Clausen & Page, 2011). In the early 1970s, students could often graduate from college debt free (Clausen & Page, 2011). However, the average debt per bachelor's degree from

a public college or university increased 16% from $20,500 in 1999-2000 to $23,800 in 2010-2011 (Lapovsky, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to examine how alumni associations are participating as advocates for public HE institutions. Even though alumni associations are known for instilling pride in their institutions and raising money for athletic programs (Avery, 2012), very little research has been done on alumni associations' roles in political advocacy. In this study, the tactics alumni associations used to lobby state legislatures was addressed. The effectiveness of alumni association advocacy efforts in influencing the two major political parties and winning their support was also examined. Furthermore, the differences in lobbying approaches conducted by alumni associations across the United States were noted. Alumni associations are identified with institutions of all sizes. D1 public colleges and universities are defined as generally enrolling the most students, having the biggest budgets, and offering the most sports programs to both female and male students (NCAA, 2015).

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. What political advocacy efforts do alumni association executive directors report using when lobbying state legislatures?

2. How do alumni association lobbying efforts on the behalf of public higher education differ from one region of the country to another?

3. What is the described professional relationship between public college and university alumni associations and Democratic and Republican members of state legislatures?

Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative methodology to determine the role played by HE alumni associations and their lobbying efforts for state appropriations. The use of quantitative methodology allowed for comparative measures not only of the most frequently used lobbying tactics of alumni associations, but also data on how these tactics differed in regions of the country (Trochim, 2006). Quantitative research can be defined as "explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematical-based methods" (Muijs, 2011, p. 1). More specifically, a quantitative approach uses measures that determined the percentages of various lobbying tactics used by alumni associations (Bluman, 2013). Quantitative research was appropriate because there was a large population, over 200 institutions of higher learning spread out across a wide geographic area. Fraenkel et al. (2012) wrote, "Quantitative data are obtained when the variable being studied is measured along a scale that indicates how much of the variable is present" (p. 188).

According to Bluman (2013), descriptive statistics consists of "the collection, organization, summarization, and presentation of data" and attempts to describe events rather than make predictions (p. 4). The big advantage of descriptive statistics is they allow a researcher to explain information with many scores by using just a few indices like the median or the mean (Fraenkel, et al., 2012). According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), "When indices are calculated from an entire population, they are called parameters while a sample of the population is called statistics" (p. 187).

A survey was appropriate to obtain feedback for this study. A survey allowed for generalizations from a sample to a population so inferences could be drawn about

specific behavior (Creswell, 2014). In order to ease access, cost, turnaround time, and to encourage a higher return rate, an online survey format was used (Trochim, 2006). According to Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2014), an encouraging trend has developed for researchers wanting to conduct online surveys. Eighty-five percent of American adults use the Internet occasionally and 70% have high-speed or broadband connections in their homes (Dillman et al., 2014). In addition, since there were neither multiple groups nor multiple waves of measurement, this research study was considered a non-experimental design (Trochim, 2006).

Population and Sample

According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), the people in the group to be studied are called the target population. For this study, the target population was alumni association executive directors or other administrators with similar responsibilities at D1 public colleges and universities. There are 221 D1 public colleges and universities in the United States (NCAA, 2015). The estimated total number of executive directors, or other administrators serving in a similar role was equal to the number of D1 public institutions. The objective of this research project was to survey all alumni association executive directors of D1 public colleges and universities. The sampling design for this study was single stage which was defined as one in which a researcher had access to the names in the population and being able to sample members of the population directly (Creswell, 2014).

Instrumentation

The instrument in a study is defined as a device used to collect research data (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Surveys are commonly used in survey research (Fraenkel et al.,

2012). The survey in this study was primarily closed-ended in nature (Fink, 2013). Survey questions included a semantic differential scale and a rating scale (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Overall, the survey included topic questions ranging from tactics alumni associations utilized to how alumni associations rated the effectiveness of their lobbying efforts on the two major political parties.

The closed-ended questions for this study were composed of multiple choice options. Multiple choice questions allowed a respondent to select his or her answer from a list of options and the use of such questions may be used to gauge knowledge, opinions or attitudes (Fraenkel et al., 2012). The advantages of using closed-ended questions were the fact they were relatively "easy to use, score, and code for analysis on a computer" (Fraenkel et al., 2012 p. 399). To be analyzed by a computer, it was important to code data first (Fraenkel et al., 2012). According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), survey questions should have an uncluttered appearance and be presented from the most general question to the most specific.

Closed-ended questions, however, may present the chance that a respondent's preferred response is not available among the choices (Fraenkel et al., 2012) It is recommended by Fraenkel et al. (2012) that an additional category labeled "other" be provided by the researcher to address this issue. The inclusion of another category allowed a respondent to include an answer that may have not been expected by the researcher (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

Instrument rationale. An online survey had the advantage of being relatively inexpensive and allows access to people who perhaps are difficult to contact by telephone (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Another advantage of online surveys is the ability to reach a very

large number of people (Fink, 2013). However, disadvantages did exist which included less chance to encourage respondents' cooperation or help to clarifying questions (Fraenkel et al., 2012). There was also the possibility of low response rates (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Furthermore, if notices about the survey were not sent ahead of time, unsuspecting recipients may have deleted the survey as spam (Fink, 2013).

Choosing an online survey was determined appropriate. It was less time consuming to utilize the online services of SurveyMonkey (Fink, 2013) than to prepare a survey from scratch and send it out through traditional mail or attempt to interview participants face to face. Also, an online survey allowed many people in a large geographic area to be surveyed (Fink, 2013). In addition, an online survey emailed to respondents helped avoid having to leave messages and waiting for a returned phone call.

The survey was helpful to describe the types of lobbying methods used by college and university alumni associations and any differences in the approaches utilized by alumni associations in various regions of the country. One of the goals of the survey was to determine the extent of coalition building carried out by alumni associations and with which other types of organizations. Moreover, the survey results indicated how successful alumni associations were at working with Democratic and Republican legislators.

The survey included filtering questions. Filtering questions are questions that determine respondent qualifications (Trochim, 2006). The survey began with two filtering questions to ensure the survey is completed by a respondent primarily responsible for the political advocacy efforts of an alumni association (Trochim, 2006).

The filtering questions were followed by nine questions grouped by topic making up the main survey of this research study.

Included in the survey were a few open-ended questions as well. Open-ended questions allow respondents to provide more individualized answers (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Two open-ended questions at the end of the survey allowed respondents to add their own thoughts, which may have been overlooked or not revealed by the series of closed-ended questions. The open-ended questions allowed for executive directors to use their own words to answer questions and provide insight (Fink, 2013). Alumni directors were able to include their opinions about how they measured the success of their alumni associations' political advocacy efforts. Respondents also were asked to explain how they thought their advocacy efforts were rewarded. Nonetheless, there are disadvantages of utilizing open-ended questions (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Open-ended questions may be difficult to interpret, difficult to score, and may be numerous, and in some cases, respondents do not like them (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

Instrument construction. The survey was customized using SurveyMonkey's templates online. The survey was electronic, self-administered and unsupervised (see Appendix A). The intention of collecting data from a group of people was to be able to describe various aspects to the population being studied (Fraenkel et al., 2012). The term census is used when a survey is conducted of an entire population (Fraenkel et al., 2012). It was the intention of this researcher to survey the entire population of public D1 alumni association officials involved in political advocacy in order to get the most accurate measure.

The design was a cross-sectional survey. A cross-sectional survey gathers data from a sample drawn from a pre-determined population (Fraenkel et al., 2012). In a cross-sectional survey, data are collected at one point in time (Creswell, 2014). One point in time, however, may entail from one day to several weeks to collect (Fraenkel et al., 2012). In this study, it was estimated all survey data would be collected within a four-week period. A one-attempt, one-observation survey is a very common form of research and is considered a strong research design for descriptive research questions (Trochim, 2006).

To better understand collected data, a rating scale was needed. According to Fink (2013), there are three types of measurement or rating scales. For this study, a continuous scale was applied to the answers provided by the respondents. A continuous scale produces numbers that fall upon a continuum (Fink, 2013). The advantage of adopting a continuous scale is that data can be "subdivided into finer and finer increments" (Fink, 2013, p. 42). Another advantage of a continuous scale is that it can be presented in graphic form providing a visual model (Fink, 2013).

Field testing. According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), a survey pretest may be a helpful way to expose problems in question wording that makes it difficult for respondents to understand. A survey which is easy to use and well designed "always contributes to reliability and validity" (Fink, 2013, p. 10). The survey was field tested by an appropriate pilot group (Fink, 2013). For this study, a group of test respondents familiar with the content and holding appropriate titles were asked to participate. The pilot test was taken by five executive directors from D2 public colleges and universities not in the sample group (Fink, 2013). Reliable and valid survey instruments

(measurement validity) and the context in which the survey takes place (design validity) provide valid survey information (Fink, 2013).

The pilot version of the survey included all the questions from the proposed survey to be used in the study of D1 alumni association executive directors. The information gathered from the pilot test was used to refine, clarify, and address any problems in the survey before it is used for data collection (Creswell, 2014, Dillman et al., 2014, Fraenkel et al., 2012). According to Fink (2013), for a survey to be both reliable and valid, it must provide accurate and consistent information. Furthermore, pilot respondents were asked to report the amount of time it took to complete the survey and whether questions were clear enough to provide an appropriate response.

Instrument reliability and validity. In order to make any solid conclusions from the data in question, the results must be reliable and valid (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Bryman (2012) stated, "Validity presumes reliability. This means that if your measure in not reliable, it cannot be valid" (p. 173). According to Seltman (2015), reliability is roughly equal to consistency and alludes "to the reproducibility of repeated measurements" (p. 10). To ensure consistency, all recipients to the survey of alumni association executive directors received the exact same questions. Validity is defined as "appropriateness, meaningfulness, correctness, and usefulness of the inferences a researcher makes" (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 147). The data to be collected were analyzed and described in detail, but not manipulated in anyway. Validity was also ensured in the main survey by including all relevant topics (Fink, 2013).

Data Collection

The study of human subjects needed to be approved by the Institutional Review

Board (IRB) at Lindenwood University (see Appendix B). After approval, the survey

was sent to executive directors of public D1 alumni associations to obtain permission and

to study their roles in HE lobbying efforts. The leadership of public D1 alumni

associations received an invitation letter to participate through a series of online survey

questions relating to HE political advocacy and their interaction with state legislatures

(see Appendix C). It was important to create a survey whose topic was interesting

enough to motivate recipients to respond (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Fraenkel et al. (2012)

suggested researchers could encourage the cooperation of respondents by expressing a

willingness to share results of the survey with respondents. The initial letter to executive

directors mentioned the willingness of the researcher to share the survey results. Prior to

accessing the survey, alumni association executive directors were required to give their

informed consent (see Appendix D).

Maintaining anonymity was needed to enhance the response rate of participants

(Fink, 2013). Researchers should ensure confidentiality and anonymity of respondents

(Fraenkel et al., 2012). Confidentiality and anonymity was clearly stated in the

introductory letter. Respondents were asked to accept digitally the terms of this survey

giving permission to use the information provided. Alumni directors could not begin

answering the survey unless they gave their formal permission. Additionally, to conduct

an accurate analysis of the data, it was important for the respondents to this study to

answer the questions in an honest way. The ability to remain anonymous promotes

truthfulness in responses, and a survey is appropriate for allowing this anonymity

(Bluman, 2013). Respondents may be hesitant to answer the survey if they feel the information gathered may be used inappropriately (Fink, 2013). Personal information such as names can be assigned codes, which can link an individual to a response, and keep a person's name confidential (Fink, 2013). The researcher utilized the technology of SurveyMonkey to implement a coding system.

According to Dillman et al. (2014), most recipients respond almost as soon as they receive a survey but if the survey goes a week unanswered, it probably will not be filled out and returned. The survey for this study allowed respondents to skip questions if they chose to do so. Requiring an answer for every question before moving on can have a detrimental impact on the motivation of respondents (Dillman et al., 2014). Moreover, a specific deadline date was listed to receive timely responses to this particular survey (Fraenkel et al., 2012). To enhance the likelihood of a high response rate, this survey process initiated a four-step plan to encourage survey returns (Dillman et al., 2014).

The first email was an introduction notifying alumni association executive directors of the survey to follow. According to Fraenkel et al., (2012), the letter should be short and specifically addressed to the appropriate person. The letter explained the purpose of the survey, emphasized the salience of the research, and the hope of the respondent's cooperation (Fraenkel et al., 2012). The in-depth survey was delivered directly to executive directors in the second email to follow a couple of days later. Executive directors were informed the survey needed to be completed and submitted as soon as possible so analysis could be conducted in a timely manner. The third email was a reminder that the survey needed to be completed and submitted within a short upcoming deadline. Respondents were reminded of the importance of their participation

to the accuracy of the survey findings. Utilizing SurveyMonkey allowed for tracking so that reminders only were sent to those recipients who had yet to respond (Surveymonkey.com, 2015). A thank you message was sent to respondents in the fourth email explaining the importance of participating in this study.

The completed results were sent back to SurveyMonkey to be downloaded by the researcher to include in the data analysis. To ensure non-duplicated responses, an electronic tally system was utilized through SurveyMonkey (Surveymonkey.com, 2015). The online survey also included a survey progress bar, which would provide the respondent with a time measure. If a respondent took 2-3 minutes to complete 20% of the survey, then he or she could expect to complete the survey in about 15 minutes (Fink, 2013).

Data Analysis

At the conclusion of data collection, the data were gathered and the results were downloaded in the form of a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Descriptive statistics were used to interpret the results of the survey (Bluman, 2013). A frequency distribution was utilized to organize the raw data in visual form using classes defined in this study as alumni association activities and their frequencies (Bluman, 2013). The classes were mutually exclusive so that no data could be placed in more than one class (Bluman, 2013). The distribution of data gathered in this study was displayed by using percentages and charts to effectively present the survey results (Trochim, 2006).

In addition, the responses provided by alumni association executive directors were grouped into four categories representing four geographic regions of the United States. The regions were labeled the following: the Midwest, the Northeast, the South,

and the West. To ensure accurate responses, a small map (see Figure 1) clearly dividing

the United States into the four above-mentioned regions was included with the particular

question asking in which region of the country their alumni association primarily

operated. The intent of these regional categories was to explore whether differences

existed in the tactics used by alumni associations in different parts of the country.

Measurement was conducted at the nominal level (Bluman, 2013).

Figure 1. Map of the United States divided into four regions, Source: U.S. Census Bureau

(2015).

Moreover, the study included a comparison of lobbying efforts by alumni

associations throughout the United States. The intention was to find whether tactics

varied significantly and if such tactics revealed substantial differences. The study also

analyzed whether alumni associations collaborated with other types of organizations. The survey was intended to provide as much in-depth information as possible to better understand the role of HE alumni associations in political advocacy.

Finally, an analysis was presented as to whether differences by region existed regarding the effectiveness of HE alumni associations and their level of support with members of the Democratic and Republicans parties. These results were presented in graphic form. Party affiliation received a nominal level of measurement and mutually exclusive categories (Bluman, 2013).

This study included an analysis of how alumni associations advocated for colleges and universities before state legislatures and the forms of political advocacy were presented in the results. A common way to list quantitative data was to prepare a frequency distribution, which was done by listing in rank order high to low (Fraenkel et al., 2012). The advocacy categories were measured at the ordinal level meaning they were ranked according to frequency of use (Bluman, 2013). Further, the survey allowed for alumni association executive directors to include other approaches through the classification labeled other.

Summary

This quantitative study served as an attempt to provide data about the lobbying role of HE alumni associations. Overall, the results measured and defined the factors utilized by HE alumni association lobbying efforts to win state appropriations. Additionally, it was the intent of this study to stimulate more research on alumni associations and perhaps other players involved in HE lobbying efforts. The survey results presented may raise questions, which go beyond the scope of this study. In the

next chapter, the results of the survey were presented. The popularity of different types

of lobbying tactics was examined. The frequency of how alumni associations

collaborated with other organizations was revealed. Finally, the degree of advocacy

effectiveness and level of support alumni associations received from the two major

political parties were explained.

Chapter Four: Analysis of the Data

Public college and university officials have implemented various lobbying tactics with the intent to compete with numerous interest groups in state capitals for funding dollars (Potter, 2003). Historically, the most significant source of HE funding has been state government appropriations (Weiss, 2014). Nevertheless, state support for public HE has declined steadily over the past 20 years (Weiss, 2014). According to Tandberg (2010), a blend of political players determines the level of public funding HE will receive. Simultaneously, an increasing number of colleges and universities are turning to alumni to assist their alma maters by serving in the role of legislative advocates (Simonetti, 2013).

The political advocacy role played by HE alumni associations was the focus of this study. The research questions guided data collection and the analysis is presented and explained. The majority of Chapter Four is committed to furnishing a complete explanation for the details of the methodology used in the study. Also incorporated in this chapter is an explanation of the study's sample and population as well as an explicit description of data analysis, instrument design, and data collection.

Data Collection

The survey instrument employed in this study was an online survey utilizing software made available through SurveyMonkey. The survey began with an informed consent question. To move forward and complete the survey, respondents had to agree to the terms outlined in the informed consent statement placed before the series of questions. The survey itself was composed of nine multiple choice closed-ended

questions and two open-ended questions. The survey was made available for 30 days;

June 10, 2015 through July 10, 2015.

Respondent demographics. All 221 D1 public college and university alumni

association executive directors were invited to take part in this study. Each of the 221

executive directors received a detailed letter via email explaining the nature of the

research to be conducted. Of the 221 D1 public college and university alumni

associations in the United States contacted, 20% took time to reply to this political

advocacy survey.

