AN EXAMINATION OF EMPLOYERS’ PERCEPTIONS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CAREER SERVICES WHEN RECRUITING COLLEGE GRADUATES

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Abstract

At no other time in history has the value of a college degree and its applicability to employment been questioned as it is today. Most universities have a team of career services professionals focused on assisting students with obtaining employment. Numerous studies have focused on student skills set and documented the impact it has on employability. This qualitative study examined the perceptions of what employers valued in regards to services provided to them from a career services office when hiring college students. Participants were talent acquisition professionals who actively hired graduates at a large private university in the Northeast. The strategy of inquiry was an interpretative phenomenological analysis utilizing a theoretical framework of organizational culture and effectiveness based on four different cultural traits: involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission identified by Denison (1990). The results identified five broad themes and thirteen subthemes as important to employers when hiring college graduates. The first theme identified was Strategic Functionality with three subthemes: Centralized Services, Access to Leadership and Access to Students. The second theme was Student with three subthemes: Providing Understanding of Student Expectations, Provide Knowledge of Student Beyond Transcript, Provide Assistance with Accessibility on Campus. The third theme was Organizational Parallelism with three subthemes: Mutual Organizational Understanding, Opportunities for Alignment, Alignment with Alumnus and Leadership. The fourth theme identified was Customer Centric with three subthemes: Simplified Process, Employee Skill Sets, and Ability to Create Change. The fifth and last theme that was identified was Organizational Learning with four subthemes: Sharing Intelligence, Building Expertise within Faculty, Provide Online Learning and Training, Support Institution with Industry Experts.
Key words: employability, career services office, college talent acquisition, organizational culture, organizational effectiveness
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There is an Indian proverb that states “where love reigns the impossible may be attained” and I believe this proverb best describes my educational journey. I attained the impossible because of love. The love of my husband, who is my strongest supporter, who never allowed me to give up on myself. Thank you, Mike, for always lifting me up and for loving your wife so much she attained the impossible. My two sons, Michael and Brendan, who when I enrolled were shorter than me and now I look up to see their faces. Thank you, my sons, for being amazing, beautiful, and thoughtful young men who loved their mom so much she attained the impossible. My parents, Brendan and Mary, who immigrated over 50 years to the United States with nothing but a determination to succeed because they loved their daughter so much, she achieved the impossible. My in-laws, Helen and Bob, for breaking all the rules when it comes to in-laws and for loving your daughter-in-law so much she attained the impossible. To my tribe of girlfriends for embracing me and for always surrounding me with your sisterly love because of all of you, your friend, achieved the impossible. To Dr. Jane Lohmann, a faculty member at Northeastern, who showed me love at a time when I suffered a serious injury and was ready give up. Because of her humanity and kindness, her student, achieved the impossible. To my classmate, Sheri, because of our shared “JOY, JOY, JOY” together, we attained the impossible. To my advisor, Dr. Joe McNabb, for always finding the positive because of you, your student, attained the impossible. Lastly, for the employers who took the time to speak to me while traveling all over the country, I am indebted and I attained the impossible because of you.
Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation to my husband, Michael Dumas. Officially, for the past 27 years we have shared each other’s joys, sorrows and pains and this journey was no different. You were there from the beginning supporting me, offering advice, and running our house and family without hesitation. I could not have done it with you, I am grateful for the day I met you and for everyday together. Thank you, my partner and my love.
Recent college graduates are challenged to find employment directly from college (Abel & Deitz, 2014; Arum & Roksa, 2014; Jones & Schmitt, 2014; Stone, Van Horn & Zukin, 2012). This challenge is exacerbated when students are graduating from a less prestigious school and other factors, such as, being first generation and not having access to individuals who have graduated from college to network with when seeking employment (Carnevale & Cheah, 2013; Grusky, Bird, Rodriguez & Wimer, 2013; Raque-Bogdan, & Lucas, 2016). In addition, students are overwhelmed with the process of finding employment upon graduation. Understanding how to begin the process is paralyzing to most graduates. A more efficient career services office that offers services that employers value could provide students with a distinct advantage when searching for employment (McGrath, 2002). Conversely, employers are challenged with limited budgets and the need to hire recent graduates from multiple schools. The traditional requirements that are valued by employers include: GPA, major, work experience, and experiences that exhibit leadership traits. All of these requirements are focused on the student skill set but ignore the process of hiring and what a college can do to assist students with their employment search. Career services departments attempt to fill any gaps that the students may have by providing services that assist soon to be graduates with the transition from college to full time employment.

The purpose of this study is to investigate which services offered by career services offices at large university in the Northeast assist employers with hiring graduates. At this stage in the research, the central phenomenon being investigated is the relationship between career
services offices and recruiters. Specifically, what services offered are valued the most by employers and what do they identify as most helpful in recruiting students at a large, private university in the Northeast. Knowledge generated from this study is expected to inform and benefit employers, students, and career services offices within universities. Employers and students will benefit from a more efficient office and career services offices will be able to use the research to determine what are the appropriate services necessary to meet the needs of employers while assisting students in obtaining employment upon graduation.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the research related to a higher education career services office to provide context and background to the study. The rationale and significance of the study is discussed next, drawing connections to potential beneficiaries of the work. The problem statement, purpose statement, and research questions are presented to focus and ground the study. Finally, the theoretical framework, Denison’s (1990) model of organizational culture and effectiveness, that serves as a lens for the study is introduced and explained.

**Context and Background**

Since the recession in 2008, college graduates have been faced with a highly competitive job market (Grusky, Bird, Rodriguez & Wimer, 2013). While college graduates are less challenged than high school graduates, they still suffer from lower wages and reduced employment. Research has shown that it is significantly more challenging for recent college graduates to obtain full time employment than it has been historically. In a study conducted by Abel, Deitz and Su (2014), current college graduates face underemployment and low wages compared to students who have graduated over the past two decades. Moreover, the impact of
the recession has led to recent graduates accepting jobs for which they are considered to be overeducated (Clark, Joubert & Maurel, 2014). Even more troubling research conducted by Kahn (2010) has proven a long term negative impact on students who graduate during a recession. All of these difficulties have placed significant scrutiny of the value of a college degree. Students, parents and employers have questioned the investment of college degree and if it is worth the expense and commitment of time.

Employers have identified gaps in the skill set of recent graduates and they have questioned the model that currently exists within higher education in assuring graduates have the necessary education to obtain employment (Aistrich, Saghafi & Sciglimpaglia, 2006). As employers have identified significant gaps in the skills of graduates and they have also highlighted universities unwillingness to respond to these gaps. Career Services Offices have played a significant role more recently in higher education as the department that is focused on the transition of graduates to industry (Chan and Derry, 2013). Historically, the role of the career service offices has provided an added value to a student’s education. Over a hundred years ago, at the University of Cincinnati, Herman Schneider, was the first to provide the framework to address the need of connecting students to industry with the first cooperative education program in the United States (Cedercreutz and Cates, 2010). Since then cooperative education has grown significantly within universities along with the need for career services offices. Muller (1989) identified early on a need for a more organized and consistent office to ensure quality in an internship or cooperative education experience for students. Career Services Offices have been designed to meet the growing needs of college students as they transition into the real world whether for full time employment or cooperative education as such it is the necessary conduit for students and employers.
In addition to providing cooperative education, a well-designed experiential education model can enhance the reputation and the brand of a university significantly. Over 40 years ago, a career development program was built into a business school at Northeastern University (Bowman, Croke, Higgins & Porter, 1975). Since then this model has been used to provide the foundation and reputation enhancement needed to build Northeastern University from a local school servicing veterans to a nationally ranked research institution. Career Services Offices can provide important resources and knowledge to both students and employers in obtaining both coops and internships. They work explicitly with employers in identifying students for these opportunities. Consequently, the Career Services Office can provide a competitive advantage for a university and to graduates when seeking employment if they are positioned strongly in providing the services required of employers to assist students with finding employment upon graduation.

There is an abundance of research on how a student can prepare for the job search and what skill sets are necessary to obtain employment upon graduation. Students who show command in technical skills, in addition to degree attainment, are more sought after by employers (Blair, Millea & Hammer, 2004). Moreover, students who have attained a high GPA are valued by employers. Employers also seek students who exhibit leadership skills (Bacon & Bean, 2006). Lastly, students who have some form of work experience whether it was internship or coop have an advantage from the employer perspective in regards to preferential hiring (Burgess, 2005; Gault, Redington & Schlager, 2000). As stated, most of the research is focused on skills a student can attain to assist them with employment; there is limited research that has shown what a career services office can do to assist students with this transition and specifically what employers will value.
The challenge when building a career services office is determining what services to offer both students and employers. Most career services offices provide a full range of services but there is a significant gap in services among universities. The gap is exacerbated by universities not providing significant staffing or sufficient budgets required to meet the needs of both students and employers. In addition, some universities provide a decentralized model that dilutes the impact of the services and can lead to inconsistencies in services between colleges with one university. Moreover, career services offices organizationally can be found in many different areas of a university including: academics, administration, student affairs and student advising offices. There is a lack of alignment within universities which can lead to misleading goals and a lack of overarching priorities. In addition, the lack of hierarchal alignment can foster internal competition between colleges resulting in a confusing message to employers. Lastly, there is an inadequacy of measurement in regards to the value of these services (Engelland, Workman & Singh, 2002). Career Services Offices provide a valuable contribution to both student and employers in administering quality career advising and systematic programing but it is a complex challenge to identify what services are most important to the employers.

**Rationale and Significance**

The rationale for this study is the researcher’s interest in expanding research on the effectiveness of career services offices within higher education. An abundance of services is provided to employers and students by college career services, but an analysis and research of what services are valued by employers is limited (Finch, Nadeau & O’Reilly, 2012). Employers and universities do not communicate or utilize each other’s rich knowledge base. Employers spend a great deal of funding to recruit college graduates and the services they experience from
each university career services office differ greatly. Career Services Offices face many challenges in working with employers to identify candidates who meet their requirement. At times, employers place unrealistic expectations on a small staff within a career services office and they are ineffective in communicating their needs. Both constituents have a shared goal of assisting students in finding full time employment upon graduation but a misunderstanding of what is important can lead to poor services by the career services office to both students and employers. Research that identifies the services that employers value could assist both employers and universities with student recruitment. In addition, students are overwhelmed with the process of finding employment upon graduation. Conversely, career services offices can experience disapproval and criticism by administration if there is a decrease in employment of graduates. This research could provide information in regards to services offered by a college to streamline the employment search for both students and employers while also assisting career services offices in providing more effective services to result in a higher level of employment for graduates.

Broader implications of the study could provide further research on the theory of organizational culture and the subsequent impact on organizational effectiveness in higher education. Much of the current research is focused on corporate business and there is limited research on nonprofits and more specifically highlighting efforts by universities and colleges (Weick, 1976; Cameron, 1981; Hoy & Ferguson, 1985). The study could advance the use of organizational effectiveness as a framework for research focused on colleges. Colleges and universities will continue to feel the pressure to demonstrate their value and the resulting student outcomes to such outside constituents as the federal government, prospective students and parents (Archibald & Feldman, 2006; Gumport, 2000). The possibility of using organizational
effectiveness to provide a higher level of services to employers will be highly sought after by institutions because of the potential impact on students’ attainment of employment at graduation.

**Research Problem and Research Question**

Historically, research on organizational culture has focused on the internal values of an organization and the impact it has on the organizations system (Weber, 1930; Mead, 1934; Blau & Scott, 1962). Abundance of research and literature focuses on defining an organization and the systems within it, but it is more recent research that focuses on an organizations culture and the impact culture has on the organizations effectiveness and performance. Using this recent literature, a study focused on the organizational culture of a career services office and its impact on organizational effectiveness will be relevant and significant to many audiences within higher education.

Research within higher education has focused on skill sets that students have that employers value and the influence of such factors as GPA, major and internship experiences on employability of recent graduates. There is limited research on what the employers value in regards to services from higher education career services offices and how a change of services could improve employability of graduates. As such, the guiding question for this research study is: How do recruiters perceive and describe the value of the services provided by a career services office?

**Definition of Key Terminology**

The following terms are defined to offer context of this dissertation.
Career Services Office - An office at a university or college that is focused primarily on providing knowledge and skills to college students that will assist them in transitioning from college to the professional world by providing the conduit for students and employers.

Career Services - Services vary extensively from different colleges but can include career advising, job skills training, job related resources, internship/cooperative experiences, career fairs, on campus recruiting and employer relations.

Cooperative Education (Coop) - A partnership between an employer, a student and a university to provide a structured, authentic learning experience in the real world for college students that is focused on the discipline of the student to enhance theory learned in the classroom (Cates & Jones, 1999).

Employers - Human Resource Professionals who recruit mainly on college campuses to hire college graduates into management training programs or full-time positions within their organizations.

Internship - The National Association of Colleges and Employers define an internship as a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting.

Organizational Culture - the fundamental core of an organizations function and effectiveness as exhibited by beliefs, assumptions and values shared by the members (Hatch, 1993; Schein, 1984)

Organizational effectiveness - utilizing the organizations culture as a driver for achieving an organization’s objectives and providing solutions to problems (Denison, 1990; Schein, 1984)

Theoretical Framework
This study was viewed through the lens of organizational effectiveness and it used theory that supports organizational effectiveness and organizational culture. Specifically, this paper built on a model of organizational culture and effectiveness based on four different cultural traits of organizations: involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission identified by Denison (1990) to determine how these traits impact the effectiveness of a career services office as perceived by employers. The researcher developed research questions to study employers’ perception of these four traits of Denison’s integrative framework and their relation to perceived organizational effectiveness. By using Denison’s (1990) integrative framework, it allows the researcher to limit the scope of the study and to also build upon recognized work.

Denison’s theory of organizational culture and effectiveness began with Weber (1922) a sociologist who organized the term bureaucracy and applied it to the functions of an organization. Additional research was conducted by Mead (1934), who identified the role of the individual in an organization. Schein (1984) is a seminal author who has written extensively on the topic of organizational culture. He describes organizational culture as a set of assumptions that are shared within a group. He refers to an organizational culture as a “coping mechanism” for a group responding to a set of experiences. He describes a set of norms that are established by a group that addresses both internal and external problems. These actions result in an organizational culture that is shared within the group and leads to consistent behavior and adherence to a specific set of norms. Schein’s work in organizational culture led to the belief that the functions of an organization are embedded in their output or organizational effectiveness (Yilmaz & Ergun, 2008). The traits established by Denison (1990) are critical to the functions of an organization and its culture (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985; Schein, 2010).
Denison (1990), focused his work on organizational culture and organizational effectiveness by providing a theoretical framework that studied four cultural traits. Specifically, using the traits as representation of the values and beliefs of the organization, Denison studies the correlation of an organization’s culture and its impact on organizational effectiveness. The traits were defined as involvement, consistency, adaptability and mission (Denison, 1990; Denison & Mishra, 1995; Denison & Neal, 1996). These cultural traits were proven to be the foundation to an organization’s culture and its ability to function well and effectively. Results of Denison and Mishra’s follow up work, illustrated that cultural traits can be used as “predictors of performance and effectiveness” (p. 204). Denison’s additional research repeatedly provides consistent proof that these cultural traits can be used as measurement of performance and organizational effectiveness (Fey & Denison, 2003; Denison, Haaland, & Goelzer, 2004).

The purpose of this study is to understand how higher education can support employers in recruiting students on campus through an effective and efficient career services office. The research question is specifically, “what traits do effective career services offices have that assist employers in recruiting students on campus”? This question utilizes culture and organizational effectiveness theoretical framework and grounds the research in a clear narrative that explicitly explains the constructs.

Specifically, the cultural traits provided a framework to investigate which specific services offered by career services offices at a large, private university in the Northeast assist employers with hiring graduates. The traits measure the strengths and weakness of the career services office from both an external and internal orientation as perceived by the employers. Relationships among the cultural traits is critical and should sustain a model that results in identifying the performance of the career services office that is consistent with the beliefs of the
employers. The researcher analyzed employers’ responses to questions about the specific traits to identify the predictors of performance that employers value in the career services office of a large, private university in the Northeast. All four cultural traits must be measured and identified as each has an equal impact on the effectiveness of the organization (Fey & Denison, 2003).

In conclusion, the choice of Culture Effectiveness and Organizational Effectiveness theory appears to be the appropriate framework for this study. Specifically, a clear validated method of measurement provided by Denison (1990) illustrates the connectedness between culture and organizational effectiveness. In addition, Denison’s (1990) definition and proven research of the four cultural traits and the relation the traits have on effectiveness is critical to this research. Likewise, Denison has created a multi-faceted framework for measuring the impact of culture on organizational effectiveness. The framework provides a broad range to measure operational effectiveness of the career services office from both an external and internal exploration. An analysis of the traits and the impact they have on effectiveness as perceived by the employers provides the study with a proven guide to identify the processes at a career services office in the Northeast that employers’ values.

Critical of Theory

Measuring an organization’s cultural impact on organizational effectiveness has many critics. The major deterrent is that there is not one common approach that is accepted that can be applied to all organizations. Theorists have used several key indicators to measure an organization’s performance but not one accepted criteria of measurement have been accepted. (Cameron, 1980; Ostroff & Schmitt, 1993). These indicators of strong performance suggested by research may be used to illustrate effective performance but may not necessarily receive full
agreement from experts. Different models may measure “competing values’ within an organization but agreement on selection of the model is challenging (Ostroff & Schmitt, p. 291). Denison’s (1990) theory is no exception, there are several critics of his theory and its applicability.

Measuring organizational effectiveness is “multidimensional” and the output for studying it cannot be done without a theoretical framework as a conceptual construct (Hoy & Ferguson, 1985). A criticism of Denison’s work is that the selection of cultural traits is limiting the scope of the research (Yilmaz & Ergun, 2008). Because the cultural traits address large number of performance indicators the results could be viewed as narrow and constrictive. Yilmaz & Ergun suggest that a wider more robust set of cultural traits should be used to examine a larger area of organizational effectiveness (p.291).

A second criticism of Denison’s work is the equal importance of all of the cultural traits (Yilmaz & Ergun, 2008; Gregory, Harris, Armenakis & Shook, 2008). The challenge when using the four cultural traits is ensuring that one trait is not emphasized more than the others. The system works when all four are balanced and one does not supersede the other. Critics point to the fact that organizations have many challenges to perform effectively and internal and external forces may apply pressure to the balance of the cultural traits forcing an unnatural emphasis on one trait above another.

A third criticism of Denison’s work is the limited use of the research in performance in actual organizations (Detert, Schroeder & Mauriel, 2000). “There has been little effort to synthesize what dimensions of organizational culture have been studied” (Detert, Schroeder & Mauriel, p. 850, 2000). The gap between academics and application of the theory in organizations is limited and Denison’s work in particular was highlighted as research that has real practicality
and should be used in implementing change in organizations as it relates to organizational effectiveness.

**Rationale**

Cameron (1980) suggested that to overcome the greatest weakness in research focused on organizational effectiveness. The researcher should narrow the study to one specific “limited aspect of the organization” (p.73). This study using Denison’s theory allows the study to be narrow and focused specifically on the views of the employers as it relates to the effectiveness of a career services office at a large, private university in the Northeast. Likewise, the specific view of the employer is a perspective that will satisfy students seeking employment upon graduation. The ability to define the perceived value of services from the employers’ perspective is critical information to achieve organizational effectiveness within a career services office.

In addition, critics of organizational effectiveness point to the multidimensional aspects of the theory and embrace the idea stated by Hoy & Ferguson (1985) of “interrelationships among elements of effectiveness” (p.121). Denison’s selection of cultural traits is consistent within organizational effectiveness and the traits complement each other within an organization for measurement. The grouping of the cultural traits of involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission provide high level analysis of performance. It is the “interrelationships” that is of value when studying the effectiveness of the career services office (Denison, 1990). It is the belief of the researcher that it is the combination of these traits that bring the level of production necessary to meet the needs of the employers and students.

