ENTREPRENEURIAL THOUGHT IN ACTION®: A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY OF THE STRATEGIC INITIATIVE TO BE ENTREPRENEURIAL UTILIZING WEICK’S SENSEMAKING THEORY

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Abstract

This research explored how organizational members make sense of the intentional change to become an entrepreneurial-focused institution. More specifically, this study considered how middle managers at a small college in Massachusetts described shifts in the nature of their work as they made sense of the current mission. To best understand how managers approached the sensemaking process, a descriptive case-study methodology was utilized. Data was collected through document review, observations of leadership team meetings, and semi-structured one-on-one interviews during a one month time period. The data analysis process included three specific stages: data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014).

The findings revealed three common themes that were important as managers described shifts in work related to the change in strategy. First, there was acceptance of having a common language around the strategy change. Second, employees are thinking and acting differently in how they approach their work. Finally, managers indicated through interview responses that a recent shift in leadership had upset the sense making process. Implications and recommendations for future research included considering the impact of the type of leadership and existing organizational culture on the sense making process as it relates to becoming more entrepreneurial; conducting a longitudinal study over a three year period; and expanding the participant groups by interviewing other staff (non-managers) and faculty to help solidify the findings in this work.

Key words: Entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial; sensemaking; strategic change
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my amazing family:

My beautiful children, Rowen John O’Leary and Brenna Frances O’Leary, and my incredible husband, Jamie O’Leary, who has always been my biggest fan

In loving memory of my grandparents:

Francis and Helen Kozik and Francis and Helen O’Connell.
Acknowledgements

This journey has been extraordinary, challenging, eye-opening and frustrating throughout the last four years. While pursuing this degree, working full-time, and having two babies, I learned how much having the support of family and friends means.

First, to my parents, Mary and Ken Kozik, who showed me the significance of continuous learning from the moment I was born, thank you. To my mother-in-law, Susan O’Leary, who gladly took my children whenever I needed to work or write, thank you. To my advisor, Dr. Margaret Gorman, who supported me through this entire journey and pushed me outside of my comfort zone so that I could learn and grow, thank you. And to my Babson College friends who have allowed me the flexibility to pursue this degree while working full-time and balancing my family needs, thank you.

Finally, and most importantly, to my family: Rowen John, my first born, who has been with me throughout this entire journey; Brenna Frances, who is my best girl; and my husband Jamie, my best friend and the greatest man I know, who has encouraged me and believed in me throughout this entire program, never once forgetting to remind me how proud he is of my accomplishments. I love you all and am truly blessed to have such a beautiful family.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

How one defines and understands the concept of entrepreneurship has evolved in leaps and bounds in recent years. For instance, entrepreneurs may be the founder of a company or just an innovative thinker (or both); and being “entrepreneurial” could be a state of mind or a way of being (Costello, Neck, & Williams, 2011). A term that was once associated predominantly with people (i.e., entrepreneurs) who started their own business from nothing has evolved into a way of thinking, acting, living, and learning. In fact, how one defines the terms “entrepreneurship” or “entrepreneur” has transformed so significantly over the years that there does not seem to be one single agreed upon definition (Costello et al., 2011). Such variation in the definition of entrepreneurship leaves much opportunity for further exploration on the topic and may explain why entrepreneurship has been at the center of the curriculum at leading educational institutions over recent years. In fact, many higher education institutions such as Babson College are dedicating significant resources to living and learning entrepreneurially. Babson College, ranked number one in entrepreneurship for over ten consecutive years (U.S. News & World Report, 2013), has an institute exclusively dedicated to expanding the practice of entrepreneurship and is known for being a top-notch entrepreneurship educator.

Why has the concept of entrepreneurship exploded in the field of higher education? What is the benefit of agile thinking and bold action? Why should one care about being entrepreneurial in both thought and action? The answer is that the future has become more and more uncertain. Due to this uncertainty, being entrepreneurial in both thought and action puts people and organizations at an advantage in many ways, including the ability to identify and create new opportunities, manage change, handle uncertainty, and develop skills that distinguish themselves from others (Costello et al., 2011).
Despite the increasing focus on entrepreneurial education, there seem to be fewer discussions on how employers can use this concept to encourage employees to work differently. Clearly, the next entrepreneurial opportunity lies in expanding the research that demonstrates how to apply this way of thinking and acting in the work environment.

**Statement of the Problem**

The concept of entrepreneurship is not a new one, however there is indication that it has been discussed much more often in many organizations in recent years (Eyal & Kark, 2004; Ling, Simsek, Lubatkin, & Veiga, 2008; Nejad, Abbaszadeh, Hassani, & Bernousi, 2012). In fact, there has been an increased focus in research journals on understanding and learning from organizational attempts to become more entrepreneurially minded as well as investigating the behaviors, traits, and/or skills related to successful entrepreneurs (Ahmed, Aamir, & Ijaz, 2011; Eyal & Kark, 2004; Hulsing, 2008; Li, Ching-Yick Tse, & Zhao, 2009; Morris, Coombes, Schindehutte, & Allen, 2007; Yan, 2011). It is apparent that the discussion focusing on organizational entrepreneurship in the research has taken on many different areas of focus. Eyal & Kark (2004) argue that leadership style plays a significant role in organizational change and entrepreneurship. Ling et al. (2008) examine whether transformational leaders have an impact on how and if a company engages in corporate entrepreneurship. Nejad et al. (2012) focused on faculty members’ relationship between organizational learning and entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, throughout much of the research a consistent pattern appears that highlights the important fact that in order for organizations to do more than just keep up with the competition, there is a critical need for a different, more innovative and creative way of learning, thinking, acting, and operating (Nejad et al., 2012).
Despite this increase in focus on entrepreneurial behaviors in organizations, there appears to be a lack of current research on how institutions are using this mindset to create actual change, especially in the world of higher education. There is a great deal of research centering on change in higher education but the emphasis is often on the actual change process rather than how to approach change in a unique and creative manner. A well-thought out and collaborative change process is viewed as critical in the higher education environment yet the research often highlights the challenges that get in the way of successful change rather than introducing new approaches that will engage the higher education community (Drew, 2010). Beyond challenges, the literature also illustrates an abundance of work around leadership style and its impact on successful change. Specific theories related to planned change found in the research are numerous and include models such as Lewin’s Change Model, the Action Research Model and the Positive Model (Cummings & Worley, 2009). Even work done by John Kotter (1996) has been readily called upon because his model is easily understood and followed. However, Kezar (2001) notes the importance of a specialized or unique approach to change within the world of higher education. The argument is that after reviewing change research in higher education, the best explanation for organizational change lies in political, social-cognition, and cultural models (Kezar, 2001). This article supports the importance of sensemaking in higher education through the social-cognition models of learning and understanding how to make sense of change that is occurring. Overlooking the uniqueness of how to approach change in higher education may result in an unsuccessful change effort (Kezar, 2001). This research attempts to contribute to the shift in assumptions needed in order to gain deeper insight into the social meaning making process.
Some efforts attempting to shift these assumptions has begun to emerge in higher education research including work that specifically highlights the role of sensemaking in the organizational change process. For example, Gioia & Thomas (1996) considered how higher educational leaders actually made sense of strategic change rather than focusing on the actual substance of the change. This study illustrates how higher educational institutions are starting to explore the concept of sensemaking more often as they struggle to keep up with the changing landscape. Chadwick & Pawlowski (2007) introduced the concept of sensemaking by utilizing Weick’s organizational information theory to provide information on how assessment data can drive large-scale change and concluded that considering the sensemaking process helped in the strategic decision making process. Harmer (2009) considered whether prior experience or knowledge in the business world would better serve teachers and students in business courses. The extent of prior knowledge that was required in order for successful sensemaking to occur was explored. But perhaps one of the most appropriate studies related to this current research is the conclusion of Kezar & Eckel (2002) about the relationship between transformational change and the sensemaking process. The findings indicate that those institutions that allowed the community to engage in sensemaking were more likely to move forward in the change process. In a world that is fast-paced and constantly changing, understanding how to move in the direction of fast but successful change is essential.

A lack of ability or desire to change and explore innovative new solutions in the world of higher education could end up being disastrous for some institutions, making the issue of change and entrepreneurship so critical. Many institutions in the higher education world could benefit by considering how a new entrepreneurial minded strategy is received by its employees. In fact, using this same model may provide a foundation for other higher education institutions to
attempt change to address some of the current issues that are being faced in education today, such as lack of sufficient aid to attract the right caliber of students.

At Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts, the concept of entrepreneurship has been a central focus for many years but the college is still grappling with how to infuse this mindset into its staff and faculty members in their daily work. Much of the attention has been focused on entrepreneurship education which is directed towards the students on campus. However, the college is asking its employees to act in alignment with the mission of the college without a real understanding of whether or not it is clear to employees how this translates in their daily work. Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation research was to gain insight into how organizational members are making sense of the intentional change to become an entrepreneurial focused institution. Specifically, the research studied a cross-section of middle managers who are required to have the ability to reconcile the new vision with their daily operations to try to understand how these managers are making sense of the change.

Research Questions

In order to address the research problem outlined earlier, one overarching question and one secondary question guided this study:

How do organizational members make sense of the intentional change to become an entrepreneurial-focused institution? More specifically, the following question was considered:

- How do middle managers describe shifts in the nature of their work in an effort to make sense of the newest mission of the college?

Theoretical Framework

Organizational sensemaking (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005) was chosen as the overarching framework to inform this doctoral thesis. According to Weick (1993), sensemaking
is the idea that “reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs” (p. 635). The concept of sensemaking may appear straightforward but the focus of this particular research deviates from general or traditional sensemaking and focuses instead on organizational sensemaking. Weick discusses seven properties of sensemaking which are summarized as: (1) grounded in identity construction; (2) retrospective; (3) enactive of sensible environments; (4) social; (5) ongoing-continuous; (6) symbols of sensemaking; and (7) plausibility over accuracy (Weick, 1995). Weick discusses the uniqueness of sensemaking and it is this very concept that supports the use of the framework for this particular research. The institution in this study is itself unique: a small institution that has accomplished massive recognition in how its faculty teach and encourage entrepreneurship in their students. Despite Babson’s many accomplishments, this recognition has not extended to the administrative and staff aspects of the institutional operations. In an attempt to transform into an institution that lives and breathes entrepreneurially, regardless of one’s role, the strategic direction of the institution has been altered. However, in spite of the re-focused strategic direction, it is unclear whether or not the desired change is clear to all community members. Given the findings by Kezar & Eckel (2002) that transformation change is more likely to be successful when institutions allow community members to engage in the sensemaking process this theoretical approach is the most appropriate lens for this doctoral thesis.

The next section outlines in greater detail each of the seven sensemaking steps and Table 1.1 summarizes the properties and outlines their application to the research under discussion. Utilizing these properties of sensemaking allows insight into how people rationalize the new college strategy for themselves and their approach to their work.
Grounded in Identity Construction. The first property in sensemaking is a very complex process focused on one’s self-identity and self-concept. It assumes that people are trying to understand their environment and how they fit into it while simultaneously reacting to situations, circumstances, and people. In effect, sometimes people need to see things happen before they can react and/or understand who they are and what their role is within various situations. These concepts are also true when making sense of many different situations within an organizational setting. In fact, being aware of one’s identity and how one sees themselves is, in part, driven by the reputation of the organization where one works (Weick, 1995). When organizational reputation is important to one’s own identity, people will likely work hard to produce positive outcomes and avoid negative outcomes as they relate to organizational character. Using the process of sensemaking, this research considered, through carefully designed interview questions, whether employees’ self-concept was impacted by how others viewed the new strategy and direction of Babson College.

Retrospective. The second property requires the ability to look to the past and determine the meaning of what occurred. This ability includes looking at both what has already occurred as well as what is occurring in the present moment (which quickly becomes the past). In essence, being retrospective is similar to taking time to reflect upon events, circumstances, people, etc. to extract some form of meaning about the experience. However, it is also important to note that this reflection needs to happen relatively quickly so that the past can be clarified, if necessary, resulting in a more confident feeling about the situation (Weick, 1995).

Enactive of Sensible Environments. The third property of sensemaking focuses on the term “enactment.” This term conveys the action that is being taken and how that action impacts the current state of one’s environment. In other words, once someone takes certain action, they
will have to react to the environment they have created as a result of their initial action. In this way, people have an active role in shaping their environment.

**Social.** The fourth property highlights the importance of the social aspects of sensemaking. Just as individual action is important in this process, so is the influence that others have on people and their environments. Dedicated support and collaboration, or lack thereof, can have a significant impact on how meaning is defined. Even when working alone, it is hard to remove the influence that others have whether it is through words, action, or mere presence.

**Ongoing.** The fifth property conveys the important fact that one is constantly engaging in the meaning making process – there is not a defined beginning and end. Typically, one is in the middle of something--a project or process or thought--at any given time so the practice of understanding various stimuli in the environment is continuous. Part of the continuous nature of meaning making centers around positive and negative emotion and the impact that emotion has on the sensemaking process. Unfortunately, negative emotions appear more prevalent than positive emotions in organizations. These negative emotions are a result of interruptions, leadership, resource concerns, downsizing, and other similar situations (Weick, 1995). Both negative and positive emotions have an impact on how people make meaning of their environment and supports the continuous and jagged nature of the sensemaking process.

**Focused on and by Extracted Cues.** The sixth property of sensemaking notes the significance of simple cues that one takes note of and then utilizes to make sense of one’s environment. In this instance, the sensemaker tries to interpret the cue in order to derive some meaning.

**Driven by Plausibility Rather than Accuracy.** Weick’s final property of sensemaking indicates that it is more important to focus on plausibility rather than accuracy. Basically, this
property illustrates the value of knowing just enough as opposed to every last detail. Even further, the focus is on reasonableness and understanding rather than specifics.

Each of these seven properties alone could be its own focus in a research study. For this reason, it was important to create interview questions that addressed one or more of the properties so that insight could be gained into how organizational members are making sense of the new strategic direction. Through the sensemaking lens, interview questions were developed that helped uncover whether organizational members are making sense of the entrepreneurial direction of the College.

Table 1.1
Summary of Weick’s Seven Properties of Sensemaking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Characteristics of Sensemaking Property</th>
<th>Analytical Questions Informing Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grounded in Identity Construction</td>
<td>Being aware of one’s self-concept and identity; being able to understand how one’s self-concept can shift depending on the environment and circumstances.</td>
<td>What is your role in the college strategy? How do you fit? Is your identity impacted by how others view the organization?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retrospective</td>
<td>The ability to look back and reflect in a timely fashion to create clarity and order.</td>
<td>Are you working differently because of the new college strategy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enactive of Sensible Environments</td>
<td>Being aware of how individual actions impact the environment one operates within.</td>
<td>Do you allow yourself time to reflect on the new strategy? Have you taken active steps to change how you approach your work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Being aware of how social interactions impact the environment one operates within.</td>
<td>Do you work in an environment where your colleagues and leaders support the new strategic direction in both words and action?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Being aware of the continuous and ongoing nature of the process of sensemaking and the impact that both positive and negative emotion have on this process.</td>
<td>Do you have the resources and leadership to support this shift in strategy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused on and by Extracted Cues</td>
<td>Being aware of cues and how one interprets these cues to derive meaning.</td>
<td>What is the leadership telling you in words and actions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driven by Plausibility</td>
<td>Focusing more on what is</td>
<td>Do you have a good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Knowing that Babson College is looking to not just be the best, but the *only* organization that leverages the concept of entrepreneurship in such unique ways, it was important to focus on ensuring that any change that is undertaken has been and will continue to be successful. However, it was also important to remember that the business environment has changed. In a global world with constantly improving technology, organizations are finding themselves in an increasingly difficult and changing environment (Kotter, 1996, p. 18). Even further, recognizing that change has become the only constant for most organizations who want to stay competitive, the concept of implementing successful and lasting change has become critical (Kotter, 1996). It is essential to clarify that this research was not attempting to study how an entrepreneurial mindset *drives* large-scale organizational change. Rather, the idea was to understand how employees actually make meaning of the intentional change that had recently taken place: to become an entrepreneurial focused institution in all aspects of its operations.

**Overview of Research Plan**

A descriptive case study to understand how various employees experience the intentional change in strategic direction was used for this doctoral thesis. Given that the emphasis of this research was focused on exploring a specific issue (i.e., whether the new strategy impacts the way people work) within a bounded system (Babson College) using multiple data sources (e.g., document review, observations, and one-on-one interviews) it was appropriate to utilize the descriptive case study as the methodological approach (Creswell, 2007).
Three data sources were identified for the purposes of this case study: a review of documents to identify the explicitly stated strategic and organizational vision; observations of both operational and strategic meetings in which the entrepreneurial strategy was discussed or explored; and semi-structured interviews with key administrators who serve in roles where they are exposed to the stated strategic direction and have to deal with the day-to-day operations to understand their perceptions of the organizational sensemaking process associated with this transition to becoming entrepreneurially focused.

**Significance of Research Problem**

The output of this descriptive case study offers many contributions to practice. First, the research attempted to understand, directly from employees, which aspects of the organizational environment best support one’s ability to make sense of the entrepreneurially focused strategic direction through both thought and action. This information will provide tools for future leaders who are looking to change their organizational strategy to a more innovative and creative direction while still making sense to organizational members. Understanding how organizational members work differently when given the freedom and flexibility to be entrepreneurially minded helps organizations who are searching for more creative and effective ways to operate in a competitive and ever changing world.

Second, this research helps Babson College, in particular, appreciate that employees do understand (and are able to make sense of) the strategy to be entrepreneurial in both thought and action. With some results indicating that employees are making sense of the strategic direction, it reassures the leadership that the organization is on track and the communication channels and approach to the change have been heard in some capacity. However, some of the data indicated
a lack of understanding which gives the college a sense of where there are gaps that need to be addressed.

Beyond contributing to current practice, this research also supports the possibility for future research of its kind. First, this research provides a foundation for future attempts to understand whether organizational members make sense of an entrepreneurially focused strategic direction. Do employees change the way they work to align with a strategy focused on entrepreneurship? Second, this research can be used as a starting point for considering different aspects of organizational behavior and how it relates to an entrepreneurial culture. For instance, does the type of leader or manager impact how one makes sense of working entrepreneurially? Or does the change process impact how organizational members make sense of the change? Is sensemaking impacted by organizational level? There are many questions that could be considered in the future using this research as a starting point.

Interestingly, the recent focus on research related to entrepreneurship is not limited to a particular industry, such as start-up businesses or family-owned businesses. Rather, research focused on entrepreneurial concepts can be found in many fields including: education (elementary, secondary, and post-secondary); health care; financial services; government; construction; and hospitality to name a few (Anderson & White, 2011; Gilbert & Walker, 2001; Li et al., 2009; Sankelo & Akerblad, 2008; Williams, 2010). In addition, not only does the concept of entrepreneurship surface in multiple industries, but it is also being considered in many organizations in countries outside of the United States (Ahmed et al., 2011; Anderson & White, 2011; Cloete & Ballard, 2011; Eyal & Kark, 2004; Lassen, Waehrens, & Boer, 2009; Nejad et al., 2012; Sadler-Smith, Hampson, Chaston, & Badger, 2003). The wide focus across industries and geographic locations leads one to the conclusion that this issue is important at a variety of
levels (local, state, global, as well as individual, group, and societal). Given this new emphasis in the marketplace and the significance of the issue, coupled with Babson College’s mission and strategy to be THE entrepreneurial educator of all kinds, it was critical to better understand how employees are making sense of a strategy that asks them to be entrepreneurial in both thought and action.

Not only does this research provide beneficial information to the community, it is vital for Babson and others looking to better comprehend how individual organizations and their employees can successfully make sense of a new strategy. Even further, understanding how employees are making sense of the new strategy helps determine whether or not the change has been effective or not. If it was discovered that employees are not able to make sense of the new direction of the college, the leadership would need to take immediate action to re-align the staff with the strategy. On the other hand, evidence that supports the fact that employees are making sense of the new strategy highlights the key features of the change process that helps employees successfully make sense of the transformation.