Reliability and validity of results. There must be reliability and validity in the

data to produce strong conclusions (Fraenkel et al., 2012). This survey was designed to

be both reliable and valid. According to Bryman (2012), reliable measure is required for

validity to occur. A reliable instrument will provide consistent results every time it is

used (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

Validity can be defined as what is considered correct, appropriate, or meaningful,

and of use to the inferences made by the researcher (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Relevant

topics were provided to ensure validity (Fink, 2013). To ensure consistency, all

recipients to the survey of alumni association executive directors received the exact same

questions and were given the same amount of time to respond. The data in this study

were collected and analyzed and the results were thoroughly explained but not

manipulated in any way.

In all, 44 alumni directors provided a response to the researcher's request. On the

first day the survey was released, 20% of the total responses were garnered. By the end of

the first week of the survey's availability, 30% of the total responses were gathered.

Several reminders were emailed to alumni directors periodically during the survey window to encourage their participation. Another 30% of directors who filled out the survey did so within the first two weeks after reminder prompts. An additional 16% of directors responded within 19 days. The final 30% of alumni directors who took part in the survey did so within one day of the announced deadline.

Analysis of Data

Alumni association executive directors were asked to respond to 11 questions electronically. Most questions in the online survey were closed-ended in nature, but two open-ended questions were included to allow for additional feedback from alumni directors. Questions varied from specific tactics alumni associations implemented to how directors ranked the support their alumni associations received from state legislators.

Questions not related to a research question. Survey questions one, two, and three were presented to the respondents and were used to gain a general overview of political advocacy at D1 public institutions of higher learning. Responses from these questions are appropriate to discuss under more than one research question. The results of these initial three questions are presented below.

Survey question one. *How would you characterize the role your alumni association plays in your college/university political advocacy efforts?* Alumni association executive directors were offered three answers to choose from; plays a major role, plays a minor role, or plays no role in political advocacy. Of the responses obtained, most alumni directors indicated their association played a minor role in political advocacy on their D1 campus. A majority of respondents, 52% selected the minor role option. More than a quarter of respondents, 29% indicated their alumni association

played a major role in political advocacy efforts. The smallest percentage obtained, 19%, were alumni directors who indicated their alumni associations played no role in political advocacy.

Survey question two. *How long has your alumni association played a role in political advocacy?* Alumni association executive directors were provided five options from which to choose from regarding the length of time their alumni association had partaken in political advocacy. The options included were one to five years, six to 10 years, 11 to 20 years, and more than 20 years. A further choice was offered for those alumni association executive directors who admitted their associations played no role in political advocacy.

The option from this question selected most often by alumni directors was more than 20 years of political advocacy participation. More than 36% of alumni directors stated their associations were active in political advocacy for over two decades. Over 17% of alumni directors chose the 11-20 year option. Almost 10% of alumni directors stated their organization had been involved in political advocacy between 6-10 years. Over 12% of alumni directors stated their associations had begun to become political advocates in the last five years. Finally, over 24% of respondents noted their alumni associations did not partake in political advocacy.

Survey question three. *In which region of the country does your alumni association primarily operate?* Alumni association executive directors were asked to define the region of the United States where their association primarily operated. Directors chose from four predetermined regions created for this study. The regions were classified as Midwest, Northeast, South, and West. A map dividing the United States into

distinct regions was provided with the regional question to clarify any confusion a director may have had with selecting the appropriate region.

Regarding the regional question, 41.5 % of alumni directors indicated their alumni association was mostly active in the region of the United States traditionally called the South. The second most selected regional choice for political advocacy was found to be the Midwest, which nearly 32% of respondents selected. Over 19% of alumni directors chose the region classified as the West. The region selected least often, the Northeast, was represented by just over 7% of alumni directors in this study. Three regions, the Midwest, the South, and the West responded with double-digit response rates as indicated above. Only the Northeast region of the country had a noticeably lower response rate. The reason for the Northeast's considerably lower participation rate is open for speculation.

Findings from research question 1. *What political advocacy efforts do alumni association executive directors report using when lobbying state legislatures*? Survey questions four, five, and six related directly to Research Question One. The survey questions and results are presented below. Each question will be discussed in detail.

Survey question four. *How often does your alumni association use the following tactics?* Alumni Association executive directors were asked to rate the use of certain tactics in political advocacy efforts. The five categories included submitting email, sending out traditional mail, placing phone calls, holding face-to-face meetings, and holding public demonstrations. A frequency scale was assigned for each advocacy tactic. The frequency choices included always, frequently, sometimes, rarely, and never. A

sixth category, labeled *other*, was included to allow alumni directors to list particular activities not mentioned previously.

Email. In regard to the use of email, 25% of directors selected the *always* category meaning they used email on a routine basis to lobby state legislators. An equal number, 25% of directors responded using email *frequently* in their approach. Using email *sometimes* was the answer given by 17% of alumni directors. Just over 8% of alumni directors stated using email *rarely*. At the opposite end of the frequency scale, 25% of directors said their alumni associations *never* used email as part of their advocacy efforts.

Traditional mail. The *never* option was the most popular choice of alumni directors. Almost 43% of alumni directors stated *never* using traditional mail as a lobbying tactic. Likewise, 40% of directors said they *rarely* sent traditional mail to influence state legislators. Almost 6% of alumni directors reported sending traditional mail *sometimes*. Another 6% of alumni directors said they sent traditional mail *frequently* in their advocacy efforts. An equal 6% of alumni directors noted they *always* sent traditional mail as a political advocacy tactic.

Telephone Contact. When it came to placing phone calls to state legislators, 37% of alumni directors indicated this tactic was *never* used. Twenty percent of alumni directors said use of the phone in political advocacy was *rarely* an option. Some 26% of alumni directors indicated placing phone calls *sometimes* as a legislative communication tool. Alumni directors by 14% expressed use of phone contact as *frequently*. Less than 3% of alumni directors utilized phone contact *always* as part of their advocacy efforts.

Face-to-face meetings. In the case of face-to-face meetings, 20% of alumni directors admitted to *never* meeting face-to-face, while an additional 20% of alumni

directors *rarely* included face-to-face meetings with legislators in their advocacy efforts.

Over 28% of alumni directors indicated *sometimes* utilizing such a tactic with state

legislators. The *frequently* option was chosen by 17% of alumni directors. Fourteen

percent of alumni directors felt the *always* option best described use of face-to-face

meetings in their advocacy efforts.

     Public demonstrations. Almost 63% of alumni directors chose the *never* option

when it related to using public demonstrations as a lobbying tactic. The *rarely* option

was selected by 14% of alumni directors. Over 17% of alumni directors indicated

sometimes using public demonstrations. Less than 3% of alumni directors employed

public demonstrations *frequently*. Less than 3% of alumni directors also stated using

public demonstrations *always* in their advocacy efforts (see Figure 2).
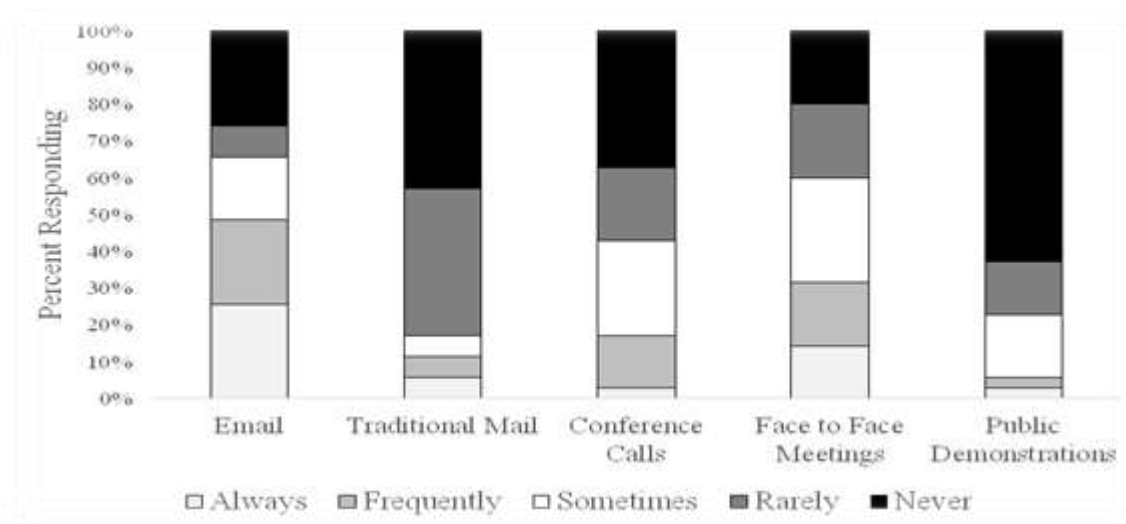

Figure 2. Frequency of communication tactics utilized by D1 alumni associations

nationwide.

     Other. Some alumni association executive directors provided political advocacy

tactics not listed in the survey. One executive director noted their alumni association

hosted events with the institution's alumni legislators in the state capital. Another alumni director explained the association held town hall meetings as part of its political advocacy efforts. The presence of a magazine had been utilized by staff of one alumni association for political advocacy. One alumni director disclosed their institution's alumni association currently was limited in its activities but was doing more to build its political advocacy program.

Coalitions. In political advocacy, sometimes interest groups representing different types of organizations may collaborate to achieve a common objective in public policy (Berry, 1977). The topic of coalitions was included in this study to determine if any coalitions were utilized in political advocacy efforts by D1 public colleges and universities. Moreover, the coalition category was incorporated to better understand the use of coalitions as a HE lobbying tactic and to measure the frequency of the coalition approach to political advocacy. The next set of questions corresponded to the use of coalitions by alumni association executive directors at public HE institutions. The frequency scale for collaboration included: *very often, often, sometimes, rarely, and never.*

Survey question five. *How often do your political advocacy efforts lead to collaboration with the following types of organizations?* Alumni association executive directors were asked to provide answers to the possible activities carried out by their associations in conjunction with other organizations attempting to influence public policy in state capitals. Executive directors were asked to respond to collaborative efforts with three types of organizations; other colleges and universities, other non-profit organizations, and corporations (see Figure 3).
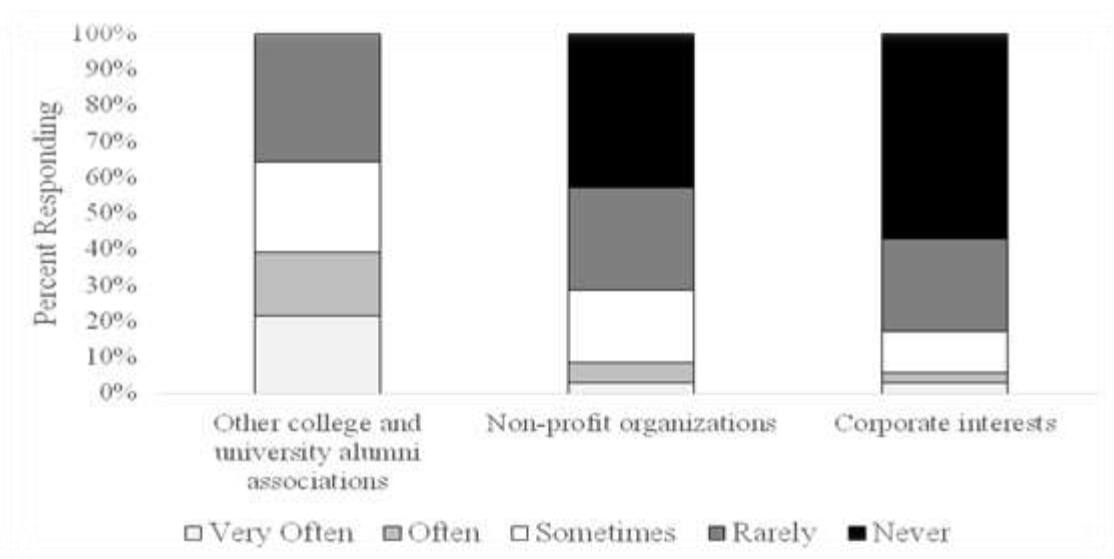
Figure 3. Frequency of collaboration efforts with types of organizations nationwide.

Twenty-seven percent of alumni directors said they *never* collaborated with other colleges and universities. Thirty percent of alumni directors *rarely* utilized the tactic of collaboration with other colleges and universities. *Sometimes* was chosen by just under 19% of alumni directors. Fourteen percent of alumni directors selected *often* to best describe their associations' collaboration with other colleges and universities. Some 16% of alumni directors selected *very often* to best describe the frequency of this tactic's usage.

Furthermore, alumni association executive directors provided answers for the category of collaboration with other types of non-profit organizations. The *never* option was the most often checked option by alumni association executive directors. Over 47% of directors chose *never* as it relates to collaboration with other non-profits. Almost 28% of directors picked *rarely* when it came to collaboration with other non-profit

organizations. The *sometimes* option was the choice of over 19% of alumni directors.

Nearly 6% of directors selected *often* on the frequency scale. Less than 3% of alumni

directors reported collaborating *very often* with other types of non-profit organizations.

The final category for collaboration efforts was working with corporate interests.

Over 58% of alumni directors *never* collaborated with representatives of corporate

interests. The *rarely* option was selected by 25% of alumni association executive

directors. Eleven percent of alumni directors picked the *sometimes* option. The *often*

option as well as the *very often* option were both selected by less than 3% of alumni

directors to best describe the frequency of collaboration between their public HE

institutions and corporate interests.

Survey question six. *In what ways do you collaborate with the following types of*

organizations? Alumni association executive directors may collaborate utilizing several

tactics. The results of tactic usage are summarized in Figure 4.
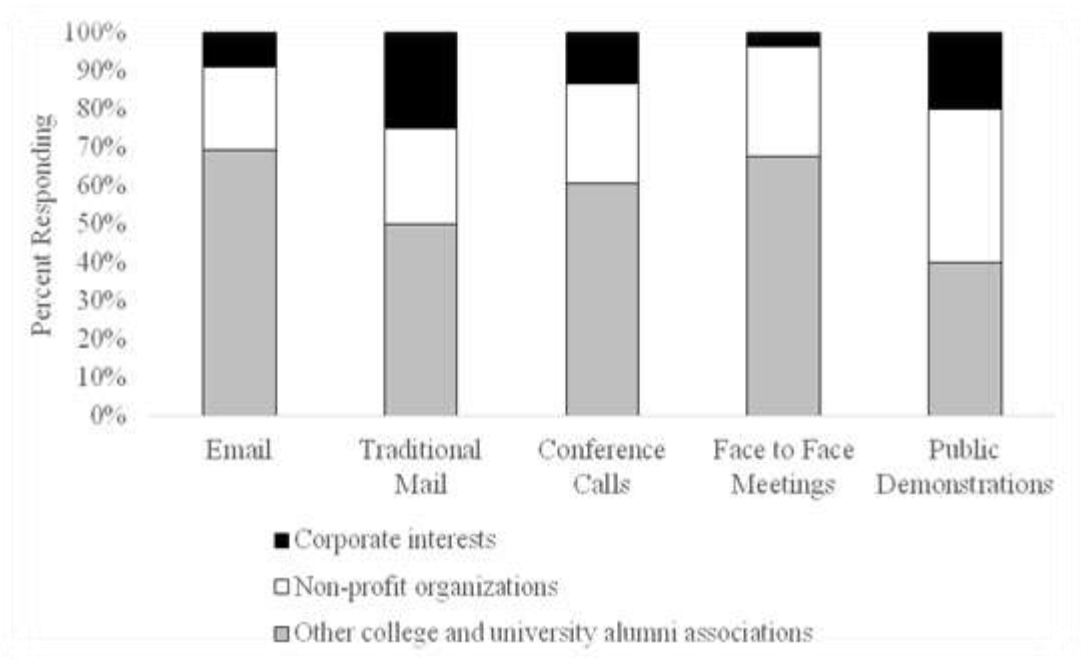
Figure 4. Frequency of collaborative tactics with other organizations nationwide.

Joint email. Alumni association executive directors were asked to describe the frequency of sending joint emails to state legislators in their collaborative efforts. When collaborating through joint emails, HE institutions were far more likely to do so with other colleges and universities. Seventy percent of joint emails sent by alumni directors were done so in collaboration with other HE institutions. Only 21% of joint emails were sent in collaboration with non-profit organizations. Just 9% of emails sent by alumni directors were done so in collaboration with corporate interests.

Joint traditional mail. Alumni directors were questioned whether they sent out traditional mail jointly with representatives of other organizations in their political advocacy efforts. Fifty percent of alumni directors indicated mail was sent jointly when

working with other colleges and universities. Twenty-five percent of mail sent to state legislators was sent jointly with non-profit organizations. Regarding corporate interests, 25% of joint mail sent as part of political advocacy efforts was sent by alumni directors in collaboration with representatives of corporations.

Conference calls. Alumni directors were also asked to describe the frequency of collaborative efforts through the use of conference calls. Sixty-one percent of conference calls held jointly by alumni association executive directors were done so with representatives of other colleges and universities. Twenty-six percent of joint conference calls were held with representatives of non-profit organizations. Alumni directors reported just 13% of the conference calls they made were in collaboration with representatives of corporate interests.

Joint meetings. Alumni directors provided the frequency of holding joint meetings with representatives of other types of organizations in their political advocacy efforts. In 68% of the joint meetings held, collaboration occurred with representatives of other college and university alumni associations. Twenty-eight percent of the joint meetings were held with representatives of non-profit organizations. Only 4% of the joint meetings held by alumni associations in their advocacy efforts were done so with representatives of corporate interests.

