

# NABCA

National Association of Branch Campus Administrators



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## NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

This issue of the National Association of Branch Campus Administrators (NABCA) *Access Journal* includes an expanded set of articles. In addition to a traditional research article, it includes two analytical essays and a book review. The goal was to provide opportunities for members to share their experiences on branch campuses without necessarily conducting research.

Future editors can decide as to whether this format will be continued. We would benefit from your insights! Please let us know what you think of this format.

On behalf of the Research Committee, we hope you enjoy this issue and look forward to hearing your feedback and receiving your submissions.

Sincerely,

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*Research Article*

## **National Association of Branch Campus Administrator (NABCA) Membership Survey Overview: Results and Recommendations for Future Research**

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### **Abstract**

In what was likely the first scholarly article to examine the off-campus experience in 1952, C.M. Schindler detailed the variation in experiences of the faculty, staff, and students at those additional sites. Though Schindler called for repeated research, little more is known about the branch campus experience today. With more than 250 members and growing, the National Association of Branch Campus Administrators (NABCA) is uniquely positioned as a leader in branch campus research. Given the inclusivity of the organization yet significantly different experiences of its members, there is value in learning from those who are similar as well as those whose enrollment, services, and programming differ from their own. This article summarizes the results of a membership survey conducted in 2023 and provides recommendations for future research. Even after significant changes like the proliferation of online learning through expanded Internet access and the COVID-19 pandemic, survey results continue to show the vast

variation of experiences of NABCA members as well as their sense of off-campus sites' value to the home institutions. Like previous researchers, the authors call for more frequent and expanded research on the branch campus experience. It is only through this consistent review of experiences that patterns and trends may be visible. More importantly, those patterns, once illuminated, may influence positive changes in the branch campus experience.

## **Introduction**

The history and number of what we collectively refer to today as branch campuses is all but impossible to trace and determine for many reasons. Labels ranging from learning sites, branch campus, regional campus, off-sites, and others are used to address these institutional resources. Not surprisingly, the same can be problematic in identifying the institution from which they stem. Identifiers such as the main campus, home campus, or residential campus are commonly used for these institutional sites. These differences can easily be associated with differences in accreditor's terminology, institutional structure, and even historic culture. Whatever the official name of these branch campuses, it is apparent that they have been in operation for decades and are often used to provide access to those living beyond commuting distance to the main institutional site. This approach of 'taking education to the people' concept led to the economic development of rural communities and the educational reach and impact of some state institutions. Many institutions can trace their expansion into branch campus operations for decades, as in the case of Ohio University, which began branch campus operations in 1946 with branch campuses in Chillicothe, Portsmouth, and Zanesville (Bird, 2014). In the decades that followed these early branch campus expansions, an organization was formed to represent the leaders of these sites.

What began as the Western Association of Branch Campus Administrators (WABCA) in 1997 and became the National Association of Branch Campus Administrators (NABCA) in 2004, is an organization that “committed to supporting the mission and goals of higher education professionals who work at a location that is separate from their parent/main campus” (NABCA website). With more than 250 active members in 2024, the organization seeks to improve leadership, teaching, and research in the field of off-campus locations.

In what was likely the first scholarly article to examine the off-campus experience in 1952, C.M. Schindler detailed the variation in experiences of the faculty, staff, and students at those additional sites. Schindler noted that while written descriptions of off-campus divisions were often complimentary, “the term ‘stepchildren’ would be far more appropriately used to describe the off-campus divisions in many higher institutions” (p. 193). Though Schindler called for repeated research, little more is known about the branch campus experience today. In fact, in the time since Schindler chronicled the experience of the ‘stepchild’ of the college campus, only a handful of articles have addressed the branch campus experience. In that same time, however, higher education has seen considerable changes, not the least of which include the Higher Education Act of 1965, through which President Johnson encouraged Congress to expand postsecondary access, societal advances through the Civil Rights Movement, and significant technological advances such as the home computer and Internet. In more recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic and expanded wireless access have shifted the modes of learning for students. As a result, more research is necessary to broaden our understanding of these sites and their perceived value to their home institutions. To do this, a common language is necessary.

While the nomenclature used to describe both the main campuses and branch campuses differs among accrediting bodies and institutions, this survey and accompanying article use Home Campus to describe the institution's Parent or Main Campus and the term Additional Site is used to describe any additional locations, including branch campuses. Given the number of higher education institutions that have additional sites beyond their home campuses, it is important to understand the structures and governance in use at those sites. A study that documents the types of structures and perceptions of site administrators is significant for many reasons. Not only will the results help inform institutions of the prevalence of different organizational structures, but they will also identify administrators' perceptions of the value their site provides to the institution at large.

## **Literature Review**

As a result of the changes within Higher Education since Schindler's work in 1951, a review of more recent research is warranted. Unfortunately, replication of Schindler's study today would be unmanageable given the lack of clear naming and the proliferation of additional sites since that time. According to Schindler (1952), there were 87 off-campus divisions in 1949-1950 and those "off-campus divisions" were more clearly defined than today's branch campuses.

"...Divisions which, because of their distance, can utilize their parent-institution facilities only negligibly if at all, which offer at least one complete curriculum on a full-time basis for credit toward the Bachelor's degree, which are primarily non-professional in nature, and which are large enough to require the services of at least a part-time local administrator" (p. 191). With more than 5,916 postsecondary Title IV institutions in 2020-2021 (NCES, 2022) and no way of

knowing how many of those institutions have additional locations, identifying even an approximate number of branch campuses is impossible. Though research specific to the branch campus leadership experience is lacking, some has been done more recently.

In 2011, NABCA researchers published multiple articles as part of a concerted effort to increase the knowledge base. Since the last published survey work from NABCA in 2011, wireless internet access and the COVID-19 pandemic have increased online postsecondary options, impacting branch campuses significantly. It is important to note that although additional survey results from 2015 and 2019 are available on the NABCA website, these surveys focused on site demographics and enrollment management efforts, respectively. The data were shared in bulleted lists rather than published in as a research study with findings, making their inclusion in this study unwarranted.

There are many models that branch campuses follow in support of the main campus: they can be feeder sites where students start degree programs but must move to the main campus to finish their programs, boosting the overall population of the institution; they can serve to block the spread of other institutions in the region; they can be a revenue stream for the institution; and/or they can serve a political need such as increasing the regional population's education level.

Perhaps because of these differences, understanding the branch campus experience is lacking. In fact, Krueger et al. (2011) noted the difficulty in compiling information on branch campus experiences. While determining experiences of additional sites is challenging, many administrators find themselves leading in these sites without preparation for what the position entails. Most branch campuses find that they operate under strict staffing levels with some services and departments that are typical at main campuses going understaffed or without any



representation. This along with few, if any full-time faculty on the branch campus often leads to an attitude that main campuses see branches as “less than” or “stepchildren” and underscores feelings of being unappreciated and/or undervalued. Adding to these feelings that branch campuses and to some extent those staff and faculty working there, is the idea that the branches are only there to fulfill the role given to them by the main campus administration under the watchful eye and direction of main campus staff and faculty. “The dangerous ground for the branch campus is where its faculty and staff construct a version of reality that feels good but fails to recognize the political reality of their existence” (Bird, 2014, p. 28-29). As branch campuses celebrate successes in student population growth, student educational completion, and community impact, faculty and staff would do well to understand the tentative relationship between the branch and home/main campus. Regardless of structure, the overall staffing, program development, and facilities require approval of the home/main campus. As Bird alludes, understanding this political reality can be imperative to the success of staff and faculty alike, especially given the lack of specific training available to branch campus administrators. “Relatively few individuals ever set out on their career paths with the idea of spending decades at a branch campus. As a result, to the extent that life on a branch campus is different than at a more traditional campus, newly appointed faculty members and administrators often feel as if they somehow woke up in a strange land, where decision-making processes seem counterintuitive, lines of communication confusing, and budgets are a mystery” (Krueger et al., 2011, p. 6). Continued research on the experiences of off-campus leaders is necessary to support these leaders in practice.

In addition to the lack of understanding for branch campus leadership preparation and

experiences, the digital advances in recent years create an additional issue for NABCA members. Well before the COVID-19 pandemic, Bird (2011) wrote about how access to online learning may impact the enrollment trends for branch campuses which sought to bridge the geographic gap in services. “If the development of branch campuses was a strong approach that derived from the best available options for access, what happens now, when online providers are proliferating, private nonprofits are reaching out more aggressively, and for-profits have become important providers in the same market served by our branches?” (Bird, 2011, p. 67). When the clear increase in online offerings from the last few years is coupled with the looming enrollment declines based on population, enrollment in additional sites may decrease along with it.

Given the lack of recent research on domestic branch campus leadership and the importance of these sites to bring accredited postsecondary access to students geographically separate from the main campus, a study of NABCA members’ experiences and perceptions is warranted to broaden understanding of these sites and their unique needs.

## **Methods**

With the goal of understanding the off-campus experience, qualitative research through an online survey was selected for this study. Though the survey included structured responses more common with quantitative research, it also included open-ended responses to further develop a sense of participants’ thoughts and perceptions. The survey included site-specific questions such as enrollment, degrees offered, and distance as well as extended responses for administrators’ perceptions of site value. Informed consent was included as the required last question in the survey with a clear note that submission of the survey constituted implied consent. The

researchers requested approval in May 2023, and it was granted by a Middle States-accredited institution in June 2023.

Researchers used purposeful sampling of NABCA members in 2023. To meet inclusion criteria, participants were at least 18 years of age and members of NABCA at the time of the study.

Recruitment took place through two emails from Dr. Cyndee Purdue-Moore, the Chief Operations Director for NABCA. The message included a link to the survey, which consisted of 33 questions and took approximately 15 minutes to complete. With approximately 234 members and responses from 57 participants, this study's response rate was 24%. Given this low response rate and the significant but unknown number of branch campus administrators nationwide, this study and its findings are not generalizable to the broader community of leaders. Instead, researchers hope to create a baseline for experiences of NABCA members on which future research can expand.

### **Data Analysis**

Researchers reviewed survey results in two Excel spreadsheets, one that included a compilation of 57 respondents by questions and another that included all answers from each of the 57 respondents. In other words, one sheet provided all responses for question one without discernment of the individual respondents while the other provided all results from respondent one before moving on to the remaining participants. As such, the researchers were able to see overall percentages for each question but retained the ability to see each individual respondent's answers throughout the survey. Results were sorted and cross tabulated by subgroup to determine if patterns were present. This process occurred independently for each researcher to ensure

intercoder reliability prior to discussion to determine agreement among researchers before inclusion in the results that follow.

