Building Bridges: a Multi-case Study of Why and How Private Selective Colleges in Massachusetts Recruit Community College Transfer Students

Author: Kristin Elizabeth Hunt

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BUILDING BRIDGES: A MULTI-CASE STUDY OF WHY AND HOW PRIVATE SELECTIVE COLLEGES IN MASSACHUSETTS RECRUIT COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER STUDENTS

Dissertation

By

KRISTIN E. HUNT

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Dedication

This is dedicated to my parents, Kathleen L. Hunt and Peter G. Hunt, who each in their own way led me to this point. May they always recognize my achievements as their own.
ABSTRACT

Research has demonstrated that attending a selective college increases the probability of graduating and accessing certain economic and social opportunities, but few community college transfer students obtain such an opportunity. In an effort to seriously consider how to increase access to this underserved population, it is important to examine the bridges by which academically-qualified community college transfer students access selective institutions.

This multi-case study looks at why and how three private selective institutions in Massachusetts currently recruit community college students. The four main themes identified as to why these institutions recruit community college students were: strategic enrollment practices, diversity, institutional enrichment, and community engagement. The two themes identified for how institutions recruit community college students were: information sharing and infrastructure support. Several challenges facing both the selective colleges, and the community college transfer students were also identified and explored. The major finding of the study was that the unique position occupied by each institution within the hierarchy of the higher education system influences the rationale as well as the methods by which it approaches and considers the transfer of community college students.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank administrators at the three institutions that participated in this multi-case study, Amherst College, Clark University, and X University. I sincerely appreciate all of the people who took the time and consideration to fulfill my requests for interviews and information. I greatly respect the decision of senior administration at each institution to allow for a critical examination of their policies and practices.

I would also like to thank my dissertation committee for their advice and direction during this process. To my chair, Dr. Ana Martinez-Alemán, I would like to thank you for your forthrightness, philosophical perspective, and the way in which you assured the process kept moving forward. To my readers, Dr. Karen Arnold and Dr. Francesca Purcell, I want to thank you for your attention to detail and all of your encouragement. In addition, I would like to thank my fellow doctoral students, especially my “Comps Group” for all of their support and friendship. I feel blessed to have gone through this journey with you. To Dr. Rossanna Contreras-Godfrey, your determination inspires me.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The ability to transfer from an open-access, public community college to a private selective four-year college represents a powerful illustration of the American dream. This dream is centered on the idea that everyone, even those with little economic means, can build their own fortune through hard work and determination. For the past fifty years, the American public has held a pervasive belief that pursuing the American dream can be done most effectively through accessing higher education (Bailey & Morest, 2006; Bowen, Kurzweil, & Tobin, 2005; Dowd, Bensimon et al., 2006; Kahelenberg, 2004). Gianino-Racine (2006), executive director of ACCESS, a non-profit higher education advocacy group, emphatically states, “Today’s path to an economically vibrant, comfortable, successful life must include a higher education, and in particular a four-year degree” (¶2).

Several studies confirm that those with a college degree make more money during their lifetimes, are in better health, and generally enjoy a higher standard of living than those who do not hold such a degree (Baum & Ma, 2007; Dickert-Conlin & Rubenstein, 2007; Gianino-Racine, 2006; Oasis/Community Impact, 2006). Through the development and expansion of federal polices such as the G.I. Bill of Rights, and the Higher Education Act of 1965 with all of its renewal acts, the federal government has demonstrated support of the notions that some type of college is accessible to everyone and that those who demonstrate academic merit will have their choice of institutions. This potential for all to participate in the realm of higher education is epitomized in the development and tremendous growth of state-funded community colleges. Not only do these institutions
have open access and low tuitions, but one of their main missions is to transfer students to four-year degree-granting institutions, both public and private.

Unfortunately, there is ample evidence to suggest that despite the public’s conceptions and the commitments made by both the federal government and state governments, many Americans, specifically those from low-income family backgrounds, are still not accessing and/or completing four-year degree programs (Bowen, Kurzweil, & Tobin, 2005; Carnevale & Rose, 2004; Heller, 2002; Kahlenberg, 2004). Gianino-Racine (2006) blames this “unattainable dream” on the fact that our society purposefully “perpetuates systems and structures that cause higher education to be an unattainable dream” for many low- and middle-income families (¶2).

Often, it is the case that the more selective a college is, the fewer low-income students are represented (Carnevale & Rose, 2004; Dowd & Cheslock, 2006). The fact that colleges exercise varying degrees of selectivity in the number of their admissions based on measures of academic merit is a telling aspect of the current American higher education system. The system is often represented as a hierarchy comprised of both public and private institutions. In general, public colleges tend to be less selective, and therefore more accessible, than many private institutions. However, there are public universities with high levels of selectivity and an entire sector of private higher education that is less selective or even nonselective in its admissions. The public sector of American higher education is comprised of community colleges, state colleges, and state universities. Philip Altbach (1999) notes that in the United States, many of the most well known universities are private, but over 80 percent of all college students attend public institutions (p. 3).
The phenomenon of a hierarchical higher education system in which many institutional players vie for position based on their exclusivity seems to have developed in response to how the tenets of the American dream have played out in public policy at various historical moments. The primary tenets of the American dream include meritocracy, or the idea that everyone can earn their standing in society through their individual abilities; democracy, or the idea that everyone has the right to education so that he or she can participate in society; the right to private gain; and responsibility to the public good. A review of the history of higher education, provided in Chapter 2, demonstrates how these four factors have combined to produce a differentiated system of American higher education.

It is not possible to claim that private institutions serve the private good, and public institutions serve the public good. Both sectors serve both types of good, and historically this has led to a complicated relationship between the public and the private. While the first colleges were private enterprises designed to educate a select few for the clergy, these schools still instilled a history of financial assistance for those (males) who could not afford tuition but who were considered intellectually qualified. And while there was never a national university established, the federal government has played an instrumental role in the shaping of both public and private higher institutions by providing funding for individual students as well as for research (Gladieux & King, 1999).

Because of the overlap between what is public and what is private in higher education, higher education institutions are often classified by factors other than funding, such as what type of degree they confer, whether they conduct research, and their level of
selectivity in admissions. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2007) has established the most widely used classification system, which recently underwent a major revision. The new classifications are organized around three key questions: What is taught? To whom? In what setting? (¶2). The classification system has never been intended as a ranking instrument. However, several sources, most notably US News & World Report, have used the Carnegie classifications to develop and publish college and university rankings. This practice has perpetuated the perception of the American higher education system as hierarchical in nature (Douthat, 2005a; Henderson, 2006).

Several critics have noted an inherent tension between meritocracy and democracy. Ross Douthat (2005b) opens his book describing his experiences at Harvard by quoting Christopher Lasch: “Meritocracy is a parody of democracy” (cited in Dothan, Preface). Baker, Lynch, Cantillon, and Walsh (2004) argue that education in the United States, whether at the primary, secondary, or tertiary level, was designed primarily to be an agent of social control, much against the ideals of democracy and equality. They write, “While [schools and colleges] are expected to develop democratic ideals and values, they are for the greater part, profoundly undemocratic in their organization” (p. 141). Others believe that the two concepts can potentially co-exist (Gutmann, 1987; Karabel, 2005), but that democratic values must be restored as the authority that guides meritocracy. Karabel (2005) and several others (Douthat, 2005b; Golden, 2006; Soares, 2007) have argued that the history of admissions at the most selective schools has not been either democratic or meritocratic, leading to the exclusion of students from lower-income families lacking the economic or social capital of their upper-income peers.
Many policymakers viewed the emergence and development of a public community college system as an answer to concerns over the lack of equality of opportunity in higher education. These institutions seemed to represent the ultimate form of democratic higher education with their open-access policies and low tuitions. Academic merit is still a sought-after goal of the institutions, but not at the expense of participation. At the same time, the transfer function has always been a central tenet of the schools’ missions. The idea that these colleges would serve as gateways to other more selective institutions (both public and private) was an integral part of their development.

However, Stephen Brint and Jerome Karabel (1989) argue that in the broader realm of higher education, community colleges have not in fact succeeded in privileging democracy over meritocracy, but rather these institutions have been relegated to the sidelines of the higher education system, and the majority of their students are not advancing on to the four-year sector as envisioned. Certainly there is evidence that the transfer function at community colleges has diminished as the institutions have faced pressure to diversify their missions (Dougherty, 1992; Lee, Mackie-Lewis, & Marks, 1993). Furthermore, in recent years, the percentage of students transferring to selective institutions has dropped (Dowd & Cheslock, 2006; Melguizo & Dowd, 2006). This is particularly disconcerting as now almost half of all undergraduates are enrolled at community colleges, including a large share of low-income students and students of color (American Association of Community Colleges, 2008).

There has been a renewed call by policymakers to revisit issues of access and success of all potential college graduates. In Massachusetts, business leaders, the
governor, and the Massachusetts senate have all been vocal about the state’s need to increase the number of students graduating with four-year degrees if the state is to remain economically competitive with other states. This research study is founded on the belief that one way to accomplish this goal is to increase the number of students transferring from community colleges to four-year colleges and universities, including those that are selective in their admissions.

Focus of Study

This study is focused on why and how three particular private selective institutions in Massachusetts recruit community college transfer students. It is presented as a multi-case study that examined the experiences of each institution, primarily through its administrators, with the phenomenon of transferring students from community colleges. The two main research questions being pursued in this study are: (1) Why do administrators at three particular institutions engage in recruiting community college transfer students? (2) How does the recruiting take place at each institution?

Important sub-questions that the research will consider include:

- What is the institutional context for these recruitment decisions, and what organizational changes, if any, were necessary to pursue community college transfer students?
- What are the benefits and challenges the administrators identify in serving community college transfer students?
- How are administrators (or other key constituents) accomplishing the recruitment of transfer students, and what, if any, are the goals around this type of transfer?
How do the administrators consider their institution’s mission and responsibilities in the context of higher education in Massachusetts?

**Clarification of Terms**

Throughout this research, there are references made to two-year institutions and four-year institutions. These are not necessarily accurate terms to describe higher educational institutions, as more students are taking longer to complete the programs offered and therefore often stay beyond the two-year or four-year timeframe. However, I use these terms for the sake of distinguishing between those institutions that offer associate's programs and those that offer bachelor's programs. In addition, there are several instances, including in the title, where I have taken the liberty of using the term “college” as a generic term for colleges and universities.

The terms “selective” and “levels of selectivity” are referred to throughout this project. In general, selectivity is used to refer to the ability of an institution to choose those students with the highest levels of academic merit. A simple calculation of selectivity is the average (or median) of SAT scores or ACT scores of entering first year students (Bowen & Bok, 1998). More complex formulas are used by some of the magazines that annually rank “best colleges.” *US News and World Report* derives 50 percent of the selectivity score from test scores of enrollees on the SAT or ACT tests, 40 percent from the proportion of enrolled freshmen who graduate in the top 10 percent of their high-school classes, and 10 percent from the acceptance rate, or the ratio of students admitted to applicants (Morse & Flanigan, 2007, p. 77). Barron’s Magazine produces, a nine-category index ranging from "noncompetitive" to "most competitive" based on several factors: median SAT/ACT scores and the percentage of first-year students above
certain scores; the percentage of first-year students within specific quintiles of their high school graduating class; minimum class rank and grades needed for admission, as well as the percentage of applicants admitted (Kuh & Pascarella, 2004). For transfer students, the focus may be more on the acceptance rate, as the SAT or ACT scores, as well as high-school transcripts, are not often required of students who have achieved a year of college-level coursework. For the purposes of this research, the levels of selectivity assigned by *US News and World Report* and *Barron’s Magazine* are the ones used to describe the institutions mentioned within the study. A rough translation of the breakdown of levels of selectivity by acceptance rates is as follows: selective or moderately difficult (accepting roughly 45%-75% of applicants who apply), more selective and more difficult (45%-25% of applicants accepted), and highly selective and very difficult (25% -15% of applicants accepted). In the case of one college in the study, Amherst College, its acceptance rate has dipped below 15% to 14% this past year, which makes it one of the most selective colleges in the country. It is referred to at points as an elite college, which reflects the highest tier of selectivity.

Finally, there are references made throughout the study that link low-income students and community college students. The researcher is keenly aware that not all community college students are low-income. However, a disproportionately high number of low-income students attend community colleges, and low-income students are demonstrably an underserved population at selective colleges. In terms of this study, I did not initially know how many community college transfer students there were at each institution in the case study, let alone how many of those were considered to be from low-income backgrounds. However, because I am concerned about the disparity in levels
of low-income students at selective colleges, I thought it was important to attempt to consider what percentage of these students might be coming from low-income families by using the proxy of students receiving Pell grants.

**Rationale of Study**

The timing of this study is highly relevant given the findings of the Spellings Commission (U.S. Department of Education, 2006) as well as other influential policy papers (Hahn & Price, 2008), which call for a renewed consideration of issues of access. There have also been numerous recent publications examining the unfair practices of admissions at some of the most highly selective institutions (Douthat, 2005b; Golden, 2006; Karabel, 2005; Soares, 2007). In general, as more and more students are seeking access to higher education, selective institutions, for the most part, are keeping their enrollment size the same as in prior years, and therefore becoming more constricted in the percentage of applicants they accept. This increase in admissions selectivity has caused a greater focus by many on who is being chosen to attend these schools.

At the same time, there is rising concern among educational policymakers about the relative lack of academic success among students traditionally served by community colleges. The Lumina Foundation, Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, and the Nellie Mae Foundation have all launched initiatives aimed at increasing access and success for low-income students, including the large proportion that attend community colleges. In Massachusetts, the Department of Higher Education\(^1\) recently convened a transfer advisory group to consider ways in which the transfer of community college students to

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\(^1\) In 2008, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education changed its name to the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education.
public four-year institutions could be improved. This was an important measure, but
given the symbolic and social status of private selective colleges within the state, it also
seems important that community college students with demonstrated academic potential
have real opportunities to transfer to these institutions as well. The reality is that the
stratification of American higher education continues to grow more delineated and that
Massachusetts in particular is in danger of becoming a polarized state of those who can
afford to attend selective higher education, thereby benefiting from certain economic and
social resources, and those who cannot. The reality is that selective institutions, by their
very nature, are exclusive, but most would agree that the exclusivity should not be based
on one’s economic and social capital, but on one’s intellectual capital. Given these
concerns, this study provides an in-depth examination of what factors and attitudes drive
certain private selective schools in Massachusetts to pursue an agenda that potentially
allows for more access of students from community colleges.

"The Study of Economic, Informational, and Cultural Barriers"

This research follows in the wake of a major national four-part research study
entitled “The Study of Economic, Informational, and Cultural Barriers to Community
College Student Transfer Access at Selective Institutions” (New England Resource
Center for Higher Education, Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, Center for Urban Education,
Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, & Nellie Mae
Education Foundation, 2006) herein referred to as “The Study of Economic,
Informational, and Cultural Barriers,” According to the preface, the study examines
opportunities and barriers faced by low-income community college transfer students at
selective colleges. It employed a variety of methods and analyses to study: “community
college transfer student achievement; administrative and professorial attitudes towards community college transfers; institutional policies, programs, and practices that promote transfer access” (Dowd & Gabbard, 2006, p. 2). A major finding of the study is that a trend of increasing numbers of academically talented community college students is being accompanied by a trend in declining transfer rates at highly selective institutions, resulting in fewer of these academically qualified community college students having opportunities and choice in their transfer decisions. The researchers also found that the students who did get the opportunity to attend selective colleges graduated at the same rates as their peers. The authors put forth a thesis upon which this research is grounded: Since community college transfer students, of any socioeconomic status, obtain the same graduation rates as their peers at selective institutions, these institutions can play a critically important role in the higher education equity agenda (Dowd, Bensimon, et al., 2006).

Another major finding coming out of the study is that the availability of transfer spots is driven primarily by the economic policies of institutions (Dowd, Bensimon, et al., p. 8). Finally, the study stresses the important role played by administrators and faculty who advocate for and counsel community college transfer students (Dowd, Bensimon, et al., p. 9). Because the researchers are concerned that low-income community college students transfer at lower rates than their peers, the researchers present several recommendations for practices that specifically support transfer access for low-income community college students to highly selective institutions.

The study by the New England Resource Center for Higher Education, et al., (2006) is quite comprehensive, and was used as a foundation for this research, both in
terms of providing rationales and strategies for the research design, and for analyzing and presenting the findings. While this research project has been highly informed by the work, its objectives and approach are different. Section II of “The Study of Economic Informational, and Cultural Barriers” considers the effects of institutional characteristics on transfer access, but it does so through a quantitative analysis of national data (Dowd & Cheslock). This study is a qualitative analysis of three particular case studies all located in Massachusetts. Section IV of “The Study of Barriers to Community College Student Access” examines best practices of selective institutions, which promote transfer access, but takes an evaluative approach to how they support community college transfer students (Gabbard et al., 2006). This study identifies case study participants through a qualitative survey of community college transfer counselors and then each case was selected based on maximum variation, particularly in regard to the levels of selectivity in admissions. The assumption that I made was that the variance in level of selectivity affects why and how these institutions behave. Therefore, this study provides an in-depth exploratory and comparative analysis of why and how administrators at three particular private selective institutions actively recruit community college transfers in light of their individual actors, institutional context, and the broader field of higher education and American society. In other words, it contextualizes the rationales and strategies of individual administrators working on the commitment of their institutions to crossing through the tiers of American higher education by bridging the ways “up” to their institutions for community college students. This research is not meant to judge these rationales and strategies but rather identify and explore them.
In a follow-up article to “The Study of Economic, Informational, and Cultural Barriers,” Dowd, Cheslock, and Melguizo (2008) note, “Case studies of successful institutions will be valuable, although relatively few instances appear to exist” (p. 466). Given the findings of their own study on the effects of institutional characteristics on transfer access, it is clear that the researchers are interested in identifying the conditions that allow for a maximization of institutional characteristics that improve community college transfer access. I believe that an in-depth examination of why certain selective private colleges deviate from the more common practice of not recruiting community college students is imperative if there is to be a shift in how selective colleges approach community college transfers.

Theoretical Framework

This study follows the general parameters of critical theory. Schwandt (2001) defines critical theory of society as “a blend of partial philosophy and explanatory social science, sharing and radically reforming the intentions of both” (p. 45). To conduct research in the spirit of critical theory means that there are certain tenets by which the researcher abides. First and foremost, the researcher’s aim is centered on integrating theory and practice “in such a way that individuals and groups become aware of the contradictions and distortions in their belief systems and social practices and are inspired to change” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 45). This requires that critical theory (or perhaps more appropriately, critical social science) is practical and normative and as such it requires instrumental reason. Finally, it is self-reflexive. It requires a researcher to attend to the social and historical conditions in which she or he is working.
To accomplish an analysis of social and historical conditions, this research draws from social reproduction theory, as conceptualized by Pierre Bourdieu (1973), to illuminate the power relations at play in the field of American higher education. Perhaps the most original of Bourdieu’s contributions is the concept of symbolic power and how it is epitomized by education’s role as a creator and legitimator of social hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1973; Swartz, 1997). One does not have to look far within higher education to find evidence to support this theory. For example, the development of tiers within the higher education system and the admissions policies developed within the top tiers were not accidental, but consciously constructed to let certain people in and keep certain people out (Karabel, 2005). Bourdieu’s theory of habitus and his claim that people use social, cultural, and economic forms of capital to sustain or increase their own social standing provide a useful framework for understanding why certain obstacles to equity prevail. It is particularly helpful coupled with the idea that higher education institutions not only mediate the exchange and accumulation of capital for their students, but in turn they as institutions compete for capital (Bourdieu, 1980/1990; Wacquant, 2005).

Jerome Karabel (2005) argues that the system of admissions to selective schools, based on a skewed sense of meritocracy, in effect necessarily promotes inequity. Certainly it is true that only a small percentage of students attend selective institutions, particularly in the private sector. However, if one wants to effect positive change by increasing access to underserved students within the current system, one must look at ways in which a true meritocracy can become closer to the reality, and therefore be less in conflict with the concept of democratic education. So, while many strongly advocate for the need for systemic changes at all levels of the American education system, the
consideration and support of academically capable community college transfer students is one means by which private selective institutions can accomplish this goal given the current state of affairs.

This line of reasoning allows for possibilities to reconceptualize the agenda of American higher education in order to realign it with some of the ideals upon which American democracy is founded. Despite deterrents to equity and the tendency for domination by those with power, many educators still believe that democratic education, as put forth by John Dewey (1916/1944) and Amy Gutmann (1987) among others, is possible and that therefore the equity agenda is a worthwhile, if not necessary pursuit (Bailey & Morest, 2006; Bowen, Kurzweil, et al., 2005; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Brint & Karabel, 1989). A thoughtful consideration of viable possibilities related to bridging community college students and private selective institutions are presented in Chapter 5.

Context of Study

National Trends

There are few people making public statements about why a selective college should not recruit community college students. However, as Dowd and Gabbard (2006) noted, the transfer rate among community college students to selective institutions is waning, and clearly there are reasons why this is happening. As Dowd & Cheslock (2006) note, partly this is happening because as schools increase their retention rates, they have less room for any transfers. However, there also appears to be an unspoken argument against the specific recruitment of community college transfer students that can be summarized by the claim that community college students have deficits (whether academic, financial, or cultural), which prohibited them from entering into other tiers of
higher education in the first place. Michael Kirst and Andrea Venezia (2003) discuss a disconnect between the academic performance of students at selective colleges and those at nonselective colleges. They register concern because nearly 80 percent of the nation's post-secondary students attend nonselective four-year and community colleges, and less than half of those students graduate. For Kirst and Venezia, this is due to varying degrees of high-school preparedness and the fact that education, or intellectual capital, are unevenly distributed, along with social and economic capital in American society.

Despite the disparities in the level of education received by so many students, and the fact that a disproportionate number of low-income and minority students end up attending nonselective community colleges, Dowd & Cheslock (2006) found that the pool of academically talented students at the community college level nonetheless has increased. Therefore, while it is true that many students who end up attending community colleges require remedial coursework and may not be academically qualified at any point during their community college career to transfer to a selective college or university, it appears there are also many students who enter community college prepared to attend a selective institution, and, one would assume, many more who become prepared during the obtainment of their associate’s degree.

Often community college students are equated with low-income students. While it is true that a disproportionate number of community college students come from low-income backgrounds, it is important to recognize that community colleges are comprised of students from all socioeconomic backgrounds. This perhaps has never been truer than at this current historical moment where tuitions at four-year institutions have soared and the economy is in turmoil. However, given the fact that low-income students are more
highly represented at community colleges, and highly underrepresented at highly
selective institutions, it is useful to consider the arguments given as to why this is so.
One argument given for the dearth of low-income students at selective institutions is
similar to the one I identified for not recruiting community college students, and that is
that there are just not enough qualified low-income students available (Bowen & Bok,
1998). Carnevale and Rose (2004) dispute this argument through a statistical analysis,
which demonstrated similar findings to those found about community college students in
general. While it is true that many low-income students lack academic preparation, there
are still many who qualify for selective admissions. In fact, they found that only 44
percent of low-income students who score in the top quartile academically attend a four-
year college (Carnevale & Rose, 2004). Another argument that schools may make against
recruiting more low-income students is that it is just too expensive to support them. Low-
income students do represent a significant financial commitment by a college or
university, and many schools may legitimately be concerned that they can’t afford to
finance increased numbers of low-income students. However, for many institutions, it is
clear that funding priorities are the real issue, and when colleges and universities edge
closer to launching billion-dollar capital campaigns, it becomes difficult to accept that all
of the schools that are not supporting more low-income students cannot afford to do so.
A secondary concern raised by higher education institutions is that if resources are
allocated to low-income students, then the resources to maintain academic quality will be
jeopardized. While there may be legitimacy to this argument, Carnevale and Rose (2004)
provide at least three compelling examples of institutions that prove it is possible to
support a significantly larger percentage of low-income students, while still maintaining high academic quality and standards. These are discussed in Chapter 2.

Trends in Massachusetts

Massachusetts is home to several high-profile nationally renowned private higher education institutions, as well as a public system comprised of five universities, nine state colleges, and fifteen community colleges. There are so many major colleges and universities here that higher education is the second leading industry in the state. As a result of the long history of nationally recognized private institutions, some critics have argued that the public system has been underdeveloped and underfunded (Coelen, Berger, Forest & Smith, 2002). This argument seems legitimate if one were to compare the private flagship university in the state with the public flagship university. Harvard University, one of the most prestigious universities in the world, was founded here in 1636. Over two hundred years later, The University of Massachusetts was founded. Differences in financial capital are extreme. Harvard reported an endowment of 36.9 billion dollars in 2008, making it the largest in the world (Harvard University Gazette Online, 2008). By comparison, the entire University of Massachusetts system reported a 350-million-dollar endowment in 2008 (University of Massachusetts, 2008). In some ways, the state can be considered as a great paradox when it comes to higher education. In 2005, Massachusetts had the highest graduation rate for bachelor’s degrees in the nation at 68 percent. (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007). According to the popular US News and World Report (2007), Massachusetts was home to two of the top six national universities and three of the top four liberal arts colleges in 2007. Yet, on
the other end of the system, the state ranked forty-second in the country in graduation rates for associate’s degrees at 18.7 percent. (NCHEMS Information Center, 2007).

Many know Massachusetts as having the distinction of being the only state that has more students in private higher education than public. However, this statistic is misleading, because a full 60 percent of those students enrolled at private four-year institutions are from out of state. When these students are removed from the equation, the majority of students in Massachusetts are educated through the public system, and of these, 58 percent initially attend community college (Coelen et al., 2002). At this point, given the difficulty in gathering statewide comprehensive data, it is difficult to determine how many Massachusetts students, whether first-year applicants or transfer students, enter the private selective sector within the state. Many Massachusetts students also attend less-selective or even nonselective private higher education institutions, several of which have established themselves as transfer-receiving institutions, by establishing transfer-friendly policies. This research is not intended to counter the important roles that both the public and less-selective private institutions play in educating students in Massachusetts. Indeed many students are well served by both the public sector and the less-selective private sector, although there have been some possible concerns raised about the latter in terms of low completion rates and significant loan burdens for transfer students. The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education has begun to address how to gather comprehensive statewide data for the public sector, and there have been some recent projects such as the seven-year effort to track graduates of Boston public schools through college, but there is still much more to be learned about the numbers and the
outcomes of community college transfer students, particularly those entering the private sector.

Research Design

The primary research method for this study consisted of a multi-case study situated at three private selective college campuses. In discussing qualitative evaluation methods, Michael Quinn Patton (1980) notes, “decision makers and evaluators think through what cases they could learn the most from, and those are the cases selected for study” (p. 101). I used this rationale when considering which sites to pursue. While the three institutions chosen for the case study can all be classified as private selective institutions, they are chosen from three different tiers of selectivity in order to provide a more diverse picture of why certain selective colleges may support community college students. The institutions were selected to participate due to their demonstrated public commitment to recruit community college transfer students as identified through a survey of community college transfer counselors at each of the state’s fifteen colleges. It should be noted that these are not the three institutions that necessarily have the largest number or greatest percentage of community college transfer students, but rather those whom their community college peers identified as making efforts to partner with them and outreach to their students.