Joint demonstrations. Due to the fact demonstrations require notable costs, there is an incentive for organizations to pool their resources (Berry, 1977). Not surprisingly, alumni association executive directors revealed using joint public demonstrations rarely. When joint public demonstrations did take place, the frequency of collaboration among HE alumni associations was similar to the frequency level of joint demonstrations with

non-profit organizations. Alumni association directors reported 40% of public

demonstrations took part in concert with other colleges and universities. Forty percent of

joint public demonstrations were conducted in collaboration with non-profit

organizations. Alumni directors disclosed only 20% of joint public demonstrations were

carried out with representatives of corporate interests.

Findings from research question 2. *How do alumni association lobbying efforts*

on the behalf of public higher education differ from one region of the country to another?

The responses to survey questions four, five, and six were analyzed further by dividing

the responses into the four geographic regions mentioned previously. The frequency

options included *always, frequently, sometimes, rarely, never.*

Midwest alumni directors' responses. Responses were collected from alumni

directors who identified themselves as being from the Midwest region of the United

States. The following tactics have been analyzed specifically for this region. Tactics

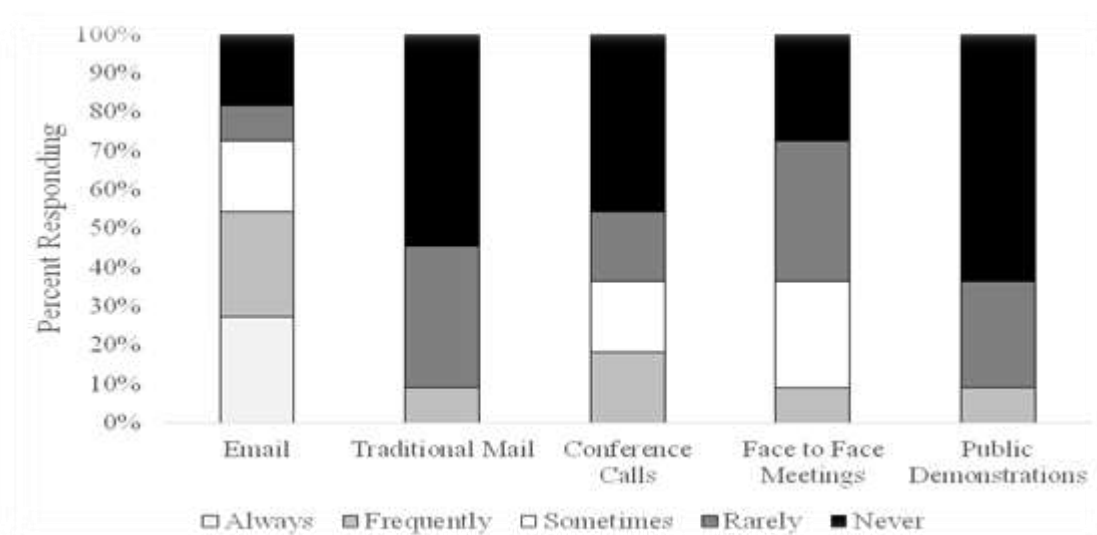ranged from sending email to holding public demonstrations (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Frequency of communication tactics in Midwest Region.

Email. In the Midwest, 27% of D1 alumni association executive directors reported *always* sending emails as part of their political advocacy efforts. Another 27% of the alumni directors responded they used emails as a tactic *frequently*. Eighteen percent of directors chose *sometimes* to describe their use of email as a political advocacy tool. The *rarely* option was chosen by 9% of directors, while 18% of directors stated *never* using emails in their advocacy efforts.

Traditional mail. None of the survey's respondents purported sending mail *always* or *sometimes* as part of their political advocacy efforts. Only 4% of executive directors at Midwest D1 alumni associations reported sending traditional mail *frequently*. The *rarely* option was selected by 36% of executive directors when describing their use of traditional mail. The *never* option represented 55% of executive directors' approach to political advocacy, the most often selected option.

Telephone contact. Regarding the use of the telephone in political advocacy, 45% of executive directors stated *never* making phone calls as part of their efforts. Another 18% reported using the phone *rarely*. A further 18% of executive directors described using the phone *sometimes* to contact state legislators. Conversely, 18% of executive directors utilized the telephone *frequently* as an advocacy tool. However, no executive director selected the *always* option as part of political advocacy efforts.

Face-to-face meetings. Midwest D1 alumni association executive directors were also asked to describe the frequency of face-to-face meetings with state legislators as part of their organizations' political advocacy efforts. Twenty-seven percent of executive directors admitted *never* meeting face to face with legislators. Thirty-six percent of executive directors chose the *rarely* option which was the most-often selected option.

Another 27% of alumni directors described meeting face to face with state legislators *sometimes*. Nine percent of directors chose *frequently* to best describe the use of face-to-face meetings in political advocacy. No directors declared they *always* used face-to-face contact.

   Public demonstration. The final tactic option presented to alumni directors was the use of public demonstrations to promote their alma maters' objectives. Sixty-four percent of alumni directors in the Midwest reported their associations *never* used public demonstrations. The *rarely* option was selected by 27% of alumni directors. Nine percent of directors chose *frequently* to best describe the use of public demonstrations. No director chose *sometimes* or *always* to describe the use of public demonstrations as part of political advocacy.

   Northeast alumni directors' responses. Responses were collected from alumni associations representing the Northeast region of the United States. Northeast directors provided the fewest responses to this survey. Directors chose the tactics used and the frequency of each tactic. The results are presented in Figure 6.
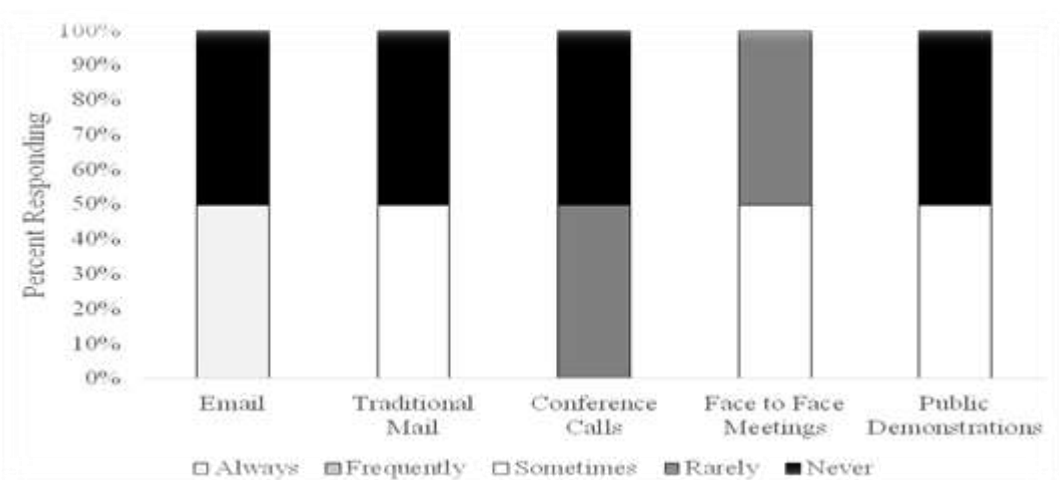

Figure 6. Frequency of communication tactics in Northeast Region.

Email. Since so few responses were received, the percentages assigned to the choices tended to be more clear cut than the other three regions. In the Northeast, 50% of alumni directors chose the *never* category for utilizing email. Another 50% of respondents chose the *always* option to best describe their use of email in political advocacy. The other three selections, *frequently, sometimes*, and *rarely* were not chosen as options.

Traditional mail.   Fifty percent of respondents selected *never* to best describe the use of mail as a political advocacy tactic. Another 50% chose *sometimes* to describe the frequency of sending traditional mail.   The *always, frequently*, and *rarely* options were not chosen by any alumni association executive directors in the Northeast region.

Telephone contact. Fifty percent of alumni directors selected the *never* option. Fifty percent of alumni directors in the Northeast reported using the telephone *rarely* in political advocacy. *Always, frequently*, and *sometimes* were not selected by any alumni directors to describe the frequency of telephone usage in political advocacy efforts.

Face-to-face meetings. The tactic of face-to-face meetings was used *sometimes* by 50% of respondents in the Northeast region. Another 50% of alumni directors selected *rarely* as the best description of using this tactic. The options *always, frequently*, and *never* were not chosen by Northeast region alumni directors to best describe the use of face-to-face meetings in political advocacy efforts.

Public demonstrations. Fifty percent of alumni directors chose *never* to describe the use of public demonstrations. *Sometimes* was selected by 50% of respondents when utilizing public demonstrations as part of political advocacy efforts. No alumni director

selected *always, frequently*, or *rarely* in describing the frequency of public

demonstrations as a tactic in political advocacy in the Northeast region.

   South alumni directors' responses. Responses to the survey were collected from

alumni associations in the South region of the United States. Southern alumni association

executive directors provided the largest percentage of responses by region in this study.

The responses regarding tactics and frequencies follow are presented in Figure 7.
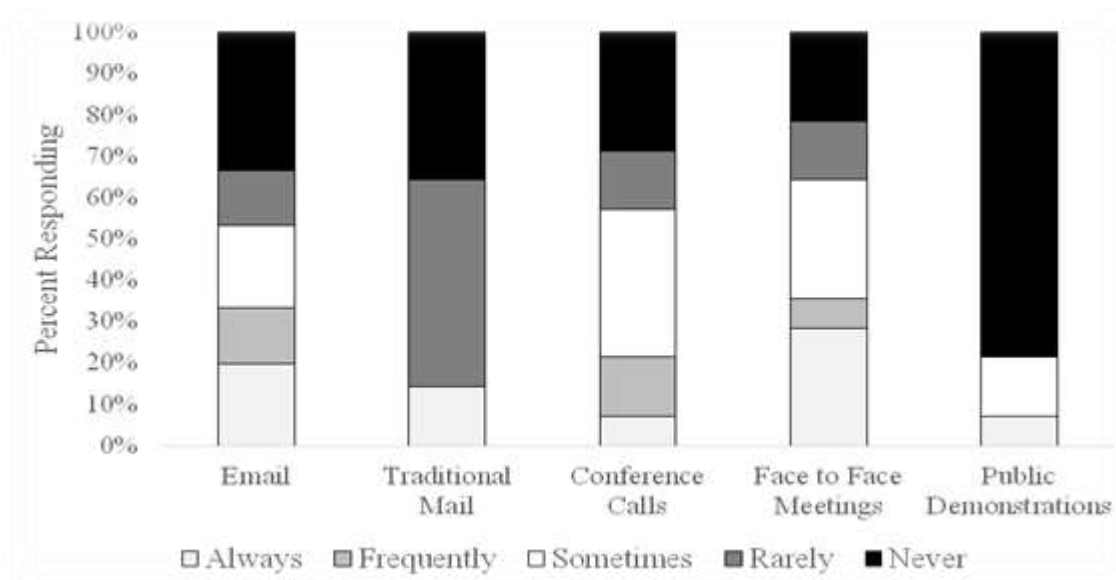
Figure 7. Frequency of communication tactics in South Region.

   Email. Thirty-three percent of executive directors of D1 alumni associations in

the South region of the United States chose *never* to best describe their use of email in

political advocacy. Thirteen percent of alumni directors selected the *rarely* option.

Twenty percent of alumni directors chose *sometimes* to best describe the use of email.

Frequently was chosen by 13% of alumni directors. The *always* option was chosen by

20% of southern directors.

Traditional mail. Thirty-six percent of alumni directors said they *never* utilized traditional mail. The *rarely* option was chosen by 50% of directors to best describe the use of traditional mail in their political advocacy efforts. Conversely, 14% of alumni directors in the South *always* employed traditional mail. Two categories, *frequently* and *sometimes* were not selected by any alumni directors to best describe the use of mail in advocacy efforts in the South region.

Telephone contact. Twenty-nine percent of alumni directors chose the *never* option to best describe telephone usage for political advocacy. Fourteen percent of alumni directors selected *rarely* on the frequency scale. *Sometimes* was selected by 36% of alumni directors when best describing the use of the telephone in their political advocacy efforts. Fourteen percent of directors chose *frequently* when using the telephone for advocacy. Seven percent of alumni directors claimed to *always* use the telephone for political advocacy.

Face-to-face meetings. Twenty-one percent of alumni directors reported *never* using face to face as an advocacy tactic. Fourteen percent of directors said they *rarely* used face-to-face meetings as part of political advocacy. Another 29% of directors chose *sometimes* to best describe their alumni associations' efforts. The least chosen option, *frequently*, was selected by just 7% of alumni directors. Twenty-nine percent of alumni directors chose *always* to best describe the utilization of face-to-face meetings with legislators in the South region.

Public demonstrations. In the South region, 79% of alumni directors purported *never* partaking in public demonstrations to advocate politically. Fourteen percent of alumni directors chose the *sometimes* option. The *always* option was chosen by only 7%

of directors. No alumni director chose the *frequently* option or the *rarely* option to best describe the use of public demonstrations in their political advocacy efforts.

> ***West alumni directors' responses***. Alumni association executive directors in the West region were also asked to participate. Directors were provided with a list of advocacy tactics and a frequency scale for each tactic utilized. In Figure 8, the results of the West region are presented.
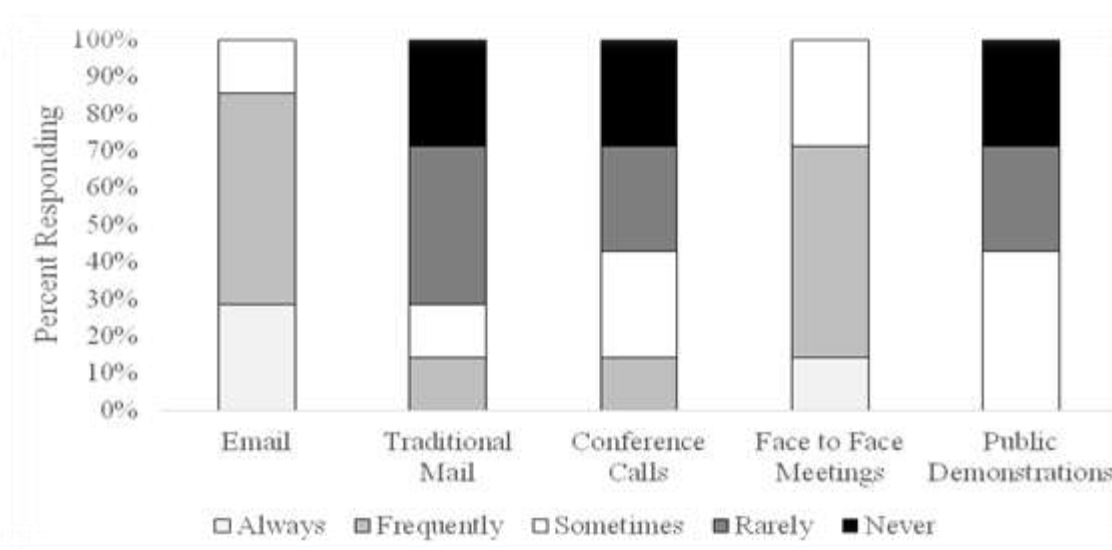
Figure 8. Frequency of communication tactics in West Region.

> *Email*. In the West region, 29% of alumni directors used email *always.* Fifty-seven percent of alumni association executive directors reported using email *frequently.* *Sometimes* best described the frequency of email usage by 14% of alumni directors. No alumni directors in the West region noted using email *rarely* or *never* to best describe their use of such a tactic in political advocacy.

> *Traditional mail.* Twenty-nine percent of directors chose *never* to best describe their use of traditional mail. Forty-three percent of alumni association executive directors said they used traditional mail *rarely*. Fourteen percent of alumni directors chose

sometimes to describe their advocacy efforts. An additional 14% of alumni directors selected *frequently* as the best way to describe the use of traditional mail in their advocacy efforts. No alumni director picked the *always* option when describing frequency of sending traditional mail.

      Telephone contact. In the West region, the use of the telephone in political advocacy was evenly distributed over several options. Twenty-nine percent of alumni directors chose the *never* option. Another 29% responded *rarely* using the telephone in advocacy efforts. A third group of 29% chose the *sometimes* option to best describe the frequency of using the telephone for political advocacy. *Frequently* was selected by 14% of alumni directors. No alumni director chose the *always* option to describe phone usage in political advocacy.

      Face-to-face meetings. The *always* option was chosen by 14% of alumni directors. Fifty-seven percent of alumni directors in the West region used face-to-face contact *frequently* with legislators. Twenty-nine percent of alumni directors selected the *sometimes* option to best describe the frequency of face-to-face meetings. No executive director selected either the *rarely* or *never* options when implementing a face-to-face approach to alumni association political advocacy.

      Public demonstrations. Alumni directors chose the *rarely* option and the never option 29% each. Forty-three percent of alumni directors reported *sometimes* using public demonstrations as part of their political advocacy efforts. The *always* option and the *frequently* option were not selected by any West region alumni director.

      Collaboration. Alumni association executive directors were asked to measure the frequency of their political advocacy efforts with other types of organizations. Alumni

directors responded to their collaboration with other colleges and universities, other non-profit organizations, and corporations. Frequencies of collaboration were broken down by the four regions for this study.

Midwest region collaboration. Fifty-six percent of Midwest region alumni directors *rarely* collaborated with other colleges and universities in political advocacy efforts. *Often* was the selection of 33% of alumni directors. *Sometimes* was the choice of 11% of directors. No alumni director chose the *very often* option or the *never* option regarding collaboration with other colleges and universities (see Figure 9).