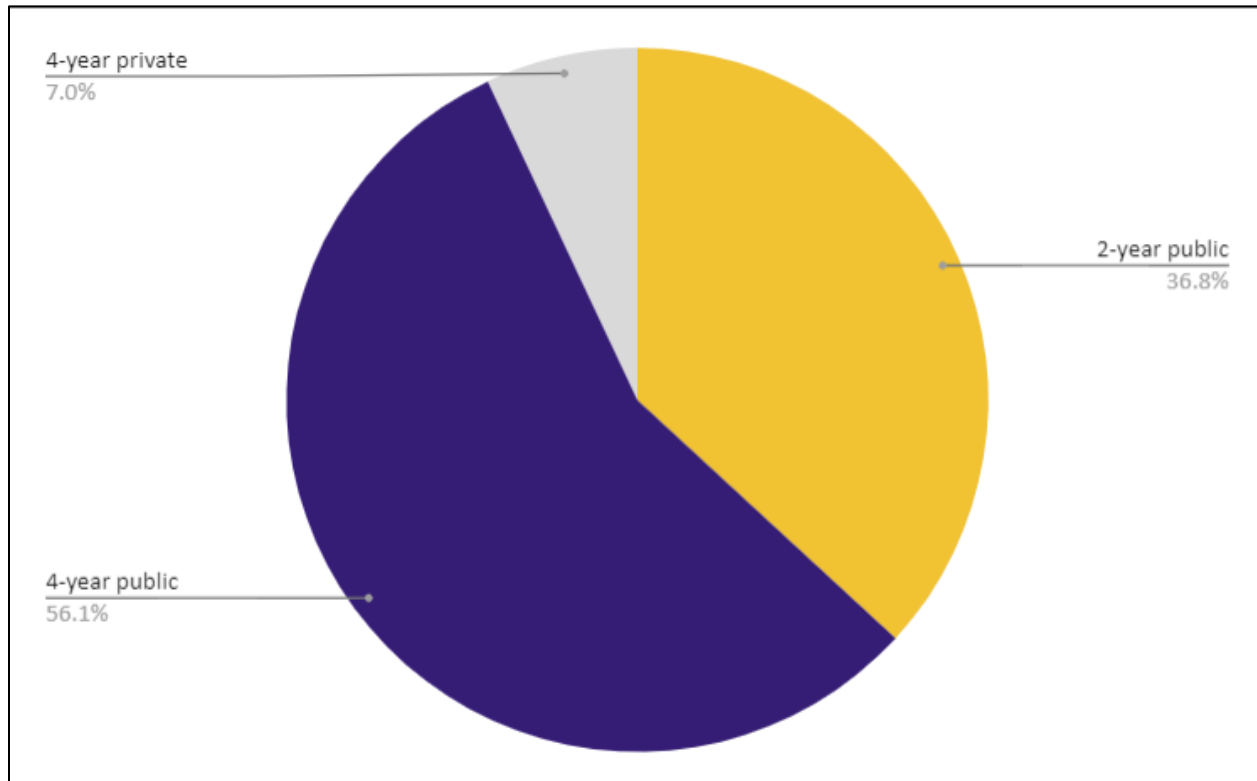
## **Results**

Although the survey included 33 questions, all of which are found in the Appendix, not all results are reported in this article. The data set itself, which the NABCA Research Committee oversees, is available to NABCA members on the website under Research Results. Future researchers may request the data, with all identifying information of respondents removed, from the NABCA Research Committee.

The survey began with basic demographic information for additional sites. NABCA connects Higher Education professionals from many institutions that vary in type and size. Survey respondents, which constitute approximately 24% of NABCA members, identify as public four-year (56.14%) and two-year (36.84%) institutions, with just over 7% identifying as four-year private institutions (Figure 1). With the membership predominantly comprised of not-for-profit public and private institutions the survey revealed that 5.26% of respondents represent for-profit institutions of higher education (Appendix 1).

**Figure 1**

*Institutional Type (n=57)*



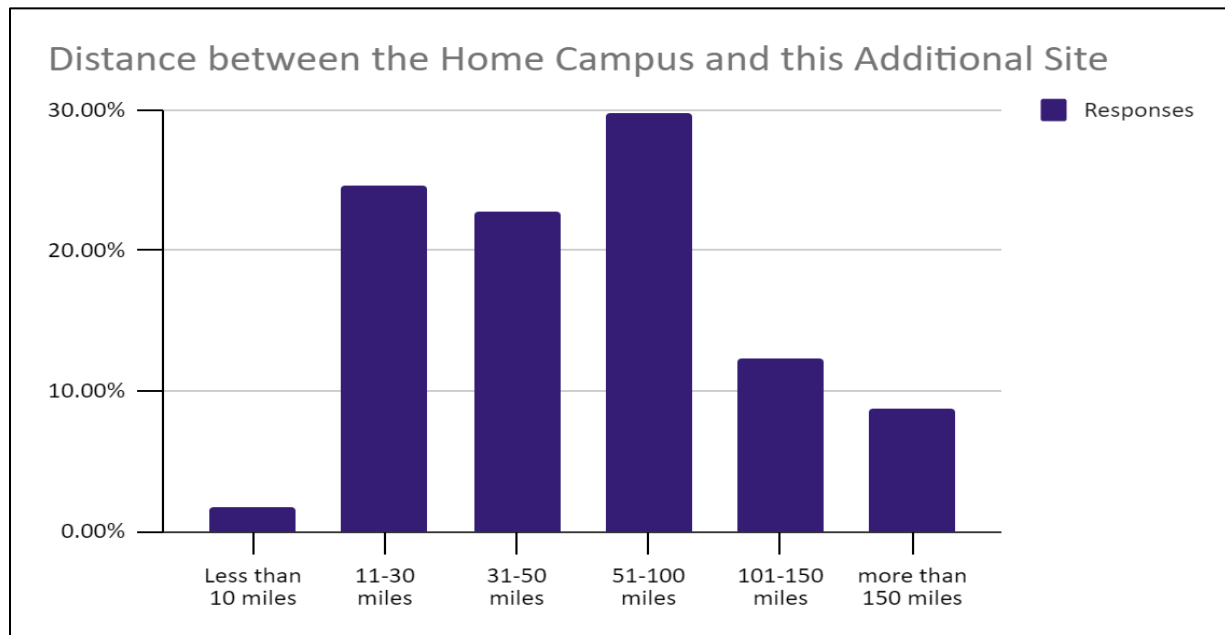
While institutional accreditation varies based on factors such as institutional type and location, multiple accrediting bodies were represented by the institutions in the survey. Respondents indicated that the largest number of institutions were accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (40.35%) and the Higher Learning Commission (33.33%), accounting for nearly three-quarters of the results (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**  
*Accrediting Body (n=57)*

Main Accrediting Body	Percentage
Southern Association of College and Schools Commission of Colleges	40.35%
Higher Learning Commission	33.33%
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities	12.28%
Middle States Commission on Higher Education	7.01%
Western Association of Colleges and Schools	3.50%
Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges	1.75%
Council on Occupation Education	1.75%

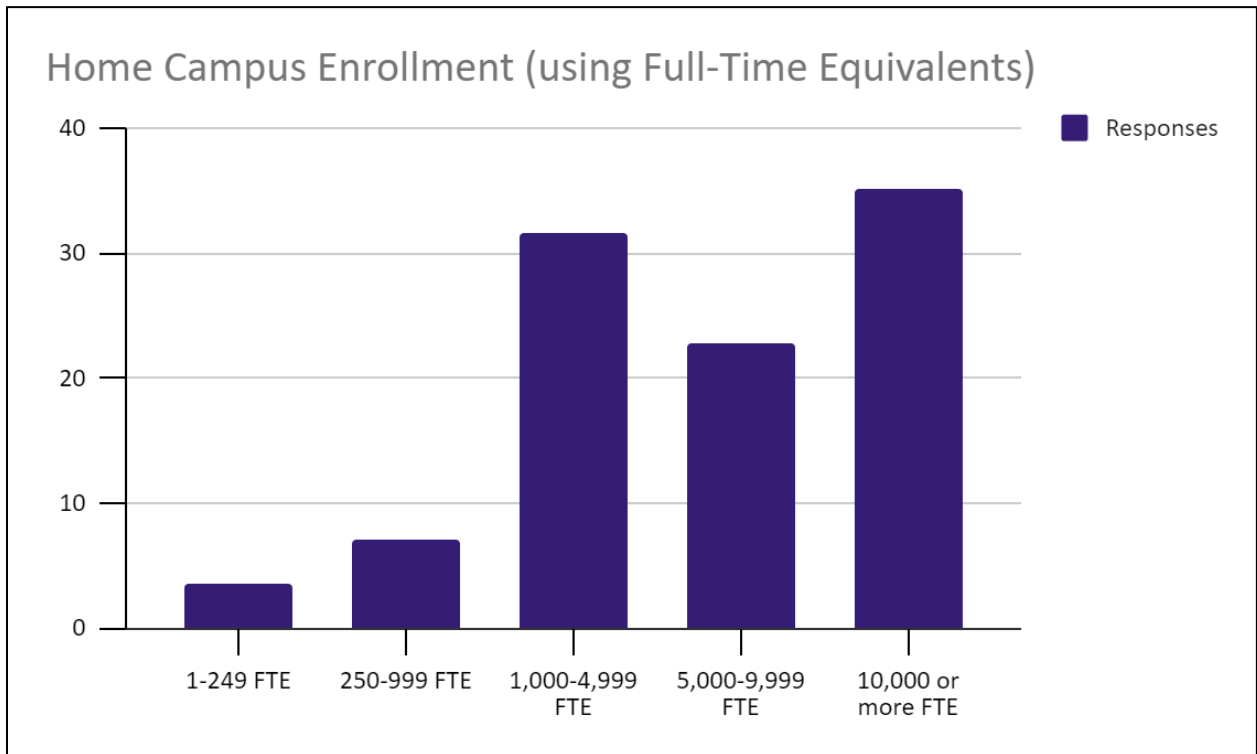
Distance between Additional Sites and their Home Campuses may impact communication and therefore collaboration between sites. The survey revealed interesting data about the distance between the Home Campus and Additional Sites with most Additional Sites located within 51-100 miles (29.82%) from the Home Campus. Additional Sites located 11-30 miles (24.56%) and 31-50 miles (22.81%) follow closely behind this group (Figure 3).