The reason that I chose the case study method is that I wanted to investigate a current phenomenon in depth and in person to gain a greater understanding of why and how a specific mission is being operationalized by members of an institution. In his introduction to Case Study Research: Designs and Methods, Robert Yin (1994) writes, “[C]ase studies are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being
posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (p. 1). I immersed myself in the three case study sites over a period of six months. The methods I used included document analysis, observation, and interviewing. The document analysis included a review of documents related to the procedures of recruiting and supporting transfer of community college students, as well as a review of web-site materials related to transfer. Much of my field research involved site visits. I conducted approximately eight interviews with key administrators on each campus. These administrators were initially identified after a meeting with a designated key informant. I observed relevant meetings and events that took place on campus and off promoting the involvement of community college transfer students at the institution. As the researcher, I completed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process at Boston College. In addition, I received approval to conduct research at each case study site.

**Researcher Disclosure**

From 2001 until 2004 I worked as a lead counselor for a federally funded TRIO program, which annually served 200 low-income and/or first-generation-to-college community college students. I conducted academic advising, transfer counseling, financial aid counseling, and non-therapeutic personal counseling. In this role, I assisted several students with applications to private selective colleges both within and outside of Massachusetts. Through this experience, I found that I wanted to further investigate why certain institutions made themselves more accessible to community college students, as well as what other institutions needed to know to perhaps be convinced to do the same. This research is in part an attempt to address these concerns.
Overview of the Study

This chapter provided an introduction to the study. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the relevant bodies of literature, which have been influential to the design of this study, as well as presents literature specific to the state of higher education in Massachusetts. The third chapter presents the overall research design, indicating the various methodologies, sampling techniques, pilot studies, and methods of data analysis and reporting of data. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the individual case studies. Chapter 5 summarizes the findings through cross-case analysis and in the context of the theoretical rationale of the study. This is also the place where recommendations for policy, practice, and further research are issued.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In order to fully consider the presence of community college transfer students at selective colleges and universities, a historical account of the development of the tiers in American higher education is useful. Central to this discussion are the concepts of meritocracy and democracy, as well as education as both a private good and public good. Literature on the transfer function at community colleges, as well as on the definitions of transfer, is also presented. This is followed by a consideration of the issues that impact the transfer of students from the community college level to the four-year college level, particularly at selective institutions. “The Study of Economic, Informational and Cultural Barriers” the epic four-part research study conducted by Alicia Dowd, Glenn Gabbard, and a large team of researchers, is addressed at length, given its importance to the literature on community college transfers students. Finally, a discussion of literature of recent initiatives that may assist the success of transfer students, both on the national and statewide levels, is presented. It is hoped that these initiatives might allow an equity agenda to be pursued through college transfer admissions.

The Tensions Between Democracy and Meritocracy

There have been many forces at play that have guided American higher education institutions, but the ideas of democracy for all and achievement through individual merit have been the two that have been constant. At times these two philosophies have seemed in line with each other, and at other times they have clearly been at odds. However, the two beliefs together have created the diverse, stratified system of higher education that we have today. Certainly the observations so eloquently articulated by Tocqueville as to
the nature of the United States are evident in this development. In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville (2000, 1835) noted that while Americans were uniquely driven by their individual quest for money, they have formed an association that allows them to rise above their individualism. Here he saw no deference given to an aristocracy, but rather to those who earned money. America represented a land of vast possibility and the notion that everyone could access his or her own fortune. Interestingly, another of Tocqueville’s observations may help explain the tiered system of higher education we have. He cautioned that ordinary Americans enjoy too much power and that, while this power promotes equality, it leads to mediocrity. Tocqueville felt that this phenomenon would force the retreat of those with true intellectual talent or those with the highest virtue to academia or private enterprise (pp. 599-616). Indeed, there has been an unflagging elite tier to higher education, and these institutions have remained remarkably true to their mission of liberal education while serving a very small percentage of the college student population. However, as Geiger (1999) argues, they are also a reminder of how privilege begets privilege as they have historically served an “elite” segment of upper income families and effectively both reflect and maintain the stratification of the American class structure (pp. 59-61).

At the other end of the higher education spectrum are community colleges, which are open-access institutions designed to serve anyone interested in pursuing higher education. Originally known as junior colleges, these institutions were introduced into the system in the early 1900’s but really developed in the 1960’s and 1970’s when social and economic pressures demanded that more people have access to higher education. These institutions now serve 46 percent of all colleges students, and over half of all first-year
students attend them. While the elite colleges represent the highest level of merit, community colleges represent the most democratic approach to higher education. Not only do they tend to have minimum or no requirements for entry, but they are also designed to be affordable and convenient for as many students as possible. In between these two types of institutions are a large number of differing types of tertiary institutions, both public and private, which strive to reconcile missions of meritocracy and democracy. This diversity in institutions is a defining feature of the American higher education system, although some would question if we should refer to the field as a system, given the emphasis on autonomy (Hersh & Merrow, 2005, p. 1). However, it is important to note that the colleges and universities have long been judged by their reputation for exclusivity, with most institutions, particularly private ones, which are not under state control, hoping to achieve higher levels of selectivity to improve their reputations. The inception of the *US News and World Report* rankings in the 1980’s has made this drive for selectivity more open and publicly scrutinized, while much less attention has been paid to the ways in which tertiary institutions are promoting democratic education.

As the next section explores, the definition of higher education as a private or public good is complicated and is ultimately what keeps colleges and universities struggling to reconcile their institutional interests in attracting the most academically strong and wealthiest students that they can, with their moral obligations to better represent traditionally underrepresented student populations, such as African-American, Hispanic, and low-income students, on their campuses.
This research is focused on three private, selective four-year institutions that are non-profit, regionally accredited, and considered more selective because they accept less than 60 percent of their applicants. While each of these institutions was chosen for its uniqueness and particular position in the hierarchy of the higher education system, they share two attributes. They have all been identified by peers at community colleges as being transfer amenable institutions for community college students and therefore they each have a history of accepting credits from other accredited institutions of higher education, and, like most private colleges, they accept federal funds and therefore are held somewhat accountable to the “public good.”

*Higher Education as a Public Good or Private Good?*

One of the questions often posed of higher education is whether it is a public or private good. This question has major implications as to who accesses higher education, how it is funded, and how it is held accountable. One of the major indicators that American higher education is perceived as a public good is the fact that there is a public sector, and perhaps even more telling is the pervasive belief that anyone should have the right to access some form of at least public higher education if they desire. But were our institutions of higher learning ever really meant for everyone to attend? Certainly when the colonial colleges were founded, they were not expected to serve all of society, but rather designed to train clergy (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976, p. 6). The federal constitution did not make any provisions for a national university system, and the Dartmouth Case of 1819 officially legalized a private sector in American higher education.

The question of whether higher education serves the public good is more complicated than whether it is publicly funded and widely accessible. From the founding
of Harvard College in 1636, institutions of higher learning have claimed that, despite
directly serving small segments of the population, they still serve the public good by
providing leaders for government and industry. And, despite a strong commitment to
autonomy, both public and private U.S colleges and universities have always maintained
relationships to state and federal governments as well as industry. Furthermore, it is
important to note that there are several other ways in which higher education has been
conceived of as a public good. Colleges transmit culture, and in the case of the United
States this has meant to many that they promote and sustain democracy. As Amy
Gutmann (1987) argues in “Democratic Education,” a university’s primary democratic
purpose is “the protection against the threat of democratic tyranny (p. 174). As such, the
university, whether public or private, requires relative autonomy so that ideas can be
exchanged freely, including those that challenge the current status quo. She goes on to
state that “universities thereby serve democracy as sanctuaries of nonrepression” (p. 174).

Because democracy encourages active citizen participation, there is also the
general belief in the United States that as many of its citizens as possible should receive a
higher education in order to more productively participate as citizens. The Morrill Land
Grant Acts of 1862 and 1890 are often cited as having established public land-grant
colleges as the impetus for access to industrial workers (Brubacher & Rudy 1976, Geiger,
and municipal colleges, the early land-grant colleges represented the force of democracy
working as a mighty leaven in the world of American higher learning” (p. 64). While
Geiger (1999) does not agree that these colleges accomplished this goal, he confirms that
the symbolic value was important in the promotion of utilitarian education (p. 52).
Throughout the nineteenth century, more opportunities became available for women and African Americans to attend college. Proponents of increased access reasoned that the more citizens who attended college, the more productive the country would be. Citizens surely received private gains, but their contributions to society, as well as their involvement in civic life (including the payment of taxes) contributed to the overall society. This reasoning is still used today to argue the need for increased access.

Involvement and funding by the federal government is a good indication of how significantly an institution is considered to be for the public good. While there are no national universities, and states have been responsible for founding public institutions, federal involvement has increased dramatically in the twentieth century, most notably in the form of student aid. During the Great Depression, the federal government developed its first program to temporarily assist individual students to attend higher institutions of learning. However, it was the G.I. Bill of Rights, formerly known as the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 that introduced millions of veterans to college. While this bill was intended to serve just a specific population, it meant billions of dollars of federal money was being spent on higher education. The federal government has also increased its use of contract research. State funding, although it continues to decline, still supports the public system: “[T]he federal role is to provide particular kinds of support to meet perceived national objectives, generally without distinguishing between public and nonpublic higher education” (Gladieux & King, p. 155).

President Johnson, as part of his War on Poverty, passed the Higher Education Act of 1965, establishing programs to provide financial support for poor students to participate in higher education. Colleges and universities that wanted funding under the
Equal Opportunity Grant had to commit to actively recruiting and supporting low-income students. In addition, the federal work-study program was initiated, as well as the federal loan program, which was initially geared at easing the burden of middle-class families.

The Higher Education Act, along with its subsequent reauthorizations, represents an enormous contribution on the part of the federal government: Before the passage of the Act, the federal government was investing approximately $200 million in a small number of graduate student fellowships and loan programs. More than thirty years later, the federal government generated more than $35 billion in student assistance annually, representing a thirty-fold increase after adjusting for inflation (Gladieux & King, p. 163).

Several critics of higher education have put forth claims that the nature and purpose of higher education in the United States are not as clear as they once were. Arthur Levine (2005) believes that both the government and the higher education community have misled the American public. He writes, “Forty years ago the federal government and the higher education community made a commitment to the twin policies of universal access to college and choice among institutions for all qualified Americans…. Today that promise is fading” (p. 153). In the book America’s Untapped Resource: Low Income Students in Higher Education, several authors present compelling arguments on how the United States is beginning to take steps backward from “its cherished national goal of the American ideal of a meritocracy” (Leone, 2004, p. v).

Richard Kahlenberg (2004) writes of how the federal government, which has played an influential role in expanding access to higher education through measures such as the Morrill Land Grant Act, the G.I. Bill, and the 1965 Higher Education Act, has had a clear shift in priorities in recent years, “as public policy at the federal, state, and university
level [has] drifted, often placing emphasis on subsidizing middle-class families rather than reaching students who, but for financial aid, would not attend college (cited by Leone, 2004, p. vi). Gladieux (2004) points out that while it is impressive how expansive the American system of higher education is, policymakers have tended to be too concerned with just getting students in the door, rather than supporting them to make sure that they achieve their educational goals. All of the concerns raised by these authors point to the inherent tensions that exists in a higher education system based on meritocracy but operating within and for a democracy.

Critics often cite concerns that despite the federal government’s growing involvement in higher education, the states have not generally increased the proportion of their budgets spent on their public higher education systems. At the time of the “War on Poverty,” many states established community colleges, which truly provided for the first time in American history open access to all Americans. These colleges have grown phenomenally and according to the American Association for Community Colleges, they currently serve 46 percent of all undergraduates. However, the last thirty-five years have proven to be difficult ones for most state higher education systems. In the 1970’s, economic recessions and political protests on college campuses deeply impacted the amount of funding state colleges received. The conservatism of the 1980’s decimated many social welfare programs, and higher education saw deep cuts in its funding. In the 1990’s, overall state contributions continued to decline and tuitions costs continued to rise (Kirp, 2003; Sperber, 2005).

During this period of time, there does seem to have been a swing away from higher education as a right for all Americans, to the idea of it as a commodity in which
individuals invest for their own financial gain. Of course, both private and public institutions have operated for quite some time in the realm of a competitive market-driven capitalist economic system. As David Kirp (2003) quips, “It is important not to romanticize academe…. Dollars have always greased the wheels of American higher education” (p. 30). Capitalism highly values privatization and therefore can conceive of education as a private good. There are those who believe that it is in better hands in the market than in the government because too much government involvement, particularly at the federal level, limits academic freedom and ultimately limits the potential of the system for both academic excellence and contributions to democracy.

*Where One Goes to College Matters*

Recently, several publications have emerged that examine the admissions processes of elite colleges in the United States (Fullinwider & Lichtenberg, 2004; Golden, 2006; Karabel, 2005; Soares, 2007). The central theme of these publications can be summarized as the fact that the admission processes at these institutions do not adhere to the ideals of academic meritocracy, which has long been touted as the standard. The conclusion, therefore, is that there are some students who should be awarded admissions based on merit but are being denied entry, while other students, who should not be admitted based on academic merit but demonstrate that they have social and economic capital, are being allowed entry. As Jerome Karabel (2005) notes in his epic historical review of admissions policies at “the Big Three,” Harvard, Princeton, and Yale, this is not a new phenomenon but rather one that has recently come under increased scrutiny as access to higher education continues to increase and the different tiers of higher education become more stringently defined.
Deidre Henderson (2006) considers the current state of selective college admissions and calls for several reforms. First she identifies the ways in which colleges and universities are complicit in promoting “the scandalous commercialization of admissions and the consequent erosion of educational values and integrity” (¶2). She notes the support that the institutions give to the ranking system developed by several magazines; the money they spend on marketing strategies and enrollment management; their involvement as members of the College Board, which dominates the multi-million-dollar enterprise of admissions testing; and the use of strategies such as early admissions and merit aid to increase their levels of selectivity. Henderson particularly criticizes the use of merit aid to attract highly qualified students, stating that it “remakes financial aid into a means of improving institutional image and undermining their responsibilities as engines of opportunity for the poor and underclass” (¶5). She goes on to provide several recommendations to selective colleges that she believes would improve the admissions process, with the implication that it would be fairer. Her recommendations include having institutions not participate in the rankings, stopping the mass marketing and redirecting that spending to financial aid, abolishing early decision, abolishing the use of the academic index that relies too heavily on standardized tests, and “reduces an entire high school transcript to one number,” disclosing how review of applications is conducted on websites, disallowing students to take admissions tests more than twice, requiring applicants to disclose if they used professional services to prepare any part of their applications, and finally, revising the common application to have an administered essay question, which would ensure that students complete it on their own. Henderson
ends by stating that she does not expect her recommendations to be embraced by those in admissions at selective institutions, given the competitive nature of the market.

Despite harsh critiques of the admissions processes at selective colleges, few debate the desirability of attending these institutions. So the question that begs to be raised is: Why do so many desire to attend these colleges, even when faced with such a daunting, and seemingly unjust admissions process? For many, it may be the concentration of exceptional academic talent represented by both students and faculty, but for many it is the power of the prestige, the access to the social networking, and the financial opportunities afforded graduates that are the draw. In, The Power of Privilege: Yale and America’s Elite Colleges, Soares (2007) argues that Yale graduates have played an extraordinary role in national politics, noting that since 1974, either the president or the vice-president of the nation has been a Yale graduate. Soares quotes from an article in the Yale Alumni Magazine that addresses this phenomenon:

The fundamental and clearest presidential pattern at Yale is the extraordinary power of privilege: the intense web of connections knitting together America’s upper classes through family ties, business relationships, philanthropic and civic activities, social and recreational life, and of course education (Goldstein, 2004, p. 46, cited in Soares, 2007, p.5).

This understanding of the multitude of benefits of attending an elite college serves to increase the college’s symbolic power. Ironically, Soares continues with a discussion about the role that Yale, along with Harvard, played in supplanting family privilege with meritocracy as the main admission criteria in the 1950’s. Soares suggests that while it is true that terminology around admissions may have changed to reflect an emphasis on academic merit, it still rewards children of privilege, who have more access to the
essential academic preparation to achieve those levels of academic distinction. He also introduces the theory of Pierre Bourdieu’s symbolic power into the discussion. For Bourdieu, each society has an elite sector, and in the United States that sector is served by the Ivy League institutions, a few other highly selective private universities, and certain liberal arts colleges, enrolling approximately 4 percent of the total student population.

Soares relates two of Bourdieu’s most important arguments concerning how these elite institutions remain relatively unchallenged. Bourdieu believed that these elite institutions work hard to distinguish themselves by providing a differentiated experience from their less selective peers, and that ultimately students are sorted into types of institution (or not attending college) based on their own self-selection and understanding of where they fit into the system based on the capital they have accrued thus far. Bourdieu’s thinking is an essential part of the critical framework used in this research study and is discussed in more detail in later chapters.

Selective colleges tend to have higher retention and graduation rates for their students than less selective institutions. As Lawrence Gladieux (2004) emphasizes, students’ chances of academic success often hinge on where they go to college. Most community college transfer students and/or students from low-income backgrounds are enrolling in nonselective or less selective schools, which tend not to support students to completion in the same way that selective schools do. An obvious argument might be that these are the ramifications of meritocracy at work in that students who are less academically capable are graduating at lower rates, but studies have found that this trend is still the case even when academic qualifications are controlled (Empty Promises, 2002; Hahn & Price, 2008). There is evidence that at least some of these students at these
nonselective or less selective institutions are academically qualified to attend selective colleges, but either do not apply, are not accepted, or cannot afford to attend (Carnevale & Rose, 2004; *Empty Promises*, 2002; Melguizo & Dowd, 2006).

Many had hoped that community colleges would serve as equalizers in giving low-income students and students of color access to the more selective tiers of higher education from which they have traditionally been excluded. Brint and Karabel (1989) have written extensively about opportunity for social mobility through higher education and particularly about the role that community colleges play in promoting social equality. They argue that community colleges fundamentally changed the scope of higher education by introducing a new tier into the academic hierarchy. While this tier was fashioned to appear to allow for the social mobility so sought after by Americans, the reality of the roles they serve is more complex. Brint and Karabel indicate that, in reality, community colleges were formed by members of the selective tiers of higher education to offer an alternative to students who might otherwise try to enter their institutions.

*Role of Community Colleges as Transfer Agents*

Forty-six percent of all undergraduates attend community colleges (the vast majority of which are public institutions). Community colleges enroll 11.6 million students, 6 million of whom are taking courses for credit. The average age is 29, but 43 percent of students are 21 years or younger. Women comprise 59 percent of the total population, 34 percent are minorities, and 39 percent are the first in their families to attend college (American Association of Community Colleges, 2007). There is no question that community colleges have afforded many people, particularly those in lower socioeconomic levels, the opportunity to access higher education. The average tuition
and fees at a community college are $2,727, roughly half of the average costs of a public four-year institution. Despite the lower price tag, 47 percent of all community college students receive some type of financial aid. In addition, 50 percent of full-time students are employed part-time and 50 percent of part-time students are employed full-time; 27 percent of full-time students are employed full-time while attending school (American Association of Community Colleges, 2007). However, due to their open-access policies, community colleges tend to enroll those students who have the most daunting educational, economic, and social barriers to their education, yet they have the fewest resources per student to serve them (Bailey & Morest, 2006).

Most community college systems in the United States began with a primary mission of promoting transfer education (Dougherty, 1992). However, this mission evolved into multi-missions as community colleges developed into more comprehensive systems. Community colleges now offer a mix of vocational, remedial, adult education, and liberal arts programs (Lee, Mackie-Lewis, & Marks, 1993). As the functions of community colleges expanded, the percentage of enrolled students transferring to four-year institutions to pursue bachelor’s degrees declined. Until the late 1960’s, the majority of community college students in the United States eventually transferred to four-year institutions; recent studies estimate the current national transfer rate to be between 20 and 25 percent (Bryant, 2001; Grubb, 1991).

There are many reasons, including large increases in jobs requiring a baccalaureate degree; changing demographics, particularly in populations traditionally underserved by higher education; more stringent admission standards at four-year institutions; and rising tuition costs, that the two-year to four-year transfer process is of
growing importance (Wellman, 2002). It is in the states’ best interests to carefully craft public policies to encourage and support the transfer function. Jane Wellman (2002) looked at state policies in six states, three that performed well in the areas of retention and degree completion and another three states that performed poorly on the same measures. The research looked at several dimensions of state policy, including governance, enrollment planning, academic policies, and data collection and accountability. Wellman found that the states did not exhibit much difference in terms of their basic approaches to transfer policy. All had heavily considered academic policy, and had comparable plans in place concerning core curriculum, articulation agreements, transfer of credits, and transfer guides. The key difference that separated the high-performing states from the low seemed to lie in governance. The three high performing states had a level of statewide governance that the others lacked. As a result, the high performers were able to use statewide data to improve transfer performance and to provide campuses with peer benchmarks.

Wellman (2002) found that, even in the high-performing states, important components of state transfer policy were missing. No state had set clear goals for two- to four-year college transfer performance, and the accountability structures generally fell on the two-year institutions alone, so little was expected from the four-year institutions. In fact, Wellman argues that many of the accountability measures in place at four-year institutions actually discouraged them from recruiting and supporting transfer students. For example, many states required certain minimum numbers for five-year graduation rates. Few community college students complete their baccalaureate in this time frame.
Furthermore, and most important to this research, Wellman found that most of the states confined their transfer reporting to public institutions, which disregards private institutions’ role in the transfer process. Few states offered any incentive funding for students who start at community colleges or for institutions to support student transfer. Finally, none of the states had specifically focused on the equity aspects of transfer performance, both for low-income students and students of color (Wellman, 2002).

There is contention about how many students who currently attend community colleges have the aspiration to transfer. On some level, this is due to differences in how potential transfer students are measured (Wassmer, Moore, & Shulock, 2003). In 2001, the U.S. Department of Education commissioned Ellen Bradburn and David Hurst (2001) to examine transfer rates based on alternative definitions of transfer. The results of the study confirmed that standardizing transfer rates would be a tricky proposition. The study used the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) 1990 Beginning Postsecondary Longitudinal Study (BPS: 1990/1994) for its sample. A “transfer student” (the numerator used in transfer equations) was defined as “one with initial enrollment at a community college followed by subsequent enrollment at any 4-year institution within the 5-year study period” (p. vi). Eight alternatives were chosen for the denominator ranging from the most inclusive to the most exclusive. For example, the first definition of a potential transfer was a student who self-identified as someone who expected to complete a bachelor’s degree, while the last definition was of a student who was pursuing an academic major at the community college and taking specific, transferable courses towards a bachelor’s degree.
In general, Bradburn and Hurst (2001) found that “restricting the pool of potential transfer students systematically altered the composition of the group to include more traditional students defined as younger, dependent students who do not work full time” (p. viii). The study also examined how the composition of the population changed as definitions became more restrictive. They found that the higher the SES, the higher the percentage of students who met the criteria for each specification. A disturbing finding was that when the most restrictive definition of potential transfer was applied, there were no black students represented in this sample. Overall, the transfer rates increased as the definitions became less restrictive. The rate for the first definition was 26 percent, and the rate for the last definition was 52 percent. One of the most frustrating outcomes of the study was that the definitions, which attempted to include those students most likely to transfer, actually excluded a large proportion of students who transfer anyway, without meeting the criteria. It was estimated that four out of five actual transfer students did not meet the most restrictive definition. It is unknown how many of these students were successful in graduating and what percentage of these students reverse transferred (returned to community colleges).

To further complicate the consideration of transfer rates, there are different types of transfer. In one longitudinal study, only 30 percent of first-transfer activity could be attributed to the supposedly traditional two-year to four-year college movements by students. Reverse transfer and lateral transfer were equally common (Aldeman, 1999). Most institutions that report transfer numbers do not separate out the different types of transfer, so it is often not clear from where they are drawing their numbers. Despite the disagreement over how to calculate transfer rates, it is generally accepted that transfer
rates have declined (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Lee & Frank, 1990 Lee & Mackie-Lewis, 1993).

*The Under-Representation of Low-Income and Community College Transfer Students*

An important question that must be considered is: Regardless of socioeconomic disadvantage, are students coming out of the community college system academically qualified to be attending selective institutions? One of the issues that should be addressed at the onset is the notion of two-year colleges as academic sorters. Lee, Lewis-Mackie, and Marks (1993) explore this concept through a historical lens. They note that originally two-year institutions, then known as junior colleges, were primarily intended to prepare students for transfer to senior colleges and universities. As a secondary focus, they also offered terminal associate’s degrees. But starting in the 1950’s the junior colleges evolved into the community colleges of today. They developed “open-door policies” and began to provide a myriad of programs from academic to vocational to general educational. During this time, enrollment swelled. Between 1950 and 1970, enrollment in two-year colleges increased by an astounding 750 percent (Karabel, 1989; Lee, Lewis-Mackie, & Marks, 1993). As the colleges shifted their institutional focus to providing career training, the transfer function was de-emphasized to allow for a broader range of degrees and certificates. Community colleges relaxed their control over the pre-transfer curriculum and left the transfer process up to individual students and the requirements up to the post-transfer institutions. It is during this period that transfer rates began to fall dramatically.

Lee, Lewis-Mackie, and Marks (1993) note that it was at this historical point that early critics of community colleges voiced concern that community colleges were
functioning as Burton Clark suggested “diverters, siphoning off students whose ambitions society was unready or unable to incorporate” (Clark, 1960 cited in Lee, Lewis-Mackie, & Marks, 1993, p. 82). The question that critics struggled with was whether community colleges advanced opportunity or prohibited students from advancing up the socioeconomic ladder. Research supported claims that community colleges were providing a second-rate education and that many students not only did not transfer but did not even graduate with an associate’s degree (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Brint & Karabel, 1989; Dougherty, 1992). Kevin Dougherty was one of the researchers who sounded alarms. Using national longitudinal data from a 1972 cohort, he looked at whether or not community college students who aspired to obtain a baccalaureate were less likely to do so than those students who directly entered four-year institutions. He found that even when he accounted for differences in student characteristics, baccalaureate aspirants entering community college were still significantly less likely to realize their hopes due to an institutional effect. Dougherty went on to state that this effect could be primarily attributed to obstacles faced by community college students during their first year, the transfer process, and the first year at the four-year institution.