The traits collectively measure both internal and external cultures. This measurement of both cultures of an organization is critical for this study. The measurement of the performance
internally with the involvement and consistency traits, as well as, the measurement of external culture with adaptability and mission provides a clear understanding of the university’s career services office organizational effectiveness. The need to be able to coordinate internal efforts because of external forces is critical to any organization’s performance.

Each individual trait brings a value to the study. The first trait, involvement, measures the value that individuals bring to the effectiveness of the office. The university’s career services office has a large staff and provides a high level of engagement to their students. A measurement of the internal staff specifically reviewing “empowerment, team orientation and staff capability” provides valuable data that speak to employee initiative and skill (Denison, Janovics, Young & Cho, 2006, p. 6). The infrastructure is autonomous and initiative of the staff is encouraged. A measurement of this culture and the impact it has on effectiveness and goals from employers would be beneficial.

The second trait is consistency. While the staff is empowered to make decisions there is an internal organizational system that supports employees. A tremendous amount of effort is focused on establishing these norms and integrating them across all campuses at the career services offices. This trait measures: core values, agreement within the group and coordination (Denison, Janovics, Young & Cho, 2006, p. 7). This trait is significant for the office because of the multi-campus system across four states. It is challenging to reach agreement and provide stability when the staff has different leadership, student populations and goals but consistency is necessary as they are working with one employer partner.

The third trait is adaptability. This trait is one of the external traits and provides an analysis of the career services office staff’s ability to change based on the employers’ needs.
The role of a career services office is dynamic and ever-changing in higher education. The ability to keep up with the changing demands is critical to the success of the career services office. It is important that the office remains relevant and this trait measures: creating change, customer focus, and organizational learning (Denison, Janovics, Young & Cho, 2006, p. 8). All of these indexes provide a measurement of how well the career services office at a large, private university in the Northeast is able to react to employer needs.

The last trait is mission. The literature speaks to the value of organizations having a clear mission and that all of their employees should understand their mission and strategic direction. In higher education this understanding of mission is even more critical. This trait measures: strategic direction, goals, and vision (Denison, Janovics, Young & Cho, 2006, p. 9). It is important for the career services office to have a measurement of these indexes and to know the value of them by the employers. Brand and distinction are important as employers have multiple schools to select when recruiting students. If the career services office is clear on its goals and can relate their work back to the mission, this should provide a consistent message and brand delivery to the employers. This consistency should lead to repeated visits by the employers and consistent outcomes for the students in regards to obtaining full time employment.

Summarily, the interdependence of the traits provides the necessary construct to measure the organizational strength of the career services office as perceived by the employers. The career services office’s ability to understand the needs of the employers is fundamental to the core of the function of the office. The author hypothesizes that a career services office should be meeting the needs of the employers as it relates to services. An analysis of both internal and
external traits that dynamically are equal in strength will identify the services valued by the employers which will result in assisting graduates in obtaining employment.

**Applying theory to study**

This research builds on a model of organizational culture and effectiveness based on four different cultural traits of organizations: involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission identified by Daniel Denison (1990) to determine how these traits impact the effectiveness of a large, private university’s career services office as perceived by employers. Utilizing Denison’s (1990) theory provides a proven framework to measure organizational culture at the career services office at a large, private institution in the Northeast and the impact it has on organizational effectiveness of the department as perceived by the employers who recruit on campus. The theoretical model and four traits provide an intrinsic and extrinsic measurement of the performance of the department. This multidimensional framework provides the necessary in-depth, analytical scrutiny of the current level of service that the career services office provides employers at a large, private university in the Northeast. The multidimensional view it provides allows a study of not only the staff and its social construct but also the overall outputs of the department as they relate to the expectations of the employer.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

The primary purpose of this research is to identify best practices of the career services office at a large, private university in the Northeast as identified by employers to improve the organizational effectiveness of the office. Specifically, what services are most useful to employers when recruiting students and what functions of the career services office provide the most assistance to employers. The results of this study should be used to identify the services most valued by the employers and the data should be used to enhance and improve the current offerings and reallocating of resources.

Recent graduates exhibit many variables that link to career success upon graduation. Research has provided extensive reviews of the value of students’ majors, grade point average and networks and the impact these variables have on employability upon graduation. However, this literature overlooks the impact of the institutions services provided to students to assist them through this transition. An enormous amount of resources is invested in services but there is a lack of research that points to the value of these services and the impact they have on assisting students with employment. A study focused on the values of the services in a career services office would provide a prioritization of services as valued by the employer.

This chapter analyzes the literature related to organizational culture and the impact culture has on organizational effectiveness. The focus of the literature reviewed centers firstly on organizational culture while defining and analyzing the research. Specifically, this includes an analysis of variables used to study organizational culture such as observable artifacts, espoused values and beliefs of an organization. Secondly, careful analysis of the literature centered on organizational effectiveness is provided, beginning with a definition of
organizational effectiveness and three approaches to measuring and discerning organizational effectiveness. The three approaches discussed include: the goal approach, the systems approach and the internal process approach. Lastly, the literature focused on culture and organizational effectiveness in higher education is examined and the need for additional research. An investigation of a career services office and the value of the department is provided as is a definition of a measurable outcome of success for institutions of higher education and literature that discusses the intersection of employers and institutions of higher education.

The literature examined suggests that organizational culture and the impact culture has on organizational effectiveness is critical to change. Institutions of Higher Education are experiencing a time of significant change. The introduction of for-profit institutions and online learning is changing the landscape quickly. In addition, the concern with rising student debt and the impact it has on the cost of tuition has raised the level of scrutiny and the need for institutions to be more efficient in their practices. Government has become much more intrusive and regulations are stringent as they relate to measures of success for institutions of higher education. Pundits are questioning the value of a college degree and whether the costs associated with pursuing a degree are worth the investment. Lim (2015) discusses the importance of higher education meeting the needs of employers and industry. Specifically, Lim’s (2015) research supports the need for universities and colleges to rely more on organizational practices to be more efficient and effective (p.149). An analysis of the literature specifically centered on organizational culture and organizational effectiveness as fundamental to the understanding of the impact of culture on an organization’s performance specifically relating to higher education.
Organizational Culture

The definition of organizational culture varies and has been debated since first being identified as a phenomenon worthy of research. Conceptualizing organizational culture has been complex. Louis (1980) identified organizational culture as a set of meanings and understandings that are shared by a group and consequently passed onto new members. These meanings and understandings are prevalent and extremely dominant within the structure of the organization, cannot be found in a manual and must be learned intuitively over time by new members. Schein (1985, 1992, 1990, 2004, 2010) defined organizational culture as the behavior of a group that espouses shared values, norms and beliefs in the impact this culture has on solving problems within an organization. According to Schein, the behavior of the group or culture is observable and therefore can be studied and measured. Within the literature there are many behaviors, traits or outcomes that have been identified to measure culture. Researchers struggle to identify the various traits that are observable within an organization and the uniqueness of an organizational culture (Ott 1989, Van der Post, De Coning and Smit 1997).

The organizational culture is unique and different at each organization and the impact these intangible beliefs have on an organization’s performance is what appeals to researchers. When attempting to identify organizational culture that is measurable, researchers have focused on observing traditions, myths or storytelling, and artifacts (Peterson & Spencer, 1990). Schein identified three levels of organizational culture that can be studied: observable artifacts, espoused values and beliefs (Schein, 1990). This cultural framework developed by Schein is most notable in the research and is commonly found in the literature surrounding organizational cultural (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Hatch, 1989; Ouchi, 1981; Pedersen, 1989; Phillips, 1994).
Observable Artifacts

The artifacts of an organization are the most observable culture to a researcher. These artifacts are obvious and clearly visible and observable. They can be seen within office structure, formal and informal communication, the website, and formal events. The facilities and the accessibility to leadership can be observed by a researcher and used in studying organizational effectiveness (Feldman, 1991; Martin, 1992; Meyerson, 1991; Martin & Meyerson, 1987, Ogbonna & Harris, 2000). The design of an organization’s office is representative of the culture (Schein, 2010, p. 16). For an employer, observable indications of the culture of a career services office can be viewed within the office structure. The office layout and access to staff and students would be a measurable artifact which also influences how staff think and feel. Indications of culture would be access to the office on campus by students and employers and how difficult is it to find for an employer demonstrates the university's commitment to the career services office. If it is not in a central location, does the office structure and location limit access to students and or faculty members? Further indications of culture are the staff's level of professional dress and the greeting received by an employer. All artifacts observed by the employer are indications of the career services office's culture.

Scholars have identified symbols as being measurable and observable indications of artifacts of culture (Hatch, 1997; Nelson, 1990; and Parker, 2000). Research has shown that organizations use symbols to portray the culture and the symbolic meaning behind messaging. Within a higher education institution, the use of symbols is inherent in the long history and culture of the university. The selection by a career services office of a university seal or mascot at an event can convey very different meanings and reflection of the culture. An employer may
recall the crimson red at a Harvard event and the expectation that artifact may mean to the employers in regards to the tradition and perceived excellence of using that color. Conversely, the use of an athletic mascot such as a Wildcat at an employer event may construe a less professional culture to employers or, perhaps, a more approachable one. Symbols indicate a meaning to observers and it is the interpretation of the meaning that is a reflection of the culture of an organization.

Hatch (1993) identified behaviors and the results of the behavior as an artifact that can be measured. Specifically, events can be identified as an artifact. Examples given by Hatch (1993) include: office awards banquets, meetings, parties and development of advisory boards, such as a career services office employer advisory board. Selection of members to an employer advisory board may be symbolic to the employers resulting in a phenomenon of belonging or culture of working together with the career services office. Conversely, employers not selected for the advisory board may feel slighted and interpret the lack of invitation as an insult. In addition, the use of the advisory board and the implications for the work can impact culture. An advisory board that is purely symbolic may lead members to disengage and alter their perspective of the organization. If the input of the members is not used to impact the organization, members may interpret this behavior as a lack of belief in their value and result in conflict.

Scholars have suggested that involvement of leadership is a measurable attribute and critical to culture (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Schein, 1992, Simms, 1997). Observable artifacts when measuring the impact of leadership on culture can be gauged through visibility of leadership. Artifacts such as where the leader is placed in the organizational structure, title of the leader, skills of leadership and even location of offices to staff are all observable and can be measured
(Bass and Avolio, Schein, 1992, and Smircich, 1983). A career service leader that is positioned within the executive leadership of the institution can be viewed as having access to the university president resulting in opportunity for funding and shaping strategic planning. Employers may view an executive level title as an individual with authority who has impact on decision making and policies. Strong leadership and a visible presence within the career service office can be interpreted as having a direct impact on the culture of the office and provides a visible artifact that can be measured by researchers. Employers seeking a strategic relationship on multiple levels within an institution will have the desire to communicate with an executive who has the ability to work within the institution among different constituents that will result in reducing silos and streamlining outreach within the organization. The style of the leadership, and the ability to negotiate within the organization’s culture are directly related to the overall performance of the department which is valuable for both employers and the career service office (Bass, 1985).

**Espoused Values**

The values of an organization are the statements that are espoused to the internal members of the organization, as well as to external constituents. Research has shown that unique values reflect what an organization stands for illustrates their culture (Rousseau, 2000; Weick, 1987; Weiner, 1988). In addition, the leadership provides the values and assumptions shared by the organization and demonstrates the values in their behavior and overall strategic vision of the organization (Brown, 1992; Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Leaders can have a direct impact on the values and also have the ability to change the values when necessary (Hennessey, 1998). The common values provide a map for employees and guide their behaviors. These values shape the
culture and reflect what is important to the leadership of the organization. Examples of visible values on a college campus can be seen in the mission of a university, strategic plan or specific outcomes declared as a success by the institution (Mintzberg, 1987). Culture and values are at the core of an organization and contribute to members’ sense of purpose and belonging to the institution. This behavior manifests itself in members’ behaviors and how well an organization is managed. An institution without a strong value system lacks direction and purpose and can limit the overarching success of the institution (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

An employer may interpret a university's mission and use it to determine whether or not they will visit a university. A university whose mission is focused on research may not yield the best results for certain employers. Leading research universities will attract a high level of employer such as Lockheed Martin, but may not be as attractive to a small non-profit. A university that espouses values within their mission that are attractive to an employer can give the employer a sense of purpose and provide a differentiator when choosing to recruit on a particular college campus. Alignment with the employers’ mission and the universities’ mission can provide more alignment between the two organizations. It is important that the mission is reflected in the career services office’s actions and culture. If the university has a mission that values authentic learning experiences, then the career service office must showcase a strong internship or cooperative education program. A weakness in this area reflects a contradiction of internal values versus espoused external values and, ultimately a contradiction in the culture of the organization (Mintzberg, 1987). The mission is an opportunity for a university and a career services office to express both current and aspirational goals to employers and all outside constituents.
Values can also provide a code of conduct or roadmap for employees. The values of an organization provide the framework for decisions and strategic planning. An organization that espouses strong core values that are understood by members excels at organizational performance (Peters & Waterman, 1982; Ouchi & Wilkins, 1983; Bate, 1984; Denison, 1984). Employees that work for an organization that has strong values that are embraced tend to demonstrate a high level of productivity, a level of longevity and a commitment to the organization that goes beyond self (Broms & Gahmberg, 1983). Communication of the values by leadership is critical for all employees to understand the code of conduct. Managing the code of conduct is done internally by the employees.

An example of behavior that would reflect a code of conduct is value that Google espoused early in their inception. Google’s leadership had a long standing value of “Don’t be evil” statement that provided a strong moral compass for Google’s employees, but it also was incorporated into their standards of business when it was used to create algorithms within the Google search system that would most benefit users (Basu, 2015). Ultimately, the motto was changed when it no longer fit their values as they expanded and grew as an organization.

Similarly, an employer could potentially seek a career service office that utilizes the institutions’ values to dictate the office objectives. Employers further the expectation of a high level of engagement from the individuals within a career services office when values are understood between the two organizations. Consistency in messaging with observable values and behaviors would provide the employer with a clear understanding of the career services office’s menu and services and the latitude an employee of the office may have in making decisions. A gap in the values espoused versus what is offered may lead to disillusionment and prohibit the employer from engaging with the college campus or limit their interaction in the future.
Beliefs

An organization's beliefs, the assumptions shared by all the individuals in the organizations, are the most difficult to discern (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Ott, 1989, Ouchi, 1981; Peters & Waterman, 1982). They are not written and they have to be learned by observation over time by new employees. As described by Denison, it is the “mindset” of the employees or “it is what we do when no one is looking” (Denison, 1990; p. 33). The integration and adoption of these beliefs within the members of the organization are at the core of the culture of an organization (Barney, 1986; Bass and Avolio, 1993; Martins and Terblanche, 2003; Schein, 2004; Smircich, 1983). An organization whose employees believe their mission is to help people and can articulate their impact have a strong culture because of this shared belief of doing good together. These beliefs can bring great success to any organization both nonprofit and for profit when these beliefs are aligned with the market values (Kotter and Haskett 1992).

A career service office that is consistent and empowers their team at all levels will have a strong belief system. An employer will seek a career service office whose employees who can make decisions and act independently to meet the needs of the employer (Barney, 1986; Schein, 2010; Weick, 1995; Yukl, 1981). In addition, a strong belief system will ensure that the work is integrated into the values of the system and that the beliefs will guide their actions when engaging with employers on a daily basis. Research shows that a level of consistency with leadership that is reflected in the behavior of the staff leads to success in organizational effectiveness and performance (Barney et al., 1986). Implementing plans that empower career service office staff that are developed with employers provides a synergy between the two entities that could result in positive outputs for recent graduates when seeking employment.
Conclusion

Companies that have a strong organizational culture exhibit tangible and measureable traits that can be observed and measured by researchers. The review of literature illustrates that managing values, artifacts and beliefs can have a positive impact on an organization’s culture. Moreover, the impact of leadership’s behavior on culture and the consistency demonstrated by leaders are both important when measuring employees’ behavior and impact on performance. In addition, these demonstrated traits can be seen by both internal and external constituents and can be used to further the mission of the organization. The literature further shows that a strong culture impacts the behavior of the members of the organization and that organizations can use culture to strategize and prioritize an organization’s vision and productivity. This is an important point when reviewing the literature on organizational culture and organizational effectiveness later in the study.

Organizational Effectiveness

When reviewing organizational cultural theory, organizational effectiveness also known as the performance of the organization is inevitably discussed. Historically, the performance of an organization was first referenced by Taylor (1911) when he emphasized the importance of maximizing production and efficiencies in organizations. Campbell (1977) scrutinized years of organizational effectiveness research and developed a list of variables that he believed were indicative of organizational performance. Goodman and Pennings (1979) provided a framework of organizational effectiveness which emphasized internal coordination of the organization with an understanding of the organization’s external constituents. As highlighted by many authors, organizational effectiveness is the primary and fundamental theme in organizational cultural
theory (Gordon and DiTomaso, 1992; Quinn and Rohbaugh, 1983; Cameron and Quinn 2005; Martin, 1992; Cameron, 1981; Ouchi, 1981; Peters and Waterman, 1982; Tichy, 1983). According to Kotter (2012), the culture of an organization has a direct impact on the performance of the organization. Tichy (1983) one of the first researchers to connect an organizations performance to culture created a theoretical framework that looked at technical, political and cultural dynamics. An individual’s job satisfaction and performance are indicative of the culture of the organization and, ultimately, the overall performance and effectiveness of the organization. While many variables can impact performance, culture and the behavior of the members of the organization are a key to establishing a leading theory for organizational effectiveness (Denison, 1990; Cameron, 1978; Quinn & Cameron, 1983). Three approaches to discerning and measuring organizational effectiveness will be discussed, including the Goal Approach (Bluedorn, 1980), the Systems Approach (Weick, 1995) and the Internal Process Approach (Daft, 2001).

**The Goal Approach**

The Goal Approach is a level of measurement that can be used to determine if an organization is performing well based on predetermined established targets (Bluedorn, 1982; Campbell, 1977; Hitt, 1988; Mintzberg, 1991; Price, 1982; Weber, 1967;). Scholars have preponderantly used this measure of organizational effectiveness and it is the most commonly used approach. Success measurements that contribute to effective performance include: earnings, stock increases, growth, new product innovation and profit sharing. Many organizations use the Goal Approach when developing strategic plans and future goal setting. It allows an organization to have shared values and specific targets when attempting to achieve a high level of performance. Leadership can determine the organization's master plan and align
the resources and efforts needed to support the predetermined goals, thus impacting organizational effectiveness.

There is a limitation to the Goal Approach because of time constraints and the identification and characterization of the goals. If the goals were set incorrectly with limited information, an organization can achieve the goals but not achieve organizational effectiveness (Cameron, 1981). Defining the goals and establishing them within an organization are just as important as the strategies that are implemented to achieve them. An organization may be deemed efficient because they have achieved their stated goals, but if the goals are incorrectly identified then the organization may not be performing at an optimal or efficient level. In addition, outside influences may inappropriately affect goal setting. For example, an institution of higher education may be responding to demands of the trustees, but not necessarily setting the appropriate goals to move the organization forward from an organizational performance perspective. Lastly, outside influence such as government regulations may not be appropriate for all institutions. Some regulations may be directed at for profit institutions but all institutions must respond. Regardless, leaders must respond and adhere to these regulations and, therefore, may establish goals to meet a government regulation but the impact on effectiveness could potentially be negative.

A second limitation with the Goal Approach is time. Time has a direct influence on goal setting and can have both a negative and positive impact (Elliot and Harackiewicz, 1994; Locke and Latham, 2002; Locke, Shaw, Saari and Latham, 1981). If time is limited or set to a specific date, the Goal Approach may not provide enough time to achieve the goals and achieve organizational effectiveness. Conversely, if the goals are met prior to the allotted time by the
organization it may indicate that the goal was incorrectly established and a higher level of performance may have been attainable (Kotter, 2008). Time is especially sensitive in an institution of higher education because of the limitations of the academic calendar year and the ability to meet goals within a nine-month time period versus a twelve-month cycle. The academic calendar can also be a challenge when working with employers who are on a twelve-month versus nine-month cycle.