**Figure 3**  
*Distance from Home Campus*



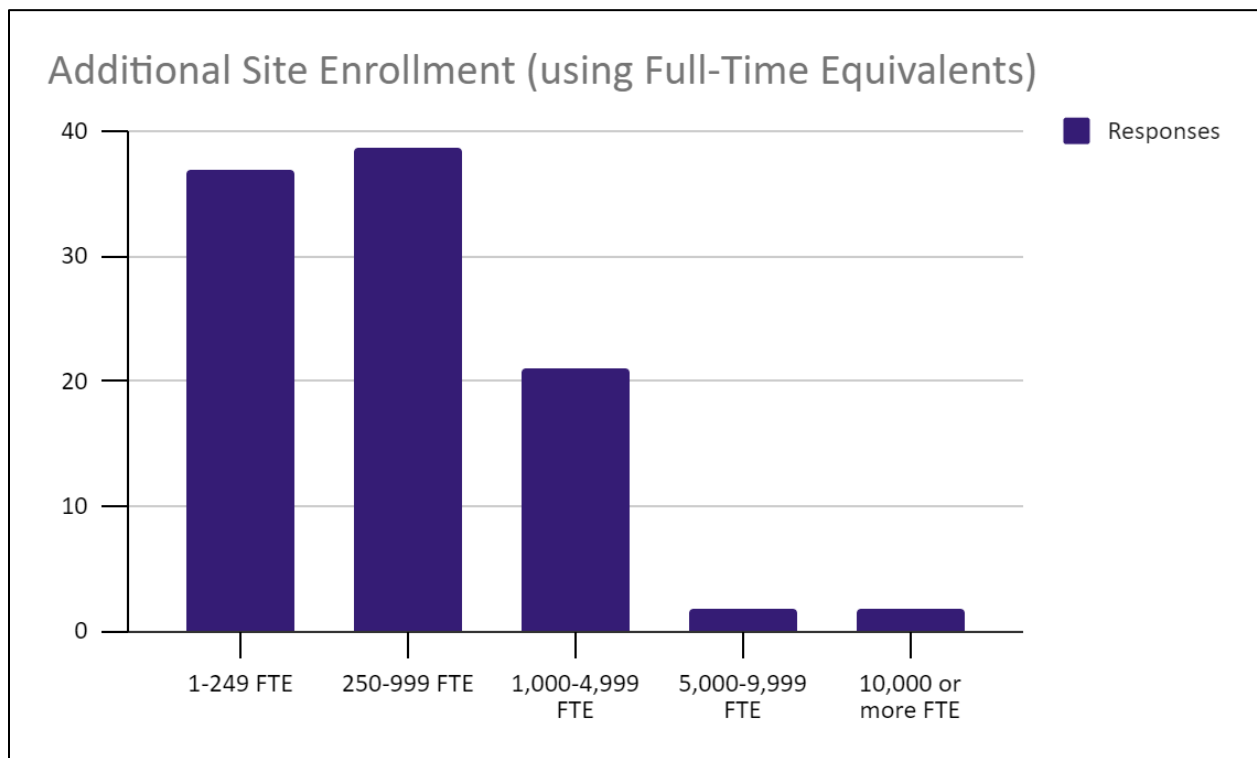
Keeping with the variation between NABCA members, the number of full-time equivalents (FTE) attending the institution's Home Campus shows a wide range of responses. The largest number of respondents (35.09%) have Home Campus student populations of more than 10,000. Populations of 1,000-4,999 were the second largest group (31.58%) followed closely by institutions with 5,000-9,999 students (22.81%). The smallest FTE populations of 1-249 and 250-999 at the identified Parent Campus were reflected as 3.51% and 7.02% respectively (Figure 4).

**Figure 4**  
*Home Campus FTE Enrollment (n=57)*



Although the enrollment size of Home Campuses was large among respondents, the enrollment size of the corresponding Additional Sites was the opposite. The branch campus FTE enrollments reflecting campuses with 1-249 FTE (36.84%) and 250-999 FTE (38.60%) were the most common. Larger student populations of 1,000-4,999 FTE (21.05%), 5,000 – 9,999 FTE (1.75%), and 10,000 or more FTE (1.75%) were much less common (Figure 5).

**Figure 5**  
*Additional Site FTE Enrollment (n=57)*



Regardless of the accrediting body or Federal definition, most respondents reported that their sites were identified as either branch campuses (29.81%) or regional campuses (21.05%) within their institution. Off-Campus Center was used least (7.02%) with Satellite Campus, Instructional Site, and Other designations used at 14.04% locations (Figure 6). Names listed within the Other category included Access Campus, Campus Center, Community Campus, Extended Campus,



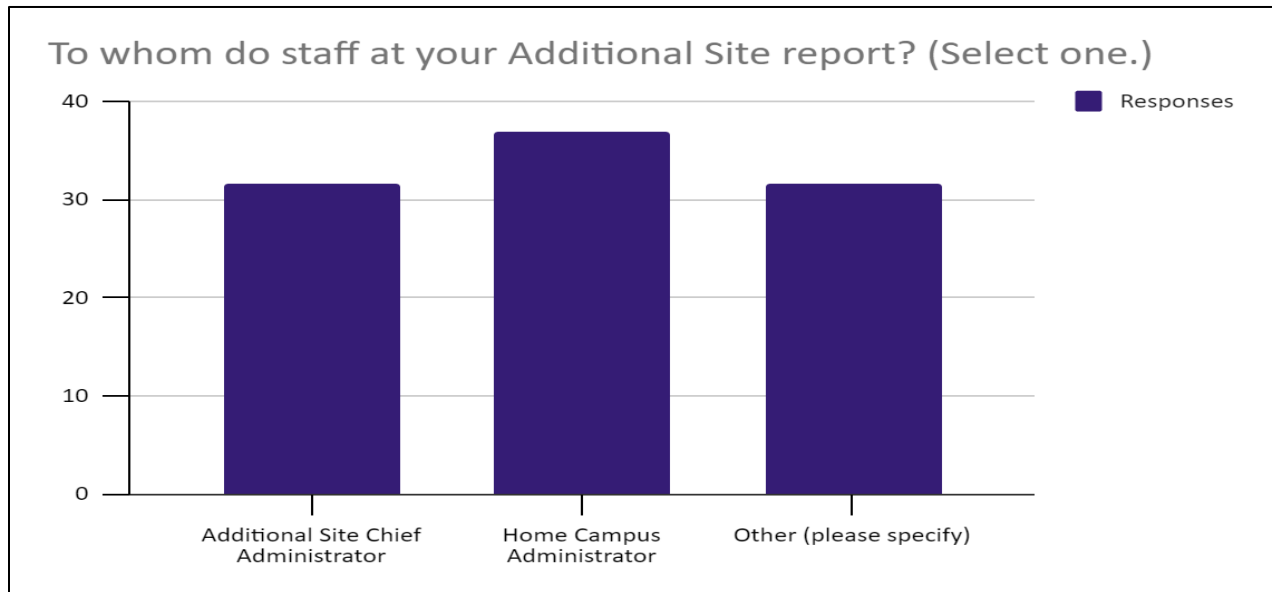
Partner Campus, and Urban Campus.

**Figure 6**  
*Additional Site Identification (n=57)*

<b>Additional Site Identification</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Branch Campus	29.81%
Regional Campus	21.05%
Instructional Site	14.04%
Satellite Campus	14.04%
Other	14.04%
Off-Campus Center	7.02%
Extension Center	0%

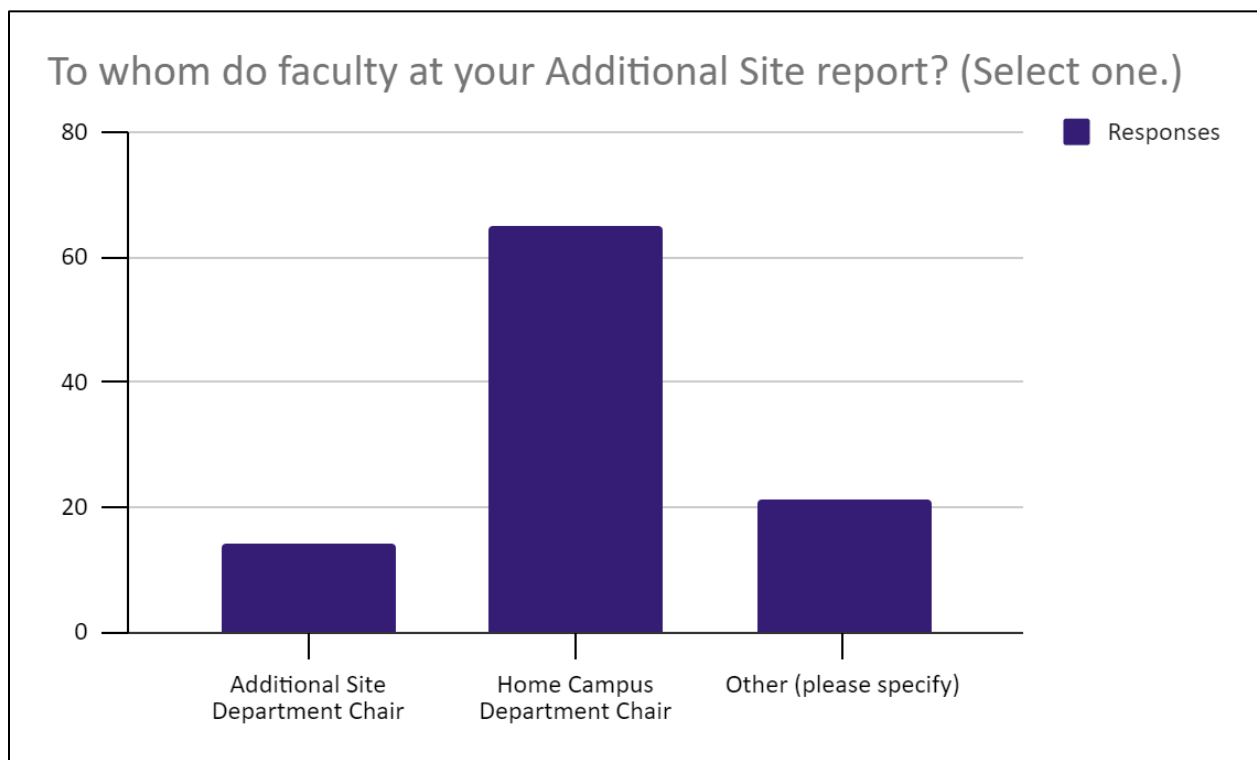
When survey respondents were asked to share non-academic staff reporting structures at Additional Sites, the results were relatively evenly split between 31.58% reporting to the Additional Site’s chief administrator, 36.84% reporting to the Home Campus administrator and 31.58% Other (Figure 7). Responses within the Other category included descriptions of a combination, split, or mix of the other two options.

**Figure 7**  
*Non-Academic Staff Reporting (n=57)*



Responses to the same question regarding faculty reporting structures revealed a starkly different response. Academic faculty overwhelmingly report to Home Campus Department Chairs (64.91%) with only 14.04% reporting to the site’s Department Chairs and a mixed reporting structure utilized by 21.05% (Figure 8).

**Figure 8**  
*Academic Faculty Reporting (n=57)*



The survey revealed some interesting finds as they pertain to degree offerings. Degrees offered at “main or home” campus shows that doctoral level degrees had the smallest reported rate of 52.63%, followed by associate degrees reported at 59.65%. Not surprisingly, the greatest number of home institutions offered bachelor’s degrees at 71.93% and master’s level degrees at 64.16% of campuses (Appendix 1).

