

**FORMAL POLICY AND ENACTED PRACTICES AT REGIONAL PUBLIC  
UNIVERSITIES: THE ORIENTATION AND PRACTICES OF RECRUITMENT  
PROFESSIONALS AT THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY**

By:

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the  
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2010

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
GRADUATE COLLEGE

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examined the work experiences of individuals who perform recruitment activities for the California State University. Based at four campus settings, the objectives were to: 1) analyze the ways in which professionals regard and enact system-wide and institutional enrollment management policies; 2) explore their professional orientations in regards to college access; and 3) examine the congruence of system-wide and institutional formal policy and the perspectives of different groups of professionals.

The analysis centered on two levels, the institutional and the ground level perspective. The principal data sources that informed the study were interviews and campus level and system-wide documents. To frame the data gathering and analysis, two theories were used to understand the perspectives of the set of professionals; the study modified the classic conceptualization of ‘street-level bureaucrats’ (Lipsky, 1969) and latent social roles of professionals (Gouldner, 1954). For the broader organizational perspective, the study relied on institutional theory and academic capitalism in the new economy to offer context to the university’s move to enrollment management. Findings indicate that professionals varied in how they enacted recruitment practices depending on the institutional context. So, while enrollment management practices are being implemented at the Cal State system, the extent to which the actions were strategic was dependent on the campus environment and the priorities of that university.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Turning students away from the opportunity to enroll in college is not typical for the California State University (CSU) system; college access is simply the objective that the CSU<sup>1</sup> was built on. In fact, one goal of the multifaceted CSU mission is to “encourage and provide access to an excellent education to all who are prepared for and wish to participate in collegiate study.” As part of the California Master Plan for Higher Education, the CSU is charged with maintaining a relatively open-access admissions policy, admitting the top third of eligible high school student graduates from California. Following this approach, the twenty-three campuses that make up the system have become the largest and most diverse public higher education system in the United States. In recent years, however, the California State University system is striving to uphold its institutional mission of college access as it experiences tremendous demand for enrollment in a time of budgetary uncertainty and constraint. The emergent developments in the past decade related to student demand and the tension over access or quality did not happen overnight. Basically, while the general interest in the CSU grew, the capacity of the universities did not. The larger context of higher education and undergraduate admissions, one characterized by limited resources and escalating fee increases, encourages universities and its personnel to make important decisions about the annual enrollment objectives and priorities that they pursue.

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<sup>1</sup> Within California, the CSU campuses are often referred to collectively as the “Cal States”. Some of the universities use “Cal State” in their name (i.e. Cal State-Fullerton or Cal State-LA), whereas others simply use “State” at the end of the name (i.e. San Diego State or Sacramento State). The terms are used interchangeably throughout this study. It is important to note that all of the institutions are part of the CSU system, including the two Polytechnic campuses (i.e. Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo and Cal-Poly Pomona).

### Role of the CSU in California

The significance of the altering enrollment trends within public higher education is vast given that regional public universities, such as the Cal States, are the primary access point for postsecondary education for state residents. In fact, Inside Higher Education, the respected on-line news source for higher education, featured the changing enrollment situation at the CSU as “The big admissions shift” since the campuses are becoming more competitive by virtue of budget cuts and limited capacity (Jaschik, 2009). In the state of California, the role of the CSU is delineated in the California Master Plan for Higher Education, which continues to be the centralized model for differentiated college access and the driving philosophy of public higher education. The purpose of the plan, officially called the Donahue Act, was a mandate from the State Legislature to ensure universal access to college for state residents by offering opportunities for all eligible students to enroll in the tiered public higher education system; this was comprised of the ten selective University of California, the twenty three moderately selective Cal States and the one hundred and eight open access community colleges (Legislative Analyst’s Office, 2004). The intent of the original Master Plan was to differentiate institutional missions and establish admission principles (such as giving transfer students top priority) to meet the educational needs of the state. Often viewed as a national model for providing access, in theory the Master Plan provides the opportunity for eligible students to enroll in the tri-level system of public higher education. Over the years, the legislature continued to reaffirm the principles and rhetoric of the Master Plan, while others have called into question the ability to sustain the commitment of universal

access in its current form (Callen, 2009; Hamlett, 2007; Gandara & Orfield, 2007). As Hamlett (2007) explains, the Master Plan may have worked in the past, but it is in need of revisiting since “the policies continue to remain in place, [but] several factors have caused the state to move away from the full implementation of these polices” (p. 265). Under shifting conditions, external and internal to the university, the commitments for providing college access for California residents are challenged.

### EM arrives at CSU

In the past few decades, colleges and universities have increasingly turned to the principles and methods of strategic enrollment management (SEM) as a way to frame problems and conceptualize solutions. In general, SEM is a focused holistic approach to attract and retain a desired student profile in light of the school’s mission and priorities (Kalsbeek & Hossler, 2009). The use of enrollment management procedures, and the implications it could have on the university’s ability to fulfill an access-oriented mission, is an emerging reality that many public universities face. Only recently has CSU needed to respond with a series of strategic decisions on who to attract and enroll, and how to cope with turning students away. In 2008, the Cal State system temporarily declared system wide impaction, with the intent to limit enrollment by providing “the CSU with additional tools for managing enrollment to levels consistent with that for which it is funded.” (CSU Academic Senate, 2008). In July of the following year, in an unprecedented move, the CSU Chancellor’s Office announced that all campuses were no longer accepting applications for the winter and spring terms<sup>2</sup>. For the first time in its

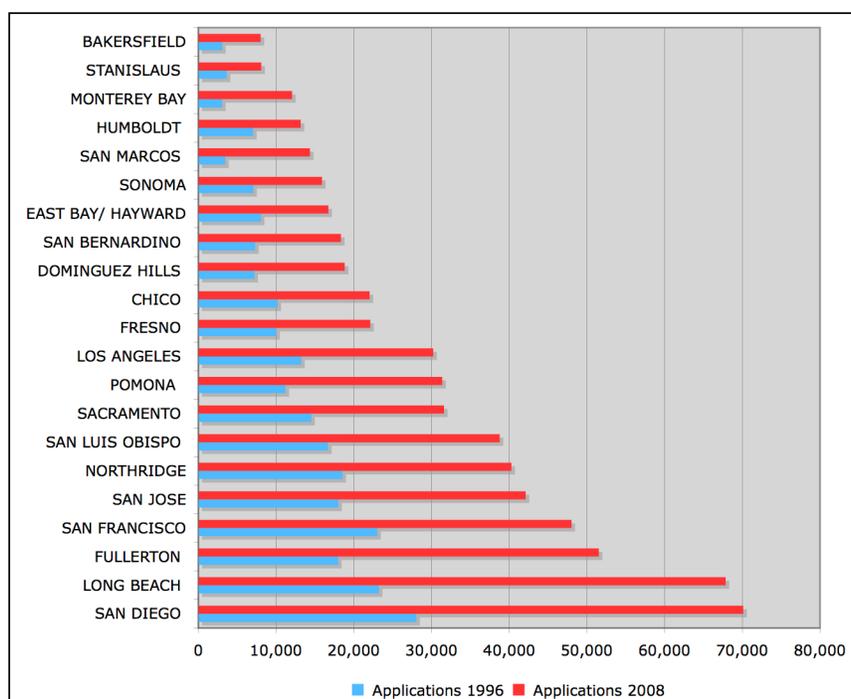
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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.calstate.edu/PA/News/2009/budget-plan-factsheet.shtml>

history, no new students were admitted to the CSU. Furthermore, the system administration set out a plan to reduce future enrollment to the system by forty thousand students over the next two years; that is, turn away qualified applicants. To say that 2009 was a pivotal year for admissions at the CSU would be an under-statement.

Documenting the number of applications submitted to a given campus can be a good indicator of the interest and demand for admission. Table one below shows the growth in applications in a twelve-year span, from 1996 to 2008, across the system.

**Table 1. Number of applications submitted to CSU campuses<sup>3</sup>, 1996-2008**



All of the CSU campuses experienced growth; many doubled in the amount of applications it received. As one result, the admissions offices need to process more applications than ever before and the university is faced with denying students the

<sup>3</sup> Two CSU campuses, Channel Islands and the Maritime Academy, were omitted from the table since they did not have 1996 figures.

opportunity to enroll in the CSU of their choice. Many of the CSU campuses received thousands more applications than the availability of admission spots. When the CSU reopened for the next application cycle to be considered for admission in Fall 2010, the CSU received a record number of applications—609, 000 in total, during its priority period (California State University, 2009). In short, enrollment demand at the CSU is escalating, and the system may be in jeopardy of not being able to fulfill the promise of providing college access to a high quality education for students in California. The ability to accommodate more students, and still provide a quality education is put in question by the competing challenges faced by the CSU.

In the last decade, conversations about institutional capacity, including the number and type of students that an institution can educate at a given time, are at the forefront of any system-level enrollment decision. In 2002, the CSU Chancellor's Office established "impaction," when campuses that were overwhelmed with applications that far exceed the amount of eligible spots, become "impacted." Impaction entitled those universities to increase the basic admission requirements for admission, thereby making admissions more competitive at those campuses. The shifts in admission policy began with the more popular CSU campuses, such as Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo and San Diego State, who dealt with large numbers of applications and other factors related to shaping an incoming class of students. In describing the challenges faced by Cal State, Long Beach, another of the impacted campuses, Rendon, Novack & Dowell (2005) explained how campus managers and professors attempted to "curtail freshman and transfer enrollment while preserving a diverse student body in a state where affirmative action

policies are disallowed and in a complex context where escalating demand for access comes at a time of state budget reductions and enrollment downsizing” (p. 223). While each university is different, this balance of objectives is at the heart of enrollment management.

Considering the introduction of practices to deal with enrollment management, I started this research project in 2007 wondering if these shifts had any ramifications for the ways public universities attract and enroll students. At a system like the CSU, which seeks to work on improving college access among the local communities of California, there are implications for the ways in which each university designs its organizational structures related to new student enrollment, and the messages that the recruiters give to students about preparing for college. I sought to understand what the current trends meant for providing college access, especially for the student population (that is, those that are in the top third of California’s high school graduates and the eligible transfer students from California’s community colleges) that the CSU intends to serve. Particularly important to the study, I was interested in understanding how the people working in the university recruitment offices deal with all of the recent shifts in applications and student enrollment patterns as well as the introduction of enrollment management. On one level, this study demonstrates the ways that the CSU system and selected campuses dealt with the increase in applications and the subsequent policies that were implemented to address institutional capacity. Yet, even though the campuses were part of a system, each university and professional faced their own challenges and enacted practices focused on serving students, while simultaneously meeting the goals of the CSU leadership.

### Recruitment and enrollment of students

The recruitment of students and their eventual enrollment as a new class are inevitable tasks that each college or university needs to tackle each year. Manifestations of enrollment management can be found in almost any institutional setting in American higher education today (Coomes, 2000; Kalsbeek & Hossler, 2008a; Smith & Gottheil, 2008). The common understanding of enrollment management generally means the plan that universities develop to set up a coordinated effort to recruit and retain students.

Much of the current research shows that achieving student access, improving diversity, enhancing quality and maximizing new tuition revenue and prestige are common goals of most strategic enrollment management plans (DesJardins, 2002; Hossler & Bean, 1990; Humphrey, 2006). Referring back to the scenario from Rendon et.al. (2005), one can observe that similar objectives were being considered within a Cal State context. Thus, in making recruitment plans, universities often consider the social, economic and political factors that drive the goals and priorities of the institution. An important aspect is to consider to what extent universities use enrollment management as an active strategic approach or simply utilizing the tools that are associated with enrollment management.

In practice, and as a profession, enrollment management is relatively new to the less selective regional universities, such as the CSU. With the rise of enrollment management as an institutional priority, the profession is becoming more of a fixture in higher education, with professional associations and annual conferences geared toward campus practitioners. Enrollment professionals have established their own groups and

publications, for example, the membership-driven journals of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), *College and University*, has research topics geared toward higher-level enrollment managers. Most of the literature on enrollment management focuses primarily on doctoral-granting, selective universities as the standard. The void in the practitioner literature on enrollment management issues at public regional universities highlights the need to explore how other types of institutional settings, and within various levels of the organization, deal with enrollment issues.

In an investigation of the academic literature on enrollment management, there was a lack of research studies about the processes that occur within the actual work setting. There are few studies (reviewed in chapter two) that speak about the role of professionals in the workplace. In one important, albeit brief observation, Hossler, Kuh & Olsen (2001) explain the process that one university undertook to create a centralized enrollment management unit, and they noted the resistance experienced from the staff.

They reported how:

not all the initiatives were immediately welcome by professionals in the offices of admissions and financial aid. Change is never easy, and many of the practitioners in these offices were unfamiliar with the research in this area; not everyone was oriented toward using research to guide practice. A combination of ongoing professional development activities and the more traditional approach of using power of senior administrators to implement change were employed to bring about needed changes in the offices of admissions and financial aid (p. 216).

This was one observation within a larger study but the scenario calls attention to the workplace dynamics involved in instituting change and the assumption that the employees would simply embrace the goals of the central administration. Given the

complexity of organizations, studying a phenomenon from a different perspective (in this case, the recruitment staff) can offer new insight in organizational behavior and the interchange between structure and agency. Thus, another aim of this study was to fill in the gap in the literature, and explore the role of the on-the-ground staff who are implementing and enacting policy daily as part of their role as recruiters. Being located in the middle to lower levels of the enrollment management structure at a university was an intriguing place to narrow the analysis; there is much to learn from the perspective of the recruitment professionals. As Nonaka (1994) stated, individuals in middle management have a unique view since the position “combines strategic, macro, universal information and hands-on, micro, specific information. They work as a bridge between the visionary ideals of the top and the often chaotic reality of the front line” (p. 32). This is precisely the case with the recruitment staff in this study, and the reason why their work experiences at the CSU are so important.