Assumptions/Limitations

When undertaking qualitative research, the researcher engages in a number of assumptions related to ontology, epistemology, axiology, rhetoric, and methodology (Creswell, 2007). These assumptions helped frame the approach that the researcher took on throughout the study. First, from an ontological view, the interviews that were conducted provided quotes and responses directly from participants in order to illustrate the multiple views that each subject had about how they make sense, or not, of the entrepreneurially focused strategy.

Second, from an epistemological standpoint it is important to understand that the researcher already had a relationship with the organization and employees being studied.
Because of this relationship, the researcher did not need to focus as much time and energy on getting to know the research site and participants.

Third, from an axiological stance, given the relationship the researcher has with the organization that was studied, it is important to note upfront the perspective of the researcher and the potential for bias in this study. The fact that the researcher has been employed by the organization being studied for over fifteen years created a possibility for bias when collecting data through observations and interviews. Interpretations of interview responses may have been influenced by historical knowledge and experiences that the researcher has encountered over the years. Moreover, the researcher’s role in the Human Resources Department allowed access to personal data and information that is not available to the general Babson College community and may have influenced the thought process and conclusions drawn throughout the study. The researcher had previously formed perspectives on the staff, faculty, and other community members making it difficult to control for when analyzing data and other documents. Finally, from a rhetorical perspective the language was personal with the methodology emerging and changing as the study unfolded. This concept of an emerging design fits well with an entrepreneurially minded organization.

The aforementioned assumptions came together to form an overall worldview that guided this qualitative research. One particular worldview that is commonly found in qualitative research is social constructivism which emphasizes how “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). The social constructive view fits nicely with this particular research study because it asked participants to articulate how they made meaning of the work environment given the changed strategy that called for an entrepreneurial approach to all college operations. The point of the research was to understand
participants’ individual experiences by asking general, open-ended questions and letting the participant do most of the talking.

It is important to highlight the ways in which this research was purposefully limited in order to conduct a meaningful research process. The organization chosen was deliberate due to the researcher’s historical knowledge of the culture and community and because of the ease of access to information. In addition, the number of people who were interviewed was scaled back; the purpose was merely to gain a snapshot of the organization through the voices of a few representatives. By limiting the number of one-on-one interviews, the researcher was restricted in what can be generalized about the research questions that were considered. However, these limitations also created great opportunities for future research.

The above outlined research approach stresses that understanding an individual’s actual experiences can only happen by engaging in some way with the individuals involved (Ponterotto, 2005). Given the fact that much of the information collected in this research relied on the views, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors of the employees involved in and experiencing the change, it seemed appropriate to use the constructivist approach as the foundation. Even further, the fact that the researcher’s role on campus allowed the ability to experience the change alongside the potential participants was critical as well. Having a methodology that allowed flexibility is essential in an entrepreneurially minded organization such as Babson College.

**Key Terms/Definitions**

*Babson College Mission Statement:* Babson College educates entrepreneurial leaders who create great economic and social value…everywhere; to do so, we want to be the preeminent institution for entrepreneurial thought and action…and known for it; and we want to embrace people, planet, and profit issues simultaneously, not sequentially (Babson College, 2013).
Babson College Vision Statement: We want to be the preeminent institution in the world for Entrepreneurial Thought and Action®—and known for it. We want to expand the notion of entrepreneurship to embrace and celebrate entrepreneurs of all kinds. We want to put the power of entrepreneurship as a force for economic and social value creation in as many hands in the world as we can (Babson College, 2013).

Entrepreneurship: “The process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic, and social risks, and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction and independence” (as cited in Arthur & Hisrich, 2011).

Sensemaking: Reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs (Weick, 1995).

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following section serves as a review of the recent literature related to the research topic outlined above. The purpose of the review was to examine and highlight existing research related to this study in order to support and justify the direction that was undertaken. More specifically, the review was structured in an attempt to offer the reader a view of recent work focusing on entrepreneurship in both an educational setting as well as a non-educational setting. In addition, the topic of sensemaking is covered to provide a foundation of the theoretical framework that was utilized. This section concludes with a discussion about the context for the current research, offering the reader critical information about the importance of the work that was undertaken. As previously mentioned, there are numerous articles and research in recent years that have focused on the concept of entrepreneurship in some form. In fact, research on the topic of entrepreneurship is seemingly endless, spanning many years and industry types. Even
further, the manner in which the concept of entrepreneurship is applied in the research is also quite diverse. For instance, one may consider reviewing research that investigates the traits that lead to successful entrepreneurs (Arthur & Hisrich, 2011; Baum & Locke, 2004) or one may choose to understand what the literature says about the importance of infusing entrepreneurship into student education (Hannon, 2006). On the other hand, one may investigate the data that supports faculty entrepreneurialism (Lee & Rhoads, 2004). Because of the abundance of research related to entrepreneurship it is important to make the direction of this particular research study clear at the outset.

For the purposes of this work, the broad topic of entrepreneurship has been narrowed down to focus on research articles that highlight the use of entrepreneurship in a way that attempts to create or encourage some form of change. In order to understand this topic, a comprehensive critique of scholarly literature was undertaken in an attempt to present the breadth of literature that exists related to the topic of entrepreneurial thought and action. This evaluation includes a thorough review of applicable studies; consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of the research reviewed; and highlights of the key arguments that are found in the field.

In order to further illustrate the current research and its link to the present study, this literature includes the following sections: first, a review of research on entrepreneurship and how this concept is leveraged in various ways within both educational settings and other organizations; and, second, research focusing on the theory of sensemaking and how this concept has been used in research taking place in various organizations.

Entrepreneurship
As mentioned earlier, the world of higher education has become increasingly competitive in recent years. This movement is, in large part, attributed to changes in the economy that have been impacted by technology, cost of living concerns, and the movement of jobs to foreign countries, among others (Arthur & Hisrich, 2011; Johnson & Kasarda, 2008; Mayhew, Simonoff, Baumol, Wiesenfeld, & Klein, 2012; Nejad et al., 2012). The impact of this economic change has dramatically altered the business of higher education (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). In the past, institutions may have been able to survive without operating any differently than competitor schools but that has dramatically changed (Eckel & Kezar, 2003). The present state of higher education is a highly competitive and constantly changing landscape that is challenging to manage and understand. The challenges that the world of higher education has faced in recent years have led to increased discussion on how individual institutions can remain competitive while working in an environment that offers fewer resources. As a result, research is surfacing that discusses the importance of innovation and entrepreneurship in higher education.

**Entrepreneurship in Education.** Concerns evolving from a rapidly changing economy have fueled discussions focused on the importance of education. Now, more than ever, education is in the spotlight. Interestingly, the attention on education is expanding to include not only K-12 and higher education but workplace and lifelong continuous learning (Duderstadt, 2009). Even as far back as 2005, the concept of a changing world that requires innovative thinking was emerging. Seline (2005/06) highlighted the changing role of human capital and concluded that there needs to be an awareness directed at countries that spend substantial funds “creating environments where experiential learning and continuous education are considered the competitive advantage” (p. 41). The emphasis is on education but the author alludes to the fact that education impacts future talent and leaders in the business world.
Johnson & Kasarda (2008) indicate that there are three major structural changes needed to stay competitive in research and development in the higher education environment. Two of the three structural changes highlighted focus on being more outwardly-focused and entrepreneurial in areas such as economic growth and job creation, cross-disciplinary research, and new business development. Although the focus of this discussion is on changing the curriculum to focus more on educating students in “intellectual entrepreneurship,” the authors raise valid points that have implications for the future of higher education. In order to transform the curriculum to become more innovative, higher education administrators, staff, and faculty need to understand and practice what they are teaching. This shift will require organizational members to be able to think and act entrepreneurially alongside students.

Similarly, Mayhew et al. (2012) focused on students and the practices and experiences that lead to innovative entrepreneurial intentions. The authors concluded that people who emphasize new ideas and push to make them a reality play a significant role in economic growth. The authors concluded that it is the responsibility of educators to focus on innovative entrepreneurship and related practices because this attention shift will support economic growth and improvement. Again, this study was geared towards entrepreneurship education but highlighted concepts that could be beneficial for higher education administrators to explore further.

Hannon (2006) discussed four specific reasons why entrepreneurship has been deliberately inserted into all levels of education in the last number of years. One articulated reason highlights the institution and how entrepreneurial thought can provide numerous positive outcomes. These positive outcomes included, but are in no way limited to: competitive edge, capacity building, and discovery of new funding sources. Another result discussed the idea that
educational entrepreneurship provides both opportunity and challenges in an effort to learn, but also requires clarity of purpose. This is important as it illustrates the importance of understanding when engaging in a process that is driven by innovation and entrepreneurial thought. The discussion continues by detailing the importance of having a philosophical understanding of entrepreneurship theory and as well as considering the importance of educators and their knowledge of the theory and practice they are teaching. The same idea can be applied to administrators in supporting the teaching and practice of entrepreneurship. This article conveys the importance of being aware of how community members are making sense of the charge to be entrepreneurial in thought and action. If they do not understand the purpose or philosophy behind the strategic direction, how can they understand the role they play in the process?

Beyond the curriculum, discussion of the practice of entrepreneurship has concentrated on the faculty role as well. Research studying the role of faculty entrepreneurialism exists and highlights the positive aspects of this practice including the potential for increased revenue streams, institutional recognition, and new opportunities that may not have been otherwise available previously (Lee & Rhoads, 2004). On the other hand, criticism also exists as to whether allowing faculty to focus on entrepreneurial activities takes away from the business mission of educating students (Lee & Rhoads, 2004). However, what if the mission of the educational institution is to educate students about entrepreneurship? Would the positive aspects of faculty entrepreneurialism hold true for staff entrepreneurialism as well? It is because of this expanded application of entrepreneurship that it is important to understand how employees can learn to make sense of a strategy that requires more entrepreneurial and innovative thinking. Even more importantly, with the focus on educating in a more innovative way, it becomes
imperative that research begins to focus on the role that administrators, staff, and faculty play in this new strategic direction.

**Entrepreneurship in Non-Educational Settings.** Previous research has considered the relationship between entrepreneurship and strategy but the focus seems to be limited to specific industries such as manufacturing and hospitality (Li et al., 2009). According to Li et al. (2009), strategic planning has been identified as an influential factor in either supporting or limiting entrepreneurship in larger organizations. If this is the case, it would be useful to understand whether the same relationship is true in different industries, such as higher education, and whether the size of the organization impacted the results. The findings of this empirical study highlighted the opportunities for future research which included exploring options for rewarding and supporting the entrepreneurial behavior of employees.

Despite the limitations on research related specifically to entrepreneurial strategy spanning multiple industries, there are still existing studies that provide insight into this topic. Engle, Mah, & Sadri (1997) discussed the importance of employees who are entrepreneurial in nature. The authors note the importance of entrepreneurial activity for future growth and success. The discussion focused on the use of intrapreneurs (people practicing entrepreneurship within an organization) as the best strategy for future success (Engle et al., 1997).

Whereas there are numerous studies that consider entrepreneurship in the for-profit world, there appear to be fewer articles that highlight the role of entrepreneurship in the not-for-profit arena (Morris et al., 2007). Morris et al. (2007) address this gap by considering whether the concept of entrepreneurship has a worthwhile place in the not-for-profit sector and conclude that there is, in fact, a significant role for entrepreneurship and the work environment plays a role. For instance, having an environment “where mistakes are treated as learning opportunities,
individual initiative is encouraged, the emphasis is on excellence, people go out of the way for the good of the team, and there is a continuous search for ways to improve operations, will tend to generate higher levels of entrepreneurship” (p. 28). However, employees must understand the environment they work within and be able to make sense of their role in order for both the employee and the organization to benefit.

**Sensemaking**

Change is often difficult, especially in organizations such as higher education where tradition is a deep-rooted and meaningful part of the culture and community. However, it has been noted a number of times that higher education has become increasingly competitive and, as such, has created the need for constant--but thoughtful--change. This need for change and the competitive nature of the situation has led many organizations to strive to become more innovative and entrepreneurial in thought and action, as outlined above. Still, becoming entrepreneurial is only one piece of the solution; it is something else entirely to figure out whether people are actually making sense of the change itself. Even further, if people are making sense of the change, it becomes just as important to understand how they are doing so in order to confirm whether it aligns with the organizational strategy.

Although this particular research did not focus on the change process, the concept of change is at the core of the discussion. More specifically, in the last few years, the strategic direction of the college has changed to focus on the education of entrepreneurial leaders. As a result of this new strategic direction, the college leadership has established new expectations from community members which include encouraging employees to think and act entrepreneurially while working. Similarly, the literature around sensemaking also tends to center around some aspect of change. One article broadly applies Weick’s work on sensemaking
into considering the metaphor as a method for establishing common understanding of an organizational change process (Tyler, 2005). The concept in this discussion highlights the importance of shared understanding and the ability to make sense of the environment before moving forward with additional changes. Another article focused on creating a framework for institutional change utilizing a case study of six institutions. One of the findings in this research study notes the importance of sensemaking when organizations are developing strategies for transformational change (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). In fact, institutions that encouraged some form of sensemaking saw more positive movement towards the anticipated change (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). As a result, the authors suggest that more research needs to be undertaken to address the role of sensemaking during the change process on college campuses. This idea for future research ties in well with the focus of this particular research study.

Yeo & Li (2013) explored the concept of sensemaking by focusing on how employees make sense of their work environment as it relates to learning. Utilizing a qualitative approach, the authors applied a conceptual framework with multiple components, including the concept of sensemaking. For the purposes of this research, the authors considered sensemaking as it relates to work life in three parts: evaluative sensemaking, subjective interpretation, and objective judgment. The findings indicated a number of tangible and intangible elements that support an employee’s ability to make sense of their work-life quality including communication, resources, and environment.

Kezar (2013) attempts to understand the role that sensemaking has in the change process by utilizing data from previous research. With a focus on organizational sensemaking/sensegiving a case study was conducted to understand how the process of sensemaking and transformational change impact one another over time. What was uncovered
indicated that institutions engaging in sensemaking and sensegiving were more successful in moving towards transformational change than those not engaging in the two processes. Even further, there were three key elements outlined that contributed to this success, one of which included the connection to strategies. This outcome highlights the importance of the relationship between strategy and sensemaking in a college environment that is attempting change.

Earlier work by Eckel & Kezar (2003) explored the most effective strategic approach when considering a transformational change. Even then, the role of sensemaking was critical and understanding how to infuse sensemaking into the change process was the focus of the study. There appears to be a significant gap in research on sensemaking in higher education as it relates to change. Given this gap, it is imperative to take the time to understand how employees go through the process of making sense of a major change such as a newly focused strategic direction. Beyond the obvious benefit this research will have, another noteworthy result of creating a strategy that fosters and supports more entrepreneurial thinking and action is the increased potential for businesses to choose to invest in higher education programs, which clearly has a positive impact on the economy (Kezar, 2013).

**Context for Current Research**

At Babson College, entrepreneurship is already both the foundation and the core of the institution and its approach to education. However, Babson’s leaders plan to expand in such a way that the practice of entrepreneurship becomes infused throughout all aspects of how the organization operates, no matter the person or the role. With the introduction of an innovative mission in 2009 that will lead Babson College to be the preeminent institution for entrepreneurial thought and action, it is clear that all community members are expected to contribute to this goal. What is not as clear is how community members are expected to support the new direction on a
daily basis. In addition, it is just as unclear whether those employees who understand the
direction of the college feel supported when attempting to think and act differently, a process
which may challenge the status quo. And even if an employee understands how to support the
college and feels empowered to do so…is there time to think creatively when many at the
institution feel challenged by a lack of resources and may not want to take chances because
doing so may set one back and create more work?

Regardless of the concerns noted above, the expectation still exists that all employees
will support the institutional mission, even if it is not explicitly discussed. Because of this
expectation, shortly after the introduction of the altered mission in 2009, then President Len
Schlesinger and the Provost called for a taskforce consisting of mostly faculty and a few staff
fellows to consider the pedagogical frameworks for Entrepreneurial Thought and Action along
with People, Planet, and Profits (Babson College, 2010). In order to address the President’s
questions, the task force looked to fellow faculty members for input and answers. Feedback
from colleagues was gathered using interview questions that were designed specifically to offer
insight into how faculty understood the aforementioned concepts, among other topics, and how
these concepts played out in individual classrooms. In the end, twenty-seven faculty members
were interviewed and three themes were identified and discussed as opportunities for the faculty
to consider. One challenge that was raised as a result of this research was the fact that “[Babson]
does not share a common language that highlights for faculty, the students, and our external
audiences how these different ideas are connected and central to our curriculum” (Babson
College, 2010, p. 48). This point should not be overlooked as it alludes to a lack of togetherness
in the College’s educational approach. If the people teaching the concepts critical to the
College’s mission are not working together it is hard to confidently state that everyone is fully understanding and making sense of the vision.

Beyond the concerns noted above by the task force, just as concerning is the group’s lack of reference to the role of staff employees, a major weakness of the research paper. The white paper specifically points out the lack of common language among students, faculty, and external audiences but does not mention staff specifically. Although the faculty has primary responsibility for designing, developing, and delivering the curriculum, staff employees of the institution play a critical role in supporting the students and faculty in this effort. If the faculty is not working together with other faculty and is ignoring the role of the staff, how is it possible that the college community can move forward? Internal discussions have focused mostly on the faculty view of supporting the college’s mission but a real lack of attention has been paid to the staff. It is because of this gap in internal research and discussion that it becomes critical for this study to understand how staff is making sense of the altered mission.

Summary

As mentioned earlier, the concept of entrepreneurship is not a new one. In the literature reviewed it is clear that there is significant research focusing on this concept. However, despite the abundance of research, there appears to be a substantial gap as well. More specifically, there does not seem to be significant recent research on organizations attempting to utilize the concept of entrepreneurship as a strategic focus and approach to daily work. Even further, existing research that does focus on organizations attempting to infuse entrepreneurial-like strategies lack discussion around how employees make sense of this model. It seems that this gap could begin to be addressed through the research outlined in this current study which offers a much needed contribution to an ever evolving topic. This is especially true given the discussion that the world
has become increasingly competitive, a phenomenon that has been identified as having a serious impact on the higher education community as well. Given that organizations, including higher education institutions, are being forced to resort to more innovative ways of operating it becomes vital to ensure that organizational members are able to understand and contribute to the vision in a meaningful way. If organizational members are not making sense of an environment that demands creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurial thought and action the organization itself could suffer.

At Babson College, attempts have been made to align the faculty with the current mission but there is a lack of effort focused on helping the staff accomplish these goals. Faculty and staff are part of the same community and are charged with educating future leaders and entrepreneurs. In order to be the preeminent institution for entrepreneurial thought and action, both faculty and staff need to work together and understand the critical role they play in propelling the institution toward its goals. This research attempted to begin to level the playing field by offering the leaders of the college insight into how staff is making sense of the college’s mission. The results of this work offer opportunities for leadership to better understand the gaps in understanding that currently exist among the staff. According to Keifer & Schlesinger (2010), “action trumps everything” and this research attempted to take action on a glaring gap in the literature.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

Now that the direction of the research has been identified through the literature review above it is important to help the reader understand how the research was actually accomplished. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the general approach that was
taken in this study including detailed information about the methodology, data collection, design, and analysis process. In addition, this chapter discusses the role of the researcher and any bias that should be highlighted.

**Methodology**

A descriptive case study (Creswell, 2012) using qualitative methods was used for this doctoral thesis. The case study approach allows researchers to explore the contextual factors impacting the nature of the phenomenon, organizational sensemaking, which highlights the role of environmental cues.