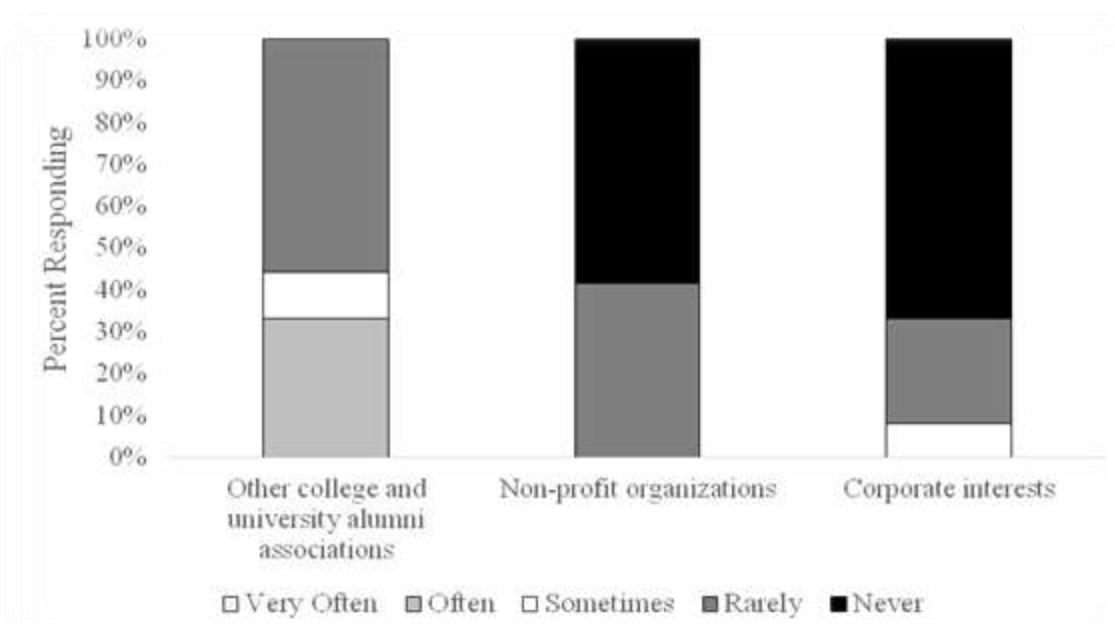*Figure 9*. Frequency of collaborative efforts in Midwest Region.

Midwest alumni association executive directors did not choose the *very often*, *often*, or *sometimes* options when measuring the frequency of collaborating with other types of non-profit organizations. Forty-two percent of Midwest alumni directors chose the *rarely* option to best describe such collaboration efforts. Fifty-eight percent of alumni

directors chose the *never* response to best describe collaboration efforts with non-profit organizations.

In regard to collaboration efforts with corporations, 67% of alumni directors in the Midwest responded they *never* worked with corporate representatives. Twenty-five percent of alumni directors selected the *rarely* option to describe such collaboration. Eight percent of alumni directors chose the *sometimes* option. No director picked either the *very often* or *often* options to best reflect their political advocacy collaboration efforts with corporate interests in the Midwest.

Northeast region collaboration. Few options were selected by alumni association executive directors in the Northeast region. No alumni association executive director chose the *very often, often, sometimes*, or *never* options as they relate to collaboration with other colleges and universities. Only the *sometimes* option was selected as best describing collaboration in political advocacy with other colleges and universities (see Figure 10).
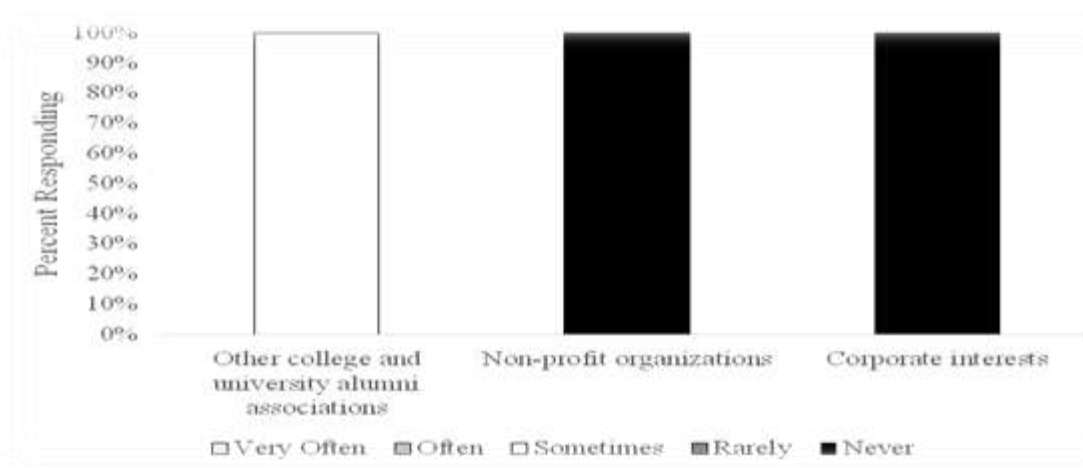
Figure 10. Frequency of collaborative efforts in Northeast Region.

No alumni director chose the *very often, often, sometimes*, or *rarely* options to best describe collaboration with non-profit organizations. The only option selected by alumni directors to describe political advocacy with non-profit organizations was *never*.

Regarding collaboration with corporations in political advocacy, only the *never* option was selected. No alumni director chose the options *very often, often, sometimes*, or *rarely* in the Northeast region.

South region collaboration. In the South region, 18% of alumni directors selected the *very often* option. Alumni directors by 18% again favored *often* to best describe their political advocacy efforts when collaborating with other colleges and universities. Forty-five percent of alumni directors chose the *sometimes* option to best represent the frequency of collaboration with other colleges and universities in political advocacy. Another 18% of alumni directors picked the *rarely* option. No South region alumni director chose the *never* option to describe the frequency of collaboration with other colleges and universities as an advocacy tactic (see Figure 11).
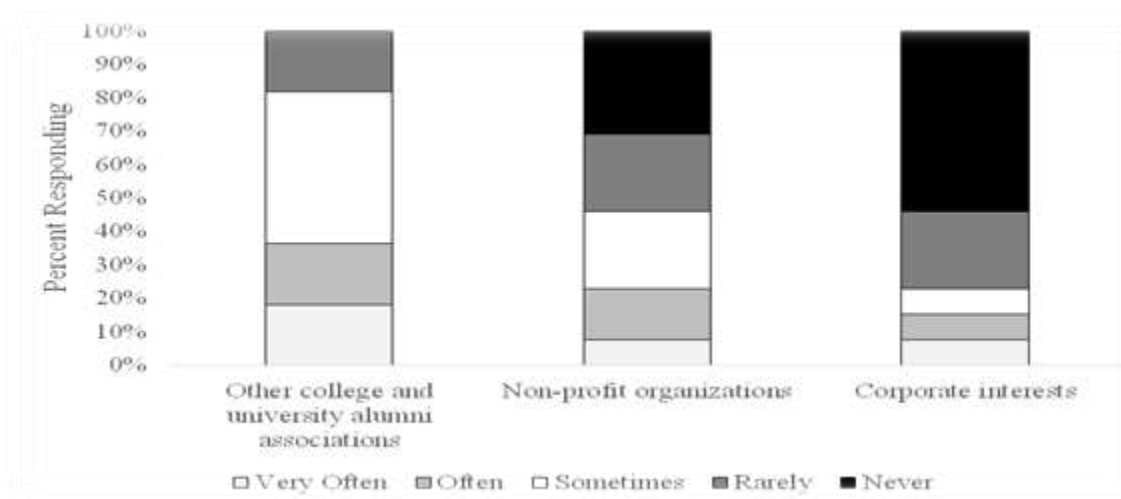
Figure 11. Collaborative efforts in the South Region.

Alumni directors in the South region were also asked to rate their collaboration efforts with other non-profit organizations. Directors by 31% reported *never* collaborating. Twenty-three percent of alumni directors claimed *rarely* collaborating with non-profit organizations. Another 23% of directors chose the *sometimes* option. *Often* was the choice of 15% of alumni directors. Lastly, 8% of alumni association executive directors said they collaborated *very often* with representatives of non-profit organizations.

Regarding collaboration with corporations, 54% of alumni directors in the South region chose the *never* option to best describe such collaboration in political advocacy. The *rarely* option was the choice of 23% of alumni directors. Eight percent of directors selected the *sometimes* option. Moreover, 8% of alumni directors picked both *often* and *very often* to most accurately describe their associations' collaboration efforts with corporations.

West region collaboration. In the West region, 57% of alumni association executive directors purported collaborating *very often* with other colleges and universities. On the other hand, 43% of alumni directors said they *rarely* collaborated with other colleges and universities in political advocacy. No alumni director chose the *never* option to describe collaboration efforts with representatives of other colleges and universities. Additionally, no alumni director selected the *often* or *sometimes* options to best describe their collaboration efforts with other colleges and universities (see Figure 12).
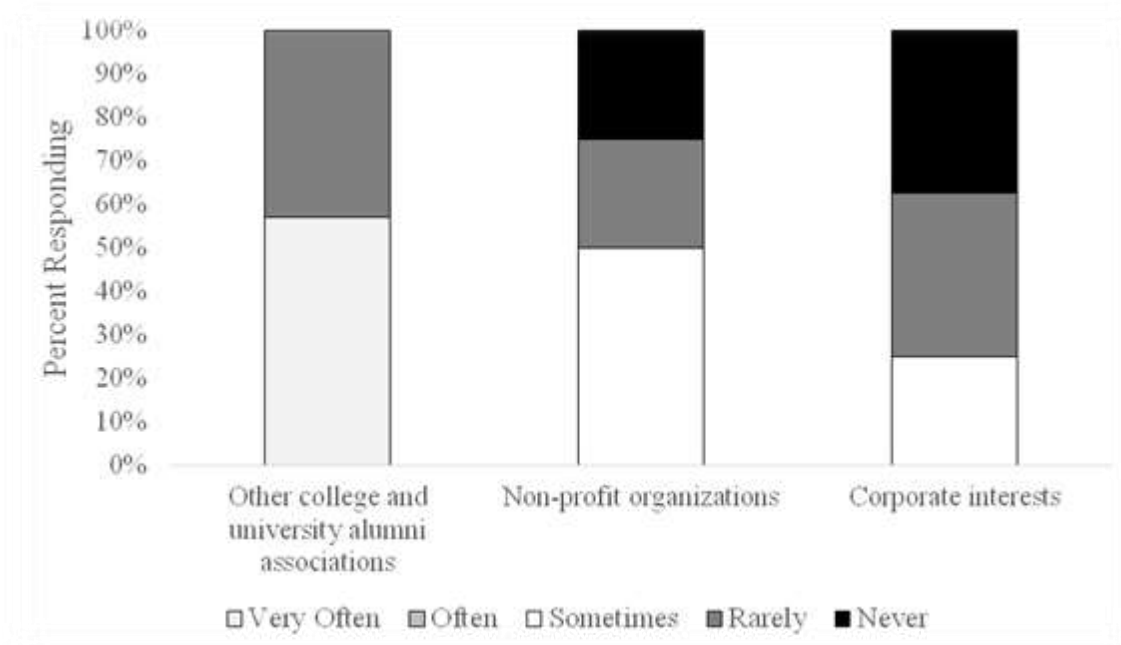
Figure 12. Collaborative efforts in the West Region.

Twenty-five percent of alumni directors preferred the *never* option on the frequency scale to best describe their collaborative efforts with non-profit organizations. An additional 25% of directors picked the *rarely* option. Fifty percent of alumni association executive directors chose *sometimes* to best describe their collaboration efforts with non-profit. No alumni directors selected the *very often* or *often* options regarding advocacy with other non-profit organizations.

West region alumni association executive directors provided their choices in regards to collaboration with corporations as well. Thirty-eight percent of alumni directors stated they *never* collaborated with corporations. An equal 38% of alumni directors selected the *rarely* option to describe their frequency levels with corporate interests. Alumni directors picked *sometimes* by 25%. In no cases did alumni directors

choose the *very often* or *often* options to best describe collaboration frequency with representatives of corporations.

  Collaboration tactics and frequencies. Alumni association executive directors were asked to provide the most accurate description of how they collaborated with other organizations. Alumni directors provided their input regarding the frequency of use of: *joint email, joint traditional mail, conference calls to legislators, joint meetings with legislators,* and how often their alumni association held *joint public demonstrations*.

  In the Midwest region, 42% of alumni directors reported holding joint meetings with other colleges and universities as part of political advocacy. No alumni directors revealed holding joint demonstrations. Thirty-three percent of alumni directors held joint conference calls with other colleges and universities. No alumni directors admitted sending joint mail but 25% of alumni directors stated sending joint email with representatives of other colleges and universities (see Figure 13).
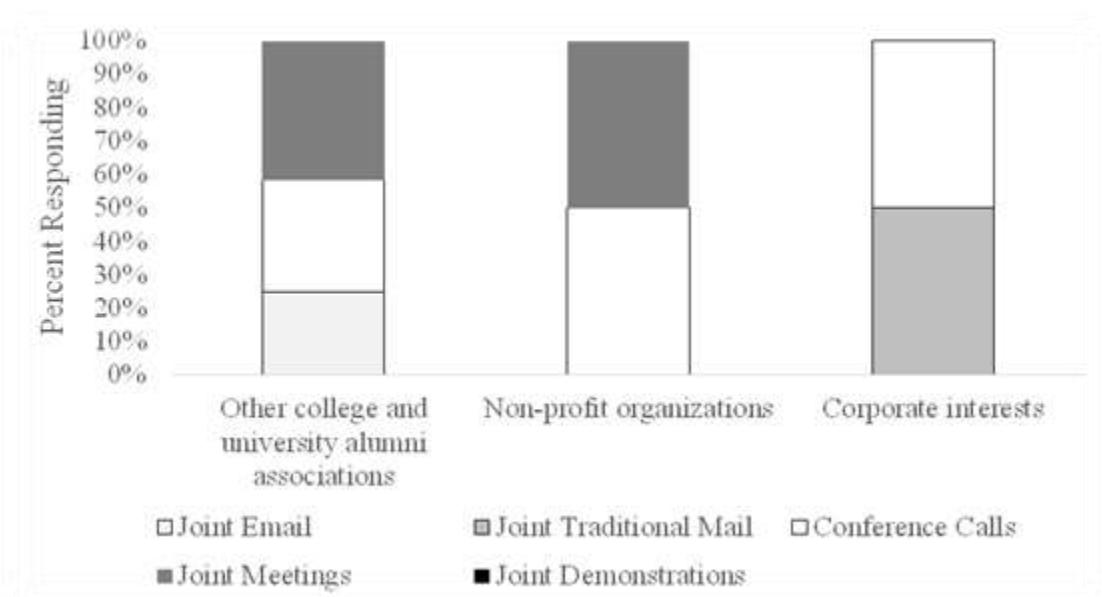
Figure 13. Frequency of collaborative tactics in Midwest Region.

When it came to collaboration efforts by alumni associations and other non-profit organizations, 50% of alumni directors reported holding joint conference calls with non-profits in the Midwest. Another 50% of directors held joint meetings with non-profit organizations as part of their advocacy efforts. No alumni executive director went on record saying his or her alumni association sent joint email or joint traditional mail. No director stated holding joint public demonstrations with non-profit organizations either.

Regarding collaboration with corporate interests, 50% of Midwest alumni directors sent joint traditional mail. Another 50% of alumni directors reported holding joint meetings with corporate representatives. No alumni director mentioned collaboration with corporations through joint email. Furthermore, no alumni director claimed to collaborate with corporate representatives through joint meetings or joint demonstrations. In the Northeast region, 67% of alumni directors stated collaboration with other colleges and universities through the tactic of joint meetings with legislators. Thirty-three percent reported having joint conference calls with other colleges and universities. No alumni director in the Northeast said there was collaboration through joint email, traditional mail, or through joint public demonstrations with other colleges and universities (see Figure 14).
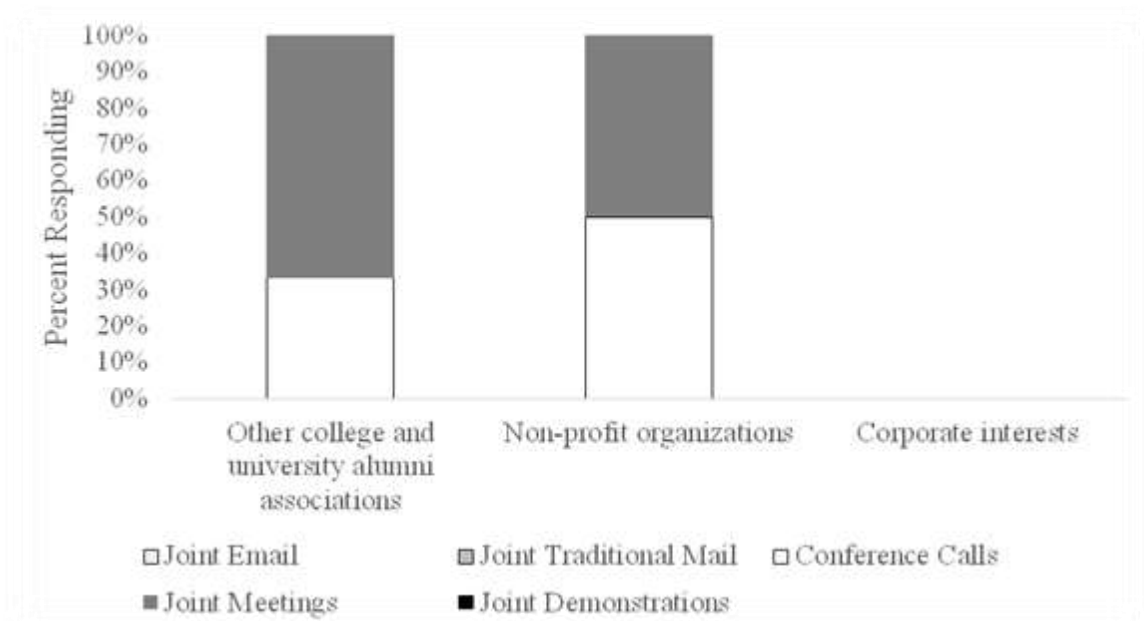
Figure 14. Frequency of collaborative tactics in the Northeast Region.