#### Statement of purpose

The study concentrated on the California State University system and a set of campuses within it. In particular, the focus was placed on the work experiences and orientations of the professionals who performed recruitment activities at sampled California State campuses. In many ways, the professional orientations and work experiences are relevant in understanding how the abstract public policies get translated and implemented in everyday situations at the campus level. For example, the professionals who work in recruitment offices are the public face of the University and on-the-ground implementers of university policy since they are responsible for explaining

admission requirements, interpreting policy changes and assisting with the application process and other pre-admission advising. Recruitment professionals are active participants in enrollment management processes: they translate formal policies into actual practice by the tasks and roles they carry out while at work. The primary objectives of the research study were to:

- 1) Analyze the ways in which CSU recruitment professionals regard and enact system-wide and institutional enrollment management policies;
- 2) Explore their professional orientations in regards to college access; and
- 3) Examine the congruence of the system-wide and institutional enrollment management policies at the system and campus level and the perspectives of a group of professionals.

Based at four campus settings within the Cal State system, this multiple case study was designed to provide an in-depth account about the ways in which recruitment professionals understand and interpret the current issues affecting the admissions landscape, and how these issues play out in the workplace. Specifically, I examined the organizational structures, priorities and services offered by the recruitment offices.

Primary data sources were thirty-four face-to-face interviews with recruitment officers at sampled universities, system-wide and institutional archival documents, as well as CSU application and enrollment records from 1996-2008. Understanding the experiences of recruitment professionals can inform key aspects of policy-making, theory development and professional practice in new and innovative ways. Exploring the role that universities

and its staff have in providing college messages offers a ground level perspective about some of the challenges and opportunities inherent in working in college admissions.

### Frameworks

The study, which involves two levels of analyses, was grounded in a number of theoretical concepts. In examining the organizational structure and the introduction of enrollment management, the perspectives of institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Powell & Colyvas, 2008) and academic capitalism in the new economy (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) provide useful frameworks to examine the current environment facing undergraduate admissions at public universities. Both theories address aspects of institutional adaptation processes (Gumport & Sporn, 1999) that universities face in current times—how to adapt and cope to current conditions. As institutions try to stabilize and secure enrollments in an uncertain environment beyond their control, examining the macro, institutional view was in order.

On another level, the study concentrated on the role and work experiences of the professionals. As such, the attention turned to the ground level perspective, and the everyday situations within organizations (Powell & Colyvas, 2008). An interest in the micro-foundations of institutional thought and understanding how institutions “are sustained, altered, and extinguished as they are enacted by individuals in concrete social situations” is an emerging trend in research on organizations (Powell & Colyvas, p.2). The micro perspective was insightful for the current study since a central objective was to understand the ways that professionals (who work in large complex organizations) learn

about and implement policies and practices, and explored the meanings they attach to these workplace routines.

As an analytic tool, there were a number of concepts that I borrowed to make better sense of the role of the professionals. In a sense, the professionals interviewed for the study can be characterized as street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1969), which are the lower level workers of a formal organization. The classic work of Alvin Gouldner on the social latent roles (1957); as well as ideas regarding managerial professionals (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002); and ‘race-related service’ (Baez, 2000) provide additional lenses from which to analyze the work experiences of individuals that perform recruitment and enrollment tasks. Taken together, these ideas were used to contextualize some of the complexities associated with the college admissions landscape at public regional universities.

#### Significance of the study

The CSU was selected as a site for inquiry since enrollment management efforts are still relatively new to public regional universities. Focusing on the campus recruitment offices and a set of professionals who work there revealed that we could learn from other sectors of higher education and other sets of actors, who are typically absent from most research and policy discussions. By learning more from within the organization (vis a vis, the professionals who work in recruitment), one can get a better grasp of the ways that the professionals go about understanding the broader policy changes, and how they deliver the key messages and updates in such a way that people can understand.

Exploring the changing policies and practices of the CSU as it relates to enrollment management is important to track over time because of the fast pace cycle of the admissions world and the annual process of projections and budget allocations. Shifts occur often and frequently. For example, the writing of this dissertation shows the changes over time. As previously stated, I embarked on this project in 2007, and conducted my interviews and campus visits in 2008, thus collecting my data just prior to the major crisis of the state budget and the mandates of system-wide impactation. While there will be continuous changes to any policy environment, I tracked some important trends occurring with regard to the access based mission of the CSU and the prominence of enrollment management within the system. For the reasons outlined above, this study represents a distinctive, original piece of research that can make a substantial contribution to the higher education field.

Furthermore, the CSU was selected as a site for inquiry given the place they hold among public universities in California. The secondary position within the Master Plan and their regional orientation often means that the efforts of CSU are overlooked and in the shadows of the University of California (UC) system. This is important for two reasons. In the same timeframe as this study was conducted, the UC system experienced similar growth in applicant pools, increased admissions standards and budget cuts. As selectivity increases, more and more students turn to the middle-tiered CSU institutions, which ultimately, squeezes an increasing number of students out of enrollment spots. This in turn, can lead to more students at the community college level; this cascading effect at the state level has implications for the types of students who attend college. No

doubt, developments and trends that occur at the University of California are influential for the CSU campuses. The changes in UC admissions policy (Keller & Hoover, 2009) and the changing profile of admitted students (Contreras, 2005) are developments that need to be addressed since it redefines what constitutes merit and access to college.

### Overview

The premise of the study was that the role and contribution of the recruitment staff should be prominent for any enrollment management efforts to be effective. The intent was to develop a level of understanding that addressed the extent to which the CSU altered their work practices with the introduction of enrollment management. The study focused on the work orientation of the recruitment personnel, and the extent to which their orientations influenced how they enacted daily work practices.

This dissertation is organized as follows: the next chapter offers the relevant literature and frameworks that served as a guide. Then, chapter three gives a detailed account of the methodology and the data collection and analysis techniques used. The subsequent three chapters, and the bulk of the study's content, present the significant findings that emerged. Chapter four provides findings from the system level, while chapter five takes the perspective of the institution. In chapter six, the attention turns to the recruitment professionals, by examining how they regard and enact the enrollment-related policies and practices. Finally, the study concludes with a discussion about the implications for future policy and practice for the CSU and beyond.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The intent of the second chapter is to acquaint the reader to the context in which the research study was embedded. In general, the underlying event that connects all of the study components was the process of preparing for college. Whether the focus is on the enacted policies to encourage college enrollment or the role of the university recruitment offices in attracting students or looking at the perspective of the high school students who search for information from college representatives, there are many factors that play a role in one's structure of opportunity for going to college. It is this interplay of actors and actions that constitute the main elements of the college admissions landscape. In this chapter, I describe the emergence of enrollment management in higher education, and emphasize how national trends can impact a state like California. Then, I review the literature on college access as well as the theoretical frameworks that informed the study.

### Characteristics of enrollment management

From its inception, enrollment management comprised conceptual and procedural components. Hossler & Bean (1990) described the practice of managing enrollments as an “organizational concept and systematic set of activities designed to enable educational institutions to exert more influence over their student enrollments” (p.6). In other words, EM initiatives are designed with the intent to help achieve the goals of the university by implementing targeted recruitment messages and admission strategies to encourage students to enroll. In a series of essays, Kalsbeck & Hossler (2008a) clarify the enrollment management perspective by focusing on the underpinnings of the profession and advocating for the market-centered perspective since, as they claim, all other EM

plans should emanate from one's market position. Kalsbeck & Hossler (2008b) pay particular attention to the retention function and using financial aid as a "tool to enhance equity, increase prestige, as a revenue enhancement tool and as a means to shape institutional image..." (p.2). In general, EM structures integrate elements of admissions, financial aid, marketing, outreach, recruitment, registration and retention responsibilities into one centralized office and/or holistic strategic plan (Huddleston, 2000; Kroc & Hansen, 2003; Hossler & Anderson, 2004). From this view, the (re) organization of enrollment-related offices are active approaches taken by the institution to develop and clarify its priorities. In short, universities establish structures and processes to coordinate more efficiently and effectively. Achieving student access, improving diversity and prestige while maintaining financial stability are common goals of strategic enrollment management plans (Baldrige, Kemerer & Green, 1982; Hossler & Bean, 1990; DesJardins, 2002; Humphrey, 2006). Most strategic enrollment plans address these objectives, even if they seem contradictory.

Managing enrollments can mean many things, depending on the institutional context. Some common practices of strategic enrollment management to help recruit students include: using geodemography techniques (Hossler, Kuh & Olsen, 2001); financial aid strategies (Kalsbeck & Hossler, 2008b; Siefert & Galloway, 2005) logistical regression formulas (Miller & Herreid, 2009; Miller & Tyree, 2009); forecasting (Avery, Fairbanks & Zechhauser, 2003; Brinkman & McInteyre, 1997) and differentiating recruitment efforts by academic profiles or ability to pay (DesJardins, 2002; Venegas & Hallett, 2008; Sternberg, 2006). Other emerging trends include the use of pod-casts,

telemarketing, and student blogs to disseminate information about the University and its programs (McCafferty, 2006; Sedwick, Carpenter, Sherman & Tipton, 2001). Recent trends speak to the emergence of EM principles and the introduction of new tools and processes into the workplace for recruitment and admissions professionals.

### Origins of enrollment management

The role of state and federal policy, as well as and demographic trends can be instrumental in understanding the emergence of enrollment management structures and the rise of the competitive college admissions landscape in higher education. For example, population trends along with policy initiatives encouraged college enrollment growth since the beginning (Thelin, 2004). Following World War II, federal policy initiatives stimulated access and growth of postsecondary opportunities. Past public policies at the federal level, such as the G.I. Bill (in 1944) or the Higher Education Act (first in 1965), encouraged college enrollment growth and universal access (Callan, 2001). At the same time, at the state level, subsidies and resource allocation investments to public institutions promoted even greater enrollment demand (Heller, 2002). The changes in population, demonstrates that the pool of eligible college students can influence the supply and demand of higher education.

### 1970 shifts to privatization

With a stagnated population and the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in 1972, key policy shifts changed the college landscape to be more market oriented. For example, as part of the reauthorization, the federal financial aid policies were one of the first legislation to use market discourse and neo-liberal ideas (Slaughter & Rhoades,

2005). In essence, financial aid was awarded to students thereby creating markets; forging the new mentality of the student as consumer. This meant that obtaining an education was viewed as a 'private benefit', so students (and their families) were expected to cover the costs of education, which resulted in a shift from grants to loans (Griswold & Marine, 1996). The policy decisions at the federal level reached the states and had ramifications for how universities interacted with students.

In comparison to the rest of the country, California experienced even greater shifts in population that had impact on student enrollment. Clark Kerr, a key figure in public higher education as President of UC system and early developer of the Master Plan, described the demographic shifts of California as tidal waves, first the baby boomers then their grandchildren heading off to college (Hechinger, 2002; Kerr, 1997). Meeting the demand for education was often a challenge for the state. Overall, the latest tidal wave to hit California represents more students of color than ever before seeking a higher education in the public institutions.

### Contemporary issues

According to Hovey (1999), state revenues continue to shrink, and public monies are diverted to other priorities, and students are expected to pay for the cost of education. With ongoing budgetary struggles at the state level, many public universities are faced with diminished resources and increased pressure to bring in undergraduate students so the money received from tuition and fees can maintain (or improve) the fiscal condition and ensure stability and survival of the university (Griswold & Marine, 1996; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). During times of recession and financial instability, public universities

tend to raise tuition and fees and rarely divert these increases back into need-based financial aid (Griswold & Marine, 1996; McPherson & Schapiro, 1998). Plus, for many public state institutions, enrollment targets and budget projections change several times a year making it a challenge to accurately predict and plan (Rendon, et.al, 2005) and universities are directing more resources to merit aid instead of need-based aid (Heller, 2001; McPherson & Schapiro; 1998). Given the climate of budget cuts and a decrease in state appropriations, it is not surprising that universities struggle to provide services in a segmented marketplace, which often translates into a general move toward privatization. With the decline of state support, and increases in student demand, universities find strategies and practices to react and cope with changing budget scenarios.

#### *The need to focus on enrollment*

Increasingly, the need for enrollment management has become a priority at the institutional level because of the growing reliance on net tuition revenue, coupled with pressure to enroll high-ability students and the desire to have a diverse student body. Tuition-dependent private institutions were the first to craft and utilize enrollment management structures (Hossler & Anderson, 2004). Now, it is common for universities to become more strategic and competitive as they aim to attract more 'high-quality' students or capture more institutional revenues by recruiting full-paying students (McPherson & Schapiro, 1998; Geiger, 2004). As public schools started to feel similar pressures for prestige and revenue maximization, they turn to ways to strategically manage student enrollments. Some argue that enrollment management is further evidence of the commercialization of higher education (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Quirk, 2005)

and highlights how enrollment-related policies and strategies can have adverse effects for certain student groups, mainly low-income and ethnic minorities students (McPherson & Shapiro, 1998; Rendon, et.al, 2005). In other words, by being able to limit enrollment and recruit higher achieving students, to what extent are public universities moving away from the student populations that they have historically served. Given the widespread adoption of enrollment management, Hossler (2004) wonders if it has fundamentally shifted the way recruitment and admissions work gets enacted in higher education. From the research outlined here, findings suggest that the answer to Hossler's question is yes.