An institution of higher education may use the goal method in organizational effectiveness, but the same variables of caution apply. For example, a career services office may set a goal of increasing employers on campus and ultimately achieve this goal, but from an employer perspective the level of services may decrease because of increased staffing needs service the increase in employers or the access to students is limited because there are more employers making the recruitment process more competitive. It is important to align goal setting with the desired outcomes and with the appropriate audiences in mind. If the career services office had established a reasonable goal of increasing employers and applied a specific strategy in the selection of the goal versus focusing just on a number, it may lead to a more efficient environment. Alignment with programs and colleges could provide greater success with this goal and ultimately, strategic direction from the leadership is necessary when using this approach.

**The System Resource Approach**

The Systems Resource Approach is a level of measurement of inputs and outputs and the impact they can have on an organization’s performance (Lewin and Minton, 1986; Scott & Davis, 2015; Molnar and Rogers, 1976; Morgan, Gregory and Roach, 1997; Pfeffer and
Salancik, 2003; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978; Weick, 1995; Yuchtman & Seashore 1967). When using this approach, the organization is considered to be a system with different parts such as employee labor, resources within the organization, technology, and assets. These specific parts of an organization are considered to be the inputs and patterns can be identified based on the results of the work (Scott & Davis, 2015). The inputs are used to create the outputs or the products and the inability to obtain inputs such as labor would lead to an inability to create outputs or products. This type of measurement of organizational performance is usually used in a nonprofit organization where it is a challenge at times to measure tangible outputs.

An organization using the System Resource Approach is measured on its ability to obtain resources or inputs to meet their objectives or outputs. The organization is considered a social system and the ability to obtain resources necessary to achieving its goals is measured versus the actual output of the system (Morgan, Gregory & Roach, 1997; Weick, 1995). The ability of the organization to coordinate and integrate their internal resources necessary to achieve their goals is a critical component for an organization to be successful when utilizing this type of measurement. In addition, this approach is influenced by the environmental conditions and the ability and fluidity of the organization to obtain necessary resources (Seashore and Yuchtman, 1967).

A lack of definitive measurement in regards to output is considered to be a main weakness of the Systems Resource approach (Cameron and Whetten, 1996). A career services office using this measurement of organizational performance may be very successful in obtaining new software or donations through advancement but may not meet the needs of the employers and, therefore, would be considered ineffective. A career services office could effectively utilize
their internal resources to meet an output of increased student engagement. Increased student engagement is not an indication, however, of employer satisfaction or a value of the career service office in regards to the employer. More importantly, it does not indicate a higher level of employability of a graduate or an increase in the services most valued by employers when seeking to hire graduates from a university.

When applying this theory of organizational effectiveness to a career services office it has the potential to hamper the members’ ability to be efficient when working with employers. Thus the definition of effectiveness for the career service office is critical to determine an appropriate measurement of organizational effectiveness when working with employers. In addition, this theory does not lend itself to analyzing output or the results of new internal mechanisms without careful consideration of desired outcomes. A career service office is not a closed system and must work effectively with its external environment to determine effective internal systems.

**The Internal Process Approach**

The Internal Process Approach looks at indicators internally at the organizational level to measure effectiveness (Cameron, 1983; Hall, 1991; Likert, 1967; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983; Scott and Davis, 2015). Heavy emphasis on internal resources and the optimization of these resources is measured. This model has also been referred to as the Decision Process Model (Lewin and Minton, 1986). Measurement of such internal functions as job satisfaction, hiring, retention of employees, budget allocation and resource dependency are all used in determining effectiveness. A fiscally strong organization would be an indicator of success when using this
approach. In addition, optimization of employees and their increase in job satisfaction could potentially lead to organizational effectiveness.

This approach can leave an organization susceptible to error because many of the success indicators are based on employee interpretation, which could lead to lack of consistency and does not take into account different perceptions throughout the organization. Overall, this model indicates a superior operation within the organization demonstrating a direct link between the strength of the operation and the efficiencies but lacks clear measurement with any outside constituents (Cameron and Whetten, 1996). This could be problematic when measuring the organizational culture of a career services office and its level of organizational effectiveness as it relates to the external partner of employers.

There are limitations to the Internal Process Approach to conducting research within the theory of organizational effectiveness in that internal effectiveness may not lead to efficiencies or improved performance (Katz and Kahn, 1978; Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1981). A career services office may achieve the highest level of employee satisfaction, but this result may not lead to employer satisfaction as it relates to effective organizational performance. Employers value the relationship with career services offices beyond the hiring of graduates; many have internship programs that also require a level of organizational efficiency. An indicator of success of the internship program may not translate to efficiency as it relates to obtaining full time employment of graduates. Further, a measurement of job satisfaction of the career service office employees may not lead to organizational effectiveness and meeting the goals of the employers. Employees of the career services office may be happy and satisfied within their office environment but this satisfaction may not result in organizational effectiveness. In addition,
internal measurement of meeting budget allocation is an expectation for any career services office, but ultimately fiscal responsibility and meeting a budget may not lead to organizational performance or efficiency as viewed by the employers or result in students obtaining employment upon graduation.

**Conclusion**

Research on organizational culture inextricably leads to organizational effectiveness. When measuring organizational effectiveness an analysis of the culture is typically included. The review of literature illustrates the importance of many variables. In particular, employee satisfaction, resources and goals all have been proven to have an impact on an organization’s effectiveness as it relates to performance.

In the research focused on the goal approach such success measurements such as earnings, innovation, and growth are variables all identified as contributing to effectiveness. Defining the goals is a challenge when using this variable for measurement. The literature points to proper alignment with leadership and notes outside constituencies are critical to success. In addition, the appropriate time to achieve success is needed as well. Research has shown that if a sufficient amount of time is not determined at the onset the goal while it may be appropriate and achievable it may not be accomplished because enough time has not been allocated.

The literature that discusses the systems resource approach illustrates the importance of balance between inputs and outputs of an organization. This type of measurement is most successful at a nonprofit organization where the entity is not creating an actual product. The ability of a nonprofit to utilize its internal resources and obtain these resources annually is critical to its organizational effectiveness. Lastly, the literature focused on the internal process approach
highlights models that focus on such internal functions such as job satisfaction, budget allocation and utilization of resources. Optimization of employees and their increase in productivity have illustrated successful measurements of efficiency within the literature.

**Culture and Organizational Effectiveness in Higher Education**

There is strong evidence that Institutions of Higher Education are under intense scrutiny with the value of the incredible financial investment being questioned by parents, students and government (Alexander, 2000; Denhart, 2013; Kezar, 2001; McMahon, 2009). In particular, the rise of student debt and the relationship of debt to starting salaries are being used as measurements of success (Avery and Turner, 2012; Rothstein and Rouse, 2011). As stated by Kezar (2001) higher education is not impervious to outside forces. The need to focus on measurable outcomes because of these external forces has resulted in institutions looking internally to improve graduates’ employability (Abel, Deitz and Su, 2014; Archibald and Feldman, 2006; Bugeja, 2013; Carnevale and Cheah 2013; Clark, Joubert, and Maurel, 2014; Field, 2013; Stone, Van Horn and Zukin 2012). While the traditional measurement of success for higher education is still student learning outcomes and the focus on measuring learning with exams, tests and surveys will remain a constant within colleges, there is a growing need to provide other measurements of value (Cameron and Whetten, 1996). Universities are now looking at nontraditional measurements of organizational performance such as career placement and the impact of the career services office on assisting students' transition from college to career (Hanover Research, 2014).
Career Services

In 2012, Wake Forest University hosted a conference with over 250 higher education leaders to discuss liberal arts education. One of the major outcomes of the conference was the creation of a document called the Roadmap for Transforming the College to Career Experience (Chan and Derry, 2013). This document, created with input of the 250 attendees, challenged the role of the career services office and recommended that the offices redefine their services and focus their efforts on defining a strategic relationship with employers. The results of the survey recognized the importance of acknowledging the relationship of academia and industry and the organizational shift services necessary within higher education to meet this need. The study recommended an alignment within the career services office and for the efforts to be mission critical (Cates and Jones, 1999; Cedercreutz and Cates, 2014; Engelland, Workman, and Singh, 2000; Hanover Research, 2014). These cultural components align specifically with Denison’s research and the traits identified as having an impact on organizational effectiveness. Specifically, the consistency trait measures the work of the organizational members and reflects a high level of ownership and coordination of work (Denison & Mishra, 1985). In addition, Denison identified mission as a cultural trait important for organizations to obtain organizational effectiveness.

Measurable Outcomes

Research shows that providing members with a sense of purpose and aligning it with leadership is critical in imbedding cultural traits that lead to organizational effectiveness (Bass and Avolio, 1993; Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Denison, 1990). A career services office that is focused on the mission of the university and whose purpose complements the mission will be
associated with effective planning and leadership that will lead to results aligned with the overall purpose of the institution (Tierney, 1988). An understanding of the mission by the leadership within the career service office could indicate effective services to outside constituents, mainly employers. Additionally, as funding becomes more challenging, areas outside of academics such as career services will be required to demonstrate a clear purpose for funding and align it with the institution’s mission. Lastly, alignment with mission could potentially lead to opportunities for fundraising within the career services office. Employers who identify a strong partner may be more interested in providing funding for services than with a partner that is not clear in their vision or mission (NACE, 2016).

**Employers**

In 2012, McKinsey & Company conducted a study by Mona Mourshed which reported on the employability of recent college graduates. The research identified a gap in the relationship between employers and higher education constituents. It further highlighted the challenges graduates face when obtaining employment and the perceived lack of skills of the graduates by the employer. The author recommends open communication between industry and higher education and the importance of this when creating a seamless transition for graduates to achieve employment. Mourshed suggested that the measure of success of the graduate would be a shared responsibility between the employer and the institution. This idea of employers and institutions sharing in the outcomes of the student is a new approach to education. When members of an organization have shared beliefs and values it impacts culture and, ultimately, organizational effectiveness. Employers and career services office who are in sync could potentially assist recent graduates and recruiters with job placement. Rivera (2010) conducted
research that confirmed highly sought after employers utilized the level of prestige of the institution attached to educational credentials as the indicator of abilities when hiring recent college graduates. A greater understanding of hiring practices of employers by career services offices could provide more opportunities for collaboration with employers. Ultimately, hiring and the influence employers have on the trajectory of graduates is significant and worthy of further research (Elliot and Smith, 2004).

Denison & Mishra (1995) highlighted the adaptability trait as a measure of an organization’s culture and the ability to react to external environmental challenges relating to the importance of customer satisfaction on performance. The adaptability trait emphasizes the organization’s ability to take risks and be flexible when necessary. Typically, these are not traits found in higher education, but the research points to a need for educators to embrace change and to look both internally and externally when developing change and a new purpose (Gumport and Pusser, 1997; Cameron and Whetton, 1996). The ability to be adaptable based on the employers’ needs of a career service office could provide a level of organizational effectiveness that will assist graduates in obtaining full-time employment. The ability to create a culture that will allow employees to design employer-focused services and the flexibility to change offerings quickly could provide a career services office with a competitive advantage emphasizing organizational effectiveness when working with employers.

Scholars have suggested that the employer plays a critical role in evaluating and hiring recent graduates and that research has shown a possible bias to elite universities and, ultimately, a discrimination relating to less prestigious institutions (Chevalier and Conlon, 2003; Marginson, 2016; Rivera, 2010, 2016; Yano, 1997). Rivera (2010) provided research that resulted in
illustrating how employers have a direct impact on career trajectory of the college graduates they interview. The results of this research points to the employer's role in interpreting the quality of the university, the value of the major, as well as, the skills acquired by the student ultimately interpretation has led to varied hiring decisions. In Rivera’s (2016) case study, employers provided access to positions only to graduates of perceived elite programs at top tier institutions. The value of the major or any extracurricular activities were negated and the strongest indicator of eligibility of employment was the ranking of the college or university (p.72). A career services office could petition for the university to seek national rankings and identify appropriate national measurements that would yield positive results for the university. Stokes (2015) advocated for institutions to align programs with specific employers to provide an optimum relationship (p.159). A career services office could conduct an audit with current employers engaged with the respective campus to identify programs that are valued and provide targeted services specific to that major and to the employer.

A career services department could provide the conduit for both employers and faculty, resulting in coordination of efforts that could potentially determine the need for a new program or, at a higher level, a new college campus. Providing opportunities for employers to engage with faculty will manifest into a seamless hiring process for graduates, opportunities for additional partnerships with employers and deepening of the brand of the institution in industry overall. Research should be conducted with employers to determine if there is a strong market support for new programs or any investment in campus relocation. Positioning the career services office as a leader in effective decision-making by providing effective programming can lead to a repositioning of the university as an elite institution and a partner of choice by employers. These initiatives cannot be conducted unless the office is performing at an optimal
level from a service perspective from both an internal and external perspective. These demonstrated efforts with employers could clearly illustrate how organizational effectiveness can be impacted by the variables contained within a culture in a career services office.

**Conclusion**

There are many variables that can be measured as they relate to the impact of culture on organizational effectiveness in higher education and a career services office. The literature results that have been discussed all have values and detractions. In addition to selecting appropriate variables, the literature references a delicate balance of internal and external factors without emphasizing one factor over another when illustrating and measuring organizational effectiveness. For example, the reputation of the college and overall quality of the program as perceived by the employer is a variable that can impact hiring. Ultimately, as the literature demonstrates, the researcher must focus on selected mechanisms that have been proven through prior studies and determine their impact on performance. Relying heavily on research to determine these proven mechanisms and variables to measure organizational culture’s impact on organizational effectiveness within an organization is crucial in assuring the study is not limited and that the results are valid.

Alignment with mission and values of the institution with the career services office can lead to a deeper and stronger relationship with employers. The espoused values of the institution provide employers with a roadmap of programs and prioritization of services. A career services office that clearly articulates the vision and mission of the university can provide a clear overview of expectations and support to employers to achieve a strategic alliance.
Lastly, utilizing Denison’s theory of organizational culture and effectiveness for this paper provides a proven model to measure the effectiveness of the career services office as perceived by the employers (Denison, 1990, 2000; Denison & Mishra, 1995; Denison & Neal, 1996). The direct relationship between organizational culture that is reflected in specific internal and external traits exhibited in a career services office and the impact these traits have on the office's organizational performance provides the model for an effective study. The ability for a career services office to be adaptable and meet the needs of the students and employers is critical to organizational effectiveness. Adaptability cannot be embraced by the employees unless a culture of this behavior is fostered within the office. The evidence of the literature clearly indicates that organizational culture is associated with organizational effectiveness and has been embraced as a theory worthy of research within higher education and within a career services office.

Summary

Employers and universities have a long history of not communicating nor utilizing each other’s rich knowledge base. Both entities have a shared goal of providing individuals with the necessary tools and means to have success in their respective fields of employment. In addition, employers spend a great deal of funding to recruit college graduates, and the services they experience from each university career services office differ greatly. Conversely, universities invest a tremendous amount of resources in academic programs and services. Both entities struggle with the financial investment and both are required to provide data to support such financial investments. Research that identifies the services that employers value could assist both employers and universities with data that could streamline student recruitment and provide
a framework for financial investments and a reform of current services. In addition, as the literature illustrated, students are overwhelmed with the process of finding employment upon graduation and the research could provide information to streamline the employment search for students, institutions of higher education and employers.

Research on organizational culture has focused on the internal values of an organization and the impact it has on the organization’s system. There is an abundance of research and literature that focuses on defining an organization and the systems within it, but it is more recent research that focuses on an organization’s culture and its impact on organizational effectiveness. Using this recent literature, a study focused on the organizational culture of a career services office and its impact on organizational effectiveness will be relevant and significant to many audiences within higher education. Identifying the variables and traits exhibited by the career services office that illustrate organizational effectiveness to employers could provide valuable information and a purpose for a both a career services office and for the employers who recruit on their campus.

In addition, prior research, within the field of higher education, has focused on skill sets that students have obtained in college that employers’ value and the influence of such on employability of recent graduates. Yet there is limited research focused on services (Finch, Nadeau, & O’Reilly, 2012; Gault, Redington, and Schlager, 2000). Scholars have identified employer value in internship, GPA, major and also the reputation of the university that a student has attended. There is however, limited research on what the employers value in regards to services from higher education and how a change of services could improve employability of graduates. Identifying the specific traits that employer value will lead to organizational
effectiveness in an institution's career services office which potentially could improve and provide more opportunities for recent graduates in regards to employment directly from school.

In conclusion, the purpose of this study is to understand how higher education can support employers in recruiting and hiring students on campus through an effective and efficient career services office. The research question that is being studied is specifically what traits do effective career services offices have that assist employers in recruiting students on campus? This question utilizes the theoretical framework of culture and organizational effectiveness to ground the research in a clear narrative that explicitly explains the selection of traits studied. The analysis of the literature provides a foundation of what variables need to be studied to determine greater effectiveness and efficiencies as they relate to the career services office and the services that are perceived to be valued by employers. Specifically, the research studies the uniqueness of the culture of the career services office and the impact the culture has on performance through such observable traits as the staff members and their power structure, the mission of the university and how it relates to the overall objectives, consistency in services and the value of these services as perceived by employers.
Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

The aim of research in this particular doctoral program is to examine a complex problem of practice, generate knowledge from data gathered at the research site, and provide context and strategies for introducing systemic change to help resolve the problem of practice. While it is not disputed that there are many factors that can impact an organization’s performance and effectiveness, culture and behavior of the members of the organization and the impact of these behaviors on performance provides a leading theory worthy of study. The review of the literature by the researcher illustrates the importance of an organization’s culture on an organization’s effectiveness (Cameron, 1983; Cameron & Quinn, 2005; Denison, 1990; Hall, 1991; Lewin & Minton, 1986; Likert, 1967; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Quinn & Cameron, 1983; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983; Scott and Davis, 2015). In addition, conducting research that is focused on higher education and the impact of the culture of a career services office on performance through the lens of the employer will provide valuable data crucial for the future of career services within higher education. This chapter provides a description of the research design and methodology and specifically outlines the purpose of the study, the data collection process, participants’ selection process, and the data analysis used in determining what traits employers value in career services offices.

**Purpose of Study**

The specific purpose of this study is to identify the services an institution of higher education can offer through their career offices that will assist employers with hiring graduates and improving students’ opportunity for employment directly from school. The problem of practice that was answered through this research is while myriad services are offered to
employers by college career services, an analysis of the services that are valued by employers is limited resulting in insufficient research. Currently, career services offices attempt to fill any gaps that the students may have by providing services that assist soon-to-be graduates with the transition from college to full time employment. This paper is a phenomenological study built on a model of organizational culture and effectiveness based on four different cultural traits of organizations: involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission, as identified by Daniel Denison (1990). Research was conducted to determine how these traits impact the organizational effectiveness of a career services office as perceived by employers.