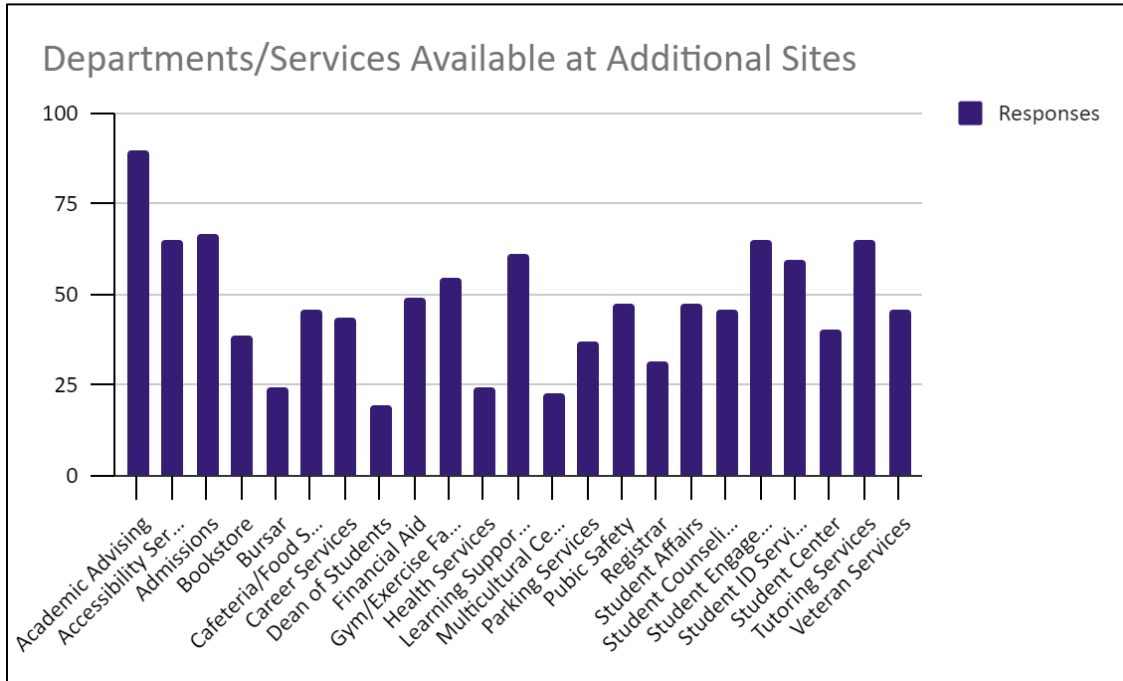
Degree levels available at branch campuses were reported in levels that are generally expected for these locations. Survey responses indicate that 56.14% of branch campus have associate degrees, 57.89% offer bachelor's degrees, 47.37% offer master's degrees, and 26.32% offer doctoral degrees. Other additional locations within the reporting institutions reflect similar offerings, with 21.05% not offering higher level degrees than the respondent. However, respondents indicated that 17.54% of other institutional branch campuses offer bachelor's degrees, 19.30% offer master's degrees, and 21.05% offer doctoral degrees (Appendix 1).

Although not a common practice, residential student housing is offered at nearly 20% of branch campuses in our response pool, with 80.70% of campuses reporting that student residential housing is not offered at their individual site or other sites within their institution (Attachment 1).

Though they are a key to success at all higher education institutions, branch campuses often lack services offered at home campuses. The most commonly reported services offered at branch campuses include Academic Advising (89.47%), Admissions (66.67%), Accessibility Services (64.91%), Student Engagement (64.91%), Tutoring Services (64.91%), Learning Support (61.40%), Student Identification Services (59.65%), and Gym/Exercise Facilities (54.39%). The lowest percent of services provided at branch campuses include Dean of Students (19.30%), Multicultural Centers (22.81%), Bursar (24.56%), Health Services (24.56%), Registrar (31.58%), Bookstore (38.60%), and Parking Services (36.84%) (Figure 9).

**Figure 9**

*Departments and Services Provided on Branch Campus Site*



The same level of services were reported at 51.92% of institutions, with 9.62% reporting that other branch campuses offered more services and 38.46% report less services were offered at their other institutional sites (Appendix 1).

Although titles of the chief administrator at branch campuses differ depending primarily on campus size and organizational structure, the most common titles are reflected below with larger fonts based on higher frequency of that response.

**Figure 10**  
*Branch Campus Chief Administrator Job Title*

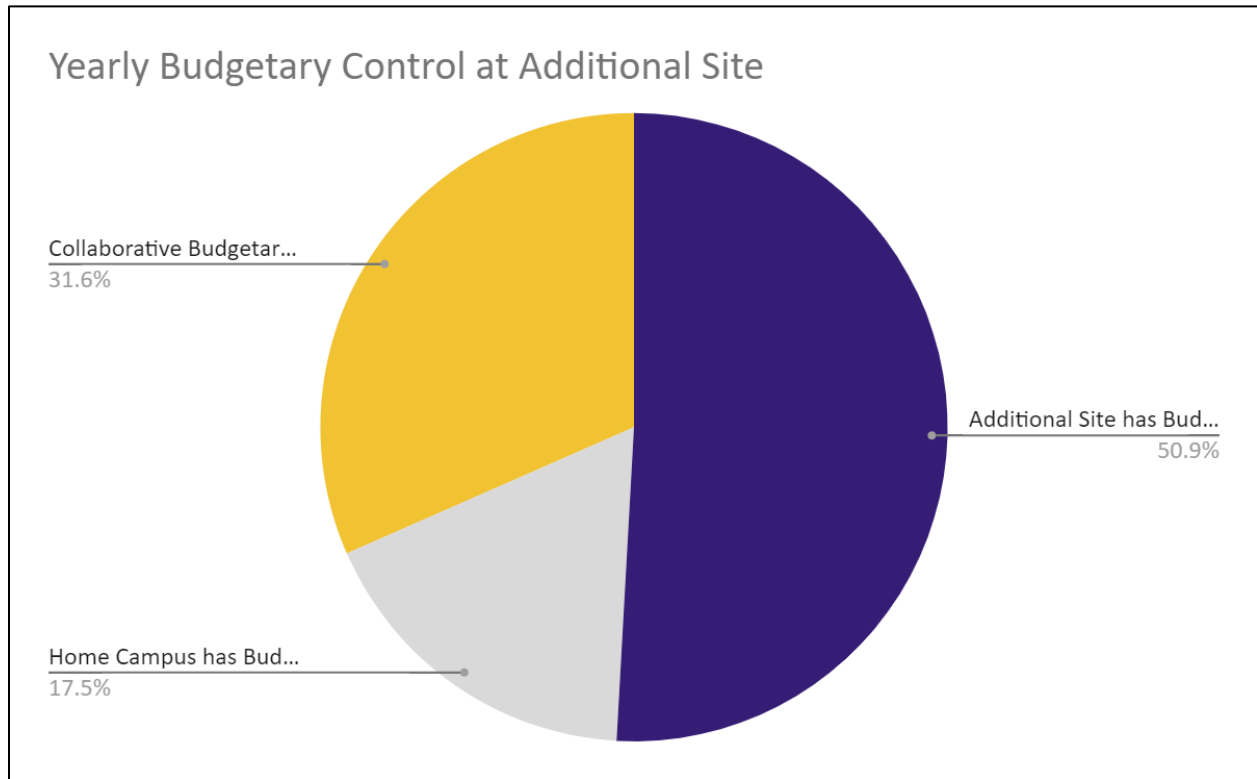


**Figure 11**  
*Survey Respondents Job Title*



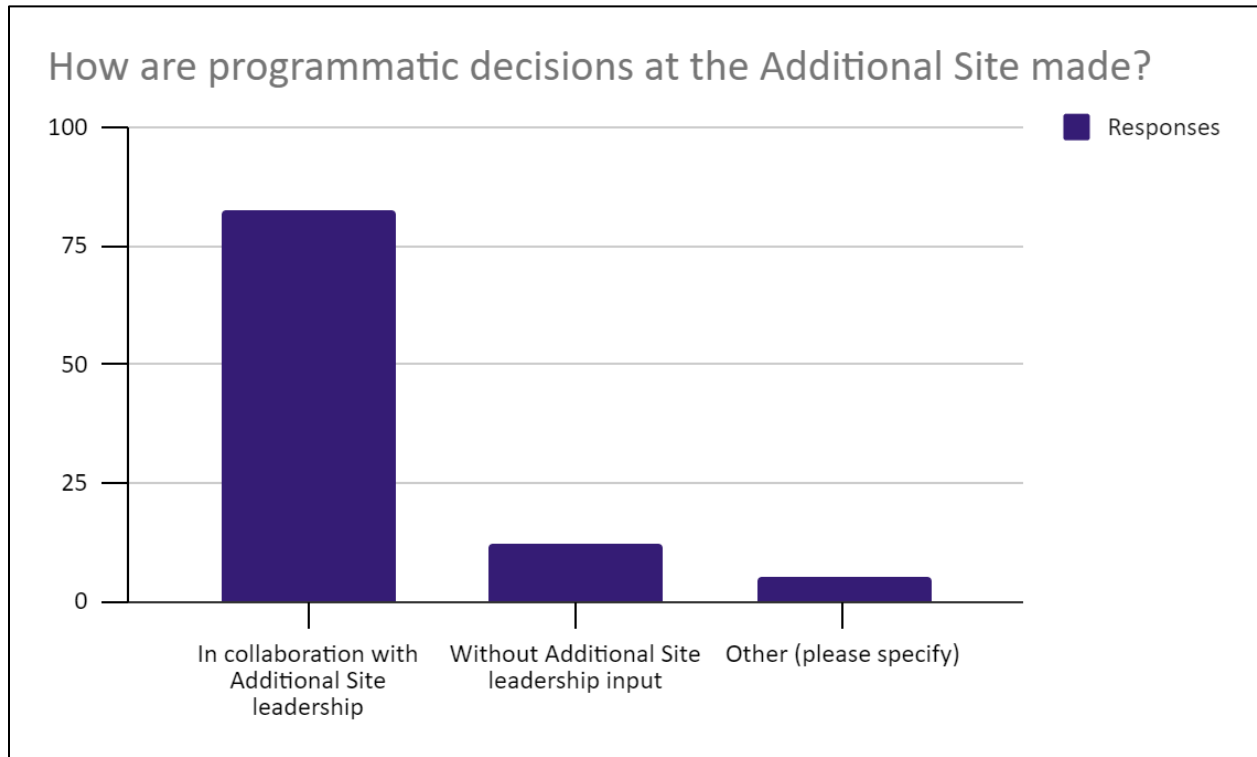
While the reporting structures for staff and faculty can provide insight into an Additional Site's governance, its budgetary control can be even more important. Slightly over half of respondents reported that the site's chief administrator maintains budgetary control (50.88%) with 31.58% reporting that the site's chief administrator works in in collaboration with main campus supervisors to provide input to the sites annual budget and 17.54% indicated that the site has had no budgetary control or input (Figure 12).

**Figure 12**  
*Budgetary Control of Additional Sites (n=57)*



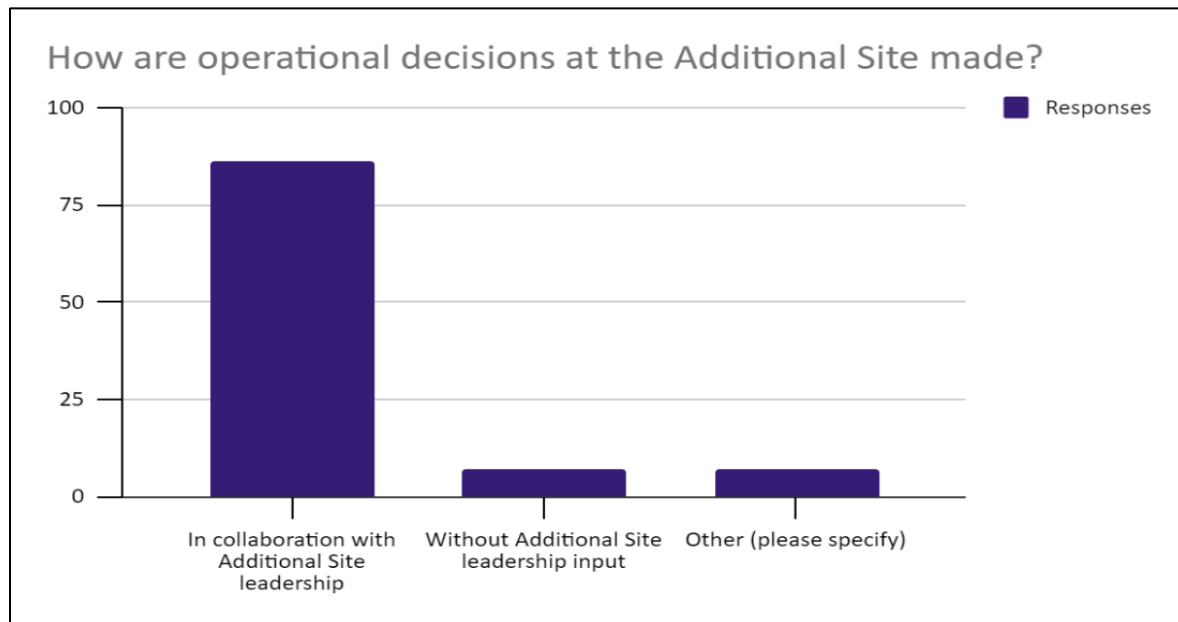
Though decisions affecting the operations and academic offerings at additional sites can be complex, survey respondents revealed that programmatic decisions are overwhelmingly made in collaboration with the site's leadership team (82.46%) compared to programmatic decisions being made without input from site leadership. A small number (5.26%) revealed that they were unsure of how these decisions were reached (Figure 13).