#### Literature review on college access

This section documents the prominent research in the areas of college access. As a way to synthesize prior research on college access and choice, Perna (2006) proposed a conceptual model where individual's college choice decisions are shaped by four contextual layers: 1) the individual's habitus; 2) school and community context; 3) the higher education context and 4) the broader social, economic and social policy context. The emphasis of the current study falls in the two latter stages. The higher education context involves the availability of enrollment spots and marketing and recruitment efforts of the institution to convey information to prospective students. The last layer in the model deals with the direct and indirect effects of state and federal policies, demographic changes and how the economic conditions effect students' college choice decisions. The model builds off the work of Perna & Titus (2004) and Perna, Steele, Woda & Hibbert (2005) that document how state policies can increase stratification across racial/ethnic groups. To recognize and acknowledge that universities are

embedded in larger social, political and economic contexts is consistent with the theoretical frameworks used in this study.

#### Access to higher education

There is an enduring problem with achieving equitable patterns of college enrollment across ethnic and socio-economic groups. Research studies continue to document patterns of social stratification in college access and opportunity to higher education in the United States (Hamrick & Stage, 2003; McDonough, 1994; Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002). College participation rates, particularly across dimensions of ethnicity and socio-economic status are not equitable (Astin & Oseguera, 2004; Perna, 2006). In particular, enrollment rates for low-income and underrepresented ethnic minorities in higher education continue to lag behind all other groups (Gandara & Orfield, 2006; Hamrick & Stage, 2003). The national pattern of college enrollment includes entering classes coming from increasingly higher income and educational level backgrounds (Hurtado, Pryor, Saenz, Santos, & Korn, 2007). Recent studies indicate that equity and access for low-income students at state flagship universities and selective colleges is diminishing (Astin & Oseguera, 2004; Carnevale & Rose, 2003; Gerald & Haycock, 2006). In a follow-up to the *Engines on Inequality* report, the researchers from The Education Trust released another report entitled, *Opportunity Adrift* (Haycock, Lynch & Engle, 2010), which presents data about public flagship universities continuing to stray from the public mission. The persistent problem of modest access and attainment for ethnic minority, low-income and students is a national issue that needs to be addressed, particularly given the national push for college completion rates to substantially increase.

### Studying college choice

The college choice process in higher education research primarily focuses on the students, and less on the actions of the universities to attract any prospective students. The college choice model developed by Hossler & Gallagher (1987), consisting of the stages of predisposition, search and choice, is the common framework used to conceptualize the rite of passage that most high school students go through as they decide to pursue postsecondary education. Hossler, Schmit & Vesper (1999) expand on this model to ascertain the key factors that influence the various dimensions of the college choice decision. Over the years, scholars examined college access and the college choice process by using various theoretical and methodological techniques. For example, economic (Becker, 1993; Manski & Wise, 1983; Paulsen, 2001) and sociological (Hearn, 1984; McDonough, 1997) perspectives are used to understand the college choice process.

In the sociological realm, research examined the extent to which student characteristics, such as SES or ethnicity, have an impact on college access and preparation for higher education (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Gonzalez, Stone & Jovel, 2003; McDonough, 1997; Perna, 2000; Perna & Titus, 2005). Studies that utilize concepts of social and cultural capital often find differences in the way students from diverse ethnic and socio-economic groups experienced the college choice process and prepare for higher education. In addition, research shows that African American and Latino students tend to apply to fewer schools than other ethnic groups (Hurtado, et.al, 1997), which can limit their educational possibilities. Other studies (Hearn, 1991; Karen, 2002) demonstrate how socio-economic status affects whether one goes to a selective

versus a non-selective four year institution. Another area for scholars who are concerned with access and affordability is the way certain student groups respond to tuition increases. Research (Heller, 2001; Hearn & Longnecker, 1985; Leslie & Brinkman, 1988) shows that low SES groups are more price-sensitive than students with greater means, which results in getting priced out or seeking cheaper alternatives like community colleges. These types of policy directions effect enrollment patterns in direct and indirect ways by either encouraging or limiting college opportunity. For example, if college is too expensive, then some students may opt out of enrolling in college. Taken as a whole, the research findings suggest that there is not a linear or rational path to college enrollment and other factors and individuals may influence a student's structure of opportunity for college enrollment. This distinction is important to my study since people have different chances to "go to college". Plus, it leaves room for other individuals, like the CSU recruitment professionals, to intervene and help more students attend college.

#### Attention to practitioners

None of the studies above mention the role of the recruitment officers in facilitating college access or influencing the choice process in any way. Overall, the various models of college choice underemphasize the role that the university and its staff play in the college choice process. In a presidential address to the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), Bensimon (2007) criticized the void of practitioner knowledge in student success theories and models.

There are a few studies that speak directly about my topic: policy changes in the admissions workplace and the role of professionals in that setting. Lipton (2007)

investigates the role of university officials in developing a “diversity consensus” when it comes to supporting race-based affirmative action arguing that these actions are transforming college admissions. This research found that embracing racial diversity in admissions was part of the organizational culture of administrators, professional networks was an important avenue to share commitment to diversity and that external legitimacy pressures helped sustain practices of affirmative action. Two other studies were similar in that they focused on the individuals working directly in enrollment management. Focusing on the chief enrollment officers, Humphrey (2006) showed the ‘push and pull’ of priorities they face as part of their job to meet institutional objectives. Shultz (2008) focused on master granting institutions in his study about enrollment management practices. The central findings include that private and public institutions are embracing market-oriented approaches to manage enrollment. The current study sought to contribute to filling the chasm in the literature base by studying the organizational and practitioner perspective, in detailing how the universities and professionals interpret policies and then implement them. Now more than ever, the role of professionals deserves more attention as universities move closer toward the marketization of college admissions.

#### Theoretical considerations

The frameworks that guided the inquiry are explained in this section. The study was influenced, in part, by the sociology of higher education (Clark, 2007; Gumport, 2007), a growing sub-field that is “located at a scholarly nexus that reflects a convergence of a sociological concern and a practical problem” (Gumport, p.19). As previously stated, the focus here was to explore patterns of organizational structures and

enacted practices of recruitment offices in the Cal State system. In addressing “things that work” and future directions for the study of sociology of higher education, Clark (2007) emphasized the need to reduce the disconnect between research and practice, and to view practitioners as the primary teachers of organizational behavior since they are situated at the crossroads, where “they have to make things work, to experiment and learn in compartmentalized universities, each operating in a particular societal context” (Clark, p. 322). Thus, it was the intent of the research project to elicit the insight and perspectives of the front-line practitioners doing recruitment work at various campus settings.

The behaviors and processes found in universities and enrollment-related offices are taking place in the broader context of institutional adaptation (Gumport & Sporn, 1999). The concept of adaptation is based on an open-systems perspective, which emphasizes how changes in one's institutional environment and the subsequent management challenges play an important role in the structure and activities of institutions. An open-systems perspective of the study of organizations highlights the ways in which the institutional environment is important in the structure and activities of institutions (Scott, 2003). In other words, universities (and the employees of the recruitment offices that work on their behalf) are not operating in a vacuum; their actions are directly and indirectly impacted by societal trends. In this context, institutions of higher education are pressured to respond and adapt to the changing environment, oftentimes this translates into the restructuring of institutional priorities, practices and systems. Yet, at the same time, restructuring may not be viewed as being rational. In fact, several past studies point to the irrationality of organizations (Cohen, March &

Olsen, 1972; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Weick, 1969). The complexity and uncertainty within university settings, along with the ambiguous connection between formal structure, technologies and outcomes are signs of the irrationality and loose coupling embedded in organizations. To further explore these ideas, the perspectives of institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Powell & Colyvas, 2008) and academic capitalism in the new economy (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) provide useful frameworks to examine the environment facing public universities, and aspects of the use of student recruitment and enrollment practices. One component of the study was to examine the role of the professionals, and their day-to-day work practices. As such, I emphasize the professional orientations and the social latent roles of the recruitment staff (Gouldner, 1957; Rhoades & Sporn, 2002). Much of the theoretical ideas used to ground this discussion are older, nevertheless, the constructs can help explain contemporary issues. Taken together, these concepts were utilized to better understand some of the complexities associated with the college admissions landscape at public universities.

*Academic capitalism in the new economy*

The theory of academic capitalism in the new economy (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) provides utility for the analysis since it speaks to the changing policy environment and the increasing importance of student markets. Academic capitalism is characterized as behaviors and practices of the university to ‘move closer to the market’ with the intention of strategically positioning themselves to become fiscally more self-sufficient. These methods include interstitial structures, intermediating organizations, new circuits of knowledge and the enhancement of managerial capacity (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

This behavior could be associated with diminished state support but it could also be the desire from within the institution to be more entrepreneurial and self-reliant by attempting to maximize revenues and the prestige that come along with it. In general, universities' invest in interstitial units (such as recruitment offices) and rely on internal managerial capacity to generate revenue from student markets, while also maximizing prestige considerations. These trends point to an emphasis on revenue and prestige maximization when dealing with new student markets (McPherson & Schapiro, 1998; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Geiger, 2004). With regard to undergraduate admissions, this is evident in competition for enrollment spots, the use of marketing strategies for recruitment and the rise of merit-based financial aid.

Over the last twenty years, changes in social, political, economic structures of America has led to the proliferation of academic capitalism in higher education, and the emphasis of market-driven activities and student markets. Higher education researchers have documented the dramatic move to the marketplace by entrepreneurial and market-driven universities (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Clark, 1998; Francis & Hampton, 1999; Geiger, 2004). The main ideas of academic capitalism sprang up from resource dependency theory, which demonstrates how external actors who provide resources to an organization have influence over organizational behavior (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Tolbert, 1985; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). In other words, universities are dependent on the state, so they act in ways to ensure continued financial support. As an extension of academic capitalism, Slaughter & Rhoades (2004) addressed the ways in which universities integrate into the new economy and focus attention on the role that the

individuals inside the university play in aggressively pursuing revenue streams. This line of research points out that it is not only external pressures that contribute to entrepreneurialism, including the recent marketing trends in undergraduate admissions.

In terms of undergraduate admissions, academic capitalism in the new economy turns our attention to the multiple student markets and the consumption dimensions being marketed as part of college life. Slaughter & Rhoades (2004) identified several themes utilized by institutions, such as marketing to students in order to accommodate the economic needs of the institution; targeting more privileged student markets by using merit aid as a recruitment tool; and utilizing advanced marketing tactics to reach students. This translates into treating students as consumers and increased competition of student markets. For thus reason, this theoretical perspective speaks to the recent trends in strategic enrollment management.

Another area where the academic capitalist framework was helpful was in tracing the emergence of interstitial units and expanded areas of managerial capacity. These newer trends within the organization, such as enrollment management related positions, can handle various functions and can “join together to express new goals and purposes for the institution” (Slaughter & Rhoades, p. 307). Then, the support personnel, or managerial professionals (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002) are hired to carry out the goals of the university. The presence of new professionals, and the direct and indirect effects of their job performance has the potential to alter the nature of the workplace since these workers bring their own values and ethics to the job. In addition, these middle-level positions are associated with rising administrative costs (Leslie & Rhoades, 1995). In sum, the theory

of academic capitalism speaks to the changing policy environment and conditions that institutions are faced with. The theory points us to the significance of universities' investment in non-traditional campus units and internal managerial capacity to recruit new student markets. However, this perspective does not address whether and to what extent there is a disjuncture between the mid-level professionals in the recruitment offices and the formal goals of the organization. For this reason, other frameworks are used to examine the enacted workplace practices of the Cal States.

### *Institutional theory*

I worked from the tenets of institutional theory to examine how and why some universities developed recruitment strategies to meet their enrollment goals and how these ideas get circulated between and among those involved in carrying out the task. This perspective brought attention to the ways in which the institutional environment affects the structure and activities of institutions (Scott, 2003). From this view, organizations try to align themselves with its environment by conforming to rules and requirements (or make changes) not necessarily for reasons of efficiency, but rather for increasing their legitimacy, resources, and survival capabilities (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1991). This suggests that institutional actions are reflections of, or responses to, the rules and beliefs embedded in the broader social and political environment. In higher education, the structure, image and activities of a university are shaped by common rationalized myths of what this distinct type of organization should look like and how they should behave.

Utilizing institutional isomorphism was a way to understand the rise of norms and structures in organizations in the context of uncertainty and competition for legitimacy and resources. DiMaggio & Powell (1983) focused on the establishment and spread of institutionalized rules and how, over time, organizations become more similar in structure. Early ideas of institutional thought were based on the assumption that organizations become increasingly similar through coercive, mimetic and normative forces (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The isomorphic processes facilitate the spread of a particular logic or structure by providing a template of what an organization should look like. Seeking legitimacy or facing uncertainty creates pressures to emulate ‘successful’ organizations, resulting in isomorphism. Thus, changes to the formal structure of a university can be explained as responses to the institutional environment and organizational field of higher education. The mechanisms of isomorphism are interconnected but are conceptualized as separate for analytical purposes. Coercive mechanisms can come in the form of government regulations or political influences that force organizations to behave in similar and consistent ways. Mimetic isomorphism provides a way to understand the tendency to adopt similar structures consistent with their aspired peers (within the normative environment) as an effort to be like the leading institutions. Copying other organization’s structure or practices, is a common task during times of uncertainty. In higher education, Reisman (1969) labeled the behavior as a ‘snake-like procession’—whatever direction the head goes, the rest of the body follows—explaining how universities tend to adopt similar practices. Normative isomorphism can provide insight into the ways in which professionals adopt common or ‘best’ practices

and the process of having careers become legitimate and institutionalized. This behavior can be associated with management fads, and taking on certain structures or adopt practices (Birnbaum, 2000). Furthermore, belonging to professional networks and sharing ideas can facilitate this type of isomorphism.