**Qualitative Research Approach**

Qualitative based research endowed this study with the necessary depth of information to provide the voice of the employer as to what they value from a university career services office (Creswell, 2011). This study was based on a constructivism-interpretivism research and is defined by Ponterotto as a form of qualitative research that confirms multiple realities not a singular reality (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 129). Constructivism-interpretivism is an interpretive approach and meaning can be found through intensive interaction between the researcher and the subject (Ponterotto, 2005 p. 129). The researcher and the subject are interdependent and are co-creators of the research. The interaction of the researcher and the participant is central to capturing the “lived experience” (Ponterotto, 2005 p. 131). The research should be interview based and the questions should be open to allow the participants opportunity for rich dialogue. In addition, this paradigm is interpreted not measured and the context of the interview is critical to the meanings. “The interpretive paradigm presents a dynamic rather than a static view of the world.” (Merriam, 1991 p. 48).
A constructivist-interpretivism approach to this study would include interviewing the employer while on campus recruiting or by telephone at his/her respective office as found in naturalist inquiry (Ponterotto, 2005 p. 132). The researcher would meet with the employer while on campus and establish a relationship with him or her. If this approach is not feasible, employers with a rich knowledge base of the institution, would be telephoned by the researcher or the researcher would meet with the employer at his or her office. In addition, the researcher would also document her own expertise in this area in the study and use the expertise to acknowledge biases and use them in findings (Smith, 2009). The study would be very subject oriented and the data would reflect specifically what the employer values in the recruitment of college graduates on campus. The research would be personalized with the goal to use the results to assist employers in recruiting students on campus. In addition, it will enable institutions to encompass identified services within their offerings to employers. This would lead to a shared goal between the researcher and the employers.

Because this study is a phenomenology study, it provides a conceptual framework that allows the researcher to engage in rich dialogue from experienced individuals in the college recruitment industry and collect and interpret their different views. The experience of the participants is at the core of phenomenology and the researchers must capture this lived experience as close to the reality as possible. This was done by the researcher by providing quotes that are exact and it requires the researcher to provide the reality of the employer when recruiting college students and working with career services offices.

A phenomenological study of inquiry is appropriate for this study because it provides a methodology that is qualitative to elicit rich responses from employers. It is a human science study that specifically provides the current views of employers as they relate to their experiences
recruiting recent college graduates. As a group, college recruiters share a commonality and mindset of the specific process of recruiting graduates. The collective perspectives of the employers inform this study as they are content experts in college recruitment and they can provide real world views of their experiences recruiting college graduates on multiple college campuses across the United States.

To ensure a rich response from the employers, the questions listed in Appendix B, were designed to identify their views of what they value in career services. The function of the questions was designed to ask the employers specifically their individual interpretation of the services provided to them and what they value most of these services in their roles as a recruiter on campus. The questions were formatted to develop an understanding of the employers’ specific experience as it relates to college recruitment. The research questions do not highlight their opinions, rather the questions were focused on the participants’ experiences. Questions were crafted specifically to garner full descriptions of their experience in recruiting college students and ascertaining what they value in their experiences working with the career services office. In addition, the researcher used a semi-structured approach to maximize her experience to gather deeper responses from the participants.

Participants

The site of this study is a large, private non-profit institution of higher education located in the Northeast region of the United States with an enrollment of approximately 14,000 students. This institution has a robust career services office with over 1800 employer partners. The department has been recognized nationally for their efforts in providing experiential education to their students. The population of interest is the employers who
recruit from this specific campus and the relationship they have with the career services office on this campus. The study participants were a purposive sample of employers, who were selected based on repetitive nature of the recruitment over the academic year with the career services office. At minimum, employers have personally visited the campus once during the year. Furthermore, the participants are recruiters whose focus is the college campus, their job titles reflect this specialty and they have been employed for at least three years in the industry. In addition, they are a homogenous sample who represent specifically college talent acquisition. As shared by Creswell (2013), purposive sampling is used when the researcher believes the individuals can provide data specific to the topic of study.

The researcher identified a small sampling of 8-10 potential interviewer participants from the employers who regularly recruit at the researcher’s university (Creswell, 2013; Smith, 2010). As stated by Moustakas (1994), phenomenological research should be conducted with a small group of individuals to ensure an extensive interview of a long duration. The researcher selected the employers based on a willingness to participate and a minimum level of expertise in the field. Employers selected for the study had titles that illustrated levels of responsibility and expertise such as director or vice president were selected for the study. The interviews were conducted with general questions initially and then built on what the experience is for the employers to engage with the career services office to more open-ended questions to ensure authentic responses as outlined previously (Rubin and Rubin, 2011).
Procedures

The researcher received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) from her institution to conduct the study. In addition, a second IRB was approved by Northeastern University. The researcher purposely selected the employers for the interviews as stated above in the participants’ description. The researcher invited through email 8-10 preselected employer partners to participate in the research. Based on the results and assurance of commitment, emails were sent with an Informed Consent information request that they signed and returned by email. The interview preparation included utilizing interview protocols developed by the researcher that were sent to the confirmed interviewees. The interviews were conducted through phone calls and varied in length from 45 minutes to 75 minutes.

Data Analysis

The interview questions were designed in a semi-structured interview format to elicit descriptive answers from the interviewees and to allow the freedom of the researcher to ask additional questions based on the responses of the employers. Likewise, the semi-structured format allowed for the interview to be more conversational and casual (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). A semi-structured interview was also a valuable format when the researcher did not have the opportunity for multiple interviews (Bernard, 2011). The interviews were taped utilizing Apple Voice Memos and then sent electronically to Rev.com, a commercial transcription company, for transcription. In addition, the transcribed interview content was entered into qualitative research software NVivo for thematic analysis.

Interpretative analysis requires a full reading of the data to understand the meaning of all of the transcripts. The researcher read the data fully before identifying shared themes and
emergent codes. A second reading was required by the researcher to identify the themes and capture the essential quality of the individual respondents’ comments (Smith & Osborne, 2008). In addition, the study was informed by the researcher’s experience and leadership in the field of higher education by utilizing the traits as themes (Creswell, 2011; Smith, 2009). The analysis included identifying themes from transcripts of digitally recorded semi-structured interviews and the researcher coded the themes that were similar in meaning. Lastly, verbatim quotes were used to validate the results of the research to illustrate clearly the participants’ experiences (Gill, 2014, p. 17).

The findings in phenomenological studies can be presented in several formats. This study utilized Cunliff (2011), which suggests that researchers use memos to record interpretations resulting in the research findings being presented with rich details and exact quotes. In addition, the use of memos allows an informal record of decisions when coding and identifying themes. Understanding this method, the researcher wrote a full composite of the interviews with highlighted memos that reflects exactly the participants’ experience (Creswell, 2013). Themes were identified for both the individual employer and also collective themes across the group of employers being interviewed by the researcher.

In phenomenological research the researcher is looking to identify and clearly articulate the “essence or core commonality” of the participants’ experience (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007, p. 1373). The researcher’s goal was to replicate as much as possible the experiences of the participants in a narrative format that reflects the data collected (Kleiman, 2004). The employers are the content experts in this field and a study focused on their experiences as recruiters reflects their commonalities as a group and what they adhere to as best practices when working with colleges.
In addition, the researcher identified within the text, quotes from the interviewees, utilizing bracketing to reflect a description of the phenomenon and used the quotes to illustrate clearly the experience (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007, p. 1373). The experience of the employers is at the core of phenomenology and the researcher captured this lived experience as close to the reality as possible. To respect the core of phenomenological research and this specific strategy of inquiry, results of the data analysis provided quotes that were exact and presented the reality of the employer as they recruit on college campuses to highlight the phenomenon being studied and remove any biases or prejudices of the researcher when identifying themes. Lastly, with any interpretative phenomenological study, the researcher’s view must be considered. The interpretation of the data collected by the researcher is critical and the researcher’s view of the data was presented (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin 2009).

**Ethical Considerations**

The research was designed and conducted in full accordance with the Northeastern University’s Institutional Review Board’s policies and procedures. In addition, it was also designed and conducted in full accordance with the researcher’s institution’s guidelines and protocols relating to research. The nature of this study involved minimal risk to the participants. The interviewers were not to be personally identified and the utmost care was given to preserve their identity. This confidential approach to the interview allowed for full disclosure by the employer during the interview. As recommended by Creswell (2011), the digital transcripts and notes are stored in a password protected file by the researcher. The files and passwords are only available to the researcher to ensure the privacy of the participants. In addition, recorded transcriptions were destroyed by the researcher once the interview was converted to digital
transcripts. This will ensure that the recorded transcripts are not used for other purposes and the identity of the participants remains confidential and secure from any other source.

**Trustworthiness**

The purpose of this study to identify what services an institution of higher education offers through their career offices will assist employers with the recruiting process in hiring graduates and improve students’ opportunity for employment directly from school. The problem of practice that was answered through this research is that there is a myriad of services offered to employers by the college career services office, there is limited research on what services the employers value. Conducting a study that explores the reality of the employers’ experience while recruiting college graduates will most likely result in a true picture of what services are valuable to them.

**Credibility**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended in establishing credibility that researchers utilize certain techniques. The first technique that this researcher used was member checking. The member checking allows participants to review transcripts and provide opportunity for corrections and validation of information. Nevertheless, there is risk involved in this method of establishing credibility as participants may change their mind or provide confusing feedback (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The second technique in establishing credibility is peer debriefing. The researcher reached out to faculty members with terminal degrees to review the research. The researcher is an employee at a large, private university and the outreach to faculty members in the doctoral program was easily obtained. Credentialed individuals allowed the data to be analyzed for
biases and weaknesses. This peer debriefing allowed the opportunity for a neutral individual to review and search for biases or assumptions that are blind to the researcher.

Lastly, the third technique that was used to establish credibility by the researcher was providing the background, qualifications, and experience of the researcher within the study and to the interviewees (Shenton, 2004). The researcher has over two decades of experience in higher education and she has been quoted and published as a content expert in the field of career services in national publications. In addition, the researcher has presented at multiple conferences on the topic of career services and engages regularly with top-level industry executives. The researcher’s experience provides a critical component to the credibility and analysis of establishing the patterns and themes within the data.

**Transferability**

As stated, the participants in the study have a shared background of college recruitment (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Smith, 2010). This purposive sampling provided interviewees with a rich knowledge base and a level of expertise that ensure credibility of the data. In addition, these individuals travel extensively to multiple colleges within the United States and this high level of skill and competency demonstrates the transferability of the data beyond the researcher’s institution (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The interviewer’s extensive experience and depth of knowledge of recruitment at other colleges ensured their experiences go beyond the researcher’s institution. Lastly, the size of the sampling was limited to ensure ample time be given to the interviews.

In addition, when reviewing the transcripts, a high level of scrutiny was applied by the researcher to ensure that the granular themes of each participant were understood prior to
developing overarching themes of all data (Yardley, 2008). The researcher’s background as a content expert in career services provided the knowledge base to ask deeper questions to obtain additional data. The goal was to obtain a detailed description of the services valued by the employer to ensure validity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

**Dependability**

When determining dependability Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that an audit trail be maintained by the researcher. They underlined the importance of creating a visual and vivid description of the research. It is suggested that the researcher provide a rich description of the participants’ background and expertise relating to the topic of research to further support why they were selected for the research. In addition, a rich description of the data analysis is necessary to provide a transparent view of the research. All data should be stored and accessible. The process of collecting the data is just as important as the data itself. Summaries of notes and connections to current literature is important to ensure transparency and a clear step by step process map of how conclusions and recommendations were made (Shenton, 2004).

**Confirmability**

In order to confirm trustworthiness a reflective journal was maintained. As the data was analyzed, overarching understandings and conclusions of the researcher were collected and documented (Shenton, 2004). This pattern provided the roadmap for the discussions of the findings and the results generated from the analysis. As suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), ongoing entries in the journal ensured documentation of decisions made by the researcher and the reason for the decisions. In addition, as themes emerged a documentation of how the themes were identified was provided. The reflective journal provided an overview of
the researcher’s background and the reason for interest in the study. This visibility of the researcher’s background provided the readers with a full understanding of the researcher’s biases and allow scrutiny and awareness of the researcher’s assumptions to be transparent.

**Potential Research Bias**

“A researcher hobbled by unchecked bias can only produce biased findings.” (Machi & McEvoy, 2012, p. 19). As an individual with over two decades of experience in higher education, the researcher has knowledge and predisposed ideas of the services provided by typical colleges. The experience and reputation of the researcher should assist in obtaining employers with in-depth knowledge and many years of experience in the field of college recruiting. In addition, as a practitioner in experiential education, the researcher has bias towards this topic and has the belief that further research on identifying what employers value could positively impact students’ future career opportunities. Briscoe (2005), references Haraway’s research about impact of positionality and the influence on interpretation of the research. The researcher must isolate these personal thoughts as a practitioner and not be predisposed to arrive at conclusions utilizing her own practical experiences.

**Limitations**

As with any research, this study does have study design limitations that may affect the outcome of the research. The participants are employers who actively engage with the researcher’s institution. This particular segment of college recruiters may provide data that is skewed to this type of institution. The institution is a less selective school and may attract a certain type of employer and thus their values may be biased or be positioned to work well within this particular environment. The services identified by the employers may not be
applicable to a more selective institution. Employers may value other services when working with a different population and other colleges and the data may not be transferable to other institutions.

Lastly, the results of this study are intended to reflect the thoughts and ideas of the participants selected. The employers selected provided data that is of importance to them and how it relates to recruitment at the researcher’s institution. The recruiters selected represent specifically the college recruitment sector. The results may highlight the values of these particular employers’ industry but may not translate to other industries or other college recruiters. In addition, the results may only be of value to institutions who provide programs of study similar to the institution where the research was conducted.
Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis

The purpose of this study is to identify the services an institution of higher education can offer through their career offices that will assist employers with hiring graduates and improve students’ opportunity for employment directly from school. Qualitative based research endowed this study to provide the voice of the employer as to what services they value from a university career services office when recruiting college graduates (Creswell, 2011). The strategy of inquiry was an interpretative phenomenological analysis utilizing a theoretical framework of organizational culture and effectiveness. The researcher built on a model of organizational culture and effectiveness based on four different cultural traits of organizations: involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission, as identified by Daniel Denison (1990). The research questions were developed and conducted to determine how Denison’s cultural traits impacted the organizational effectiveness of a career services office as perceived by employers. The results of this research will be used to provide insight into what services employers value when working with colleges and the impact they have on the recruitment of college graduates.

Ten participants were invited to participate in the study through an email that included a consent form (Appendix C). The participants were identified by title that reflected management level responsibility and a hierarchal significance in the field of Human Resource Management, specifically college relations and talent acquisition. Three participants responded positively to the email and a second email was sent to the remaining seven recruitment specialists. Ultimately, a total of nine individuals responded positively to the request to be interviewed and agreed to participate in the study. To ensure transferability of the research, participants were all highly credentialed, full time human resource specialists with titles ranging from Senior Vice
President of Talent Acquisition to Senior College Relations Director (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Smith, 2010). The participants had a broad range of experience from one to twenty-six years in talent acquisition. The individual with the one year of experience had notably worked in higher education for over a decade before moving into talent acquisition. Two males and seven females participated and pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity when reporting the results of the analysis. The companies that the participants worked for represented a broad range of size and descriptors. One company was privately owned while the remaining others were publically traded. One of the companies was ranked as one of the largest companies in the world and seven of the companies operate globally while two are based solely within the United States. Data was collected through in-depth interviews ranging from 45 to 75 minutes. An analysis of the transcripts yielded themes centered on the recruiting experiences of the participants.

**Research Questions**

The qualitative research questions that were used during the interviews are what services offered are valued the most by employers and what services do they identify as the most helpful in recruiting students? The purpose of this study is to identify the services an institution of higher education can offer through their career offices that will assist employers with hiring graduates and improving students’ opportunity for employment directly from school. Through semi-structured interviews the researcher documented and understood what the college recruitment specialist articulated as services they perceived as valuable in contributing to their success recruiting college students. The nine interviews were scheduled through email and phone.
Interview Format and Protocol

The nine interviews were conducted over the phone following a defined interview protocol that was given to all of the participants prior to the interview (Appendix C). All of the participants were asked the same questions and the format was semi-structured to allow fluidity of the dialogue. The questions found in Table 1 attached below were constructed to answer the research question grounded in Denison’s Theory of Organizational Culture and its impact on Organizational Effectiveness. Interviews were recorded using Apple Voice Memo and transcribed using the transcription service Rev.com.

Table 1

*Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews*

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>How did you come to be a human resource professional?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>How do you select the schools that you recruit from for your corporation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Describe for me, based on your experiences, the leading career services office within higher education?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Please describe the culture of the leading career service offices? From your perspective, does the culture at this CSO align with the leading CSO you described?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>From your experience, does the mission of the institution impact your selection process of a leading career services office?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>After reading the mission of this university, can you identify services that you value in your role as a recruiter that reflect the mission?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Please describe the leadership structure of the leading career services office and what you value in this structure that assists you in your position as a recruiter?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>This university is a multi-campus system please describe from your experiences if the services you receive is consistent among the four campuses? From your perspective are there specific services at one campus that you value more than others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>In your experience what services can a career services office provide for you that you value and need in recruiting college graduates?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>From your perspective, how responsive are the career services offices at this university to your needs, do they exhibit adaptability? Please describe an example of an employee’s responsiveness to a need you had while on campus?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. Describe a situation where a career services office professional at this university responded uniquely to your needs as a college recruiter that you valued?

12. Can you identify services that you value that highlight employee initiative and working cooperatively together?

13. Can you identify services that you valued when on campus that reflect a team approach at this CSO?

14. You identified critical services earlier in our interview, please describe for me an example of how this service was of value to you?

15. When identifying these critical services why is it important to you in your job?

Analysis of Interview Data

A thematic analysis of the transcripts was conducted utilizing a software called NVivo. The researcher read the transcripts multiple times highlighting initial thoughts on interpretative themes, patterns that were identified and shared points of view of the participants (Forrester, 2010). These initial thoughts were captured in a reflective journal (Shenton, 2004). The transcripts yielded specific themes that were shared by the participants from their perspective in what they valued in recruiting college graduates. The themes were highlighted and coded in NVivo. A descriptive summary was first done by the researcher utilizing the four traits of Denison. After a careful review of this work, the researcher determined a second descriptive summary was needed.

The second descriptive summary based on the researcher’s interpretation of the transcripts that focused specifically on data related to the research question yielded much stronger results. The second descriptive summary demonstrated broad themes that were clustered together that could answer the research question of what services does an employer value while recruiting college students. The themes were first clustered by individual and then in group.
clusters. From these clusters, six superordinate themes were identified and then streamlined to five final superordinate themes. To further provide an understanding and significance of the five superordinate themes a Thematic Analysis Network was created and can be seen in Figure 1 following. As theorized by Denison (1990) the recurring themes have significance as it relates to organizational culture and impact on organizational effectiveness. These superordinate themes are: 1) Strategic Functionality; 2) Students; 3) Customer Centric; 4) Organizational Learning; 5) Organizational Parallelism.

To ensure the researcher’s interpretation of the data was reflective of the participants’ experiences the Thematic Analysis Network was sent to each of the participants through email. In addition, individual summaries with their verbatim extracts were given to each participant to provide a descriptive summary supporting the superordinate themes. Participants were asked to provide any feedback and all of the participants responded that they believed the descriptive summary was reflective of their specific interview and thoughts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, a chart was created by the researcher to document repeated patterns expressed by the participants. Lastly, a peer review was done by a well-qualified and credentialed faculty member. The faculty member has served as an advisor for doctoral students and has a doctorate from Boston University, a large research institution. The reviewer’s feedback was utilized in the researcher’s interpretation of the data (Forrester, 2010).
Strategic Functionality

The first superordinate theme that was identified by the researcher was Strategic Functionality. It was articulated by all of the participants and it reflects that at the core of what the employers value most is the relationship between the employer and the institution. In utilizing the word frequency query in NVivo the term Relationship was mentioned 66 times by the participants and it had a weighted score .92%. The participants expressed that the relationship is ultimately about recruiting the best candidates for the employer’s organization but
it requires a strategic partnership that is aligned with multiple functional touchpoints throughout both organizations. As stated by Aileen, “Again, I think it’s shared culture, shared values, history together. A true definition of partnership, and it helps to promote the value proposition for both the schools and for my company.” All nine participant described their work as a relationship with the school and that it was a partnership that was fluid and if managed well went beyond the career services office. All of the participants described the relationship with the career services office as an alliance and the two departments working together to navigate complex organizations. For example, Terry stated:

Typically, the number one thing that makes our lives a little easier is that there is someone who's clearly identified as an employee relations person but that single point of contact makes it easier for us to then navigate the complexity of the institution, because they can help break down some of the faculty barriers, some of the administrative barriers, depending on what we are looking to accomplish. That tends to be the first kind of go to for us, in terms of a measure that we will use to make a decision around whether or not we want to engage with that particular school

Another example from Laura:

As I said earlier, it comes down to relationships. There's no question that you can, you know when you're dealing with someone who's sort of harried and being pulled in different directions and wearing multiple hats. You just feel that. You feel that in the relationship; you feel that in the follow through.