**Overall Plan**

The descriptive case study using qualitative methods utilized multiple sources in the field in order to extrapolate insights about organizational sensemaking. The study used the following research question to guide the inquiry: How do organizational members make sense of the intentional change to become an entrepreneurial-focused institution? This question was addressed by considering how middle managers describe shifts in the nature of their work in an effort to make sense of the newest mission of the college. The research explored the contextual factors via document review, the nature of interactions through observations, and the perceptions of the meaning-making process through semi-structured interviews.

Earlier in the discussion, an outline of the assumptions and limitations were highlighted providing insight into the various philosophical assumptions of this research study. These assumptions noted the fact that one-on-one interviews were used to provide quotes and responses directly from participants about the topic investigated as well as the fact that the researcher had a pre-existing relationship with the research site, Babson College, and the employees being
studied. Given the one-on-one nature of the interviews, it was determined that the responses would represent personal opinions and beliefs directly from the participants.

The research paradigm for this particular research modeled the constructivist or interpretivist perspective which focuses on the individual’s view of reality. This approach emphasizes that understanding an individual’s actual experiences can only happen by engaging in some way with the individuals involved (Ponterotto, 2005). Given the fact that much of the information collected in this research relied on the views, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors of the employees involved in and experiencing the change in direction, it seemed appropriate to use the constructivist/interpretivist approach as the foundation for this study. Even further, the fact that the researcher’s role on campus allowed the ability to experience the change alongside the potential participants was critical as well.

As described earlier, this research is vital for Babson College as it offered insight into whether the college’s strategy is understood and supported throughout various levels in the organization. Hearing from a number of employees through interviews offered firsthand data on the perception of the strategy and identified and uncovered whether people were, in fact, able to make sense of it through their daily work responsibilities. Three data sources were identified for the purposes of this case study: a review of documents to identify the explicitly stated strategic vision and organizational direction; observations of both operational and strategic meetings in which the entrepreneurial strategy was discussed or explored; and semi-structured interviews with key administrators who serve in roles in which they are exposed to the stated strategic direction and have to deal with the day-to-day operations.

Prior to conducting interviews, a pilot test was conducted with two participants who represented a similar profile to the sample outlined earlier. Going through this process helped
the researcher understand whether the structure of the research made sense and whether the interview questions and technique were working appropriately (Seidman, 2006). Minor adjustments needed to be made to the interview questions and these changes were made prior to collecting the data that was utilized for the data analysis process in this study. The pilot study also allowed the researcher to get comfortable with the data collection process and confirmed that the type of location and time allocated was appropriate. It is important to note again that having a methodology that allowed flexibility was essential in an entrepreneurially minded organization such as Babson College.

**Research Design.** This research was qualitative in nature and was undertaken in an attempt to understand how various employees were able to make sense of an entrepreneurial strategy. As discussed above, the specific design attempted to understand the reaction toward the change in strategic direction, not study the change itself. A qualitative approach worked well in this research because the data collected was in a natural setting focusing on how the people involved in that particular setting reacted to a specific change. The results of this research focused on the voices of the participants which provided richer data than a quantitative approach would have provided. These voices helped the researcher better understand whether the shift in mindset outlined in the strategy was successful. For these reasons, taking a qualitative approach was the most appropriate research design for this particular research.

**Sample Design.** A sampling design of this study was developed in order to create an appropriate and representative approach to sampling the Babson College management population. Babson College was chosen as the research site for two reasons: ease of access due to the role of the researcher and the recent change in strategic direction that had been implemented. The target population was middle managers who had been employed at the
institution since at least 2009; this group of employees was employed by the college during the introduction of the new strategy. Middle managers were described as those employees who were categorized in the managerial or senior managerial salary bands.

Eligible participants noted above were also full-time staff in a permanent, budgeted position (not in a temporary role). This group of employees was all over eighteen years old. For the purpose of this study, union staff members were excluded due to the unique characteristics of a union environment which may have impacted the results of the research. In addition, faculty members were also excluded; the focus of this research was on how staff employees make sense of the entrepreneurial strategy. When selecting the participants for this study, a criterion sampling approach was utilized. This approach worked well because the assumption was that all participants identified in the target population were aware of the change in strategy given their length of employment (since at least 2009). Therefore, this population met the predetermined criteria of having been employed during the changing of the strategic direction of the institution. Please note that the researcher was also excluded from the participant pool. For specific information on the profile of the participant population see Table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Participant Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Babson Population</th>
<th>Study Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52 (57.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>38 (42.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90 (Potential staff in managerial &amp; sr. managerial bands employed since 2009)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The literature advises using no more than four to five case studies in a single study design (Creswell, 2007). For this research, twelve potential participants were contacted and six agreed to participate in the interview process. These six participants were drawn from the same
population above using maximum variation which allowed representation from different cases and perspectives (Creswell, 2007). Of the six participants, three were male and three were female. Three participants were in the senior managerial band and three were in the managerial band. These six participants represented different divisions and departments on campus including: Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Information Technology, the Undergraduate School (two participants from this division), and Executive Education.

**Recruitment and Access.** The researcher applied for permission to study the participants in the project through the institutional review boards at both Babson College and Northeastern University (the institution where the researcher was a doctoral student). None of the research began until approval had been obtained from both institutions. Participants selected to participate in the interviews were determined through the maximum variation approach described earlier (see Research Design section). Outreach to selected individuals for the interview process was in the form of an email that described the research process and asked for a response if the recipient was interested in participating. Selected participants who agreed to participate were provided information about the process and protected as participants of this research (see Protection of Human Subjects section). There were no incentives provided to the participants for their participation.

Given the researcher’s role at the institution, accessing the research site was not a problem. However, because of the fact that the researcher was a Human Resources employee, extra care was taken to assure participants about the confidentiality of their discussions related to the topic of this study.

**Data Collection**
The strategy for data collection consisted of: (a) document review, (b) observations, and (c) one-on-one interviews. In the first phase of data collection, documents (e.g., emails, videos) relevant to the strategic plan and mission of the college as well as strategic updates from the president were reviewed and analyzed to supplement the data that was gathered in the observations and interviews. Information about the process the past president went through when engaging the community in discussion about an updated strategy was also included in the review. In addition, documents in which the current president indicates support of the strategy were gathered from the Babson College website. A formal process for reviewing and analyzing these documents was followed (see Appendix C). This data is public information and did not require the same privacy protection as the other data gathered in this research.

The second component of data collection included observations of both operational and strategic meetings in which the strategy was discussed or explored. It was assumed that accessing some of these meetings would present a challenge due to the confidential nature of the items typically discussed at the leadership level. The goal was to attend three to five separate meetings, including the provost’s leadership team meeting and the Human Resources management team meeting. In order to gain access to leadership meetings, outreach to six senior leaders took place via email. Of the six contacted, five senior leaders responded with their willingness to help. However, due to the timing of some of the upcoming meetings, only two meetings ended up being included in the data collection: the Development Leadership Team Meeting and Human Resources Leadership Team meeting. The researcher acted as a participant observer in the Human Resources Leadership Team meeting.

The third and final component of data collection included one-on-one interviews. In order to secure participants for the interview portion of the data collection, twelve participants
identified through the selection process noted above were contacted via email. Of those twelve, six indicated a willingness to participate in the research. A hard copy of an informed consent document was given to interviewees for review and signature prior to the interview (see Protection of Human Subjects section). Interviews were scheduled for one hour but were often completed before the full hour had passed. The interviews took place in the interviewees’ offices at a time and day that was convenient to them. The interview was semi-structured and utilized a previously designed interview protocol (see Appendix B) and was recorded with a digital voice recorder (Sony IC Recorder). Interviews were transcribed by a paid, confidential third party, Rev.com. A copy of the interviews, transcriptions, and coding was stored on the researcher’s password protected computer. In addition, a back-up copy of this data was saved on a portable drive; the researcher was the only one who had access to this drive. Participants’ identity was protected by using pseudonyms chosen by each participant in the data; only one participant asked the researcher to assign a pseudonym for her. The original transcriptions, interview files, and coding of transcripts stored on the researcher’s computer and back-up portable drives will be destroyed upon completion of the research.

**Research Tradition.** A number of theorists have been involved in the history of the case study methodology including well-known names such as Robert E. Yin and Robert Stake (Creswell, 2007). In 1992, Jennifer Platt looked at the history of case studies and found that the concept can be traced back to the early twentieth century (Platt, 1992). However, Platt indicates that the 1980s seemed to focus more on the case study method as an acceptable approach to research than in earlier years. It seems apparent that the introduction of case study research by Robert Yin in the early eighties seems to have re-focused attention on this method as a potential and acceptable research approach (Platt, 1992).
Creswell (2007) describes the case study approach as one in which the researcher is focused on understanding an issue within a bounded system(s) over some defined time period utilizing detailed and multiple forms of data collection. Given that the emphasis of this research was focused on exploring a specific issue (i.e., whether the new strategy impacts the way in which people work) within a bounded system (Babson College) using multiple data sources (e.g., document review, observations, and interviews) it was appropriate to employ the case study as the methodological approach. The various interviewees allowed for better insight into the meaning making experience of the individuals involved with, and impacted by, the organizational change process taking place through the introduction of a new, entrepreneurial focused strategy. The data from this case study helped describe the activities of the various participants impacted by the change in mindset as well as identified shared differences in behavior that have surfaced since the change has been implemented.

**Overall Plan.** As outlined above, there were three different phases of data collection that took place during this research: a review of documents to identify the explicitly stated strategic vision and organizational direction; observations of both operational and strategic meetings in which the entrepreneurial strategy was discussed or explored; and interviews with key administrators who serve in roles in which they are exposed to the stated strategic direction and required to deal with the day-to-day operations. Within each of the phases there were three steps that were followed which included: (1) data collection; (2) an analysis of the data collected; and (3) an interpretation of the data analyzed. Table 3.2 summarizes the process and a description of the detailed process follows below.

When embarking on a review of documents, the first step was to thoroughly review the Office of the President’s website which has a section dedicated to the strategic plan. Within this
section there was information about the direction of the college in 2008, how it changed in 2009, and strategic updates for 2009-2012. In addition, there was access to the president’s “State of the College” speech in both 2010 and 2011. Second, outreach was made to the president’s chief of staff to request any paper documents, memos, and videos related to the college’s strategy dated from 2009 to the current day. Finally, outreach was made to the Babson Magazine department to request copies of its quarterly publications dating back to 2009. Once all the pertinent documents were gathered, the researcher reviewed each, taking notes and highlighting the areas where there was mention of the role of staff in the strategy. This information supplemented the information collected in the interviews and helped illustrate areas of alignment between the stated strategy and the process by which middle managers were making sense of that strategy.

When originally considering which different groups to observe it was important to consider ease of access as well as which groups were more likely to have meetings that included discussion of the strategic direction of the College. More specifically, for those departments or leaders that are in a role that requires them to lead and support the strategic efforts, the assumption was that they would discuss and actively work towards supporting the strategy on a daily basis. Initially, the three departments that were identified as fitting the above criteria were: Human Resources management team; the Provost & Senior Vice President’s leadership team; and the Social Innovation Lab Lewis Institute. However, the Provost’s leader never responded to the request to be included in this research and the Lewis Institute’s meeting was cancelled. Because of this, the researcher outreached to a number of additional leadership groups to observe but only one group agreed to the observation during the data collection time period. Of the two groups observed, one was observed twice (Human Resources) and one was observed once (Development). During the observations, notes were taken highlighting each occurrence when
the role of staff in the strategy was mentioned. This information was used to support the findings from the interviews.

Finally, in the last phase of data collection, the interviews took place. Six employees who have been employed at the institution since at least 2009 were included; these employees were selected through a purposeful sampling of a cross section of middle managers which provided a representative sample of the population. The interviews took place after the document review, but at the same time the observations were taking place. The interviews took place at a location that was convenient to the participant and took no more than an hour. The specific questions that were asked can be found in the interview protocol in Appendix B. The questions utilized in the interview were developed based on each of the stages in Weick’s sensemaking process in order to probe the participants on how they are making sense of the strategic direction of the organization. These questions based on Weick’s theory will directly inform the research question at hand.

Table 3.2
Summary of Data Collection Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review of documents</td>
<td>Gathered past memos, videos, announcements and other strategy documents dating back to 2009.</td>
<td>Took notes; highlighted areas where the role of staff was discussed.</td>
<td>Noted relationship between publicized documents and interview results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>Observed two different leadership meetings; took notes.</td>
<td>Highlighted areas where leaders discussed or alluded to the strategy.</td>
<td>Noted areas where the groups are, and are not, utilizing the strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Interviewed six employees; recorded conversation.</td>
<td>Transcribed data; coded; developed themes.</td>
<td>Noted how themes that emerged relate back to research question, literature, and theoretical framework.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Document Review.** The data collection process began with the documents reviewed in Phase I. Documents reviewed include memos, videos, announcements, and any additional documentation that related to the current strategy dating back to 2009. Selection criteria included any document that referenced the role of staff in support of the strategic direction of the college. By reviewing and analyzing these documents, the researcher gained a rich history of the strategic process undertaken during the introduction of the new strategy. Although the researcher was also an employee during the strategic process in 2009, this review reminded the researcher about the information that had been shared previously, but this time through the lens of a researcher rather than an employee. Even further, the document review helped the researcher understand how the role of staff in the college strategy has been communicated, or not, in subsequent years following the creation of the new strategic direction. The researcher reviewed documents and took notes, highlighting items that related to the role of staff in the strategy. The questions created for the interviews included language from the strategy documents as well as incorporated ideas and concepts from Weick’s seven properties of sensemaking in order to establish a link with the original research question.

**Observations**

The second phase of data collection focused on onsite observations. The purpose of the observations was to gain an understanding of how a sample of college leadership was incorporating the strategy into departmental objectives and discussion. For the observations, the goal was to find three to five groups to participate. However, due to a number of logistic factors, only two meetings were included in this portion of the data collection process. The selection criteria utilized was convenience sampling due to access issues. Although the researcher had
familiarity with the site and was able to outreach directly to department heads it is assumed that the role of the researcher at the college created some concerns for some leaders given confidentiality issues and potential conflicts. Although the selection of the specific groups for observation saved time and effort, it raised a question around credibility.

During the observations, the researcher noted when the participants in the meetings referenced the strategy and how they are making sense of it according to Weick’s sensemaking theory. The researcher acted as a participant observer and noted sensemaking properties, relevant quotes, and documented interaction. Information was only captured when it was related to the topic under investigation. These meetings were not recorded. After the meetings, the notes were reviewed and initial identification of the common themes was highlighted.

**Interviews**

In Phase III of the data collection, one-on-one interviews were conducted. As the critical component of the data collection process, the interviews were designed to provide detailed and rich descriptions of how employees were making sense of the college strategy, thus informing the research question. Staff selected to participate in the interview process were drawn from the population outlined earlier with a total of six participants included in the final conclusions. The interviews were scheduled for sixty minutes; none of them exceeded this allotted time. The interview process was taped and stored on a digital voice recorder that was uploaded to the researcher’s computer files. Access to the researcher’s computer was password protected so that only the researcher could access the information and confidentiality could be maintained. In addition, a back-up copy was saved on a portable drive in the researcher’s possession in case the computer files were lost or corrupted. The data from the interviews was transcribed by a third party, Rev.com. Once the transcriptions were completed, the researcher reviewed and took
general notes. After an initial analysis, the researcher reviewed the transcriptions a second time to create a participant profile. Interview transcriptions and any information that was eventually coded were stored on the researcher’s computer.

All paper documents (interview notes, coding notes, and documents) were stored with the researcher and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the dissertation process. Upon completion of the research, the informed consent documents will be kept for three years.

**Data Analysis.** Miles & Huberman (1984) discuss the fact that qualitative data was historically focused in the social sciences and the like, but note that in recent years this research approach is showing up more often in educational research and organizational studies, among others. Despite the fact that qualitative methods are becoming more prevalent, there are still many researchers who question the validity and reliability of this approach. Yin (2003) argues that the analysis process specifically for case studies is not well-defined. Given the lack of definition on how to specifically analyze case study data, and the fact that qualitative methods are still looked at with a skeptical eye by some, it was important to define the analysis process clearly and upfront before the data collection process began. Although different software programs can assist in the coding and patterns to be analyzed, it was important to have a strategy for analyzing the data rather than relying on tools that may not have provided the specific output required for an accurate discussion of results.

Miles & Huberman (1984) outlined three approaches to qualitative data analysis which include: interpretivism, social anthropology, and collaborative social research. Over time, extensive research, and three editions of their book, the authors identify a core number of common features that they argue should accompany the qualitative data analysis process: assigning codes or themes to various collected data; identifying and isolating similar phrases and
patterns; making notes and reflections; interpreting the information; and making generalizations (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The data collected in qualitative research is unique given that it is often naturally occurring, is seen as rich in description, and provides meaning to what is being questioned. However, in order to conduct a meaningful and respected qualitative study, the data analysis process must be clearly outlined.

For the purpose of this research, the data analysis process that was utilized followed the work of Miles et al. (2014) by incorporating the common features of the data exploration process referred to above with their suggested view of qualitative analysis activities: data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions (pp. 12-14). First, an initial analysis of the collected data took place, pulling together and focusing the data (data condensation). This included looking for similarities, relationships, and any themes/patterns that emerged. Next an analysis of the information discovered was undertaken utilizing the research questions outlined earlier. This information was arranged in a way that allowed the researcher to understand what was occurring and provided a foundation for next steps (data display). The first steps were to aggregate findings across each individual case study by creating a coding scheme and placing all the codes into a table for easy viewing. By placing the data in a table format, it was easier to start to see patterns that emerged from the cases and allowed the researcher to draw cross-case conclusions about the study (Yin, 2003). The coding approach was a combination of initial and in vivo coding for the first-cycle analysis. After the first-cycle was completed, the researcher began the second-cycle analysis using the information from the first-cycle process. Finally, the data was interpreted based both on the literature as well as Weick’s framework. From this thorough analysis, conclusions were drawn, limitations discussed, and ideas for future research were outlined (drawing and verifying conclusions).
**Trustworthiness.** As an employee of the institution that is being studied, the researcher brought prolonged engagement and observation in the field which can assist in understanding the data that is being reviewed. In addition, the researcher’s history and the previously defined relationships bring trust, credibility, and an understanding of the people and the culture of the organization. However, this knowledge could have also impacted the results of the study, so additional methods must be utilized in order to ensure trustworthiness of the data. First, triangulation was supported through the variety of data collected (i.e., observations, interviews, and documents) in order to corroborate findings. In addition, after an initial analysis of the data, member checking took place in order to ensure that the researcher built credibility and that the views and responses of the participants were reliably captured. More specifically, interview participants received a copy of the transcription to review. Only one participant noted minor changes while the remaining participants indicating that the transcription was accurate. In addition, specific descriptions accompany the transcriptions outlining the participant (see participant profiles) and the setting in order to provide a solid platform for transferability of findings. Although utilizing a peer review to enhance the trustworthiness of the study was considered it was determined that it was not feasible. Because of this, more than two of the validation strategies outlined by Creswell (2007) were employed to strengthen the reliability and validity of the results.

As mentioned above, a concern was raised relative to researcher bias given the researcher’s role and tenure at the institution that was studied. The researcher has preexisting beliefs related to the research question under discussion and as such worked hard to maintain objectivity for the purposes of this study. Being a part of the community that openly discussed the new strategy and being a staff member in Human Resources allowed access to information
that is not accessible to the regular employee. This knowledge could have impacted and shaped interpretation of the data collected. In addition, there are several threats to internal validity that need to be discussed. First, the various participants in this study have diversity in background, age, gender, years of service, among other items; these differences could have seriously impacted the results if the focus was solely on interview responses. Because of these difference, the observations were conducted in an attempt to support the findings in the interviews. However, having only two meetings included in the observation process limited the attempt to strengthen the validity of the data. Second, events occurred naturally internally as daily business operations were conducted that may have highlighted information related to the focus of this study leading participants to respond in a way they may not have otherwise in the absence of the event(s). Even further, the recent change in leadership definitely impacted the results of this research given that the original strategy being studied was developed by the former college president. Finally, the specific participants selected for the interviews may have impacted the results.