The establishment of enrollment management initiatives continues to be a growing trend among non-selective public universities. Institutional theory points to the possibility that these campuses are doing so to ensure external legitimacy since other universities have similar offices or processes in place. This is an important point to consider with regard to institutional theory; that one needs to go beyond the organization in order to understand it. The legitimacy that universities get from complying with trends can be enough to drive key policy decisions and actions that influence work practices. So, in another way, the emergence of formal organizational structures can simply be an exercise in demonstrating external legitimacy to a general public. For example, recruitment and admissions offices need to comply with various federal and state laws as well as other regulations emanating from the Trustees or the Chancellors office, like setting enrollment priorities for the type of student to admit. These types of examples would be coercive in nature since universities are monitored to comply with the orders. Institutional theory directs our attention to the tendency of organizations adopting similar structures especially in times of uncertainty. In other words, institutions copy or mimic others by acting in similar ways. The normative environment contributes to isomorphism since it speaks to the circulation of professionals and ideas, particularly those deemed state-of-the-art or 'best practices.' Staff of recruitment offices may belong to professional

networks and associations that impact the workplace. These associations can potentially shape the professional orientations of staff, and not be attached to the formal structure. The need for best practices (and perhaps, the spread of enrollment management) speaks to the national environment in which universities are embedded, and the external factors that can impact the direction universities choose to take in recruiting students. Overall, in exploring trends, it is important to consider the broader national context of undergraduate admissions that could influence the ways that universities behave. For example, some CSU may look toward other universities outside of the CSU system as aspirational peers or as competitors. In understanding the national context, one needs to also pay attention to the professional networks and associations (that are also national in scope) when considering the influence of other elements of institutional theory.

Institutional theory provided a framework to view the actions of the professionals who implement recruitment strategies—i.e. do the enacted practices align with, or differentiate from, the normative environment. The focus on the regulatory mechanisms that the universities need to comply with, as well as the adoption of strategies and practices based on mimetic and normative processes are central. Using an institutional perspective suggests that there can be some disjuncture between the various levels that make up the enrollment structure and the objectives of the central administration. In other words, individuals can have other professional commitments that run counter to the goals of the administration. As we will see from the work of Gouldner (1957), there may be some professionals who are committed as much (or even more) to their profession or community, then to the goals of the employing organization.

Within higher education research, many studies have utilized institutional theory (See Dey, Milem & Berger, 1997; Morphey & Huisman, 2002; Tolbert, 1985) but none of these were specifically on undergraduate recruitment offices. However, the studies do illustrate the merits and usefulness of institutional theory, especially when supplemented with other frameworks. For this reason, other theories were integrated into the study as a way to provide multiple lenses to interpret the study's findings. Yet, like any other theory, there are critiques and limitations to the utility of institutional theory. One critique is that it does not account for political influences, competition or power structures at the micro level. Kraatz & Zajac (1996) report on the limitations of the framework, documenting how organizational change at liberal arts institutions were not explained by isomorphic or legitimacy considerations. Rather, the local technical environment predicted the major changes happening at the campus level.

On a similar note, the theory does not account for individual agency within the organization. Thus, as an extension of institutional theory, Powell & Colyvas (2008) stress the micro-foundations of institutionalization and recognize that "institutions are sustained, altered and extinguished as they are enacted by individuals in concrete social situations" (p. 2) and that "attention to what individuals or organizations do, separately from what they mean by doing it, should be central to the study of micro-processes" (p. 25). Focusing on the ground level provides different insights into the organization than previously thought. Institutional theory posits that organizations are embedded in larger social and political environments and focuses on the ways that this is reflected in organizational structures and isomorphic tendencies. Institutional theory typically holds a

macro-level view and uses the organizational field as the unit of analysis, but there is growing interest in the micro-foundations of institutional thought. Focusing on the micro level and the daily processes is insightful for the current study since a central objective was to understand the ways that professionals (who work in large complex organizations) learn about and implement policies and practices, and begin to explore the meanings they attach to their workplace routines.

#### *Middle management perspective*

The theories described above concentrate on the macro level, offering more contextual information about the ‘bigger picture,’ which is consistent with other organizational and systems perspectives. Yet, the insights we can gain from exploring the micro-foundations of such theoretical ideas are also promising. That is, by focusing on another level, i.e. the actors that comprise the organization and the day-to-day actions, we can expand our understanding of organizational behavior and the ways in which policies and practices get enacted. By drawing attention to the organizational actors, the study take a step inside the organization to examine the work lives of professionals since the tasks that the individuals in the lower-levels of the organization do “affects the way the public bureaucracy fulfills its public responsibility” (Prottas, p. 286). As a guiding point of reference, I thought of the recruitment officers as the street-level bureaucrats of the university (Lipsky, 1969; Prottas, 1978). Knowing that these people have some degree of agency and autonomy in their positions allowed me to consider the latent social roles, the professional orientations and the experiences that they bring to the job.

#### *Local and cosmopolitan orientations*

The work of Alvin Gouldner (1957) is relevant to any discussion about professional orientations and loyalties since he described the differences in social latent identities. For Gouldner, in the context of the workplace there are two types of latent identities:

- “(1) *Cosmopolitans*: those low on loyalty to the employing organization, high on commitment to specialized role skills, and likely to use an outer reference group orientation.
- (2) *Locals*: those high on loyalty to the employing organization, low on commitment to specialized role skills, and likely to use an inner reference group orientation” (p. 291).

By distinguishing between locals and cosmopolitans, there are obvious differences. In this case, the locals turn to the University is the reference group, not looking beyond the organization for answers, whereas the cosmos are embedded in professional networks and tend to value mobility and the exchange of ideas as important. In general, the theory of locals and cosmopolitans addresses the difference between personnel and touches on issues of internal politics of the organizations: some may be embedded in the needs of the local community and not on the ‘best practices’ highlighted at national conferences. The existence of differing orientations suggests that there may be room for other types of professionals. In response to Gouldner’s (1957) idealized types of social latent identities, Rhoades, Kiyama, McCormick & Quiroz (2007) suggest alternatives that combine the two orientations, advocating for new conceptions of what it means to be a ‘successful’ professional in higher education. I expand on this line of work in chapter six.

Exploring professional roles

While some research has been conducted on college administrators (Keller, 1983; Rosser, 2001), research on the middle to lower levels of the higher education work structure has been under-explored. There is little empirical research on this aspect of the campus community, what Rhoades and Sporn has labeled ‘managerial professionals’ (Rhoades & Sporn 2002; Rhoades 2006). Managerial professionals are the individuals on campus who are neither faculty nor central administrators; they tend to hold positions that require specialized knowledge about their area of concentration. Managerial professionals usually have advanced degrees and establish professional organizations; they have journals, codes of ethics and other common knowledge sets that inform the profession (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002). In this case, it is those at the middle levels of the organizational structure that serve as a bridge between the various dictates coming from above (from top administration and the State), while managing the day-to day aspects of the position. In this way, the people who hold these positions tend to be ‘boundary-spanning’ since they deal with issues internal and external to the university.

In addition, I drew on the ideas of Baez (2000) as an alternative way to explore how professionals conform to, or challenge, the institutional structure and norms of the profession. Baez (2000) focused on a group of faculty of color and race-related service, but the ideas can be applicable to managerial professionals in recruitment offices. He found that race-related service was viewed as an opportunity for empowerment and sense of community and an example of working toward social change at the local level.

### Summary

As discussed above, one outcome of academic capitalism in the new economy is the rise in managerial capacity to attend to the new initiatives and coordinate interstitial units. In other words, colleges and universities hire more employees who are not faculty, nor central administrators. This growing segment of the higher education workforce, situated in the lower to middle levels of the organizational structure, contribute to the university's mission and functions but in diverse, less obvious ways. Recruitment professionals serve as a good example since they are responsible for the actual implementation of recruitment activities; they represent the university in a number of settings and their work is reflected in the makeup of the incoming student population. For this paper, I utilized the insights offered from various scholars who are interested in the professional workforce as another way to examine the work lives of those involved with undergraduate recruitment. In general, there is lack of attention about enrollment management practitioners: we do not know about their knowledge base, beliefs, experiences—and how all this affects how they interact with students. As a whole, focusing on the middle level perspective brought awareness to other types of organizational behavior within the institution. Looking at other levels of the university is one way to compliment (not replace) all the research that focuses on campus leadership and the faculty. As Rhoades (2000) notes, strategic activity can happen at any level of the organization, even if it is at the periphery. The concepts presented in this chapter were utilized to introduce other lens from which to analyze the actions taken by university recruitment offices and individuals performing the recruitment tasks for the University.

### **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

This chapter provides an overview of the research design and methodology. The first section restates the research questions. Next, the research approach and the three elements of inquiry, knowledge claims, strategies and methods, as outlined by Creswell (2003) are discussed in relation to the current study. Then, I describe how I selected, collected and analyzed the data. This section also highlights the initial propositions and the logic that linked the data to the propositions. Finally, I consider the criteria I used to interpret the findings as well as the validity claims and study limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with the significance and potential contributions that the findings of this scope and design may have on the field of higher education.

#### Research questions

The qualitative study explored the role of universities and professionals working in university recruitment and how system-wide CSU policies were implemented in the workplace. The focus was on the daily work practices and orientations and how the recruitment professionals have come to understand the formal policies and procedures related to recruitment and enrollment management. To that end, the study utilized document analysis and semi-structured interviews to help answer the following research questions:

- 1) How does the California State University system and the four selected universities in that system carry out its enrollment management policies?
- 2) How do recruitment professionals enact their daily work practices?
- 3) How do recruitment professionals view their role in regards to college access?

a. Does it vary by professional orientation?

4) To what extent is there congruence between the official CSU policy documents (at the system and campus level) and the perspectives of recruitment professionals?

### Elements of inquiry

This section considers the modes of inquiry I employed to undertake the study. I decided that I needed to talk to the people who actually do the recruitment work, so from its origins, the inquiry was qualitative in nature. In describing the way research studies get shaped, Creswell (2003) details three essential features of research design: knowledge claims, research strategies and methods. Each component is discussed below.

### Knowledge claims

Taking a constructivist approach to research means that certain assumptions were used in the design and interpretation. A major assumption that was relevant to this study was that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work, and that they develop subjective meanings of their experiences (Creswell, 2003; Neuman, 2000). This speaks to the social construction of reality and the multiple meanings placed on everyday activities as part of qualitative inquiry, particularly around data collection via interviews. On the other hand, a close reading of the documents afforded me some insight into the sense making at the policy level of CSU. While the study does not delve into the intricacies involved in the other levels of the organization that influence enrollment management decisions at the Cal State, the documents hint at the kinds of ways that other levels of the CSU system are responding and (re)acting to current trends.

### Research strategies

A qualitative approach to social science research integrates a broad topic, theories and methodologies enable the researcher to learn more about the phenomena in question. Qualitative research typically helps answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions due to its exploratory nature (Yin, 2003). Common characteristics of qualitative inquiry include: takes place in a natural setting and puts the emphasis on socially constructed events and lived experiences (Creswell, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In other words, the goal was to rely on the participants’ experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of events and how they connect meaning to their (work) lives to understand their social surroundings. Since the nature of this approach is subjective, Creswell (2003) suggests using multiple methods, in a holistic manner, to collect and interpret the data.

A common qualitative strategy, the case study—specifically, a multiple-case design with four cases—was employed here. A case study is an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2003, p. 13). Since these boundaries are unclear, it is necessary to include steps in the research design, such as using multiple sources of evidence to triangulate the findings and theoretical propositions to guide the data collection and analysis (Yin, 2003). For this reason, I supplemented the interview data with document analysis from multiple sources. The extensive document analysis entailed an analysis of archival documents at the system and campus level as well as an analysis of enrollment records (i.e. the *CSU Applications and Admissions Report By Campus*, 1996—2008.) These data were accessible through the California State University Chancellor’s Office website and was available to the general

public. ([http://www.calstate.edu/as/stat\\_reports/fall\\_apps.shtml](http://www.calstate.edu/as/stat_reports/fall_apps.shtml)). Thus, I examined twelve years of application and enrollment trends to get a better sense of the magnitude of the enrollment demand for a Cal State education.

### Units of analysis

The primary unit of analysis was the system and the set of campuses within it. A secondary unit of analysis was the professionals. Given the multiple levels of analysis, the presentation of findings is organized in three distinct chapters: chapter four deals with the findings from the CSU system, and chapter five deals with the institutional settings. Chapter six focuses on findings that emerged about the work orientations of the professionals who work in the undergraduate recruitment offices.