Dougherty’s first observation was that community college students had higher dropout rates than students at four-year colleges in their first years of college. He attributed this to the community college’s weaker ability to integrate students into the academic and social life of the institution (Dougherty, 1992; Tinto, 1975). As for the transfer process, Dougherty estimated that although 40 percent of entering community college students express the desire to complete their baccalaureate, only 15 percent of community college entrants eventually transfer to a four-year college. Again using the
longitudinal data of the high-school class of 1972, Dougherty determined that only 49.3 percent of the baccalaureate aspirants who started at community colleges reached their junior year, while 96.2 percent of four-year college entrants did. While Dougherty acknowledged that the physical move in schools was a contributing factor, he attributed the finding more to inadequate transfer advice by the community colleges, as well as the fact that some students were drawn into occupational programs where transfer was difficult. Dougherty found that even when students transferred, they were still at a higher risk of dropping out after transferring. He suggested that these findings were due to less academic preparation, less financial aid, difficulty in transferring credits, and less social integration on campus. Dougherty’s variance in graduation rates is valid only for the time period from which his data was taken. This represents a time of transitional adjustment for community colleges, and since that time the preparation of transfer students has improved. Using data ten years more recent than Dougherty’s, Lee, Lewis-Mackie, and Marks (1993) found that there was no significant difference in graduation rates between students who successfully transferred and their peers who were native students of the four-year institutions. Current research also supports the claim that transfer students graduate at the same rate as their peers (Melguizo & Dowd, 2006). Despite the fact that Dougherty’s conclusion is no longer timely, the obstacles he cites in all three stages of the transfer journey continue to be relevant and are still often cited as concerns (Flaga, 2006; Laanan, 2001; Townshend, 1995).

As has been mentioned throughout this study, the majority of students from low-income backgrounds who pursue higher education are concentrated at community colleges. Because of this phenomenon, there is a tendency to think of community college
transfer as a means by which more low-income students can access four-year colleges. While this is not always the case, it does make sense to consider the relationship between the under-representation of both low-income students and community college transfer students at selective colleges. Therefore, a review of literature on why low-income students are under-represented at selective colleges provides a useful analysis for the consideration of community college students. Carnevale and Rose (2004) take issue with two claims commonly made by selective institutions about low-income students or community college students on campus. The first argument is that preference is routinely given to disadvantaged students’ applications. In the amicus brief in the University of Michigan affirmative action cases, eight elite universities said that they “already give significant favorable consideration” to socioeconomic status (Kahlenberg, 2004 p. 9). The other claim often made by selective schools is that they would admit more low-income student if these applicants could handle the work. William Bowen, former president of Princeton, and Derek Bok, former president of Harvard argued that it is not realistic to admit more disadvantaged students. They wrote, “The problem is not that poor but qualified students go undiscovered, but that there are simply too few of these candidates in the first place” (Bowen & Bok, 1998). Through statistical analysis, Carnevale and Rose (2004) proved that neither of these claims appears to be true. If low-income students were systematically receiving a break in admissions, as many colleges suggest they do, one would expect to see them over-represented with regard to their academic records. But, in fact what Carnevale and Rose found was that the proportion of poor and working-class students is lower than it would be if grades and test scores were the sole basis for admissions. The reality that Carnevale and Rose expose is that selective
universities could admit far more qualified low-income students than they do and have no drop in graduation rates. “There are large numbers of students from families with low-income levels who are academically prepared for bachelor’s degree attainment, even at the most selective colleges. Only 44% of low-income students who score in the top quartile academically attend a four-year college” (Carnevale & Rose, 2004, p.136). Certainly a large percentage of those academically capable students who don’t enroll in a four-year school attend a community college.

One of the advantages for recruiting and supporting community college transfer students is that schools can accept students who have proven themselves at the college level. While it is true that many students start community college academically under-prepared, there are still thousands of students who either are prepared from the time they start at community college or are able to effectively address their academic deficits so that they can successfully fulfill the requirements of a four-year degree. Furthermore, by participating in community college they have experienced the demands of college and have strengthened their commitment to college. It should be noted that the students most likely to transfer tend to be those faced with fewer disadvantages. They are often of a higher social class, less likely to be minority, and less likely to be female. These factors are somewhat disconcerting for those advocating for underserved populations. However, the research also demonstrates that it is students’ academic behaviors in community college that exhibit the strongest direct effects on transfer (Lee & Frank, 1990). Certain academic behaviors had particularly strong effects. Although the accruement of more credit hours and being a full-time student facilitated transfer, the biggest indicator of whether a student was the number and level of their credits in mathematics and science
(Lee & Frank, 1990). They also found that students who were least satisfied with their current employment situation were most likely to transfer. Lee and Frank (1990) posit two theories regarding this phenomenon: 1) those who transferred chose more education over present working conditions and compensation, or 2) work attracted some students away from school. Perhaps what is most telling about the study by Lee and Frank is that even though the transfer students in the study were less academically advantaged than those who entered four-year colleges immediately after high school (especially in regard to their scores on achievement tests), their concentrated pursuit of academics (over employment) while in community college seems to have facilitated transfer to and persistence in four-year colleges.

There is no arguing that it costs more to support low-income students, whether they are high-school graduates or community college transfers. They represent a significant commitment by a college or university, and many schools are concerned that they can’t afford to finance increased numbers of low-income students. A secondary concern is that if resources are allocated to low-income students, then the resources to maintain academic quality will be jeopardized. While there is legitimacy to the argument, there are also examples that prove it is possible to support a significantly larger percentage of low-income students. Berea College, a successful liberal arts school, is able to function financially despite the fact that it does not charge tuition to any of its students, who are all from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. It is able to cover costs through fundraising and spending a large portion of its endowment. Two other schools, University of California, Berkeley, the highest ranked public elite university, and Smith College, an elite women’s college located in Massachusetts, both have student bodies
comprised of over 30 percent Pell Grant recipients. Princeton and Harvard, despite being in the news for supporting lower-income families by eliminating loans from their financial aid packages, both have fewer than 7 percent Pell Grant recipients (Bailey & Morest, 2006).

“Study of Economic, Informational, and Cultural Barriers

Pak, Bensimon, Malcolm, Marquez, and Park (2006) make several observations about transfer students based on their narrative stories of ten community college students who transferred to selective institutions. They found that the transfer students could be categorized as being “late bloomers.” They write, “With the possible exception of one, all of the successful transfers seem to have discovered their full academic potential at the community college” (p. 6). Another theme was of the “accidental” nature of their transfer. Many of the transfer students’ stories hinged on random incidents that just happened to lead them to “transfer agents.” Transfer agents represent the third theme. Transfer agents were teachers, counselors, and other authority figures who provided the students “with the resources to cross the cultural border that divides two- and four-year colleges” (p. 6). Pak et al. (2006) note that the transfer agents, as described by the students, seemed to have special predispositions for advancing the transfer cause. The fourth theme is one that echoes Vincent Tinto’s (1987) call for social and educational integration, and that is the significance of “out-of-class involvement” as a means of access to hidden transfer resources. Most of the participants in the interviews mentioned some kind of involvement at both the two-year and four-year institutions that proved invaluable in helping them feel connected and gave them access to various resources on campus. Pak et al. note, “These experiences were noticeably absent in the narratives of
students who had to work off-campus and experienced the four-year college exclusively through course taking” (p. 7). The fifth theme had to do with the “relational” and “informal” elements of the transfer process. Students described being helped along the way by people who made an extra effort to reach out and often connected them with other people who could help them successfully transfer. The “relational” and “informal” elements of the transfer process were particularly noticeable at the community colleges, “primarily because institutional level supports in many cases were under-resourced, underdeveloped, and unsystematic” (p. 7). Finally, there were the structural and formal elements of “transfer shock inoculation.” At several of the four-year institutions there were distinct programs and practices to address transfer students’ academic needs and “prepare them for the sociocultural barriers that divide the world of open access and selective admissions and facilitate the initial period of self-doubt and difficulty in adjusting to their new environment” (p. 7). These programs helped students with the phenomenon of transfer shock by providing them with a taste of what college would be like (e.g., a pre-transfer summer program). In a safe environment, “they could learn how to “decode” the new cultural and academic norms of the four-year college” (p. 7). It was the engagement of these ten students with the themes mentioned that allowed them to successfully complete their degrees at selective institutions. While there are certainly components of the themes that colleges and universities specifically tried to address for students, one is struck by how much of their success appears to be due to random connections and individual contributions.

Pak et al.’s (2006) research on the life stories of ten community college transfer students is the third part of a four-part study commissioned by the Jack Kent Cooke
Foundation, Lumina Foundation, and the Nellie Mae Education Foundation. The Study of Economic, Informational, and Cultural Barriers (New England Resource Center, The research, directed by Alicia Dowd and Glenn Gabbard, was a very large endeavor to study the economic, informational, and cultural barriers to community college transfer access at selective institutions. Several conclusions came out of this report. For example, in Part I of the study, Dowd and Cheslock (2006) analyzed both NCES data and data from the College Board’s annual survey of colleges, and found that four-year institutions with relatively high rates of student attrition from the first to second year are those most likely to admit transfer students in greater numbers. Comparing cases with similar characteristics for institutional type, sector, enrollment size, admissions rate, geographic location, tuition, and other factors, a 10 percent increase in student attrition is associated with a 5 percent increase in the transfer enrollment rate. The researchers concluded that these schools used transfer students to replenish enrollment and fill classrooms, particularly in the upper-division courses. They note that recruiting transfer students may be a more favorable policy than increasing the size of the freshman cohort due to how the institutional ranking system works and perhaps also because of physical (space) constraints (p. 18).

Dowd and Cheslock (2006) also determined that after controlling for the larger sizes of public institutions, they still have a 7 percent higher transfer rate than private universities. They attributed this finding to the “obligation of public institutions to provide equal access to college.” In some states, fewer community college transfers, as well as fewer low-income students and students of color, are represented at the flagship
campuses versus the lesser known (and often lesser ranked and funded) public institutions (Kahlenberg, 2004; Handel, 2006).

The work of Dowd, Gabbard and their fellow researchers illustrates that transfer from both two-year and four-year colleges to elite institutions has become more constricted. Even among the community college students who transfer, students from particular backgrounds are under-represented. According to a survey conducted by The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (1996/1997), in 1996 there were 3,252 students who transferred to the nation’s twenty-five highest ranked institutions and of these 154 (4.7 percent) were black. Melguizo and Dowd (2006) concluded that only 3 percent of community college transfers enrolled at and graduated from elite colleges, and most of these students were from affluent families, as has been the trend for the past ten years. The vast majority of community college transfers, nearly 80 percent, enrolled at nonselective institutions, often where the majority of students are of low socioeconomic status and only half graduate within 8.5 years. The reality is that except for the very few low-income high-school students who manage to take the SAT, score highly on it, and have someone advise them on how to apply to colleges and obtain financial aid, the majority of low-income students with high academic potential do not enter selective colleges either after high school graduation or community college graduation. Comparing real enrollment numbers against what would be expected under an equal representation by socioeconomic status quintile, approximately 44,000 traditional-age low-income students were “missing” from the community college transfer pipeline. The number missing is nearly equal to the 47,000 traditional low socioeconomic status (SES) students who did transfer (Melguizo & Dowd, 2006). For Melguizo and Dowd (2006) the way to
achieve equitable representation of the least affluent students in the transfer pipeline is to have the selective sectors of the higher education system double their efforts to serve low-income families.

Melguizo and Dowd (2006) found in their study that those community college transfers who enrolled at highly selective and selective four-year institutions graduated in high numbers. Seventy-five percent completed their degrees within 8.5 years, a figure that increases to 80-90 percent at elite institutions (Dowd & Melguizo, 2006). These graduation rates demonstrate that once given the opportunity, at least some community college students are fully capable of performing at selective colleges. There is a lot of room for more work on other measures of success for these students.

*Keeping the Door from Closing: Initiatives Underway*

Because of changing demographics and increasing economic pressures throughout the United States, higher education access for low-income students and community college transfer students is currently receiving a lot of attention. In 2007, *U.S. News and World Report* added a new category to its rankings entitled “economic diversity.” It is based on the percentage of students enrolled that receive Pell grants. UCLA led national universities with 38 percent (*US News & World Report, 2007*). The term “socioeconomic affirmative action” is being used more frequently, particularly as racial affirmative action is being questioned in courts (Carnevale & Rose, 2004; *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 1996/97*). It should be noted that advocates of socioeconomic diversity such as Carnevale and Rose (2004) recommend that socioeconomic affirmative action be used in conjunction with racial affirmative action policies, as there are still significant educational gaps attributed uniquely to race, after accounting for class differences.
Many educators and policymakers are becoming more vocal about the need for a renewed focus on the original mission of community colleges (Bailey & Morest, 2006; Wellman, 2002). They emphasize the growing importance of transfer for community college students, with a particular emphasis on students who are from low- and moderate-income backgrounds, as a viable way of addressing inequity in the educational system. In addition to calls to strengthen K-12 education, particularly in urban areas, and the state initiatives underway to improve state policies around community colleges, there are at least three national initiatives related to transfer that are being heavily funded by major foundations.

The *Achieving the Dream* campaign is considering transfer rates as one aspect of how community colleges can use data to measure and improve student success. The initiative is particularly concerned about student groups that traditionally have faced significant barriers to success, including students of color and low-income students. “Achieving the Dream works on multiple fronts, including efforts at community colleges and in research, public engagement and public policy. It emphasizes the use of data to drive change” (achievingthedream.org, homepage, ¶1). So far, four community colleges in Massachusetts, Bunker Hill Community College, Northern Essex Community College, Roxbury Community College, and Springfield Technical Community College, received initiation grants. The data collection is being coordinated by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education.

Another campaign, *Access to the Baccalaureate*, is being sponsored by The American Association of Community Colleges and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, with funding from the Lumina Foundation. The campaign
works with the 1500 institutional members to “identify non-financial barriers at state, system, and institutional levels; pinpoint ways to eliminate them; and work with institutions and policy makers to urge new solutions” (American Association of Community Colleges & American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2004, p. vii). Part of the initial research was a survey of administrators at two-year and four-year colleges. The results indicated that two-year institutions perceive transfer obstacles to be greater than four-year institutions do. Other key findings include: Transfer of credits is the major obstacle cited by the two-year institutions; transfer students need more supports, such as daycare, flexible schedules, and specialized advising personnel; and there needs to be more opportunities for online educational opportunities. The most successful initiatives identified to address barriers were articulation agreements, while the initiative identified as having the least impact was a common numbering system between two- and four-year institutions (MFM Associates, 2003).

A third major initiative involves both public and private institutions and primarily focuses on what four-year institutions can do to better support transfer students. Through its initiative, The Community College Transfer Initiative, the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation recently awarded major grants to eight highly selective institutions to increase the number of community college transfer students by 1,100 in four years and also to provide college access and application support to another 2,100 low- to moderate-income students. The foundation and the eight institutions have pledged 27 million dollars over the next five years towards their goals of supporting these students. In addition, the foundation funds a separate undergraduate transfer scholarship designed to support high-achieving community college students with serious financial need. In 2007,
fifty-one students were selected for scholarships to attend colleges such as University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Columbia, Stanford, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. One student, who attended community college in Massachusetts, transferred from Bunker Hill Community College to Harvard University to study public policy (jackkentcookefoundation.org).

There has also been numerous statewide initiatives developed within Massachusetts that are aimed specifically at increasing the success of college students, particularly low-income students and students of color. The impetus for these initiatives comes in part, from a series of reports to the Massachusetts Senate about the status of higher education within the state. While Massachusetts continues to be a top performer in areas such as percentage of the workforce with a bachelor’s degree, there are troubling disparities among racial and ethnic groups. In addition, the issue of affordability is often raised as a major hurdle. In 2005, the Senate Task Force on Public Higher Education presented a report to the Massachusetts Senate on how public higher education was faring in Massachusetts (Massachusetts Senate, 2005). The report reiterated what had first been presented sixteen years earlier in the Saxon Report (1989, cited in Massachusetts Senate, 2005), primarily that Massachusetts has been underfunding their public higher education system, and employers are leaving the state because they can’t find a qualified workforce. The Senate Task Force on Public Higher Education presented sobering statistics on the funding of public higher education in the state. At that time, Massachusetts was ranked 49th in the nation in state spending on higher education per $1,000 of state income, and ranked 47th in the nation in state spending on public higher education per capita. Between 2001 and 2004, the state had the nation’s largest decrease in state funding for
public higher education, at 32.6 percent reduction (adjusted for inflation), and was the only state in the nation that was spending less on public higher education than it had ten years ago. In addition, student charges were consistently above the national average. Furthermore, the report noted that due to predicted changes in demographics, the situation was expected to get more dire as discrepancies in college attendance and completion varied widely between racial groups. The Senate Task Force made several recommendations, particularly in regard to governance and investment strategies for the university system. Overall, the report presents a strong argument for why both access and quality of education are urgently needed in the state’s higher education system.

In 2007 another task force was formed through the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education to look at retention and completion rates at community colleges. The creation of The Task Force on Retention and Completion at the Community Colleges spurred in great part by the public exposure received by the below-the-national-average statewide graduation rate of Massachusetts’s community colleges. The first issue addressed by the Task Force (Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, 2007) was how the graduation rates had been determined. As there is no systematic national database in which all community colleges participate, community college graduation rates are compiled using IPEDs data. However, as the task force was quick to point out, this data captures only first-time, full-time degree-seeking students, and represents only approximately one-third of all community college students. In addition, the data cannot account for students who drop down to part-time status, who take ESL or developmental courses, or who transfer without obtaining an associate’s degree (in 2005 this was nearly half of all transfer students). Despite these issues raised by the Task Force, the reality is
that the IPEDs data does seem to capture those students who are full-time and seeking a degree and both of these criteria have been positively correlated to success in degree completion, so they do provide useful data that should not be ignored. (Bradburn & Hurst, 2001).

The general findings of this task force (Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, 2007) included the recognition that more than 60 percent of incoming community college students in the state required developmental coursework, and this negatively impacts those students’ graduation rates. As other research has demonstrated, the group found significant achievement gaps based on income, ethnicity, and gender (Boswell, 2004; Bowen, Kurzweil, & Tobin, 2005; Carnevale & Rose, 2004). Although the graduation rate of those students measured by the IPEDs data was below average, the retention rate was comparable to the national rate. Finally, the report found that there was incomplete data on and assessment about other measurements of success, particularly for those students falling outside of the parameters of the IPEDs data. The three major recommendations that came out of the Task Force report (Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, 2007) were to improve the statewide graduation rate of community college students so that it would exceed the national average within the next seven years, to develop comprehensive campus-wide success measures to foster data-driven improvements, and to leverage financial resources to address some of the major funding issues. In terms of specific measures aimed at transfer students, it was noted throughout the report that there is limited data and analysis on the success of student support services. It was also acknowledged that there is no current measure of how many transfer students reach their educational goals and how their performance at four-year institutions
compares that of with the “native” students who started at the four-year school. The original charge to the Task Force asked them to review if the Board’s policies and campus policies regarding transfer—such as the Transfer Compact, Tuition Access Program (TAP), and Joint Admissions—were effective in creating a seamless pathway from community colleges to senior institution degree completion for community college students. The Task Force did not report on these policies but rather recommended that a separate task force, The Commonwealth Transfer Advisory Group (Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, 2008), be established to pursue these issues. Finally, it should be noted that in surveys conducted for the Task Force on Retention and Completion Rates at the Community Colleges, financial pressure was cited as the most common reason for students leaving the community colleges. This did not seem surprising to the Task Force, which reported that the median Mass Grant, the state’s grant for the neediest students, covers less than one-third of the cost of tuition and fees at the community college level. If students cannot afford to attend the state’s community colleges, they will not be able to afford the four-year institutions, particularly private, selective institutions, which do not provide full financial aid packages.

The outcome of the report by the Commonwealth Transfer Advisory Group, (Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, 2008) was another set of recommendations specifically geared at streamlining the transfer process for students, thereby encouraging more students to successfully transfer. The result of both of these reports conducted through the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education is that the state has committed for the first time to centralizing data to better assess the performance of community college transfer students. This will enable a much deeper analysis of what is happening to
potential transfer students, particularly under-represented low-income students, and how they can be better supported. The primary focus of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education has been on public two-year to public four-year transfer, because that is the sector affected by legislation and state funding. It is also the sector that serves the majority of Massachusetts’s students. However, 85 percent of the baccalaureate-granting institutions in Massachusetts are private, many of them selective (CIHE). These institutions often boast high graduation rates and may offer specialized support services or learning environments that cannot be replicated at the public colleges and universities.

Several foundations have recognized a need for further research and specific initiatives that address some of the issues facing college students in Massachusetts. The Boston Foundation, a major sponsor of education initiatives in Massachusetts, recently issued a report reiterating the important role community colleges should be playing in-state and what can be done to help them reach their potential (Lassen, 2007). The report ends by summarizing other current developments, which should be beneficial to developing a better understanding and strategies for what is not working for the community colleges. It notes that in addition to the Task Force Report to the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (2007), MassInc has recently completed a review of promising practices in retention and completion rates. Another organization, Private Industry Council/Center for Labor Market Studies, is reporting on education and employment outcomes for students as part of Project ProTech, as well as tracking college enrollment data for Boston public school graduates. Also, two new college preparedness programs, specifically targeted to underserved student populations, have been launched throughout New England. And finally, there are two projects aimed at data collection
that will tremendously help with efforts to track students through the higher education pipeline. The first project involves the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education and Massachusetts Department of Education, both of which have committed to participate in a multi-state effort to track Massachusetts high school graduates who move on to Massachusetts two- and four-year public institutions. Lassen (2007) writes, “This will allow for a school-by-school analysis and will shed light on questions ranging from the degree to which MCAS scores predict college success to the impact of various course-taking patterns on retention” (p. 29). The other data-tracking project involves the Boston Private Industry Council and the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University and plans to track all Boston Public School graduates who attend postsecondary institutions that are part of the National Student Clearinghouse program. Lassen believes this will provide a much more detailed picture of where Boston Public School graduates are experiencing success and where they are not. All of these initiatives aim to strengthen the educational preparation of underserved students in Massachusetts, including many who are being served, or will be served by the state’s community colleges. By addressing some of the issues that have prevented some students from being academically prepared to pursue a bachelor’s degree, selective colleges will have fewer reasons not to be involved in assisting these students through the academic pipeline. Already, results from the Boston Public School project indicate that students who go on to private, selective colleges within the state have significantly higher graduation rates than those who attend the state universities (Vaznis, 2009).
Conclusion

The chief prediction concerning New England college students by the year 2020 is that most New England states, but especially Massachusetts, will suffer declines in the percentage of young workers holding bachelor’s degrees if current educational and demographic trends continue. In order for Massachusetts, which has one of the highest per capita incomes in the nation, to stay ahead of other states, to maintain its high property values, and to avoid the enormous costs of supporting those without adequate workforce preparation, “it is necessary to maintain educational attainment in the Commonwealth at levels higher than in the other states (Coelen, et al., 2002, p. 4). Of particular note, minority college students continue to be underrepresented in New England. Although Massachusetts’s institutions, overall, do a slightly better job enrolling minority students than other states in New England do, many of these students are recruited from out of state (and as a result, they are much less likely to remain in Massachusetts upon graduation). Researchers have been able to use the national data collected for longitudinal studies of college students to study transfers, but more progress towards standardized data collection specifically geared to track students’ movements between and through institutions needs to be developed so individual colleges and states can analyze and compare in more detail the transfer experience of their own students. This data can facilitate understanding of the transfer system and “make sure that it strengthens rather than thwarts the community college equity agenda” (Bailey & Morest, 2006, p. 262). However, governance does take place at an institutional level for the community colleges, and as a result there is little statewide coordination between them. As previously mentioned, statewide data collection has only recently been considered,
and therefore analysis on how effective transfer policies are is limited. Furthermore, there is little coordination between the public and private sectors.

It is difficult to compare the numbers of transfer students in Massachusetts with the numbers and percentages of transfers based on national longitudinal data, as the state does not have a comprehensive database that tracks transfer students. However, pieces of data are available that help to begin to paint the picture. In 2001, the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, the state’s flagship campus, reported that its transfer enrollment was on a rebound since declines in the mid-1990’s. The 2001 acceptance rate for transfers was 62 percent and the admissions yield was 57 percent. The new class was therefore comprised of 30 percent transfer students, 42 percent of whom came from community colleges (12.6 percent of total enrollment). Of the 388 community college students enrolled, 66 percent of them came through the joint admissions program, which guarantees admission if students complete their designated associate’s degree with a minimum GPA of 2.5. The average GPA for all transfers was 3.09. At all of Massachusetts’s public four-year institutions that year, 9.22 percent of the students were transfer students, while at private four-year institutions that number was 3.54 percent (Coelen, et al. 2002). These low percentages suggest that factors are prohibiting students from successfully transferring. The Final Report from the Task Force on Retention and Completion Rates at the Community Colleges (Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, 2007) provided data that stated in the fall of 2005, 2,395 Massachusetts community college students transferred to the public four-year institutions in the state (1,715 to state colleges, 679 to the four University of Massachusetts campuses). This number does not include any students who transferred to private four-year colleges and
universities within the state or any of the students who transferred out of state, although it seems likely it represents the majority of state transfers. The report notes that nearly half of these students did not receive their associate’s degrees before transferring.

It is not clear how many students are able to meet their educational goals at the community college level, and even less clear what is happening to those students who do manage to transfer. Questions that remain unanswered include: How many potential transfer students successfully attend and graduate from four-year colleges? How many transfer students stay in state? How many are of low-income backgrounds? How many attend private versus public colleges and universities? Which private institutions are more amenable to transfer students and which have the highest graduation rates of transfer students? Due to limited statewide and intra-institutional data and analysis on transfer students, little is known at this point what becomes of them after they transfer.

Given the enormous increase in community college attendees, the projected changes in demographics, the dire state of the economy, the growing need for a bachelor’s degree to be competitive in the Massachusetts workplace, the issue of affordability of public institutions, as well as the very high costs associated with many of our private higher education institutions, this may prove to be a very difficult time for community college transfer students in Massachusetts. However, all of these factors may lead the state, as well as individual colleges and universities within the state, to effectively reconsider how to best serve the next generation of college students. Massachusetts already has several of the basics of state policy in place to help to promote transfer, especially to the public sector. It has articulation agreements, a joint admissions program, and tuition discounts for transfer students who maintain a minimum GPA. And,
as noted earlier, recently the Commonwealth Transfer Advisory Group convened by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education released a report with several recommendations on how to strengthen the transfer function.