This particular research study was structured in such a way that replication could be easily attempted. Not only is this the type of work that could be considered at other organizations with a newly introduced strategy supporting the concept of entrepreneurship but more work could be done internally at the college as well. In order to strengthen the data it would be beneficial to speak to more staff and even consider the input of faculty and union employees as well. Even further, conducting a longitudinal study looking at how employees make sense of the strategy over time would be interesting. It is clear that this study creates a solid foundation for future research of its kind.

**Protection of Human Subjects.** The research undertaken at Babson College included staff members of the institution who are all legal adults over the age of eighteen. Participation in
the study offered no known risk to the participants. The one potential vulnerable population was the participants being interviewed given the dual role of the researcher. The researcher has an obligation to act if any of the interviewees had shared information with the researcher (a Babson College Human Resources professional) that violated college policy or placed a community member in harm. However, given the focus of this research this situation did not arise. The only other potential risk was if interviewees were unclear on the strategy and felt unable to answer the questions; this may have resulted in employees feeling embarrassed or uncomfortable given the role of the researcher at the institution. In order to address this concern, the researcher provided the interviewee with a copy of the current strategy, as well as relevant strategic updates for their reference before and during the interview process. All of the participants were able to respond to the questions asked.

Before commencing data collection, an application for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was submitted that outlined detailed information about the research process. No work began until approval was granted by the Babson College IRB as well as the Northeastern University IRB. Specific information about the informed consent process and ethical considerations/confidentiality is outlined below.

A hard copy of an informed consent document was given to interviewees for review and signature prior to the interview (see Appendix A). Prior to beginning the interview, a review and discussion of the research study took place which explained to participants why they were selected to participate, how much time was required, as well as the benefits and risks involved with participation. This review took place in order to reassure the interviewee of the process and purpose of the research and to avoid any ethical issues or concerns. In addition, it was discussed that the interviews were to be recorded and transcribed, and that their identity would not be
matched to their responses in the results; only the researcher would have access to this information and that it was to be kept confidential.

Interviewees were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could stop participating at any time. Contact information was provided in case any questions arose before, during, or after the research process. This signed document was kept with the researcher and a copy was offered to participants for their records. Finally, the participants were reminded that the researcher was acting as a student researcher and not a Human Resources employee for the purpose of the interview discussion.

Summary

The three chapters outlined above provide an introduction to the study conducted at Babson College. The participants were not negatively impacted by participation and the rich, detailed transcriptions of responses provided critical information about the research question that was considered. The researcher had a unique role at the research site allowing ease of access and trust as the researcher engaged as a participant observer during the data collection process. The results of this work provide an opportunity for additional research at the college as well as the ability to replicate this work at another organization.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this descriptive, qualitative case study was to gain insight into how organizational members at Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts were making sense about the intentional change to become an entrepreneurial focused institution. More specifically, this research focused on a cross-section of middle managers responsible for understanding and
infusing the new strategic direction into their daily operations in an attempt to understand how (or if) these managers were making sense of the change. The participants selected were all managers who had been employed by the college since at least 2009 when the introduction of the new strategy took place. There were eighty-eight managers who had been with the institution since at least 2009. Of these eighty-eight eligible participants, two participated in the pilot study and thus were excluded as eligible participants for the research and conclusions presented in this paper. Over ten invitations were sent out to request participation in this study but due to non-response, timing issues, and an unwillingness to participate after reading the study requirements, a total of six participants agreed to take part in this study.

The objective of this research study was to answer one overarching research question:

**How do organizational members make sense of the intentional change to become an entrepreneurial-focused institution?**  
This primary question was guided by the secondary question: How do middle managers describe shifts in the nature of their work in an effort to make sense of the newest mission of the college? The purpose of this chapter is to review the research findings relative to the aforementioned questions using Weick’s sensemaking theory as a lens. This chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, an overview of the data analysis process is explained in detail. In the second section, a description of the research site is offered. In the third section, the participant profiles are presented and a summary of individual findings is discussed. In the final section, a report of the overarching themes is presented.

**Data Analysis**

The interview data analysis process in this study followed the approach defined by Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2014). Namely, these authors describe the data analysis process as three concurrent pieces: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.
**Data Condensation.** In this first step of the analysis process, the goal is to tighten the data that has been collected, in other words, “the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data that appear in the full corpus (body) of written-up field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials. By condensing, we’re making the data *stronger*” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014, p. 12). The first step of data condensation that was taken in this research study was a complete review of all six interview transcripts without taking any notes in an attempt to get familiar with the data without the pressure of trying to uncover early themes. Once the researcher reviewed each transcript, each interview was re-read and a summary of the interview was created for each time period (i.e., 2009, 2014, and 2019) that was discussed (see Appendix E for the interview summaries). The summaries helped condense the data by pulling out key responses to each question.

Next, each transcript was read again but this time the researcher highlighted key phrases, terms, and/or quotes which were then captured directly on the transcript utilizing the in vivo coding process. The use of in vivo coding was applicable because it is known as being an appropriate approach for most qualitative studies, especially those that look to capture the voices of participants (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). In this first attempt at coding the data, just over six hundred codes/phrases were identified. After eliminating duplicate codes/phrases from the first round of coding, the researcher re-read fresh, unmarked copies of the transcripts for another round of coding. This second round of coding was compared to the first round in order to verify initial findings. Emerging from the two rounds of coding were fifteen initial themes which are displayed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

*First Round of Themes*

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<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial strategy made sense and was not surprising; logical extension to existing brand.</td>
<td>More of everything: Action, confidence, conversation, workload, etc.</td>
<td>Different delivery methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Felt relief and excitement but struggled to translate it into daily work.</td>
<td>Strategy, culture, or both?</td>
<td>Financial Impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anything was possible, more meaningful conversations began to emerge and work process included more experimentation.</td>
<td>Different way of thinking: Act, translate, take risks, etc.</td>
<td>Work differently</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work did not change much: Already doing it—just required reframing or the ability to communicate it differently.</td>
<td>Disconnect and uncertainty: Top leadership and senior leaders</td>
<td>Must be able to work, think, and be different - UNIQUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common language which allowed for faster, more intentional acting, reflecting, failing, and trying again.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership acted as a role model in every way (president and other senior leaders).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Awareness &amp; intention: Conversations to actively infuse ET&amp;A into work.</td>
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**Data Display.** In the second step of the data analysis the focus is on displaying the data in an organized and informative way. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) discuss how displaying the data is, in essence, a visual representation of the data in such a way that conclusions can be drawn and action can be taken. In support of this stage of the analysis process, the researcher pulled the data into tables by three different views in an attempt to highlight a smaller number of overarching themes emerging from the data. First, a table was created for each research question and key phrases/responses were captured by individual participants. After this visual was created, the researcher went back to the research question and
created a second visual that supported two overarching themes: employees are working and thinking differently and leadership played a key role in making sense of the mission. This second display highlighted key quotes supporting each overarching conclusion by participants and included the associated in vivo code. The final visual that was created included quotes that acted as key examples of how employees are shifting the way they work in order to support the new strategy. The key quotes captured in this final display were listed next to their corresponding sensemaking property in an attempt to highlight the theoretical lens with which the data was considered (see Appendix G).

**Drawing and Verifying Conclusions.** The final step of the data analysis process led to the drawing and verifying of conclusions. Initial patterns and themes emerged early on as they did in the first two steps of this analysis process, but the final conclusions required some additional review and interpretation of the data. In this research study, the conclusions drawn from the data analysis of the interviews needed to be compared to the information gathered from the leadership meetings observed and the documents gathered throughout the data collection process. Although the analysis process was made up of three individual steps, the analysis process was ongoing and the researcher attempted to condense the data into data displays, finding initial themes and then going back to look at the data in a different display and so on. Although some consistent themes emerged as conclusions of this research study there was much more to consider in the future. The specific conclusions and how they were reached will be discussed in detail below.

**Research Site**

Babson College is a small business school located less than fifteen miles outside of Boston. The college currently has over two thousand undergraduate students and over one
thousand graduate students from more than seventy countries (Babson College, 2014). The college has evolved significantly since it was founded by Roger Babson in 1919 in an attempt to educate young men about business. When the college named Leonard Schlesinger the college president effective July 1, 2008 the environment began to change. President Schlesinger felt the college had not done enough to capitalize on its clear strength: the teaching of entrepreneurship. Because of this, the president took immediate action by undergoing a many month review of the strategic plan with significant community involvement. At the end of this thorough process, a new strategic plan and mission had been developed which called on the college community “to educate entrepreneurial leaders who create economic and social value…everywhere” (Babson College, 2012). Within this overarching mission, three goals were identified: We want to be known as THE educator for Entrepreneurship of All Kinds™; we want to extend our capabilities to the world; and we want to ensure a fully sustainable financial model for the College (Babson College, 2012). These goals were intentionally built by looking back at the work the college had done over the last few years in collaboration with where the institution aspired to go in the future. More importantly, in the strategic update document, the president highlighted another important aspect of the college: its people. It was made clear at this time that without dedication, support, and hard work from the faculty and staff the new mission and strategic direction would not be achievable.

This intentional stating of the new mission and the role of faculty and staff, although exciting, was also seen as a significant change for many employees who had been working for the institution for many years. The college, although still small by anyone’s standards, had achieved world recognition in the teaching of entrepreneurship and had been referred to as “a small school that does ‘big things’” (Babson College, 2014). Because of this significant shift, it
became clear that it was important to understand how managers who were in a position to influence multiple staff in a positive direction were making sense of the new mission.

Interestingly, when this research was conducted, a new president had assumed leadership and although charged with keeping the college on the same strategic path, this transition certainly played a key role in the responses of the six individuals interviewed.

**Participant Profiles**

Part of the data analysis process included reviewing interview transcriptions and compiling a short summary of each participant’s response (see Appendix E). Below is a brief introduction to each of the six managers who participated in this study; the names of participants have been altered to maintain confidentiality.

**Harry.** Harry had been with the college for more than five but less than ten years and had held the same position for the entire time. He worked within the Student Affairs division with his primary role and focus being on the student population. Harry remembered how clearly articulated the strategy had been at the time it was introduced but mentioned that his staff felt that it was just the new buzzword with a new president. He stated:

My staff is thinking…what are we going to have to learn in order to do our jobs differently? And one of the things that I stressed with them was you don’t have to learn anything, you’re already doing it and that’s one of the things that we’ve really championed here in [my department]. It’s just communicating it differently.

Harry’s responses were generally positive as he reflected back to 2009 and discussed where his department was in 2014 relative to the changed strategy. He noted a lot of enthusiasm, as well as support, from both the past president and his various managers over the years and articulated that the environment was more accepting of failure than it had been prior to the strategic change.
Fred. Fred had been with the college for more than ten years and had held a number of different positions during that time. He worked within the Information Technology division and his work supported the entire Babson College community. Fred noted that he reflected more on the strategy presently than he did back in 2009 but described a number of times when he saw a definite change in his work environment at the time that the new strategy was unveiled. He described one example of a more advanced technology as a contrast to the past:

It was the, let’s put something out there, let’s see how it sticks, let’s see what the feedback is, let’s get the information directly from them, let’s take a more agile approach, let’s take a little bit of the approach similar to ET&A. And one of the things that we talk about a lot is that the ET&A approach is pretty much just a rebrand of agile development. So, that was the idea and so we really sort of adopted that alongside while this was all going on and I think it was a great solution, I think it really did work.

Fred described many times how the new strategy felt different and allowed him to see results in a way that his colleagues had not been able to in the past, though he also spoke a number of times about the increased workload resulting from the change.

Nora. Nora had been with the college for more than ten years and had held a few different positions during that time. She worked within the Undergraduate School division with her primary role and focus being on the student population. Nora spoke of the relief and excitement she and others felt when the new strategy was rolled out five years ago. She discussed how she immediately got to work with her team to try to figure out how to infuse these ideas and concepts into their work which is illustrated in the excerpt below:

We sat down and said, “all right, now how do we continue to map this?” But we feel like we are in great shape because we’re already there. It already matched. So that was really
nice. But we did become a lot more, I think, intentional. About how we spoke about it and how we tried to draw the parallel. Because I think the good thing was that this was the first time in a long time that we had, as a college, our common language.

Nora spoke about how the leadership at the time of the new strategy was infectious and that there were a lot of discussions whereas today she felt that there was not any top down voice around any strategy which left a sort of unanswered question about where they were going in the future.

Joan. Joan had been with the college for more than five but less than ten years and had held a few different positions during that time. She worked within the Executive Education Division which has a more external focus. Joan referred a number of times to the fact that she and others in her department struggled when the new strategy was created because of the nature of their work which can be seen in the excerpt below:

We struggled because, historically, entrepreneurial thought and action doesn’t resonate as well in corporations and so it took us a little while to get behind the…how we could translate that to the corporate world. And so I would say that we struggled a little bit to, for lack of a better term, get with the program. We had historically used the word innovation, we’d, you know, done some things that sort of took a spin on that but we have and still continue to have a push-back on entrepreneurship is a startup and so for [X] education, that’s not something corporate clients are as willing to do that.

Although there are still struggles that Joan noted throughout her conversation, she also mentioned the realization she has had that there are some merits to small experimentation and the ability to try something even if it fails.

Simon. Simon had been with the college for more than ten years and had held a few different positions during that time. He worked within the Undergraduate School division with
his primary role and focus being on the student population. Simon was not surprised by the new strategy because he noted that the entrepreneurship brand and spirit had always been a part of the culture at Babson. He felt that little changed and that leadership appeared to support the new direction at the time. He referred to the climate at the time of the new strategy in the following way:

I think perhaps the only thing that changed on or around that time was the language was more familiar…now there was a name and a brand to associate with the action versus just, you know, we’re progressive, forward thinking, risk takers, now it’s like, now we’re ET&A. So it was a way to sort of capture the spirit so to speak so I think that was perhaps we started just using that language more often and it became much more part of the culture.

Much of the concerns Simon noted were related to the cost of this model, both related to finances/resources as well as the cost to people.

Anna. Anna had been with the college for more than ten years and had held a few different positions during that time. She worked within the Undergraduate School division with her primary role and focus being on the student population. Anna felt that the college had been in the entrepreneurship game for a long time and often referred to her inability to understand whether the changes she discussed were related to the strategy, the existing culture, or both. Anna’s thought process relative to the change and whether the culture of the institution plays a role in that response is seen in the excerpt below:

You know it’s collaborative. It’s cross divisional lines, just problem solving, its initiative. Find niches that people feel passionate about. Action orientation. So this, this can all…these are all descriptive of entrepreneurship, but they’re not very different than a
strong culture. We’re already entrepreneurial…I think those were always true. The things that stand out for me about [the former president] in 2009 were the boldness, everywhere, the social entrepreneurship, and the action.

Anna noted that there was something special about Babson and that it was exciting to be a part of the community.

Data Collection

Three different forms of data were collected for the purposes of this research: documents, observations, and semi-structured interviews. These different forms of data were collected in an attempt to strengthen the results. The following section outlines each phase of the data collection process in detail.

Document Review. A number of documents were reviewed at the beginning, middle, and end of the research process. The document review began with the Office of the President’s website. The researcher pulled all documents and references to the college’s strategy found on this site. This review was happening at the same time that participants were being contacted for potential inclusion in the interview portion of the study. In addition to identifying and reviewing any documents online that referenced the strategy, a search using the word “strategy” was initiated in the search function of the entire college website. This search was also replicated in the researcher’s email files and folders. All documents returned in these searches were reviewed and flagged if they referenced the role of the staff in the updated strategy.

A review of the strategic documents, updates, and other communication demonstrated that there was clearly a call for all community members to change the way in which they approach their work. In September of 2008, the then incoming president wrote a paper on his observations and thoughts about Babson’s future and discussed the uniqueness of Babson and its
remarkable success in being recognized for its entrepreneurship education. These accolades are a result of the college’s ability to not just focus on entrepreneurship as an academic discipline but rather as a way of thinking and being. The president discussed his hope for the college to begin to capitalize on what he described as a competitive advantage: the ability to think and act entrepreneurially. This document specifically laid out five challenges asking the community for help. These challenges included developing a capacity for living entrepreneurship rather than just teaching as well as considering how to recruit and develop future staff and faculty who understood and supported this new direction. Questions were laid out asking the community for help on how to infuse the principles of entrepreneurship into all aspects of the college, including administrative processes. Other questions focused on what needed to be done to make Babson a great place to work or how the institution could develop an entrepreneurial planning approach as a guide. In reviewing this document, it was clear that staff and faculty were expected to play a major role in this shift requiring them to change the way they approached their work.

Although these documents were clearly stated and shared, some documents were not as explicit in how they illustrated the role of staff in the strategy. The April 2009 eleven page paper sent to the community highlighted the world’s need for “entrepreneurial solutions and leaders who can create them” (Schlesinger, 2009, p. 1) but did not specifically state how staff or faculty could take action. Even further, a call was made for the community to “extend our leadership in entrepreneurship by moving from entrepreneurship-the-discipline to the more pervasive entrepreneurial thought and action” (Schlesinger, 2009, p. 3) but again it included no specific charges on how to begin doing that. Even without detailed direction, the documents reviewed made it clear that no matter who you were – students, parents, alumnus(a), faculty, staff, or governance – fulfilling the vision was critical as was gaining clarity around the definition of
entrepreneurial thought and action. Despite the fact that there was not always specific direction, the documents reviewed show consistent communication and numerous attempts to help the community understand this new direction by utilizing references to a common language.

The second focus of the document review focused on the Alumni magazine published by the College. The College Marketing department was contacted to request copies of the quarterly *Babson Magazine* from January 2009 through the present day (2014). Although more recent copies of the entire quarterly publications could be found online, older magazines could only be found in hard copy in the magazine archives. Because of this, the researcher was able to receive hard copies of all issues of the magazine dating back to January of 2009. A review of the magazine articles resulted in similar findings to the strategy documents discussed above. For instance, in many of the presidential updates included in the magazine, the president conveyed a message that reinforced what he had outlined in earlier strategy documents. As an example, the president discussed the community approach to developing a new strategy and noted that Babson was better prepared for challenges because of the fact that community members practice what they teach (Schlesinger, 2009). The former president’s message was consistent and often discussed how the College was doing relative to the strategy. With the recent change in leadership, it is not possible yet to confirm through these documents whether this approach will continue, given that the change occurred less than a year ago.

The third part of the document review included outreach to the college’s chief of staff to determine whether any additional information was available related to the strategy that could not be accessed online or in the magazines. The chief of staff recommended speaking with the director of strategic communications who was in the process of writing a book about the history of Babson College. The director provided the summer 2012 update document (which was also
available online) but had some specific examples of how the college was living and breathing entrepreneurship on the staff side. The examples cited focused on collaboration in new and exciting places such as staff and faculty working together significantly more often and with better success than other institutions; employees working beyond functional lines; and a former president who would provide budget money to people who lacked funding for their big ideas. It is in this document that the president highlighted the need for continued focus on changing the way the college operates including, “the way we design and deliver our curriculum; how we use technology; the way we recruit, hire, and develop faculty; and how staff undertake their work” (Schlesinger, 2012, p. 5). The president went on to state that in order to accomplish what he had laid out there was a need for the community to work individually, as a team, and across the college.