Fifty percent of alumni directors held joint conference calls with non-profit

organizations. Another 50% of directors reported holding joint meetings with

representatives from non-profit organizations. No alumni director declared sending joint

email or joint traditional mail with non-profit organizations. No directors purported

holding joint demonstrations with representatives of non-profit organizations. In

addition, there was no collaboration what so ever between alumni associations and

corporate interests in the Northeast as provided by respondents.

In the South region, 35% of alumni association executive directors said they sent

joint emails with representatives of other colleges and universities. Another 35% of

alumni directors reported holding joint meetings with other college and university

representatives. Twenty-nine percent of directors stated holding joint conference calls

with other college and university representatives regarding their advocacy efforts. No

alumni directors expressed holding joint demonstrations or sending out joint traditional

mail with representatives of other colleges or universities (see Figure 15).
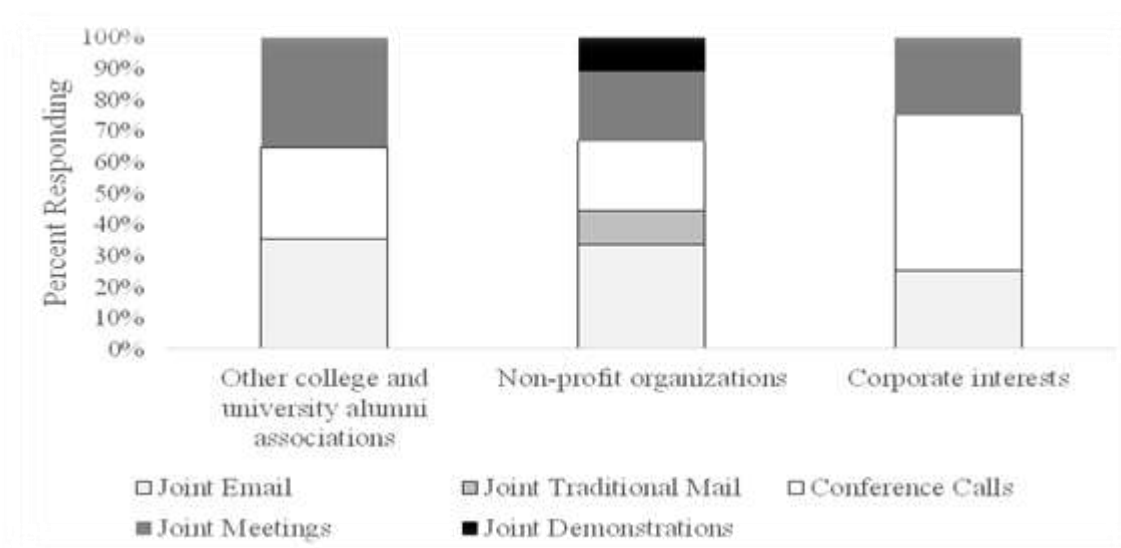
Figure 15. Frequency of collaborative tactics in South Region.

Thirty-three percent of South region alumni directors stated sending out joint

emails with non-profit organizations. Twenty-two percent of directors held joint

conference calls with non-profit representatives. Another 22% of directors reported

holding joint meetings with non-profit representatives. Eleven percent of directors said

they sent out joint traditional mail. Eleven percent of directors declared holding joint

public demonstrations with representatives of non-profit organizations.

Fifty percent of alumni directors in the South region admitted to holding joint

conference calls with corporate representatives. Twenty-five percent of directors sent out

joint email with corporate representatives. Another 25% of directors said they held joint

meetings with representatives of corporate interests. No director confirmed sending out

joint traditional mail or holding joint public demonstrations with corporate

representatives.

In the West region, 33% of alumni directors sent out joint email with

representatives of other colleges and universities. Twenty-nine percent of directors held

joint meetings with other public colleges and universities. Nineteen percent of directors

held joint conference calls with other college and university representatives. Ten percent

of alumni directors sent out joint traditional mail. Another 10% held joint public

demonstrations with representatives from other colleges and universities (see Figure 16).
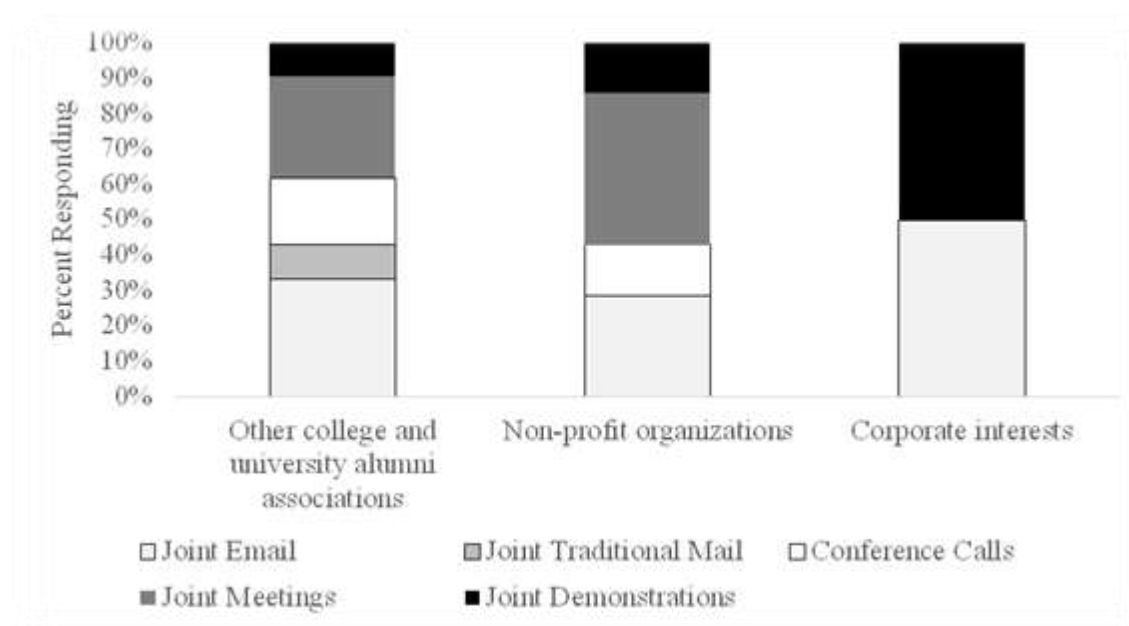
Figure 16. Frequency of collaborative tactics in the West Region.

Regarding collaboration with other non-profit organizations, 43% of alumni

directors held joint meetings with representatives of non-profit organizations. Twenty-

nine percent of directors sent out joint emails with non-profit representatives. Fourteen

percent of directors said they held joint conference calls. Another 14% admitted

collaborating with non-profit organizations at public demonstrations. No alumni director in the West region reported sending out joint traditional mail with non-profit organizations as part of political advocacy.

The response rate was very low when alumni directors were asked to report their collaboration with corporate interests. Fifty percent of alumni directors who conducted collaboration efforts with corporate leaders sent out joint emails. Another 50% of alumni directors admitted to holding joint public demonstrations with corporate interests. No alumni director collaborated through joint traditional mail, joint conference calls, or joint meetings in the West region.

Findings from research question 3. *What is the described professional relationship between public college and university alumni associations and Democratic and Republican members of state legislatures?*

Survey questions seven, eight, and nine apply to research question three. The three survey questions and survey results follow in the next section. Each nationwide survey result is also followed by results from the four geographic regions defined previously.

Political parties. State legislatures in the United States are responsible for providing substantial public funding for institutions of higher learning in their states. The reality being as it is, the Democratic and Republican parties dominate American politics (Schmidt et al., 2015). Depending on the state, political power may be unified or divided. Unified government means the executive and legislative branches are both under the control of one political party. Divided government occurs when the governor, head of the

executive branch, is from one political party and the legislative branch or state legislature is controlled by another party (Schmidt et al., 2015).

Higher education political advocacy involves communicating effectively in some way with members of state legislatures. Higher education professionals seek adequate funding levels from state legislatures to achieve their institutions' missions through influential university officials and through the advocacy efforts of alumni (Potter, 2003). Alumni association executive directors were asked to describe the level of support their institutions received from Democratic and Republican members of state assemblies.

Survey question seven. *How effective are your political advocacy efforts with the following parties?* Alumni association executive directors were asked to rate their political advocacy efforts with members of the two major political parties. The rating scale was as follows: *very effective, effective, neutral, ineffective*, and *very ineffective*.

Of the responses obtained, alumni association executive directors considered their political advocacy efforts as being predominantly *neutral* in relation to the level of effectiveness their institutions' efforts had with the two major political parties.

Sixty percent of alumni directors nationwide said their effectiveness was *neutral* when advocating before the Democratic Party.

Regarding the Republican Party, 58% of alumni directors assigned a *neutral* rating for effectiveness (see Figure 17).
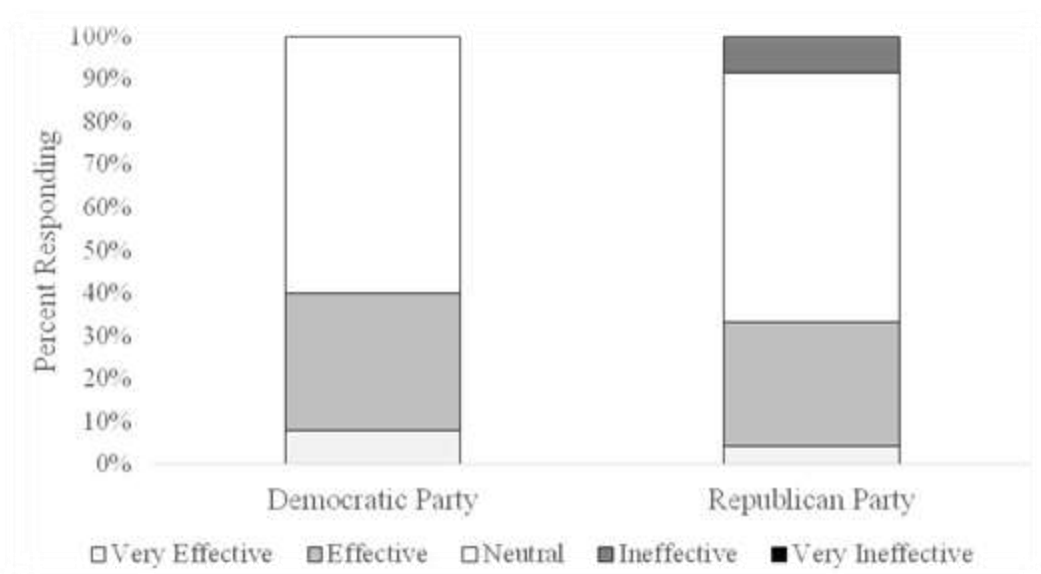
Figure 17. Advocacy effectiveness with major political parties nationwide.

For some alumni directors, advocacy efforts with party members were seen as *effective*, but neither party Democratic or Republican was noted as being considerably more effective than the other. Thirty-two percent of alumni directors reported *effective* when advocating before Democratic Party legislators while 29% of directors reported *effective* when advocating before Republican Party legislators. No alumni director reported advocacy efforts as being a *very ineffective* with either major party.

There are noticeable differences, however, when examining the results for the ratings *very effective* and *ineffective*. Eight percent of alumni directors nationwide disclosed their efforts as being *very effective* when dealing with the Democratic Party in state legislatures. Only half or 4% of alumni directors disclosed their efforts as being *very effective* with the Republican Party. When examining the results for the *ineffective* option, the results are more pronounced. Just over 8% of executive directors reported their efforts as being *ineffective* when approaching Republican Party legislators while no

director assigned the *ineffective* rating to Democratic Party legislators in their political advocacy efforts.

     Political parties by region. Executive directors of alumni associations in the Midwest region were asked to rate their effectiveness with the parties on a scale from *very effective* to *very ineffective.* Eighty-nine percent of directors rated the Democratic Party as *neutral.* Similarly, 88% of directors said the Republican Party was *neutral.* Neither party was rated as *ineffective.* Again, neither party was considered *very ineffective.* Neither party was considered *very effective* on the other end of the scale. Thirteen percent of alumni directors classified their efforts as *effective* with Republicans. At the same time, 11% of directors determined their efforts with Democrats as *effective.*

     In the Northeast region, both the Democratic and Republican parties were considered *effective* as relating to the efforts of alumni associations' advocacy efforts. Neither party received a rating for the other ratings options. No other ratings are available for *very effective, neutral, ineffective*, and *very ineffective* due to the low response rate.

     The response rate in the South region was much higher. Sixty-seven percent of alumni directors rated their effectiveness as *neutral* with both major political parties. Regarding the effective option, 33% of alumni directors said their efforts were *effective* with Republicans. Twenty-two percent of alumni directors said their efforts were *effective* with Democrats. Alumni directors by 11% reported their efforts as *very effective* with Democrats but no alumni director reported *very effective* with Republicans. On the opposite side of the effectiveness scale, neither party received an *ineffective* or *very ineffective* rating.

In the West region, 17% of executive directors said their efforts were *very effective* with both Democrats and Republicans. Sixty-seven percent of executive directors reported having *effective* efforts with Democrats. In the case of Republicans, only 33% of directors said their efforts were *effective*. Seventeen percent of directors classified their efforts as *neutral* with Democrats. When dealing with Republicans, alumni directors classified their efforts the same at 17% *neutral.* Alumni directors did not assign either party a *very ineffective* rating regarding their advocacy efforts. In the *ineffective* category, 33% of directors said their efforts with Republicans were *ineffective* while no alumni director said their efforts were *ineffective* with Democrats in state legislatures.

Political party leaders.   Similar to the U.S. Congress, the leaders of political parties in state legislatures hold considerable power. These leaders, whether Democrat or Republican, not only set the legislative agenda but determine when votes will occur (Sidlow & Henschen, 2013). Alumni association executive directors were asked to describe the level of support their HE institutions received from the leaders of the two major political parties in state legislatures.

Survey question eight. *How would you rate your alumni association's level of support among political party leaders?* Alumni association executive directors were requested to explain the level of support their associations received from the leaders of the two major political parties through the use of a rating scale (see Figure 18).

The scale provided included the following levels of support: *very supportive, supportive, neutral, unsupportive, and very unsupportive.* Directors described both parties to be *supportive*. Fifty-two percent of alumni directors revealed Democratic

leaders as *supportive* while slightly less or 48% of alumni directors revealed Republican

leaders as *supportive*.
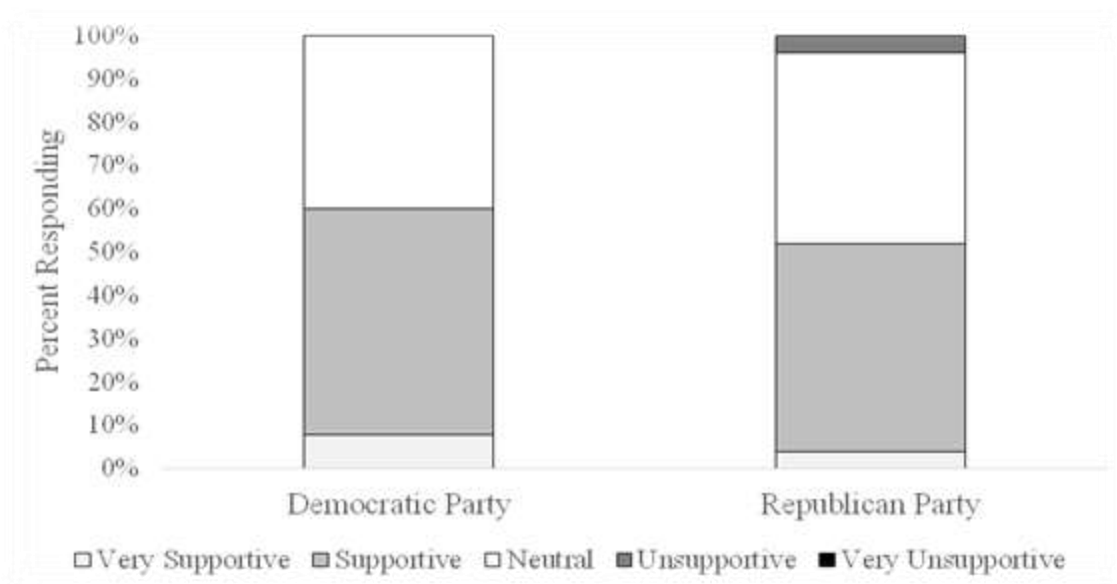
Figure 18. Advocacy support with major political party leaders nationwide.