Another example from Valerie:
The one thing that you can say consistently no matter what campus recruiting effort you have, is that those people are your lifeline, and trying to build that relationship is very important.

In summary, the superordinate theme of Strategic Functionality speaks to relationship between the career services office and the employer as stated by the participants. In order for the relationship to be productive for both entities there must be a strong organizational culture within the career services office. Participants identified the need for a strong leader who has decision making power, and the need for the career center to be able to collaborate utilizing all of the resources on campus. As stated by Aileen, “We really need mature, seasoned professionals who can partner with us, think strategically, help us forecast, make sure we're not wasting our time, have the confidence and the leadership to tell us if they think we are wasting our time.” Lastly, as reported by the participants a career center that is integrated fully into the university community that can provide strategic functionality when an employer is on campus.

Centralized Services

The topic of centralized services was heavily discussed during the interviews. Eight of the nine participants all agreed that centralized services was an essential component to a high achieving relationship. In their words a career services office that is centralized contributed to a greater level of collaboration and provided a seamless approach to the relationship according to the employers. The participants described an effective partnership is the direct result of having individuals specifically focused on assisting them and not owning multiple areas of responsibility such as a faculty member also managing internships or employer relations. The one participant
who expressed an affinity with a decentralized approach was currently responsible for just one major hence did not have a need to navigate the entire university community. Joseph described the desire for a centralized department as:

I really see the need for the centralized one-stop shop method where I'm able to speak with one person that, what I call a single point of contact, that can really understand what my needs are.

Another example from Terry:

They have someone that's a faculty member and their real job is to be a professor and teach, but then, on the side, they do a little bit with internships and it's too much for the faculty member, to be honest. It doesn't help their students either, so I've been kind of begging them to put some resources, if they can, behind having at least one person that's dedicated to helping their students get their internships.

A seamless approach with a strong leader providing strategy and direction within career services representing the entire university community was the preference by the participants. As one participant, Terry, who is employed at one of Forbes top 50 largest private company in the United States said “The second thing would be looking at how their career services are aligned. So some of them are aligned centrally, and some are dispersed across the various colleges that run the schools. We have found that the ones that are aligned centrally make it a little bit easier for us.” The research clearly indicated that centralized career services was the preference of the participants and in their view provided an effective way to navigate the institution and ultimately recruit students. With that said, Joseph also stated that while centralized career services were
valued and preferred for most schools but it did not matter for highly selective, top tier schools because his organization had a high regard for the students.

So for some schools, yes, we absolutely look at, are they resourced in a way that will make our access to the institution a little bit easier? And for other institutions, we may care so much about the talent that they produce, but it does not matter how difficult it may be for us to get access to the talent. We are going to go after them regardless of how their career service unit is structured.

In conclusion, when reviewing the subtheme of a centralized career services office it is evident that the participants prefer this method of organizational structure. Terry discusses wanting to “break down barriers” and that without a centralized location his organization may choose to recruit at another institution. As stated by Terry he uses the word “beg” to describe his desire to work with one individual. He cited frustration in working with a faculty member who is responsible for placing student interns while also maintaining a full teaching load. Carrie stated that she preferred a particular school because the career services office was connected, “definitely love working with X University for the career service experiential education department because they're all linked.” In summary, eight of the participants are looking for “centralized one-stop shop method” that lead to a superior efficiency, in tandem coordination and an institution who really understands their needs. Lastly, two of the participants expressed that they would still recruit on a campus if a centralized office was not present. First, Joseph spoke about recruiting at a highly desired school that they “care so much about the talent that they produce” that they will visit regardless of services. This was not his preference but he would do it in order to get access to the perceived top talent. Secondly, Andrea recruited for a narrow
population and did not require a full suite of services. “As a recruiter, in my specific position, now, it would probably be the more decentralized, where you have the smaller group of career services advisors working specifically with students from a major.”

**Access to Leadership**

The participants indicated a desire to have access to strong leadership within the career service offices. The data pointed to a need within career services of an individual who was part of the executive team within the institution and had a high level of decision making authority and ability to think “strategic”. One participant, Aileen, described the leadership’s role as:

Having leaders in the career services office that are empowered to make decisions so that we're not having to wait for them to ask someone else, who's asking someone else, having a career services leadership team that can deliver on their promises, and having people on the team that are strategic thinkers, because as you know, the landscape is changing really quickly.

Another example from Laura:

Think if you don't have strategic thinkers in career services office, if it's just people who are administrators, who are making sure that they fill the interview slate, no one's interested in that anymore. It's a very tight labor market. We really need mature, seasoned professionals who can partner with us, think strategically, help us forecast, make sure we're not wasting our time, have the confidence and the leadership to tell us if they think we are wasting our time, and also feel comfortable being able to tell us if they think we're doing something wrong, or if we should be doing something better, or if we're not being competitive, and being able to bring that level of trust and expertise.
The employers also recognize that leadership is part of the culture of the institution. One participant, Andrea, described it as “leadership and culture are like, you know, the chicken and the egg, right? What came first?” A strong leadership is indicative of a strong culture and necessary for an optimal relationship. Employers expressed a direct link to strong leadership and better results of their recruitment. The participants felt a strategic thinker overseeing the career services office provided them with optimal results. As one employer, Terry stated “I think that's where having, kind of, more senior buy-in at the institutional level has yielded us better results.”

In summary, a career services’ leader who can provide “strategy” and direction is invaluable and a highly desired as expressed by the employers. Aileen described a recruitment environment that was dynamic and changing. She used the example that employers don’t just want their interview slots filled, “no one's interested in that anymore.” She expressed that they want a partner who can challenge them and provide them with expertise in recruiting students. A career department that has a strong leader who has purpose and who can provide structure that will deliver positive results was evident in the reported experiences of the participants. An institution that does not invest in the appropriate staffing and resources in leadership will be deficient in the eyes of the employer. In addition, a leader who is empowered and does not have to ask permission to provide employers with their recruitment needs is critical to success. As stated by Terry there is a direct correlation in the view of the employer of having a senior leader work with them to achieve superior recruitment results.
Access to Faculty

The subtheme of Having Access to faculty was indicated by all of the participants. The employers were highly motivated to have a relationship with the faculty members. They viewed the faculty members as the gatekeepers of the best students and they wanted the career services office to be able to provide them access to them. As Joseph expressed:

Depending on the school and if the school is of strategic importance for us ... we will bring our senior executives out to campus to meet with folks. And having somebody that can help facilitate meetings with deans, meetings with department chairs, meetings with key faculty, becomes really critical to what we consider to be success at those schools.

The employers articulated that the faculty are a vital piece of the relationship. The recruiters want the vehicle to provide access of their leadership to academic leadership on campus. They have the expectation that the career services office serves as the conduit to the university and that they will have access to senior academic leadership who will have an understanding of what their needs are to help them navigate the campus. As stated by Valerie “a culture where they're integrated with the relevant professors, with the administration, and have business acumen from the perspective of having a sense of what's going on from a corporate perspective.” This is a tall order for career services offices. They are asked to not only have an understanding of the employer partners’ business goals but also be able to navigate the institution for them.

Another example:

What is incredibly valued is when they have the ability to kind of do some of the pre-work for us, and prep their colleagues about who we are, what we're looking to do, so
that we're not having that same conversation 10 different times, or 10 different people, so
we can really get to the meat of what our needs are pretty quickly.

In summary, access to faculty and academic leadership is an expectation of the
employers. The employers believe that access impacts their organizational performance in
college recruitment and that it is critical to a successful relationship. In addition to access they
want the career services office to provide a succinct summary to academic leadership of who
they are so that they can be efficient when on campus. As an external constituent the employers
are relying on the career services office to represent them in gaining access to faculty and
expressing the importance of who they are to them. As stated by Terry, “But that single point of
contact makes it easier for us to then navigate the complexity of the institution, because they can
help break down some of the faculty barriers.” The career services office represents a critical
vehicle for the employers to access faculty and the community.

In conclusion, the superordinate theme Strategic Functionality points to the importance of
the relationship and the minutia that is required to sustain it. The employers have high
expectations of institutions and they want a strong relationship with colleges that they believe
have students that align with their culture. They do not view it as a transactional relationship
rather they view it as a multidimensional relationship that requires strong leadership on the part
of the career services office. As stated earlier by Valerie “The one thing that you can say
consistently no matter what campus recruiting effort you have, is that those people are your
lifeline, and trying to build that relationship is very important.”
Students

The second superordinate theme that was identified by the researcher is the topic of students. Utilizing the word frequency query in NVivo the word, student, was mentioned 166 times with a weighted percentage of 2.6%. Every participant spoke of students and the importance of access to them. The participants expressed that they need as much information as possible in regards to the students. They are challenged to identify ways to make an impact with them and to make a connection so that the students want to work for their organization. As Carrie stated:

 Especially this generation, help them make it not so difficult to go from college to the real world, and what those expectations are, and as well as from an industry perspective, helping the industry understand what the student expectation is as they're graduating.

That the career services office exhibits an understanding of the current student body’s mindset and stay current on what influences them and the industry overall was stated as important to the participants. The behavior of a student has a direct impact on the hiring process and an awareness of the students’ level of commitment to the company or their overall purpose in wanting employment was critical to the participants. As stated by Andrea, “I think your students are going to be much more successful, because that’s what the career services group is working on, is learning the industry, knowing the industry and knowing what employers want.”

The participants stated that they need a career services office that will assist them in hiring and identifying talent and providing feedback on what students’ expectations are in regards to timing of job offers, salary ranges and titles. This can assist and expedite the process for the institution, the employer and the student. Valerie discussed an example of a school who
reached out to her and she valued that from them and felt it was a real collaboration that could provide vital information about students to her organization. “I really trusted that they knew exactly what that candidate wanted, they had already had a previous conversation with them.”

In addition, employers highlighted the importance of networking with students and providing them opportunity to focus on the skill set necessary in an interview. As stated by Andrea “Sometimes I feel like this generation can have a little bit more of a challenge or just be, feel more uneasy about those face-to-face interactions and so, I feel like career services that, when they offer those types of services, then that, that, those are things that, that we're really looking for.” Specific services that are responsive to the needs of both the student and the employer provide opportunities for a higher rate of success in hiring. The participants expressed that if the students are prepared by career services professionals then they will more than likely have greater success with the employer partner. As stated by Laura “They were so ingrained in that student's school life, that they knew what was going to make sense for them, and what wasn't going to make sense.”

In conclusion, students are at the center of the relationship and participants expressed the challenges they have understanding them, accessing them and prioritizing them for hiring. As stated by Aileen: “What does the current graduate want that we may or may not be aware of?” The participants cited that the career center can provide assistance to them with consistent opportunities to understand the student better and improve their hiring on campus. The stronger the relationship the more information is provided to the employer. As stated by Laura, “As the relationship deepens, so does the relationship with the students that you recruit. Without that, it’s really hard to do what you need to do.”
Provide assistance with accessibility on campus

Many employers mentioned the importance of creative opportunities to facilitate engagement with students. As Terry described “we also spend a lot of time making sure that we're getting the biggest return for the activities that we're doing. And having an employer partner and a campus partner that is willing to have conversations with us about how we can reach their students, in a way that might be a little bit less traditional. Meaning, it's not a career fair, but will allow us to get access to a very specific, targeted population of students, is something that we are always looking for ... and really appreciate it when our campus partners are active in allowing us to think about those strategies with them.” There is a wide spectrum of activities that a career services office can provide employers. Events that are targeted and specific to the needs of the employer are desired. A career services offices that can be adaptable and provide events that go beyond the boundaries of a traditional office may attract more employers.

Certain employers mentioned events that the institution and the employer partner could deliver together when they had a shared strategic outcome. A collaboration that meets the needs of both the employers’ organization and the university could provide an unusual platform of engagement with various levels of employees in both institutions, as well as, students. As stated by Andrea:

Good opportunity where it's relationship building that's supporting causes that both the company and the higher ed institution are supportive of. It could be on hunger or sustainability or supporting a non-profit organization in the Northeast. That speaks both to the higher ed institution and the organization
 Lastly, events that are not specific to recruitment but rather are focused on building the brand of the employer’s organization was mentioned as valued. Exposure to other stakeholders on campus results in a greater awareness among students, faculty and staff and a higher level of willingness to recommend a company to a student.

We took over their Quad on campus, and brought a bunch of our technology to their Quad under the tent, and had food, and all kinds of things, just to showcase that technology and innovation are a big part of who we are. And I wouldn't describe that as a service, but rather their ability to work with us to do things that might be a little bit different, just so we get some broader name recognition out there.

In conclusion, providing access to students requires a career services office to have the skills necessary to navigate the complexity of the campus in order to be creative and meet the needs of the employer. In addition, a career services office that understands their institution’s mission and also the mission of the employer partner organization may find unique opportunities for creative alignment and programming that would benefit the students, and overall campus community. As stated above by Andrea, she described a unique alignment from a philanthropic perspective that focused on hunger which provided a foundation for a deeper level of commitment between the two organizations that surpassed college recruitment.

**Provide knowledge of student beyond transcript**

Four of the employers emphasized that they would like to have additional information about the students that went beyond the traditional transcript. As cited by the participants, most employers require a minimum grade point average and certain jobs require graduates from a
specific program but the participants stated that they are looking for more information beyond the transcript to assist them with the hiring process.

I think the idea of skill-based transcripts, or ... in competencies that we can then rely on, the same way that we rely on a student having a degree, and that degree means X to us ... having some type of ability to transcript skills would be very attractive.

Another Example from Carrie:

We value knowing, having students being prepared and all the work that career services, you know, does with the resumes and interview prep and just, interacting at a networking event and all those things that may not, people might not find important, employers like my corporation find absolutely vital to the success of students.

Career services offices that can provide additional valuable information on students to employer partners could assist students and employers in the hiring process. As employers establish their talent pipeline on campus it is difficult to discern students from a specific program beyond GPA and the participants would like evidence of meaningful activities such as expressed above by Carrie. Students who seek the career services office in developing networking skills or other skill attainment competency outside of the classroom are valued activities by employers. Overall, a greater understanding of the student beyond the transcript was desired by participants. A coordinated effort by the institution to meet the needs of the employer by providing information beyond the transcript is seen as having a positive impact on the relationship and was cited as important by the participants. As stated by Laura, “If you are truly invested into the future of the students and value where you’re placing them and how you’re placing the, I think it just comes through. I think it shows.”
Provide understanding of the student expectations

As stated by Valerie, it is a challenge to both employers and career services professionals to assist students with finding full time employment when graduating. “Especially this generation, help them make it not so difficult to go from college to the real world.” One of the participants spoke about leading by example and that a career services office should exhibit the same skills that are being required by their students when working with employers.

I just want to focus on the culture of the office, the initiative of the employees, the leadership, the adaptability, the communications ... I'm using your words now ... Strong communication. I think that then the students see that and that also kind of trickles down to them.

As stated by Carrie, a career services office that exhibits a high level of professionalism may prompt students to act professionally throughout the interview process. She discussed a direct correlation between the professionalism of the career services staff with the students’ ability to interview successfully. Modeling good professional behavior is a skill that career services staff should adhere to when working with both students and employers.

In summary the superordinate theme Students points to the importance of students in the relationship. Employers want access to them in creative ways outside the normal boundaries of a career services team. As stated by Theresa “the culture that I've seen and like, is the career services offices that actually do take the time to get to know their students in working with them through resume writing, through finding them internships, and just kind of becoming a resource for those students.” In addition, a conduit that could provide additional information beyond the transcript would be valuable to employers. Career services offices that dedicate staff and
resources to obtaining and providing this information to employers would benefit and provide customer focus to their employers. As stated by Terry a “skills based transcript” would provide valuable information in the interviewing process.

Organizational Parallelism

Organizational Parallelism was the fifth superordinate theme identified by the researcher. At the core of the relationship the participants discussed a similarity or likeness between the two organizations. Some of the participants identified it as a shared vision while others spoke of traits within students that aligned with their organization. Elements within this theme identified by participants were mutual organizational understanding, opportunities for internal and external alignment, and lastly opportunities for alignment with leadership and alumnae. All nine participants provided examples of an alignment and interrelation between the institution and the organization and they expressed that they valued the comradery resulting from the likeness. As one participant stated:

They treated me like I was one of their own team members, involved us in conversations.

Another example:

When the university was thinking of making a change, they would call and say, "How does this affect you in your recruiting efforts?" It was almost like we were part of their team.

Mutual Organizational Understanding

Mutual Organizational Understanding is a subtheme of Organizational Parallelism and examples of it were mentioned multiple times by all nine participants. The participants
expressed a congruence between the two organizations and identified culture, mission and shared values as extremely important when making a decision to recruit on a college campus. As stated by Aileen:

"Particularly in today's arena, and even when you look at things like politics today, if you start to see a mission that's too far afield from what the culture and what we hear from our employees are important to them, we would never want to be put in a compromising position where we were going to a school with an entirely different mission that was at odds with the mission of our company."

The participants voiced a real connection with the institution and ultimately with the career services office. As one participant indicated there is a direct connection between understanding and alignment with each other’s mission and culture when seeking organizational effectiveness for both entities.

"I think it's shared culture, shared values, history together. A true definition of partnership, and it helps to promote the value proposition for both."

There is evidence in the transcripts that alignment with the mission for both organizations provides the employers with students who would identify with their organizational culture. Employers have a strong desire to not just hire students but also retain them for their organization.

"But we want to make sure that we're also evaluating the institution on how the associates are doing once they get here. And are they performing the way that we want them to? Are they retaining the way we want them to? Is their rating, in terms of their long-term potential, the way that we would like them to be? And what institutions are producing us
the right talent? So it's not just about, "Are we hiring from X, Y and Z School?", but once we hire, are they performing the way we want them to.

One participant cited consistency in offering internship as a mode of education at an institution is an indicator of the culture of an organization they value. A “hands on approach” was referred to as a value for the employer partner and an indicator of an institution that they would want to partner with or a student they would want to hire.

We find that any educational program that includes that sort of hands-on approach, for us, helps us to identify the culture of the school and the culture, ultimately, of the candidate.

Three participant referred to a higher level of intimacy in the partnership if there is alignment within the culture of the two organizations. Laura stated “I think that the services, and experiences, the more you can partner, and talk, and share the good, and the bad, and the ugly, and whatever it is, the more successful the two of you can be together.” Andrea cited specifically that there was a level of sophistication and understanding of each other’s culture in the communication between the two organizations. Knowing what can be communicated to each other and knowing where full transparency can be used was cited by Andrea as something that will lead to a more productive relationship between the employers and the career services office.

But I do think that the cultures need to gel between the office—or even the higher ed institution in general—and the organization. Now, their goals may be different, but the culture and the way in which they communicate, the way in which they work do need to gel. Because what might be open communication for one company may not work for another, right? I'm not sure if I'm making any sense but what might seem to be just, "Hey, we're having a conversation," may appear to another office as too forward.
In conclusion, the subtheme of Mutual Organizational Likeness is a powerful theme and evident in all of the participants’ transcripts. The participants cited an intimate relationship that was rich and ongoing as clearly valuable to them. As stated by Laura, “It was like getting supported from the beginning to then end, not just at one point in time. It really felt like a true relationship.” In addition, the participants desire a similarity between the two organizations with mission and strategic direction and believe this alignment impacts their recruitment efforts. As stated by Carrie, “We find that, in order to attract students that are like minded to us, it helps starting with a university who is like minded to us in terms of their values.”