Finally, a number of strategic video updates from the former president were reviewed and notes were taken when references were made to the role of the community in achieving the new strategy. The videos included the former president explaining how entrepreneurship was being redefined as more than just start-ups and that a different definition of entrepreneurship was being written at Babson every day. The former president was infectious in his message articulating how the community needed to come together to own the method, extend the context, and impact the world. The message in the videos was clear, highlighting that being entrepreneurial in thought and action meant taking action: act, learn, and build. He was clear that the community needed entrepreneurs of all kinds and that the college had a responsibility to make a dent in the universe. This powerful message conveyed the importance of entrepreneurial thought and action and the fact that employees had a critical role in making this a reality.
In reviewing all of the information described above, it was clear that the strategy was communicated well in 2009 and updates on the progress the college was making related to its strategic plan were made consistently, at least during the tenure of the former president. However, more recent communications that were reviewed lacked the focus on the strategy and progress the college has made relative to it.

**Observations.** An outreach to a number of senior leaders took place during the early stages of data collection in an attempt to understand how leaders and their staff were making sense of the new strategy in their team meetings. Although six leaders were contacted, due to scheduling conflicts or non-response, only two leadership team meetings were observed: the Human Resources Leadership Team meeting and the Development Leadership Team meeting.

The first meeting observed was the Human Resources leadership team meeting led by the vice president of Human Resources. This meeting included all the managers that directly report to the Human Resources vice president as well as the assistant to the vice president. The vice president shared a meeting agenda which included the topic, “Ensuring our vision, values, and goals attainment.” When discussing this topic, the group focused on the newer Human Resources strategy that was created based on the strategy document outlined by the former president in 2009. The discussion centered on how to onboard the many new members of the department, including how to help them appreciate the concept of entrepreneurial thought and action. Beyond understanding the concept itself, there was also discussion about how to infuse ET&A into the department and the staff. Not only did the discussions refer to being more entrepreneurial but the approach to the meeting illustrated how the managers are practicing this concept as well. New ideas and concepts were introduced, discussed, and supported, illustrating the concept of taking action.
The second meeting observed was the Development Leadership team meeting led by the vice president of development. The meeting included the directors who report directly to the vice president of development. The vice president shared an agenda which asked for various group members to lead the discussion based on their areas of responsibility. The discussion touched on the strategy and how they could engage the college’s trustees and align them more with the departmental strategy. Although there was not specific reference to ET&A in the conversation, the practice was observed when the group discussed a number of strategies that were being rolled out before the end of the fiscal year. For example, the leadership discussed how well the March Madness challenge had been going. (March Madness was a creative way to utilize a well-known sports event to increase athletics giving.) The discussion continued with a brainstorming session on why the college was not teaching people entrepreneurially to be philanthropists. More ideas were thrown out which increased the excitement and energy in the discussion.

Although only two leadership meetings were observed which limited the ability to support the data collected in the interviews, it was clear from the two meetings observed that people were thinking, speaking, and working it a different way. The Human Resources team discussed the concepts of ET&A and how they educate new team members on this way of thinking, acting, and working. The Development team provided examples of entrepreneurial thought in action through the brainstorming and discussion of new strategies to enhance the entrepreneurship environment of the college. From these two meetings, intentional discussion and/or practice of entrepreneurial thought were observed in action.

**Interviews.** Outreach to twelve managers took place at the beginning of the data collection process with six agreeing to participate; all six are included in the data analysis and
results. The six participants came from various areas of the college and provide a solid cross-section of the community. Appendix E provides a summary of participant responses as they reflected on the past, present, and future of the college strategy.

Each interview took place in the participant’s office with only the researcher and participant present during the process. The interview consisted of three overarching questions (past, present, and future) that included a number of sub questions (see Appendix B for the interview protocol). At the conclusion of each interview, the researcher submitted the interview recording to Rev.com to transcribe the data. A number of themes emerged throughout the data analysis process resulting in three final themes which are described in detail below.

**Themes**

The data analysis process was outlined in detail above with the first round of coding and analysis resulting in fifteen themes/phrases noted earlier in this section. As the data analysis process progressed into the data display stage the researcher noticed two overarching themes: employees *are* working and thinking differently; and leadership played a key role in making sense of the mission. In order to better understand these overarching themes, the researcher pulled various quotes and the corresponding in vivo code into a table by past, present, and future for each of the six participants (see Appendix F). From this display, further breakdown and display of the common themes was undertaken by viewing the data according to each of the sensemaking properties outlined by Weick, again by participant (see Appendix G). After looking at the data through the different views, it was clear that despite a number of differences between participants concerning how they and their staff were making sense of the strategy change, there were also some very consistent themes that emerged as well: Acceptance of
Common Language; Different Way of Thinking & Acting; and Leadership Shift Unsettled Sensemaking.

**Acceptance of Common Language.** Each participant came with his or her own view of how it felt to work through the strategy change introduced in 2009. Some felt excitement, relief, and were not surprised while at least one participant remembered struggling because of the inability to translate it to her primary customers. Despite the differences in responses, the fact that there was now a common language for the entire college was felt by a majority of the participants. For some, it was explicitly stated that a crucial change that resulted from the new strategy was that the entire community was working with a common language (see Table 4.2). Other participants were not as explicit, instead noting that they/their department needed to figure out how to translate this new approach in order to apply it in their own work. This concept of translating fits here because it illustrates the fact that the department was attempting to shift the way they work to fit with the new style, or new language, of the college. This common language was also referred to as a framework for the staff to tell the community and the world what Babson is all about. This language became more familiar for the staff and developed into not just the framework but also the brand, which can be seen in some of the quotes referenced in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2
*Theme: Acceptance of Common Language*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Theme: Acceptance of Common Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>“It was really just articulating what they’re doing in a different light.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Overarching umbrella structure…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>“I heard it from a lot of people, I heard it certainly in our own organization, you know, this is a whole new way to work.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>“What did change was ET&amp;A provided us a framework to continue”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to tell our stories.”

“The good thing was that this was the first time in a long time that we had, as a college, our common language.”

| Joan | “We have worked really hard at translating how entrepreneurial thought and action and entrepreneurial leaders and social value can be translated into the corporate world.” |
| Simon | “I think perhaps the only thing that changed on or around that time was the language was more familiar…now there was a name and a brand to associate with the action…” |
| Anna | “Reframing”
“…there was a clearer, more, better articulated umbrella for it.” |

**Different way of thinking and acting.** This research set out to understand whether middle management staff was functioning differently as they worked through the sensemaking process related to the intentional change in strategy. From the six participants interviewed, it is clear that the staff was working differently in many ways. One of the ways that was consistent across the participants was the fact that the staff was now thinking and acting differently in how they approach their work. Interestingly, when asked if they were working differently, many responded initially that they were not working differently. However, as the conversation went on, it was clear that they were thinking differently when approaching their work which can be seen in some of the quotes listed in Table 4.3. Many participants referenced that they are now taking more risks, experimenting, and/or taking action rather than doing what they have always done. Instead of accepting what has always been, these participants cited that they were actively making changes by trying (taking action) and then adjusting as needed. They are working hard to infuse a different mindset into their clients, the students, and other community members as illustrated in Simon’s description of how he and his staff are working on being role models on ET&A so that students are able to understand this concept from the start. Even Anna notes that her new way of thinking has allowed her to understand that ET&A can inform even the more
heavily operations-focused departments. Throughout the interviews, there were many references to being more agile, flexible, embracing risk and failure, trying, doing, learning, and so on which all support the idea that the staff is thinking differently even if they cannot specifically see it themselves.

Despite the clear theme that the staff is thinking and acting differently, what is unclear is whether the staff is working differently due to the new strategy, the existing culture of the institution at the time of the change, or both. Given that idea is beyond the scope of this research, this question will be left unanswered and is noted as an important follow-up for further research.

Table 4.3.
*Theme: Different Way of Thinking and Acting*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Theme: Different way of thinking and acting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>“If you think about the Entrepreneurial Thought and Action cycle, the idea is that you’re going to act, one way or the other you’re going to act. You’re not going to plan, you’re going to act, you are going to see what the response is and then you’re going to think about it or you’re going to observe, right? Then you’re gonna reflect and you’re gonna act again…that’s what [we] do.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Acceptance of failure.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>“We saw a definite change in that response, you know, with some of these earlier strategies and some of the earlier days of the ET&amp;A and so we started saying, ‘okay, let’s throw it on the paper, the virtual paper and see what sticks.’”</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>“Let’s put something out there, let’s see how it sticks, let’s see what the feedback is, let’s get the information directly from them, let’s take a more agile approach, let’s take a little bit of the approach similar to ET&amp;A.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>“We did become a lot more, I think, intentional about how we spoke about it and how we tried to draw the parallel.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We have gotten more comfortable in it…we’re taking bigger risks than we would have taken back then.”</td>
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</table>
| Joan        | “I recognized the merits of some of the small experimentation and the ability to say, ‘hey, let’s try it,’ okay, so we goofed, it didn’t work, let’s
**Simon**

“Last year and a half or so we’ve been embarking on this project of how do we learn about being more entrepreneurial ourselves and then how does that resonate with students so we’ve rewritten cases…it gets this language of understanding entrepreneurship into their minds right away.”

“It’s nice to know that you can take risk and if that doesn’t work you can change it again…”

**Anna**

“Explicit permission to be more experimental”

“…try something…try it and to learn from it and build it.”

“There are ways that entrepreneurial thought and action can inform a heavily operations focused area.”

“What feels most tangible is some of the things that we…some of the initiatives with other colleagues that we were able to do.”

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**Leadership shift unsettled sensemaking.** The concept of leaders and leadership is a well-researched topic. The fact that the theme of leadership emerged in this research is not surprising especially given the leadership transition that has taken place in the last year. When the strategy was introduced in 2009, a new president was just transitioning in (July 1, 2008) and at the time that this research took place President Schlesinger had transitioned out and another new president had transitioned in (July 1, 2013). The responses to the interview questions displayed consistent differences in how the leadership is viewed from 2009 to 2014 which are likely attributed to this significant leadership transition, however, this cannot be confirmed from this particular research and further work would need to be undertaken to confirm this assertion. Needless to say, it is still important to highlight the leadership theme because the concepts were very consistent among the six participants.
The first part of the interview questions focused on 2009 and asked participants to reflect back on a number of items related to the rollout of the new strategy. Part of this reflection included asking participants to think back to the cues that the leadership was giving them at the time and to describe what they remember. The responses to the question about 2009 illustrate how powerful the enthusiasm of then President Schlesinger’s strategic mission was to the staff.

Table 4.4 provides examples of how participants remember the leadership responding to the change and displays the infectiousness of the president and the modeling of the behavior by both the president and his staff. However, looking at the responses to the same question in 2014, there was much more uncertainty either explicitly stated or assumed as to whether the current leadership was going to continue down the same path as the former president. It is clear that the message to the staff has been that the College plans to continue on the same strategic path but the quotes illustrated provide support for a possible disconnect between the top leadership and the participant’s direct supervisor. The theme in 2014 seemed to be that the middle to upper leadership was on board with the strategy but it was unclear whether the executive leadership was or not. Regardless of the timing or the particular leader, it is apparent that leadership plays a critical role in how participants responded or felt about the strategy.

Table 4.4  
*Theme: Leadership shift unsettled sensemaking*

|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Harry       | “I mean he had a really unique way of spinning all that was going on.”  
              “I think to some degree he was modeling the behavior. I think it was done very intentionally with a lot of conversations around why.” | “My interaction has mostly been with [my direct supervisor]…she is definitely more willing to say sure, give it a try, let’s see what happens.”  
              “I think the leaders area…they almost encourage it.” |
<p>| Fred        | “There is a little bit of ‘ra-ra’ meaning like that come on board, that’s” | “It is this whole agile approach…that approach is quite” |</p>
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</table>
| Nora | “It was pretty apparent…I will say this wasn’t rolled out quietly which was great.”

“[The former president] was a real advocate for his own strategy. You heard him talking about it and he was infectious…he was somebody who not only was clear about this is what we’re doing but was really able to get people excited about it.”

“I reported to [the VP] at the time…we had our kind of first retreat that year we really dug into it a little bit more to figure out what does this mean for us?”

| Joan | **Did not speak about this topic in 2009.**

<p>| | |</p>
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</table>
|   | “It seems like our current leadership is more focused externally where previous cues were more focused on Goldman and sort of domestically.”

“I think because of so many changes that are taking place in leadership, I think we’re going to struggle a little bit to either stay on track or expand. I know that [the current president] has suggested that she wants to increase our presence in the world but I don’t know how that’s going to play out.”

| Nora | a bit different and that comes directly from our [VP] and brought down…so that’s a big thing.”

“It’s gonna be very interesting to see…I mean I do believe that the [former president’s] departure, this was still here (references the strategy document)...we all speak the language so I don’t worry about it.”

“I do think that without this kind of larger direction top down, we are gonna continue to do the work the way we do it simply because I think we all enjoy this work.”

“I don’t see yet that there’s gonna be any top down voice around any of this…I can see the focus starting to move towards other priorities.”

“Certainly trickled down to my directors at the time.”

“Obviously trickled down to my directors at the time.”

“exciting, you know…and I think [the former president] was very much that way and that was infectious. And I think people wanted to jump on board and were willing to buy into a lot of this because of the way he sort of got people excited about.”

“I reported to [the VP] at the time…we really dug into it a little bit more to figure out what does this mean for us?”

“Certainly trickled down to my directors at the time.”

“Certainly trickled down to my directors at the time.”

“I reported to [the VP] at the time…we really dug into it a little bit more to figure out what does this mean for us?”

“I reported to [the VP] at the time…we really dug into it a little bit more to figure out what does this mean for us?”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Simon</strong></th>
<th>“Part of our message is just don’t be afraid, there’s support here even if things go wrong.”</th>
<th>“[Current VP] leads by example…there’s not a concern over failure.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“[My former VP] was supportive of any entrepreneurial…he was very and still is very entrepreneurial himself.”</td>
<td>“I think what’s tricky is there’s been so much leadership change in such a short period of time that you’ve got to give people some time and space to sort of figure it all out and how that intersects with their own goals.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I mean we certainly just looking above felt confident that, you know, [former VP] was setting the right tone at the time.”</td>
<td>“Internally for me, the new [supervisor] he gets it and if anything he’s right on board with the rate of change and things that need to be updated and refreshed…at least for my direct line, he gets it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anna</strong></td>
<td>“I think the cues were in the public messaging…certainly the focus on action…gave us sort of explicit permission to be more experimental.”</td>
<td>“What I do see in here consistently is that we are continuing with the entrepreneurship being a primary mission. So, we’re not changing the mission…so that’s what I hear.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Certainly the work my boss, the work I saw him doing …I was witness to.”</td>
<td>“I think that everything else is a little too clouded and I’m a little bit removed from the discussion about the transition to know what’s happening…and whether they are indeed sort of entrepreneurial principles…but it’s a question mark.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary of Findings**

The purpose of this descriptive, qualitative case study was to gain insight into how managers are making sense of the intentional change in strategy which includes the practice of entrepreneurial thought. The goal of the study was to understand from these middle managers how they were working differently in an attempt to make sense of the new strategic direction of
the institution. More specifically, the following research question was considered utilizing sensemaking theory as the theoretical lens: How do middle managers describe shifts in the nature of their work in an effort to make sense of the newest mission of the college?

In order to gain insight into this question, three forms of data collection were used: document review, observations, and one-on-one interviews. These three different sources were utilized in order to further strengthen and validate the results (through triangulation of the data); this concept is further illustrated in Table 4.5. As summarized in Table 4.5, these various forms of data collection supported three significant findings that were categorized as: acceptance of common language (there is comfort in the fact that the College is working off a common language in how they approach their operations); a different way of thinking and acting (managers and their staff are thinking differently about how they approach work); and leadership shift unsettled sensemaking (leadership support and uncertainty has a significant impact on how managers approach work). The first two findings fit nicely when considering the original research question as it is clear from the data that middle managers described the shift in the nature of their work through the acceptance of a new common language at the college and the fact that they can clearly articulate how individually and departmentally they are thinking and acting differently in how they approach their work. However, the third theme centers on the concept of leadership which does not fit as nicely when considered against the original research question. Because a number of the properties described in the sensemaking theory ask for reflection on one’s environment, leadership, and colleagues in that environment, it makes sense that leadership emerged as a theme. More importantly, given the recent change in the top leadership, this concept is even more significant because the findings indicate that there is a potential disconnect between the former leader’s and the current leader’s support of the current
strategy. Chapter five of this research paper will outline conclusions as they relate to the theoretical framework as well as discuss implications for future research.

Table 4.5
_Triangulation of the Data_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Source One: Document Review</th>
<th>Source Two: Observations</th>
<th>Source Three: Interviews</th>
<th>Final Finding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of Common Language</td>
<td>Video updates by former president discuss what ET&amp;A means; how Babson is redefining entrepreneurship; and how Babson needs to make a dent in the universe. Videos were constantly reinforcing same concepts/ideas. Strategic plan, Alumni Magazine, and email updates provided ongoing communication and information in different formats to different audiences keeping the community updated on progress relative to the strategic and their role in making it a reality.</td>
<td>Leadership team meetings openly discussed how they could be more “ET&amp;A” in their approach to work.</td>
<td>Some participants openly stated the relief felt to have a common language while others noted how there was not a lot of change with the exception of stating that the language was more familiar.</td>
<td>Managers are using a common language in how they approach their work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different Way of Thinking and Acting</td>
<td>Documents, emails, and videos specifically ask community members to think about redefining the concept of entrepreneurship by</td>
<td>Lots of brainstorming on new ways to approach departmental/division strategy</td>
<td>Participants perceived the environment as agile, flexible, more willing to take risks, and</td>
<td>Managers are thinking differently in the way they approach their work (i.e., it is</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


simply taking action, doing something, making a dent supporting the concept of “entrepreneurs of all kinds.”

These documents ask questions of the community such as how to shift to a way of thinking that included embedding the principles of entrepreneurship into everything included governance and administrative processes.

Using the concepts of ET&A as the foundation. less aversion to failure. okay to try something, fail, and then try something else to see what works).

Leadership Shift Unsettled Sensemaking

Former president sent constant email updates; video updates were “chats” with different employees across the institution; constant communication.

Current president does not appear to provide same types of strategy updates.

Participants perceived former president as a real advocate for the strategy and infectious whereas there was a lot of uncertainty as to where the current president stood relative to the strategy.

Managers rely on leadership to model the behavior.

**CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

The purpose of this dissertation research was to gain insight into how organizational members were making sense about the intentional change to become an entrepreneurial focused institution. Specifically, the research studied a cross-section of middle managers who were required to have the ability to reconcile the new vision with their daily operations to try to understand how these managers were making sense of the change. Through multiple forms of data collection a significant amount of data was gathered and analyzed using Karl Weick’s
sensemaking theory as the theoretical framework. Six middle managers at Babson College were interviewed with participants asked to reflect on the strategy at three different points in time: when it was first introduced in 2009; current day; and looking into the future. From these interviews rich, detailed data was collected and analyzed in an attempt to gain deeper insight into the social meaning making process. This was a descriptive case study exploring a bounded system (Babson College). The single case study approach is a common method in qualitative research and is considered a very descriptive and eye-opening method of research (Miles et al., 2014). Data analysis for this research followed the work of Miles et al. (2014) incorporating the common features of the data exploration process referred to earlier with the following stages: data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. The data was then triangulated to ensure overall agreement from all sources of data. This analysis resulted in three conclusions that support the idea that employees are in fact seeing shifts in the nature of their work due to the intentional change to become an entrepreneurial focused institution.

The purpose of this chapter is to review the implications and conclusions of this research as well as highlight the opportunities for future research. First, an overview of each of the three findings will be presented both as they relate to the research question as well as the theoretical framework. Second, a discussion centering on implications to theory, practice, and ideas for future research will be presented. The chapter will close with final thoughts and conclusions.