A multiple-case study was the most appropriate strategy to use here because I wanted to get a more holistic perspective and compare across campus settings. A case study may involve more than one unit of analysis, called an embedded case study design (Yin, 2003). The multiple cases were determined using replication logic (Yin, 2003). That is, each case was selected so that it predicts similar or contrasting results based on the theoretical frameworks that I used to frame my research. In order to select my cases, I used replication logic, where cases are either a) a literal replication, predicts similar results or b) a theoretical replication, predicts contrasting results but for predictable reasons that are informed by the theoretical frameworks (Yin, 2003). The study can be characterized as having a multiple-case replication design since it focused on four distinct campus settings within the CSU. Consistent with replication logic, all of my cases were from one public system of higher education since they shared the similar mission, state

context and student demographics. In other words, there was some uniformity between cases since they belong to the CSU system and subject to the same policies and mandates from the State or the Chancellor of the system. Having a multiple case design strengthened my external validity claims about the findings of the study.

#### Data collection

Various principles of data collection helped establish construct validity and organize the data. First, the use of multiple sources of evidence for the purpose of triangulation, such as the use of interview transcripts and document analysis of official documents, involved examining different evidence from various data sources to build a coherent justification for themes (Creswell, 2003). Here, the sources of evidence complement each other and promote triangulation.

#### Pilot study

After an extensive review of the literature, I developed a research instrument in the form of a standardized interview protocol. The protocol was edited and refined based on conversations with my dissertation committee members and colleagues within the admissions field. In 2008, three pilot interviews were conducted at a Research I university that was undergoing a reorganization of its enrollment management-related offices and strategies. Pilot studies offer a chance to get a practical sense of the questions and how it relates to the domain of the subject area (Kezar, 2000). The interviews were useful in accessing the quality of the protocol and to ascertain whether the questions I asked were addressing the essence of the main research questions. A few minor

modifications were made to the interview protocol before I submitted the project application for approval to the Institutional Review Board.

*Data collection of documents*

Prior to the interview process, the institutional websites of the CSU system and all of the universities were reviewed to set the context of the study. The thematic analysis of the documents found on the websites helped identify the prominent issues regarding enrollment management, impaction and college admissions. The bulk of the data were collected from the CSU Chancellor's Office and institutional websites during March and April of 2008 and remained until early 2010. Documents consisted of system and institutional websites, Chancellor public communications, institutional mission statements, recruitment materials, publicly available strategic plans and organizational charts to explore the official position of the University in regards to college access and recruitment. The documents served as the official position of the organization and offered a glimpse into the way that the universities were trying to shape the public perceptions of the campus. In the data collection and analysis stages, there was special emphasis toward the official policies—Master Plan; admissions policy; enrollment management policy; admissions priorities set by the CSU trustees and chancellor; affirmative action-related mandates—and the formal procedures that relate to the policies—local service area, eligibility index, impaction and programs offered. Extensive document analysis provided a foundation about the public discourse and formal statements with regard to undergraduate admissions at CSU. Each document was digitally saved and transferred to NVivo 8 for analysis.

### Data collection of interviews

Interviews from thirty-four individuals were the primary data points used to answer the research questions. In the summer of 2008, I visited four recruitment offices situated within the California State University system. The data collection was separated into two phases: during the first trip, I visited two campuses and interviewed seventeen people. At the first university, I conducted most of the interviews in the respondent's private work office. In two cases, the interview took place in the staff conference room. At the next campus, all of the interviews took place in a private space at the university library. Respondents had pre-arranged times and met me at the designated spot at the time of the interview. On the subsequent trip to California, I interviewed seventeen people at two other CSU sites. At the third university, each of the interviews took place at the individual's private office. The venue at the fourth university was pre-arranged in a small conference room, where each person met me at the time of the scheduled interview. At each interview, the participant signed the IRB-approved consent form allowing for the interview to be audio recorded. The signed consent forms are filed at the department office of the researcher for safe-keeping. In total, thirty-four interviews were conducted. Although offered at the time of the interview, none of the participants asked to review their interview transcripts. The interview protocol is included in appendix.

Since the time of data collection, many changes have occurred within the system. Most notably, in July of 2009 the Chancellor declared system-wide impaction, thus all campuses were affected by overcapacity and resource issues. As a whole, the situation was so drastic that the CSU system did not admit any students for the winter term that

began in January of 2010. So, one advantage for conducting the study when I did was that I got to speak to the professionals before the big shifts in enrollment policy. Given what they shared with me, I think that many responded in shock that the CSU system was not accepting applications because of the budget situation at the state and system level. In our conversations, the professionals spoke in abstracts about the budget, but I suspect that none thought that their jobs were in jeopardy at the time of data collection. The passing of time, since the data collection and the final write up of the findings, allowed me to trace some of the changes within the system and sampled universities over time. In thinking about all of the changes that have occurs since data collection and analysis here, future research tracking the impact of policy decisions is important.

#### Site selection

The study was conducted at four California State Universities. Given the broad scope of the Cal State system, I chose to concentrate my analysis on the CSU campuses located in Southern California. Thus, the four sampled universities were situated with the same geographic area of the state of California. The close proximity to other CSU campuses and the growing populations around Los Angeles, Orange and surrounding counties made the southern region of the state an interesting area to focus on. Overall, I approached six Cal State universities to participate and ultimately, four sites came to fruition, including one site that was dealing with campus-wide impaction. In April of 2008, I sent email inquires to the Directors of Recruitment (listed on the college websites) at four CSU offices that explained my research project and invited a phone conversation to learn more. I heard back from two of the Directors within a few weeks

who expressed interest; I never heard back from the others from this original inquiry. After phone conversations with the Directors about the project and securing appropriate permission, I scheduled in-person interviews at two of the CSU campuses. As the details of the research visits were getting finalized, I sent email inquires to two other CSU recruitment offices. These exchanges yielded participation of two more sites, bringing the total number of four universities represented in the sample. Constructing the sample was a matter of timing and convenience; the sampled offices were receptive to my research interest and allowed me to visit the office during regular business hours to conduct my interviews. In keeping with the standard of confidentiality, I cannot share too many details that could reveal the identities of the universities within the sample. Each of the universities are identified here using pseudonyms. In picking the pseudonyms for the schools, I decided to choose tree names. Each type of tree has its own distinctive qualities but it is still part of the broader classification, just like the Cal States. Accordingly, the sample included Juniper, Sycamore, Pine and Cypress Universities. There were two universities that had a student body population of over eighteen thousand students, and two others that had less so there was a balance between large and medium sized campuses represented in the sample.

To offer a more insight into the enrollment patterns among the sample, we turn to the university acceptance rates. Table two documents the overall acceptance rates from the sampled CSU schools based on the number of applications submitted compared to the number who were accepted.

**Table 2. Total acceptance rates for the sample, 1996 and 2008**

	1996	2008
Sycamore	72 %	53 %
Pine	79 %	58 %
Juniper	76 %	68 %
Cypress	84 %	61 %

Although the raw figures are not included here (to protect for confidentiality purposes), highlighting the change of the acceptance rates over time suggests that there is a shift in admissions practices. In 1996, the acceptance rate for all campuses hovered around the 70 and 80 percentile. Twelve years later, the acceptance rates have decreased substantially, suggesting that the CSU in the sample are turning down applications for many more students than in years past. This trend of increased competition for limited spots continues, even as the enrollment patterns remain steady at best. In the appendix, the application, acceptance and enrollment figures for each Cal State are provided.

At each research site, the offices targeted for inclusion were: Enrollment Services, Student Outreach, Student Recruitment, or School Relations (for the most part, this was similar functions but different names depending on the university setting). People with the titles of Director, Associate/Assistant Director, Coordinator, Recruiter or Counselor were invited to participate. Initially, the offices that were targeted for participation were the ones that hired and trained people who were responsible for providing pre-admission advisement to prospective students, families, high school counselors; assisting with the application process and other pre-enrollment procedures; and representing the campus at

recruitment programs internal and external to the University. The data used to inform this level of the analysis include system and institutional documents, as a way to corroborate the responses from the interviews. I deliberately chose to focus on the domain of the recruitment office because these individuals that are the “public face” of the university; as part of their jobs, they are the ones that need to interpret and explain what these policies mean. Since they are the liaison between the community and the university, I felt it was appropriate to focus on this particular set of professionals in higher education.

**Table 3. Characteristics of the professionals in the sample**

	<b>Juniper</b> ( <i>N=10</i> )	<b>Pine</b> ( <i>N=7</i> )	<b>Sycamore</b> ( <i>N=5</i> )	<b>Cypress</b> ( <i>N=12</i> )
<b>Graduated from a CSU</b>	7	5	5	8
<b>Transferred from a CC</b>	6	3	0	2

Table three describes the number of people interviewed at each institution. The two rows delineate the number of people who graduated from a Cal State campus (25 in total) and the number of people who began their postsecondary careers as a community college student (11 in total). In sum, thirty-four people were interviewed as part of the study.

Considering that the entry-level requirement for recruitment positions is a bachelor’s degree, everyone in the sample was a college graduate. In fact, seventeen of the thirty-four respondents were graduates from a California State University. Twenty of them had earned advanced degrees and four of the professionals were starting graduate programs at the time of data collection. Eleven of the professionals began their own

postsecondary career at a community college. The range of work experiences was broad: with seven people were in their current position for over one year; eight others had two to three years experience; and twelve others were in the profession for four to eight years. Seven others, the most experienced, have at least eight years experience. Within the overall sample of thirty-four, at least half were exposed to the recruitment profession as student workers (17), others worked in one of the TRiO outreach programs (11) and many focused primarily on early outreach (9). Each individual was given a pseudonym, at the time of the interview, to maintain privacy throughout the research process. Each of the universities were identified using pseudonyms as well. In picking the pseudonyms for the schools, I decided to choose tree names. Each type of tree has its own distinctive qualities but it is still part of the broader classification, just like the Cal States. Accordingly, the sample included Juniper, Sycamore, Pine and Cypress Universities.

#### Methods of analysis

Since data analysis is a significant phase in qualitative research, the following section describes how the data were managed and organized. Each audio interview was transcribed, coded and analyzed. I built a case study database for each case site to organize documents, notes, narratives, interview transcripts and other relevant data sources. The database was a beneficial tool to maintain a valid chain of evidence to document each research step to increase the reliability and construct validity of the study (Yin, 2003). The intent was to treat each case a whole study, before comparing across cases. Creswell (2003, p. 191-195) recommended the following steps for data analysis, which I loosely followed to guide the data analysis:

*Step one: organize and prepare the data for analysis*

Upon returning to Arizona, I wrote and reviewed my field notes and listened to several of the interviews to get a general sense of the conversational style and speed, but more importantly, to assess the usability and quality of the audio recordings. Soon after, I transferred the audio MP3 files into Express Scribe, a digital transcription software to aid in the transcription process. Express Scribe was a useful tool since I was able to control the playback and speed level as well as bookmark key points in the recordings.

Transcribing thirty-four interviews was a long and tedious process. Once all of the transcriptions were complete, I organized the Microsoft Word files by campus and imported them into NVivo 8 for initial coding.

*Step two: read through the data.*

I printed out and read all of the transcripts prior to coding in NVivo 8. I read the interviews in the order that I visited them. I wrote notes on the margins and highlighted areas that were relevant to the research questions or a key quotation that one of the professionals said. During this phase, I imported the audio files into my ipod so I could refer back to the recordings when I had free time during the day. Sometimes it was useful to just listen to what the people I interviewed were saying, to try and notice differences in tone and/or inflections of voice. It allowed for deeper reflection.

*Step three: begin detailed analysis with a coding process.*

Data analysis and coding is an inductive and deductive process. I created 'Free Nodes' around the main concepts from the questions and theoretical frameworks. For example, the original list had titles like organizational structure, outreach, programs,

impaction, enrollment management, coercive, mimetic, normative, student market, prestige, access, and finances. These codes were a starting point. In short, this phase of coding was looking for basic themes to better understand to what extent (if at all) the outreach and recruitment practices and strategies are expressed using the concepts of academic capitalism or institutional theories.

*Step four: Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting as well as categories or themes for analysis.*

Over the span of the study, I conducted the coding in two distinct phases. First, in Arizona, I completed a great deal of the analysis and refined the codes. For example, a simple code of ‘competition’ would now have tree nodes associated that accounts for competition among other CSUs, competition with the UC or another institution. The second phases of the coding was conducted months later in Los Angeles. This time the coding was more refined into categorical themes and concepts. I developed matrix and compound queries in NVivo to connect codes and to explore more nuanced relationships. I developed a casebook, designating each individual, their alias, position, year of experience and other characteristics that I had access to. Once imported into NVivo, more robust inquiries were available. For example, I was able to identify all the veteran recruiters in my sample (classified here as eight or more years experience) and then linked their answers about workplace challenges or the way that they viewed their role in working with students.

*Step five: Advance how description and themes are represented in qualitative narrative.*

Working between the NVivo dataset and Microsoft Word, I constructed preliminary narratives about each campus. I wrote a series of short papers, 3-4 pages in length, focused on a certain theme or code. I highlighted many of the examples, included here in this dissertation, since they resonated with a particular theme or encapsulated a certain feeling in just the right way. The process was particularly helpful in synthesizing the abundance of data from the transcripts.

*Step six: Making an interpretation or meaning of the data.*

I developed propositions to guide in the analysis and interpretation of the data. The use of propositions in qualitative case study research is common as a way to direct attention to specific issues that fall within the scope of the study (Yin, 2003). Drawing on the theoretical lenses and research questions, propositions were constructed as a tool to analyze the trends that we observe within college admissions and to frame the analysis to understand the problem from a variety of viewpoints.