It is evident that Massachusetts needs to heavily invest in public higher education as well as continue to improve upon the college readiness of all of its high-school students. Community colleges also have their work cut out for them as they balance multi-missions and try to rectify the educational deficits that most students bring with them. Despite all of these changes that need to be made to better prepare community college transfer students, there is still much that can be done for the students who are ready for transfer. In order to understand how to best support these students, it is important that efforts continue to develop a method of tracking the colleges into which students are gaining access, and what certain four-year institutions are doing, or might be willing to do to allow under-represented students more access, so that ultimately opportunities can be expanded.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The research design for this project is based on a qualitative analysis of the rationales and strategies employed at three private selective institutions in Massachusetts to recruit community college transfer students. While some transfer compacts have been established between community colleges and in-state private colleges, it is not a general practice. Many private colleges prefer to have more flexibility in the admissions process than is allowed by articulation agreements, so they have constructed different policies around the admissions of community college students. However, the specific methods of recruitment, as well as the rationales behind those methods, have not been well researched. Since 46 percent of all college students now attend community colleges, it is important to consider the ways in which many of these students can successfully transfer and be integrated into all types of four-year institutions, including private selective colleges. This study has been designed with the intent of better understanding the factors at play that impact a private selective college’s practice of recruiting community college transfer students. It is my desire that the findings of this research inform those at selective institutions about both the benefits and challenges that these particular institutions have faced, thereby allowing them to consider their own institution’s standing and capacity for supporting community college students.

There have been several qualitative studies (Alexander et al., 2007; Nowak, 2004; Townshend, 1995) that have been conducted from the point of view of community college students’ perspectives of the transfer experience. While these are valuable studies, they do not deeply examine why and how administrators at private selective
institutions might craft policies to actively respond to these students. The primary reason that this research focuses on the perspectives of administrators and faculty is that they are the ones who ultimately control access to their institutions by serving as gatekeepers.

This study was conducted at three case sites. These sites were carefully selected for meeting certain criteria, but also for maximum variation within those criteria. The actual steps in selecting the case study sites will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter. Although all three case sites are chartered as private institutions in Massachusetts and all accept less than 75 percent of their applicants, they are different in terms of type of institution, size of student population, yield ratios, and institutional policies. Each of the three sites represents a different level of selectivity pertaining to their first-year first-time students. Clark University can be described as selective or having moderately difficult admissions standards, which I am defining as schools accepting roughly 45-75 percent of applicants, X University can be considered more selective with more difficult admissions standards due to its acceptance rate falling between 25 percent and 45 percent. Amherst College can be considered highly selective with very difficult admissions criteria and an acceptance rate of fewer than 25 percent of all applicants. The institutions vary in terms of type of institution as well as size of their undergraduate populations. X University can be described as a national research university and is the largest institution in this study. Clark is the next largest, but considerably smaller than X University. It is also considered a national research university by *US News & World Report*, but describes itself as a liberal arts university. Amherst is the smallest institution in the study and is described as a liberal arts college. It does not support graduate programs or an evening division.
The methods employed to carry out the multi-case study included the interviewing of key administrators and faculty such as transfer admissions counselors, financial aid directors, vice-presidents of enrollment management and deans. At least eight administrators were interviewed on each campus. In addition, I conducted both participant and researcher observation by attending transfer-related events and meetings held both on and off campus. I also collected relevant materials as well as carefully reviewed the institutions’ web sites and conducted content analysis to further enrich the findings.

In order to effectively triangulate the information gathered during the course of the case study, I conducted member checking by sharing the initial case study profiles, as well as the cross-case findings and recommendations with each administrator interviewed. A survey was also sent out to transfer counselors at some of the community colleges that work closely with at least one of the three institutions in the study. The survey, which was sent via email asked these community college administrators to reflect on their understanding of why and how the institutions in the case study recruit their students.

The research was conducted over a period of six months. The time spent at each institution varied depending on how the interviews were scheduled and what transfer-related events were taking place. At each institution I started by identifying a key informant who was willing to serve as the main contact person at that institution for the duration of the case study. At Amherst that person was the Associate Dean of Transfer Admissions, at Clark that person was the Transfer Coordinator, and at X University, the person was the Director of Enrollment Management Research.
Research Questions

The two main research questions being pursued in this study are (1) Why did administrators at three particular institutions create and/or implement policies and practices aimed at recruiting community college transfer students? and (2) How are they pursuing this agenda? The important sub-questions driving the research were:

- How are administrators (or other key constituents) accomplishing the recruitment of transfer students and what, if any, are their goals around this type of transfer?
- What are the benefits and challenges the administrators identify in serving community college transfer students?
- What is the institutional context for such decisions and what organizational changes, if any, were necessary to pursue community college transfer students.
- How do the administrators describe their institution’s mission within the context of higher education in Massachusetts?

Generalizations cannot be made from this study about what rationales and strategies should be employed at all selective institutions to promote and support the transfer of community college students. However, this research did identify specific rationales and strategies that have allowed three selective institutions to recruit community college students. It identified both the benefits and challenges these particular institutions have faced in implementing this practice. It also identified the means by which they carry out the practice. The research does not evaluate the institutions’ efforts, but administrators provided their own assessment of what is working or not working and why. Perhaps these considerations will be explored and/or adapted
by other selective institutions that are considering increasing access of community college transfers.

Research Methodology

This study is presented as a qualitative descriptive multi-case study. This approach incorporates aspects of both constructivist and critical theory frameworks in what I am referring to as “critical constructivism.” From a constructivist standpoint, the researcher employs “an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p.5). From a critical theoretical perspective, the researcher believes that the meanings that humans contrive are based in large part on the historical and social conditions in which they live (Creswell, 2003). While this study does not focus directly on students, the empowerment of underrepresented students through the actions of the “gatekeepers” at certain institutions is of utmost concern to the researcher. It is hoped that by presenting an in-depth examination of three different environments, all of which are engaging in the practice of integrating community college transfer students into their undergraduate population, that others can gain a deeper understanding of the factors involved. Perhaps then this research can affect administrators, boards of trustees, and policymakers to envision more ways in which the transfer of community college students can be supported at all tiers of the higher education system. So while this research does not qualify as a direct call to action, it is meant to serve as an advocacy project.

Rationale for Qualitative Approach

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggest five defining characteristics of qualitative research. First they say that qualitative research takes place in “the natural setting” and that the researcher is the key instrument used. This is important to this project because of
the belief that “action can best be understood when it is observed in the setting in which it occurs” (p.30). The setting in these three case studies has to be understood within the context of the history of the institutions, the context of the higher education system, and the context of the state in which they reside. The second and third points that Bogdan and Biklen raise is that qualitative research is descriptive and that it is concerned with the process rather than simply outcomes. Questions they pose include, “How do people negotiate meaning?” and “How do certain terms and labels come to be applied? (p. 31). These questions are of utmost concern to this project. Given how much institutional decision-making is based on competitively reacting to peers within the higher education system, it is vital to examine how people derive what is important for an institution and how they define certain terms and labels. Just the term “community college transfer student” raises a lot of connotations among administrators in higher education. The fourth point by Bogdan and Biklen is that qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively. They claim that researchers do not search out data to prove or disprove a hypothesis they hold before entering the study. It should be noted that the case study sites were chosen precisely because they appear to be bucking a trend among selective colleges to accept fewer community college students. Based on prior personal experience, a review of the literature, as well as initial interviews held with both administrators and students, I did approach this project with certain assumptions about what I would learn. Yet, it was the results of the research that shaped the findings. My assumptions were just that, and I recognized that they may or may not hold. This leads to Bogdan and Biklen’s final point that meaning is of essential concern to the qualitative approach. This point is centered on the idea that qualitative researchers are concerned
with what are called “participant perspectives” (p.320). For me, it is crucial to note the historical and social context within which administrators at the case study sites are operating because I believe that this highly impacts how meaning is constructed. However, it is also important to consider that there are institutional rationales and strategies that have been created by individual administrators and which only they (or their successors) can fully appreciate based on their own interpretations of the environment around them. While these meanings can be richly described and analyzed, and thereby provide valuable insight, they cannot be replicated because they are individualized and therefore specific to the particular participants.

**Rationale for Case Study**

I wanted to conduct research in environments where the transfer of community college students is an institutionalized practice in order to gain a better understanding of how and why key administrators and faculty at these institutions have chosen to take this course of action. The study could have focused on case sites where community college students are not recruited and provided an analysis of what barriers were preventing this recruitment. However, while there is certainly much to be learned from examining either a “pro” or “con” environment, the idea of looking at concrete possibilities of how it might be done was intriguing and hopeful.

As Patricia Heinz (2007) has noted, “Reasons for choosing case study include the desire to understand complex social phenomena with the belief that the research approach needs to explore the contextual conditions related to the phenomena” (p.349). Heinz also notes that in case study research it is highly likely that the researcher has no control over the context within which the phenomenon exists (p. 350). This research can be described
as an explanatory multi-case study because it is looking to explain an existing phenomenon (that of actively supporting community college transfers) at three different sites. As this recruitment is already currently taking place at each of these institutions, it is safe to conclude that I had no control over any aspect of the context of this practice.

The reason that I chose to conduct a multi-case study is due in large part to the hierarchical framework of American higher education and the profound impact it has on how colleges and universities position themselves through their mission, policies, and initiatives. It is my belief that institutions of higher education operating from different positions on the hierarchy of the system are always acting to maintain their position in the hierarchy or improve it if possible. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the power relations at play among institutions and society at large to truly appreciate how decisions are made and implemented within institutions. Having three case study sites operating from different positions of selectivity was purposefully chosen to allow for variation among private selective colleges.

Prior Research and Fieldwork:

Prior to the start of the multi-case study, I conducted background research of available data related to community college transfer students in Massachusetts. Sources for this part of the research include the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, College Board, US News and World Report, College Data, as well as individual institutions, both at the community college level and the four-year level. This research allowed me to gain a better understanding of the private selective institutions in the state, the different levels of selectivity, transfer patterns, and how many Pell grant recipients different institutions served. This last piece of information emerged as critical given the
large number of community college students who receive Pell grants. Given the lack of statewide data available, I was not able to directly determine the numbers of community college transfers by institution, but was able to gather that information for some institutions, as well as review the numbers of overall transfers by each selective institution. The background research I conducted suggested the need to survey the community college transfer counselors in the state as well. I conducted this survey by telephone and email and asked community college transfer counselors to identify which private colleges they considered transfer amenable. Sixteen private selective institutions were named, eleven of which were named three or more times. A partial list of the results is included in Appendix A. The universities named by transfer counselors have been omitted because I used this list to choose my case study sites, and one of the sites requested not to be named in the study.

Prior fieldwork was also done as preparation for this case study. I conducted several interviews of administrators at the community college level, at transfer-amenable private four-year colleges, as well as at private four-year colleges that do not actively support community college transfer students. I also formally interviewed four students who had recently graduated from selective colleges in Massachusetts about their transfer experiences from community colleges. Findings from this research include a recognition that some colleges have practices concerning community college transfer students that may or may not be addressed in formal policies; that some private selective institutions, particularly the more selective ones, are moving away from the concept of transfer altogether (as noted in Dowd, Bensimon, et al., 2006); that institutions may support socioeconomic diversity and an equity agenda through avenues than community college
transfer such as partnerships to improve K-12 education, college prep programs, and recruitment policies related to high school students; a confirmation that selective institutions are heavily influenced by the actions of their peer institutions; and finally that community college transfer students do not necessarily want to be identified as such on four-year college campuses, but do appreciate mentoring and extra support.

Perhaps the most surprising finding was how little information many administrators at the private selective colleges knew about the number of community college transfers at their institution and what their needs might be. In fact, when I spoke with some administrators at colleges, that had been recommended to me as “transfer amenable” by community college colleagues, some were surprised that their institution was considered as such.

In addition to field research, Gabbard and Singleton’s (2006) case study research was used as a model for conducting case study research on community college transfer students at selective institutions. This study conducted a quantitative analysis to determine selective schools that had high rates of community college transfer students and then conducted interviews about best practices for supporting these students. While the research questions posed by this study were different than the ones I am posing several features of how they structured their research were useful. For example, I followed a few of the selection steps employed by Gabbard and Singleton. These included checking the Phi Theta Kappa web site to confirm which private selective institutions offered scholarships to community college transfer students, and conducting web-site reviews for information available to potential community college transfer
students. In addition, themes from the Dowd and Gabbard research project served as a check to the codes that I inducted from my data.

Sampling

Recruitment

The three case studies used in this research were selected by their demonstrated commitment to the recruitment of community college transfer students. They were initially identified through a survey of transfer counselors at the state’s fifteen community colleges. Demonstrations of commitment to institutional community college transfers students may have been in the form of a specialized program which draws applicants from community colleges, a recruitment strategy in which the selective college reaches out to community college transfer students, or a partnership with an outside organization to encourage community college transfer students to apply. It should be noted that it is not that these institutions necessarily have higher transfer rates than their peers, but rather they were chosen because they have made deliberate outreach efforts to community colleges. In the absence of comprehensive data, that identifies which private selective institutions recruit and retain the most community college transfer students, this gauge of outreach efforts was employed. The initial list of private selective transfer-friendly schools identified by community college counselors consisted of sixteen institutions. I approached six colleges that I believed would allow for maximum variation given acceptance rates, demographics, institutional history, and type of institution. Two colleges that were approached elected not to participate and a third college agreed to participate after the arrangements with three other case study sites had been finalized. As
a note, four of the institutions named in the community college survey were women’s colleges.

Institution A in the study is Amherst College. It is a highly selective college, often referred to as “elite” due to its low acceptance rate. It is a small private liberal arts college located in the five-college region in western Massachusetts. Amherst recently began a grant-funded initiative through which they are recruiting community college transfer students. Institution B is Clark University, which is a small liberal arts university located in Worcester, Massachusetts. It is moderately selective. Clark has a long history of recruiting from community colleges and regularly participates in transfer fairs. They also have dedicated financial aid awards for community college transfers. Institution C chose not to be identified by name or certain identifiers, although it did provide institutional data. I have chosen to represent it as X University rather than with a pseudonym to demonstrate that certain data has been omitted or obscured, but an “alternate identity” for the institution has not been pursued. This institution also has a long history of recruiting community college transfers and often provides on-the-spot admissions to transfer students. Permission to conduct research at each institution was obtained from senior leadership at each campus and the Institutional Review Boards at each campus were informed and documentation was provided if requested. (Please see Appendix B for the letters of introduction used to introduce the research project and request permission to include the institution in the study.

Snowball sampling was employed to determine who would be contacted for interviews. Key informants were identified on each campus to serve as the main contact throughout the case study. At two of the campuses, it was the transfer coordinators who
played this role, and at the third college it was the Director of Enrollment Management. While I had an idea of which administrators would be most useful to interview, I deliberately followed the initial leads provided by the key informants, and then in turn followed up on leads provided by each interviewee until saturation was achieved. In addition, the key informant at each case site helped to identify and locate pertinent documents and data, as well as informed me of relevant events.

At Amherst, eleven individual interviews took place, nine of them in person and two of them conducted via telephone. The key informant, the Associate Dean of Transfer Admissions, was interviewed twice. At Clark, eight interviews were conducted, all in person. The key informant, the Transfer Coordinator, was interviewed twice. The interview with the former admissions officer took place at his current institution. At X University, eight interviews took place. Three of those interviews were individual and in person. Three interviews consisted of two individuals and were in person. One interview was conducted as a conference call over the telephone and consisted of three administrators from the evening school division. The final interview resembled a focus group with all nine members of the Arts and Sciences advising team answering questions in person. As with the other two institutions, the key informant was interviewed twice. Please see Appendix C for the initial interview protocol. In addition to the interviews, there was email correspondence throughout the case study with interviewees.
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<th>Amherst College</th>
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<td>Associate Dean of Transfer</td>
<td>Transfer Coordinator</td>
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<td>Admissions</td>
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**Instruments**

The interview protocol contained open-ended questions designed to allow administrators to reflect on why and how they have instituted or continued certain policies around recruitment of community college transfer students. Following the interviews there was also follow-up communication to verify factual information, pursue further questions, and to verify and/or clarify any statements made either by interviewee or by myself in preliminary analysis. The protocol was informed by the “Transfer Access Self-Assessment Inventory for Four-year Colleges” principally developed by Alicia Dowd, Estela Bensimon, and Glenn Gabbard (www.natn.org). The questions I used were fewer and more broad-based as my objective was not meant to be a formal assessment of practices, but rather an exploratory study. A specific question was asked to encourage administrators to reflect on their decision-making process within the context of Massachusetts. As mentioned earlier, the interview protocol can be found in Appendix C.

Also included in the appendices is the protocol for the follow-up survey I conducted to triangulate findings with community college transfer counselors (Appendix D). The questions in this informal survey were designed to have the transfer counselors reflect on what they understood to be the purpose behind recruiting community college transfer students at the three institutions in the study. The questions were sent out to community college counselors in the local area of the case study sites. In addition, extensive field notes were kept of all events that the researcher attended. Finally, it should be noted that the findings, both from the with-in case analysis and from the cross-case analysis were shared with all of the interviewees via email. A special message was
sent to the senior administrators at each institution reiterating the request to use the institution’s name in the study. One institution declined to be named. The message sent to the senior administrators is included in Appendix E.

Ethical Guidelines

In order to establish trustworthiness, an alternative to validity and reliability suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), I asked the several questions of my data in regard to the collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting of data loosely based on questions initially proposed by Michael Bassey (1999). These questions included have I spent enough time with my data? Have I sufficiently checked the sources of my data? Has there been sufficient triangulation of data? Did I provide enough details on my data? And finally, I asked myself throughout the whole process if I documented the paper trail adequately. Evidence as to how I answered these questions is presented in the following sections.

Data Collection

The research took place over a period of six months from July to December 2008. As noted earlier, an average of eight interviews was conducted, averaging approximately 45 minutes. In addition, there was email correspondence between myself and the interviewees. I also attended or gathered information about campus activities such as recruitment events, orientations, and support groups that were sponsored by the institution, both on-campus and off-site. I reviewed institutional materials related to transfer and/or community college students, including web-based information. Finally, in an effort to triangulate the data collected from administrators, I surveyed some of the community college transfer counselors who work with each of the three institutions.
There were two phases to the data gathering. The first phase included initial interviews with key informants as well as other administrators. The main goal of the interviews was to explore the experiences of the administrators and thoughtfully consider how these experiences are reflected in the construction and modification of the institutions’ policies concerning admissions. Therefore, the interview protocol asked a series of open-ended questions based primarily on the interviewee’s experiences with community college transfer students. The interviews were recorded on a DVR recorder and then transcribed by the researcher using HyperTranscribe software. In addition, I memoed extensively about my experiences in conducting the interviews as well as on observations I had made during process. I also wrote follow-up memos after most of the interviews. The confidentiality of each participant was maintained throughout the process, until permission was given by participants to use their titles. No individual names were included in the research findings. While the case study was being conducted, no information was shared between institutions unless specific permission to do so had been granted. The institutions themselves remained unnamed until the designated official at each institution gave permission to use the institution’s name. Initial analysis of the data began upon completion of the transcriptions with the researcher using HyperResearch software to process open coding. More on this process will be explained in the next section.

The second phase of this research consisted of document review of both printed literature and online materials that pertained to community college transfer students. The data gathered was coded according to the factual components of the materials as well as by any themes that emerged. For each institution, I reviewed relevant documents to
surmise whether they were accessible to community college transfers, contained useful information for the application process, and made reference specifically to community colleges. I also conducted fieldwork by visiting the campuses and attending transfer-related events held both on and off campus. At some of these events, I either observed from the perimeter or was actually introduced as a doctoral student conducting research. At other events I was a participant observer. At X University, I was encouraged by the admissions coordinator to sign up as a potential transfer so I could have a first-hand experience as to what students might hear and receive in terms of communication. At Clark University, I attended Orientation day for transfer students. While there, I spent time behind the information booth and participated in a discussion with the student coordinator. I also attended a parent Question and Answer session, a Resource Information session, as well as observed an icebreaker social activity for the new students. At X University, I attended an Open House Day where I sat in on a general information session, as well as a transfer session, and participated in an interactive tour of the university. I also attended a local community college fair that I learned about from the admissions office at X University. While I was there, I spoke with X University’s transfer counselor, as well as the transfer counselor from Clark University and the transfer coordinator at the community college. At Amherst College, I did not have the opportunity to directly observe a transfer event. However, I was briefed by administrators on three events that took place during the semester: Orientation, The Community Colleges and Amherst College Faculty Conference, and the Admissions Open House for transfer students. For all three case study sites, documents related to each of the transfer events were collected and analyzed, and field notes were analyzed as well.
All procedures employed were documented. While careful consideration was used to replicate certain data collection at each of the three sites, I did not approach each site in the same way. I felt that flexibility was needed in order to capture what was important to each institution. Contact summary sheets and memos were used to help organize data and validate the research process.

Figure 1. Data Collection Methods

Note: KI = Key Informant
In order to extract themes from the data, I used the constant comparative method developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967; Merriam, 1998). This strategy relies on inductive analysis of the data. Data analysis occurred simultaneously with data collection. As previously mentioned, the interviews were recorded and transcribed. An initial reading of the data was completed (transcripts, field notes and documents) and the researcher took notes on initial impressions. At this point, I began the process of open-coding by pulling out striking words and concepts. The codes were kept on a master list that was then used for each member institution of the case study. After all the data had been open-coded, the concepts were grouped together to allow for larger concept codes. At this point, some deductive analysis took place by comparing initial codes to the major themes elicited from the case study conducted by Gabbard and Singleton (2006).

Merriam (1998) notes that the naming of the coding categories comes from at least three sources: the researcher, the participants, and outside sources. All three of these sources led to the creation of the coding categories.

Once the categories were established from the data I returned to the data to see if other phrases, or coding chunks, could be classified under the categories. Data management was crucial to this project. Because of the large amount of data that was being analyzed, HyperResearch software was employed to record and analyze the coding categories of data.

The checking of emergent themes happened through two measures. The researcher conducted member checking with the key informants and other administrators at each case study site. In addition, the thematic codes for how schools support recruiting
efforts was checked against the case study research conducted as part of the Dowd and Gabbard research project (2006). Codes gleaned from this study include, transfer agents, transfer champions, authentic caring, peer advising, navigation, socialization, apprenticeship, networks of support, relationships with community colleges, financial aid assistance, and extra-mile advising. Several of these codes either validated the emergent codes from this project or suggested new relevant codes for consideration.

*Interpreting Data*

The theoretical framework that provided the context for my analysis, is critical education theory as articulated by Kathleen Weiler (1988), who writes that education is the site and instrument of both of the reproduction and production of class identities. She writes that what essentially defines critical educational theory is “its moral imperative and its emphasis on the need for both individual empowerment and social transformation (p. 6). This framework allows for a consideration of the ways in which private selective colleges may simultaneously operate as sites of both domination and liberation, or put another way, sites where class inequities are reproduced yet also subject to change.

*Reporting Data*

The data is reported in two sections. Merriam (1998) writes that there are two stages of analysis for a multi-case study-- the within-case analysis and the cross-case analysis (p. 194). The within-case analysis is presented in Chapter 4 and treats each case site as a whole case. Chapter 4 begins with a general explanation of the emergent themes that I generated through my coding process. Then a narrative account of each institution and the rationales and strategies employed by that institution are presented in the context of its institutional mission and goals, as well as its standing among its peers.
Chapter 5 presents the cross-case analysis as well as recommendations. Yin (1994) states that in a cross-case analysis, the researcher attempts to “build a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases even though the cases will vary in details” (p. 112). Using this method of data analysis allowed for the consideration of the data through the lens of critical education theory, as well as in relation to the concept of democratic education.
CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDY PROFILES

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings that emerged from the three case studies conducted of private, selective colleges in Massachusetts that actively recruit community college transfer students. The primary research question of this study centers on why these colleges, from the perspectives of lead administrators, choose to pursue these students. Four major themes of the rationales emerged: strategic enrollment practices, diversity, institutional enrichment, and community engagement.

Throughout the discussions of why administrators felt their institutions supported community college transfers, the challenges presented by this practice also emerged. In a certain respect, these challenges may be considered as why private, selective colleges may not engage in the recruitment of community college students, but in these three case study sites, these challenges alone were not enough to deter institutions from their recruitment goals. Since it is important to understand how these challenges impact the development of the institutions’ recruitment strategies, they are considered as a particular theme as well.

The second part of the research question posed in this study focused on how the institutions involved actively recruit and support community college students. This question was asked in light of how this information would illuminate the reasons that institutions were engaged in recruiting these students and perhaps shed light on the depth of that commitment. The researcher did not attempt to evaluate the programs and practices of the institutions, but rather to identify them and share the reflections of
administrators on how these relate to the enrollment goals for community college transfer students.

The major finding related to how institutions recruit community college students is that the ways in which institutions recruit and then support these students reflects the reasons they have for recruiting them. This finding is in line with Section IV of *The Study on Economic, Informational and Cultural Barriers* (Gabbard, Singleton, et al., 2006), entitled “Practices Supporting the Transfer of Low-Income Community College Students to Selective Institutions: Case Study Findings.” This research focused on eight highly selective institutions that were determined to have and support a relatively high percentage of community college transfer students. Gabbard, Singleton, et al. considered a series of what they termed “critical features” that were found to support the recruitment of community college students. These included: financial aid, dedicated resources, transfer champions, the role of faculty, and the policy environment. This research confirmed the importance of these critical features. The two major themes that emerged under the question of how institutions recruit and support community college transfer students are: information sharing and support infrastructure.

*Why Private Selective Colleges Recruit Community College Transfer Students*

**Strategic Enrollment Practices**

Strategic enrollment practices can be defined as those practices and policies geared at recruiting, accepting, and matriculating certain student populations.

**Diversity**

For the most part, the term diversity was used by administrators in reference to racial and socioeconomic diversity of its student body; however, there were instances in
which it was used to describe age diversity, institutional diversity, and diversity of beliefs and practices.

For enrollment strategies, it was a factor that was often discussed in relation to recruitment strategies. For institutional enrichment, it was the single most cited reason given for the recruitment of community college transfer students. Finally, in terms of community engagement, there was the recognition by several administrators at each institution that their college community may not be reflective of the local community surrounding it and that it was important to engage in partnerships to address that issue. In more general terms, administrators reiterated that the colleges felt a sense of responsibility to conduct research and solve problems that go beyond academia and into local and global communities.

Institutional Enrichment

Institutional enrichment refers to the ways in which administrators identified community college students as contributing to campus culture, both socially and academically. This may be through their previous academic achievements, the life experiences they bring to the classrooms, or their leadership on campus.

Community Engagement

Community engagement refers to the partnerships formed between colleges and their local communities, as well as how the college defines its role in the larger global society. For two of the colleges in the study, a sub-theme for them was social justice, which they defined as having a responsibility coming from a point of privilege to share resources.
Challenges

Challenges can be defined as those issues facing either the institutions or potential transfer students that either prohibit students from successfully transferring or make the transition more difficult once students have transferred.

The research specifically asked about challenges facing the institutions as a means of getting at some of the reasons why colleges may be hesitant to recruit more community college students.