**Figure 13**  
*Programmatic Decision-Making at Additional Sites (n=57)*



Likewise, operational decisions affecting Additional Sites shared a similar rate of collaboration (85.96%) with these types of decisions being made without campus leadership input and Unknown both reported at a 7.02% (Figure 14).

**Figure 14**  
*Operational Decision-Making at Additional Sites (n=57)*



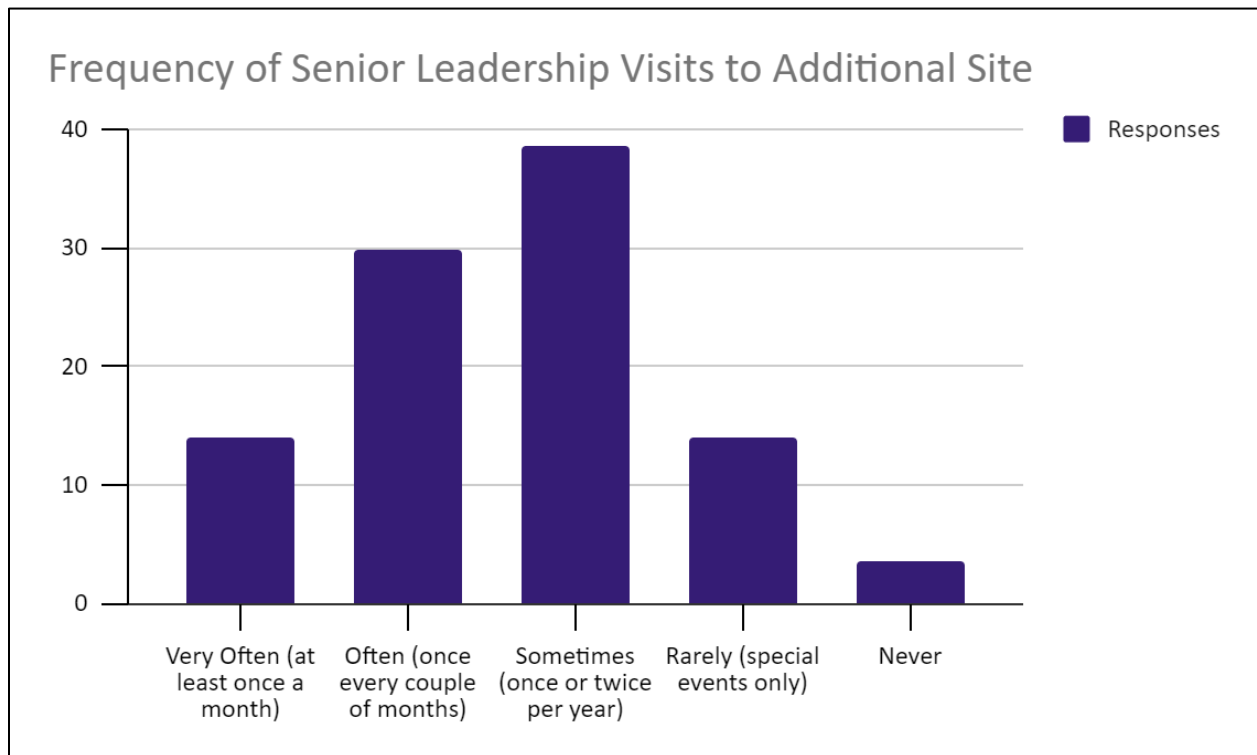
When considering both programmatic and operational decision-making, there is a range of responses. These results are considerably better than Schindler’s (1952) description of the broad range of responses. “An administrative evaluation of the administrative policies and procedures as applied to the operation of off-campus divisions was the primary purpose of the study, and as might be expected, it revealed practices all along a scale from the extremely good to the extremely bad” (p. 193). With just a few responses that suggest no input from site leadership, an overwhelming majority express a collaborative decision-making process in both programs and operations.

Before considering survey respondents’ perceptions of their Additional Site’s value to the institution, the frequency of senior leadership visits to Additional Sites may be a predictor. When



asked, respondents reported that institutional senior leadership visits were Very Often (at least once per month) once or twice a year (38.60%) being the highest reported response. Visits by these senior leaders every couple of months (29.82%) was the next highest rate, once a month and only during special events visits were both reported at a rate of 14.04%. However, the most concerning visitation schedule reported was, that institutional senior leaders never (3.51%) visited the branch campuses of their institution (Figure 15).

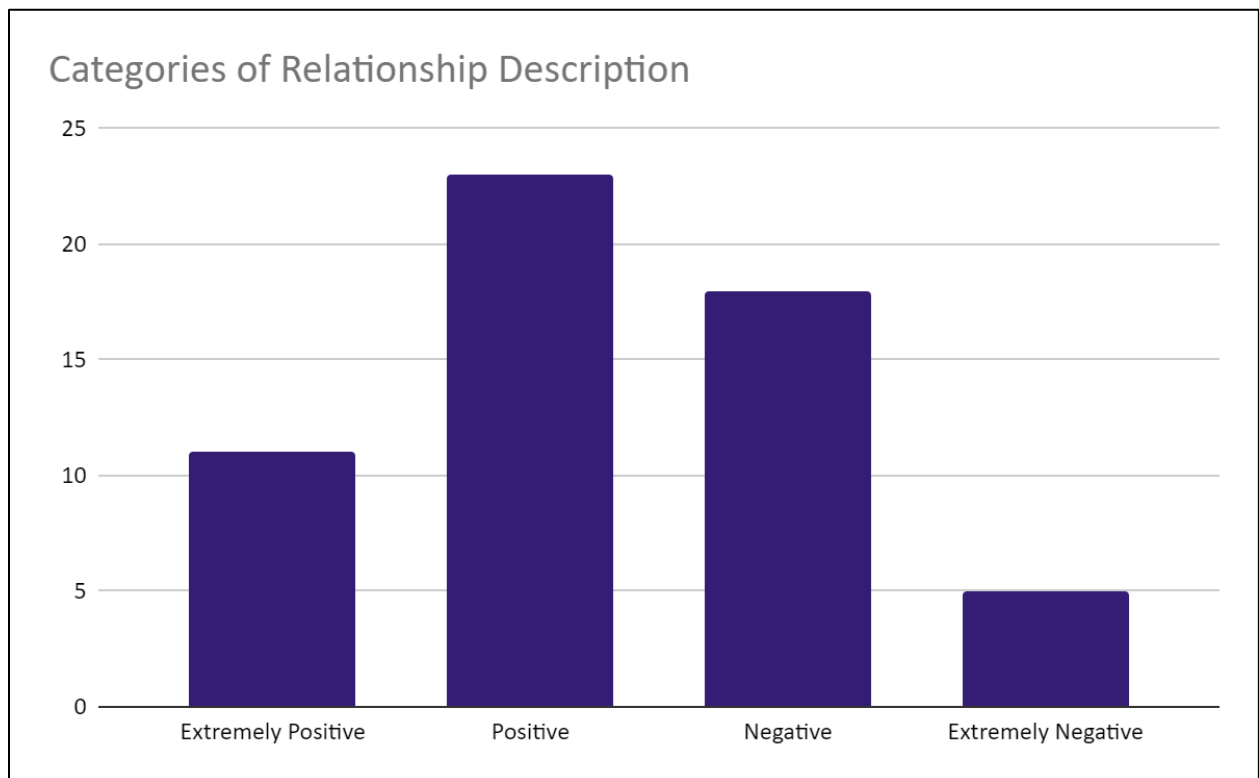
**Figure 15**  
*Frequency of Senior Leadership Visits to Additional Sites (n=57)*



A key piece of this survey is to determine the NABCA members' perceptions of Additional Site value to the institution, making the question, "How would you describe the relationship between

your Additional Site and the Home Campus of your institution?” particularly important. While the use of open-ended questioning for survey respondents regarding their perceptions provides an opportunity for deeper understanding, the reporting of those results is not possible in the same form as the previous responses. As such, the next section includes poignant responses as well as the researcher’s coding of the comments into four categories. Categories include extremely positive, positive, negative, and extremely negative. Figure 16 includes the breakdown of results.

**Figure 16**  
*Categories of Relationship Descriptions (n=57)*



These categories show most respondents (59.65%) describe their relationship as positive or extremely positive with only five rating it as extremely negative. Specific responses help to

elucidate the feelings further in Figure 17.

**Figure 17**  
*Participant Comments across Relationship Descriptions*

<b>Participant response when asked, “How would you describe the relationship between your Additional Site and the Home Campus of your institution?”</b>	<b>Relationship Category</b>
A 55 mile sidewalk	Extremely Positive
It is great. We are a team and work hard.	Extremely Positive
Loving	Extremely Positive
Very collaborative and much improved over 5+ years ago	Extremely Positive
been through stages with different dynamic, but right now it's a healthy and improving collaboration.	Positive
Collaborative, supportive	Positive
Growing engagement, good	Positive
Overall, it is positive, but 3 of the 5 satellite campuses struggle with identity and purpose.	Positive
Contentious at times, but then very collaborative at times too.	Negative
Ever evolving. Sometimes faculty, staff, and students at the additional site feel overlooked or like there are fewer resources allotted to the additional campus.	Negative
Has been rocky in the last few years as more and more areas become centralized to the main/home campus.	Negative
Strained. We feel as though we compete for resources and often get the "leftovers". There is very much an "us v. them" mentality. The culture on each campus is very different.	Negative
competitive	Extremely Negative
out of sight out of mind	Extremely Negative

Though the researchers have heard many colleagues use Schindler’s stepchild reference anecdotally, the survey responses do not support this notion. In fact, that term was not used by any of the 57 respondents when asked to describe the relationship between the Additional Site and Home Campus. In fact, though not generalizable, these results suggest that progress has been made based on Schindler’s (1952) call to “bring these ‘stepchildren’ into the bosom of the

campus family” (p. 228). Some analysis of how these relationship descriptions compare to the decision-making processes and senior leadership visits may provide context for actionable items to improve these relationships.