#### Overview of propositions

The propositions guide the analysis and state the conditions of what I thought may be found, or not found during the study. Thus, I organized each proposition around the research question that it corresponds to.

#### Structural implications

*RQ1:* How does the CSU system and the four selected universities in that system enact its enrollment management policies?

The first set of propositions related to the system and institutional level, focuses on the formal structures and priorities. Then, a second set of propositions centered on the experiences of the professionals.

*Enacting priorities and services*

*RQ1*: How do recruitment professionals enact their daily work practices?

*Proposition One: The formal position on enrollment management at the system level will focus on revenue considerations and maintaining the access mission of the CSU. At the campus level, the emphasis will be on maintaining access and improving prestige, with revenue considerations underemphasized.*

*Proposition Two: All campuses will be increasingly entrepreneurial in reaching new student markets. As a result, recruitment offices will feel pressure to recruit and enroll students.*

The propositions above started from the premise that academic capitalism in the new economy, and the universities responding to current realities, was the context from which we need to view the changes in student recruitment and the rise of enrollment management, even at public regional universities. Given the backdrop of academic capitalist tendencies that pervade higher education, I wanted to trace the emergence of enrollment management within the Cal State system, and the extent to which campuses were being strategic about their recruitment approaches. I was interested in examining the organizational chart and the interactions between offices. Due to the decline in state support, I anticipated that the impetus for enrollment management processes was to manage enrollments with limited resources and moving toward being more self-sufficient and identifying other types of revenue streams to maintain student enrollment. Research

indicates that most strategic enrollment management efforts are centered on achieving multiple objectives for the university (Kalsbeek & Hoosler, 2008b). As such, I wanted to understand the balance and priority placed on access, quality and revenue. In general, when examining enrollment management policy priorities, the analysis was framed in terms of a balance of emphasis (among access, diversity, quality, and revenues) rather than in either/or terms. For the most part, it seems unlikely that a university would not embrace diversity and access over revenue; although it can choose to emphasize one over the other in their initiatives and actions. While being mindful of the current economic outlook, the CSU system may try to maintain the relatively open access model of admission. In examining these propositions, I had a watchful eye in the ways that the administration spoke about enrollment issues, and then how the staff interpreted it.

*Doing it our own way*

The following propositions relate to institutional theory and how the universities prioritized how they expend the institution's time and resources.

*Proposition Three: Non-impacted campuses will adopt new programs and enhance services to attract more students to their campus.*

*Proposition Four: Each campus will organize its programs and services by following mandates from the Chancellor or mimicking the recruitment models of other Cal State Universities.*

In general, since the individual universities do not set admissions policies, all CSU campuses share the same coercive environment, i.e. the state, CSU trustees and chancellor's office all exert control over the enrollment processes. For this reason, and the uncertainty that comes with predicting enrollment trends, the CSU campuses will

share a similar organizational structure and offer very similar programs to prospective students. On the other hand, it was not definite at first that the recruitment offices were run the same way or functioned with similar consequences. As such, the propositions listed here tested out some of the limits of isomorphic tendencies.

The rationale behind this proposition was that since non-impacted universities still have enrollment space, they are actively seeking students to enroll in their university. The non-impacted schools may be lesser known and trying to meet their enrollment targets. For this reason, the universities will be much more involved in visiting high schools and community colleges as well as hosting events on campus. From a normative perspective, these are the types of activities that recruitment offices typically facilitate. In my analysis, I tried to understand if the professionals were acting in a certain way because “that’s what recruitment officers do” or if universities chose to be more innovative in their approach. On the other hand, for the professionals at the impacted campus there may be less of an emphasis placed on outreach events because they are not in a position to cater to specific students—they already have a lot of applications and interest in their university. The difference in the forms is that students have to go to the website to get information and in the other case, the professional goes to the student’s high school and community events to reach out to prospective students. Related to the proposition above, the professionals at the impacted campuses may be at odds with the impaction situation since they don’t focus as much on meeting with students and have to turn students away. On the other hand, those universities that are seeking more students can implement more creative ways to reach new audiences.

### Orientation of staff

The second research question is addressed in chapter five of this study; the chapter revolves around the interviews with the thirty-four professionals and examined how the professionals approached their jobs.

*RQ2:* How do recruitment professionals view their role in regards to college access?

- a. Does it vary by professional orientation?

*Proposition Five: There will be an overrepresentation of 'locals' compared to 'cosmopolitans' in the office units. Some individuals may exhibit the characteristics of both.*

*Proposition Six: Among the four categories of latent social roles, differences emerge as it relates to loyalty, commitment and mobility of the professionals.*

The propositions focused on the types of professionals who work in the recruitment positions. Since the CSU is community oriented and regional based, I thought that perhaps a lot of the staff reside in the local area and are active in the community. For this reason, many could have embodied the characteristics of Gouldner's 'Local' type. Along the same lines, not as many 'Cosmopolitans' work at the CSU. There are key distinctions between the various latent social roles and this section devotes time to offer an overview of the various types and provide examples from the data.

### Facilitating access

This proposition outlined the role of the professionals' orientation to the job and concentrated of the variations among the types as well as differences within groups.

*Proposition Seven: Regardless of the one's position or impacted status of the institution, all professionals will view their role as facilitating access to higher education.*

Three sub-propositions are related:

*7a) However, the difference is who to provide access to and the student population that is emphasized: 'locals' want to assist the local community while the 'cosmos' seek to simply meet the enrollment target.*

*7b) Those in director-level positions tend to be cosmopolitan and will be involved with national professional associations and embracing strategic enrollment management principles.*

*7c) Many of the professionals with the Local orientation will exhibit the need to 'give back' to students and the community since they benefited from someone who helped them.*

The central idea that forms the basis of these propositions is that it expands from Gouldner to present new ways of thinking about professionals. The section considers the work philosophy and commitment, as well as offers a perspective from the lived experiences of those individuals who are out traveling around to high schools and community colleges, speaking to prospective students about opportunities in higher education. I wanted to understand what keeps them motivated and why they were drawn to this type of work. So, this part of the analysis deals with the professional orientations toward the job and how they view their role and their thoughts about college access.

For the most part, the final propositions used the policy-to-practice quandary as a focal point for considering the ways in which policies get (re) interpreted in the real world, working with students. It addresses the final research question, to what extent is there congruence between the official CSU policy documents (at the system and campus level) and the perspectives of recruitment professionals?

*Proposition Eight: The Local employees interpret the enrollment management policies and practices as being a threat to the open access*

*mission and commitment to the local community, whereas the Cosmopolitans and the Cosmopolitan-Locals actively encourage the adoption of innovative and state-of-the-art recruitment practices.*

*Proposition Nine: There will be professionals (with a local or intermediary orientation) who disagree with the official admission policies and will carry out recruitment duties/messages as they see fit.*

Perhaps those professionals who are embedded in the local community are more likely to promote activities geared toward facilitating recruitment of more diverse student populations. I wondered if the new tools and processes of enrollment management challenge the individuals who are more oriented toward the local community and equity issues. Institutional theory suggests the possibility of a disjuncture between the mid-to lower level professionals in EM units and the former goals of the organization because of the basis of their personal or professional commitments. Therefore, the last research question attempts to connect the formal policies of the institution to daily work practices. In other words, is there an alignment between the formal EM policies and procedures and the actual workplace behavior and orientations of the professionals? Or is there a disjuncture?

This type of inquiry suggests a more nuanced analysis of the policies and enacted practices is required than simply determining whether the policies were actually in place. For these propositions, the language of academic capitalism and institutional theory may overlap. For example, offices may be turning to elaborate websites and on-line content to make the information ‘customer-friendly’ and personalized, using market tactics to reach new customers. Yet, institutional theory would predict that these practices are not

necessarily for rational means or efficiency purposes, but can be an outcome of normative or mimetic tendencies where institutions try to keep up with each other or have offices in place for symbolic reasons to uphold the image of the university to establish legitimacy. I anticipated finding evidence that supports both theories. A large part of the analysis was to treat each case a whole study, before comparing across cases. The bulk of the analysis indicates how and why each proposition was demonstrated or not. I relied on the propositions to guide the data collection and the case study analysis.

#### Validity and reliability

Validity, as described by Creswell (2003) strengthens any form of qualitative research because reliability and generalizability are not tests suitable to this method. In this case, I sampled four universities so it may not necessarily be representative of the whole CSU or other regional universities. Thus, generalizability is restricted. Yet, there are mechanisms that I employed to establish the quality of any empirical social research, which include: construct validity, using multiple sources, establishing a chain of evidence and using key informants); external validity (the use of replication models for multiple case study) and reliability (developing a case study protocol and case study database). Close attention to these mechanisms increased the robustness of the study design.

#### Study limitations

Like any other qualitative study, this study has its limitations. First, in a study of this type, the presence of a researcher may bias people's responses (i.e. they say what they think I want to hear) but most qualitative work is based on people's perceptions of events. I prepared for this by conducting pilot interviews and sharing the interview

protocol with my dissertation committee so that the questions were written clearly and did not include anything that was perceived to be unclear or threatening to the participants. During the interviews, each person seemed comfortable answering the questions. In fact, many commented that they were happy that someone was interested in the type of work that they do. For that reason, I think they were being honest in what they shared with me. In retrospect, it was best to conduct interviews at the various campuses, as it seemed an effective method to understand their interpretations and perspectives. I did not complete follow-up interviews, which could have been helpful given the changes that occurred within the CSU system from the time of the data collection to the completion of the study. Finally, my study does not attempt to consider the position of the chief officers at the university administration or the effects it has on students. While these topics are important and relevant (and definitely possibilities for future research) they are not considered as the main focus of the dissertation.

#### Positionality of researcher

An important characteristic of qualitative inquiry is to address the role of the researcher and any potential biases. For me, I gravitated toward the study of college admissions in graduate school because that is where I began my higher education career. My experience working in the undergraduate admissions office was instrumental in my thinking about the opportunities for college access and the importance of higher education. First as an undergraduate student worker, then as an admissions counselor at the University of Arizona, I spent about five years as a recruiter. As an undergraduate student, I worked in the office of Minority Student Recruitment (MSR) where the main

goal was to visit local high schools and recruit ethnic minority students. From the start, what was interesting to me was visiting the schools in different parts of town and observing the types of college information, programs and services that were available for students. For example, many of the locations of my high school assignments ranged across the state: from more affluent parts to areas with less socioeconomic status. I began noticing inequities in college opportunity and information to prepare for college. I remember on several occasions, being asked why an office like MSR even existed, and wasn't it reverse discrimination? Sometimes students did not want to be singled out for being a certain ethnicity. These were my first encounters dealing with the intricacies of the policies and practices, and what my role was in contributing to the goals set by the institution and my interest in helping students.

Upon graduation from college, I was hired as an Admissions Counselor, where I was responsible for general student recruitment. I participated in numerous college fairs, high school visits and on-campus recruitment programs. I had many conversations with prospective students, families and high school counselors about the opportunities that a college education can provide. I have attended several training sessions (at my home institution and in national settings) and various staff meetings where recruitment plans were introduced and implemented. In short, I have strong, first-hand 'insider' knowledge about the daily practices of entry-level admissions personnel. This orientation may have helped me in building rapport with the study participants.

On the other hand, I may have been viewed as an 'outsider' to the study participants because I do not have any experience with the state and local contexts, and

the specific policies and mandates that follow. In terms of professional development, I have never attended any professional conferences that relate to recruitment, admissions or enrollment management nor do I belong to networks or associations within the field. So then, while I had some insider knowledge of college admissions, I did not foresee this as having a major bias to my study because the activities that are central to this study were situated in a completely different context. However, because of my extensive experience in working in recruitment settings for many years, I carry with me a unique knowledge base that allowed me to understand the issues in depth, more so than a layperson.

When I embarked on this study, I had little working knowledge of the California State University system. I needed to learn more about the large state system under investigation and the specific institutions that comprise it. The document analysis component of this project, elaborated on in this chapter, helped in this regard. I am not from California. While this study was in progress, I relocated to Los Angeles to take a position at the University of Southern California. By living in California, I was exposed to more local coverage in the newspapers and television about the Cal States than ever before. In addition, I met staff and students from some of the CSU campuses in the area, and sometimes would overhear conversations on the bus and metro among Cal State students. While this exposure is minor, the move to Los Angeles allowed me to get a better grasp on the institutional environment of the CSU. Moving gave me a better perspective, and I found that I interrogated the data in new ways, than if I had stayed in Tucson to complete the study. For example, one day I saw an advertisement on the city bus for one of the CSU campuses in my sample, so I went back to my dataset to see what

they said about strategic messages and how they advertise for the school. On another occasion, I struck up a conversation with a CSU administrator at a dinner party, and some of his insights about the budget issues motivated me to collect more data about how the Chancellor's office framed the enrollment crisis in financial terms. I feel these types of interactions made my observations and analysis sharper.