How Private Selective Colleges Recruit Community College Students

Information Sharing

This term is used to describe the various methods each institution had for disseminating information related to both the application and the enrollment processes to potential transfer students. The methods of information sharing may have been achieved through information posted on institutional websites, email communications, printed materials, open-house sessions, or personal communications.

Support Infrastructure

This term refers to all of the services and resources an institution has that provide student support. This may include everything from student services such as financial aid and the registrar’s office to academic support services and counseling services.
Table 2.
Practices Supporting the Recruitment of CC Students by Institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Sharing</th>
<th>Support Infrastructure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amherst</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Public Campaign</td>
<td>▪ Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ through Jack Kent Cooke Foundation</td>
<td>▪ Student Life Fellow dedicated to JKC students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Visits to area CC’s by admissions officer and fellow</td>
<td>▪ Student Life Fellow dedicated to LI students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Open house for Transfer Students</td>
<td>▪ Peer Mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Website</td>
<td>▪ 100% of financial need met, including costs related to living and medical expenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Printed transfer information packets</td>
<td>▪ Bridge to Future funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Orientation Student Life Fellow dedicated to JKC students</td>
<td>▪ Transfer Student Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Student Life Fellow dedicated to LI students</td>
<td>▪ General student services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Peer Mentoring</td>
<td>▪ General student services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ 100% of financial need met, including costs related to living and medical expenses</td>
<td>▪ Bridge to Future funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Bridge to Future funds</td>
<td>▪ Transfer Student Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Transfer Student Alliance</td>
<td>▪ General student services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Clark**

- Community College Fairs
- Personal communication with admissions
- Website

**X University**

- Community College Fairs
- Website, including transfer credit evaluation online tool
- Open houses
- Email communication

Presentation of Findings

An overview of each institution is presented, which includes a review of the institution’s mission, history, and demographics. A narrative then provides a detailed case study of what unique circumstances led to the particular practices in regard to community college transfer students at each particular institution. The themes identified above are explored within the context of each institution’s story.

Finally a cross-case analysis of the three institutions is presented. All of the institutions are private selective higher education institutions in Massachusetts, but they vary in terms of level of selectivity, geographic location, and size of undergraduate student body. They are similar in tuition and fees. The smallest school is a liberal arts college located in a suburban setting in western Massachusetts, the medium-sized school
is classified as a small research university and is located in an urban environment in central Massachusetts, and the last institution in the study is a large research university located in a major urban setting. While each institution is unique, the data from each case study has been compared and contrasted to provide a broader picture of the issues facing private selective colleges recruiting community college transfer students.

Table 3.

Comparative Institutional Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amherst College</th>
<th>Clark University</th>
<th>X University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Founded in 1821</td>
<td>Founded in 1887</td>
<td>Founded in XXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Located in Amherst, MA</td>
<td>Located in Worcester, MA</td>
<td>Located in XXXX, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Year Admittance Rate (Fall 2007)</td>
<td>First Year Admittance Rate (Fall 2007)</td>
<td>First Year Admittance Rate (Fall 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
<td>Below 45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Enrollment</td>
<td>Undergraduate Enrollment</td>
<td>Undergraduate Enrollment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,685</td>
<td>2,320</td>
<td>Between 8.000-15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Tuition</td>
<td>Cost of Tuition</td>
<td>Cost of Tuition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$37,643</td>
<td>$34,220</td>
<td>$30,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endowment</td>
<td>Endowment</td>
<td>Endowment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,662,377,481</td>
<td>$285,087,375</td>
<td>Under $1 billion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case Study I: Amherst College

Overview

At first glance, Amherst College may seem an unlikely candidate for a transfer-friendly institution for community college students. It is a small, elite liberal arts college with an admissions rate of 17.6 percent in 2007, and 14.2 percent in 2008. It carries a price tag around $50,000 for tuition and room and board. It is also one of the wealthiest small colleges in the United States, reporting an endowment of over one and a half billion dollars. With these financial resources, Amherst can afford to be one of the most highly selective schools in the nation, and this is reflected in the academic qualifications of its admittants. As with many elite institutions, there are few spots “open” to transfer students due to the institution’s retention rate of 98 percent for first-year students. However, it is how Amherst chooses to use those few spots that differentiates it from many of its peers. In 2007, nine out of the sixteen transfer students were from community colleges. This past fall (2008) twenty-two transfer students were accepted, and fourteen of these students came from community colleges.

Table 4. 
Entering Students (Amherst College 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. First Yr Students</th>
<th>No. 4Yr College Transfer Students</th>
<th>No. CC Transfer Students</th>
<th>Total Entering Students</th>
<th>CC Transfers / Total Entering Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>474</td>
<td>7*</td>
<td>9*</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: transfer students admitted in the spring
Table 5.
Demographic Data (Amherst College 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Undergraduate Pop.</th>
<th>CC Transfer Cohort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pell Grant Eligible</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students of Color</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students from MA</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Year Retention Rate</td>
<td>98.0%</td>
<td>92.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Amherst Office of Admissions, 2008

Why: A President’s Initiative Impresses a Major Foundation

In 2004, Amherst College appointed the youngest president in its history. From the moment he arrived, the President began a public campaign to increase access to Amherst for academically qualified low-income students. The President’s initiative quickly became an institutional priority and administrators began actively searching out ways in which they could increase socioeconomic diversity on campus. Shortly thereafter, the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation (JKCF) announced a grant program to increase the number of community college transfer students attending selective colleges. As the mission of the grant was in line with the broader vision espoused by the President at Amherst, he asked the college’s administration to consider applying for the program. Administrators and the Faculty Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid debated whether and how they should craft a proposal to the foundation. Some of the faculty and administrators raised concerns about whether Amherst could successfully support another initiative geared toward low-income students. Already the institution was in the process of planning its largest capital campaign in history to support the planned increases in the number of low-income students on campus. Faculty and administrators also voiced concerns of repeating the past mistakes of a prior program aimed at recruiting non-
traditional community college students. This program had faced several challenges and was phased out in the early 1990s. Several of the administrators who had taken part in the previous program reflected that the institution had been unprepared to deal with the challenges of serving students who had very different needs from their traditional student cohort. The majority of the community college transfers were older students, and some had families. Housing proved difficult for many of these students as Amherst does not have housing for families and, while Amherst provided some financial support, many students had faced heavy financial burdens. While there were stories of student successes in the program, four administrators shared stories of students who had to leave the college before completing their degrees.

Despite their concerns, faculty and administrators ultimately agreed to apply for the grant. The Dean of Admissions, who had witnessed a similar prior disappointment in serving non-traditional students at another college, was in support of the decision, as long as the lessons of the past effort were heeded: “We could have done this better, particularly around issues of support and flexibility. I felt that I was right in retrospect that we should have done more.”

This initiative would require significant financial resources and therefore the senior leadership of the college felt it was important to have consensus on doing the program throughout the Amherst community. The decision was made by the faculty committee and the Dean of Admissions to focus on transfer students who were more similar in age to their traditional student population. As the Dean stated, “Let's put our foot in the water a little more slowly this time.” Amherst proposed taking approximately ten community college transfer students per class. The Dean noted that they could
always increase their efforts and the parameters of their recruitment after they had built a successful foundation for the transfer students.

The grant program sponsored by the JKFC is called the Community College Transfer Initiative (CCTI). It was designed to “help high-achieving community-college students earn bachelor’s degrees at top colleges and universities nationwide” (Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, 2008). According to the JKCF website, The Foundation has invested $6.8 million to develop targeted programs at eight highly selective four-year institutions. Amherst received a $585,142 grant and committed an additional significant amount of institutional resources to fulfill the objectives set forth in its proposal. The website states, “Together, the eight recipients of the grant pledged a combined $20.5 million in financial aid and other resources and committed to enrolling 1,100 new community college transfer students, as well as college counseling for thousands of other low-income high-school students” (www.jackkentcookefoundation.org).

As part of the grant, Amherst was asked to identify community colleges with which it could develop transfer partnerships. The College named six area community colleges with which it would work to establish programming and pledged to do outreach at all fifteen of the state’s community college campuses. While it is not a requirement of the grant that Amherst recruit only low- to moderate-income students, the intention behind the grant is to increase the number of these target populations at highly selective institutions because they are under-represented at these schools. Amherst’s President issued this statement about the college’s involvement with the grant program: “We hope that other selective private colleges will see, through Amherst’s example, how much this
untapped population of students contributes to academic and community life at campuses like ours” (“Opening Doors,” 2007).

**Strategic Enrollment Practices**

Amherst does not depend on the revenue of transfer students as part of its operating budget. Many of Amherst’s peers have severely limited or eliminated the practice of accepting transfer students. For the past five years, Amherst has allowed for a limited number of spots, averaging twenty-two spots a year. Since being named one of the recipients of the JKCF grant in the summer of 2006, Amherst has reconstructed its enrollment strategy for transfer students to focus primarily on community college transfer students. The grant program has received a lot of publicity, due to the promotion by the JKCF as well as marketing efforts of Amherst. As a result, the number of transfer applications from community colleges has risen 302 percent since the grant’s inception.

While the numbers of community college students accepted are modest, the Associate Dean points out that a community college transfer student has a better chance than a first-year applicant of acceptance given the high level of selectivity applied to the entering classes. Still, the Associate Dean admits that it is a challenge explaining to community colleges that Amherst is looking to increase access, when it still accepts so few community college students, but that is always the dilemma of an elite institution.

**Institutional Enrichment**

While the President’s initiatives of increasing socioeconomic diversity have required changes in certain practices on campus and have at times been questioned by members of the Amherst community, they ultimately have been both accepted and actively supported by the majority of constituents. This is perhaps because they relate to
Amherst’s institutional history and original mission. As the President is fond of quoting, Amherst was originally founded as an institution to educate “indigent young men of piety and talents but of hopeful piety and promising talents” (Symonds, 2006). While the mission has undergone revisions over the years, the latest mission statement clearly states the college’s desire to enroll students of diverse circumstances. The main statement reads, “Amherst College educates men and women of exceptional potential from all backgrounds so that they may seek, value, and advance knowledge, engage the world around them, and lead principled lives of consequence” (Board of Trustees, Amherst College, 2008). The next line of the statement explicitly validates recent initiatives to include more students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds: “Amherst brings together the most promising students, whatever their financial need, in order to promote diversity of experience and ideas within a purposefully small residential community.” This commitment by the institution was mentioned throughout the majority of interviews, and socioeconomic diversity as well as equal opportunity to education were the prevalent benefits cited by administrators as to why Amherst was deliberately reconstructing enrollment strategies.

The Associate Dean of Admissions/Assistant Director of Financial Aid for Outreach is the position within the admissions office that was created to specifically recruit for the grant. The person chosen for the position is a recent alumnus of the college and had worked in the admissions office as an undergraduate. He feels that the recruitment efforts he performs are considered an institutional priority linked to the larger mission at Amherst to support more socioeconomic diversity. The Associate Dean believes that Amherst’s decision to search out students who seem able to more fully
participate in the college community was a wise improvement over the earlier initiative at
the college, in which students were often much older students, many with families of
their own. He notes, “We are obviously not going to discriminate against nontraditional
students’ [ages], but we are looking to recruit students who are in their early to mid-
twenties...who might have chosen community college for a variety of different reasons
but who are now excelling academically there.” He stresses that since 98 percent of the
students live on campus, it makes sense to look for students who could “immerse
themselves in the college academically but also a little bit of the social side of things.
Some of the transfer students do live off-campus but there is an expectation that they will
engage in activities outside of their classroom experiences.

Several administrators talked about the importance of the community college
transfer students’ life experiences and how the sharing of those experiences would
hopefully enhance other students’ educational experience at Amherst. The Dean of
Admissions noted that many students at Amherst could construct an argument around
issues such as universal healthcare but may have never discussed it with someone whose
family does not have healthcare, or who may not have initially attended a four-year
college because their family was struggling with medical expenses.

Social justice was a prevalent theme brought up by administrators. Four
administrators explicitly used the term and several others alluded to it. Administrators
suggested that the CCTI allows the college to practice social justice by opening up a
pathway to students who are academically qualified for admittance, but are lacking the
resources or experiences to access the institution in the regular admissions process. There
were references made by senior administrators such as the Dean of Admissions, the Dean
of Student Life, and the Dean of Financial Aid, as well as the President, of a moral obligation to share institutional resources and thereby spread the wealth. The Dean of Admissions explained, “We benefit by so many things and I have long felt, and [the President] feels this as well, with that comes some responsibility to do something.” The Dean provided a frank insight that what is happening in American higher education is the same thing that is happening in the larger American society. He noted that at Amherst and other highly selective institutions, privilege begets privilege, and this privilege is in a sense protected, which allows it to grow stronger.

Community Engagement

Several Amherst administrators discussed one benefit of the grant initiative as being its ability to reconnect the college with local community colleges. As Amherst’s reputation has grown over the decades and the market for higher education has become more national and international in nature, Amherst has drawn fewer students from surrounding communities. Currently only 10.6 percent of Amherst students are from Massachusetts. The college is part of a consortium known as Five Colleges Incorporated. The consortium is made up of four private institutions, as well as the state’s flagship university, the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Through this joint program, the college maintains relations with other institutions, but community colleges are not a part of this network. The initial program at Amherst of recruiting community college students did form ties with local community colleges, but when the program ended, the ties were not maintained. Since the grant stipulates that Amherst will formally partner with six local community colleges, several visits have been made to these institutions. The Dean of Admissions discussed the work that his office did to prepare the launch of the grant
program: “We did a lot of work with counselors at all of the Massachusetts community colleges well in advance of beginning to recruit students and we had a conference here, we had visits to every community college in the state.” Several administrators talked about specific partnerships formed, some between admissions and transfer counselors at the college, and others among faculty members. The Associate Dean of Faculty, who serves as the faculty liaison for the grant, discussed the two “Community College and Amherst College Collaborative Workshops” that have been held at Amherst. She noted that the annual event begun in 2007 brings together faculty and staff to discuss transfer strategies as well as teaching pedagogies. For the Associate Dean, the benefit of drawing faculty from community colleges and Amherst together is twofold: “I think it is a good way of getting faculty to think of encouraging students to transfer but also … I think it would be nice just for faculty to have more connections with other faculty in the area.” She noted that the focus this year on teaching pedagogies that “link academia to the community to strive to foster civic engagement and social awareness” was well-attended and that the faculty shared a lot with each other. In addition, there was a panel discussion in which community college transfer students at Amherst talked about their experiences. This was followed by advising discussions on how to prepare community college students to transfer to selective colleges.

When asked about how the grant might impact Massachusetts’s students in particular, the Dean of Admissions acknowledged that it was very likely that the grant would always serve more students from Massachusetts than elsewhere. He noted that because Amherst administrators are aware that students often choose to attend a local community college because they have obligations that might keep them close to home,
this understanding impacts how they think of community college transfers differently from first-year applicants. He coupled this feeling with the appreciation that he felt towards the partner community colleges: They were very helpful to us and some of them remember the bad old days and they said, ‘Okay, we will give you another chance,’ and I don't want to turn our back on them.” Last year 37 percent of the community college transfers were from Massachusetts.

**Challenges**

Overall there was consensus from the administrators interviewed that they are pleased with how the current initiative is developing. For the most part, the community college students appear to be reaching their academic goals. Several administrators noted that the community college students seem to be performing at the same academic level as their peers, although one administrator did remark that math has presented a challenge to a few of the incoming students. Several of the administrators reflected on how this current program has addressed concerns left over from the previous initiative, and that they felt that significantly more resources are being dedicated to ensure that this group of students is successful. However, as with any new initiative, there were some challenges that administrators identified.

The first challenge identified was concerning issues of trust and skepticism. The Assistant Dean of Admission discussed encountering skepticism when initially approaching local community colleges about the current initiative. He talked about meeting with individuals who remembered working with Amherst when they had their original community college outreach program and that they knew that program was “a bust.” He went on to describe how these same individuals then witnessed “ten years of
[Amherst] not doing anything, not acting favorably towards their applicants,” and now they are contending with administrators from Amherst saying to them, “Hey we're really serious about enrolling your best students.” He described the difficulties in talking with the community colleges about Amherst’s desire to increase access while at the same time they remain an extremely selective institution. He also discussed his initial skepticism as to whether Amherst would be able to find enough academically qualified students for admission, but noted that this skepticism on his part had been quelled by the applications he has reviewed. Others echoed this initial concern and also indicated that they were surprised at what a non-issue this turned out to be.

The administrators from the Office of Student Life noted that some of the CCTI students had shared some challenges that they have faced at Amherst. These included confronting the privilege present at Amherst, adapting to the housing, and a tension between wanting to assimilate and wanting to celebrate their distinctive experiences as community college transfers. The college has addressed these concerns by providing resources, but there is a recognition that these resources need to be employed in innovative ways that resolve conflicts rather than mask them.

How: Personalized Outreach and a National Campaign

The comprehensive approach that Amherst has chosen to pursue with its community college transfer students is one that is holistic in nature, and therefore requires tremendous amounts of resources and diligence. In the descriptive brochure of the grant program, the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation describes Amherst’s initiative as “a set of new mentoring programs and services designed to support community college transfer students from their first day on campus through their transition to graduate
school and post-graduate careers.” The formation of this approach appears to be derived from lessons learned by administrators after the previous attempt to support community college transfers, as well current information and resources that have emerged from recent research funded by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, the Lumina Foundation, and others. Over the past two years, Amherst has had opportunities to adjust some of the practices, and several administrators cited improvements that have been made since the start of the program.

Information Sharing

The Associate Dean of Admissions and the Transfer Fellow regularly visit with “transfer agents” at community colleges throughout the state. As the Associate Dean explained, the admissions team is interested in creating and maintaining networking relationships by which transfer counselors as well as key faculty and other administrators can refer potential candidates for transfer. The Associate Dean found this to be a more useful approach for Amherst than attending college fairs since the academic qualifications that Amherst requires are so high. Amherst has information about the initiative on their website as well as printed transfer guides for potential students. In addition, the JKCF website contains information about Amherst’s program as well as regularly produces press releases and articles related to the grant. Since the campaign has been so widely publicized, there has been a lot of interest in Amherst by community college students across the nation. The Dean of Admissions noted that his office is now pulling back from publicizing the program given the very large increase in the number of applications. He reflected, “We thought we would be looking for needles in a haystack, and that did not turn out to be the case. So we are putting the brakes on.”
As part of the grant, the Office of Admissions holds an open-house event for potential community college students on the campus of Amherst. The Associate Dean pointed out that because of the high level of selectivity and the small number of spots in Amherst’s admissions, that the Office of Admissions makes it a point to broaden the conversation at this event to include discussion of what students need to know to apply to private selective colleges in general. This past fall, twenty-five students attended the event.

Once community college transfer students are admitted, they attend an orientation either in August or January, depending on when they start at the college. The orientation for transfer students is part of the larger orientation for all new students, but certain sessions are reserved particularly for them. There is a lot of emphasis on community at orientation and, according to the Associate Dean of Student Life, there are always different pieces on diversity. This past fall, there was a focus on socioeconomic diversity.

Support Infrastructure

The transfer students are initially advised during the orientation process. This past year a new format was initiated in which a panel of faculty met with the transfers to discuss advising strategies and then provided individual counseling to the students. Because they were all present together, they were able to establish all of the transfer students’ schedules within two hours.

Perhaps the greatest strength of the CCTI is the financial resources that the college is able to provide students in need. For the past several years, Amherst has been nationally recognized for the strength of its financial aid, and recently it garnered a lot of attention for eliminating student loans from its financial aid packages for domestic
students. This year, it will implement that policy for international students as well. For community college transfer students, the costs that are considered in their financial aid package include everything from tuition and board, to books, to travel expenses to and from their homes. As the recipients of grant programming, they also may receive additional assistance for emergency funds or career preparation. *Bridge to the Future* funds help students in their junior and senior years “prepare for life after Amherst.” They may provide resources for students to partake in thesis research or buy appropriate attire for job interviews.

In addition to the Associate Dean position and the Transfer Admissions Fellow position, the grant also funds a Student Life Fellow position. The Student Life Fellow assists the CCTI students in transitioning to and from Amherst as part of the effort to ensure both their retention at the college and their academic and career success after Amherst. In addition, the Fellow serves as the administrative liaison to the transfer student association, which is a student-run organization. The organization is meant to provide camaraderie to transfer students through community-building activities and social events. Two peer mentors were recently hired to serve the transfer students as well.

One of the Co-Directors of the Career Center is responsible for the distribution of the *Bridge to the Future* funds. She noted that it would be difficult for a community college transfer student who was struggling academically not to be brought to the attention of the administration. There are many support services provided as part of the grant, which provide “a lot of informal tracking of the community college students.” In addition, there are Amherst’s student support services, which identify all students who
are having difficulty. As she puts it, “Any student that is in crisis is going to hit the radar of many people in student affairs and if that student is CCTI we would notice that in particular.”
Case Study II: Clark University

Overview

While a gate surrounds Clark University that appears to separate it from the rest of the neighborhood, the university is actively engaged in its community on many levels. Clark’s students, faculty, and administrators participate in several neighborhood initiatives and the university sponsors or hosts a variety of local events on its campus. The school’s motto of “Challenge Convention, Change Our World” reverberates throughout the campus, and many administrators point to their commitment to the local community as a demonstration of how that motto is put into action.

Clark University is a small liberal arts research university located in central Massachusetts in the city of Worcester. It was originally founded in 1887 as the first all-graduate institution in the United States and was conferring doctorate degrees to both men and women by 1898. The first President of the university earned the first Ph.D. in psychology granted in the United States and founded the American Psychological Association. In 1902, a separate school, Clark College, opened to serve male undergraduates, and in 1920 the two institutions were united. In 1942, the university admitted its first class of undergraduate women. Today, the institution serves 2,235 undergraduates and 789 graduate students (Clarku.edu).

Table 6.
Entering Students (Clark University, 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. First Yr Students</th>
<th>No. 4Yr College Transfer Students</th>
<th>No. CC Transfers Students</th>
<th>Total Entering Students</th>
<th>CC Transfers / Total Entering Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>574</td>
<td>59*</td>
<td>17*</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 7.
**Demographic Data (Clark, 2007)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Undergrad. Pop.</th>
<th>CC Transfer Cohort (Fall 2007)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pell Recipients</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students of Color</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students from MA</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Year Retention Rate</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Clark Office of Admissions*

**Why: Taking Down Fences and Creating Partnerships**

Clark University’s development as an institution is intimately tied to the history of its surrounding community. At the time the university was founded, the South Main Street neighborhood around the campus had “developed into a neighborhood of major industry, commercial establishments and hundreds of new multiunit housing structures” (Clarku.edu). The neighborhood prospered until the post World War II era, when there was a major decline of industrial bases throughout New England. Many residents who could afford to do so moved out of the neighborhood, and for those left, crime and poverty soon became serious problems. Clark’s website reports that according to the 1990 census, “over 78 percent of 12,000 residents of the one-square mile of Main South are of low or moderate income and over one-fourth are living in poverty.” At that time, unemployment in the South Main Street area was noted to be at twice the level of the national average and 44 percent higher than Worcester’s average.

In 1985, the seventh president was installed at Clark. In his inaugural address he called upon the institution to reconsider its responsibilities to the City of Worcester and particularly Main South. Upon the President’s retirement in 2000, an article in the *Clark Alumni Magazine* ran, highlighting his accomplishments at Clark (Jaeger, 2000). Much
of the article focused on his initiatives in the Main South neighborhood. The author wrote of his inspiration: “In Clark, [the President] saw a community with the compassion and determination to set a new standard for neighborhood redevelopment.” The article also quoted the Executive Director of the Main South Community Development Corporation who shared: “I think [the President’s] legacy is definitely that he has re-established the credibility of Clark University in the eyes of this neighborhood.” In 1995, the President had overseen the development of a formal neighborhood partnership known as the University Park Partnership (UPP), and Clark was a primary partner in the effort. The Executive Director reflected on the significance of this collaboration, “The University Park Partnership has offered this neighborhood new hope when it needed it, and has created new opportunities at every level.” To further demonstrate his commitment to the neighborhood, the President and his wife relocated their residence to Main South in 1996.

The current President has continued to support Clark's commitment to its neighborhood and the city of Worcester. Over the past decade, the university has received a lot of public attention for its community initiatives, and the UPP is considered a national model of neighborhood revitalization. In 2004 Clark received Massachusetts’s inaugural Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter Award for the most outstanding college-community partnership in the Commonwealth. Recently, Clark became involved as a key participant in a citywide education reform effort that earned an $8 million grant from the Carnegie Corporation (clarku.edu). In addition, Clark is involved in another major initiative that will result in housing units and a Boys and Girls Club among other things. The emphasis on community development is reflected in the curriculum, with majors available such as “Urban Development and Social Change” and “Community Planning and Development.”
At least two of the university’s research centers, the Mosakowski Institute for Public Enterprise and the Jacob Hiatt Center for Urban Education, regularly engage in research related to community initiatives, and the community Engaging and Volunteering Center maintains a comprehensive database of opportunities for Clark students, faculty, and administrators to become involved in area projects.

**Strategic Enrollment Practices**

Enrolling transfer students has long been a specific and well-supported strategy of the Office of Admissions at Clark. On a fiscal level, the institution depends on the financial benefits of enrolling a transfer student population to replace revenue lost by student attrition. For the past five years, Clark has enrolled an average of fifty-six transfer students, with approximately 30 percent coming from community colleges. Unlike many campuses, Clark’s housing is not operating at capacity, so there is space available for transfer students to live on campus.

Admissions officers at Clark attend community college transfer fairs, as well as hold an annual Open House Day for potential transfer students. The Coordinator of Transfer Admissions is an alumnus of Clark who himself was a transfer student from a local community college.

Approximately 30 percent of Clark’s students come from Massachusetts. Of the transfer students who come from community colleges, typically 50 percent or more come from Massachusetts. Clark regularly accepts students from the local community college, Quinsigamond, and offers a scholarship specifically geared towards those students.

There has been discussion on campus as well about the possibility of developing a specific bridge program with Quinsigamond Community College and possibly others that
would be structured in part as a strategic practice to draw more students of color, particularly African-American students, to Clark’s campus. The Provost that a bridge program may be a good idea because “there is also interest…of reaching populations that have been less successful at private institutions” and that “looking at transfer students as a way of achieving that” would be beneficial.

The idea behind a bridge program would be that students accepted to the program in high school would follow a track through two years at a community college, and then finish out their undergraduate experience at Clark. The Provost said, “You are actually signing on for a package, kind of a stepwise set of decisions.” He also said that there even had been discussion about perhaps having these students live on campus before they actually enrolled in Clark, or having them simultaneously enroll at Clark and a local community college. The Provost has noted that while such a program was still in the stages of discussion and that the university would need to fundraise to support it, the decision has recently been made to pursue its development.