While this study sought to determine the types of institutional structures and governance experienced by NABCA members and how these structures led to perceptions of off-campus site’s value to the organization, results revealed no discernable patterns. As a result, sharing implications for practice is inadvisable. Much like Bebko & Huffman (2011), who noted that their study led to more questions than it answered, this study is best used as a level setting for understanding the experiences of NABCA members moving forward.

## **Conclusion**

Ultimately, the updated NABCA member survey demonstrated the idea that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Even after significant changes like the proliferation of online learning through expanded Internet access and the COVID-19 pandemic, survey results continue to show the vast variation of experiences of NABCA members as well as their sense of off-campus sites’ value to the home institutions.

Like Schindler (1952) and Bebko & Huffman (2011) before us, we call for more frequent and expanded research on the branch campus experience. It is only through this consistent review of experiences that patterns and trends may be visible. More importantly, those patterns, once illuminated, may influence positive changes in the branch campus experience. Preliminary analysis of the results of this survey suggest that additional questions may be necessary. As such,

consideration of new survey questions is recommended now that the initial survey and its results are complete. NABCA's Research Committee should oversee the administration of the survey to ensure that regardless of membership and/or leadership changes, the research agenda continues.

In addition to consistent yearly surveys for NABCA members, researchers recommend additional analysis using the current data set. These include a NABCA membership profile, updated typologies of branch campuses based on the work of Bebko and Huffman (2011) as well as analysis of the types of degrees offered at locations and/or accrediting bodies represented by NABCA members.

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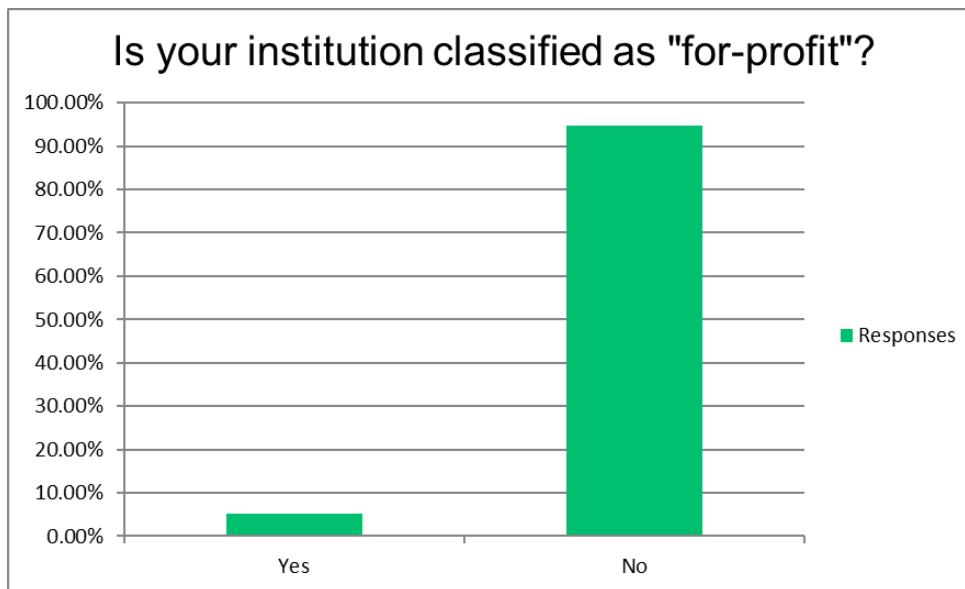
Administrators.pdf

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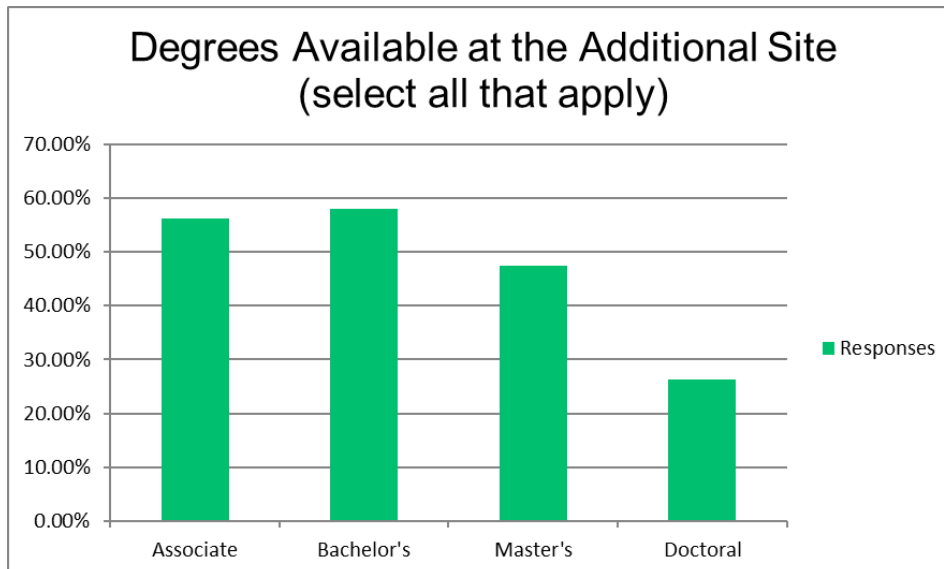
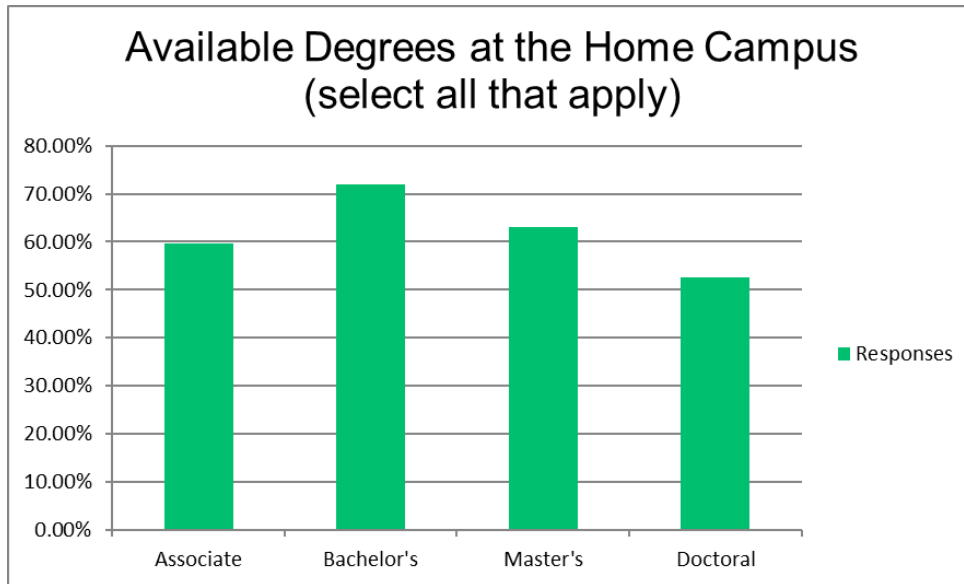
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## Appendix 1

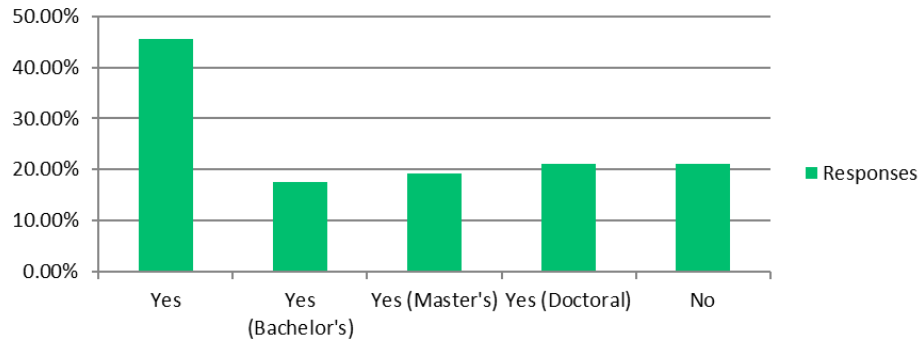
### Public and For-Profit Institutions



## Degree Offerings

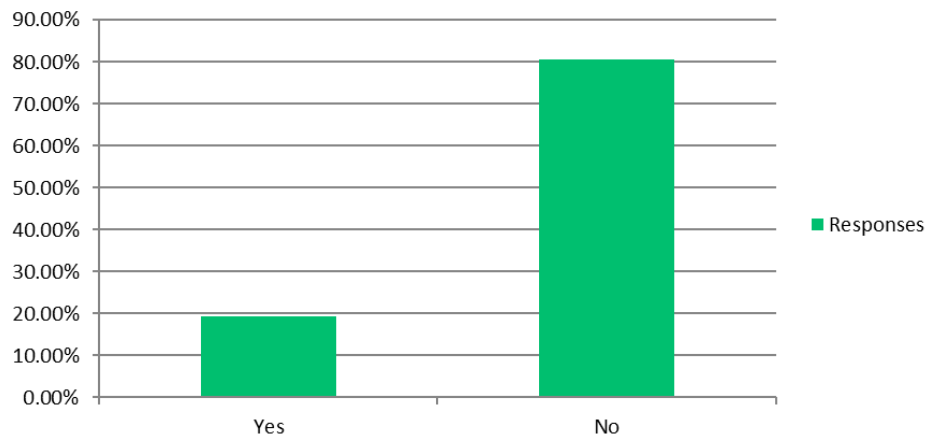


Do any other Additional Sites within your organization offer higher levels of degrees than yours? (Select all that apply.)



### Campus Services

Does your Additional Site have residential housing?





## **Increasing Academic Advising Support Services for Transfer Students from Community Colleges**

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This opinion piece serves as a call to action for the implementation of mandatory staff advisors assigned to students transferring to four-year universities from community colleges. Students transferring from two-year community colleges to four-year universities face issues with connecting to campus and understanding a different campus culture. Academic advisors at four-year universities should adopt practices like community colleges to help these students transition to a new college environment.

Students transferring from a community college to a four-year university are in a unique situation—specifically, they represent a population of students with a need that staff advising from a four-year college can fill. These students come from a small educational community where they were assigned to a staff academic advisor that followed them through their educational journey. Students feel the support and can go to their advisor with questions about classes, college policies, complaints, and career and transfer planning. Their advisor becomes part of their success team and plays a role in retention and graduation. As the student transfers into a four-year university, they lose this one-on-one support network since they are assigned to faculty

advisors that balance teaching, research, and advising. An article published in *The Washington Post* describes this as “an uphill battle of a system that is extremely tough to navigate and which students get little help” and called the guidance that students can get “unclear and insufficient” (Marcus, 2023). Four-year universities should include staff advising for the first semester to this population of students to increase a successful transition.

Many transfer students in this population will enter their new school as juniors and are assigned to faculty advisors in their major. The only interaction with staff advisors happens during the orientation sessions to get the students registered and then students are told to work with their faculty advisor for the remainder of their degree. Faculty advising is a new concept for community college transfers that are used to an assigned staff advisor. Transfer students can also be a new concept for the faculty advisors since they expect students to only come to them about registration and career questions. Transfer students from a community college are accustomed to a different type of interaction, may fear change, or not feel like their faculty advisor is able to provide adequate academic advising.