**Identify opportunities for alignment**

Identifying Opportunities for Alignment is a subtheme of Organizational Parallelism and was cited within six of the participants’ transcripts. Themes that were highlighted included: creating unique opportunities for alignment and a shared approach to work. The evidence that was identified included examples of seamlessness between the two organizations that only could happen with a high level of understanding of each other’s values and culture. As stated by Joseph:

Finding those unique ties that bring your company together with the values of the students, it's critical to get in the higher quality students and helping them believe that this is the right decision for them as they come out of school.

One participant mentioned that both organizations were sharing a one-hundred-year anniversary and that this commonality led to a stronger alignment as well as a deeper understanding and familiarity for the students his organization was hoping to recruit. This type
of unique alignment would only be possible with two organizations who have a rich understanding of each other’s history and what is important to them culturally.

A hundred years of school two or three years ago, was very complementary to my organization approaching its hundred years next year, and bringing those synergies together allowed that personal connection so that when students had a choice on where they go, they were saying, "Well, this is a hundred-year-old organization and my school is a hundred-year-old organization."

Four participants mentioned a shared approach to work and how it positively affected their goals and created a trust with the career services office. Participants cited that alignment in approach to events and recruitment overall provided them with a level of comfort that came directly as a result of a strong partnership.

Corporate Day is a great example, because it's such a large production, and we have a lot of people there at once, and therefore having the career services office team dedicated to that, so we're not bringing 30 people on campus that are, you know, in eight different locations on the campus on one day, and only having one person from career services trying to juggle all of that, so I think that's a great example, when it's like for a larger event or a larger production, that you've got the whole team there. Something like that makes us feel really valued, and quite frankly, it's just all a little less scary.

Another Example:

Because when you're in HR and you're trying to herd all of the cats internally to make them feel like it's well-organized and they know where to go and so forth, having the whole career offices team there, and there to back it up, is huge.
In conclusion, the subtheme of Identifying Opportunities for Alignment spoke to a deep affiliation between the employer and the career services office. Participants cited building trust and working together with the office to create opportunities that reflected each organization’s mission and culture as critically important. As stated by Terry: “being proactive, and not reactive, and really looking for campus partners that are going to both understand what our needs are ... and from a hiring perspective ... and present us with opportunities that they think might make sense, given their particular campus, and their student population.”

**Alignment of alumnus and leadership**

Alignment of alumnus and leadership is a subtheme of Organizational Parallelism and examples of it were cited eleven times by eight participants. Themes that were identified by the researcher included senior leadership requesting recruitment at their alma maters, retention of alumni and impact on recruitment, and alumni assisting with recruitment on campuses. The participants spoke of the significance of positioning alumni leadership with the college relations team and the interconnection of the number of alumni and culture of the two organizations.

One of the participants, Joseph spoke passionately about the connection between his organization and the institution. He highlighted a personal connection and a level of intimacy when selecting candidates.

Our executive leadership legacy and the school that they've been involved with in the past either as alumni, grad school participants, or such, there's a lot of legacy and heart that goes into some of those selections.

Another Example:
Whenever possible we use alums to touch base with folks that they're still in contact with to develop those relationships as well.

Participants spoke about the selection of where they recruit from and they cited that leadership has a strong influence as to where their organizations visit. As stated by Joseph, “The selection process a lot of times starts with our senior executives and their relationships with previous universities and colleges.” Leadership influence on successful college recruitment was also discussed by Aileen. “One of our presidents. For example, Sean he actually has an opportunity to come and teach on campus.” She spoke of her company’s president, Sean, teaching at his alma mater and the value it provides to successful recruitment.

In addition, Terry stated that there was a specific strategy attached to school selection and current alumni employed within her company. She cited alumni making connections with faculty and staff within their alma mater to improve the recruitment strategies of her organization.

Whenever possible we use alums to touch base with folks that they're still in contact with to develop those relationships as well.

In addition, one of the participants spoke of the influence of repetitive successful recruitment from one college and positive impact on organizational culture. Aileen stated, “it tends to start to line up the culture of the students and administration with the culture of people in our company, not to mention the fact that, you know, we have more and more alumni from those kinds of institutions.” Specific examples of alumni connecting with the institution outside of the traditional college recruitment process was cited by two of the participants.
We have a lot of employees that are taking initiative on their own to reinforce their relationships with schools, whether they're alumni at that school, or whether or not we've encouraged them to do it.

In summary, the subtheme Alignment of Alumnus and Leadership was cited multiple times by eight of the participants during their interviews. The participants spoke of the preponderance of the college recruitment team utilizing executive leadership and alumni of the colleges within their organization to support their hiring process. In addition, staff members who are alumni volunteer to assist with recruitment and “reinforce” the relationship. The participants expressed a higher success rate with retention of new hires as well as impact on the “culture of the people” within the organization when there is a long history with one institution. As cited by Theresa, “The existing relationships we have, everything works out fine. That may be just because we’ve been doing it with them for a long time.”

In conclusion, the fifth and final superordinate theme of Organizational Parallelism was cited by all of the participants. Overall, examples of it were cited thirty-seven times by the participants. The researcher observed a strong correlation between the employers’ organization and the institutions the employers send their college recruitment team too. The similarities that were important to the participants between their companies and the institutions was observed by the researcher as employees who are alumni within their organization, leadership who either teach or who are alumni themselves. Lastly, the researcher identified the lasting impression formed by hiring from the same institution over a long period of time and the impact that has on their organizational culture. As stated by Andrea, “It's the relationship. It's seeing that every year, consistently, when there are candidates coming out and it's not just candidates that are
getting hired, I cannot step into an account without running into several alumni, which is absolutely amazing to me.”

**Customer Centric**

Customer Centric was the next superordinate theme identified by the participants. All of the participants discussed the importance of working with a career services office that had appropriate human resources and a team of people who were highly skilled and committed to the relationship. Specifically, the participants expressed a need for a team that was empowered to make decisions and who could be adaptable when necessary.

Over the years, the industry has changed. Demand has changed. We've changed. We've grown quite a bit, and the relationship with both of those schools, while other relationships have peaked and ebbed and flowed, those two relationships remain the strongest, and I think that is a direct correlation between the institution's ability to adapt, and change, and meet the demands of clientele, if you will.

As stated by Joseph, “Trying to find that balance, I think, for schools that are able to find that adaptable, be adaptable to what those industry needs are, are the ones that will find more success.” The participants expressed that employees within the career services office should have a level of mastery that can assist them while on campus. In conclusion, understanding the customer needs and having a skilled staff that is prepared and able to deliver are both critical to the relationship as expressed by the participants.
Employee Skill Set

One of the subthemes identified by the researcher within the subordinate theme of Customer Center is Employee Skill Set. Participants identified a highly skilled team within career services as an important element within the relationship. As one employer observed “I do feel like I ... There's empowerment. I can tell there's personal accountability. There's responsiveness.” Eight of the employers spoke of individuals who were adept and who could provide assistance to them that is creative and not within the typical job responsibility of a career services professional.

She really jumped in, and was supportive of testing this technology out, and helping students really kind of voluntarily take a HireVue to see what could be some of our pitfalls, and would it be challenging? Would it be difficult? I think that was sort of an out of the box thing that we asked somebody to do, but she took initiative to work with us together to see if it's going work.

One of the participants, Theresa, spoke of correlation between the level of skill set of the staff in the career center being a direct benefit to the students. “There's always that opportunity to at least talk things through. So I think they're very responsive, very adaptable. Always willing to try something new, if it's going to benefit students in that aspect.”

Another example:

I think, also, what I enjoy seeing a lot of times is for the career fairs, and for the employer events, is seeing a variety of the career services staff out working the event. Walking the floor, talking to employers, learning a little bit more about what's going on with those
employers that are there at the event. As well as with the students that are there, and kind of helping them through.

In summary, the skill set of the employees within the career center was valued and highlighted by all of the participants. Employers believe there is a link between the productivity and proficiency of the staff and the overall success in their recruitment. Carrie specifically highlighted communication between the staff and the employer and the skill and ability of the staff to identify opportunities for them. “We've absolutely had such good collaboration.”

Another participant stated:

I really appreciate the work that they do, in particular, because they're very active, in terms of outreach around opportunities that they think might be a good fit for us. So they're not a career services unit that waits for us to have a need. They're constantly, constantly presenting opportunities for us that they think might be a good fit

Christine stated, “they have the right person in place, which is sometimes the case and sometimes not the case, but we see a huge difference in the value of our investment into the relationship if we can establish a good rapport with the person in the career services office.” The more adapt and skilled the staff are in communicating directly with the employers the higher the return. The participants cited the importance of autonomy and the ability to be creative as a service that is valued by the employers. As stated by Theresa: “So, career services offices employees that aren't afraid to think outside of the box, and look at what an employer is looking to do. And offer ideas because of their expertise.”
Ability to create change

The second subtheme, Ability to Create Change, was a shared point of view by seven of the participants. The employers indicated that a career services office that is customer centric and that the offices that have the ability to create change are important to them as they visit campuses. Terry spoke specifically about adaptability and the importance of it in the relationship with the career center. He highlighted his disappointment and frustration when the career center was not willing to change their current employer activities.

But how do we create an experience for students that engages them, and allows them to come and talk to us? We were starting to test some concepts out with some of our university partners. And some of our schools were very adamant that if we requested something different to their career fair meeting ... we said, "We don't a table. And we want a space just a little bit bigger than you give to other people," even if we were willing to pay for it, that there was zero flexibility in their ability to deliver on that.

In addition, flexibility with the calendar and the ability to be pliable with recruitment dates was articulated by four of the employers. Joseph stated “It's not surprising that some organizations have onboarding in July; other organizations have onboarding in September; others have them right after the first of the year. Trying to find that balance, I think, for schools that are able to find that adaptable, be adaptable to what those industry needs are, are the ones that will find more success.” Centers that employ staff members who are multi-faceted and have the authority to make decisions and change the status quo are perceived as valuable to the participants.
In conclusion Ability to Create Change is appreciated and held dear by the participants. They expressed that in their experiences recruiting on college campuses, more career services offices are providing them with customer centric programming. As stated by Aileen “Let me just preface this by saying there are a lot of ways where we're seeing more and more career services having a willingness and an interest in customizing solutions for us, because we are so high-growth, and we do ask some unique things.” The employers express that they want to work with an institution that is willing to “adapt and change how they do things” to get them better access to the university community.

**Simplified process**

The third subtheme identified in the data was a Simplified Process. Six of the participants expressed and articulated examples of an interaction with the career center that were valued because they were simplified. One of the participants, Christine, shared that all staff at both organizations was at capacity and that a simplified process would maximize effectiveness for all.

Whether it's administrative, personnel at our corporate office, or the operators, everyone's got a full boat. Everyone's got a full load. To the extent that systems can be streamlined, it's just helpful to everybody.

Terry, expressed a frustration with universities that had a complicated and inconsistent process. He highlighted the use of different resources across campuses limits their recruitment work. Having to learn different systems for the same campus can be daunting and limiting to the recruitment process.
The biggest pain point for us is that kind of inconsistency across campuses, in terms of the systems and the tools that they use. And our ability to get access to the students' information is different on every campus. So if I could advocate for institutions, just think about a way to better service employers.

A limited budget was cited by the employers as a reason for the process needing to be more simplified. A straightforward service for employers will allow them to spend less time on campus and be more productive in their recruitment efforts. As stated by Joseph “the funding that we are allotted in terms of our budget process really restricts us in terms of how many campuses we can recruit on.” They expressed that they have limited funding and need to make their time on campus as efficient as possible.

In conclusion, a simplified process was cited by six of the participants. The ability to have a definitive and consistent process for recruiting students was strongly desired. As stated by Christine, employers want the process to be uncomplicated for both organizations and the students and they perceive to see a value in working with the career services office to make it less complicated. “Big thing for us, is that we want to make sure that we are making the process both simple for the institution, and as simple as possible for the various groups that we work for hiring.”

In summary, the Customer Centric superordinate theme identified by the participants was cited repeatedly. The interpretation of the researcher is that employers want to engage directly with students and not be burdened with a complex process to gain access to them. As noted by Terry:
And find some type of tool that would allow us to leverage the time that we're spending with students in a more impactful way.

In addition, the ability of a career center to have staff that are highly skilled and be given the authority to make decisions was mentioned by the participants. Employers once again spoke of a partnership and working together with the career services office to meet a specific objective. Aileen referred to a large event on campus:

I think that's a great example, when it's like for a larger event or a larger production, that you've got the whole team there. Something like that makes us feel really valued, and quite frankly, it's just all a little less scary, because when you're in HR and you're trying to herd all of the cats internally to make them feel like it's well-organized and they know where to go and so forth, having the whole career offices team there, and there to back to up, is huge.

A level of credibility with the staff and trust is at the core of the relationship as expressed by the participants. The career services office’s ability to show agility and support the employers with a high level of performance was important to the participants.

**Organizational Learning**

Organizational Learning was the fourth superordinate theme identified by the researcher. Elements within this theme identified by the participants are learning opportunities that organizations can bring to each other in regards to current trends, content experts and credentialing. Laura spoke specifically about a career services office organizing data for the employer to assist them with understanding hiring trends.
I know this is stuff that we should actually know, and it's quite frankly hard, because we're such a large organization, but this is something that you did not have to do, and was great, because it's helping us learn something about our organization, which eventually is going help us be a better partner for you in the future.

In addition, taking advantage of online courses for executives and staff members within the organization was stated as a benefit by four of the employers. The opportunity to provide educational training to the industry partner provided a level of engagement that could potentially lead to more hires due to the in-depth knowledge the employer partner would gain. As stated by Aileen:

We've been partnering with executive education for the online executive MBA, and for example, we were able to combine that support and participation from career services.

Lastly, sharing content experts was seen as a value by four of the participants. Exposure of their executives to the campus through classroom presentations, honorary doctorates and guest lecturers were all identified as services or experiences the participant valued when working with a career services office. Joseph specifically mentioned:

Different universities opportunities to take our senior leaders and put them in distinguished visiting professors or classroom speaking opportunities or such from there.

I think that is something that we value.

In conclusion, shared Organizational Learning was a superordinate theme identified by all of the participants. The employers perceive a value in strategic alliance in working with an educational institution and seek out opportunities to engage on this level. The subtheme of sharing intelligence was discussed the most by the employers within this theme.
Sharing Intelligence

The subtheme of Sharing Intelligence was mentioned the most within Organizational Learning. The researcher reviewed twelve lengthy examples by employers on this topic and evidence of it with every participant. Employers perceive the institution as content experts in regards to the specific industry and about the students. As stated by Joseph, “I think it's really important that career services share insights with our campus programs team, with our recruiting team, that we wouldn't otherwise have. That's really important, and its competitive intelligence.” They want open and consistent communication and any insider information the career services office may have in regards to changes in academics or students is valued.

Keep us abreast of the changes in the culture of the academic side. That's the biggest thing. We have the day to day functions that we can provide, and we can get to the faculty and staff of what's changing in the industry, but really, what we value is, what are the students seeing?

In addition, employers want to know what new programs are being considered or developed by the colleges. They want to keep pace with changes or identify areas of future hiring opportunities as a result of new majors. Conversely, if they identify a need within industry they cited the importance of communicating that with the university. Five of the participants identified gaps in what is being taught in the classroom and what is occurring in industry and expressed a desire to keep pace with what is being taught.

Adapting to our changing business so that when we acquire a new company, and you hear that we're looking for new competencies, or developing a new program, to help
adapt the opportunities to recruit there, and to market there, to what our current needs are, based on our growth plans.

Another example:

A critical service that we find the most value in is when new education comes out, whether that's via textbook, whether that's e-learning, and being informed of that immediately. Again, we operate on the day to day of what we think ... What we see in the industry, but sometimes that can be very different than what is taught in school.

Two of the participants mentioned internship as an opportunity for sharing intelligence. Christine specifically stated: “We find that any educational program that includes that sort of hands-on approach, for us, helps us to identify the culture of the school and the culture, ultimately, of the candidate.” Employers mentioned that a student can provide a window into the university and be a reflection of the value of the education received by them. Internship was identified as a strong opportunity to preview and learn more about the institution without fully committing to a full time hire. As stated by Laura:

They would even want to know how they were doing down the road. If they didn't get converted from an internship to a full time job, we would talk about that and they would give feedback to the students.

In conclusion, the subtheme of Sharing Intelligence was mentioned by every participant. Employers are convinced that the institution is a content expert and can provide current up to date information to them about the industry and learning trends. They expressed that they are eager to form a strategic alliance and share changes in industry in the hopes it will impact curriculum. As stated by Valerie: “We built a long term standing relationship to where they feel
open that they could call and ask for feedback or ask for recommendations on changing any curriculum that might be based on the current trends in the industry.” In addition, there is a level of respect for the knowledge that the career services office can offer them in regards to their recruitment on campus. As stated by one participant:

My initial reach out to you, in coming on campus again, and not knowing the background, and so, working side by side with you to not only learn the background ... Learn how we needed to do things differently on our end, and through your feedback and through your guidance, being able to take that back to my headquarters, to say, "Here's what we did wrong. Here's what ... They want to help us, and here's what we need to do differently

**Building expertise within faculty**

Building Expertise within Faculty is a subtheme of Organizational Learning that was discussed by four of the employers. Elements within this subtheme include sharing faculty expertise with the employer partner, and providing new trends to faculty to ensure that it is being taught in the classroom. A career services office that can coordinate this level of interaction and provide opportunities for companies to collaborate at a deeper level was seen as beneficial by the participants. As shared by Aileen, “exchanging best practices” provides alignment with the two organizations that just recruitment alone would not bring to the relationship. One participant, Terry, shared a story about faculty expertise and the impact it had on building a program at his company.

So we had a strong interest in building a, some expertise at the entry level for the HR function. And we went to Career Services, and we said, "We'd really be interested in
helping to understand how you might be able to support an initiative like this." And within a matter of days, we were having a conversation with the dean of the business school.

In addition, providing the opportunity to interact with faculty to provide direction for the relationship was cited by one of the participants. Casual interaction where ideas can be shared was valued and cited. Andrea spoke specifically about:

Having an opportunity to engage with students and faculty one-on-one in an educational setting, where they can exchange ideas in terms of what's happening in industry and learn from industry.

In conclusion, the employers value working with faculty and encouraging career services to provide these opportunities. Whether the opportunity is to enhance the content in a classroom or bring institutional experts to the industry partner, employers expressed that this type of activity and “access” was worthwhile and provides consistency to the relationship. As stated by one participant:

In addition to giving us access to the faculty and the administration outside of the career services office, to ensure that we have an opportunity to bring some insight to them, and vice versa.

**Provide Online Learning Training**

Providing Online Learning and Training is a subtheme of Organizational Learning that was denoted by three participants. Elements of this subtheme include opportunities for the
employer partner to participate in continuing education. The participants recognize the overall focus and mission of the university in providing education. As stated by Laura:

The opportunities for continuing education partnership on both sides of the board, with faculty working with us, and then with our associates being able to come on campus and take continuing education classes.

In addition, customized programs for their executives was also cited by the participants. The ability to provide their executives with educational benefits are a value. Aileen stated:

We've been partnering with executive education for the online executive MBA, and for example, we were able to combine that support and participation from career services when we had our both orientation and graduation for the MBA program.

In conclusion employers described the utilization of the educational offerings at the institutions where they recruit. They feel it is an opportunity to form a “partnership” and to provide a benefit to their organizations. As stated by Andrea, “I don't know if the educational opportunities are also something to include in this, because that's huge.”