**Interpretations and Conclusions**

The interview process presented a number of interesting findings that suggest that employees are seeing shifts in the nature of their work. First, a theme that emerged was the concept of a common institutional language. Second, participants were able to articulate ways in which they were thinking differently as they approached their daily tasks; this was corroborated
in the observations of two leadership team meetings. Third, the leadership shift that had taken place had a significant impact on the sensemaking process. The following section will further describe each finding as it relates to the original research question as well as the theoretical framework.

**Finding #1: Managers have accepted a common language in how they approach their work.** When participants were asked to reflect back to 2009 and the introduction of the new strategic direction, the reactions described indicated that managers were generally not surprised by the intentional change. As an institution known for its skill in entrepreneurship education, it was not surprising to most of the participants that the leadership was attempting to leverage this strength in every aspect of its operations. Participants also noted that the new strategy did not feel very different because as one participant articulated: the college had been in the “entrepreneurship game a long time.” However, what participants did express as a change in practice was the broadening and inclusiveness of the definition of entrepreneurship to include social aspects and a boldness that had not been present in the past. This broadening was explained as an overarching umbrella by two participants. Another participant noted the excitement that came with having a common language as an institution. Others conveyed the idea of a common language or overarching structure by providing examples of how they were practicing ET&A. Other participants discussed the difficulty in translating these concepts to the corporate world. Regardless of the reaction, participants discussed the change that took place when introducing a common language which provided managers and their staff the ability to move forward in a different way despite the potential challenges.

**Finding #1: Relationship to Research Question and Theoretical Framework.** The specific research question guiding this work asked how middle managers described shifts in the
nature of their work as they attempted to make sense of the newest mission of the college. The fact that participants either specifically noted that they felt a positive change with the introduction of a common language or they described an example that supported the concept of positive use of a common language/term (i.e., ET&A) indicated that managers were shifting how they worked to incorporate new language into daily operations. Weick’s sensemaking theory suggests that part of the sensemaking process requires the ability to look back and reflect in order to create clarity and order. In this case, participants were able to reflect back to 2009 and articulate how this concept of a common language was a way to begin to translate what this new approach meant for the work they did. In addition, sensemaking theory also highlights the importance of being aware of cues and the meaning derived from these cues. Participants received cues from emails, documents, alumni magazines, strategic documents, and other sources that consistently communicated the new focus of the institution. This repetitive form of marketing helped reinforce the use of the new language that had been introduced and provided, according to some participants, a sense of relief and excitement.

**Finding #2: Managers are thinking and acting differently in the way they approach their work (i.e., it is okay to try something, fail, and then try something else to see what works).** When asked directly how they were working differently (both reflecting back to 2009 as well as currently), many participants indicated that they did not feel much had changed. The responses indicated to the researcher that this particular college environment was already viewed by the community as different and nimble and with an appropriate culture in place to support this approach. However, as participants spoke more, it became clear that managers had begun to think differently in the way they approached their work even if they could not articulate this when asked directly. One participant discussed the fact that, “we need to learn about being more
entrepreneurial ourselves” by making changes in the way staff do things first so that they can act as role models for students. Another participant spoke about the ability to start playing with ideas stating, “We’re gonna mess this up along the way. And that’s kind of the point. We wanna take some missteps to figure out what we want.” Participants noted that they were taking bigger risks and getting more comfortable with the concepts outlined in the 2009 strategy change. One participant even spoke about the immediate changes seen in the early days of ET&A where the approach changed from getting everything in order before trying anything to a new approach in which the team started throwing ideas out to the community to see what worked and changed direction on the fly as necessary. Another participant even noted the fact that the change in thinking had led to new revenue streams for the College. This finding is congruent with Hannon (2006) who discusses the results of infusing entrepreneurship into education which includes capacity building (note: collaboration was described by a number of participants) and discovering new funding sources.

Even those participants who described little change noted that they worked to communicate in a different way what they were doing on a daily basis thus engaging in the process of thinking differently. Despite the fact that participants did not always acknowledge that they were thinking differently, responses to the interview questions indicated otherwise. This finding highlighted the fact that employees have started thinking differently over some period of time which has masked the ability to recognize that they are doing so; in other words it has become second nature.

**Finding #2: Relationship to Research Question and Theoretical Framework.** Once again considering the original research question, the data indicated that managers are seeing shifts in the nature of their work as they make sense of the strategy by engaging in a process of
actively thinking differently, whether they are aware of this process or not. For example, managers stated that they are taking more risks, taking more action, getting more comfortable with experimenting, and worrying less about failure than they were when the strategy was first introduced. Again the participants engaged in retrospective sensemaking as they reflected back to 2009 and considered how they are working differently today, if at all. Some participants even described taking time to think about how they fit into the strategy by engaging in conversations with their teams about the impact the strategy had on their department as well as understanding how they, themselves, could be more entrepreneurial (e.g., Grounded in Identity Construction and Enactive of Sensible Environment sensemaking properties).

Finding #3: Leadership shift unsettled sensemaking. The timing of this research was difficult due to a significant change in leadership occurring eight months prior to data collection. At this time, a new president came on board who was charged with continuing down the same path as the former president; however based on the participant responses it is clear that the reaction to the change in leadership caused a considerable amount of noise in the system. Because of this disruption and a number of other senior leadership changes, it is not surprising that the importance of leadership emerged in the data collected. Participant’s descriptions of the former president were clear and consistent with comments such as:

“[The former president] was a real advocate for his own strategy. You heard him talk about it and he was infectious.”

“There is a little bit of ra-ra, meaning come on board, that’s exciting, [The former president] was very much that way and that was infectious. I think people wanted to jump on board and were willing to buy in to a lot of this because of the way he sort of got people excited about it.”
“He had a really unique way of spinning all that was going on...he was modeling the behavior...it was done very intentionally with a lot of conversations around why.”

Beyond the president, participants commented on the support of their direct managers in 2009 as well as the senior leaders of the college. These senior leaders were described as people who were modeling the behavior in words and action. Because of this, one participant described the fact that, because of the role modeling leadership was doing at the time, managers and others felt confident to look above and see that they were setting the right tone.

As participants were asked to reflect on the leadership cues they were receiving in the present day, the tone of the conversations changed. Despite the fact that many participants still described their direct managers as supportive and modeling the behavior, responses indicated a noteworthy amount of uncertainty about whether the new president and senior leadership supported the strategy. Participants’ concern around the current leadership and the impact on the strategic direction of the college are summarized in the following quotes:

“I don’t know if it’s totally understood just yet but I think what’s tricky is there’s been so much leadership change in such a short period of time that you’ve got to give people some time and space to sort of figure it all out and how that intersects with their own goals.”

“I don’t yet see that there’s gonna be any top down voice around any of this.”

“I think because of so many changes that are taking place in leadership, I think we’re going to struggle a little bit to either stay on track or expand.”

Given the significant shift in attitude towards the leadership it is apparent that leadership plays a key role in how managers approach their work. This finding supports results from Eyal & Kark (2004) that indicate that leadership is associated with entrepreneurship. Even further, Eyal &
Kark discovered that the most prevalent strategy associated with transformational leaders was the “initiating entrepreneurial strategy” (p. 228). Without continued support from top and senior leadership, it is a valid concern that the strategy could lose momentum.

**Finding #3: Relationship to Research Question and Theoretical Framework.**

Managers described various shifts in how they work as they make sense of the intentional change to become a more entrepreneurial institution. Part of the early shifts described included support from both direct supervisors as well as senior and top leadership. As participants described the future state of the institution it was noted that future employees would require different skills and a different mindset. However, it is hard to tell if managers will continue to make sense of the strategy without consistent direction, support, and communication from both direct supervisors as well as senior and top leadership. The responses indicated that the change in leadership did not alter the strategic direction but lead to a questioning of whether managers truly believe in the strategic direction. Because of this, this finding is critical for Babson to consider as it moves forward.

Through carefully designed interview questions, participants were asked to reflect on leadership cues in 2009 and the present day as they engaged in specific sensemaking properties (e.g., ongoing, social, focused on and by extracted cues). The responses of the participants indicated a change in how they view leadership (their words and actions). For now, these participants seem content to continue down the path they were already on after the introduction of the 2009 strategy, focusing on what they understand (ET&A) rather than the unknown (how the new leadership fits in) which is descriptive of Weick’s seventh property (i.e., Driven by Plausibility Rather than Accuracy). However, the future may be uncertain and is an important point to highlight in this findings discussion.
Implications to Theory

Karl Weick’s sensemaking theory was used as a basis for this research. A major component of this theory asks for the ability to reflect in various ways. This process is outlined clearly in the retrospective property noted by Weick which requires the ability to look back and reflect on one’s situation in a timely manner in an attempt to create clarity and order in the environment. A number of other properties require reflection in a more indirect manner as well. First, being grounded in identity construction requires an awareness of one’s self-concept and identity and how it may be impacted by one’s environment and circumstances. Second, the enactive of sensible environments property involves an awareness of how individual actions impact the environment one is working in. Third, the social property steps beyond the individual and notes the importance of social interactions and the impact these interactions have on the environment. Fourth, focusing on and by extracted cues requires an awareness of the cues that arise in the environment and being aware of how these cues are being interpreted as meaning is derived. Finally, sensemaking theory suggests that when engaging in the sensemaking process people are driven by plausibility rather than accuracy. In other words, people focus more on what is understandable and believable rather than what is accurate. Each of these descriptions asks for reflection at some level; a process that each participant engaged in throughout the interview process. The fact that participants were able to reflect is interpreted as evidence of the sensemaking process taking place. Participants were able to reflect back on the past, speak about the current environment, and think about the future which illustrates the sensemaking process. In addition, the sensemaking process that participants were going through was ongoing in nature with both positive and negative emotions emerging throughout the reflection and meaning making process. From these participants, the sensemaking process is confirmed as a useful tool.
for understanding how managers make meaning of the intentional strategy change. These results contribute to the literature by adding additional insight, from the higher educational perspective, to work such as Yeo & Li (2013) who explored how employees make sense of their work environment. The results indicate that communication and environment help support an employee’s ability to make sense of their work-life quality. The results in this research paper highlight similar findings indicating that communication (through leadership and a common language) and the environment (seen in leadership, use of a common language, and the ability to try and fail safely) all contribute to a manager’s ability to make sense of the shift in his or her work. In addition, Seline (2005/06) asserted that experiential learning leads to a competitive advantage. The findings in this research paper illustrate that employees are working, thinking, and acting differently through more experimentation and risk taking and less fear of failure; in other words more trial and error is taking place in the work place. Weick’s theory does not cover the concept of experiential learning however the findings in this research help support the benefits of experiential learning as outlined by Seline. Finally, Engle et al. (1997) discussed utilizing the concept of intrapreneurs (people practicing entrepreneurship within an organization) as a way to increase the likelihood of future success. As this research illustrates, Babson College is asking the community to practice entrepreneurship (through the strategy) within the organization and it is clear that managers are thinking and acting differently, practicing entrepreneurial thought in action in more ways which could lead to future success as Engle and colleagues assert. The next section will discuss the implications this research has on practice.

**Implications to Practice**

This research collected data directly from middle managers in an attempt to understand how middle managers described the shift in the nature of their work due to the intentional change
to be more entrepreneurial. Recent research has indicated that the world of higher education has become increasingly competitive. In addition, it is clear that the concept of entrepreneurship is being utilized more often in the educational world as educational institutions at all levels fight to become more innovative as a way to become differentiated from the competition. However, much of the current literature focuses on students and faculty and how to educate in a more entrepreneurial fashion. For example, Lee & Rhoads (2004) discussed the role of faculty entrepreneurialism and the positive outcomes this change in approach to practice can have on an institution. And Johnson & Kasarda (2008) focused on curriculum changes that infuse more concepts of entrepreneurship in student learning. However, what is research lacks is information on methods that allow staff and administration to support these newer models of entrepreneurial education. Is staff able to support concepts of entrepreneurship if they are unclear on what it means to be “entrepreneurial”? What is the impact of trying to infuse concepts of entrepreneurship into college operations outside of the classroom? Without understanding how staff and administration make sense of an entrepreneurial shift in thought, teaching methods, and other operations, it is unlikely that these changes will be successful.

The findings in this research indicate that managers can in fact make sense of how an intentional change to become more entrepreneurial shifts the nature of their work. First, the results of this study indicate that the introduction and continued use of a common language as part of an intentional change is supportive of middle managers going through the sensemaking process. Because of this finding, it is important for the staff at other institutions who are considering implementing intentionally innovative approaches to their operations model to think about identifying some common phrases, themes, or concepts that will create a common language or brand that managers can identify with and utilize in their daily operations. For
Babson College in particular, if the decision by the new president is to continue down the same strategic path outlined in the 2009 strategy, it is important to continue to utilize the common language previously established in as many communications as possible. Doing so will help managers continue to make sense of their work as it relates to the strategic direction.

Second, creating a strategy that is intentionally entrepreneurial requires a different way of thinking in order to be successful. Allowing managers to practice thinking differently by taking risks in a safe environment in which there is no fear of failure is critical. Lee & Rhoads (2004) identified increased revenue streams as a positive outcome of faculty entrepreneurialism. In the current research, one participant noted that the change in strategy allowed a different approach and thinking to his work which resulted in new and increased revenue streams for the college. These positive outcomes need to be shared. Even further, sustained encouragement of working and thinking in a way that supports the new strategy must be continued. Given all the recent leadership changes it becomes especially important to educate new community members on the current strategy and create opportunities for these leaders to model the behavior for their middle managers and other staff.

Finally, the role of leadership is vital during a time when employees are actively engaging in the sensemaking process. If the environment requires managers to shift the nature in which they work but the leadership cues are not supportive of this shift in words and/or actions, managers may struggle to understand how they fit. At Babson College in particular, the new president needs to show her support of the strategy through words and actions. The next section outlines the implications of this research on future research opportunities.

**Implications for Future Research**
Based on this case study, the researcher was able to conclude three specific findings that help understand how organizational members make sense of an intentional change to become an entrepreneurial-focused institution. More specifically, it was clear that having a common language; providing an environment where people can think and act differently; and being mindful of how a shift in leadership can impact sensemaking is necessary for middle managers to make sense of the intentional change to be more entrepreneurial. However, some of the participants referred to Babson as “unique” and “special” so it is not clear if these same findings would emerge at another similar-sized institution. Because of this question, future research could also expand to different colleges/universities through a multi-case study approach. This could be accomplished by looking at the Boston Consortium of schools which includes local area schools. Even further, supplementing this research by conducting a longitudinal study at Babson College over three years at different points in time would provide insight into whether the findings in this study were supported.

Another important point to note is that a few of the participants raised the question as to whether the shift in their work was a result of the new strategy, the pre-existing culture of the institution, or both. This particular research did not focus on the culture and whether or not it played a role in how managers made sense of the intentional change. Further research should be conducted at Babson College specifically to determine whether the pre-existing culture played a significant role in the results of this research. This may be related to the discussion above that categorized Babson College as “unique” and “special.” Further understanding as to whether this is in fact true, and what it is about the institution that makes it this way, would be interesting.

Expanding this research in an attempt to understand how other community members are making sense of the change would be beneficial as well. First, exploring other staff members at
various levels could help support the findings in this study. In addition, although some internal research previously focused on faculty understanding of the concept of entrepreneurial thought in action, conducting a similar study to the current research with faculty members would be helpful in understanding whether similar findings would emerge.

Finally, future research should consider the role of the leader when trying to understand how employees make sense of the intentional change to be more entrepreneurial. “Theories of transformational and charismatic leadership suggest that there is a significant relationship between leadership, organizational change and entrepreneurship” (Eyal & Kark, 2004, p. 212). It would be helpful to understand whether having an entrepreneurial leader makes a difference at Babson College. Examining leadership types and the impact they have on a manager’s sensemaking process would be useful as well. In the following section a final summary is offered.

Summary and Reflections

The following section summarizes the research and concludes the discussion. This study focused on how organizational members are making sense of the intentional change to become an entrepreneurial-focused institution and included the reflections of six middle managers employed at Babson College since at least 2009. Overall, it was discovered that having a common language, allowing the ability to think differently, and leadership support positively impacted middle managers’ ability to describe the shift in the nature of their work as they attempted to make sense of the new strategic direction. The student researcher conducted this research both to contribute to educational practice but also to understand how her own institutional members were making sense of the intentional change, especially given the recent
leadership transition. As a result, the researcher offers the following reflections for Babson College specifically:

1. The college should consider building in the ET&A language and practice throughout all communications again, including employment advertisements, job descriptions, systems, and recruiting tools.

2. The college should consider how to reward and recognize employees who take risks and experiment in direct support of the strategy.

3. The college should consider highlighting managers who role model the ET&A behavior.

4. The college should think about how it can best support employee sensemaking under the new leadership.

5. The college should consider providing regular updates to the community illustrating how community members are living and breathing entrepreneurship in their daily work.

The purpose of this dissertation research was to gain insight into how organizational members were making sense about the intentional change to become an entrepreneurial focused institution. Although a small case study, this research highlighted important concepts related to this purpose. In addition, this research has introduced opportunities for further research both at the current research site and beyond. Even further, this study provides additional research on how higher education institutions can intentionally become more entrepreneurial which is critical in an increasingly competitive field. The results of this research add support from the higher education perspective to Engle, Mah, & Sadri’s (1997) discussion of using intrapreneurs (people practicing entrepreneurship within an organization) as the best strategy for future success. This
research is especially important to the researcher who has been employed by Babson College for fifteen years and seeks to contribute to its continued success.
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APPENDIX A:

INFORMED CONSENT

Entrepreneurial Thought in Action®: A Descriptive case study exploring how organizational members of small business college in northeastern U.S. make sense of the strategic initiative to be entrepreneurial utilizing Weick's sensemaking as a lens

<DATE>

Dear <NAME>,

As you may know, I have worked at Babson College in the Human Resources department for the last fifteen years. I am also a doctoral candidate at Northeastern University pursuing a degree in Higher Education Administration. As the final part of my doctoral program, I am required to conduct research and write a thesis paper. The purpose of this dissertation research is to gain insight into how organizational members are making sense about the intentional change to become an entrepreneurial focused institution. Specifically, the research will study a cross-section of middle managers who are required to have the ability to reconcile the new vision with their daily operations to try to understand how these managers making sense of the change.

The following information is provided to you so that you can make an informed decision about your willingness to participate in this research. The data for this project will be collected in three phases: document review (includes memos, videos, announcements, and any additional documentation that relates to the current strategy dating back to 2009); observations of leadership team meetings; and one-on-one interviews. As part of this process, it is important that I highlight a number of points:

- There are no incentives offered for participation
- There are no known risks associated with participation
- Responses will be confidential unless a violation of college policy is shared
- You can decline participation at any time; your participation is completely voluntary
- If you are being interviewed, you will be given the transcriptions to review
- Your name will not be associated with any of the research or results

Please feel free to ask me any question before, during, or after the research process. I can be reached at 781.239.4209; koleary@babson.edu; or in the Human Resources department located in the Nichols Building.

Please indicate your consent by signing below. You will be provided with a copy of your signed form for your records.

Thank you,

Kate O’Leary
Signature of Participant  
Date
APPENDIX B:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

As you may know, I have worked at Babson College in the Human Resources department for the last fifteen years. I am also a doctoral candidate at Northeastern University pursuing a degree in Higher Education Administration. As the final part of my doctoral program, I am required to conduct research and write a thesis paper.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this dissertation research is to gain insight into how organizational members are making sense about the intentional change to become an entrepreneurial focused institution. Specifically, the research will study a cross-section of middle managers who are required to have the ability to reconcile the new vision with their daily operations to try to understand how these managers making sense of the change.

In order to gain this understanding, I will be conducting an interview today that should last approximately 60 minutes. Before we start, I want to remind you of a few important points:

- This research project is completely confidential and your identity will not be matched to your responses.
- Data that could reveal your identity will be stored in files accessible only to the researcher.
- Your participation is completely voluntary and as such, you can choose to withdraw at any time.