Students may also transfer in for one major and decide to change their major to something completely different. Faculty advisors may not be prepared for the neediness of these transfer students and not provide them with the supports that they crave and are used to. At the community college level, students are used to separating faculty and advising and may visit their advisor to express frustration at grading policies or to submit a grievance against a professor. This could make the students shy away from trying to find the connection with the faculty advising member.

Four-year universities can include a one semester staff advisor assigned to this student population to ease the transition. This person can handle student questions, comments, and concerns, and use the same type of intrusive advising practices utilized by community college advisors. This can help the student find one person on campus to make an initial connection with and allow them to feel a sense of belonging. Having an advising framework like the community college would minimize culture shock by letting them experience advising the way they did at community college.

There are potential drawbacks for four-year universities to implement this type of advising model including staffing issues. While it would be a large undertaking, the university staff can use the primary role academic advisors that work with undecided students or first-year students before their assignment to faculty advisors. Another potential drawback for four-year universities would be offering a service for specific population of students that differs from the general admission students. However, transfer students are a special population that need to re-learn how to assimilate to a new community. There could be a specific number of sessions, workshops, or lessons that the advisors provide to the transfer students that are focused on ideas and issues that may come up in their first semester.

Community college advising is not perfect and differs from institution to institution. However, most colleges use an assigned advising framework where the student is paired with an advisor based on a certain criterion upon entrance to the community college (i.e., major, last name). This person serves as the advisor from connection to completion allowing for the student to have one person in their corner that does not change from semester to semester. The advisor role at the

community college varies depending on the needs and wants of a student. Students can use advising as frequently as they want and come in for more than registration and career or transfer planning. Students that have benefited from a positive advising relationship at the community college level will look for a person to fill this role at their next institution. This is where the staff advising model for one semester could come in handy.

The staff advising model could encompass a registration assistance piece but also allow the student to have one contact from their acceptance to the end of the first semester. This would follow the connection to completion framework but on a modified schedule. Having one assigned staff member on campus would allow the students to be comfortable asking general questions and inquiring about policies and procedures. The staff advisor can make referrals or send information about campus resources like the writing or tutoring centers and can help students learn about getting involved on campus and making a connection. This population of students deserves to feel part of the campus environment just as any other student on the campus does.

Navigating a whole new college campus can be scary, especially if students are searching for a support network and coming up empty. This population of students serves colleges and universities an important reminder about connection and importance of a sense of belonging. By adding a staff advisor to assist transfer students with their first semester transition, four-year universities can ensure that community college transfer students have a smooth and comfortable transition.

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*Analysis*

## **Creating a Comprehensive Branch Campus**

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### **Introduction**

Language matters. I have long held the belief that a college's "main campus" is the one that serves the needs of the students who attend it. In that sense, every college campus is the main campus for the students it serves. I have experiences with new campus development and expansion as a founding faculty member, department chair, and dean of instruction. Given these experiences, last year I was asked by the President of Bluefield State University to transition from my then position as Provost and Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs to the founding president of Bluefield State University-Beckley.

For more than four decades Bluefield State University, a public Historically Black University (HBCU) in Bluefield, West Virginia, has had a site location in Beckley, which is over 40 miles from the University. The average age of students at the Beckley site is slightly older (24.8) than the students at the Bluefield campus (22.7). Additionally, Beckley students are commuters whereas Bluefield is a residential campus. The Beckley site primarily serves the needs of students entering allied health professions. As a result, it has successfully trained more than 1,000 health care professionals during that time. However, as the Beckley site transforms to a full-service campus, offering a variety of programs and majors, it is establishing a more

comprehensive approach to meeting all of the educational needs of the residents of the region. In doing so, there are certain lessons that we have learned and are still learning.

### **Working With the Community to Build Relationships and Develop Partnerships**

As branch campuses, we must continue to be “of our community,” actively seeking input from the residents and businesses within our service areas to ensure that we are meeting community and student needs. Working with area employers, community boards, agencies, and civic organizations, we are developing programs to provide these stakeholders with a well-prepared workforce—a strategy that benefits the community, business, and industry. By identifying the workforce needs of employers, we are establishing new degrees, majors, continuing education, and academic programs on our campus to address those needs. To further support employer needs, we are developing and delivering customized trainings for local businesses. We have also facilitated collaborations with faculty, staff, and employers to strengthen integration between noncredit and credit programs by aligning learning outcomes of customized training and noncredit programs with those of credit programs. This strategy enables students to more easily navigate a seamless transition from one to the other in addressing their educational needs.

### **Creating a Culture of Student Engagement and Shared Governance**

To more effectively engage students in campus activities and decisions, last fall we created a President’s Student Advisory Council. Consisting of 10-12 campus student leaders who have been nominated by their instructors, the President’s Student Advisory Council meets monthly and serves as an advisory group to the campus president about students’ needs and how the University can more effectively meet those needs. The Council provides an opportunity for the

mutual exchange of ideas and facilitates open dialogue about common challenges and opportunities students face. The meetings also allow the campus president to solicit advice and student perspectives on decisions affecting matters of importance to students. Minutes of meetings are sent to all students and posted on bulletin boards. Based on this body's recommendations, the campus has created social media sites, hosted new student activities (such as Welcome Week Cookouts and games) and cultural events (e.g., Black History Month, Women's History Month), sponsored a clothing and toy drive for distressed families in the county, and initiated a "Day of Service" with area service agencies. Additionally, student advisory council members have volunteered for area recruiting events and fairs.

We also created a Faculty/Staff Advisory Council, consisting of all full-time and part-time campus personnel, that serves as an advisory group to the campus president on a plethora of topics including recruiting, scheduling, student services, student pathways to completion, strengthening the campus's foothold in the community, and employee needs. There had not previously been a forum at this location for all employees to meet. As a result, several faculty members who have worked for the University for several years did not know each other. By bringing all employees together in monthly meetings, employees get to know each other and it has reduced any sense of "isolation" they may experience. The Faculty/Staff Advisory Council meets monthly and minutes of the President's Student Advisory Council are shared with the group to enable the Faculty/Staff Advisory Council to also serve as a "case management" body for student issues and concerns.



### **Including Students and Faculty in Recruiting and Community Events**

Recruiting teams of admissions counselors, faculty, and students have been created to meet with area employers, work with community service agencies and organizations, and participate in area recruiting events and fairs to attract new students. Admissions counselors are essential to recruiting students. However, potential students are often attracted to a university based on who their professors will be and with the students they will interact (Furbeck, 2001). At recruiting events, admissions counselors answer questions and process student applications for immediate acceptance. Faculty serve as content experts who can explain their programs and requirements in greater detail. The students on the team have been selected because they either graduated from the high school visited or have worked with the employer/agency/organization and can describe their experiences in the program and at the University. In the fall semester, recruiting teams met with over 300 potential students with an additional 500 potential students scheduled for the spring semester.

### **Providing Food Service**

Historically, there has been no food service at the Beckley site. Most of the students are enrolled in allied health professions which usually require them to be in class from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., with limited time for breaks between classes. Although there is a food kiosk and vending machines on campus, the closest fast-food restaurant is over two miles away. We successfully piloted a program at the Fall Festival Health Fair in which people pre-ordered lunches from a vendor that were delivered. We adapted this model from one of the private high schools in the area. As a result, we have worked with food vendors to be on campus each day of the week delivering pre-ordered lunches for students and employees.

## **Creating and Placing Students on an Academic Pathway**

Because branch campuses often have lower enrollments, creating predictable schedules that enable students to complete all of their coursework on time is essential. Utilizing best practices identified by *Complete College America* (Structure, 2021), we have created “meta-majors” or “career clusters” to replace the “undeclared” category for early undergraduate students who have not declared a major area of study. Unlike Lewis Carroll’s advice from the Cheshire Cat to Alice, that if you don’t know where you are going, any road will take you there, (Carroll, 2018, 75-76), we prefer to follow the words of that philosopher, Yogi Berra, who purportedly proclaimed that “you’ve got to be very careful if you don’t know where you are going because you might not get there.” Meta-majors provide students with a clear pathway to graduation, as well as connections between their studies and different career tracks, by grouping individual majors under a larger academic umbrella.

Our meta-majors have been developed in collaboration with faculty, department chairs, and deans. Similar to other universities, they include Applied Sciences, Business, Education, Health Professions, Liberal Arts, Social Sciences, and STEM. Academic Advisors and Counselors work with new and returning students to assess their interests and assist them in selecting degree paths. After meeting with an advisor or counselor, all students select a meta-major or program that introduces them to their field of study, creates supportive cohorts, and helps them choose a specific pathway to completion.

We created articulated pathways/degree maps (Degrees, Programs, and Certificates, n.d.) that are sequenced with critical courses and other milestones identified and aligned with specific career

and further education targets. Policy and administrative infrastructures have been established that require every student to have a customized, full-program plan based on individual degree maps. Student program plans are used to generate predictable course schedules that encourage and enable on-time completion. Utilizing a “15 to finish” model in which all articulated pathways are designed to enable students to enroll in 15 hours each semester (the number of credits necessary each semester to keep students on track for on-time completion), we created structured or block schedules for students based on their meta-major, facilitating the creation of student cohorts and easier class scheduling for advisors.

Understanding the important role that English and mathematics play in setting the foundation for academic success, we require all students to successfully complete an English and mathematics course within their first semester. Individual mathematics pathways have been created to allow students to take different paths through the math curriculum, depending on their course of study. All students are also required to enroll in a technical literacy course in their first semester.

Students who are college ready in English and mathematics (Example 1 below) also enroll in two courses in their major/meta-major. Students who require remediation in either English or mathematics (Example 2 below) are co-enrolled in a remedial course as well as in a three-hour college success course. The college success course is designed to assist students in developing academic and life skills that will help them successfully transition to college level work by learning “to accept responsibility, discover self-motivation and self-management, employ interdependence, develop self-awareness, adopt lifelong learning, develop emotional intelligence and self-confidence, learn effective study strategies, and develop critical and creative thinking

skills” (Building Successful College Skills Course Description, n.d.).

Due to the extra hour requirement for remediation and the three-hour college success course, remedial students do not enroll in a course in their major/meta-major until their second semester. Regardless of their college readiness upon entering the institution, all students have an opportunity to complete at least nine hours in their major/meta-major their first year, providing them with the momentum to be far more likely to graduate on time.