Leaders of both parties were similarly close when rated as *neutral*. Alumni

directors by 40% detailed Democratic leaders as *neutral* and slightly higher or 44% of

alumni directors detailed Republican leaders as being *neutral*. Neither party's leaders

were considered *very unsupportive*. Four percent of alumni directors assigned

Republican leaders as *unsupportive,* while no Democratic Party leaders received a rating

of *unsupportive*. There is a noticeable difference when alumni directors made their *very*

supportive ratings. Democratic leaders were considered *very supportive* by 8% of

directors while only half that number, 4%, assigned the *very supportive rating* to

Republican leaders nationwide.

Political party leaders by region. According to the results of this study, leaders of both political parties received identical scores in the Midwest region. Neither Democrats nor Republicans in the Midwest were classified as *unsupportive* or *very unsupportive*. Moreover, leaders of neither party were considered *very supportive* by alumni directors. Thirty-three percent of executive directors of alumni associations considered both major political parties leaders as *supportive*. Again, both political parties' leaders received similar ratings of support for the *neutral* option. Directors by 67% assigned both parties as *neutral* on the topic of support for the efforts of alumni associations.

In the Northeast region, only two options were selected to describe level of support for alumni advocacy efforts by party leaders. Democratic Party leaders were classified as *supportive*. Republican leaders were classified as *neutral*. All other options were not chosen due to the low response rate in the Northeast region.

In the South region, 11% of alumni directors classified Democratic and Republican leaders as *very supportive*. Directors by 56% rated both party leaders as *supportive*. Thirty-three percent of alumni directors classified both parties as *neutral*. Neither Democrat nor Republican leaders were considered *unsupportive* or *very unsupportive* by alumni directors.

In the West region, 17% of alumni directors classified Democratic Party leaders as *very supportive*. No alumni director classified Republican Party leaders as *very supportive*. Sixty-seven percent of alumni directors stated both parties' leaders as *supportive*. The *neutral* category was selected by 17% of alumni directors in the case of both political parties' leadership. Neither party leadership was classified as *very unsupportive*. Nonetheless, 17% of alumni directors chose the *unsupportive* category to

best describe Republican leadership while no alumni director assigned such a rating to

Democratic Party leadership.

  Legislative committee members. State legislatures like the U.S. Congress assign

issues and potential legislation to various committees. Committee members gain

specialized knowledge in particular areas of public policy (Turner et al., 2013). Similar

to other public policy issues, HE is influenced by committee members who deal with HE

issues on a daily basis. Alumni association executive directors were asked to describe the

level of support they received from legislators who served on HE committees in their

state legislatures

  Survey question nine. *How would you rate your alumni association's level of*

support among those legislators who serve on committees dealing with higher education

issues?

Nationwide, alumni association executive directors were asked to describe the level of

support their associations received from Democrats and Republicans who served on

legislative committees specializing in HE issues. Again, directors were provided with a

scale to rate the level of support their associations received. The rating options were as

follows: *very supportive, supportive, neutral, unsupportive, and very unsupportive.*

Similar to the party leadership question, neither party's HE committee members received

a *very unsupportive* rating (see Figure 19).
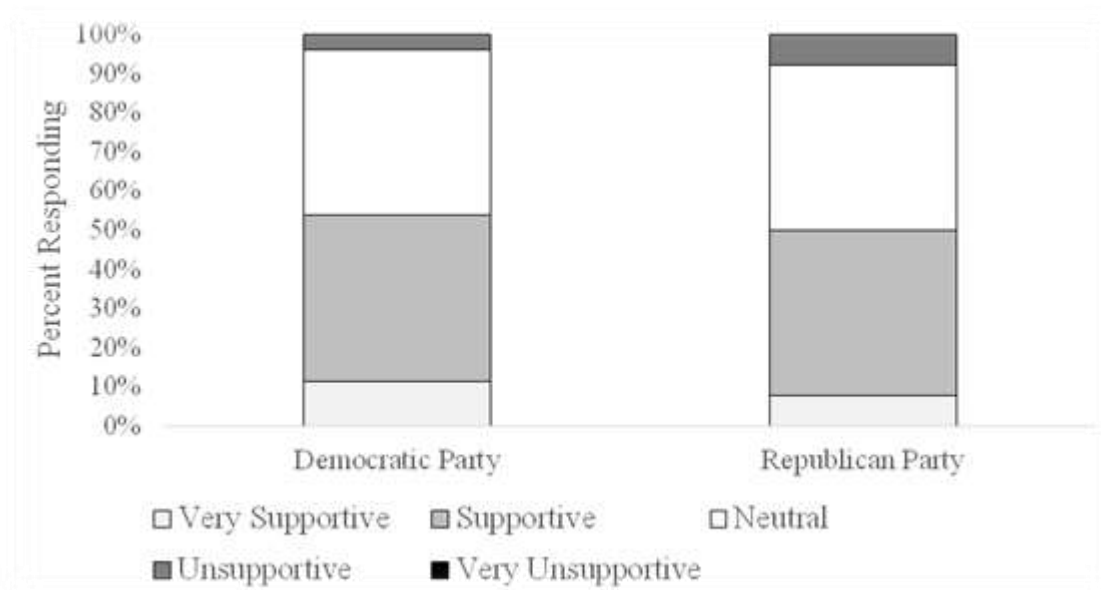
Figure 19. Advocacy support among HE legislative committee members nationwide.

Both parties received similar ratings when described as *supportive* and *neutral*.

Forty-two percent of alumni association executive directors disclosed both Democratic

committee members and Republican committee members as *supportive* of their

associations' advocacy efforts. Both parties received similar scores when rated *neutral*.

Forty-two percent of alumni directors reported Democrats and Republicans on HE

committees as *neutral*.

Alumni association executive directors did show a slight preference for

Democrats over Republicans when assigning the option of *very supportive*. Almost 12%

(11.5) of alumni directors said Democrats were *very supportive* while almost 8% (.077)

of directors said Republican committee members were *very supportive*. No alumni

director stated members of either party as *very unsupportive*. A noticeable difference

appeared regarding the rating of *unsupportive*. About 4% (.038) of alumni directors

revealed Democrats as *unsupportive*. Almost 8% (.077) of alumni directors revealed Republicans on HE committees as *unsupportive*.

Legislative committee members by region. In the Midwest region, 44% of alumni directors stated both Democratic and Republican members of HE committees were *supportive* of their associations' advocacy efforts. No alumni director rated either parties' committee members as *very supportive*. Fifty-six percent of alumni directors rated Democrats as *neutral* in their support. Forty-four percent of alumni directors rated Republicans as *neutral*. No Midwest alumni director said either party was *very unsupportive* in regards to alumni association advocacy efforts. According to ratings on the *unsupportive* scale, 11% of alumni directors claimed Republicans were *unsupportive*. In contrast, no alumni directors assigned the *unsupportive* description to Democrats serving on HE legislative committees.

In the Northeast region, both political parties received a *supportive* rating. Neither party was assigned a *very supportive* rating by alumni directors. Alumni directors did not rate legislative committee members in the *neutral, unsupportive,* or *very unsupportive* categories. The lack of variety in choices was the result of a low response rate.

In the South region, 20% of alumni directors gave *very supportive* ratings to Democrats on HE legislative committees. Ten percent of alumni directors said Republicans were *very supportive*. Forty percent of alumni directors rated both Democratic and Republican committee members as *supportive* of their associations' advocacy efforts. In the *neutral* category, 50% of alumni directors said Republicans were *neutral* towards their advocacy efforts. At the same time, 40% of alumni directors

assigned the *neutral* rating to Democrats. According to ratings presented, no alumni

director gave an *unsupportive* or *very unsupportive* score to either Democrats or

Republicans.

In the West region, 17% of alumni directors said both Democrats and Republicans

on HE legislative committees were *very supportive*. Thirty-three percent of alumni

directors said both Democrats and Republicans were *supportive* of their alumni

associations' advocacy efforts. Another 33% of alumni directors rated both Democrats

and Republicans as *neutral* towards their advocacy efforts. Seventeen percent of alumni

directors considered both major political party members on HE committees as

unsupportive. Neither Democratic nor Republican committee members were rated *very*

unsupportive by alumni association executive directors in the West region.

Open-ended questions. Alumni association executive directors were asked two

open-ended questions. Open-ended questions were included to provide alumni

association executive directors the opportunity to "express opinions in their own words"

(Fink, 2013, p. 34) and "more freedom of response (Fraenkel et al., 2011, p. 375). In

particular, the open-ended questions would provide alumni directors the chance to

explain how they measured the success of their alumni associations' political advocacy

efforts. Moreover, alumni directors would be allowed the opportunity to explain how

they felt their alumni associations' political advocacy efforts were rewarded.

Survey question ten. *How does your alumni association measure the success of*

its political advocacy efforts? Numerous answers were given by alumni association

executive directors regarding the measure of success. Some of the answers were similar

and were grouped by a common theme.

State funding levels were the most prevalent answer to measuring success of alumni association political advocacy efforts. Budget allocations or appropriations were mentioned by numerous respondents. The link between funding levels and success are not surprising considering the funding challenges HE officials have had to face over the past number of years.

Another popular answer used to measure success was related to goals or objectives of the alumni association. Several respondents measured success through achieving institutional goals and legislative outcomes. Not only were important HE votes in legislatures given consideration, but participation levels in political advocacy by alumni. Level of alumni engagement and contact with legislators were mentioned to measure success. Respondent #1 spoke of the activity level of alumni and the overall success achieved by their advocacy efforts. Respondent #5 pointed to the number of alumni participating, communications, activity level, and success of overall results.

Respondent #4 and Respondent #14 talked of the number of attendees at events, the number of communications to legislators, and the number of people that had taken action. Respondent #15 reported the level of contacts and visibility with key decision makers. Respondent #16 pointed to open rates of emails and number of alumni participating. Respondent #19 measured success by the coordination and support of the government relations team and chancellor.

Other alumni directors admitted little activity. Respondent #18 conceded just starting to build a plan of action for legislative relations. Respondent #8 said their political advocacy efforts were a work in progress. Respondent #9 claimed results were not measured because the alumni association did not do enough. Respondent #21

admitted not doing much in terms of political advocacy at present but the association had done more in the past.

Funding levels, meeting goals, and increased alumni engagement and legislative communications were the most common measures of success. Following up on how alumni association executive directors measured success, alumni association executive directors were further asked a second open-ended question. Directors were questioned about the issue of their alumni associations being rewarded for their political advocacy efforts. Answers to the rewarded question were again grouped by common theme.

Survey question eleven. *In what ways do you feel your political advocacy efforts are rewarded?* Like measuring success, funding was a major category with a recurring theme. Alumni association executive directors gave several similar responses. Respondent #9 commented the alumni association's efforts were rewarded by increases in the university's budget provided for by the state legislature. Respondent #15 said the reward of political advocacy was demonstrated through funding. Respondent #5 talked about the university being rewarded with a better funding base.

Goals were again mentioned in the second open-ended question. Respondent #11 stated political advocacy efforts were rewarded by meeting goals. Respondent #8 reiterated this theme by saying efforts were rewarded by the university achieving its goals and objectives. Several respondents included goals as part of a larger set of rewards.

A third category having emerged dealt with recognition or awareness. This category was applied to different groups. Respondent #12 discussed the reward of being recognized in their efforts by university leaders. Respondent #14 commented their alumni association political advocacy was rewarded when leaders and officials at the

university saw such efforts "as a tangible example of alumni relations." Furthermore, Respondent #6 pointed to an acknowledgement by university administrators of the efforts of the alumni association.

In addition to recognition or awareness by HE leaders and administrators, recognition or awareness was presented in other ways as well. Respondent #5 talked of the awareness from the alumni themselves or university friends of the key role HE continues to play in society was considered rewarding. Respondent #13 said their efforts were rewarded "by engaging supporters in support of the institution."

Recognition or awareness was also applied to state legislators. Respondent #10 included the idea of greater knowledge by legislators of what the university provides and "a full awareness" of what impact their institution has. This particular director noted those legislators who were aware of public HE tended to support the important role public HE plays in our society today. Respondent #5 claimed the very fact the importance of HE was mentioned in legislative committee meetings was rewarding. Respondent #11 said their efforts were rewarded when legislators become more aware of the needs of the university. Respondent #4 asserted the rewards are establishing "strong personal relationships with many elected officials."

Respondent #5 mentioned the "awareness of the public good versus personal benefit" was rewarding. Respondent #3 said the rewards were evident when either students or families with current students benefited from political advocacy. Respondent #1 commented their political advocacy efforts were rewarded when there was "a change in position" regarding the legislature. Finally, Respondent #7 did not specify how the

alumni association's political advocacy efforts were yet rewarded but was "anxious to discover" such rewards.

Summary

The largest group of respondents to the survey came from alumni directors in the South region. More than 41% (41.5) of alumni association executive directors participating in this study represented colleges and universities located in the southern U.S. Over 52% of alumni association executive directors reported their associations played a minor role in political advocacy. The largest group or nearly 37% of alumni association executive directors stated their association members participated in political advocacy for 20 years or more.

Overall, a combined 50% of alumni association executive directors expressed sending emails *always* or *frequently* in their political advocacy efforts. The numbers for the use of traditional mail were stark. Over 83% of alumni directors *rarely* or *never* utilized traditional mail in their advocacy efforts. More than 37% of alumni directors reputed *never* placing phone calls in their political advocacy efforts. Almost 29% (28.57) of alumni directors *sometimes* used face-to-face meetings as a component in their advocacy efforts when approaching state legislators. Sixty-three percent (62.86) of alumni directors throughout the United States disclosed *never* participating in public demonstrations as part of their advocacy efforts.

Higher education collaboration was not common according to answers provided in the survey. A combined 57% of alumni directors reported *rarely* or *never* collaborating with other public colleges and universities in their political advocacy efforts. Collaboration with representatives of non-profit organizations was less frequent.

Almost 75% of alumni directors recorded to *never* or *rarely* collaborate with non-profit organizations. Moreover, the overwhelming indication was that alumni associations had even less collaboration with corporate interests. Eighty-three percent of alumni directors responding to the survey revealed to *never* or *rarely* collaborate with representatives of corporations.

Collaborative efforts by geographic region were somewhat similar to the overall results. Collaboration among HE institutions, although not common, was more likely than collaborative efforts between either HE and non-profits or HE and corporations. Regarding collaborative efforts among HE institutions, only the West region appeared to follow such a policy a majority of the time. Fifty-seven percent of West region alumni association executive directors in this study reported to collaborate *very often* with other colleges and universities. Additionally, West region alumni associations were more inclined to collaborate with non-profit organizations. Fifty percent of alumni directors stated *sometimes* collaborating with representatives of non-profit interests.

No alumni directors in this study rated their advocacy efforts as *very ineffective* with either members of the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. Moreover, no alumni director reported party leaders or HE committee members as *very unsupportive* in the overall survey. In the South region, Republicans earned their best ratings. More alumni directors considered their efforts higher with Republican legislators than with Democrats under the *effective* option. Conversely, the largest difference in favor of Democrats occurred in the West region where alumni directors rated their efforts more *effective* with Democrats in state legislatures.

Where noticeable differences emerged in the overall study were in the *very effective* and *ineffective* options. More alumni directors nationwide said their advocacy efforts were *very effective* when approaching Democratic legislators than Republicans legislators. In addition, 8% of alumni directors stated their advocacy efforts were *ineffective* when approaching Republican state legislators. At the same time, no alumni director responding to this survey nationwide assigned the *ineffective* option to Democrats in state legislatures.

In Chapter Five, an overall summary will be presented. In addition, brief summaries will cover each chapter of this research project. Final thoughts about the findings in this research will be discussed. Moreover, future research recommendations will be suggested.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

In Chapter Five, a succinct review of research findings on political advocacy of public D1 college and university alumni associations will be presented. Findings will then be analyzed and discussed. The literature review compiled in Chapter Two will then be consulted as it relates to the findings of this study. Such topics as the role of alumni associations, collaborative efforts utilized, and potential threats to HE funding will be addressed. In addition, Chapter Five will include an explanation of the research findings, recommendations for future research based on information gathered, along with an overall summary of the chapters presented earlier in this study.

Findings

Alumni association executive directors at public D1 colleges and universities were invited to participate in an online survey regarding their organizations' political advocacy efforts. Of the 221 public D1 college and university alumni associations in the United States, 20% of alumni directors took time to respond. The survey was made available to alumni directors in June and July 2015. Twenty percent of alumni directors who responded to this survey did so the first day it was available. Moreover, a full 30% of directors who responded did so within the first week of the survey's posting. Responses continued to be received with each succeeding email reminder.

Additionally, alumni association executive directors were presented with two open-ended questions titled; how do you measure success? In what ways do you feel your advocacy efforts are rewarded? Besides being recognized by HE administrators for their efforts, the overwhelming response to the open-ended questions related to funding.

Funding levels, budget appropriations, or budget increases were most often mentioned by alumni directors as to describe success and rewards.

Alumni association executive directors were asked to respond to the communication techniques their organizations used in political advocacy efforts. Moreover, alumni directors were provided with frequency ratings to best gauge their advocacy efforts regarding each tactic presented. In the analysis of research question #1 to follow, percentages were used to provide a clear presentation of tactics utilized by alumni associations in political advocacy.

Research question #1. *What political advocacy efforts do alumni association executive directors report using when lobbying state legislatures?* Several aspects of political advocacy were explored. The following were areas alumni association directors reported in regard to their lobbying efforts.

Communications. When presented with various forms of communication in the study, the use of email as a common medium of communications was not surprising given its predominance in American society today. Overall, 50% of alumni association executive directors reported sending email *always* or *frequently* in their advocacy efforts. What was surprising in the results was the fact 25% of alumni directors indicated *never* using email. The number of directors not using email appears rather high since email is a common tool.