I would like your permission to tape-record this session. By doing so, it will ensure that I have an accurate reflection of our conversation today. [Pause to give participant time to respond]. Only the researcher and transcriptionist will have access to this data. After the interview is transcribed I will give you back a copy of the transcript for your review. Do you have any questions before we begin?

At this time the participant will be provided a piece of paper that has the current mission and some details about the strategic direction. They will be read the following: Take a minute to read the mission and strategy. Think back to 2009 when this strategy was first introduced and feel free to make any notes on your sheet of paper.

After a few minutes pass, the researcher will start the questions:

Questions

1. PAST: Thinking back to 2009 when the current strategy was first introduced, how did you and your department/team/staff respond? In an effort to be more entrepreneurial in
thought and action can you describe how did the nature of your work changed and stayed the same?

2. PRESENT: Now it is 2014. In an effort to be more entrepreneurial in thought and action can you think about how you/your department are working differently and the same? Where do you see the concepts of ET&A being utilized the most?

3. FUTURE: Assume it is 2019 (Babson’s Centennial) and Babson is not only the premier institution in entrepreneurship education but has been recognized as the best in conducting business operations entrepreneurially. Can you describe what this news story looks like and what adjustments, if any, need to be made in your department to support the future of ET&A?

POOL OF PROBES, IF NECESSARY:
Thinking back, what cues was leadership giving you at the time? Currently, what cues is leadership giving you? In five years, how do you see leadership supporting this strategic direction? This can be action, words, resources, etc.
In what ways did you/have you/will you reflect on the strategy and how it impacted your work and your department?
Thinking back, tell me about the reactions of your staff? What about your colleagues?

Thank you very much for taking the time to talk to me today. If you have any questions about this research please feel free to contact me at any time. I will be in contact with you as soon as I have the transcripts for you to review.

Thank you!
APPENDIX C:

DOCUMENT REVIEW PROCESS

1. Search College website for memos, videos, announcements, and any additional documentation that relates to the current strategy dating back to 2009.

2. Outreach to Chief of Staff for memos, videos, announcements, and any additional documentation that relates to the current strategy dating back to 2009 that were not identified in step one.

3. Outreach to Director of Strategic Communications for any additional information related to the role of staff in the strategy.

4. Outreach to Babson Magazine for memos, videos, announcements, and any additional documentation that relates to the current strategy dating back to 2009 that were not identified in step one or two.

5. Review all identified documents; highlight any area that speaks about the role of staff in the strategy; put a sticky note on each important area uncovered in documents for ease of reference.

6. Refer back to highlighted areas that support interview findings.
APPENDIX D:

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

As you may know, I have worked at Babson College in the Human Resources department for the last fifteen years. I am also a doctoral candidate at Northeastern University pursuing a degree in Higher Education Administration. As the final part of my doctoral program, I am required to conduct research and write a thesis paper.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this dissertation research is to gain insight into how organizational members are making sense about the intentional change to become an entrepreneurial focused institution. Specifically, the research will study a cross-section of middle managers who are required to have the ability to reconcile the new vision with their daily operations to try to understand how these managers and their staff is making sense of the change.

In order to gain this understanding, I will be acting as a participant observer during your meeting today. Before we start, I want to remind you of a few important points:

- This research project is completely confidential and I will not use names in my notes.
- I will only take notes when the meeting discussion focuses on the subject of the strategy and how this group is making sense of that strategy.
- You may request a copy of my notes if you would like to review them.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for allowing me to observe your meeting today!
APPENDIX E:

INTERVIEW SUMMARIES

Simon: Summary
One-on-one in-person interview
Undergraduate School Division
Primary role: students

PAST (2009):
Initial reaction: not surprised, always have had an entrepreneurial flavor. Focus is on the curriculum and the whole “entrepreneurship brand, flavor, spirit has always been there…so it was a logical extension” to brand it across the college. The concept was not foreign to him or the group.

Group was not concerned about the new message; had fun with the idea that anything was possible if you tried and took a risk. The only minor concern was wondering if the students would understand the message but still realize they had to progress through the curriculum, there were boundaries to the approach.

Didn’t see much change in the way they worked because they were always nimble with lots of changes to the curriculum over the years. Always had been a department that that tried new things to ensure they were keeping current but they did not necessarily brand it as “entrepreneurial.” Always felt empowered to do this. Only change: used the language more often and it became part of the culture; “using the language that was messaged from above it certainly felt a little more comfortable.”

Leadership at the time sent the message, “don’t be afraid…there’s support here if, even if things go wrong.” Felt confident with their leader at the time because he was very entrepreneurial himself.

PRESENT (2014):
Biggest difference – just more, more of everything – more businesses to support, curriculum transitions to manage, more everything. They were bigger and had more students - “we have grown in every conceivable dimension…which is good…there’s a human cost, there’s a financial cost…you know.” Mentioned lots of stress in the system.

ET&A seen most currently in the curriculum – asking the staff teaching the first year seminar to role model ET&A which they call entrepreneurial leadership with a global mindset. The last year focus has been on how to learn being more entrepreneurial as staff and how that resonates with students. Examples: re-written cases which is a cultural shift so the students get the language of entrepreneurship right away.

Current manager gets it; however lots of leadership changes in the last year so the spirit is there but still hesitation as to where it might be going…
FUTURE (2019):
Felt there was a need to be ready to sustain being an entrepreneurial system over a systematic period of time. In order to continue down this path there is a need to “keep reinvesting or…and this would be real entrepreneurial is how did you figure out a way to make it cost effective.” There is a cost to constantly looking at how to change and make things better.

Need the leadership to decide “where on that intersection do we lie where we can foster the spirit of entrepreneurship and in such a way that the institution can just sort of handle it…we’ve sort of been doing it anyway…I think it is quite possible that we’ll continue on this trajectory.”

Need to be mindful of the impact it has on everybody to continue to reinvent the way we do things.

Keep educating people and attracting people who buy into the strategy. Thinking about staff of the future means looking differently at where people come from, not necessarily traditional paths into higher education. Must be creative and get the right mix of people and think not about the school they went to but how they can contribute.
Harry: Summary
One-on-one in-person interview
Student Affairs Division
Primary role: students

PAST (2009):
Initial reaction: it was making known what the Babson brand was as well as emphasizing the social side of entrepreneurship.

His staff reacted by thinking it was just another buzzword with a new president and felt it was kind of all the same just packaged differently. Staff was looking at him to understand, “what are we going to have to learn in order to do our jobs differently.” He stressed that they did not have to learn anything that they were already doing it but they just had to learn how to communicate it differently. They were already in the ET&A cycle and their jobs were the model for acting, responding, observing, reflecting, then acting again. Biggest takeaway from ET&A was articulating what he and his staff did in a different light as well as the concept of trying something and failing and that being okay.

Leadership (President) at the time had a unique way of spinning all that was going on; the conversations were remembered as very intentional with a lot of conversations about why things were happening; felt the President was really modeling the behavior.

He helped staff by asking them questions to get them to think differently about situation rather than reinforce the importance of the strategy.

PRESENT (2014):
Seems to be more tolerance for trying something and failing – the culture has changed in a positive light relative to the acceptance of failure.

His staff and students are using the concept of ET&A all the time because they have to take calculated risks in order to grow. Staff is always thinking about the resources they have and how they can get the most out of those resources.

Direct manager willing to say, “sure, give it a try, let’s see what happens.” Leaders “almost encourage it.”

FUTURE (2019):
Would be great not to care about what other schools are doing (including the rankings); just focus on Babson and the uniqueness of the environment.

Have to take the resources you have access to and be willing to try to use them differently.

Could see hiring staff in a different way by hiring staff with non-traditional backgrounds to fill traditional roles but would need to think about the impact on the students.
Administratively feels they are still behind the times but is starting to hire positions that are not totally developed yet and allow the position to grow as needed because there is a need to be nimble.
Fred: Summary
One-on-one in-person interview
Information Technology Division
Primary role: faculty and students

PAST (2009):
Initial reaction: it had a direct relationship to him and his team; saw a change in conversations and ideas that used to go nowhere instead saying, “okay, let’s throw it on the paper…virtual paper and see what sticks.” Started putting things out, seeing what happens, getting feedback, and take a more agile approach which was very different from the past.

Got things out the door faster to give something to react to rather than getting reactions to a number of potential actions that would need to be whittled down. Spend more time on the post and less time on the pre so it can be improved a second time. Strategy gave permission to take action rather than go through a long process. He and his group were excited because they say results, they had stuff to show.

Result was producing at a much higher, faster level; quality stayed the same.
Leadership (President) was “ra-ra” and it was infectious, everyone wanted to jump on board, buy-in, and get excited. This was true of other leaders as well. However, workload increased because of trying new things and failing and having to start over. Reflected on the landscape of technology to understand where it was going, thought about ways to be more transparent.

PRESENT (2014):
Working differently now and taking on a lot more. Take on major projects and just go with it figuring out how to resource it later as opposed to upfront (so less cautious than in the past where everything was planned out upfront). Increased confidence, ways to increase revenue streams (and quickly) and provide resources to the College which created a stronger bench for the institution.

See ET&A in projects like the HUB where they gather feedback from the end-users with focus groups and then make changes, they act, within a very short period of time. Also see ET&A in an approach from others on the team called “sprints” where the team agrees to work on something in a short period of time which he sees as an agile development shop which he notes they have never had before (past was a “waterfall” with a process and everything being followed exactly).

Leadership approach is modeling behavior by pushing down the concept of always providing the client with something to react to and then making the change. He uses the same concept in his own team thinking constantly about how to produce more, with the same quality, in a faster period of time. The group also spends time researching new technologies that can help support this approach; always evaluating the efficiencies with which they are doing things.

FUTURE (2019):
We need more office space…we are going to be so much larger in 2019 than we are today, additional staff. Our programs will look so different taking advantage of more of the blended
tools. The concept of blended learning will be out the window…”everything will be blended at that point.”

A sense that he and his team will not have to worry about their jobs if they keep doing good work because of the work they do and because “there is no end in sight…from the amount of stuff that’s going on…it’s just going to grow and grow and grow.”

It was mentioned that it is exciting to think about the future multiple times. Past President told him that there is always a place for Babson and he remembers this. Feels that traditional education will still exist though the delivery mechanisms will be different.

Big piece for the future is training – how to train the next generation of faculty so they can do more for themselves and have a higher level of technical knowledge. In the future there will be new tools to train on, training will not go away and needs to be a priority.

Does not feel the staff he hires needs to look different – need to be able to adapt to change quickly, flexible which are all things he feels like his group has today. The ability to train and communicate is as important in the future as it is today; as well as the ability to adapt and learn new technologies really fast, and accept the fact that technology can fail sometimes so move to plan B fast.
Nora: Summary
One-on-one in-person interview
Undergraduate School Division
Primary role: students

PAST (2009):
Reaction: being excited by the clarity because as a career center entrepreneurship was an ugly word for her team and was very difficult to translate to employers. The strategy branding “was a relief and was helpful” so people were excited. The group started thinking about how to talk to their students, who were still the same students, but help they understand how to talk about Babson in a way that differentiated them from other students in the interview process.

The strategy brought on lots of conversation on how to translate the message to their role in the college.

Did not see a lot of changes initially except for a natural increase in the number of students talking about a socially responsible career but felt that was the generations of students not necessarily an impact of the strategy. However, what did change was that “ET&A provided us a framework to continue to tell our stories.” She felt like they just needed to continue to map this out but they had already been doing this. However, they became a lot more intentional about how they spoke about it and drawing the parallels – felt it was great because it was the first time in a long time that the college had a common language.

Felt that leadership dug into it in meetings and that the former President was a real advocate for his own strategy – he was infectious, clear, and got people excited but not everyone agreed with him. Her direct leader was clear and helped the leadership team translate it together and she said it was fun.

Core takeaway was about action, “the ability to just take small steps…and do, do, do” which she felt was already an existing strength of the culture. Infused this discussion into her team’s conversation right away walking way with actionable items but talking openly about the fact they would mess up along the way and that was okay. She felt the team reacted well because they felt they could try something without being penalized.

PRESENT (2014):
Feel more comfortable with ET&A/strategy in the present; taking bigger risks than a few years ago, communicate well to each other, asking people to take on roles that push them out of their comfort zone and asking team for different skill sets. Everyone on the team is committed and on board but it there are still issues. The students are still the same but how they service them is better.

Feels that as a college they are intentional about what they do to infuse the concepts of ET&A including continuing conversations around the concept to keep it fresh.

Feels the leadership at her level works well together, speaks the language, and she does not worry but doesn’t see yet that there will be any top down voice around any of this (new
President) because she sees the focus starting to move towards other priorities. Uncertainty around whether she continues this work because she likes it and is passionate about it but that it is done on the side in the future as opposed to a primary goal – she is sensing this is the direction but notes she will need to see what happens.

FUTURE (2019):
Does not see major adjustments, just continuation of the work as they are currently doing it. Hopes that in the future her department will be seamless, that students will be completely engaged in her office throughout their four years, but no big changes.

At the college level, she felt that thinking about our brand and making sure that they are selling Babson as a solid, foundation business program with a flare because not everyone understands what entrepreneurship is when trying to place students in jobs.

Feels that the staff she hires will be completely different requiring the ability to self-direct, pushing forward an agenda, change the way they do their work, think differently about their work, communication at a higher level, and a better comfort in living in ambiguity. In addition, employees need to understand what is going on through the department to do their job successfully which is going to require a different set of skills.
Anna: Summary
One-on-one in-person interview
Undergraduate/Graduate School Divisions (shared services)
Primary role: students

PAST (2009):
Reaction: entrepreneurship piece was not new; it was always part of the culture as long as she had been there but that the exciting part was the social entrepreneurship piece. “…that reframing, or that sort of broadening if the definition felt wonderfully embracing and whole and in sync with things I deeply care about.” Loved the boldness of the statement… “sort of made me think about what Babson could be…what a leader’s vision can mean.” Felt there was expanded awareness about the college’s mission and vision and how they could articulate that to prospective students. Did not know if anyone got as enthusiastic as she did/does.

Felt that more things did not change than changed at this time because they had always been entrepreneurial but that the social entrepreneurship piece changed. Was not a new mission, what they had always done, but felt it was a clearer, more articulated umbrella for it.

Leadership cues were in the public messaging and the work that she could see happening on campus as well as the focus on action. Felt that there was explicit permission to be more experimental, to take action and learn from it, and that there was enthusiasm.

Her team had conversations around what it meant for them as a heavily operation-focused department and how ET&A could inform them. Most tangible thoughts were around initiatives happening through collaboration.

PRESENT (2014):
Not much is different because the culture was always strong. Sees a culture that is collaborative, cross-divisional lines, problem-solving, initiative, action orientation, passion which she notes is descriptive of entrepreneurship but also of a strong culture which has always been Babson.

The things that stand out are the boldness, the social entrepreneurship, framing and articulating that entrepreneurship can be taught and have a methodology. The culture was always there but it was changed in a way that emphasized and opened up areas – not sure if it is because the college is focused on entrepreneurship.

Thinks that what she has seen emerge at Babson could happen in other organizations that were not focused on entrepreneurship but says, “there’s something about here…the special…other things…”

Reference to trying something, learning from it, and building from there; feels that the initiatives that ask students to learn and translate it into their own lives are powerful and where she sees ET&A the most.

Leadership cues state that entrepreneurship is still the primary focus despite leadership changes but that the leadership styles are very different so that it is really a question mark still (although
she notes ways the current President is practicing entrepreneurship as she talks through her response).

FUTURE (2019):
Would love to see the College figure out a way to deliver a program that is financially sustainable; continuing to innovate on the delivery methods and not just the content so that they reach more people and that everyone has access to it/can afford it.

Does not feel her staff would look significantly different though would need a willingness to engage, the right attitude to embrace the complexity to make it work, ability to think about operational implications, and support of people. Balance between living in ambiguity and abiding my federal regulations – bridging this.

It would be challenging to figure out the operational pieces for inventing major new modes of delivery, programs, etc. but would also be exciting to be a part of it.
Joan: Summary
One-on-one in-person interview
Executive Education Division
Primary role: external (revenue driven)

PAST (2009):
Reaction: they division struggled because historically ET&A did not resonate well with corporations; took a while to figure out how to translate this concept to the corporate world. They had and still continue to get push-back that entrepreneurship is a start-up as a concept.

Felt that ET&A was foreign but over time was able to recognize the merits of small experimentation so individually she has become more comfortable with ET&A.

Hard to translate to her job at the time due to personality and her job role; as a group struggled to sort out how to translate into what they do.

When they took over another department on campus in 2010 it was a better lead-in for entrepreneurship and allowed them to build on that.

PRESENT (2014):
Much of the predictive responsibilities have stayed the same but for her and her department they have adopted is more experimentation (because of her role, feels she can only experiment to an extent).

Leader leads by examples and there is no concern over failure; more confident in experimentation.

“Worked really hard at translating how entrepreneurial thought and action and entrepreneurial leaders and social value can be translated to the corporate world.” Still have a number of people who don’t get what ET&A is (clients).

Loves seeing real ways that the institution is bringing entrepreneurship of all kinds to the world like social value and opportunities to be in Rwanda.

Seems to her like the current leadership is more focused externally whereas previous leadership was domestic (and international as well). Notes that with all the leadership changes we are likely going to struggle to stay on track or expand. Uncertainty (mentioned more than once) around how this will play out with current President but feels the institution is practical, adaptable, and nimble enough to react regardless of what happens.

Her leader focuses on financial as #1 so they do not turn work away that is not ET&A but they try to infuse it in what they do and extend their reach globally.

FUTURE (2019):
Feels a need to better figure out the online components because it will be huge in 2019 and feels they have not figured it out yet (and that the college is not ready for it).
Concerned about tuition dependency; college has challenges and hopes “that through our nimbleness and our ability to act and reflect and experiment will work towards addressing them.”

At the college level notes that a challenge is “our eyes are always bigger than our bellies.” Hard for people to walk away and say something is not working; need to establish a metric to experiment quicker; talk way too much sometimes as an organization.

Staff of the future would need to be: nimble, multi-task, work on competing and varied and complex priorities, requires a certain mindset, being comfortable with trying something and not being afraid of failure or the possibility of failure, ability to speak up when bored, and willingness to try new things.
APPENDIX F:
EXAMPLE OF CODING

Conclusion 1: Employees are thinking and working differently

Participant #1: Harry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>“What are we going to have to learn in order to do our jobs differently?”</td>
<td>WHAT DO WE HAVE TO LEARN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It was really just articulating what they’re doing in a different light”</td>
<td>ARTICULATING IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>“A little more okay…let’s try it…we are in a safe environment”</td>
<td>TRY</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culture has changed…”acceptance of failure”</td>
<td>SAFE ENVIRONMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>“I think…with the resources that we have, you have to be [uh] willing to just try to use them differently”</td>
<td>WILLING TO USE RESOURCES DIFFERENTLY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Would be fun to be able to say ‘I don’t care what other schools are doing’”</td>
<td>DON’T CARE ABOUT OTHER SCHOOLS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant #2: Fred

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>“Definite change…we started saying, okay, let’s throw it on the paper, virtual paper, and see what sticks”</td>
<td>DEFINITE CHANGE THROW IT ON THE PAPER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Helped us get out the door faster…got something out there”</td>
<td>GET OUT THE DOOR FASTER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>“We are working differently, in that, we are taking on a lot more.”</td>
<td>WORKING DIFFERENTLY TAKING ON MORE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We used to be a little more cautious”</td>
<td>USED TO BE MORE CAUTIOUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We’ve had an opportunity to bring in some resources…all of a sudden we’ve got a much stronger bench”</td>
<td>RESOURCES STRONGER BENCH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2019  “Everything will be blended at that point”

“Delivery mechanisms will certainly be different...classroom will be cooler...technology is going to be just critical.”