It should be noted that Clark also has a College of Professional Studies and Continuing Education (COPACE), which is geared towards adult students and holds classes in the evenings and on weekends. This program specifically addresses the needs of transfer students on its website and provides a more specialized level of support for non-traditional students. While the college offers its own curriculum, it has a public presence on campus and is cited frequently on the university’s web site. The college is another alternative to community college transfer students who are working full time or have families.
Institutional Enrichment

When asked about the benefits and challenges that Clark has experienced in the recruitment of community college students, the Provost of Clark felt it was important to reframe the question. He stated that administrators at Clark would not consider the recruitment of community college transfer students in cost/benefit terms, but rather as a part of their “mission responsibility.” He defines as part of that mission responsibility, “to create transformative educational opportunities for people from a wide array of backgrounds and in the American higher education system, [and] that involves having transfer students.” He sees the recruitment of community college students in particular as an opportunity “to deliver on our mission commitment” because community colleges “help address relatively efficiently, quite frankly, some of the developmental processes that need to happen for some of these students to enroll in a place like Clark.”

Several administrators suggested that community college transfer students are the same kinds of students who comprise their undergraduate body but who just happened to be accessing Clark in a different way. While some of the administrators identified students’ decisions to attend community college as being primarily based on the cost of tuition and board at Clark, they did not explicitly state that a major reason for recruiting these students was to achieve socioeconomic diversity. The Director of Financial Aid did note, however, that the students coming from community college tended to have much higher financial need than other students and that Clark was aware of this trend and made “a conscious decision” that despite that, they try to attract more students from these types of colleges. A few administrators did reflect on the fact that community college students represented opportunities to increase racial and ethnic diversity.
So while transferring community college students was not identified as a particularly defined initiative, it was identified as part of the way in which Clark challenges convention and remains open to any student who is a right fit for the college. The “right fit” appears to be a blend of high academic credentials and a demonstrated commitment to effecting social change. Several administrators expressed surprise at being asked why the institution would actively recruit these students that other private selective colleges may not. The Dean of Admissions responded, “Why wouldn’t we?”

The Dean of Student Life did suggest that transfer students enrich the institution because they “bring with them a certain level of maturity and purposefulness.” She did not see value in distinguishing community college transfer students from other transfer students, but rather differentiating commuting students from non-commuting students, as commuting students faced unique challenges in socializing with the campus community.

Community Engagement

As mentioned earlier, most administrators consider the recruiting of local students, both at the first-year level and the community college level, as a practice that is in compliance with Clark’s commitment to its local community. As the current Coordinator of Transfer Admissions noted, “We are really big on community service, and you know the motto, ‘Challenge Convention, Change Our World’. . . . Part of it is if you can’t help your local community in some way, what’s the point?” The college has formed a particularly strong bond with its local community college, Quinsigamond, and regularly recruits students from there each semester. Part of the bond is due to shared experiences among administrators. In addition to the current Coordinator of Transfer Admissions at
Clark having transferred from Quinsigamond, the Associate Dean of the College once served as an administrator at the community college as well. The Senior Admissions Coordinator at Quinsigamond previously worked at admissions in Clark and is still active in discussions with Clark administrators about potential programs aimed at helping more community college students transfer to Clark.

While the mantra of “Challenge Convention, Change Our World” is one that was repeated several times, it is important to note that most administrators did not suggest that they currently are actively seeking out underserved students at community colleges specifically to challenge convention. Rather, administrators interviewed gave a sense that Clark is a unique environment that the “right” students would find and that Clark was open to receiving those students from any pathway, including community colleges. There was, however, a strong belief expressed that there was a supply of “right” candidates from community colleges, and that those students who found their way to the institution would be successful.

The Associate Dean of the College also made the point that Clark and Quinsigamond Community College are both members of the Colleges of Worcester Consortium. The consortium has a policy that allows students to take courses at other member institutions, while paying the tuition costs at their home institution. The Associate Dean expressed surprise that more students from Quinsigamond don’t come to Clark to take courses. He noted that if a bridge program were put in place, the consortium agreement should play a role in facilitating students’ participation in the bridge program.
Challenges

The administrators interviewed at Clark did identify several challenges related to recruiting community college students. The former transfer counselor talked about how she felt it was difficult to participate in community college fairs because of low turnout to her tables. She had a sense that students were much more encouraged to apply to the public four-year institutions and did not seriously consider the possibility of a private selective college. In the Office of Financial Aid, the Director noted that some students had difficulty with the price differential and the expectation that they would need to contribute at least a couple thousand dollars to their educational costs. She also noted that some community college transfers did not understand the need for the more extensive paperwork that Clark required to file financial aid. The Associate Dean of the College noted that at times there was concern among transfer students as to how many of their credits would transfer, and concern on the part of Clark faculty and administrators as to whether the work requirements would be too intensive for some students coming in from community colleges. The Provost spoke of the need for Clark to ensure the equivalency of courses so that, for example, students who had taken Introduction to Biology at a community college were prepared to take the next level of biology at Clark. He also spoke of the need to fundraise to support the formation of a more formal bridge program that focused on increasing students of color, particularly African-American students, on campus.

How: Connecting with Community

Clark now has several initiatives underway in the local communities that surround it. Since it partakes in the Colleges of Worcester Consortium, it has regular contact with
the local community college member, Quinsigamond Community College. Recently the administrators between the two colleges began discussion around developing a bridge program through which qualified local high-school students could participate in a program that led them from Quinsigamond Community College to Clark University.

Information Sharing

Admissions counselors from Clark attend local community college transfer fairs as well as host open houses on campus for prospective transfer students. The former Coordinator of Transfer Admissions mentioned that when she started in the position, she felt the need to redesign the transfer materials, but now they are more reflective of the quality offered to first-year students. In addition, Clark’s web site has specific information for transfer students. This past year, the Senior Assistant Director in the financial aid office arranged to have a transfer student make a video that talked about his experiences with the Office of Financial Aid, and this will be posted on their web page. The Director of Financial Aid noted of the video, “It is great because I think it tells other transfer students that we think they are important enough to actually have someone who is a transfer [student] speak [on our web site].”

Students who have enrolled at Clark take part in an orientation day that is specifically geared towards transfer students. At this event, students meet with the Dean of Student Life as well as the Associate Dean of the College, who share information with them on how to address questions and concerns about their academic or social experiences on campus.
Support Infrastructure

The biggest support that Clark provides transfer students is in the form of scholarship aid. All three administrators interviewed from the Admissions Office, as well as the two administrators interviewed from the Financial Aid Office, discussed how particular scholarships have been crafted and employed to attract community college transfer students to Clark. Clark is one of fourteen institutions in the state that supports Phi Theta Kappa scholarships. Phi Theta Kappa is an honor society that, according to its web site, has a two-fold mission: 1) to recognize and encourage the academic achievement of two-year college students and (2) to provide opportunities for individual growth and development through participation in honors, leadership, service and fellowship programming. Administrators at Clark talked about how the university offers these scholarships for Phi Theta Kappa members as an incentive for them to attend. In addition, the university supports a larger scholarship. The former transfer counselor talked about why she felt it was important to offer the larger award: “I wanted to be able to offer a really significant scholarship—one or two at least to transfers coming in—so if a student meets the qualifications to be nominated for a PTK scholarship through the PTKA, we adopted those criteria, a $15,000 scholarship, and we offer two of them.” She felt that this increased scholarship would not only attract more qualified applicants, but that it would increase the likelihood that a low- to moderate-income student would be able to enroll at Clark. The PTK scholarships are awarded on merit, though, not financial need. However, the administrators in Financial Aid noted that students who receive the PTK scholarships could still qualify for need-based institutional aid.
In addition to the PTK scholarships, the current Transfer Counselor created a new scholarship called the transfer leadership scholarship. He notes, “My reason for trying to create that scholarship was to attract students that may work or have other responsibilities and their grades may not be as high as you would need to become a member of phi theta kappa or that the fee to become phi theta kappa may be too much.” He also discussed a Quinsigamond scholarship that is reserved for a student coming from the local community college. There is only one scholarship available to students transferring from four-year institutions.

A committee exists to review transfer applicants’ transcripts and award transfer credit. This committee consists of three administrators and is chaired by the Associate Dean of the College. The Associate Dean noted that during the course of the academic year, he might meet with potential transfer candidates to discuss transfer credit issues. In addition, the transfer orientation represents a unique opportunity for transfer students to learn about both academic and student support services and have their particular questions answered. The Associate Dean noted that he tells students at this event that if they have concerns with their transfer credit evaluation, they can come to see him. This orientation is particularly important given that this is the only time they are addressed by the administration as a group.

Outside of the orientation event, there are no activities or opportunities specifically available to transfer students. Administrators gave the impression that because of the belief that these students, like all students chosen at Clark, are the “right fit” for the institution, there is no reason to distinguish them. The Dean of Admissions said, “So after [orientation], we don’t stamp them with a big red T.” For him, there is an
expectation that the students who enroll, most of whom receive a Phi Theta Kappa scholarship and therefore are high academic achievers, will be very successful at Clark. The Dean of Student Life commented that Clark is such a small and eclectic community that transfer students tend to quickly integrate. The transfers are housed together so they may support each other through that connection, but for the most part, they are not identified as a group. The Dean of Student Life did note, however, that transfer students might face extra pressures around completing their academic requirements in a timely manner, as well as not being eligible for the full tuition remission of the fifth-year master’s program. The Associate Dean of the college echoed these concerns.

While there have not been specific efforts to assess how community college transfer students perform academically and socially at Clark, there was a general sense by administrators that they have been pleased with how community college students have experienced Clark. Both the Admissions Office and Financial Aid Office did talk about having focus groups or individual interviews with transfer students in order to better understand their concerns, and that these provided helpful information on how to better serve these students.
Case Study III: X University

Overview

X University is a large private research university in Massachusetts, serving thousands of students annually. The school was founded in the nineteenth century and its original mission was to primarily serve newly arrived immigrants. The university was incorporated in the early decades of the twentieth century and began acquiring property shortly thereafter. Following World War II, X University experienced a massive expansion in the number of students applying and sought to accommodate them by adding programs and buildings to its growing campus. By the 1980s, its enrollment had swelled. The institution was marketed as a viable and affordable alternative to the state colleges and universities and was sought after for its emphasis on balancing work with education.

In the early 1990s, an economic recession hit New England and the university faced financial difficulties. The decision was made by the President and the Board of Trustees to downsize the student population but upgrade the physical facilities of the campus with the intention of increasing the academic caliber of students as well as the research capabilities of the faculty. The level of selectivity as well as research funding increased significantly. By the late 1990s it was clear that the strategy had been successful in achieving its aims, and that a transformation of the university was underway.

Note: Some of the details of X University have been obscured by request of the institution.
Table 8.  
*Entering Students (X University, 2007)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. First Yr Students</th>
<th>No. 4Yr College Transfer Students</th>
<th>No. CC Transfer Students</th>
<th>Total Entering Transfer Students</th>
<th>CC Transfers / Total Entering Students</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2871</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>3,494</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.  
*Demographic Data (X University, 2007)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pell Grant Recipients</th>
<th>Undergrad. Pop.</th>
<th>CC Transfer Cohort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students of Color</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students from MA</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Year Retention Rate for Entering Class 2007</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
<td>87.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: X University Office of Admissions

**Why: Dynamic Decade: Redefining a University**

The past ten years at X University are described on the university’s web site as the most dynamic decade of X University’s history,” as the university has developed into a nationally renowned research institution.

According to *US News and World Report* (2007), X University enrolls one of the largest numbers of transfer students of any private selective college or university in the state of Massachusetts. It has historically taken in large numbers of transfer students, including those from local community colleges, with 163 community college transfer students enrolled in 2007. However, the transformation of the university has led to the redefinition of its mission, institutional priorities, financial expenditures, and ultimately the constituents it serves. Enrollment research data suggest that there is a decline in the number of applications being received from community college applicants, and overall
the number of community college transfers who have matriculated has decreased slightly as transfer matriculants from private four-year colleges have increased. As the university continues to adjust its enrollment strategies around transfer students, the institution is in a unique position to redefine its relationship with area community colleges and engage them in new ways as it rises to national prominence.

Table 10.
Transfer Enrollment Trends (X University)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
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<td>2 yr. college</td>
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<td>251</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>132</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 yr. public</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 yr. private</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>270</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proprietary</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>643</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>623</td>
<td>581</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: X Office of Strategic Enrollment Research, 2008

Strategic Enrollment Practices

The major theme throughout the case study conducted at X University was that the recruitment of transfer students was performed as a strategic enrollment strategy linked to the financial health of the university. As with most colleges and universities, X University seeks to maximize the use of classroom space, which may be open in upper-level courses due to attrition. While the university retention rates have risen in recent years, approximately 10 percent of the first-year class is not retained. In addition, student movement off-campus due to internships also allows space for transfer students. Because transfer students are viewed as a necessary source of revenue for the institution, everyone interviewed, including the academic advisors, was aware of the university goal of 550 fall transfers (16 percent of all incoming students) for 2007. As a large part of their enrollment strategy, X University transfer counselors present materials at community
college fairs, as well as participate in other recruiting events held at community colleges. The Dean of Admissions noted that these visits are particularly important because it is not a viable option for admissions personnel to recruit transfers at four-year colleges. The Office of Admissions also sponsors open-house events and information sessions on campus and maintains an email information system, which notifies prospective students of transfer deadlines and events. A large amount of resources has been dedicated to providing online information on transfer, including an online transfer credit evaluation tool.

While admissions personnel identified particular practices specifically geared toward attracting community college recruits, several administrators outside of admissions either questioned or disagreed that the institution actively recruits community college transfer students. As the Senior Vice President of Enrollment and Student Life noted, “I think what you will find is that we are not as intentional at X University as you think based on our size and market…” Other administrators, from the Director of Strategic Enrollment Management to the Academic Advisors in the College of Arts and Sciences, echoed this feeling. The Director of Financial Aid phrased it as, “We don’t discourage them,” but went on to say that he believes there is a self-selection process that is currently happening among community college students due to the rising academic requirements, and especially due to the high price of attending X University. Throughout the interviews there was the recognition that for a university growing in national reputation and increasing its selectivity, it is inevitable that some of the students who may have once attended X University are either no longer eligible or may no longer desire to attend.
Several administrators linked the lack of intentionality towards transfer students with X University’s consuming drive to increase the profile of its freshman class. Rankings such as those produced by *US World and News Report* were mentioned several times throughout the interviews, and some of the administrators noted that since transfers were not considered in the rankings, and their numbers are so much lower than those of the first-year class, they receive less consideration. The Vice President of Enrollment and Student Life suggested that since this is the case, administrators on campus will most likely be less in accord about the purpose and strategies being employed for transfer students. Her prediction did play out in the interviews conducted. For the Dean of Admissions, this does not necessarily represent a problem. She noted that the Office of Enrollment Management is concerned with the numbers that need to be reached for the university to function at optimal level. Her office is then left to determine how those numbers are fulfilled. She doesn’t mind if other departments are not aware of the reasons why admissions specifically targets certain students to transfer, because it is a relief given all the attention paid to the recruitment of the first-year class. However, administrators in academic services stated that there was cynicism on the part of some staff members that transfers were used primarily to backfill seats and that any purpose beyond that has not been clearly articulated by the university administration.

X University also recruits and serves community college transfer students through its evening school division. The evening division accepted a total of 382 community college transfer students, approximately triple the number of the day program. 189 of these students were from five area community colleges. 11.1% of these students received Pell grants. (personal communication, Senior Assistant Dean of Enrollment Management,
March 10, 2009). Like the rest of the university, this division has experienced substantial changes in the past decade, and particularly in the past five years. This school provides professional programs, as well as more traditional continuing education opportunities. It recently has added graduate degree offerings and plays a role in international programming at the university. While some of its administrative functions are part of the centralized structure at the university, its admissions office and academic programming are entirely separate. It is marketed as a flexible, low-cost educational opportunity, particularly designed to support working professionals. The Senior Associate Director of Enrollment Management referred to it as having “a mission of access.” Over 97 percent of the students entering the evening school transfer in credit. Adult community college students are considered an important market for the school, and therefore deliberate enrollment strategies are developed to attract them. A transfer credit evaluator was recently hired, and the college is working with several local community colleges to put articulation agreements in place.

**Institutional Enrichment**

While the goal of diversity is one to which X University espouses, transfer students are not regarded by most administrators as a primary source of diversity, but rather as a complement to the diversity achieved in the first-year class. The Director of Financial Aid did reflect on the student demographics represented at community colleges and noted, “There is strong growth among some of those students we want to have, whether it is low-income, Hispanic, or African-American students.” He acknowledged, “In some ways [a community college] is a natural place for us to go because any remedial effort may have been taken care of there that wasn’t taken care of in K-12 and then we
can take it from there.” However, he did not see this as a developed university-wide strategy, stating, “I think that is sort of a beginning discussion, I wouldn’t say it is far along.” Both the Senior Vice President of Enrollment and Student Life and the Director of Financial Aid felt that the school’s preference is always to bring in diversity through the freshmen class, rather than relying on the transfer class. The Senior Vice President acknowledged that community college students might bring diversity, but that the institution may not need to fill in gaps in its student body because, as she described it, X University is atypical of a traditional selective college. Due to the history of the school, she feels that the student body population more closely resembles a public flagship university in the sense that a higher percentage of students are receiving grants and are from low-income backgrounds. Furthermore, she believes that in many respects it might be better to accept non-traditional students earlier in their academic careers. “There is some level of…urban, first generation to college that come out of our community college market that I would probably argue on a philosophical level we would be able to serve better if we were to get them at the start.” This would allow the university to provide more of a support infrastructure for those students. However, she did recognize that there are community college students who are well served by X University. She described them as “those students who simply have other demands, need a different price point, and they are extremely academically capable, extremely driven, and are ready to complete their degree and move right into our curriculum.” She also noted that the evening school division serves working adult students coming out of community college.

It is difficult to ascertain how community college transfer students at the College of Professional Studies might enrich the overall institutional environment at X
University, as there is not a lot of opportunity for interaction between these students and students in the traditional day schools. Many of the professional school’s course offerings are online, and two of its campuses are located off the main campus, further constricting the presence of its students on the central campus. However, administrators at the evening school division reiterated that community college transfer students were a valuable constituent and helped make the division successful. The division as a whole might be considered as a source of institutional enrichment not only because it serves non-traditional students who otherwise might not be able to partake in higher education, but also because it employs a sophisticated marketing campaign, which in essence promotes the overall university. It is also involved with international programming that impacts the greater university community.

Community Engagement

For the administrators in both the undergraduate admissions office and the evening school division, outreach at the local community colleges is a way in which the institution continues to honor the history of X University as an accessible college. The Dean of Admissions discussed how despite the university’s jump in selectivity, it was still important to the institution to provide access and opportunity. She noted, “[W]e recognize that there are certain portions of the population where community college enrollment is a lot of times their only option and so we are very deliberate with community colleges and trying to be accessible and trying to enroll that population.”

The Director of Financial Aid talked about the importance of maintaining town/gown relations and that the cost of X University is making it more difficult to retain regional loyalty by being an attractive option for local community college transfers. The
Senior Vice President of Enrollment and Student Life described the university “in the process of reframing” a lot of local community relationships and roles given that the institution is becoming more selective, and thereby more national and international in terms of where it draws students. This represents a change from the past, when local students from nearby community colleges considered the university easily accessible to them as an “earn while you learn” program. One way in which X University has maintained a regional commitment is through its partnership with the local school system. Given the discrepancy in the average SAT scores of X University students and those in the local school system, the Vice President acknowledged that the university often had to dig deep to find all of the academically qualified students within the system, and mused that that kind of search might be an impetus for partnering with a local community college that may also be serving students from the local schools.

**Challenges**

Administrators in the day school expressed several concerns about rising challenges facing transfer students at X University. The primary challenge mentioned was the increasing cost associated with attending X University and what a differential in price that represented when compared to the cost of attending a community college. A major concern of the Director of Financial Aid was that often community college students expect a level of financial aid counseling that they may have received at the community college level, but that X University does not provide. He said he understood that for many community college transfer students, financial aid from their previous schools had covered all of their tuition fees and even books, so it was a different experience for students once they arrived on campus. Since X University is at such a
higher price point and does not have the resources to cover the entire bill, students need to come up with some of the financial resources on their own. In addition, he noted that there was less control on the part of the financial aid office over what the student did. At community colleges, students’ records are often frozen if they failed to submit paperwork. At X University, that is not the case, as the philosophy of the Office of Financial Aid is that students’ need to be responsible and take care of their own business. That theme of students needing to reach out on their own for assistance was reiterated throughout various interviews, with administrators stating that it was up to students to build networks of support and to take advantage of the many resources offered by X University.

Another concern mentioned over the course of the case study was that there was no longer as much space for community college transfer students. In addition to increasing selectivity at the institutional level, several of the academic programs that have been popular with community college transfer students have recently been capped due to accreditation requirements, and some are no longer taking external transfers. Students interested in pharmacy, for example, are no longer able to apply. Members of the academic advising team at the College of Arts and Sciences see the largest number of community college transfer students, but overall they did not feel that they had reasons to differentiate students coming from community colleges from other transfer students. However, they did discuss reasons why they thought X University was a difficult place into which to transfer for any student. One advisor mentioned that the internship model means that students transferring in may not get an opportunity to bond with “their class,” as many may not be on campus when they arrive or will be leaving campus the following
semester. She also mentioned that there is “not a lot of wiggle room” for transfer students to explore majors as they need to declare a major right away to begin the process of participating in the internship program. Another advisor noted that she was growing more concerned with transfer students being “lost.” An orientation is held for transfers by the admissions office, but it is not enough to prepare them for course registration. Meetings set up by a member of the advising team are also periodically held to provide transfers with more information, but most transfer students do not seem to be taking advantage of these resources. The Director of Academic Advising noted that providing academic advising to transfers could be frustrating because the advisors often have to help chase down credits as well as help take care of other loose ends. One member reflected that perhaps if the advising team created more of a transition with admissions by being present earlier in a potential student’s career, that it might reduce some of the frustration.

It should be noted that the challenges outlined above were restricted to the day programs at the university. The different nature of the evening college, from the lower cost of tuition, to the use of enrollment coaches and flexible programming, eliminates some of the tensions present in trying to integrate transfer students into a more general traditional student population. The challenges noted by administrators in the evening school primarily concerned how to work more effectively with community colleges to ease the application process for prospective students.

How: A University Embraces Technology

X University is a large institution that recruits a large transfer class each year. Their methods of recruitment are designed to reach a mass audience, but are managed in
a way that is timely and as personal as mass communication can be. Once transfer
students enroll, they attend an orientation event hosted by the admissions office and then
they enter X University in the same manner as all other students. The support
infrastructure for transfer students is no different from that for other students.

Information Sharing

X University appears firmly committed to meeting its large enrollment goal for
transfer students and dedicates the resources required to achieve their goal. As
mentioned earlier, X University representatives attend community college events, as well
as host open houses for transfer students on their campus. But the real strength of their
recruitment efforts is in the technology they employ. Once potential transfer students
provide an email to admissions (most often done by requesting information online), they
are put into the admissions communication system and receive periodic emails about
recruitment events and applications deadlines. In addition, X University has a
sophisticated, although ever-evolving web site that includes an online transfer credit
evaluation tool, allowing transfer students from all over the country to determine if any of
their courses have been evaluated by the institution and will transfer to the university.
The transfer counselor noted that the admissions office has put a lot of energy into
providing this tool and that they launched the site by providing course-to-course
evaluations for all of the courses offered by local community colleges.

Institutional Support

The Office of Admissions conducts the majority of institutional support for the
full-time community college transfer students. They hold the open-house events, assist
with transfer credit evaluation (which then must receive final approval from the
registrar’s office), and conduct the orientation. They also help to identify community college students who are eligible for community college transfer scholarships that are sponsored by the university.

After orientation, transfers students are considered fully integrated into the university and therefore do not receive any particular services designed specifically for transfers. One exception is the College of Business Administration, which has a counselor committed to transfer students, but that department serves only a small number of transfer students from community colleges.

In the past decade, a task force at X University examined the issue of access at the university and determined that special consideration needed to be given to students from the surrounding city, particularly the immediate neighborhoods surrounding X University. While the majority of the focus has been on elementary and high-school students, there has also been a specific partnership with a local community college. According to the Associate Director of Scholarships, “The goal of this partnership was to serve the educational and development needs of the local community and beyond by ensuring that higher education is accessible to all students regardless of their economic status, race, or other life circumstances.” The concept behind the partnership was that both institutions needed to work collaboratively on “the issues that confront them as educators and community members.” A Summer Enrichment Academic Program was established in which faculty from both institutions taught. Community college students who had completed a year of coursework are selected to participate, and up to four students who complete the program are offered $10,000 to attend X University. Also as
part of the grant, the community college faculty have the opportunity to pursue a graduate
course at X University tuition-free to further their expertise.

In addition, a program at X University was established that provides low-income
individuals with college-level coursework at no cost to qualified applicants. Students
attend evening classes at a community college that are taught by an X University faculty
member and then are awarded six college credits from X University that can then be
transferred back to the community college or to another institution. X University also
offers full-tuition scholarships to transfer students who live in area public housing units.

Overall, the university continues to serve a large number of community college
transfer students even as changes in policies and practices may lead to a reconsideration
of why and how to recruit this student population.
CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents a cross-case analysis of the findings and results of the three institutions that took part in the study. The research questions and literature review provide the framework for this analysis. The findings are contextualized in light of the theoretical framework of critical education theory, and the implications of the findings are carefully examined. Several conclusions are drawn from the research and recommendations for policies are addressed. It is my hope that these findings and results provide insight to educational leaders and policymakers who are interested in pursuing or maintaining pathways of accessibility to selective institutions for community college transfers students.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of critical education theory allows each institutional narrative to be contextualized according to its unique position in the hierarchy of American higher education. As explained in Chapter 1, the reason that institutions of varying levels of selectivity were chosen was due to the belief that each institution’s position within the hierarchy of the higher education system profoundly influences how they approach and consider the transfer function at their institution. Critical education theory provides the framework for the consideration of how educational structures reproduce and participate in social hierarchies while simultaneously producing possibilities by which these social hierarchies may be disrupted. These seemingly contradictory perspectives, articulated through the social reproduction theory of Pierre

When examining why a policy or practice is pursued in higher education, it is important to consider that it is not just individual administrators at individual institutions who are making decisions based on one criterion. Rather decisions are made due to a combination of the beliefs and actions of individual actors, institutional culture, peer institutions, and the larger realms of the American higher education system and society in general. Given the complexity of the power relations continuously at play between and among individuals and institutions, it is important to consider how these power relations are maintained. For Pierre Bourdieu, these relations are mediated by the exchange and accumulation of different types of capital. Therefore, a consideration of why a college or university would choose to recruit community college students needs to recognize that forces at play within the field of American higher education, and the desire by institutions to retain different types of capital needed to participate in certain tiers, heavily impact how American colleges and universities implement policies and procedures.