The low use of traditional mail was not surprising. Eighty-three percent of alumni directors reported *never* or *rarely* sending traditional mail in their advocacy efforts. In contemporary American society, the sending of mail is declining (Boston Consulting

Group, 2010). The decline in mail usage appears to be reflected in alumni association advocacy efforts where email usage is more popular.

A full 57% of alumni directors claimed *never* or *rarely* using the telephone in advocacy efforts. Since less than a majority of alumni directors utilized the telephone in their advocacy efforts, the indication would imply representatives of alumni associations are not in direct contact with state legislators. There is a strong possibility alumni association executive directors leave personal contact with legislators to governmental relations professionals or high ranking HE administrators. Direct lobbying involves personal contact between a lobbyist and public officials (McClain & Tauber, 2010).

Forty percent of alumni association executive directors purported *never* or *rarely* meeting face-to-face with state legislators as part of their political advocacy efforts. At first glance, this would seem surprising. Face-to-face meetings with legislators are considered a direct technique in lobbying efforts (Schmidt et al., 2015). Face-to-face meetings may be handled by HE officials with greater stature since typically governmental relations professionals have conducted HE lobbying activities (Johnson, 2011). The lack of face-to-face contact by alumni association representatives with legislators may need to be reconsidered if present advocacy efforts are deemed ineffective.

Seventy-seven percent of alumni association executive directors declared they *never* or *rarely* used public demonstrations as a tactic in their advocacy efforts. Public demonstrations are examples of indirect lobbying techniques intended to generate public pressure (Schmidt et al., 2015). The low usage of public demonstrations as reported in this study is not surprising. According to Berry (1977), demonstrations are generally

directed at the press and "decrease in newsworthiness the more often they occur" (p.

233). Demonstrations are classified as unconventional tactics and are utilized

infrequently (Bardes, Shelley, & Schmidt, 2014). Nonetheless, 17% of alumni directors

admitted *sometimes* utilizing public demonstrations. The circumstances by which

demonstrations are utilized could be examined further.

In the category labeled *other*, alumni directors were provided the opportunity to

present other tactics utilized by their alumni associations. One director reported hosting

events as part of political advocacy efforts. It was also reported meetings were held with

legislators in the state capital. Furthermore, the use of town hall meetings was mentioned

to promote the concerns of alumni associations. The use of a college magazine was

discussed by another alumni director. Using print was apparently seen as a way to get

messages out to alumni considered important to political advocacy efforts. The

effectiveness of these approaches was not addressed in this study.

Collaboration. When collaborating, interest groups may form alliances or

coalitions. Coalitions may be utilized as a tactic in political advocacy efforts by public

college and university alumni associations. Coalitions can be formed with other HE

institutions. Alumni associations may also form coalitions with non-profit organizations

or even with corporations. Interestingly, 57% of alumni association executive directors

nationwide who responded to the survey stated they *never* or *rarely* collaborated with

other colleges and universities in their advocacy efforts. This finding would appear to

indicate most alumni associations are looking out only for the interests of their alma

maters. However, in the results presented, there is evidence of some collaboration among

colleges and universities. About 40% of alumni directors claimed to have collaborated *often* or *very often* with other institutions of higher learning

Public college and university alumni associations were less likely to collaborate with representatives of non-profit organizations. Seventy-five percent of alumni directors said they had *never* or *rarely* collaborated with non-profit organizations. Collaboration with corporations resulted in even lower response rates. Over 83% of alumni directors responding to the survey admitted to *never* or *rarely* collaborating with representatives of corporations. Although the vast majority of alumni directors posited they did not collaborate with corporations, approximately 5% of directors revealed *often* or *very often* collaborating with corporate interests. Despite the small percentage of collaboration with corporations, an analysis of such collaboration merits follow up. The reasons as to why alumni directors would form coalitions with corporate interests deserve to be researched.

When alumni association executive directors did collaborate, collaboration was far more likely to occur with directors of other alumni associations. The mostly widely used collaborative tactics included email, meetings, and conference calls. Alumni directors who responded to the survey purported 70% of the joint emails they submitted were with representatives of other colleges and universities. The frequency of joint email appears to correspond with the level of collaboration. Only 21% of alumni directors reported sending joint emails with representatives of non-profit organizations. An even smaller number, 9% of alumni directors, sent joint email with corporate representatives.

Sixty-eight percent of alumni association executive directors noted collaboration with other colleges and universities through joint meetings. Collaboration with representatives of non-profit organizations was considerably lower. Only 28% of alumni

directors disclosed holding joint meetings with non-profit representatives as part of their advocacy efforts. Collaboration with corporations was far less frequent. Less than 4% of alumni directors claimed to have collaborated with corporate representatives through joint meetings.

The frequency of a particular communication tactic and frequency of collaboration with a particular type of organization is seen again regarding holding joint conference calls. A noticeable 61% of alumni association executive directors reported conducting joint conference calls with representatives of other colleges and universities in political advocacy efforts. The percentages fall dramatically when conference calls are conducted jointly with non-profit or corporate representatives. Only 26% of alumni directors disclosed collaboration with non-profit representatives through joint conference calls. The percentages for joint conference calls with representative of corporate interests are even lower. As few as 13% of alumni directors divulged collaborating with corporate interests through joint conference calls.

Despite the fact traditional mail is not utilized nearly as often as email, the use of traditional mail too reflected the closeness of collaborative efforts. Fifty percent of alumni association executive directors indicated sending joint traditional mail with other colleges and universities. The collaborative levels for sending traditional mail jointly with both non-profit organizations and corporations were much lower. Only 25% of alumni directors stated they sent joint traditional mail with representatives of non-profit organizations. Another 25% of alumni directors admitted sending mail jointly with representatives of corporate interests.

Only in the case of infrequent joint demonstrations does the level of collaboration not follow the frequency levels of other tactics. When public demonstrations were held, 40% of alumni directors said they collaborated with representatives of other colleges and universities. Interestingly, 40% of alumni directors admitted holding public demonstrations with non-profit representatives. The circumstances of this collaboration should be investigated. Only 20% of alumni directors revealed holding joint public demonstrations with representatives of corporate interests.

Research question #2. *How do alumni association lobbying efforts on the behalf of public higher education differ from one region of the country to another?* Various forms of communication are available to alumni associations to utilize in their political advocacy efforts. Contact with state legislators can be made through use of email, traditional mail, telephone calls, face-to-face meeting, and even through public demonstrations. Research question #2 provided for a comparison and contrast of alumni association political advocacy efforts based on the region of the United States in which the alumni association operated.

Email. In the Northeast region, 50% of alumni directors said they *always* used email in their advocacy efforts. Fifty percent of the other Northeast responders noted they *never* used email for political advocacy. In the South region, 33% of alumni directors stated *never* using email in political advocacy. In contrast, 86% of alumni directors in the West region and 54% of alumni directors in the Midwest region claimed to use email *frequently* or *always* in their advocacy efforts.

Traditional mail. The lack of traditional mail usage was evident throughout the four regions in this study. A majority of alumni directors in the Midwest and Northeast

regions reported *never* sending traditional mail as part of their advocacy campaigns. Eighty-six percent of alumni directors in the South region reported *rarely* or *never* using traditional mail while 72% of West region alumni directors admitted *never* or *rarely* sending traditional mail.

Telephone calls. Except for the South region, a majority of alumni association executive directors reported *never* or *rarely* using the telephone in political advocacy efforts. A full 100% of Northeast alumni directors admitted *never* or *rarely* using the telephone. Some alumni directors said they *sometimes* used the telephone. Overall results, however, indicated little telephone usage as a political advocacy tactic.

Face-to-face meetings. A majority of alumni directors in the Midwest region stated to *never* or *rarely* meet face to face with state legislators. In the Northeast region, directors were divided between *rarely* and *sometimes* meeting face to face. Conversely, 58% of South region alumni directors *always* or *sometimes* met face to face to with state legislators. West region alumni directors had the most face-to-face contact. Seventy-one percent of alumni directors claimed to have met *always* or *frequently* with state legislators.

Public demonstrations. The last tactic presented to alumni association executive directors was the use of public demonstrations in political advocacy efforts. The vast majority of alumni directors surveyed did not utilize public demonstrations. In the Midwest region, 91% of alumni directors claimed to *never* or *rarely* conduct demonstrations. In the Northeast, 50% of directors said they *never* organized public demonstrations while another 50% *sometimes* conducted demonstrations.

In the South region, a large majority of alumni directors reported *never* using public demonstrations. Seventy-nine percent of South region alumni directors *never* used such a tactic in political advocacy. In the West region, 58% of alumni directors *rarely* or *never* utilized public demonstrations.

Collaboration with colleges and universities. Alumni association executive directors were asked to rate the frequency by which they collaborated with various types of organizations. In the Midwest region, 56% of alumni directors reported *rarely* collaborating with other colleges and universities. Thirty-three percent of directors reported *often* collaborating with other HE representatives. In the Northeast region, the only choice selected regarding frequency of collaboration with other institutions of higher learning was *sometimes*.

In the South region, 45% of alumni directors stated they *sometimes* collaborated with other colleges and universities. Thirty-six percent of directors claimed to collaborate *often* or *very often*. In the West region, 57% of alumni directors revealed collaborating with other colleges and universities *very often*. Nevertheless, another 43% of alumni directors purported *rarely* collaborating.

Collaboration with non-profit organizations. Alumni association executive directors who responded to this survey reported collaborating less frequently with non-profits than with other HE institutions. One hundred percent of alumni directors in the Midwest region reported *never* or *rarely* collaborating with non-profit organizations as part of political advocacy. In the Northeast region, alumni association executive directors only responded that they *never* collaborated with non-profit organizations.

In the South region, a majority of alumni directors reported *never* or *rarely* collaborating with non-profit organizations. In the West region, a full 50% of alumni directors revealed *rarely* or *never* collaborating with non-profit interests. Still, 50% of alumni directors in the West region purported to collaborate *sometimes* with representative of non-profit organizations.

Collaboration with corporations. According to the findings in this research study, the least frequent form of collaboration conducted by D1 HE alumni associations was with corporations. In the Midwest region, 92% of alumni directors disclosed *never* or *rarely* collaborating with corporations as part of political advocacy efforts. In the Northeast region, the only option selection to represent frequency of collaboration was *never* to partake in actions with corporate interests.

In the South region, 77% of alumni directors claimed to *never* or *rarely* collaborate with representatives of corporations. In the West region, a combined 76% of alumni association executive directors purported *never* or *rarely* collaborating with corporations in their political advocacy campaigns. Although collaboration was rare, there was some collaboration with corporate interests. The circumstances of this collaboration deserve further analysis.

Collaborative tactics by region. In the Midwest region, 42% of alumni directors said they held joint meetings with representatives of other colleges and universities. Thirty-three percent of directors reported holding joint conference calls with other colleges and universities. In regard to collaboration with non-profit organizations, 50% of alumni directors made joint conference calls. Another 50% held joint meetings with representatives with non-profit organizations.   In addition, 50% of directors said they

sent out joint email with representatives of corporate interests. Another 50% of directors stated sending out joint mail with corporate representatives in the Midwest.

In the Northeast region, 67% of alumni directors sent out joint mail with other colleges and universities. Thirty-three percent of directors made joint conference calls. Fifty percent of directors made joint conference calls with non-profit organizations. Another 50% of directors sent out joint email with non-profits. However, no alumni director in the Northeast reported any joint collaboration tactic with corporate interests.

In the South region, 35% of alumni directors stated sending email jointly with other colleges and universities. Another 35% of directors send out mail jointly. Regarding non-profit organizations, 35% of directors sent joint email. Twenty-two percent of directors made joint conference calls or held joint meetings with non-profit organizations. Fifty percent of directors in the South held joint conference calls with corporate interests. Twenty-five percent of alumni directors sent out joint email with corporate representatives.

In the West region, 33% of alumni directors sent out joint email with representatives of other colleges and universities. Twenty-nine percent of directors purported holding joint meetings. In regard to non-profit organizations, 43% of alumni directors held joint meetings. Twenty-nine percent sent out joint emails. Fifty percent of directors who collaborated with corporate interests sent out email jointly. Another 50% of directors claimed to have held public demonstrations jointly with corporate interests in the West.

Research question #3. *What is the described professional relationship between public college and university alumni associations and Democratic and Republican members of state legislatures?*

Alumni association executive directors were asked to describe their organizations' professional working relationship with Democratic and Republican party members in state legislatures. Alumni directors rated the effectiveness of their legislative advocacy efforts with both political parties. Alumni directors were requested to also rate the level of support their advocacy efforts received from political party leaders. Furthermore, alumni directors were asked to rate the level of support their advocacy efforts received from state legislators who served on committees specializing in HE issues.

Political parties. Overall, Democrats received a slightly higher *neutral* percentage than Republicans on the ratings scale. Moreover, slightly more alumni directors reported their efforts as *effective* with Democrats than Republicans. In addition, 8% of directors said their efforts were *very effective* with Democrats while only 4% of directors said their efforts were *very effective* with Republicans. Conversely, 8% of directors said their efforts were *very ineffective* with Republicans while no directors responding to this survey stated their efforts were *very ineffective* with Democrats.

Party leaders. Ratings for level of support among party leaders were somewhat similar to the effectiveness levels alumni directors reported having with party members. Slightly more Democratic leaders were considered *supportive*. Republican leaders were more likely to be rated *neutral* than Democrats. Alumni directors reported 4% of Republican leaders as *unsupportive* and no alumni director reported Democratic leaders as *unsupportive*. Eight percent of alumni directors said Democratic leaders were *very*

supportive while only 4% of alumni directors said Republican leaders were *very*

supportive.

  Legislative committees. Nationwide, both Democrats and Republicans serving on

HE committees were rated as *supportive* by 42% of alumni directors. Additionally, 42%

of alumni directors said both Democrats and Republicans were *neutral* regarding their

support for HE alumni association advocacy. The *very supportive* and *unsupportive*

options revealed some differences in the two major political parties. Twelve percent of

alumni directors claimed Democrats *as very supportive,* while 8% of alumni directors

claimed Republicans as *very supportive*. Four percent of alumni directors purported

Democrats as *unsupportive,* while 8% of alumni directors purported Republicans as

unsupportive.

Conclusions

  Most of this study's findings are consistent with the research presented by

numerous scholars in Chapter Two. The fact alumni directors measured rewards and

success to funding relates to the findings of Tandberg (2010) that politics matters in HE

lobbying efforts and state appropriation levels. The lack of literature regarding political

advocacy tactics is not surprising since Avery (2012) recommended research be

conducted on the role of alumni in lobbying efforts. Weerts et al. (2010) urged alumni

association leaders to inquire about the political advocacy efforts carried out by

individual alumni for continuity of message. This suggestion would seem to indicate a

lack of control or coordination by alumni associations in political advocacy.

  The results regarding collaboration were in line with previous research. Sabatier

and Jenkins-Smith (1993) spoke of coalitions and groups working together when sharing

a common interest. In this study, even though HE collaborated at times, college and

universities do not collaborate with other institutions on a highly consistent basis. As

mentioned by Avery (2012), state legislators would like HE to speak as one voice.

Nonetheless, the lack of collaboration would seem to indicate alumni associations

participate in political advocacy to promote the interest of their alma maters. The focus

on the alma mater may simply be an expression of school pride or an understanding other

colleges and universities are competitors for a stake in the same state funding.

Furthermore, alumni directors were asked to describe collaboration with

representatives of non-profits. The survey results indicated there was some collaboration

but less than collaboration efforts with other colleges and universities. The lower level of

collaboration may be the fact HE is again competing with representatives of other interest

groups for state funding. Scholars such as McLendon et al. (2009) and Tandberg (2010)

have reported HE being squeezed out by competing interests at the state level.

The level of collaboration with corporations was even lower than collaboration

with non-profit organizations. Perhaps most alumni association officials do not see a

benefit of collaborating with corporate representatives. As mentioned by scholars such as

Martinez and Garcia (2014) and Clausen and Page (2011), corporate interests could well

symbolize neo-liberalism to alumni directors. It is feasible that HE representatives in this

study shared the same negative opinion of neo-liberalism as symbolized by corporate

America.

Although most alumni association executive directors scored Democrats and

Republicans relatively equally regarding level of support, there were noticeable

differences. According to this study, Democrats were more likely to be described as *very*

supportive and Republicans were more likely to be rated as *unsupportive*. The noticeable and consistent differences HE has received in support as indicated in this study are not surprising. Generally, the Democratic Party being more liberal favors government action to address societal issues while the Republican Party being more conservative favors less government and more individual responsibility (Schmidt et al., 2015). Moreover, many conservative lawmakers see HE as bloated and are of the opinion HE should learn to live with less government support (Hebel & Blumenstyk, 2014).

Polarization of American politics has been increasing in state legislatures with Republicans becoming more extreme faster than Democrats (Shor, 2014). The results of the survey may reflect the rise of the Tea Party Movement in the Republican Party whose members oppose compromise with Democrats (Schmidt et al., 2015). Even with the end of the Great Recession, HE representatives are still struggling to secure state funding at satisfactory levels (Kelderman, 2014). Whether the Tea Party Movement is to blame for the ratings reported in this study is worth further investigation.

Implications for Practice

Findings from this research indicate alumni association executive directors use several communication tools or tactics in their political advocacy efforts. The frequency of such communication tactics varied by region of the U.S. and when coupled with different collaborative efforts. The first suggestion to alumni directors would be to keep meticulous records of each tactic used and its effectiveness. Such records could help improve future advocacy efforts on the behalf of alumni associations.