My own personal identity as a Chicana inherently has some influence on my worldview and outlook on epistemology, knowledge creation and interpretation. I believe that every student should have the opportunity to attend college, and am fully aware that there are structural barriers in place that make the path toward college completion much more difficult. In any setting, I interrogate issues from the perspective of the 'underserved' and work toward making more efficient structures of opportunity for communities of color. Only then, can we start seeing college access and completion rates that are more equitably along dimensions of race, ethnicity and social class. Every step of the way, I was mindful of the assumptions I might be projecting in my study. Yet, I am aware that my identity (in outward appearance) may have aided in comforting some of the participants. For example, in the case of the professionals who advocate for undocumented students, they brought up and talked at length about the issue and how it affects the students and their communities. Sometimes they reflected on their own personal experience. Perhaps they perceived the interview time and venue as a 'safe' topic since I shared a similar skin color. Or I encouraged them to keep speaking by asking follow-up questions. In other cases, some of the individuals used phrases in Spanish; one individual even prefaced one of his comments with, "You know how it

is...” At that time, he was unaware of my background in student recruitment, so he might have been referring to some sort of ‘shared experience.’ In any case, I feel that I connected on some level with the participants, but I also tried to create a distance, so that I can go back and review the data more objectively. I kept a journal of field notes that had a section for personal thoughts about the research process and a section devote to linkages of the data to the theory and propositions.

In addressing my positionality, I should address my own professional orientation. As we will find out in chapter six, there are a variety of professional orientations. In the context of this study, I talk about Locals and Cosmopolitans and the professionals who blend the two traditions to form a new type of professional. I believe that I represent this new type of professional. I can trace my first understanding of these concepts to graduate school. When I first read Gouldner’s paper in the Organization and Administration class, I identified as a Local. Being born and raised in Tucson, the UA was all I knew about in terms of what higher education was all about. In graduate school, I worked with, and took classes, along side people who traveled from out of state, and other parts of the world, to be a student at my hometown university. At work, I recognized these people when they tried to introduce new ideas or when they compared policies or practices from the institution where they used to be; I could also spot them in class the classroom when they showed a lack of appreciation of the local community and traditions. Yet, as I pursued my doctorate and joined national associations, such as the Association for the Study of Higher Education and the American Educational Research Association, my awareness of the higher education profession grew, as did my professional networks. Now that I have

left Arizona to work at USC, and maintain a position where I collaborate with, and have direct contact with numerous faculty members and policy analysts from across the country, I am starting to embrace the Cosmopolitan nature of my emerging professional identity. As the findings will point out later, one does not need to sacrifice “the local” to achieve success in a career in higher education.

#### Significance of the topic and setting

This study offers contributions to higher education scholarship and practice. First and foremost, the study represents a fresh look on the issues of college access and workplace structures and processes. The study provided an insider view of recruitment responsibilities in the workplace. The findings could help policy audiences understand what happens on the front-line of the enrollment management world and to see how some of the policy decisions are playing out in reality. The study reveals that there is an added dimension to consider when examining students’ college choice processes (since the recruiters can play a big role in assisting them) or in the strategic moves that universities are making (since the recruiters are the ones that carry out the plan). The CSU recruiters can involved in these processes but are often overlooked in the larger scheme of representing, or operating, a university. But as we will see, the recruitment and enrollment functions are important, and integral for any university to sustain itself.

In addition, I examined public four-year state universities, an institutional type often overlooked in the higher education literature. The above methodologies and theoretical constructs allowed me to connect the specific instance of CSU workplace practices to more general claims about the different ways that universities, and their

employees, operate. I was able to consider the ways in which these professional orientations impact how recruitment work gets carried out in practice. By examining the common workplace practices within the admissions offices and experiences of the staff, one may be able to identify the ways in which they carry out their work; explore individual, office and institutional priorities; and become familiar with the viewpoints of professional staff about their role in the larger enrollment management structure and the strategic direction of the University. For an organizational perspective, the study sheds light on the structures that may promote or inhibit workplace tasks, and the extent to which the Cal States are looking to each other for assistance in understanding and responding to the current climate of undergraduate recruitment and admissions in the state of California.

## CHAPTER FOUR: SYSTEM LEVEL FINDINGS

This chapter presents an overview of system-wide trends to contextualize the findings from the system level. As such, this chapter focuses on the ways in which the CSU as a whole responded to the changing trends in college access and new student enrollment. It is organized into three sections: the first part provides a summary of recent CSU patterns and the existence of enrollment management structures and positions within the CSU. Then, in the next section, I analyze the formal policies that relate to new student enrollment at the CSU. I report the findings from the system and institutional discourse with regard to the issues of increasing access, diversity and positioning the institution to become more financially self-sufficient. Finally, I offer a thematic analysis of a selection of formal policies and official public statements from the Chancellor associated with outreach and enrollment.

### Background of CSU trends

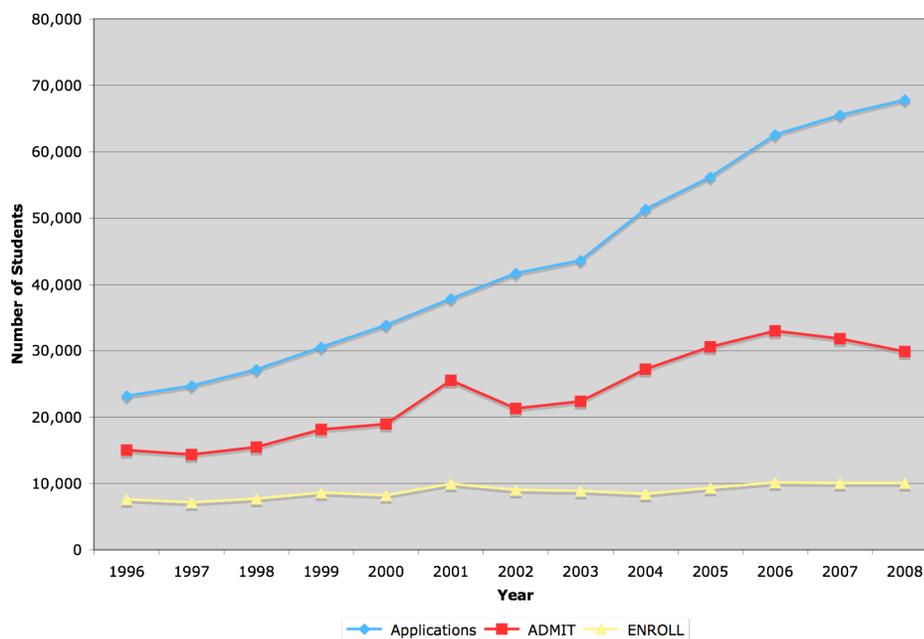
This section takes a brief, sweeping view of the Cal State system to provide some general context before the rest of the findings are presented. It covers trends in applications and enrollment, student fees, graduation rates and information on revenue.

### Application pipeline

In the first chapter, table one presented the shifts in student demand for admission to the CSU. Each campus in the system experienced a surge in submitted applications, in many cases doubling the number from a decade prior. All this, while the enrollment figures remain steady. In the appendix, tables for each campus identify the application, admission and enrollment rates for each CSU. To get a glimpse of the enrollment trends,

I offer the example of Cal State Long Beach as indicative of what is occurring across the California State University system.

**Table 4. CSU-Long Beach: application, admission & enrollment trends, 1996-2008**



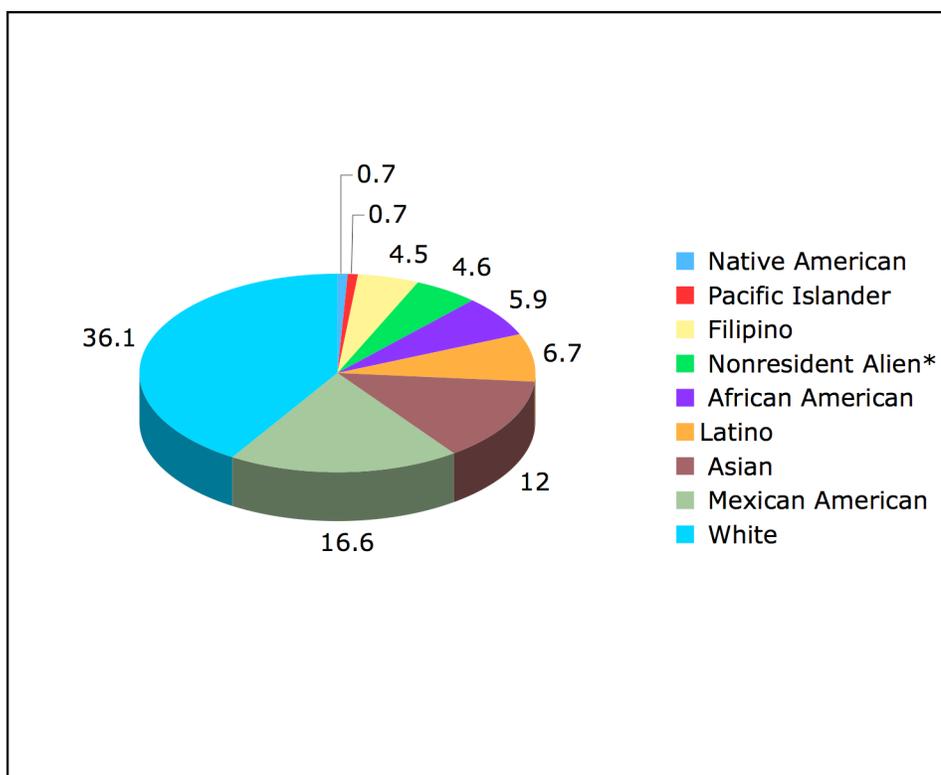
In table four above, the three trend lines represent applications (in blue), admission notices (in red) and the actual enrollment figures (in yellow). It is clear that the blue line has skyrocketed in the last twelve years, while the yellow line remains steady. The gap in between the two lines represents those students who applied to the school but were not able to attend the Cal State. This is not to say that the students do not pursue higher education, or even another CSU, but the distance between the two lines is interesting to examine given the resources and efficiency considerations to process applications. At the CSU, the issue of students submitting multiple applications is becoming more of an issue.

The system tracks the rates, and there is a substantial overlap in students who apply to more than one CSU.

### Student profile

Overall, the CSU educates over 400, 000 students each year (CSU, 2010). The CSU is the most diverse system of higher education in the United States and the table above showcases why: the Cal States educate a diverse group of students. In Fall 2008, Whites constituted the largest group (36.1%) followed by Mexican American (16/6%), Asian (12%), Latino (6.7%), African American (5.9%), Nonresident Alien\* (4.6%), Filipino (4.5%), Pacific Islander (0.7%) and Native American (0.7%). In general, the CSU enrolls a healthy heterogeneous mix of students, primarily made up of students of color.

**Table 5. CSU system-wide enrollment for Fall 2008, by ethnicity**



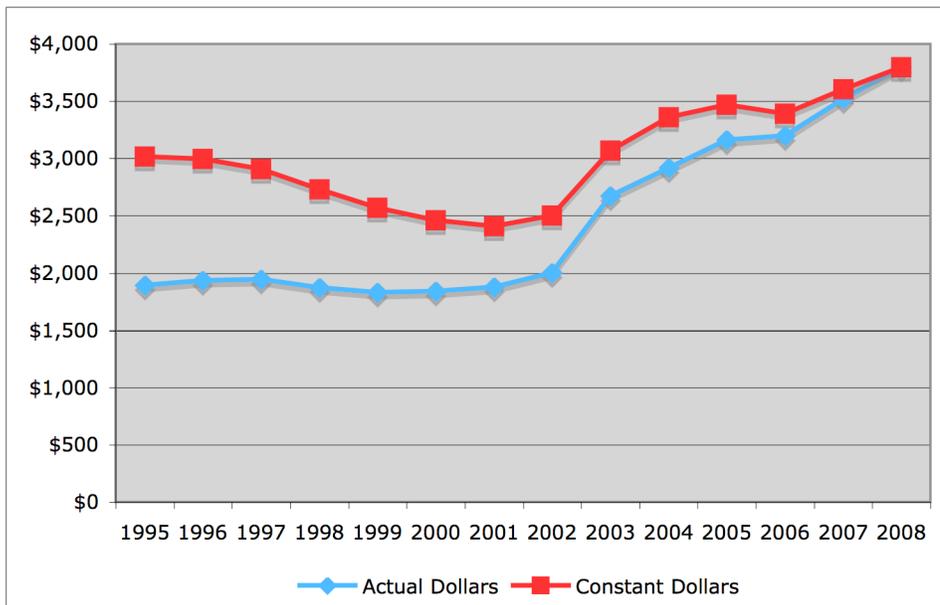
Overall, the California State University system distinguishes itself from the type of students that it educates and the type of impact and contributions to the community and state. According to the 2009 CSU Fact Book, the student demographics point to the non-traditional nature of the CSU student body. For example, some key characteristics include: the average age of undergraduates is twenty-four; over 75% have jobs and over 25% have dependents and 12% are married. System-wide, only 8% of students live on campus, and about 35% of the student population is classified as first-generation college students, as they are the first in their families to attend college (CSU, 2010). Another key characteristic of the CSU is the high level of remediation required for first time freshmen. For example, in the Fall of 2008, among the population of around fifty thousand new freshmen system-wide, 37% needed remediation in math and 47% in English.<sup>4</sup> The extent to which these trends vary depends on the campus, as well as the ethnic group. The system tracks progress by ethnicity and records show that the levels of remediation increase among the traditionally underserved populations.

### Revenue streams

Financial considerations are an important element in understanding the case of the CSU. Later in this chapter, we focus on the limited resources and the CSU decision to raise student fees. Table six highlights the increase in student fees. In actual dollars, undergraduate student fees at the CSU went from \$1,891 to \$3,797 in 2008 for full-time undergraduate students at the Cal State.