Despite its important contributions, a Bourdieuan analysis does not sufficiently address all of the findings. Therefore, the concept of democratic education, and the idea that in a democratic society, colleges and universities are driven by more than just their own self-interests, was also explored through the data. For example, philosophical issues raised by administrators about moral obligations connected with the admissions process, as well as policy decisions around access and equity, were explored as they relate to the concept of democratic education. This additional consideration allowed for a more
nuanced and comprehensive understanding of why these colleges pursued the practice of recruiting community college students.

Research Questions

The two main research questions that drove this study were 1) Why did administrators at private selective institutions engage in recruiting community college transfer students? and 2) How do administrators perceive of this practice at their institutions? Although the interviews conducted with each administrator were loosely structured, certain sub-questions were covered in each conversation. These questions included:

♦ What is the institutional context in which such decisions are made, and what organizational changes have impacted the recruitment of community college transfer students?

♦ What are the benefits and challenges identified with recruiting community college transfers?

♦ How are administrators (and other key constituents) accomplishing the recruitment of transfer students and what if any, do they identify as the goals of this type of transfer?

♦ How do administrators consider their institution’s mission and responsibilities in the context of higher education in Massachusetts?

Each of the sub-questions was intentionally designed to draw out particular information. The question concerning institutional context was asked to illuminate the distinctive features of each institution and to understand how these three institutions are situated in the broader arena of the American higher education system. The question
about benefits and challenges was meant to draw out a better understanding of the considerations the institutions took into account in order to decide whether to pursue and continue this practice. A few administrators did not feel comfortable casting their recruitment practices in this light, so the question was adjusted to reconsider “benefits” as strengths brought to institutions by community college transfer students.

The question concerning how recruitment is done was asked in order to get a sense of how many resources are invested in the practice. Since two of the three schools rely on the revenue of transfer students to balance their budgets and the third school has invested heavily in ensuring community college students access, it was clear at the beginning of the case studies that the institutions were committed at least on some level to securing transfer students. This question was also asked to gain an understanding of any support services that an institution might provide in order to retain those community college students.

Finally, the last question about how institutions view their role in the context of Massachusetts was asked in order to gain a better understanding of the relationships these institutions have formed within the state of Massachusetts and how the institutions have engaged students in the state. This question seemed particularly important given the projected demographic changes facing Massachusetts and how that will likely impact the pursuit of higher education for students within the state. In 2005, it had the highest graduation rate for bachelor’s degrees in the nation at 67 percent (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005). In 2008, higher education in Massachusetts ranked above average among states in all categories except for affordability (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2008). However, when one breaks down educational
attainment by race and ethnicity, the results are less impressive. Only 15 percent of Hispanics, between the ages of 24 and 65 have obtained a bachelor’s degree compared to 43 percent of whites (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2008). This constitutes one of the largest gaps in the nation. As the Hispanic population continues to grow, this gap in college attainment may have profound repercussions for the state. The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education estimates that if all racial groups within the state were able to achieve the same level of educational achievement, then the total annual personal income would rise by almost 10 billion dollars (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2008). As 68 percent of the higher education institutions in Massachusetts are private four-year colleges, it makes sense that they can be key players in addressing this persistent gap (www.cihe.neasc.org). As discussed later in this chapter, the question about how institutions regard their relationship with the state did not garner the response I had initially anticipated. The three institutions in this study were all involved in local community engagement initiatives, but administrators did not reflect on the overall state of higher education in the Commonwealth and how their institution could potentially impact statewide trends or concerns.

Cross-Case Findings

As discussed in Chapter 4, four themes emerged from the question of why institutions recruit community college transfer students. Below is a summary table of the major themes identified. Although community engagement was given as a major reason for all three institutions, the case study findings suggest that each institution conceives of
and participates in community engagement differently. Only Clark University identified it as its primary reason for recruiting community college students.

Table 11.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strategic Enrollment Practices</th>
<th>Diversity</th>
<th>Institutional Enrichment</th>
<th>Community Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amherst</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Bold indicates primary reason given*

As noted by the bold indication, a different primary reason was identified for each of the institutions. These primary reasons were identified mainly identified through the coding of the data collected through the interviews of the administrators involved with the transfer process at each institution. Amherst had dual primary reasons of institutional enrichment and diversity, particularly in the form of socioeconomic diversity. There was also a strong sense shared by administrators that the grant-funded initiative on recruiting community college transfers gave the Amherst community opportunities to practice social justice. The primary reason given at Clark was community engagement. Since the 1980s Clark has committed itself to being an integral part of its local community, including efforts to make Clark accessible to Worcester residents. The reasons behind this community engagement are explored in Chapter 4 and later in this chapter. A related reason for recruitment that was frequently voiced at Clark was that the school attracts students who exemplify their motto: “Challenge Convention, Change Our World,” and that these students might come from all paths to college, not just the traditional or conventional one. An important secondary reason for the recruitment of community
college students was also identified at Clark, which was that the practice was part of the institution’s strategic enrollment practices. Although it was no mentioned as frequently or as broadly as the theme of community engagement, administrators in both admissions and financial aid acknowledged that merit aid was strategically used to attract academically talented community college transfer students. At X University, strategic enrollment practices were identified as the primary reason for the recruitment of community college transfer students. The institution is a large private university and it relies on a significant transfer population to balance its operating budget. A secondary reason given by administrators in the office of admissions was that the recruitment of local community college students was in part a tribute to institutional history, and therefore may be considered as an effort at community engagement. A similar argument may be made for the evening division of the college, which cited an “access mission” on their part, particularly in light of the fact that the day school has changed so dramatically in the past decade. While the evening division noted that their recruitment of community college students was indeed strategic based on the market, there was reference to the strong commitment on the part of the Vice President of the division to being accessible. Interestingly, although the evening division has several programs available online, seventy five percent of the students reside in Massachusetts.

Each institution gave several specific examples of the benefits or strengths derived from having community college transfer students on their campuses. The benefits cited by Amherst are primarily related to the larger themes of diversity and institutional enrichment noted in the last chart. The institution is engaging in a targeted approach to the specific mission of increasing socioeconomic diversity on campus, and
the Community College Transfer Initiative is a piece of that. Administrators at Clark University identified the most benefits or strengths related to bringing these students to campus. This most likely can be attributed to the fact that they both rely on the financial revenue from their transfer students and have tied the practice to their school’s motto. X University cited the fewest reasons for the recruitment efforts, and it was clear throughout the case study that there was some ambivalence about what strengths community college students brought to the day programs during this period of transition to a more selective institution.

Table 12. **Strengths (Benefits) Of CC Transfer Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amherst College</th>
<th>Clark University</th>
<th>X University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessible population</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic diversity</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial diversity</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of life experiences</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be more dedicated, mature students</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Way of improving/maintaining relations with surrounding communities</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less pressure on admissions to recruit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty and Staff enrichment</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component of social justice</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright, successful students</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition Revenue</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As noted in Chapter 4, administrators at all three institutions also identified several challenges that affected the institution’s efforts to recruit these students, as well as students’ efforts to apply and attend these institutions. Since all three schools reported that they did not identify a retention issue with transfers, these challenges were either ones that those at the institution felt they were able to address through student services or ones that had potential applicants “self-select” out of the application process. In Chapter 1, I suggested that there is a concern on the part of administrators at four-year colleges that community college students might face obstacles (whether academic, financial, or cultural) that initially prohibited them from entering into other tiers of higher education. Some of the obstacles noted were related to such deficits, but it is important to note that all three schools expressed the belief that, despite the difficulties faced by students, there was not a shortage of well-qualified students applying for transfer from community colleges. Furthermore, all three institutions noted that most of their community college transfers were successful in achieving their degrees, with similar retention and graduation rates as their peers. These findings are in line with the findings of Alicia Dowd and Glenn Gabbard (2006) and should help to dispel the myths that there are not a lot of community college transfer students qualified to transfer to selective institutions or that community college transfer students cannot succeed at selective four-year institutions.
Table 13.
Challenges Of Recruiting CC Transfer Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Amherst College</th>
<th>Clark University</th>
<th>X University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providing financial aid</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating non-residential transfers on mainly residential campus</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific challenges to first-generation cc transfers</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC students’ concerns over transfer credits</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/Administrators concerns over transfer credits</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic preparation of some cc transfers</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC students’ difficulty in navigating application processes</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC students’ lack of financial resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main challenge facing Amherst is assimilating the community college transfers to their new environment. The main challenges facing Clark are outreach, transfer credits, and affordability. The main challenges identified at X University are the ability of students to navigate its institutional systems, from the curriculum to financial aid services, as well as the issue of affordability. Later in the chapter, these challenges will be revisited in a discussion about what these institutions are able or willing to do for community college transfers, and what they are not.

Social Reproduction Theory

Another light by which to consider the strengths and challenges identified by the case study sites is that offered by social reproduction theory. Social reproduction theory is often explained in terms of the exchange of resources or capital. At each institution administrators made reference to ways in which their institution was either invested in
various kinds of capital or interested in exchanging capital, or ultimately increasing their overall values of capital. To better analyze the importance of these endeavors, four specific types of capital have been identified for consideration: economic capital, intellectual capital, social capital and symbolic capital. Economic capital equates to money. For a college or university, this may be in the form of tuition revenue, room and board fees, endowments, and research money. Since economic capital is of so much importance in our market society, institutions often invest their economic capital to “buy” faculty with competitive salaries or improve their facilities in order to attract students with more intellectual capital or donors who have social or economic capital to invest. All three of the institutions in this study have significant tuition and fees, and therefore require a considerable financial investment, whether on the part of the institution, the federal government, or the student and his or her family. Certainly institutions are always looking to cover their costs and build their revenue stream. Intellectual capital, which is often considered under the larger umbrella of cultural capital by many social reproduction theorists, equates to knowledge. It may be in the form of the academic performance of entering students, as measured by SAT scores and high-school or college GPAs, or it may be in the caliber of faculty and the research that they produce. It is also represented in the curriculums offered at individual institutions, the research conducted, and the graduate programs offered. Social capital is about networking. It can be represented by the “know-how” that students possess to navigate the college application process, or more specifically, it can be the social networking opportunities that exist on a college campus such as those established through academic programs, professional associations, athletics, honor societies, and alumni relations among others. These networks may include more
formal relationships between students and their institutions (as represented by faculty and administrators), as well as the social connections made between families and individuals who attend the same higher education institution. Often these connections are lifelong ones, as is evidenced by the strong support many colleges receive from their alumni associations.

Perhaps the most important type of capital for institutions is symbolic capital, which in many ways is a compilation of all the types of capital, and is manifested in an institution’s reputation. It is reflected in how others view the institution, and it can be so powerful because it often goes unquestioned and those institutions that possess a lot of symbolic capital continue to manifest it. Reputation is notoriously difficult to quantify, and for a long time was loosely based on who attended what schools and the academic pursuits at those institutions. Since the creation of rankings such as those produced by *US News & World Report*, there is now a focus on quantifiable measures of reputation, which primarily try to measure the different types of capital an institution possesses. These rankings look at measures such as acceptance rate, average SAT scores of accepted students, endowment, and other indicators of an institution’s academic strength and popularity. However, there are many who would argue that while these measures may capture or even define the essence of a college’s reputation, they are misguided in that they do not accurately determine whether institutions are effective and efficient at providing a higher education. Still, there is no denying that both the rankings and the popular reputations of certain colleges hold a lot of sway in American society, and therefore contribute to the symbolic capital of those institutions recognized at the top of the tiers. To reiterate, in order to grow, symbolic capital requires the three previously
mentioned types of capital, but given the predominance of the market culture in our society, it especially relies on financial capital.

Some of the codes used to classify data in the study clearly could be grouped according to which type of capital they seemed to most represent. As mentioned earlier, colleges are interested in increasing their capital. Certain codes were related to how the colleges managed their economic capital. They include: resources, financial aid, and cost. The code of socioeconomic diversity was also useful to consider here because it was often used by administrators to refer to the lack of financial resources possessed by some students, and the implication was that the institution had to cover the expenses related to these students. So in terms of economic capital, socioeconomic diversity was considered a practice that required an investment of institutional economic capital. The codes grouped under intellectual capital include: SAT scores, GPA’s, academic preparedness, faculty, and curriculum. The codes grouped under social capital are: networking, internship, social justice, connections and alumni. These codes are related in that they all rely on social connections. Finally the codes grouped under symbolic capital are: reputation, rankings, prestige, and selectivity. The codes of access and opportunity were also useful to consider under this type of capital, because similarly to discussions of socioeconomic diversity, discussions concerning access and opportunity often seemed to be directly linked to institutions having to invest capital in order to provide for students who had less capital than their main student body. For an institution to be thinking about providing access and opportunity inherently indicates that those are privileges, which they have the power to bestow. In this case, providing access and opportunity probably means institutions have to invest all three of the previously mentioned types of capital.
and administrators often referred to this as a balancing act as reflected in some of the
quotes shared in the tables below.

Table 14.
Examples Related to Economic Capital

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples Related to Economic Capital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amherst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15.
Examples Related to Intellectual Capital

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples Related to Intellectual Capital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amherst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 16.
*Examples Related to Social Capital*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amherst</td>
<td>“It takes a certain amount of social capital to transfer--tacit knowledge”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark</td>
<td>“The challenge [facing transfers] is social continuity and embeddedness”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Clarkie” (reference to a member of the Clark community)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Clark is such a small community so if people want to integrate, they do so incredibly easily.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X University</td>
<td>“We are so focused here [on specific course sequencing] that it is difficult for transfers.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Are we socially networking transfers so they will stay?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17.
*Examples Related to Symbolic Capital*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amherst</td>
<td>“We benefit [from being Amherst] every way that we can”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Students have a sense of opportunity here”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“This place is like Disneyland”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark</td>
<td>“[In the United States,] students have an opportunity to go to 2-years first and then enroll in a place like Clark”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X University</td>
<td>“Back in the day, X University was not ranked like it is now.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Retention rate is important to overall reputation.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ex: Relief that transfers are not included in rankings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pierre Bourdieu (1984) posited that families tend to transmit as much and as many types of capital as they can to their children in the hope of replicating (or improving) their status in the hierarchies in which they are enmeshed. Colleges and universities are also another powerful means of transmitting capital among families. As has been suggested in the previous section tertiary institutions not only mediate the accumulation of
individuals’ capital, but they as institutions seek to gain institutional capital. While the various tiers of higher education are organized around missions, Bourdieu argues that the tiers are actually sorting institutions that primarily distinguish students by socioeconomic classes. As mentioned earlier, the more selective colleges tend to have higher tuitions and fees, and higher admissions requirements. Although these institutions offer financial aid to attract students with the highest level of intellectual capital, they overwhelmingly serve upper-income families. These institutions are able to serve fewer students and provide them with greater resources than less selective institutions, and often offer a curriculum more geared towards liberal arts or professional education.

Americans have long held the belief that “individuals should be able to move up the ladder of accomplishment as far as their talents, character, and determination take them (Bowen et al., 2005, p. 4). This has been applied to the higher education system and is in part why the function of “transfer” exists. Jerome Karabel (2005) refers to this idea as the “principle of equality of opportunity.” There has been less public recognition that not everyone has the equality of condition to take advantage of equality of opportunity.

That is due in large part to the immense but often hidden force of the symbolic power. For example, Laura Perna (2006) writes how a students’ habitus, which shapes their everyday experiences and understandings of how society works, tends to lead them to self-select particular choices when considering college admissions. As in other aspects of American society, a hierarchical structure has become entrenched in the higher education system. One has to consider the seriousness with which administrators take the US News and World Report rankings, to gain an appreciation of how tenaciously institutions vie for a top position in the hierarchy.
Historically, class privilege has played a large part in who gains entry into the top tiers of the system. Community colleges, as low-cost public institutions that are open-access make up the base of the hierarchy. (McDonough, Ventresca & Outcalt, 1999). Bourdieu reveals ways in which educational institutions “legitimate class structures by transforming social distinctions into educational distinctions, which are then socially constructed as distinctions of merit (cited in Horvat, 2001, p. 203). For Bourdieu the social enterprise is one of generating distinction. In the realm of higher education, institutions seek to generate distinction from one another and place themselves in the most elite class possible via their securing of various forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1984).

While each institution identified ways in which they were impacted by the presence or absence of all four types of capital, the ways in which administrators discussed the capital created a unique portrait of each institution. Amherst, which had the largest endowment of the colleges, made the most references to financial capital. The amount of financial capital and what to do with it has clearly become a major topic of conversation on campus in light of the president’s initiatives to increase socioeconomic diversity on campus by bringing in more students from low to moderate-income backgrounds. This commitment has required that the college openly address how students from upper-income backgrounds have been more heavily represented on campus. However, Amherst is not looking to overhaul its standing as an elite institution. Rather it is committed to maintaining its reputation and the privileges that go along with that. The president has reiterated the school’s commitment to being a place that attracts the “best and brightest” and the reality is that many of these students come from affluent families who have afforded them many educational opportunities. In order to ease the
concerns of parents and alumni, the president hopes to expand admissions by approximately 120 spots so that the increase in low-income students would not affect the number of spots available to the other applicants. This would require a major capital campaign, which is currently being planned. Meanwhile, more low-income students are being introduced slowly on campus. The Jack Kent Cooke Initiative is bringing approximately ten to fifteen community college students a year, and while most are of low-income backgrounds, that is not a requirement. The other three types of capital were also mentioned several times by administrators at Amherst. The power held by faculty at the institution came up frequently in the interviews and several administrators noted that it was important that they were on board with any initiative if it was to succeed. Some administrators, including the Dean of Admissions admitted to being surprised by the number of highly academically qualified students applying since the start of the grant, especially because a student would need to have a very high GPA in liberal arts courses, most likely in an honors program, and have completed 30 credits at the time of application.

To summarize, Amherst, which is ranked as the top liberal arts school in the country and has one of the largest endowments, does not seek to gain economic capital from its practice of recruiting community college students. Rather, they are using their symbolic capital, and investing economic capital to redefine their “distinction” as a place where intellectual capital is valued over economic capital.

Administrators at Clark also made several references to financial capital but they were of a different nature than Amherst’s. While several administrators discussed the relatively high cost associated with attending Clark, there was not a sense from
administrators that the university was a place of financial privilege. The Dean of Admissions talked about how Clark’s endowment was not large enough to fully support its financial aid programs and the Director of Financial Aid discussed how Clark offered competitive aid, but would not be able to cover the full costs of any student. Financial capital was linked to intellectual capital, as Clark aggressively used merit aid to attract top transfer students. There was very little reference to social or symbolic capital, especially reputation or rankings. However, the motto “Challenge Convention, Change Our World” was cited several times and identified as valuable to the institution’s identity.

At Clark, there was a feeling that the college’s symbolic capital was tied to its ability as an institution to be different from its peers in the sense of its commitment to its community and its attraction of students dedicated to making a difference. In terms of procuring and retaining capital, it makes sense that Clark would invest in its local community as the decline of the surrounding neighborhood stands in stark contrast to the campus, and in effect can bring down the value of the institution itself.

To summarize, Clark University has been successful at branding its mission, as expressed through their motto of “Challenge Convention, Change Our World.” This motto imbues their community outreach efforts, such as recruiting community college transfer students, with symbolic capital, which then strengthens their reputation. It also allows them to, in some ways, remove themselves from the beaten path of US News and World Report rankings because they have identified themselves as different from other institutions. Therefore, instead of focusing on their ranking in US News and World Report, they stress their inclusion in Colleges that Change Lives: 40 Schools that Will Change the Way You Think about Colleges (Pope, 2006). This makes sense given the
investment that Clark has made in their surrounding neighborhood and their inclusion in a category of the *US News & World Report* rankings that doesn’t fit them well.

X University is the institution undergoing the most changes in terms of its position in the hierarchy of American higher education. As an institution publicly vying for a higher position, it is not only investing large amounts of capital in endeavors that will distinguish it, but it is deliberately breaking ties with policies and practices that were based more on access than merit. Several administrators contrasted X University today with the X University of the past. The current institution was often described as a high-cost selective institution, in deliberate contrast to its former image of a low-cost private alternative to public schools. At the same time, there was uncertainty expressed over what X University’s new position was. The Senior Vice President noted that X University was different from traditional selective institutions because it resembled more of a selective public university in terms of its economic mix of students, suggesting that while X University has achieved some of the intellectual and even symbolic capital of being a highly selective institution, its financial and social capital still reflect the institution’s former image.

The school’s internship program is one of the institution’s distinguishing features but has undergone a transformation. It was initially conceived of as a way by which students could work their way through college to pay their tuition. Now, the economic rewards of the internship are downplayed, and the program is packaged as an intellectual opportunity for students that can later be exchanged for economic capital upon graduation. In essence, students are now paying for the opportunity to engage in work experience that will translate into higher-paying positions upon graduation. Throughout
my interviews, there were not many other references made to the intellectual capital at X University. However, the university’s website and publications stress the emergence of X University as a major research institution and many of the initiatives and achievements of the faculty are highlighted. There was also a significant focus by administrators on the US News and World Report college rankings as well as on the university’s retention rate which would suggest a concern for increasing the intellectual capital that students are bringing in to the campus and how that translates to a stronger academic reputation.

To summarize, in its efforts to build up symbolic capital, X University is in effect trying to distance itself from less-selective institutions, which would include community colleges. At the same time, its enrollment strategies require transfers and community colleges represent a viable market for these students. To complicate their position on community college transfer students, the evening school continues to actively seek out this student population. It is likely that the more selective and wealthy X University becomes, the less diversified their student body will be, and the more likely they will carefully construct policies to accept students who may not have the economic capital but have demonstrated the intellectual capital through their academic performance and the social capital through their ability to navigate the application process.

Given the three institutions’ particular positions in the hierarchy of higher education, one can identify ways in which each school protects or maintains the different types of capital it has in its possession, as well as how it may be strategically planning to either exchange forms of capital or increase its supply of a type of capital. As such, there are policies and practices related to the recruitment of community college transfer students, which an institution is either willing or not willing to do.
In the case of Amherst, it is clearly willing to invest economic capital, as well as give preference to community college transfer students over other transfer students. It is also willing to engage in a very public campaign in order to attract talented community college transfer students but just as importantly to demonstrate to its peers how it is hoping to distinguish itself. What Amherst is not willing to do is lower or change any of its academic standards, so that community college students, many of whom have not had the same resources and opportunities available to them as their peers at Amherst, have to demonstrate the same academic accomplishments. The school has established strict guidelines for community college transfer students, which include having achieved 30 transferable credits from a liberal arts curriculum (with no math under calculus being accepted) with at least an A- average. The school is also not willing to develop specific articulation agreements with any community college, nor is it willing at this point to replace middle and upper-income students with low-income students or increase the class size dramatically (although they do have plans to run a capital campaign to fund a sizeable increase in the future).

Clark, which has less symbolic capital than Amherst, and therefore less to wage, but also less to lose, is still willing to spend the resources to recruit community college students. They send admissions officers to community college fairs and hold open houses. They are also willing to spend economic resources to recruit top academic talent through their merit aid reserved for community college students. With the exception of their merit awards, they are not willing to give preference to community college transfer students over four-year transfer students. Also, they are not willing to make articulation agreements with community colleges, although their recent decision to support a bridge
program for community college transfer students may change that. They are not able to fully fund students.

Like Clark, X University is willing to conduct outreach to community college students, but because of the large number of transfers it seeks, it engages in a mass communication approach. In the past they had established a partnership with a local community college, which is still in place, but does not draw a lot of recognition on campus. Like the other two institutions in the study, the day program at the university is not looking to develop other specific articulation agreements, although the evening division has been trying to establish these with area community colleges. At this point, X University does not give preference to community college transfer students over other transfer students nor do they provide specific support services to address the difficulties they face in navigating the university’s systems. They are not able to fully fund students but do provide some scholarship support for high-achieving community college transfer students.

Democratic Education

A Bourdieuan analysis does not lend itself to a consideration of the ways in which institutions may be simultaneously upholding traditional channels of the exchange of capital while also engaging in the practice of what educational theorists from John Dewey to Amy Gutmann have identified as “democratic education.” For example, the desire to increase capital does not account for why an institution like Amherst is compelled to pursue an initiatives on socioeconomic diversity even though it may result in a loss of symbolic capital, as well as economic capital (not just by the costs of supporting the community college transfers, but by what they stand to lose from unhappy
In 1987, Amy Guttmann published a pivotal book on the role of education in a democratic society. In it, she describes the role of democratic education as that which provides students with the knowledge necessary to participate in the running of the democracy as well as to be able to enjoy a “good life” (p. 42). This objective entails that schools being responsible on some level for the development of moral character among students so that they may achieve the ultimate goal of the “conscious reproduction of society” (p. 174). Gutmann acknowledges the forces at play that Bourdieu and others discuss, but injects the belief that a sense of morality for the greater good is capable of driving the systems of education. This analysis suggests that institutions would not just be driven by their own self-interests, but by this overall mission and that therefore the two core principles by which they should operate are nonrepression and nondiscrimination. These two principles allow education to “cultivate the virtues, knowledge, and skills that are necessary for political participation” (p. 287). Nonrepression does not allow any group to “curtail the rational deliberation of competing conceptions of the good life and the good society.” (p. 44). On one hand, this principle
lends itself to the development of the many tiers of American higher education. However, evidence that the principle is not met is evident when looking at the dominant representation of Ivy League graduates in national politics. Americans are taught that any child can grow up to be president, but recent history strongly suggests they must go through Yale first (Soares, 2007). The principle of nondiscrimination suggests that all children must be educated, and with that claim there is an assumption that higher education be made available to students as well. Within this framework, it is possible to move away from what an institution stands to gain from recruiting community college transfer students, to why they may be compelled to serve these students following the principles of non-repression and nondiscrimination.

In a lecture entitled, “Great Expectations for Higher Education in the 21st Century”, Gutmann (2008), points out the realized possibility of democratic education by noting the many profound changes that have taken place in the realm of higher education in the past forty years that have increased access to traditionally underserved students, as well as faculty. While there are still many more challenges to be faced, Gutmann believes in the possibility and suggests that the country’s leading selective institutions are capable of being leaders of democratic education, as opposed to just protecting their elite status. Speaking specifically of the national research universities, she states, “There is so much more to be accomplished by way of simultaneously diversifying and improving the quality of universities, that any president that aims for preservation…will not have an adequate, let alone admirable vision of a multi-university moving forward.” Gutmann believes that a research university should have one primary purpose to increase access in order to achieve a diversity of students. The three tables listed below provide examples of
comments made by administrators at the three case study sites indicating that they also recognize access and opportunity to achieve a diverse student body as an important purpose of their institutions as well.