Support institution with industry experts

Support institution with Industry Experts is the last subtheme within Organizational Learning. This subtheme was cited by four of the participants. Themes that were identified were opportunities for employers to engage with students in an academic setting such as a classroom, curriculum development and overall relationship building. Joseph stated:
Different universities provide opportunities to take our senior leaders and put them in distinguished visiting professors or classroom speaking opportunities or such from there. I think that is something that we value.

The ability to provide enhancements to the classroom with industry experts was defined as worthwhile and beneficial by the participants. The participants shared that the opportunity to impact curriculum was inestimable. As stated by Laura, “They actually worked with me to put curriculum into their school that would benefit the program I was supporting, and we had a very, very close relationship.”

In conclusion, the participants discussed examples of supporting institutions with industry experts. They considered sending their staff to the university to speak as an extension of the relationship and it was an opportunity that was appreciated by them. As stated by Andrea:

Ensuring that we're supporting the institution, both from an educational perspective, as well as helping provide information that support the faculty and staff, because it's a two-way relationship.

**Conclusion**

The research question and the sub-questions used during the interviews were designed to understand what specific services offered by their career offices were valued the most by employers and which of these do they identify as most helpful in recruiting students? The research was conducted to identify the services an institution of higher education can offer through their career offices that will assist employers with hiring graduates and improve students’ opportunity for employment directly from school. The data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with nine participants. The transcripts of the interviews were
analyzed to better understand the experiences of the participants and five superordinate themes were identified by the researcher as important to the participants. While the participants came from a variety of organizations, they share commonalities as to what they cited as important and meaningful when recruiting college students that supported the findings of this study.

The superordinate theme that was commonly cited by the participants was Strategic Functionality. The findings of the study emphasized the importance of the structure of the career services office and that an employer can identify the value a school places on the career center with what they perceive to be the investment of resources. It was described as an alliance between the two organizations and the level of services provided by the center should be designed to help both entities achieve success. According to the research, a career services office is an important if not critical piece of the relationship but in order for it to be successful they must exhibit strong organizational performance to meet the needs of the employer partner. Based on the interviewee’s comments, traits that they desired included: strong leadership with ability to navigate the entire university system, access to faculty, the ability to communicate the employers’ message and brand, and lastly a centralized office that can keep pace with the employer in what they describe as a strategic partnership. Exceptions to a centralized process included recruiters who had a very narrow population to recruit and recruitment at a highly regarded institution.

The second most cited superordinate theme was Student. It was discovered by the researcher that at the core of the relationship with the colleges were the students. The participants expressed a strong desire for the career services office to be highly knowledgeable about their students. They spoke of the career services office being able to identify such internal
traits as the students’ motivation to work for the company, skill sets beyond the transcript and that there was a level of trust between the two organizations when students were recommended. The results identified a challenge of the participants in identifying the millenniums motivation and that they relied heavily on the career services staff to provide training to the students in regards to the hiring process to save them time. They also spoke of the importance of the career services office’s ability to understand their organization so they can provide an overview of their company to ensure a match between the student and the organization. Lastly, the research spoke to the value of the career services office to provide them with creative opportunities to engage with students to optimize their visits.

The third superordinate theme and a major finding of the study verbalized by the participants was Organizational Parallelism. The participants cited an alliance between the two organizations. They expressed that they felt that they were part of the team at the career center and that there was a oneness and collaborative approach to their work. In addition, they also referred to a deep partnership at the highest level specifically identifying the mission and being “like minded” ensuring there was alignment between the two organizations at all levels as well as a significant level of trust. They referenced that a deep alignment of culture and mission it yielded unique partnership opportunities between the two organizations. Lastly, within Organizational Parallelism, the research spoke of alignment with alumnus and leadership. The participants indicated that the more alumnus they had from a particular college the more it had an impact on their culture. The recruitment, as cited by the participants, is supported by leadership when they are visiting an alma mater of a leader within their organization. In addition, independent of the college recruitment team alumni make their own connections to their
respective colleges to support the hiring of students. The alumni use their own familiarity with the institution to meet with students and faculty members.

The fourth most cited superordinate theme was Customer Centric. The results indicated that the participants wanted to work with a career services office that was staffed with able and competent individuals willing to work creatively with them. The participants cited agility and adaptability as essential qualities within the employees of the career services office. The more talented the staff are in meeting their needs, the more favorable the participants’ recruitment was on campus. A consummate team that is present and working events with the employers is recognized as advantageous for recruitment and an image that has a positive impact on the students according to the participants. In addition to employee skill set, the participants spoke of a need for the ability to create change. The participants cited that they did not want an indistinguishable approach to recruitment. They asserted that they needed career centers willing and able to be innovative and keep pace with them. Lastly, they sought a relationship that relied on processes that were streamlined and consistent. They expressed that they had limited budgets and their time on campus was being measured and therefore they needed to be as productive as possible when recruiting on campuses.

The fifth and last most cited superordinate theme was Organizational Learning. The research yielded that a level of certain level of expectation was required by the employers from the career center. Specifically, the participants expressed a need to understand current trends as understood by the university and having the opportunity to take part of formal learning was of significance. The results suggested that the employers sought opportunities where content experts could be shared by both organizations. Specific opportunities for leadership to speak in
the classroom, or distinguished visiting professorships were cited as something they sought when working with a career center. In addition, encouraging their employees to seek graduate degrees or other credentials were mentioned by the participants of examples of organizational learning encouraged. The flexibility to provide customized programming was desired and overall utilization by the participants of the educational products offered by the institution. The participants also discussed a synergy between faculty and their organizations. They highlighted specific events where faculty assisted them with a problem and their industry experts providing insight into curriculum development. The data suggested that employers want and highly regard the opportunity to share “best practices” that went beyond hiring students but still influenced a successful recruitment strategy.

This study utilized a model of organizational culture and effectiveness based on four different cultural traits of organizations: involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission, as identified by Daniel Denison (1990). The next chapter will highlight the significance of the findings as it is compared to previous research, and whether the results are supported or not based on the theoretical framework. In addition, the chapter will include recommendations by the researcher for its applicability in industry. Lastly, the chapter will attempt to identify opportunities for further research.
Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications for Practice

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate services offered by career services offices that are most valued by employers. The central phenomenon being examined is the relationship between the career services office and the employers. Specifically examining, as described by the recruiters, what services they value in the relationship with the career services office when recruiting on campus. The study used Denison’s model of organizational culture and effectiveness which provided a theoretical framework that studied four cultural traits (Denison, et al). The four cultural traits were defined as involvement, consistency, adaptability and mission. These cultural traits were proven to be inherent in an organization’s culture and its ability to perform effectively. The further intent of this qualitative study was to identify services and practices of a career services office by examining how employers described what they valued and sought from a university when working with a career services office. Through semi-structured interviews the researcher documented and understood what nine college recruitment specialist articulated as services they perceived as valuable in contributing to their success recruiting college students. The guiding question for this research study was: How do recruiters perceive and describe the value of working with career services offices?

The results of this qualitative research identified five broad themes and thirteen subthemes as important to employers. The first theme identified was Strategic Functionality with three subthemes including: Centralized Services, Access to Leadership and Access to Students. The second theme was Student with three subthemes including: Providing Understanding of Student Expectations, Provide Knowledge of Student Beyond Transcript, Provide Assistance with Accessibility on Campus. The third theme was Organizational
Parallelism with three subthemes including: Mutual Organizational Understanding, Opportunities for Alignment, Alignment with Alumnus and Leadership. The fourth theme identified was Customer Centric with three subthemes including: Simplified Process, Employee Skill Set, and Ability to Create Change. The fifth and last theme that was identified was Organizational Learning with four subthemes including: Sharing Intelligence, Building Expertise within Faculty, Provide Online Learning and Training, Support Institution with Industry Experts.

The results of this research will be described in the following chapter through the findings of this study as it relates to the theoretical framework and supporting literature. In addition, the implications for practical application and the potential for future research will also be discussed.

**Strategic Functionality**

The first finding to be discussed is Strategic Functionality. As described by the employers, the relationship with the institution is at the center of their recruitment on campus but in order for it to be successful the career services office must show a high level of strategic functionality. The center must act as a strong partner for them and ultimately, a conduit to the entire university community. All of the interviewees stressed the importance of this theme and that they viewed the relationship as a partnership with shared values that benefited both organizations. The employers identified a subtheme of strong leadership within the career services office as a necessity for a successful partnership. The career services office leader’s ability to navigate the complexity of the institution with a strategic mindset was cited as critical by the employers. In addition, eight of the nine participants expressed a subtheme of a desire to work with an organizational structure that was centralized and that could provide a seamless one
stop approach to their recruitment. The employers expressed a desire to meet with academic
leadership and the ability of the career services office to navigate the academic units and provide
access to them as important. Lastly, they indicated that they wanted the career services office to
not only provide them access to faculty but also be able to understand their organization and
articulate clearly their objectives and motives for being on campus for a productive relationship.

These findings identified as Strategic Functionality by the researcher support several
areas of the theoretical framework of Denison’s model of organizational culture impact on
organizational effectiveness. Denison identified mission as a trait within an organization’s
culture that impacts performance. Strategic Functionality as a theme aligns with this trait
because it speaks to vision, strategic direction and goals (Denison, Janovics, Young & Cho,
2006, p. 9). Denison and Mishra (1995) identified mission as a cultural trait that leads to strong
organizational performance and that it emphasizes purpose, meaning and provides the strategic
direction of the organization (Denison and Mishra, 1995, p. 216). Strong leadership with a deep
sense of understanding of the employer partners’ needs was mentioned as a necessary skill by the
employers relating to the leadership of the career services office a fact which supports this
research. As expressed by the participants, the ability for the leader of the area to navigate the
institution and assist the employers in meeting their goals was significant to the participants and
supports the mission trait within the theoretical framework. A shared goal and purpose was also
stated by the participants and supports the Mission trait as described by Denison & Mishra
(1995). The shared goal was described by the participants as an alliance and shared value
proposition between the two organizations and indicates a high level of performance as
perceived by the participants. It also supported in the relevant literature of the impact culture on
performance and demonstrates that clear goals among the constituents result in a higher performance (Heskett & Kotter, 1992; Peters & Waterman, 1982).

Within the literature review research highlights the importance of leadership and notes that the presence of it is as a measurable artifact can be used when measuring organizational culture and its impact on organizational effectiveness (Bass, 1985; Schein, 1992; and Smircich, 1983). The style of the leadership, and the ability to negotiate within the organization’s culture are directly related to the overall performance of the department. As cited by Bass (1985), leadership can have an impact on organizational effectiveness in particular when leadership views both external and internal forces. The participants in this study clearly state they want a skilled leader who is strategic and empowered to assist them with meeting their goals. The participants described the ideal leader as “empowered, strategic, matured, seasoned and confident” and someone who could be a resource and partner. A leader who does not have these traits will not be able to meet the expectations of the employers. Yukl (1981), discusses the importance of the type of behavioral traits a leader may have and the potential these bring for providing both a positive and negative impact on the performance of an organization.

Lastly, eight of the participants indicated the importance of a centralized office and a streamlined approach to their engagement on campus. These results are supported in literature in regards to the design of an organization’s office and its influence on the culture of an organization (Schein, 2010, p. 16). Schein (1992) established an office location as an artifact that can be studied and that it can have an impact on effectiveness when researching an organization’s culture. In addition, a centralized office with easy access to the university community is reflected in the literature as a best practice when describing facilities and the
impact on efficiencies and performance and thus supporting the significance of its location (Ebben & Johnson, 2005; Raisch & Birkinshaw 2008). Tushman and O’Reilly (1996) cite the importance of a centralized structure in an organization and the impact it has on an organization’s ability to adapt to change and overall performance of the organization. As cited by the participants they described the need for “one stop, seamless structure with power and appropriate infrastructure” as important to them. Peters and Waterman (2005) research supports these findings and speaks to the significance of structure and the ability to be centralized with authority and decision making.

The next section will address the second theme, Student with three subthemes including: Providing Understanding of Student Expectations, Provide Knowledge of Student Beyond Transcript, Provide Assistance with Accessibility on Campus.

**Student**

The second theme, Student, is comprised of three subthemes including: Providing Understanding of Student Expectations, Provide Knowledge of Student Beyond Transcript, and Provide Assistance with Accessibility on Campus. As described by the participants, Students are at the center of the relationship and employers have the expectation that the career services office will provide a greater understanding of the students’ needs to them, identify students who are aligned with their organization and lastly that the career services office will provide their students with the skills necessary to be able to express themselves appropriately within an interview. The participants cited challenges relating to understanding the needs and desires of the students and that the career services offices provide critical information of the students as they attempt to recruit them. In addition, the participants spoke of training and skills the career services office provide
the students as critical to their overall success in obtaining a job offer from them. Lastly, the research yielded a strong desire among the participants to be able to access the students in an easy manner. They identified the career services office’s ability to provide seamless engagement as important in their search for new hires.

The second theme, Student, is supported within the theoretical framework of Denison’s model of organizational culture impact on organizational effectiveness within the consistency trait. Denison (1990) discusses the importance of integration and leveraging internal systems for clients. The participants refer to the students as a core component of the relationship and that the career services office is important to the employers in matching them with students during the recruitment process. Identifying specific student talents that align with the needs of the employer is a function that the participants desire from the career services office. The participants indicated a challenge in understanding the current student population and a need to work with a career services office that can consistently orchestrate access to the student and provide knowledge to them beyond the transcript. These results demonstrate that the participants have a need for the career services office to be able to leverage their knowledge of the student to enhance the relationship with the employer. In addition, these results support the research on the need for consistency of communication and internal processes with external constituents and impact they can have on performance (Sorensen, 2002, Deal & Kennedy, 1982).

In relation to literature on consistency and integration of systems for external constituents there are several studies that support this behavior in organizational performance. Cameron (1983) research speaks to a strong emphasis on internal resources and the optimization of these resources as an indicator of organizational effectiveness. In addition, the Systems Resource Approach is a
level of measurement of inputs and outputs and the impact they can have on an organization’s performance (Lewin and Minton, 1986; Scott & Davis, 2015; Molnar and Rogers, 1976; Morgan, Gregory and Roach, 1997; Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978; Weick, 1995; Yuchtman & Seashore 1967). As cited by participants, an effort to optimize information focused on the students by the career services office will yield stronger result in recruitment. As stated by Breaugh (1992), recruitment employers are more successful with hiring and retention if candidates have a thorough understanding of the job and required skills. Effectively managing and understanding their roles in career services by providing valuable information to students on specific companies and job opportunities will improve the progress of the employers to recruit graduates from the institution.

In comparison, measuring integration of the systems resource approach is a challenge to determining success in an organization (Cameron and Whetten, 1996). Previous research is critical of this approach to measuring organizational effectiveness due to the complexity of an organization and the inability to identify appropriate resources (Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1983). The participants express a strong desire to have more knowledge of the students beyond their transcripts but the granular detail of what they wanted was not provided. Additionally, the desires of one employer over another may provide conflict for the career services office in regards to what to identify when seeking additional information from students. Lastly, the quality of the engagement with students and the ability to coordinate the data supports the lack of a definitive measure of success.

The following section will discuss the third theme, Organizational Parallelism with three subthemes including: Mutual Organizational Understanding, Opportunities for Alignment, Alignment with Alumnus and Leadership.
Organizational Parallelism

The theme Organizational Parallelism was cited as important by all of the participants. This theme, Organizational Parallelism included three subthemes of Mutual Organizational Understanding, Opportunities for Alignment, and Alignment with Alumnus and Leadership. As described by one participant it “helps starting with a university who is like minded to us in terms of their values”. The participants indicated that they seek to recruit at campuses that have similar values and missions. The participants cited specifically looking at leadership within their organization who are alumnus, definitive student traits that they desire as an organization, and specific opportunities for alignment such as events and similar celebrations between the two organizations. The evidence suggested that employers value a close relationship and seek opportunities to align the two organizations beyond recruitment. The participants articulated that the deeper the relationship, with strong embedded alignment in multiple areas, the more successful the recruitment on campus.

The third theme, Organizational Parallelism, reinforces the theoretical framework within the adaptability and mission traits. The adaptability trait is an external trait that suggests successful integration with customers. The participants spoke of having input and being able to share the process with the career services office. They highlighted the importance of alignment and identifying similarities between the two organizations. Denison’s research reinforces this by defining the importance of customer input and organizations positioning their work to align with customers. The participants spoke of the impact of hiring over a long period of time from one institution and the impact the hires have on the culture of the organization. In addition, there is alignment with this theme within Denison’s mission trait. The results of the mission trait within
Denison’s research highlight the importance of having strategic direction and deep understanding of organizational objectives. To achieve the level of organizational parallelism as discussed by the participants, the mission must be meaningful to all constituents both externally and internally in order for it to be used for organizational effectiveness (Denison, 1990; Tichy, 1983).

In other literature, research supports the result of this study and the importance of adaptability specifically highlighting adaptability and mission. Baer and Frese (2003) speak to the value of customer centric services and strong cultural understanding within an environment that supports risk taking and innovative ideas without personal risks. A long history of adapting to change and allowing employees to take risk and create alignment beyond the norm is critical for success. These results are represented in the research when described by the employers as a shared approach to work with the career services office. The employers felt that it positively affected their goals and created a trust with the career services office. In addition, research points to an organization’s ability to adapt to external forces when there is a long history of success. This is also supported in the research as many of the participants speak of the adaptability of the career services office and the ability to understand the organization because of the long historic relationship. The emphasis on the importance of organizational alignment and the impact on organizational effectiveness can be found in Powell’s (1992) research. Lastly, Payne and Ballantyne’s (1991) research supports the results that speak to identifying external partners with shared values that are significant to both organizations in order to optimize organizational performance (p. 20).

The next section will address the fourth theme Customer Centric with three subthemes including: Simplified Process, Employee Skill Set, and Ability to Create Change.
Customer Centric

The fourth theme Customer Centric includes three subthemes: Simplified Process, Employee Skill Set and Ability to Create Change. Participants in this study emphasized the importance of Customer Centric. They cited the importance of human capital and ability to work with employees within the career center who were talented and had autonomy to make decisions. In addition, the participants emphasized a streamlined process that addressed their needs in order to avoid multiple trips to the campus. They voiced the need for an understanding of their goals and providing services that assisted them with meeting their goals as extremely important when recruiting on campus. Lastly, the participants spoke of the importance of the Ability to Create Change. The participants did not want a mass produced effort on campus rather they cited the desire to be creative as well as the need to have the ability to customize their efforts on campus.

Customer Centric supports the theoretical framework of Denison (1990) specifically with the involvement trait. Within this the involvement trait, Denison highlights the importance of employee skill set and the impact of empowerment, team orientation and capability on organizational performance. The participants provide examples of engaged and highly skilled employees within the career services office working collaboratively with them to enhance their recruitment on campus. The participants cited a high level of ownership and coordination of work with the employees within the career services office (Denison and Mishra, 1985). The results of the study clearly illustrated that employee skills set, alignment and focus within the employees work, adaptability and autonomy are critical skill sets for such external constituents as employers. This factor supports the involvement trait within Denison’s (1990) research.
Customer Centric is also situated in the current literature. There is an abundance of evidence in the literature that supports the theory that highly skilled employees can impact organizational effectiveness (Denison, 1990; Bass, 1990, Hatch and Dyer, 2004). In addition, beyond highly talented staff the ability of individual employees to create change independent of leadership is also found in the literature (Denison and Mishra, 1985; Baer and Frese, 2003; Kotter and Cohen, 2002). This study supports literature that emphasizes the fact that an organization is considered a social system and that it must have the ability to obtain highly skilled and motivated human resources necessary to achieving its goals. (Morgan, Gregory & Roach, 1997; Weick, 1995). In conclusion, the study revealed and is supported in the literature that there is a need for motivated and dedicated career services staff who are empowered to work effectively and independently with employers to meet common goals within both organizations that support recruitment.