**Example 1: Students Who Are College-Ready in English and Mathematics**

Fall Semester – Semester 1					
15 hours					
Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00-9:50	ENGL 101		ENGL 101		ENGL 101
9:00-10:20		TECH LITERACY		TECH LITERACY	
10:00-10:50	MATH		MATH		MATH
10:30-11:50		MAJOR		MAJOR	
11:00-11:50	MAJOR		MAJOR		MAJOR
Spring Semester – Semester 2					15
hours					
9:00-9:50	ENGL 201		ENGL 201		ENGL 201
9:00-10:20		MAJOR		MAJOR	
10:00-10:50	PSYC 102		PSYC 102		PSYC 102
10:30-11:50		MAJOR		MAJOR	
11:00-11:50	MAJOR		MAJOR		MAJOR

### Example 2: Students Who Require Remediation in English and Mathematics

Fall Semester – Semester 1					
14 hours					
Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00-9:50	ENGL 101		ENGL 101		ENGL 101
9:00-10:20		TECH LITERACY		TECH LITERACY	
10:00-10:20	ENGL 101L (Co-Requisite Remediation)		ENGL 101L (Co-Requisite Remediation)		ENGL 101L (Co-Requisite Remediation)
10:30-11:50		MATH		MATH	
12:00-12:20		MATHL (Co-Requisite Remediation)		MATHL (Co-Requisite Remediation)	
11:00-12:20	COLLEGE SUCCESS		COLLEGE SUCCESS		COLLEGE SUCCESS
Spring Semester – Semester 2					15
hours					
8:35-9:30	ENGL 201		ENGL 201		ENGL 201
9:10-10:30		MAJOR		MAJOR	
9:40-10:35	PSYC 102		PSYC 102		PSYC 102
10:45-12:05		MAJOR		MAJOR	
10:40-11:35	MAJOR		MAJOR		MAJOR

### Guaranteeing Classes

Several branch campuses face an enrollment crisis. Because branch campuses generally have lower enrollments, a loss of 20 students can have a profound impact on the institution’s total enrollment. This can present an issue, however, with meeting the minimum enrollment requirement of the number of students to deliver a class, leading to multiple class cancellations.

While *Complete College America* (Structure, 2021), recommends students follow curriculum “pathways” to graduate on time, cancelling low enrolled classes impedes this best practice and negatively impacts retention. When low enrolled classes are cancelled students take the courses they need elsewhere or leave the university altogether, further decreasing enrollment.

Alternately, low enrolled classes may be delivered by compensating faculty on a per student basis or by converting classes to “Independent Study.” Neither option fairly compensates faculty for their work in developing and delivering these courses.

Working with our faculty senate, Bluefield State University designed a “guaranteed class schedule” which eliminates the need to cancel low enrolled classes or deliver them as Independent Study (unless designated as such). Faculty honor their teaching assignments as listed in the schedule regardless of class enrollment. Teaching assignments are converted to load hours based on course enrollment. At Bluefield State University, fulltime faculty are required to teach 24 hours per academic year. If a three-hour course has low enrollment, the faculty member may be awarded two load hours. When that occurs the dean, in consultation with the faculty, may determine whether the faculty member will be assigned an extra course to meet his or her teaching load or teach a course in a separate semester (including an intersession term or summer semester term). All faculty are compensated for the extra load hours they incur. No classes are cancelled, thereby allowing students to graduate on time. Additionally, faculty are more fairly compensated for their services.

### **Ensuring That Every Student Has the Services He or She Needs to Be Successful**

Although required for accreditation standards, branch campuses may sometimes lack sufficient resources to assist students with services including admissions, academic support programs, advising and articulation, career development and placement, curriculum and instruction, distance learning, enrollment management, financial aid, health and counseling services, library services, registration, retention, student affairs, student organizations, testing, and tutoring. We

have arranged for the directors of each of these services to be on our campus at least one day every other week to meet with students in person. While students find this to be an invaluable service, several have expressed concern that the days in which directors are on campus may not be the same days that the students are on campus. On the days in which these directors are not on campus, we have established a designated “hotline” to these offices in the president’s suite that students can access any time the university is open, with the president or a member of his staff there to assist them. Additionally, we are in the process of hiring generalists who will be on campus at all times and can more effectively meet student needs.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Creating a comprehensive branch campus requires a shared vision with clear communication and set measurable expectations of each stakeholder, relying on their expertise and strengths. It’s important not to be afraid to take chances and fail. It’s also important to point out that not every site location is alike and that there is no “one size fits all” model to transition into a full-service campus. Commuter campuses should not be expected to have as actively engaged a student body outside class as residential campuses would. Working adults may have work and/or family obligations that younger students don’t have, preventing them from utilizing after class resources. That is why it is also important to hear the student voice, convening an inclusive group of students to gauge their wants, needs, and expectations of their campus.

As Bluefield State University-Beckley transforms from a site location to a comprehensive branch campus, changing the culture; adopting the proper constructs, procedures, and protocols; hiring the right personnel; and committing to the best practices of student success in entering a program

of study, completing English and mathematics gateway courses during students' first semester, and earning 30 credits and completing a minimum of nine credits in their field of study during students' first year are critical to the institution's success and they are commitments worth making.

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Book Review

**Bain, Ken. (2012). *What the Best College Students Do*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. \$16.00**

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In Ken Bain's bestselling book, *What the Best College Students Do*, through interviews and research, Bain examines the characteristics and stories of individuals who have often graduated college and gone on to invent, create, and solve problems within the world. The book contains eight chapters that summarize these characteristics: "the roots of success," "what makes an expert," "managing yourself," "learning how to embrace failure," "messy problems," "encouragement," "curiosity," and "making hard choices."

In the first chapter, Bain demonstrates that the best college students are not concerned with making good grades, but they take the time to understand themselves, how they think, how they work, their unique characteristics, what motivates them, what they are passionate about, and their purpose. They learn to integrate their abilities and their studies. They study and apply principles from a wide variety of disciplines. They use the process of metacognition (thinking about our own thinking) to engage in conversations with themselves (creating an inner dialogue), asking important questions, and work through the difficulties of drawing conclusions. They appreciate the messy quality of life. These individuals have an enhanced capacity for creativity, empathy, and problem solving. The best college students enjoy the process of learning. They are confident, responsible, and compassionate. Bain explains that to create something original, individuals must

stop being concerned with grades or results but take the opportunity to explore their own thoughts, questions, and make connections. As noted by Nobel Prize winning economist Paul Samuelson, “good questions outrank easy answers.”

In chapter two, Bain expresses that often the problem in colleges today is that students’ interests do not always align with the required coursework. As a result, he surmises, there are three types of learners: surface learners, strategic learners, and deep learners. Surface learners focus on memorization for tests. Strategic learners focus on getting good grades so that it might help them later in life. Strategic learners will not take risks because they do not want to mess up their GPA. Both surface and strategic learners get bored, can be anxious, or become depressed. They do not retain the material. However, deep learners analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and theorize. Deep learners take control of their education and decide what they want to learn. Deep learners create something new, look for meanings and symbols, and create connections. They are curious and pursue their own personal growth. They have a passion, internal motivation, and a crystalized vision of what they want to accomplish and what that accomplishment means. They will utilize their resources to achieve it.

In chapter three, Bain discusses mindset, attitude, and how creative people are often able to improve their ways of thinking. He found that the best college students can navigate through uncomfortable situations, recognize patterns, and are able to solve problems more quickly because of these abilities. He expresses the importance of experiencing a failure of expectations where the outcome does not match our expectations and individuals must learn to adjust. It is crucial to experience bold and shocking expectation failures that require us to stop, look at our

expectations, the outcomes, and then rebuild our understanding. Living abroad in foreign countries or even collaborating with people in different social groups, can help us to become better analytical people because it prompts us to be creative and to work through uncomfortable situations. Bain expands on the three distinct types of brains that we have and how we can use or control them. Our “Spock brain” allows us to store and remember things, reason, and make decisions. It can be mindless or mindful. Our “alligator brain” triggers flight or flee response. The alligator brain creates test anxiety and other emotional responses we might experience. It is important to learn to regroup to reduce panic and control these emotions. Changing our words can increase our mindfulness and even changing the words in a textbook can be effective. Words such as “which could be” or “may be” help students imagine more solutions to problems than without those words. Our “pleasure brain” allows us to find a connection between having fun and learning. The enjoyment that comes with it prepares the brain for complex problem solving. Bain explores other frameworks from psychology that influence our thought processes such as confirmation bias, vividness bias, and framing which can influence how we think. The best college students understand how they think and what can influence those thoughts.

In chapter four, Bain reviews Carol Dweck’s “growth mindset” model. He discusses how students who believe they can grow will put forth more effort to understand the materials. Creative and productive individuals acknowledge their failures, embrace, explore, and learn from them. Students that receive praise for how smart they are (person-praise) have a fixed mindset whereas those that get praise for their efforts have a growth mindset. The way people attribute their success and failure influences their achievements and shortfalls, whether they place blame on things they cannot control or take credit for what they can. People who are extraordinarily

successful in handling failures take responsibility for both. They have self-efficacy, the belief that they can do something. The best college students have both a growth mindset and self-efficacy.

In chapter five, Bain suggests various generalizations about the best college students in relation to life's messy problems. He recommends that students surround themselves with interesting and diverse sets of people that have different perspectives so that they can engage in discussions about messy, ill-structured problems. He conveys that it is important to develop and maintain a fascination for the world, to understand it by drawing on individual experiences, and interests. Engaging in original research on messy problems and seeking support from mentors who believe they can find solutions are critical. He clarifies that in using our experiences we need to utilize reflective judgements. Bain expounds on King and Kitchener's ladder of development when it comes to reflective thinking. He argues that the best students see how things fit into a bigger picture, can take a problem and an argument apart as well as apply general principles to a solution. The best college students compare/contrast ideas and explain causes. They integrate ideas together from one subject and apply them to another. They generate new theories and imagine ways to evaluate hypotheses. Deep learners make wise judgements by making decisions and getting feedback on their thinking. People do not necessarily learn from their experiences but from reflecting on them.

In chapter six, Bain rationalizes that self-esteem alone can be detrimental to mindset if self-esteem is based on getting good grades when a good grade is not received. He conveys how curiosity, self-kindness, self-compassion, purpose, resilience, self-examination, and self-comfort

can be beneficial in exploring the power of the mind and to have a creative life. He reviews Kristin Neff's three major approaches: self-kindness, common humanity, and practicing mindfulness. Self-kindness refers to how we treat ourselves, having compassion, and realizing we can all make mistakes. Common humanity is the recognition that others have gone through the pain or failure you face and it is all part of the human experience. Practicing mindfulness is acknowledging painful thoughts and feelings but not over-identifying with them known as having self-compassion. When commiserating with another person, creative people seek to understand, accept, and even feel the other's pain without judging him or her. It is imperative to take responsibility for action and confront the consequences mindfully. The best college students set ambitious standards for personal knowledge. Having self-knowledge allows them to accept criticism easily and use it for personal growth.

In chapter seven, Bain communicates that those individuals who are highly creative and productive learn to make tough choices. Their broad education helps them make choices as they learn to see connections between liberal education and the specialty they choose to pursue. They recognize innovative ideas as they encounter them. The best college students learn to question everything. They look for assumptions behind arguments and the concepts employed. They think about their implications and applications. They ask for evidence, question sources, and examine the nature of supporting information. He states that the best college students understand their learning styles and what works best for them, which helps them design their own education. Curiosity, purpose, devotion to a greater cause, and concern for society drive highly creative people to solve problems.

In chapter eight, Bain discusses that picking a major is just one decision that students make but they also must determine what instructors and courses to take. The best college students choose instructors that will challenge them. They try to find something interesting when they are bored and take control of what they learn. He further discusses different approaches the best college students use in reading and in making connections between what they read. Bain ends the book with final tips about reviewing materials, writing, and becoming a great college student. He also gives a quick overview of the findings in his book, *What the Best Teachers Do*, which could be a worthwhile read for all college instructors and administrators as well.