BLENDED
DELIVERY MECHANISMS DIFFERENT
CLASSROOM WILL BE COOLER
TECHNOLOGY CRITICAL

Participant #3: Nora

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>“ET&amp;A provided us a framework to continue to tell our stories.”</td>
<td>FRAMEWORK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“First time in a long time that we had, as a college, our common language”</td>
<td>COMMON LANGUAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>“I think we’ve gotten more comfortable in it...we’re taking bigger risks”</td>
<td>MORE COMFORTABLE BIGGER RISKS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We are intentionally building a curriculum, co-curriculum so that students are going to actually get ET&amp;A...that’s been really exciting”</td>
<td>INTENTIONAL GET ET&amp;A EXCITING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>“Continuing to do the work the way that we’re doing our work”</td>
<td>CONTINUE THE WORK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I do believe that ET&amp;A has allow our students to be thinking differently about these things. The pattern of reflection...and the increase in conversations about the importance of reflection is opening them up to some of that. So I hope that really is what, is the path that we continue to go down”</td>
<td>ET&amp;A ALLOWS DIFFERENT THINKING PATTERN OF REFLECTION REFLECTION CONVERSATIONS CONTINUED PATH</td>
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Participant #4: Joan

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>“We struggled because historically ET&amp;A doesn’t resonate well in corporations and so it took us a little while to get behind...how we</td>
<td>STRUGGLED TRANSLATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Quote</td>
<td>Code</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>“I don’t know if it changed that much…always been pretty nimble…we’ve always, you know, internally felt confident in the ability to try new programs, try new initiatives…”</td>
<td>DON’T KNOW IF IT CHANGED ALWAYS BEEN NIMBLE CONFIDENT TO TRY NEW THINGS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>“Trying to get not only people to think about ET&amp;A in relation to how they think about the course and how it’s designed, but also how you transfer that energy to the students…if we can’t be roles models on ET&amp;A, like how will you expect the students to respond”</td>
<td>TRANSFER ENERGY ROLE MODELS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…embarked on this project of how does that resonate with students,…cultural shift…gets this language of understanding entrepreneurship like into their minds right away”</td>
<td>CULTURAL SHIFT LANGUAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>…just more collaboration…”</td>
<td>COLLABORATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>“It can be costly on so many different…</td>
<td>COSTLY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
levels…we’d have to be ready to sustain it over a systematic period of time because…there’s a lot of costs…what I am trying to envision is how do you, how does this, that, that, sustain itself over a long period of time?”

Participant #6: Anna

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>“A lot of things didn’t change…we’ve always been entrepreneurial…always been, you know, sort of part of the culture”</td>
<td>LOTS OF THINGS DIDN’T CHANGE ALWAYS BEEN ENT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“There absolutely were conversations about [um] what does this mean for us…that are ways that entrepreneurial thought and action can inform a heavily operations focused area.”</td>
<td>CONVERSATIONS WHAT DOES THIS MEAN ET&amp;I CAN INFORM HEAVILY OPERATIONS FOCUSED AREA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>“it’s collaborative, it’s cross divisional lines, problem solving, its initiative…action orientation…these are all descriptive of entrepreneurship but they’re not very different than a strong culture”</td>
<td>COLLABORATIVE CROSS DIVISIONAL LINES PROBLEM-SOLVING INITIATIVE ACTION ORIENTATION DESCRIPTIVE OF ENT. STRONG CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>“I would love if there to be a, a, you know sort of fabulous new [uh] way we figure out to deliver a program that is in, in a more financially sustainable way”</td>
<td>FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Continuing to innovate around, you know, sort of delivery not just the content but the delivery methods in ways that reaches more people that [uh] can be [uh] done economically [um] that everybody could have access to it and afford it”</td>
<td>INNOVATE DELIVERY NOT JUST CONTEXT DELIVERY METHODS REACH MORE PEOPLE ECONOMICALLY EVERYBODY COULD HAVE ACESS AFFORD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion 2: Leadership plays a key role making sense of the shift

Participant #1: Harry
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>“[Former President] was modeling the behavior...done very intentionally with a lot of conversations around why”</td>
<td>MODELING BEHAVIOR INTENTIONAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>“[Current supervisor] definitely more willing to say, sure, give it a try, let’s see what happens”&lt;br&gt;“I mean, I think the leaders are...they almost encourage it”</td>
<td>MORE WILLING TO TRY LEADERS ENCOURAGE IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>“Administratively, I think to some degree we’re still behind the times...it’s very difficult to think about what the next thing is”</td>
<td>BEHIND THE TIMES ADMIN. DIFFICULT TO THINK ABOUT THE NEXT THING</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant #2: Fred

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>“A little bit of ‘ra-ra’ meaning like that come on board, that’s exciting...the [former President] was very much that way, you know, and that was infectious”&lt;br&gt;“I think people wanted to jump on board and were willing to buy-in to a lot of this because of the way [the former President] sort of got people excited about it”&lt;br&gt;“Trickled down to my directors at the time and other leaders”</td>
<td>RA-RA EXCITING INFECTIOUS JUMP ON BOARD/BUY-IN TRICKLED DOWN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>“Agile approach...gets stuff out there, get reaction and then change...from our [VP] and brought down.”&lt;br&gt;“Always talking about our strategy”</td>
<td>AGILE REACTION CHANGE BROUGHT DOWN TALKING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>“I remember [the former President] saying it full, very clearly, there is always going to be a place for Babson.”</td>
<td>A PLACE FOR BABSON</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant #3: Nora

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>“Pretty apparent...this wasn’t [um] rolled out quietly which was great because I think in a lot of</td>
<td>PRETTY APPARENT NOT ROLLED OUT QUIETLY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participant #4: Joan

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>“[My supervisor] leads by example…there’s not a concern over failure”</td>
<td>LEAD BY EXAMPLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I loved the opportunity to see [senior leader] in action…ways that we as an institution are bringing…entrepreneurship of all kinds to the world”</td>
<td>LACK OF CONERN OVER FAILURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Seems like our current leadership is more focused externally…so many changes that are taking place in leadership…we’re going to struggle a little bit to either stay on track or expand…I don’t know how that’s going to play out”</td>
<td>HELPED BRING SOCIAL VALUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BRINGING ENT. TO THE WORLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>“[The former President] was a real advocate for his own strategy…you heard him talk about it and he was infectious…he was somebody who was not only clear about this is what we’re doing but was [um] really about to get people excited about it”</td>
<td>LEADERSHIP FOCUSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I do believe that the [former President’s] departure [um] this was still here (reference to the strategy document)”</td>
<td>EXTERNALLY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I do think that [um] without this kind of larger direction top down we’re going to continue to do the work the way that we do it”</td>
<td>LEADERSHIP CHANGES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I don’t yet see that there’s gonna be any top down voice around any of this…I don’t know that…I can see the focus starting to both towards other priorities”</td>
<td>STRUGGLE</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>STAY ON TRACK</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DON’T KNOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SEE SHIFTING FOCUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2019  “I do worry...[the former President] was someone who had a huge cabinet...and [the current President] seems to be someone who has a smaller and yet...I am purposely keeping a low profile...so I don’t really know...would seem that that might offer some advantages”  WORRY

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“If I remember at the time, I mean, part of our message is just don’t be afraid, like, there’s support here if, even if things go wrong”</td>
<td>SUPPORT DON’T BE AFRAID CONFIDENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“[Supervisor] at the time was supportive of any entrepreneurial, but, and he was very, and still is very entrepreneurial himself...I mean we certainly just looking above felt confident that you know he was, he was setting the right tone at the time”</td>
<td>SUPPORTIVE OF ET&amp;A ENT. HIMSELF CONFIDENCE IN LEADERSHIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The very top, I don’t know if it’s totally understood just yet but...so much leadership change in such a short period of time that you got to give people some time...”</td>
<td>DON’T KNOW IF TOP LEADERSHIP UNDERSTANDS LEADERSHIP CHANGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“[New supervisor] gets it...right on board with the rate of change and things that need to be updated and refreshed...”</td>
<td>GETS IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…from above the leadership has to decide exactly where on that intersection do we lie where we can foster the spirit of entrepreneurship and in such a way that the institution can just sort of handle it...we’ve sort of been doing it anyway...I think it is quite possible that we’ll continue on this trajectory”</td>
<td>LEADERSHIP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Participant #6: Anna

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I think the cues where in the [uh] the public messaging...focus on action...opposed to [um] theorizing...I think gave us...explicit permission to be more experimental”</td>
<td>FOCUS ON ACTION EXPLICIT PERMISSION MORE EXPERIMENTAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I hear his voice” (former President)</td>
<td>HEAR HIS VOICE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>“I do see in here consistently is that we are</td>
<td>CONSISTENLY</td>
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</table>
continuing with the entrepreneurship being a primary mission…so we’re not changing the mission…but it’s a question mark.”

“[My supervisor] is just well [uh] it’s funny cuz he is entrepreneurial in a million little ways…he never made a very big proclamation…he’s like the practice of it times 10 in one person”

2019 “I don’t know if it’s harder or easier to be entrepreneurial in a sort of stressful transition”

Thinking Differently:
1. Figuring out how to translate/articulate what we are doing in a different light = common language
2. Taking more chances/risk/trying more things – comfort in experimentation
3. More comfortable/acceptance of failure
4. Doing more/working faster
APPENDIX G:

DATA ANALYSIS EXAMPLE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Characteristics of Sensemaking Property</th>
<th>Analytical Questions Informing Research</th>
<th>Examples of work shifts in order to make sense of the strategy (FRED)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grounded in Identity Construction</td>
<td>Being aware of one’s self-concept and identity; being able to understand how one’s self-concept can shift depending on the environment and circumstances.</td>
<td>What is your role in the college strategy? How do you fit? Is your identity impacted by how others view the organization?</td>
<td>“For us it comes down to how can we produce more, you know, at the same quality level today that we, that we did yesterday. You know, and, so that’s something that we are always talking about and, you know, our strategy around that is, you know, to get it out there, get it done…find the technologies that will allow you to produce it faster”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retrospective</td>
<td>The ability to look back and reflect in a timely fashion to create clarity and order.</td>
<td>Are you working differently because of the new College strategy?</td>
<td>“Definite change…we started saying, okay, let’s throw it on the paper, virtual paper, and see what sticks”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enactive of Sensible Environments</td>
<td>Being aware of how individual actions impact the environment one operates within.</td>
<td>Do you allow yourself time to reflect on the new strategy? Have you taken active steps to change how you approach your work?</td>
<td>“We are working differently, in that, we are taking on a lot more.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“We’ve had an opportunity to bring in some”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Being aware of how social interactions impact the environment one operates within.</td>
<td>Do you work in an environment where your colleagues and leaders support the new strategic direction in both words and action?</td>
<td>“I think people wanted to jump on board and were willing to buy-in to a lot of this because of the way [the former President] sort of got people excited about it”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Being aware of the continuous and ongoing nature of the process of sensemaking and the impact that both positive and negative emotion have on this process.</td>
<td>Do you have the resources and leadership to support this shift in strategy?</td>
<td>“Agile approach…gets stuff out there, get reaction and then change…from our [VP] and brought down.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused on and by Extracted Cues</td>
<td>Being aware of cues and how one interprets these cues to derive meaning.</td>
<td>What is the leadership telling you in words and actions?</td>
<td>“A little bit of ‘ra-ra’ meaning like that come on board, that’s exciting…the [former President] was very much that way, you know, and that was infectious”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driven by Plausibility Rather than Accuracy</td>
<td>Focusing more on what is understandable and believable as opposed to accuracy.</td>
<td>Do you have a good understanding of the strategic direction even if you don’t fully understand the detailed strategy?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>Characteristics of Sensemaking Property</td>
<td>Analytical Questions Informing Research</td>
<td>Examples of work shifts in order to make sense of the strategy (NORA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounded in Identity Construction</td>
<td>Being aware of one’s self-concept and identity; being able to understand how one’s self-concept can shift depending on the environment and circumstances.</td>
<td>What is your role in the college strategy? How do you fit? Is your identity impacted by how others view the organization?</td>
<td>“Had to think about…how do we talk to our students who are still saying this is what they want to do and help them to now understand how do you talk about Babson as a differentiator for yourself…brought a lot of churn”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retrospective</td>
<td>The ability to look back and reflect in a timely fashion to create clarity and order.</td>
<td>Are you working differently because of the new College strategy?</td>
<td>“ET&amp;A provided us a framework to continue to tell our stories.”</td>
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<td>Enactive of Sensible Environments</td>
<td>Being aware of how individual actions impact the environment one operates within.</td>
<td>Do you allow yourself time to reflect on the new strategy? Have you taken active steps to change how you approach your work?</td>
<td>“We immediately infused this into our own conversation…this is giving us a format to say, you know, try something think about those, what do you have for resources around it and take action on it?”</td>
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<td>Social</td>
<td>Being aware of how social interactions impact the environment one operates within.</td>
<td>Do you work in an environment where your colleagues and leaders support the new strategic direction in both words and action?</td>
<td>“[The former President] was a real advocate for his own strategy…you heard him talk about it and he was infectious…he was somebody”</td>
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<td><strong>Ongoing</strong></td>
<td>Being aware of the continuous and ongoing nature of the process of sensemaking and the impact that both positive and negative emotion have on this process.</td>
<td>Do you have the resources and leadership to support this shift in strategy?</td>
<td>“I don’t yet see that there’s gonna be any top down voice around any of this…I don’t know that…I can see the focus starting to both towards other priorities”</td>
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<td><strong>Focused on and by Extracted Cues</strong></td>
<td>Being aware of cues and how one interprets these cues to derive meaning.</td>
<td>What is the leadership telling you in words and actions?</td>
<td>“I do think that [um] without this kind of larger direction top down we’re going to continue to do the work the way that we do it”</td>
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<td><strong>Driven by Plausibility Rather than Accuracy</strong></td>
<td>Focusing more on what is understandable and believable as opposed to accuracy.</td>
<td>Do you have a good understanding of the strategic direction even if you don’t fully understand the detailed strategy?</td>
<td>“I don’t know that it’s about major adjustments. I actually believe that it is about continuing to do the work the way we’re doing our work.”</td>
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<td>Property</td>
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<td>Analytical Questions Informing Research</td>
<td>Examples of work shifts in order to make sense of the strategy (JOAN)</td>
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<td>What is your role in the college strategy? How do you fit? Is your identity impacted by how others view the organization?</td>
<td>“It took us a little while to get behind the…how we could [um] translate that to the corporate world.”</td>
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<td>Retrospective</td>
<td>The ability to look back and reflect in a timely fashion to create clarity and order.</td>
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<td>Being aware of how individual actions impact the environment one operates within.</td>
<td>Do you allow yourself time to reflect on the new strategy? Have you taken active steps to change how you approach your work?</td>
<td>“I think we as a group were struggling to sort of how we could translate that into what we do, given the resistance that we’ve had.” “I think for myself and my department and what we’ve [um] sort of adopted is more the experimentation”</td>
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<td>Being aware of how social interactions impact the environment one operates within.</td>
<td>Do you work in an environment where your colleagues and leaders support the new strategic direction in both words and action?</td>
<td>“[My supervisor] leads by example…there’s not a concern over failure”</td>
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<td>Being aware of the continuous and ongoing nature of the process of sensemaking and the impact that both positive and negative emotion have on this process.</td>
<td>Do you have the resources and leadership to support this shift in strategy?</td>
<td>“Seems like our current leadership is more focused externally…so many changes that are taking place in leadership…we’re going to struggle a little bit to either stay on track or expand…I don’t know how that’s going to play out”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focused on and by Extracted Cues</td>
<td>Being aware of cues and how one interprets these cues</td>
<td>What is the leadership telling you in words and</td>
<td>“I loved the opportunity to see [senior leader] in action…ways that we as an</td>
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to derive meaning.  
actions?
institution are bringing…entrepreneurship of all kinds to the world”

“I do worry…[the former President] was someone who had a huge cabinet…and [the current President] seems to be someone who has a smaller and yet…I am purposely keeping a low profile…so I don’t really know…would seem that that might offer some advantages”

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<th>Do you have a good understanding of the strategic direction even if you don’t fully understand the detailed strategy?</th>
<th>“I think we have become…more…confident in experimentation. I think we have worked really hard at translating how ET&amp;A and entrepreneurial leaders and social value can be translated to the corporate world”</th>
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<td>What is your role in the college strategy? How do you fit? Is your identity impacted by how others view the organization?</td>
<td>“Trying to get not only people to think about ET&amp;A in relation to how they think about the course and how it’s designed, but also how you transfer that energy to the students…if we can’t be roles models on ET&amp;A, like how will you expect the students to respond”</td>
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<td>The ability to look back and reflect in a timely fashion to create clarity and order.</td>
<td>Are you working differently because of the new College strategy?</td>
<td>“I don’t know if it changed that much…always been pretty nimble…we’ve always, you know, internally felt confident in the ability to try new programs, try new initiatives…”</td>
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<td>Do you allow yourself time to reflect on the new strategy? Have you taken active steps to change how you approach your work?</td>
<td>“Perhaps the only thing that changed on or around that time was the language was more familiar…now there was a name and a brand to associate with”</td>
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<td>Do you work in an environment where your colleagues and leaders support the new strategic direction in both words and action?</td>
<td>“Part of our message is just don’t be afraid [like] there’s support here even if things go wrong.”</td>
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<td>Do you have the resources and leadership to support this shift in strategy?</td>
<td>“[My supervisor] was supportive of any entrepreneurial, but, and he was very, and still is very entrepreneurial himself...just looking above felt confident that you know he was, he was setting the right tone at the time”</td>
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<td>What is the leadership telling you in words and actions?</td>
<td>“...the very top, I don’t know if it’s totally understood just yet but...there’s been so much leadership change in such a short period of time that you’ve got to give people some time and space to sort of figure it all out.”</td>
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<td>“The [new supervisor] you know, he gets”</td>
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Driven by Plausibility Rather than Accuracy | Focusing more on what is understandable and believable as opposed to accuracy. | Do you have a good understanding of the strategic direction even if you don’t fully understand the detailed strategy? | “Our focus is on the curriculum and so the whole entrepreneurship brand, flavor, spirit has always been there…not foreign to us.” | it…he’s right on board with the rate of change and things that need to be updated and refreshed.” |
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<td>“I think it gave us…explicit permission to be [uh] more experimental”</td>
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<td>Are you working differently because of the new College strategy?</td>
<td>“A lot of things didn’t change…because we’ve always been entrepreneurial…always been, you know, sort of part of the culture. The key things that did change, you know, about social entrepreneurship…we’re part of a the community, we support students…it’s really fun…almost like in a kind of an affiliated role.”</td>
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<td>Do you allow yourself time to reflect on the new strategy? Have you taken active steps to change how you approach your work?</td>
<td>“There absolutely were conversations about [um] what does this mean for us…that this can, that are ways that entrepreneurial thought and action can inform a heavily operation focused area.”</td>
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The ongoing nature of the process of sensemaking and the impact that both positive and negative emotion have on this process. Leadership to support this shift in strategy? Him doing… I was witnessed to.

“I hear his (former President) voice, you know what I mean?”

Focused on and by Extracted Cues

Being aware of cues and how one interprets these cues to derive meaning. What is the leadership telling you in words and actions?

“What I do see in here consistently is that we are continuing with the entrepreneurship being a primary mission. So we are not changing the mission and so that’s what I hear.”

“I’m a little bit removed from the discussion about the transition to know what’s happening and to, and whether they are indeed, you know, sort of entrepreneurship principles…but it’s a question mark…”

Driven by Plausibility Rather than Accuracy

Focusing more on what is understandable and believable as opposed to accuracy. Do you have a good understanding of the strategic direction even if you don’t fully understand the detailed strategy?

“There was mostly an awareness, about what the college is, mission and vision wise…the expanded awareness that we tried in our ways to help articulate to prospective students…we’re always trying to represent the college.”