The next section will address the fifth theme Organizational Learning with four subthemes including: Sharing Intelligence, Building Expertise within Faculty, Provide Online Learning and Training, Support the Institution with Industry Experts.

**Organizational Learning**

Organizational Learning is the last theme identified by the researcher and it includes four subthemes: Sharing Intelligence, Building Expertise within the Faculty, Provide Online Learning and Training and Support the Institution with Industry Experts. Elements within this theme identified by the participants were learning opportunities that organizations can bring to each other in regards to current trends, content experts and credentialing for their organization. All of the participants emphasized the importance of sharing intelligence. The sharing of intelligence
was exhibited in the performance of the students on internship. The participants expressed that internship is a form of sharing intelligence and that the skill set of student interns was unique to the specific university and provided valuable information prior to actual full time employment being offered. The results indicate that a strong internship program would support this theme. Lastly within this theme the sharing of experts may be unique to higher education. The results of the study support the need for sharing of knowledge whether from industry experts or conversely with faculty from industry partners. The participants expressed the need for a connection with the university with corporate training, sharing intelligence and swapping content experts. All of these were cited by the participants as having a significant positive impact on the recruitment and the need for a strong culture within the career services office to provide these high level engagements with the employer partner.

Organizational Learning supports the adaptability trait within Denison’s research. Denison speaks specifically to organizational learning as an indicator of the adaptability trait and he also highlights the importance of customer focus and the ability to change. Specifically, Denison emphasizes the importance of understanding the needs of the customer and adapting and providing for those needs. The results of this study underline this with the uniqueness of the higher education market in meeting employers’ needs. The participants emphasize the desire for sharing intelligence and getting access to faculty while also being able to provide content experts from their leadership with curriculum development and knowledge base needs. On the surface, all of these examples provided by participants may not support the theory but a closer look emphasizes the importance of an institution to look at the employer beyond a hiring partner of their students. The research supports a purposeful effort in providing the employers with knowledge, both formal and informal education and access to content experts such as faculty that
is unique to them. As the results indicate, the employer partner believes that these examples of interaction between the two organizations results in an effective relationship that supports and leads to successful performance in the hiring of students.

Sorenson (2002) supports the concept that a “superior coordination internally” is the cornerstone of a strong culture that leads to effective performance. This is corroborated by Schein, a seminal author, that internal processes and structure can influence external constituents. A career services office that can incorporate all that the institution has to offer for an employer partner will benefit greatly in building a shared goal with the partner that supports their needs as well as enhances the institution’s’ community as a whole. In addition, Roberts and Dowling (2002) study spoke of the value of the uniqueness of an organization on organizational performance and that an organization’s “intangible characteristics” provide them with a competitive advantage that can’t be readily duplicated. The study supports this theory in that employers specifically stated they wanted to tap into the uniqueness of the institution by assisting each other with organizational learning. Examples of this within the study included online training for employees, industry experts in the classroom, faculty sharing research and input with curriculum development. All of these examples are unique to each institution and can provide a competitive advantage to a career services office when attempting to work with an employer partner. The ability to aggregate all the assets of the institution with a customer focus by the career services office leads to deep engagement that results in higher performance as expressed by the participants.

The following section will provide a conclusion based on the findings of the research, with appropriate evidence to support it based on the researcher’s knowledge.
Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify the services an institution of higher education can offer through their career offices that will assist employers with hiring graduates and improving student opportunity for employment directly from school. The strategy of inquiry was an interpretative phenomenological analysis utilizing a theoretical framework of organizational culture and effectiveness. The researcher built on a model of organizational culture and effectiveness based on four different cultural traits of organizations: involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission, as identified by Daniel Denison (1990). The research questions were developed and conducted to determine how Denison’s cultural traits impacted the organizational effectiveness of a career services office as perceived by employers. The results of this research will be used to provide insight into what services employers value when working with colleges and the impact they have on the recruitment of college graduates.

Consistent with the literature, the results of this study suggest that institutions would benefit from creating a career services office that can exhibit a) strategic functionality specifically centered on a leadership situated at a high level within the university who will act as a conduit to the entire community for the employer partners. In addition, within the leadership a centralized structure is necessary to provide agility for the employer to access all areas within the institution including faculty and students, b) an understanding of the current student body’s mindset and the ability to understand what influences them in the decision making process of the job search and to be able to articulate the student beyond the transcript, c) identify areas of organizational likeness between the two organizations with shared mission and strategic direction building trust and working together to create opportunities with alumnus and
leadership, celebrate shared milestones and highlight similarities that reflect each organization’s mission and culture, d) develop a customer centric approach to their work by approaching it as a partnership with shared goals. Develop appropriate levels of highly skilled staff empowered to make changes and be adaptable with a seamless and consistent process for recruiting all students, e) recognize that the employer partner views them as a content experts and identify areas of partnership beyond recruitment that speak to credentialing, online courses and training, curriculum development, providing opportunities to keep faculty current with industry trends and industry experts speaking within the classroom. The results of this research support the theoretical framework of Denison in that culture impacts effectiveness and that culture can be measured by identifying specific traits within an organization that can have a positive effect on organizational performance.

The findings also suggest that purposeful actions by the career services office can influence the relationship with the employer beyond a transactional moment of graduate talent acquisition. Teamwork, strategic direction, employee focus and strong leadership are all cultural traits that are indicative of organizational performance and are evident in the study (Denison & Mishra, 1995). Career services offices would benefit greatly by an investment of human resources (Graetz, 2002, Yukl, 2008)). Evidence within the study suggests that a high level leader with authority and access to the executive leadership, faculty and students would result in higher performance as stated by the participants. In addition, the results indicate allowing employees to be entrepreneurial with authority to make decisions independently of leadership is critical to success as perceived by the participants.
The findings of this study also speak to the importance of the structure of the organization (Blau and Schoenherr, 1971; Child, 1972). Child (1972) identified work roles and the impact they can have on an organizations’ performance. The research from this study, suggests that employers struggle with inconsistencies within some career services offices. The data identified the need for a centralized structure that allowed for full integration within all of the systems of the institution. The data revealed that a career services center situated within the center of the institution, with the ability to navigate all levels of the institution, is a valued structure by employers. These results provide validation of a centralized structure for a career services office as perceived by the employers.

The career services office is one of the few areas within an institution that works on a regular basis with outside constituents but is fully entrenched within the university community. Other departments such as admissions and fundraising while actively conducting work with outside agents do not regularly engage with internal mechanisms within the organization. This internal position of career services provides an external window for the institution. The research identified the importance of the relationship to the employer in that they view the institution as more than an opportunity to recruit graduates. A career services office that can understand the importance of their role in collaborating with an external constituent such as an employer could lead to a partnership that could extend to such areas as, training for their employees with online education, curriculum development with industry partners, faculty exchanges and exchanges at many levels. These results are confirmed in the supporting research of organizations adapting to external forces resulting in productivity in an open system (Hoy and Ferguson, 1995).
The following section will discuss recommendations for practice based on the findings within this research.

**Recommendations for Practice**

There is a preponderance of research on the topic of career centers and what is considered to be best practices and required services (Carlson, 2017; Chan and Derry, 2013; Hanover Research, 2014, NACE, 2016; NACE, 2017). Historically, research has been based on benchmarking one institution to another, students’ perception of the value of the center or a compilation of best practices by leaders within the profession by various colleges and universities. The central phenomenon being examined in this study is the relationship between the career services office and the employers. The results of this study provides specific opportunities for the researcher to rethink the work at the career center at her university based on employers’ perceptions of what is valuable to them.

The results of this research are also very timely in that institutions of higher education are under great scrutiny from external forces and students’ perception of why they are enrolling is shifting. The results of this study should be of importance to high level leadership at colleges and universities including: presidents, enrollment managers, provosts and deans. According to a study conducted by Gallup and Purdue Index Report 2016, over 86 percent of students identify that finding a job is significant in their decision making process of enrollment but only 52 percent believe their major will lead to a job. Conversely, the same study results showed that only 17 percentage of students felt that the career services office was helpful in their job search. Lastly, the study indicated that students who did visit the career center and had a positive experience were 5.6X more likely to state that their university prepared them well for life outside
of college. The Gallup and Purdue Index Report 2016 study underscores the importance of my research results indicating that colleges and universities should be doing more to assist students with finding jobs and remove any barriers to ensure their career centers are positioned well to meet this goal. This information will provide data and research required to support budget and changes centered on the career center for this researcher. In addition, the researcher will utilize this information to create annual reports to support messaging to trustees and senior management.

Based on the findings and literature the research suggests that the career centers should be positioned to offer strategic functionality with their leadership to the employers. This includes leadership that has the authority and the ability to navigate the infrastructure to best meet the needs of the employer and ultimately, the students. Based on the data, it is critical that the university identifies a strong leader who can articulate both the organization’s mission and the university’s mission to multiple audiences. The results of this study clearly articulated that employers view the work with the career center as a relationship and that there is real value in the employers’ view that it is a partnership beyond recruitment. The leader of the career center’s primary focus should not be the operations of the center rather they should be a senior executive level individual who has the capacity to think strategically and develop other opportunities for the institution with the employer partner. The work in the center should be able to support strategic plans for the institution with employer feedback and support. These specific results, centered on the importance of leadership in the study, are also supported in culture and organizational effectiveness literature specifically in the research of Schein (2006) and Roberts and Dowling (2002). While the career center at the researcher’s institution currently has an
executive level leader, the findings provide valuable support for continuation and funding of this model and it will be used by the researcher in future leadership meetings and discussions.

The third recommendation is embedded in the services and the approach of the career center with students. The research identified the need to provide knowledge of the student beyond the transcript to the employers. Employers have a need for a greater understanding of the students’ expectations and the researcher will explore avenues to provide this information. As stated in the results, a technology driven tool would be ideal so that employers can aggregate the data and synthesize them for optimal use and the researcher will investigate the potential of purchasing a product that provides this information through technology. In addition, the data spoke to the value of providing better experiences on campus beyond career fairs while also removing barriers to developing creative events to provide a more customized access to the students for the employer partner. The results of this study clearly indicated that employer partners are looking to engage with students beyond the traditional career fair. The researcher will use this data to offer more flexibility from the career center in programming for employers that can lead to a deeper level of engagement with the student.

The fourth recommendation for practitioners is a customer centric approach to work within the career center. This study supports a simplified process for all engagement with the employer partner with an ability to utilize technology and employees at all levels of the career center. This recommendation confirms the theoretical framework and other research by integrating and leveraging employees for clients (Cameron, 1983; Denison, 1990). The researcher will focus on utilizing employees’ skill sets to best position them to work with employer partners. She will work with staff to ensure autonomy to make decisions, and
frameworks that will allow them to be nimble. The researcher will use this information to
develop a strategy meeting with staff and faculty to identify opportunities for growth and a
consistent method for communicating with the employer partners. The data shows support for
the researcher to initiate a formal program on campus spotlighting specific employers with
targeted goals and recommendations for a deeper relationship that is customer centric.

The results of the study indicate that the career services office should have a holistic view
and perspective beyond the services within the center when working with employers. The data
indicated the desire of the employers to engage beyond talent acquisition. The researcher will
identify opportunities to leverage expertise on campus with the employer partner, providing them
with faculty or students that may assist with a problem or research. In addition, the researcher
will develop a script for the staff ensuring that employers are asked specifically what their
training needs are and how the university can support them with learning initiatives whether with
online courses or continuing education. The researcher will create a mechanism to provide the
employer with current trends within the institution such as new curriculum development, new
learning modules and identifying institutional needs to them so that the employer partner may be
able to provide assistance and resources to the researcher’s institution. Lastly, the research
indicated a need to look at the employers as content experts who can enhance the classroom
experience by providing leaders from industry. The researcher will connect with faculty to
identify their needs and align them with the appropriate individuals from industry. The
recommendations by the researcher speak directly to Denison’s adaptability trait. Identifying
best practices that can focus on the customer, that lead to organizational learning and create
change within the institution resulting in improved efficiency.
The results of the study suggested that the career services office have a grounded approach to employer outreach where areas of mutual understanding of each organizations’ priorities are highlighted. The research of this study overwhelming supports the claim that the employers view the career services office as a strong partner and that they share goals with the office that increase the value proposition for them. An example provided was sharing a centennial anniversary with an employer partner and that it translated as a benefit to the students and to the organization. The data indicated that high level connections between the college and the organization built loyalty and trust. The researcher will use this information to identify specific employers and create a customized, high priority approach to these relationships. This also is supported in the literature highlighting external partners that have shared values that are significant to both organizations to impact efficiency and performance (Payne and Ballantyne, 1991).

The data also underscored the importance of organizational parallelism by specifically identifying alumnus of the institution within the organization. As the research suggested, there is no faster path to mutual understanding then having an alumnus of the university in a leadership role within an organization. The researcher will use this information to identify alumnus who have had success with targeted employer partners to create an affinity for the institution and to also provide a clear picture of what the relationship could potentially mean for the employer partner.

In addition, the research supported establishing norms of communication with the employer partner. As each college is unique and different so too are the employer partners’ organizations. Informal communication may not work with certain partners and it might be quite
successful with others. Understanding the culture of the organization and what levers to use when communicating is critical for a leader within career services. The researcher will utilize customized opportunities for engagement underscoring the similarity between the two organizations and she will embrace language that suggest a true partnership such as: we will work together, or my team will support you with your initiative. As the study indicated, the approach of the career center to the employer partner and a customized communication strategy for specific employers will be adopted by the researcher.

Lastly, the researcher will use the results of this study and disseminate it among her peers in higher education. The results will be used in proposal presentations at conferences focused on employability, career centers, and organizational effectiveness in higher education. In addition, an article will be written by the researcher to be submitted for approval to journals focused on college graduates hiring, career education, career centers, or organizational effectiveness in higher education.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The researcher has identified three areas for potential future research. First, the results of this study identified that some employers will recruit and engage with a school regardless of services that are offered if the school is considered to be a higher tiered institution. Future research could reexamine this and focus the research specifically on top tiered research institutions. The services that are valued by employers at career services offices at top tiered institutions may vary greatly from institutions with different classifications.

Second, this study interviewed employers who engaged regularly with the researcher’s institution, a successful track record is hard to ignore and may lead the institution to adhere to
proven methods without responding to environmental changes. A study focused on several universities with employer partners from a variety of institutions may result in different results and a more general applicability to all colleges.

Third, as with any research focused on how culture can impact organizational effectiveness, there are many attributes that can be studied. Research in the area of organizational culture and effectiveness has embraced a “competing values framework” and that there are many factors both internally and externally that can be studied to determine the impact of culture on organizational effectiveness (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1991). This study focused on Denison’s theoretical framework and the specific traits he identified but other frameworks could be utilized to further the research and provide additional results and knowledge.
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Appendix A

Email to Potential Participants

Dear Human Resource Professional,

My name is Maureen Dumas and I currently serve as the Vice President of Experiential Education & Career Services. As part of the research I’m conducting for my doctoral dissertation at Northeastern University on the topic of culture and the impact on organizational effectiveness, I specifically would like to understand what services you, as an employer, value when recruiting graduates seeking full time employment directly from college. Because you work with hiring recent college graduates, I would appreciate it very much if you would agree to be interviewed about your work.

This is what I’m asking of you:

1. Sign a consent form to participate in my study. (See appendix C)
2. Participate in an audio-taped interview for 45-60 minutes at your convenience over the phone or in person. (See appendix B for a list of questions)
3. Review transcript of interview for accuracy

Your participation will be kept completely confidential. Participation is, of course, entirely voluntary. If you are interested in helping me learn more about what employers value when working with career services offices, I would be very interested in speaking with you. Please contact me at 401-487-6373 or by e-mail at dumas.ma@husky.neu.edu if you have any questions about the survey or my research. You may also contact Joe McNabb, Ph.D., the principal investigator for the research at j.mcnabb@neu.edu.

Thank you very much for considering this request!

Sincerely,

Maureen Dumas
Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Introduction Script

May I begin recording?

I would like to thank you for agreeing to speak to me today. As I mentioned in my email, my name is Maureen Dumas and as part of my doctoral dissertation at Northeastern University I am conducting research on the topic of culture and the impact on organizational effectiveness. Specifically, my research will be focused on the effectiveness and value of a career services office to you as an employer when recruiting college graduates.

The interview should take about 45 minutes to one hour. I will be taping the conversation and converting the dialog into a transcript. Please speak clearly and I may ask you for clarification. As noted in your signed consent form, your responses will be kept confidential and you will not be identified as a participant.

Do you have any questions before I begin the interview?

Interview Questions

1. How did you come to be a human resource professional?
2. How do you select the schools that you recruit from for your corporation?
3. Describe for me, based on your experiences, the leading career services office within higher education?
4. Please describe the culture of the leading career service offices? From your perspective, does the culture at my CSO align with the leading CSO you described?
5. From your experience, does the mission of the institution impact your selection process of a leading career services office?
6. After reading the mission, can you identify services that you value in your role as a recruiter that reflect the mission?
7. Please describe the leadership structure of the leading career services office and what you value in this structure that assists you in your position as a recruiter?
8. Please describe from your experiences if the services you receive is consistent among the four campuses? From your perspective are there specific services at one campus that you value more than others?

9. In your experience what services can a career services office provide for you that you value and need in recruiting college graduates?

10. From your perspective, how responsive are the career services offices at my University to your needs, do they exhibit adaptability? Please describe an example of an employee’s responsiveness to a need you had while on campus?

11. Describe a situation where a career services office professional at my university responded uniquely to your needs as a college recruiter that you valued?

12. Can you identify services that you value that highlight employee initiative and working cooperatively together?

13. Can you identify services that you valued when on campus that reflect a team approach to CSO at my university?

**Closing Script**

14. You identified critical services earlier in our interview, please describe for me an example of how this service was of value to you?

15. When identifying these critical services why is it important to you in your job?

16. Is there anything else you would like to add

Thank you for your time today. I will be sending you a copy of the transcript within a few days for your approval. I would appreciate a quick response that the transcript is accurate.
Appendix C
Informed Consent

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies

Name of Investigator(s): Dr. Joseph McNabb, Principal Investigator and Maureen Dumas, Student Investigator

Title of Project: An Examination of Employers’ Perceptions on the Effectiveness of a Career Services Office when Recruiting College Graduates

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study
We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?
We are asking you to be part of this study because you are a human resource professional with expertise in the field of recruiting college students.

Why is this research study being done?
The purpose of this research is to determine what services do employers value when working with career services offices while recruiting college graduates.

What will I be asked to do?
If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to:

1. Sign a consent form to participate in our study.
2. Participate in an audio-taped interview
3. Interview questions will be centered on your experiences as a college recruiter.
4. Review transcript of interview for accuracy.

Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?
You will be interviewed in your office in person or via telephone at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview will take approximately one hour. A copy of the transcript will be sent to you within one week of the interview for verification of accuracy.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?
There are no foreseeable risks or discomfort.
Will I benefit by being in this research?
There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in the study. However, the information learned from this study may improve the services provided to you in the recruitment of college graduates.

Who will see the information about me?
Your part in this study will be confidential. Only the researchers on this study will see the information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way or any individual as being of this project. Any data will be stored in the researcher’s computer that is password protected. In addition, on completion of the student’s doctoral studies after one year all transcriptions will be deleted.

Can I stop my participation in this study?
Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have as a participant.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?
If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Maureen Dumas, at 401-487-6373, the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Dr. Joseph McNabb at jmcnabb@neu.edu, the Principal Investigator.

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?
If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, Mail Stop: 560-177, 360 Huntington Avenue, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Will I be paid for my participation?
There is no compensation provided for participating in this study.

Will it cost me anything to participate?
There is no cost incurred by the participant for this study.

Signature of person agreeing to take part
____________________________________________
Date

Printed name of person above

Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent
____________________________________________
Date
Printed name of person above