Table 18. 
*References to Access and Opportunity for a Diverse Student Body, Amherst College*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was a student here too. I think the college has changed a lot to become a much more diverse place in the last couple of years, and a lot of that has to do with President Marx taking over and his real focus on diversifying the college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our goal is to be the most diverse college, and thereby have the greatest mix of students from different backgrounds so they can learn from each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If we can find the stars amongst those [community college students] who might be interested in joining us, that seems like a good use of our transfer slots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In small ways we have tried to be cognizant of mostly financial barriers, but also cultural barriers and I don’t just mean cross-cultural in terms of nationality, I mean like class cultural issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would simply say that the President came in with gusto with a real commitment to social justice issues from the start. He came in looking for ways to really enhance and support issues of diversity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: References are direct quotes.*

Table 19. 
*References to Access and Opportunity for a Diverse Student Body, Clark University*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What we care about is having a diverse community. And for us, diversity goes way beyond ethnicity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity that we see is that the recruitment [of community college transfers] allows us to deliver on our mission commitment to make available our education to a wide array of students from a variety of backgrounds who have taken different paths to get to university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The biggest numbers of [community college] students come from Quinsigamond Community College. This is where we live and that is part of our mission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One of the things that has worked for Clark and for our transfer students is the heterogeneous nature of our students. We used to have the Clark pea-pod poster. And it was [a picture of] a peapod and all of the peas were of a different color and the tag line was “categorizing people is just not something you can do here.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: References are direct quotes.*
We take the role of providing access and opportunity to students still very seriously even as we have become much more selective and we recognize that there are certain portions of the population where community college enrollment is a lot of times their only option so we are very deliberate about our relationships with community colleges and trying to be accessible.

There is growth [at community colleges] among Latinas/os and among African Americans; there is growth so in some ways [community colleges] are a natural place for us to go because any remedial effort may have been taken care of there…and we can take it from there.

Our history is a little different… We aren’t the traditional selective high-priced institution because of who we were ten years ago or twenty years ago, so our economic mix looks more like a [public research university] than a [private research university], we have a higher percent of students on need and a higher percentage of students on Pell grants.

We are very conscious about economic diversity across our entering class but we do feel that transfers will help round out that mix.

On the undergraduate side, we do have an access mission. We see ourselves as sort of the next step forward for those who may not have had opportunity otherwise at either a high-cost institution or an institution that is more rigid in course structures and academic credentials. So we are here to help those students.

**Note:** References are direct quotes.

Gutmann’s (1987) emphasis on the principles of non-repression and non-discrimination may best be evidenced by the theme of diversity that emerged from the study. Administrators at two of the institutions, Amherst and Clark, directly addressed how the recruitment of community college transfer students felt like a moral imperative. While administrators at X University did not make such a statement, it is important to note that this institution has the strongest history of access and diversity. Even though it has deliberately shifted its emphasis on access, it still accommodates the most diverse student population, and its evening school continues to serve nontraditional students through its “access mission.”
Gutmann (2008) suggests that a university should also have a set of secondary purposes that are symbiotic with the primary one. Speaking as the president of one such university, she identifies the goals of improving education through a social contract by which student commit to engaging in local and global communities by which they learn and contribute to the social welfare. As previously mentioned, the themes of diversity and community engagement were both identified by institutions as primary objectives to the practice of recruiting community college students. I provided an analysis of how institutions might conceive of these themes in terms of their goals around increasing institutional capital. However, given Gutmann’s claims as to the importance of these concepts to the pursuit of higher education in a democratic society, it is useful to also consider these themes in terms of how they allow higher education institutions to serve society. All three institutions also displayed a strong commitment to community engagement. While some reasons might be linked to the accumulation of capital, there was also a sense given on each campus of civic responsibility. Administrators at X University in particular argued that there are other ways to serve one’s community outside of enrolling members of that community. The Senior Vice President noted that X University was in the midst of renegotiating its role within the surrounding communities, but that it was not disengaging. This can be evidenced by their strong commitment to the local public school system. Clark also has strong partnerships with its local community. Amherst does not have as strong a history of partnerships with its community, but did recently open the “Center for Community Engagement” and individual faculty members engage their students in community service projects. All three institutions are members of the Campus Compact chapter in Massachusetts, which, according to its website, is “a
nonprofit coalition of college and university presidents committed to developing the civic
skills of students, building partnerships with the community, and integrating civic
engagement with teaching and research” (www.ase.tufts.edu/macc ¶2).

Table 21.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>References to Community Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amherst College</td>
<td>There has been a lot of interest at Amherst in encouraging the students and faculty to become a lot more involved in the community. So the college has created the center for community engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>So there has been a long-standing but also growing interest in how Amherst can become more involved in the surrounding community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark University</td>
<td>This institution always talks about this community component. You know we are really big on community service and you know the motto, “Challenge Convention, Change Our World,” and part of it is, if you can’t help you local community in some way, what is the point? You know you start at this community college and you try to extend it out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This is an institution committed to community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X University</td>
<td>Because of the fact that we want to keep a good relationship with students from our general area, particularly as we are getting more national recognition, a lot of that does come from the transfer population within the local community colleges so we do on-the-spot admissions with them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* References are direct quotes.

In her speech, Gutmann also spoke of the need for universities to be able to place
limits on the pursuits of democratic education. Just as the consideration of capital led to
limits on what institutions are willing or not willing to do, so should the pursuit of an
equity agenda in the name of democratic education. Gutmann warned about a disturbing
trend of universities being expected to serve as “short term social service stations” that
substitute government and nongovernmental services on elementary education, health
care, etc. This analysis is particularly relevant when considering the case of X University,
a large, loosely coupled research university, answering to a multitude of constituents. Clark Kerr (1963/1994) famously dubbed research universities “multi-universities” in reference to the many roles they are expected to fulfill. He describes these institutions as inconsistent and not being one community but several (p. 14). He points out the contradiction that such a university “devoted to equality of opportunity, is itself a class society.” (p. 14). Furthermore, Kerr goes on to discuss how the multi-university is invested in its name, He writes “the name of the institution stands for a certain standard of performance, a certain degree of respect, a certain historical legacy, a characteristic quality of spirit” (p. 15). Given the state of flux in reputation at X University and its multivariate role as a research university, it seems understandable that a particular practice such as the recruitment of community college students is not as clearly linked to mission as it is in the smaller institutions in the study.

Higher education institutions are notorious for being slow to change, however, as Gutmann (2008) noted about the changes brought in the last forty years, they do indeed change. In terms of the impetus for change in perceptions, practices, and policies regarding community college transfer students, Dowd and Gabbard (2006) highlight the importance of individuals, who play the roles of transfer agents, transfer champions, and peer mentors.

Transfer agents have been defined as those administrators or faculty, whether at the community college level or the four-year college level who help transfer students navigate the application process thereby making those students feel encouraged to pursue the transfer option (Dowd, Bensimon, et al., 2006; Pak et al., 2006). Often, as in the case of these three institutions in this study, transfer agents are the admissions officers who
work directly with transferring students. However, it should not be assumed that this is so. The former transfer coordinator at Clark University for example, confessed that while she now has a deep appreciation for what community college transfer students face, she did not have experience with this student population when she began her assignment. So while she may have been the obvious transfer agent on campus, there may have been other administrators on campus during her first year that were more effective transfer agents.

Transfer champions is a term used to refer to those within higher education who help to promote policies and institutional changes that lead to an increase in transfer rates (Dowd, Bensimon et al., 2006; Gabbard et al., 2006). The President of Amherst can be considered a “transfer champion” as he strives to redefine how Amherst approached socioeconomic diversity on campus. Often both transfer agents and transfer champions are driven to action by their own personal experiences with transfer or by inequities within higher education. They may feel morally compelled to ease the transition for students who may have fewer advocates than other student populations. The actions of these individuals often help remind their peers about an institution’s role in a democratic society.

Moving Forward: Addressing Multiple Objectives

It has been argued that higher education has the capability to create critical thinkers who can then influence political and social practices for the better of all of society. Surely this would be an academic outcome for which most colleges and universities would strive. At the same time, the three institutions in this study, as is probable with all institutions that actively recruit community college students, do so
because the benefits to their institution outweigh the challenges or at least are not
overcome by the challenges. These institutions do not operate in a different realm from
other private selective institutions; the references to the various forms of capital confirm
that they do not. Rather, despite these institutions’ adherence to the “rules of the field,”
they have figured out ways in which they can incorporate the recruitment of community
college students into their policies and practices. It is important to recognize that while
some of the reasons for doing so are based on fiscal policy, some on protecting or
increasing their institution’s reputation, others are based on social responsibility.

In some respects this analysis has demonstrated that institutions, through the
actions of individual actors, are driven to act both by their self-interests, which increase
their accumulation of capital and by the philosophical implications of being an institution
of higher learning within a democratic society. It is the balancing of these two objectives,
that governs the creation and adherence to the policies and practices that delineate what
institutions are willing and not willing to do in relation to issues of access and equity.

Several researchers have recently urged a renewed focus on increasing access of
low-income students to selective colleges. A few of these researchers have suggested
addressing issues of access by increasing transfer pathways for community college
students. The reasons cited by them are similar in nature to the ones identified in this
multi-case study. For institutions with low to moderate levels of selectivity in their
admissions, there are several logical reasons related to fiscal policies and enrollment
management, which tend to drive the recruitment of two-year students (Hanover
Research Council, 2007). These reasons are less compelling for more selective
institutions with high retention rates. However, this research study, as well as research
by Dowd, Cheslock, and Melguizo (2008) provides compelling reasons why these highly selective institutions should still consider recruiting community college transfer students. In accordance with the findings presented here, Dowd, Cheslock, and Melguizo (2008) discuss the need for highly selective colleges to preserve the role of education in a democratic society by providing opportunities to students based on academic ability, not socioeconomic means. They also discuss how four-year colleges can right socioeconomic inequities, which have been perpetuated by the lower-levels of the American educational system. They recognize how institutions may pursue democratic education by exposing students at selective colleges to diversity in order to allow them to develop the awareness necessary for citizenship in a pluralistic society. Finally, they explain that in some cases, even for highly selective institutions, it may be sound fiscal policy to pursue community college transfer students. Given the overwhelming desire by highly selective institutions to maintain their competitive positioning, it is imperative that each college apply the reasons cited by Dowd, Cheslock and Melguizo, and evidenced by this multi-case study, in a way that is conducive to their institutional needs and desires as well as to their commitment to the pursuit of democratic education.

With the recruitment of community college students, the three institutions in this study appear to be addressing some aspect of their multiple objectives, not just their economic objectives. For Amherst, they are clearly not considering their economic profit line. However, although they are investing financial capital, this is being offset by contributions made by the Jack Kent Cooke foundation, and the federal government. In addition, Amherst made the conscious decision to expend financial capital in return for intellectual capital that comes with community college students sharing real-life
experiences with other students and the faculty, and social capital, which they gain by
their ability to promote social justice and their opportunity to redress past institutional
failures. Amherst recognizes its “place” as a leader and administrators voice a
recognition that they are deliberately trying to influence peer institutions.

For Clark, their decision to recruit community college students is in part due to
their fiscal objectives. However, their social objectives are strengthened by the
demonstration of the enactment of their motto, “Challenge Convention, Change Our
World.” For X University, there is a serious consideration of their financial goals. There
is uncertainty about the social objectives, although there was reference made to a desire
to preserve institutional history by maintaining a connection with area community college
transfer students. The evening school was more explicit in its mission to increase access
and opportunity for more students. Because it is the institution most in transition, it has
the greatest opportunity to consciously construct policies and practices that address the
triple objective going forward.

Policy Recommendations

Some might argue that the hierarchical system of higher education in the United
States is problematic because it cannot be reconciled with the notion of democracy of
education. Gutmann (1987) among others would argue that this is not necessarily the
case. Regardless, this is the system that currently exists and therefore any policy
recommendations should address this reality. As stated in Chapter 1, this research is
concerned with inequities in access to higher education and the belief that these inequities
can be partly addressed through the deliberate recruitment of community college transfer
students. Although this research did not evaluate the effectiveness of the practices
employed at the three case study sites, the administrators who were interviewed provided insight into what was working and not working given their institution’s position both in terms of its accumulation of capital and its commitment to democratic education. Through their analysis as well as the researcher’s own observations and review of online and printed materials, several policy recommendations emerged. Examples of how these recommendations related to the individual case study sites are given as well. Although these policy recommendations came directly out of this research study, it should be noted that some of them are similar in nature to those proposed by Gabbard and Singleton (2006) suggesting that the findings from this research support the larger findings from the research conducted by Dowd and Gabbard (2006).

♦ *Disseminate Rationale of Recruitment Strategies Beyond Admissions Office*

At Amherst, all of the administrators interviewed were well aware of the grant initiative and everyone expressed the same rationale. Amherst is a very small institution so it is easier for people to engage interdepartmentally. In addition, the President endorsed the initiative giving it high visibility.

At Clark, there was not as clear an understanding of the rationales for this particular practice, but administrators naturally made the connection themselves to the university’s mission and motto. At X University, the rationale of the need for transfer students to support fiscal policies was well understood outside of the admissions office, but other rationales such as those related to community engagement were not.

♦ *Align Practice with Institutional Mission*

Amherst recently realigned its mission statement to reflect its commitment to socioeconomic diversity. Clark’s motto of “Challenge Convention, Change Our World”
was echoed by several administrators and clearly served as a central tenet for why and how policies are enacted. At X University, the university’s mission was not specifically cited although some administrators noted that they were unsure of how the practice of recruiting community college students connected to the mission of the university.

♦ Analyze Whether Institution Is Ready for Practice

There are a variety of tools that a selective institution can utilize to determine whether and to what extent it is prepared to support community college transfer students and or other under-served student populations such as low-income students. “The Equity Scorecard” developed by Estela Bensimon and a team of researchers from the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California is a means by which an institution can measure how much it values equity in relation to educational outcomes for traditionally underrepresented students (www.uwsa.edu/edi/equity/overview). “The Transfer Access Inventory” was a tool developed by Alicia Dowd, Estela Bensimon, and Glenn Gabbard, and a team of researchers in conjunction with “The Study of Economic, Informational and Cultural Barriers.” This tool is designed as a self-assessment with five sections “with a series of indicators of practices and policies relevant to promoting transfer access from community colleges” (p. 1). Finally, an institution considering its policies and practices around the recruitment of community college students most likely would benefit from doing some type of cost/benefit analysis that would be able to take into account the costs associated with the practice, as well as the how the institution would measure the benefits of the practice.

This research study stops short of evaluating the policies and practices pertaining to the recruitment of community college transfer students. It was intended as an
exploratory study meant to identify how three different selective institutions that have been identified by their peers as being transfer amenable pursue their practice and what motivates them to do so. However, I believe that a formal assessment of the findings would be useful to these three case study sites. As a recipient of the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation grant, Amherst has most likely used all three of the tools named above.

♦ Periodically Assess Academic and Social Experiences of CC Transfers

Amherst is currently being assessed in its efforts by an outside evaluation team contracted by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation and the findings will be disseminated publicly. Clark does not have any formal assessment of its transfer students in place, but administrators shared anecdotes of how successful their community college transfer students were. Administrators in both Admissions and Financial Aid did talk about how small focus groups or individual conversations with current transfer students provided them with helpful feedback. X University also does not formally assess transfer students, although the office of institutional research does periodically run reports comparing retention, GPAs and graduation rates of transfer students, particularly when faculty raise concerns.

One specific measure that might be helpful would be for selective institutions to periodically plan focus groups with community college students who applied but did not enroll at the institution to gain an understanding of the factors that impacted their choice and the barriers to transfer they might have faced.

♦ Link Practice to Other Initiatives of Community Engagement

There has been a renewed and growing interest in community engagement at Amherst. Recently a new center on community engagement was opened and at this
year’s conference sponsored by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, Amherst faculty and community college faculty came together to discuss projects in community engagement. At Clark, there are several initiatives on community engagement. Some are linked, but currently the practice of recruiting community college students is not linked to other initiatives. The University plans to move forward on developing a formal bridge program that would link initiatives at local high schools with Quinsigamond Community College and Clark. At X University, the focus seems to be more on global community engagement than local community engagement. This makes sense given the large size of the university and their involvement with global initiatives. There are some local partnerships that have been established, most notably with the local urban school system. There is also a small partnership with a local community college, but the extent of the partnership does not appear to be well understood on campus.

Limitations of Study

This qualitative case study was limited to three private selective colleges in Massachusetts. With only three cases from one state in this study, the generalizability of the findings is diminished. Also, the case study may have been limited by the use of the theoretical framework of critical education theory, and more specifically the focus on Bourdieu’s social reproduction theory. As a qualitative research project, it relies heavily on the perceptions of participants. In addition, it should be noted that the research has been affected by the experiences and perceptions of the researcher.

Implications for Future Research

During the course of this research, several large foundations, most notably the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation and the Lumina Foundation became engaged in large-scale
comprehensive research endeavors aimed at drawing attention to the need to increase access at selective institutions for both community college students and low-income students in general. The research coming out of these foundations will continue to impact the way in which institutions consider recruitment practices, as well as policies concerning access at their particular institutions.

Research that does not currently seem to be on the foundations’ agendas but that would still be informative to four-year institutions, community colleges and policymakers, includes: a consideration of collaborations between community colleges and four-year colleges and universities that extend beyond the student transfer function; an exploration of funding alternatives for private selective institutions interested in increasing the number of community college transfer students; and the development and assessment of bridge programs, such as the one mentioned by the Provost at Clark which would involve partnerships between local high schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges or universities. Finally, I hope that there continues to be efforts to more carefully and comprehensively examine the roles that private higher education plays in the lives of Massachusetts’s community college students. Recent findings from the ongoing study of Boston Public School graduates (Vaznis, 2009) has illustrated that where students go impacts their performance, and that private selective colleges in the state that are positively affecting local students’ lives. As consortiums and partnerships grow, there are many ways in which private higher education can serve local communities, but these must be accompanied on some level by access for underserved students to the selective private sector.
Conclusion

It is important to recognize that Amherst invested heavily into the community college student initiative in ways that most private institutions could not afford to do. Furthermore, its efforts serve a very small number of students. This institution has significant finances to fund their effort, and they have determined that the other types of benefits that they will receive from this practice are worth the investment. For Clark and X University, the cost to recruit these students is offset by the financial benefits of having these students. These two colleges did not consider the costs of support services separately for community college students. In Clark’s case, they are interested in recruiting a small number of highly academically capable students, which they attract through merit aid. These students tend to perform as well or possibly better than the typical undergraduate student at Clark, so additional services are not needed. In the case of X University, it is unclear whether additional services may be useful, but transfers are not an institutional priority at the moment, especially given that the retention rate of transfers is fairly comparable to that of first year students.

Through the individual case study analysis of three different private selective colleges and universities within the state of Massachusetts, several underlying issues impacting why and how these institutions recruit community college transfer students have been explored. The particular reasons why this practice is pursued at each institution have been illuminated in light of the institution’s particular position within the hierarchical framework of American higher education coupled with its desire to maintain or increase its standing, as well as the institution’s participation in a democratic society and its role in promoting educational equity. The timing of this research study is critical
given the important crossroads facing higher education in Massachusetts. While Massachusetts has long been considered a leader in higher education, changes impacting both the economy and the state’s demographics are forecasted and are expected to have serious implications for higher education. The public sector has made strong strides in recent years to more effectively serve the state’s college student population, but it still faces serious issues regarding affordability and achievement gaps related to race and ethnicity. Community colleges continue to serve the majority of students who are most negatively affected by both of these dilemmas and given the prevalence of private four-year colleges in the state, it makes sense that if many of these students are going to successfully move beyond an associate’s degree they will require access to both public and private options for their bachelor’s degrees.

Nationwide, as more students look to start their higher education pursuits at community colleges, all colleges and universities should be in the process of reconsidering why they should support community college transfer students and how they may be able to do this, particularly as a means of leveling the playing field for the concentration of students of lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The research being funded by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, the Lumina Foundation, and the Nellie Mae Foundation among others clearly demonstrates a need for selective institutions to become more consciously involved in how serving those students who have been traditionally underserved. Several research studies indicate that low-income students continue to be underrepresented at selective institutions, and these institutions should continue to feel pressure to address this issue. In this light, any selective institution would benefit from doing an assessment of whether it is prepared to pursue practices and policies for
recruiting community college transfer students. In a state like Massachusetts, with such a high profile private sector the question remains: Will the private selective colleges respond? The three institutions in this case study have shared the factors that have allowed them to do so in some way. Hopefully they and other colleges will continue to strategically think about how they can serve their institutional needs while also reaching out to underserved populations in their pursuit of the idealization of democratic education.
REFERENCES


Community college transfer collaboration agreement, Amherst College. Retrieved February 13, 2008 from http://www.amherst.edu/admission/important_info/communitycollege_students.html


APPENDIX A: Results of Initial Survey of CC Transfer Counselors

Private Selective Colleges Mentioned 3 or more times by Community College Transfer Coordinators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># of Specific Mentions</th>
<th>Selectivity Ranking</th>
<th>PTK Scholarship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merrimack College</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Selective</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Holyoke College</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>More Selective</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith College</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>More Selective</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amherst College</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Most Selective</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellesley College</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Most Selective</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: This table only includes the Liberal Arts Colleges referenced by Community College Transfer Coordinators. Universities have been omitted.*
APPENDIX B: Letter of Introduction to Potential Case Study Sites

Date
Kristin Hunt
67 Crooked Pond Drive
Boxford, MA 01921

Name of Contact
Address of Institution

My name is Kristin Hunt and I am a doctoral student in the Higher Education Program at Boston College. I am writing to ask permission for [Your University’s] participation in a multi-case study of private selective colleges in Massachusetts. The colleges asked to participate in this study have been recommended as transfer amenable institutions for community college students through a survey of community college transfer counselors.

As I am sure you are aware, the number of transfer students at private selective colleges has been steadily declining over the past twenty years. As competition for selective institutions has grown fiercer, financial costs have risen, and enrollment management strategies have been honed, it makes sense that there is less of a need to attract transfer students at many institutions. Yet, the number of community college students has greatly expanded and there are more community college students who have the academic qualifications to pursue a bachelor’s degree at selective institutions. Recent research has demonstrated that community college students who are given such opportunities graduate at the same rate as their peers.

This research is meant to provide an in-depth picture of why and how particular private selective colleges or universities have chosen to encourage community college transfer students despite the challenges they may face in doing so. It is my hope that by presenting these cases, administrators at other private selective institutions may be able to more effectively consider their own role in supporting the transfer of academically capable community college transfer students. Specifically I plan to attend to the following questions:

♦ What are the rationales and strategies of the recruitment of community college students employed at the institution?
♦ What is the institutional context for decisions regarding the encouragement or recruitment of community college transfer students
♦ What are the benefits and challenges administrators identify in serving community college transfer students?

I plan on interviewing approximately 7 administrators at each case study site. While the individuals participating at each campus may vary, I anticipate interviewing at least one admissions administrator, a financial aid administrator, a student affairs administrator, an enrollment management administrator, and possibly a Dean or faculty member who might work with transfer students. It should be noted that this research is not looking to evaluate how successful certain measures or institutions are with community college transfer students, but rather to present a multi-case study of the rationales and strategies employed by distinct private selective colleges, given their fiduciary, academic and community responsibilities.
Finally, I would just note that I have been approved by the IRB board at Boston College, and plan on working with the IRB boards at each of the approved case study sites to resolve issues of confidentiality and proper protocol at each institution I am very excited about the possibility of having [Your Institution] as one of the case study sites.

I sincerely appreciate your time and consideration to this request and I would be happy to answer any further questions or concerns you may have. I can be reached at 978 852-7566 or huntkr@bc.edu. Otherwise, I will plan on following up with you via email.

Sincerely,

Kristin Hunt
Boston College
APPENDIX C: Interview Protocol

*Interview will begin by asking for identifying information such as name, position title, and time in position*

Tell me about your experiences with community college transfer students?

How do these experiences differ from experiences you have had in the past (either at another institution or before current policies at current institution)?

Why do you think your institution is currently pursuing policies or practices around the recruitment of community college students?

What do you see as the major issues impacting the transfer of community college students?

Follow up Question: How do you feel your institution is addressing these issues?
Hello:
As you may know, I have been doing dissertation research on why and how private selective colleges and universities in Massachusetts that recruit community college transfer students. I did an initial survey of community college transfer counselors last summer to determine which private selective colleges conduct outreach. From that list, three schools were chosen and agreed to partake in the study. These schools were chosen specifically because they are located in different parts of the state and because they have different levels of selectivity in their admissions.

I am contacting you because you are at a community college that at least one of the case study sites identified as one that is local to them and from where they have received students in the past. In an effort to corroborate my findings, it is my hope that you will take a few minutes to answer some questions to the best of your knowledge. Most likely, there will be one school that is more local to you than the other two, but if you have had experience with transfer at the other two institutions please feel free to share.

Please note that the information you provide will be used to support or refute my findings, however, neither you, or your institution will be named. After you have answered the questions, I would be happy to share my findings with you if you are interested.

The three institutions in the study are: Amherst College, Clark University, and [X University]. Please consider whichever ones are relevant to your experience as you answer these questions.

1. Have you had any students transfer from your institution to any of these three institutions in the past five years? If so, approximately how many?

   Amherst:

   [X University]

   Clark:

2. Have any of these three institutions conducted outreach efforts on your campus? If so, can you describe how they have done so?

3. If outreach efforts have been conducted, what has worked particularly well? What has been challenging?
4. Do you have any impression as to why the schools you identified above have done outreach on your campus?

5. Do you have a specific partnership with any of these three institutions?

6. Any other comments about your institution’s relationship to any of these three institutions would be greatly appreciated.
APPENDIX E: Electronic Message to Senior Administrators

Dear [Senior Administrator]:

Attached to this email are my findings on the case study I did at XXX on why and how the institution supports the recruitment of community college transfer students. I have included the section of my Chapter 4 which profiles [Your institution]. I have also chapter 5 which presents a cross-case analysis within the context of my theoretical framework. Finally, I have included a summary document of chapter 5. The case study profile, along with the summary document is what I am disseminating to everyone I interviewed at [your institution], and the full chapter 5 is available to them upon request.

Please note in the Case Study Profile I identify [your institution] by name, but that is only been shared with individuals at [your institution] at this point. In chapter 5, I took out institution's names because it was a cross-case analysis. I am awaiting your approval of whether I can name [your institution] in the final draft. I have cc'd [primary contact person] as s/he has been my main contact person at [your institution].

I would like to extend my profound gratitude to you for allowing me to have the opportunity to interview you as well as include [your institution] in my case study. I sincerely appreciate the time and attention you have given my research. I hope that you find my depiction of [your institution] to be accurate and respectful of the institution and the administrators who I interviewed.

I look forward to hearing from you after you have had a chance to review the material as to how you would like me to proceed with identifying [your institution] in the final draft.

Sincerely,

Kristin Hunt
PhD Candidate, Higher Education Administration
Boston College
cell: 978 852-7566