Secondly, if alumni representatives share common interests with other colleges and universities, the effectiveness records should be shared to improve the prospects for

achieving common goals in future legislative sessions. Common interests could be translated into continuity of message during legislative sessions. State legislators preferred HE speak with one voice in its political advocacy efforts as reported by Avery (2012).

Another way alumni association executive directors should consider sharing effectiveness records is with representatives of non-profit organizations and corporations. Although collaboration with non-HE organizations has been less frequent, alumni directors may find the sharing of effectiveness records advantageous. As presented by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) and Stachowiak (2013), coalitions are interest groups that share common core beliefs. Sharing effectiveness records could help build trust and demonstrate good faith with representatives considered competitors or adversaries at times for state funding.

Higher education officials and alumni directors may want to justify the importance of public HE in building a more self-reliant population when contemplating collaborative efforts with non-profit interests. McLendon et al. (2009) and Tandberg (2010) found HE tended to lose out to other interest groups for state funding. Doyle and Delaney (2009) spoke of the increased state role in K-12 education. Perhaps HE officials should consider collaboration with K-12 and promote a comprehensive approach to education rather than an approach that divides the educational system.

Stressing the importance of a highly-educated workforce being needed to lure or retain businesses should be the emphasis of HE officials when considering collaboration with corporate interests (Kelderman, 2014). Fiercely advocating for a well-educated citizenry could resonate with corporate representatives. If alumni directors and other HE

officials come to see non-profit and corporate representatives more as potential allies, HE interests may be achieved more often in state legislatures. Weerts (2014) found HE institutions receiving higher levels of anticipated support from state government possessed engagement strategies demonstrated by significant partnerships with the surrounding community, industries, and businesses. The engagement strategies of better-funded institutions were promoted as having mutual benefits to local communities and industries (Weerts, 2014).

Recommendations for Future Research

Several issues have emerged as a result of the findings in this study, which would warrant further research. Tandberg (2010) found a significant positive relationship between the percentage of registered HE lobbyists and state HE appropriations. Tandberg (2010) noted as the percentage of HE lobbyists increased in proportion to total registered lobbyists, appropriations for HE increased. Perhaps a similar relationship exists regarding advocacy conducted by alumni associations. It would be worth investigating whether evidence exists proving HE appropriations by state legislatures increase as alumni association advocacy efforts increase.

As reported by Richardson (2009), faculty in the state of Nevada has become politically active. Nevada HE faculty have created their own political action committee or PAC which advocates for HE interests including state funding and publicly endorses candidates and contributes to their campaigns (Richardson, 2009). An investigation is worth conducting on the Nevada model as it relates to HE faculty movements in other states. There may be a national trend developing around more active faculty or Nevada may simply be an anomaly.

Much of the research available on performance-based funding (PBF) in HE covers the history of PBF and various models instituted through the years and alterations to those models (Dougherty et al., 2011; Miao, 2012). Dougherty et al. (2011) claimed addressing the fears of HE administrators was needed to gain the support of the HE community. Miao (2012) reported on fiscal uncertainty and recommended a transition period be implemented to help HE administrators. Perhaps in-depth publication of frank and honest opinions from HE administrators throughout the country may help state legislators better understand the concerns of HE professionals.

Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) spoke of core beliefs holding groups with similar interests together in coalitions. According to McLendon et al. (2009), HE seems to lose out to other interest groups for state funding dollars in difficult economic times. Tandberg (2010) noted the expansion of Medicaid pushing out funding for public HE. There appears to be little or no research showing collaborative efforts between HE and non-profit organizations. If collaboration has occurred, conceivably such collaboration can serve as a model for more collaborative efforts between HE alumni associations and representatives of non-profit organizations in the future.

Collaboration between HE alumni associations and corporate interests also warrants further research. Very little collaboration was reported in this research study. However, survey results indicated collaboration between HE and corporations did exist. Further research on the specifics of collaborative efforts between HE and corporations should be conducted. Possibly a more constructive working relationship may be developed. Higher education professionals like Clausen and Page (2011) perceived the corporate model or privatization as detrimental to traditional HE. Studies of a

constructive relationship, however, may improve the likelihood of better understanding and increased collaborative efforts between HE and corporations.

Research design. Different research designs could garner different results. Using a case study approach could provide more accuracy by limiting the scale of the research. Weerts and Ronca (2012) observed a great disparity in state support for public HE among states but not within states. Perhaps concentrating on one particular state or region rather than nationwide may result in higher response rates and a greater confidence in survey findings. Since the South and Midwest regions provided the most participants in this study, alumni directors from these regions should be contacted. A case study allows for in-depth analysis of individuals and activities (Creswell, 2014). The case study would entail qualitative research. Whether qualitative research would reveal more accurate finding as related to political party support for HE is questionable but worth pursuing.

In qualitative research, the inquirer serves as the key instrument (Creswell, 2014). The inquirer is involved with the participants and the research that is gathered is interpretative (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research could be collected through focus groups comprised of alumni association executive directors or through personal interviews (Creswell, 2014). Interviews could be carried out in-person, by telephone via Skype or conventional telephone interviews for participants who prefer not to be visually identified. The intent of personal contact would be to improve participation over the previous approach of an impersonal online survey. Similar to this study, participants would be asked a series of questions regarding alumni association advocacy tactics, collaborative efforts, and political party support in state legislatures.

Nevertheless, even qualitative research conducted through the interview setting may not be a substantial improvement over a quantitative approach. Interviewing respondents may result in a phenomenon known as social desirability. When social desirability occurs, a respondent provides answers that cast one's self in a "good light" with the person asking the survey questions (Dillman et al., 2014, p. 99). The intention of such behavior is to create a positive impression (Dillman et al., 2014).

In the qualitative approach, data would be collected over a limited period of time. Anonymity would be guaranteed. Questions would be both similar and different from the questions asked in this study. Most questions would be closed-ended in nature to provide consistency in their answers (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Not only would alumni directors be asked to rate the frequency of advocacy tactics but also asked to rate the degree of effectiveness for each tactic utilized. Moreover, questions would include level of collaboration with other colleges and universities, non-profit organizations, and corporations and perceived levels of effectiveness of those collaborative efforts. Perhaps the survey instrument in the earlier study could even be utilized to ask for representatives of non-profits and corporations to provide their opinions on collaborating with HE interests.

Summary

In Chapter One, the issue of state support for HE was presented. According to Hebel and Blumenstyk (2014), state funding of HE has not kept up with either enrollment growth or with inflation. Doyle and Delaney (2009) claimed state appropriations for HE were primarily cyclical and spending levels would reflect the state of the economy. Tandberg (2010) found political factors played a significant role in funding levels.

Moreover, McLendon et al. (2009) noted the importance of political factors in their research on HE funding. Often in hard economic times, McLendon et al. (2009) discovered HE lost out to other interest groups.

Doyle and Delaney (2009) claimed state funding of HE has become less reliable and more volatile especially since the 1990s. As reported by Tandberg (2010), state appropriations for HE have been reduced relative to spending on other programs. Many HE professionals believe lower state appropriations for HE are permanent (Fethke & Policano, 2013). Nevertheless, HE has utilized lobbying efforts used by other special interest groups to compete for funding (Greenberg, 2013). As purported by Tandberg (2010), politics matters and HE lobbying efforts have been proven effective.

This study was comprised of an in-depth examination of HE alumni association lobbying efforts. The conceptual framework of this study was based primarily on the Fiscal Policy Framework developed by Tandberg (2009). Fiscal policy framework attempts to explain the state appropriation process for HE (Tandberg, 2009, 2010). The conceptual framework also included Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith's Advocacy Coalition Framework also referred to as Coalition Theory advanced in 1993. According to Coalition Theory, coalitions are held together by policy core beliefs (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993).

In Chapter Two, the history of lobbying and interest groups was presented. Lobbying by interest groups has long been part of the American political tradition (Turner et al., 2013). Often interest groups holding common objectives form coalitions, which may be formal or informal relationships, and long or short term in duration (Phinney, 2010). Since the end of World War II, there has been enormous growth in

enrollments at colleges and universities (Lapovsky, 2013). A large part of this growth

was due to the GI Bill (Farnsworth, 2010). Historically, there had been strong and

consistent state government support for public HE (Doyle & Delaney, 2009).

Potential threats to public HE funding were also discussed. Neo-liberalism favors

free market solutions to public policy issues including HE (Clausen & Page, 2011). The

shift from public good to private responsibility has resulted in fewer state dollar

appropriated per student (Weiss, 2014). The cost of HE is shifting away from state

governments and more to students and their families (Hebel & Blumenstyk, 2014).

There has also been a dramatic rise in performance-based funding calling for

more HE accountability (McLendon & Hearn, 2013). McKeown-Moak (2013) purported

performance-based funding models reflected more than just the interests of HE

institutions. Liu (2011) predicted more funding models would be adopted. Dougherty et

al. (2011) claimed the fears of HE administrators would need to be addressed to win their

support. Miao (2012) called for states to reduce fiscal uncertainty and to allow time for

HE administrators to learn how PBF models would impact their institutions. Kelderman

(2014) reported HE officials were even willing to accept no cuts to their budgets rather

than push for spending increases.

Additionally, polarization threatens HE funding. Polarization means greater

philosophical differences between political parties making compromise more difficult

(Dar, 2012). About 50% of state governments in the U.S. are more polarized than the

U.S. Congress (Shor, 2014). According to Dar (2012), polarization in state governments

leads to reduced funding for public HE.

Potter (2003) claimed HE administrators were looking more to their alumni to help in lobbying efforts. Weerts et al. (2010) found that even though alumni traditionally had been active in charitable giving, alumni were advocating politically on behalf of their alma maters. Weerts et al. (2010) recommended alumni association leaders inquire about alumni advocating independently of HE institutions for continuity of message.

In his study, Avery (2012) found there was no uniform system to report legislative success of governmental relations efforts to college governing bodies. Furthermore, Avery (2012) identified three players in HE lobbying efforts: professional lobbyists, HE administrators, and alumni. The role alumni associations' played in political advocacy was this research study's focus.

In Chapter Three, the intention of this study was presented. The role of alumni associations in political advocacy was examined. Political advocacy is defined as techniques used to communicate with government officials or working on a team specializing in political action (Weerts et al., 2010). This study incorporated an online survey presented to alumni association executive directors to acquire data on their organizations' lobbying techniques. Additionally, executive directors were asked whether such techniques included collaboration with other organizations in coalition efforts. Finally, alumni directors were asked to rate the level of support their advocacy efforts received from Democrats and Republicans.

In Chapter Four, the results of the online survey were analyzed and explained in detail. A majority of D1 public alumni association executive directors described their association as playing a minor role. The greatest number of alumni associations had been

involved in advocacy for more than 20 years. A plurality of respondents to the survey represented alumni associations in the Southern region of the United States.

Overall, alumni directors reported using email rather than traditional mail. Public demonstrations were rarely used as an advocacy tactic nationwide. Telephone contact was used sometimes as well as face-to-face meetings. Regarding collaboration, most HE institutions did not regularly collaborate with other colleges or universities.

When collaboration did occur with other colleges and universities, email was the most common tactic utilized jointly. Collaboration with non-profit organizations was reported as infrequent. Even less collaboration occurred between alumni associations and representatives of corporate interests.

In regard to support for HE among state legislators, alumni directors rated the two major political parties relatively evenly. There was, however, a small but noticeable difference in two ratings alumni directors assigned. Overall, Democrats were more likely to be rated as *very supportive*. Republicans on the other hand were more likely to be rated as *unsupportive* in this study.

In Chapter Five, all research findings were summarized. Alternative research approaches were presented with the intent of gathering more accurate data regarding the advocacy efforts of HE alumni associations. One intent of future research would be to measure the effectiveness of various advocacy tactics.

Additionally, collaboration among HE institutions, non-profits, and corporations should be analyzed from non-HE perspectives to find whether representatives of non-profits and corporations share a common desire to collaborate with representatives of HE institutions. In conclusion, further research should be conducted regarding political party

support ratings for HE advocacy efforts. Whether the rating differences found in this

study remain constant merits additional study.

Appendix A

College and University Alumni Association Survey Questions

Filtering Questions

1. Are you the executive director of the college/university alumni association?

Yes   No

2. Are you the individual primarily responsible for directing political advocacy efforts of the alumni association?

Yes   No

If No, please forward this survey to the individual primarily responsible for the alumni association's political advocacy activities

Political Advocacy

1. How would you characterize the role your alumni association plays in your college/university political advocacy efforts?

Major Role	
Minor Role	
No Role	

2. How long has your alumni association played a role in political advocacy?

1-5 years	
6-10 years	
11-20 years	
More than 20 years	
Does not play a role	

3. In which region of the country does your alumni association primarily operate?

Midwest	
Northeast	
South	
West	

4. How often does your alumni association use the following tactics?

	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Email					
Traditional Mail					
Phone Calls					
Face to Face Meetings					
Public Demonstrations					
Other					

Coalitions

1. How often do your political advocacy efforts lead to collaboration with the following types of organizations?

	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Not At All
Other college/university alumni associations					
Non-profit organizations					
Corporate interests					

2. In what ways do you collaborate with the following types of organizations?

	Other College/University Alumni Associations	Other Non-Profit Organizations	Corporate Interests
Joint email			
Joint mail			
Conference calls			
Joint Meetings			
Joint Demonstrations			
Other			

Political Parties

1. How effective are your political advocacy efforts with the following parties?

	Very Effective	Effective	Neutral	Ineffective	Very Ineffective
Democrats					
Republicans					

2. How would you rate your alumni association's level of support among political party leaders?

	Very Supportive	Supportive	Neutral	Unsupportive	Very Unsupportive
Democratic Leaders					
Republican Leaders					

3. How would you rate your alumni association's level of support among those legislators who serve on committees dealing with higher education issues?

	Very Supportive	Supportive	Neutral	Unsupportive	Very Unsupportive
Democrats					
Republicans					

Open-ended questions

1. How does your alumni association measure the success of its political advocacy efforts?

2. In what ways do you feel your political advocacy efforts are rewarded?

Appendix B

IRB Approval from Lindenwood

LINDENWOOD

LINDENWOOD UNIVERSITY   ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI

DATE: September 25, 2015

TO: Richard Buchli, Ed.D
FROM: Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board

STUDY TITLE: [695792-1] Higher Education Alumni Associations and Political Advocacy
IRB REFERENCE #:
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: June 4, 2015
EXPIRATION DATE: June 4, 2016
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research project. Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the IRB.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the completion/amendment form for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of June 4, 2016.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

Generated on IRBNet

If you have any questions, please contact Megan Woods at (636) 485-9005 or mwoods1@lindenwood.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

If you have any questions, please send them to mwoods1@lindenwood.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board's records.

Appendix C

Invitation to Participate in Survey

School of Education

Lindenwood University

June 10, 2015

Dear Mr. Smith,

Political advocacy conducted by higher education alumni associations is the topic of my doctoral dissertation. It is the goal of the online survey to gather as much data as possible on the political advocacy tactics used by alumni associations. The survey is mostly composed of closed-ended questions. However, two open-ended questions will allow participants to share their individual thoughts. The results of this survey will be available for you to read if you so desire.

Your responses will be kept confidential, and you will remain anonymous. The accuracy of this project will be enhanced through your participation. This study has been approved by the University's Research with Human Subjects review committee at Lindenwood University. The official policy of Lindenwood University requires participants to sign an informed consent form. This form will be provided to you as a link to the online survey. I would like to take this time to thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Richard N. Buchli
Doctoral Candidate
Lindenwood University

Appendix D

Letter of Introduction and Informed Consent

LINDENWOOD

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Higher Education Alumni Associations and Political Advocacy

Principal Investigator Richard N. Buchli
Telephone: ████████████████████████

Participant_____ Contact Information _____

_____

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Richard N. Buchli under the guidance of Dr. Rhonda Bishop. The purpose of this research is to determine the degree of political advocacy and tactics used by higher education alumni associations when dealing with state legislatures.

2. a) Your participation will involve
   ➢ An introductory email explaining the nature of this study. It will be followed by an online survey of questions asking whether your alumni association utilizes political advocacy, and if so, what tactics your alumni association uses and if your alumni association collaborates with other types of organizations when carrying out political advocacy.

   ➢ Each participant will be asked to complete the online survey, which should take approximately 20 minutes. The survey will be sent directly to the email address of the alumni association's executive director or other official responsible for conducting political advocacy efforts.

   b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be approximately 20 minutes.

   Presently, 221 alumni associations will be involved in this research.

3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.

4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about alumni associations and political advocacy.

5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Richard N. Buchli at ███████████ or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Rhonda Bishop at ███████████ You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Jann Weitzel, Vice President for Academic Affairs at 636-949-4846.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

_____   _____

Participants Signature   Date   Participant's Printed Name

_____   _____

Principal Investigator Signature   Date   Investigator Printed Name

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Vita

Richard N. Buchli was born in Chicago, Illinois. He has a passion for international and public affairs. Richard earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in political science from Illinois State University. He won the Vito Marzullo Internship in public administration and interned with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs. Richard also served as Director of Development for the Heartland Institute, a public policy think tank.

Richard earned his MBA in international business from Dominican University. Teaching English as a second language, Richard was awarded an outstanding teacher certificate. Later, he produced public affairs television programming for the Comcast Network winning a Hugo Award for documentaries. Richard currently teaches college-level political science and business courses. Richard, and his wife, Julia, presently reside in Springfield, Missouri.