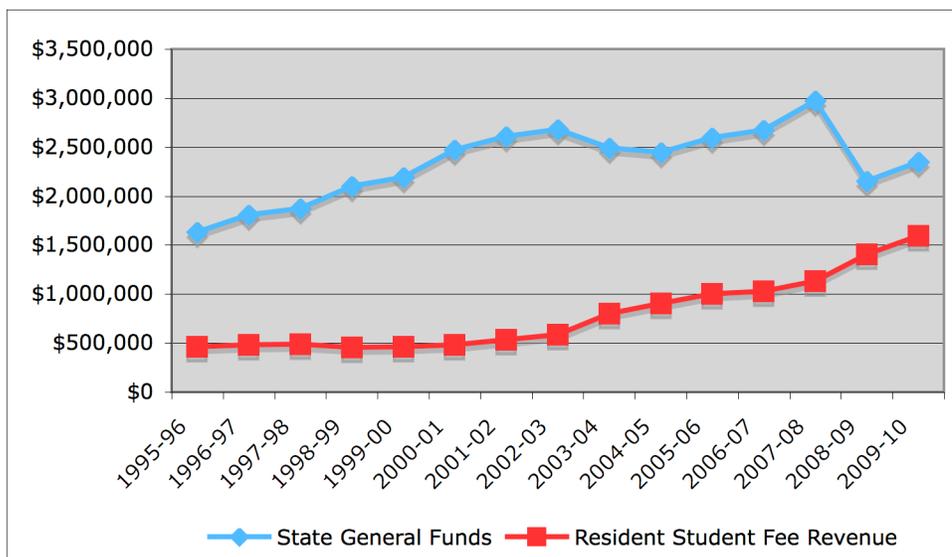
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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.asd.calstate.edu/remediation/08/Rem\\_Sys\\_fall2008.htm](http://www.asd.calstate.edu/remediation/08/Rem_Sys_fall2008.htm)

**Table 6. CSU resident undergraduate student fees, 1995-2008**

(Source: California Postsecondary Education Commission, 2010)

Table seven describes the two main funding streams for the system: the California general fund, which on average allocates eleven to twelve percent each year to higher education (CPEC, 2010). There is a lot of talk about limited resources and reduced funding from the state, but the table below suggests that the CSU is still bring in resources, it is just from other sources.

**Table 7. CSU funding: the state general fund and student fee revenue, 1995-2010**

(Source: California Postsecondary Education Commission, 2010)

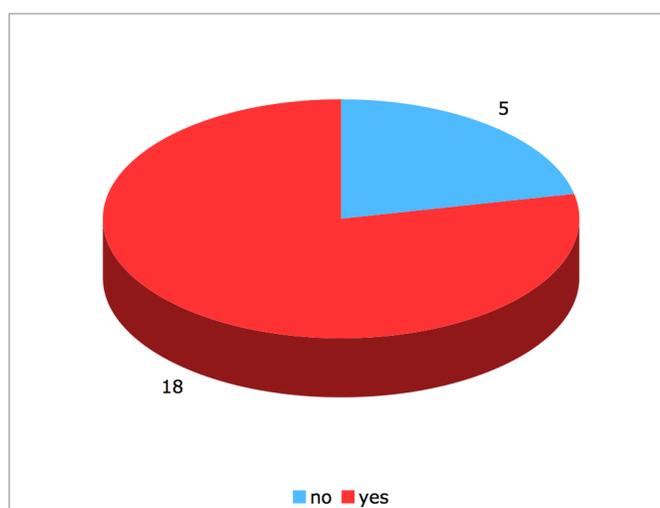
Revenue earned from student fees has become increasingly important at the CSU. Since 2002, student fees have steadily climbed each year. With the sudden decline of state general funds, campuses are turning to student fees and other alternative funding sources.

#### Enrollment management structures and positions

This section outlines the enrollment management structures and positions that were in place within the Cal State Universities during data collection, 2007-2010. By providing an overview of the CSU system, one can recognize that the sample is well representative of the whole. Each of the campuses were dealing with enrollment issues in their own way, yet the issues surrounding enrollment management and recruitment pervade the entire system. Although we cannot determine the extent to which universities engaged in strategic enrollment practices based on the scope of the current study, the

mere existence of enrollment management positions is pertinent here because these types of positions did not exist a few decades ago. Table eight highlights the pervasiveness of senior level enrollment management positions among the CSU system.

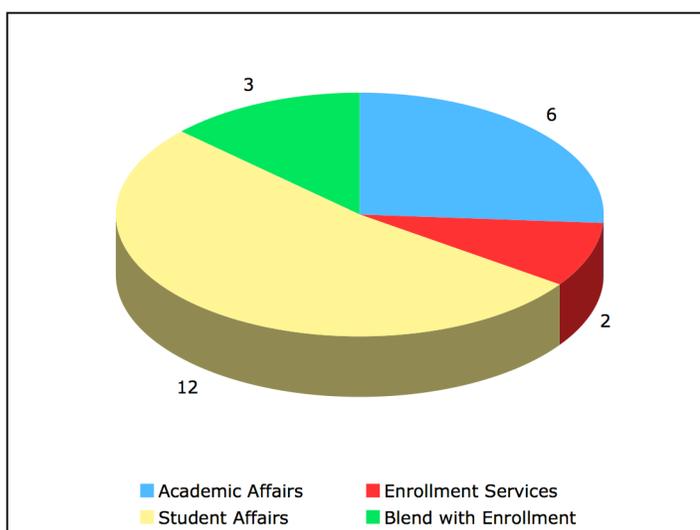
**Table 8. Cal States who maintain Associate Vice President for Enrollment positions**



A striking distinction was that in 2010, eighteen of the twenty-three Cal State campuses maintained a position of Assistant or Associate Vice President (AVP) of Enrollment Management/Services. Thus, more than three-fourths of the CSU schools had a senior administrator responsible for coordinating the overall recruitment and enrollment plan. In many of the cases, the Assistant/Associate Vice President reported to a Vice President (of Student or Academic Affairs or Enrollment Planning) who reported directly to the President. There was greater variation in terms of the jurisdiction of the recruitment office fell. As table four illustrates, the majority of the recruitment offices were a part of the Student Affairs unit. Several recruitment offices were organized under

Academic Affairs, while a few others blended the functions to include a Vice President for Student Affairs *and* Enrollment Management. At two of the universities, a separate division of Enrollment Services was established to oversee the enrollment function.

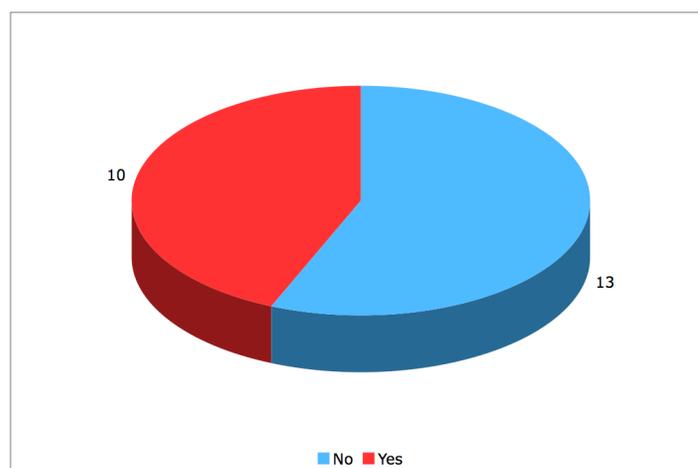
**Table 9. CSU System: Responsibility for Recruitment**



Finally, another distinction among the campuses of the CSU was whether or not the recruitment and admissions offices were combined as one. Thirteen of the campuses had separate offices and different directors, while ten others had a singular unit lead by a director, who was responsible for both. The smaller campuses tended to organize the operations around a single office. Table nine shows the breakdown of campuses. In comparing the sample with the rest of the system, there was a decent representation of the patterns that are found across the state. For example, of the four universities in the sample, three of them had an Assistant Vice President responsible for student enrollment.

One of the universities combined the responsibilities of recruitment and admissions to create a large office. Furthermore, only one of the CSUs was deemed 'impacted' during the time of the study. In determining the internal arrangements for recruitment tasks, I was interested in whether campuses combined recruitment and admission functions. From the sample, only one CSU did so. As a system, ten campuses of the twenty-three integrated the two areas.

**Table 10. Cal States who have an office that combines recruitment with admissions**



Based on the patterns presented above, it is reasonable to declare that enrollment management services have spread through the CSU. Although more studies are needed to pinpoint how these trends get adopted and spread across the system, the current study shows that in fact EM has arrived at the Cal State, and all campuses do not organize in the same way.

#### Policy analysis

There are numerous policies that influence college admissions; this section focuses on the few that were most relevant to the study. These policies include the California Master Plan for Higher Education, the CSU Enrollment Management policy, and two state level policies: Assembly Bill 540 and Proposition 209.

### California Master Plan

As discussed in the first chapter, the CSU constitutes the public sector of higher education in California, along with the California Communities Colleges and the University of California. The mission differentiation among the sectors was organized around the California Master Plan for Higher Education. This historic document and the philosophy it upholds, remains a key aspect of California's education system even after fifty years since its creation. The purpose of the California Master Plan, under a mandate from the State Legislature in 1960, is to provide universal access to state residents by offering opportunities for all eligible students to enroll in the tri-level system: some highly selective institutions of University of California where the top 12.5 percent of high school graduates are eligible, the moderately selective regional schools of the CSU that admit the top 33.3 percent of eligible high school graduates and the nonselective, open-access community colleges. California is one widely known for its centralized model to distribute students into postsecondary sectors. Although the ideas and structure behind the California Master Plan for Education is still in place, limited resources from the state has made it difficult for the institutions of higher education to fulfill its lofty goal of universal access to higher education.

### CSU Admissions Policy

The admission standards of the CSU are straightforward. For first time freshman, applicants need at least a 3.0 grade point average and complete the established A-G curriculum. If an applicant does not meet the 3.0 mark, then the scores from standardized tests (SAT or ACT) are considered on a sliding scale. For transfer students, eligible applicants would have completed the Golden Four curriculum and pass all transferable courses with at least a 2.0 grade point average.

### Legislature and Trustee priorities

State Education Code 66202 provides enrollment priorities for the system to follow. One mandate prescribed by section 66202, for example, specifies the 60/40 mix of transfer and freshman students. The priority is placed on veterans, upper division transfer students, and residents of California who are eligible for admission. The policy states that these high-priority categories need to be considered first in admitting students to the CSU. In another way, the CSU Trustee Policies can have an influence on the admissions operation. Title 5, § 40650, describes the establishment of quotas for enrollment purposes to distinguish between class level, disciplines, and programs. In 2000, the CSU Trustees “reaffirmed that upper-division California Community College transfers who are California residents have the highest priority for admission, that all CSU-eligible freshmen who are California residents are accommodated somewhere in the system, that all CSU-eligible students who are California residents are guaranteed admission to at least one local CSU campus, and that campuses must maintain a balanced program and achieve diversity as admission priorities are implemented” (CSU, 2002). Two key areas in the passage should be

noted. First, the system is able to still offer college access *somewhere* in the system. Next, the Trustees declared that diversity was important in meeting the institutional enrollment goals.

CSU enrollment management policy

The system-wide enrollment management policy allowed for flexibility so that campuses could respond as they saw fit. The CSU defined enrollment management as “a series of steps and strategies that campuses use at their discretion either to increase enrollment or to control enrollment by limiting the number of students admitted prior to requesting major, program, or campus impaction and the use of supplementary admission criteria to screen applicants” (CSU, 2002). Thus, campuses needed to have a long-term plan but they could carry out EM practices as they saw fit. In drafting the policy, the Chancellor’s Office reiterated the need to reach out to the local communities. The document stated that

CSU outreach, admission, and retention policies shall continue to provide encouragement, support, academic and counseling services, and access to students traditionally underrepresented in California higher education toward the goal of enrolling a student population reflective of campus’s local regions and California’s growing diversity (CSU, 2002).

Not only does the Chancellor endorse the direct outreach approach, the office pledged to “coordinate all statewide efforts related to these services” to ensure that campuses were doing their part in providing access to the students and communities that need it the most.

The concept of impaction was first introduced within the EM policy document. The focal point of impaction is capacity, as in, how many students can be accommodated at one time. According to the Chancellor’s office, impaction occurred when “an undergraduate major, program, or campus is designated as impacted when the number of

applications received from fully qualified applicants during the initial admission application filing period exceeds the number of available spaces that the campus can accommodate in the major, program, or campus given the instructional resources and physical capacity of the campus” (CSU, 2002). Thus, when impaction is declared, campuses can utilize supplementary criteria to screen applicants.

### Summary

Overall, the intent of the document analysis was an attempt to determine how written documents prioritize the “main goals” of enrollment management and how themes relate to institutional priorities. For the Chancellor, the EM policy was necessary “to ensure that CSU campuses continue to comply with the provisions of the Master Plan for Education.” Following the Master Plan translated into providing access to all eligible students and serving the local communities of the CSU. For the CSU, achieving access and diversity were major objectives present in policy discussions and practice. At the same time, the CSU system was cognizant of its reliance on the state and the increasing demand for enrollment that could not be accommodated without sufficient resources. As such, the CSU focused on revenue streams and findings ways to attract more students (and the resources they bring with them to college).

### System-wide findings

#### Thematic analysis

For this component of the study, I examined the Chancellor Communications from 2002-2008, as well as a selection of public speeches delivered during that time frame. The Chancellor of the CSU, Charles B. Reed, was the formal leader of the system,

so he represented the official Cal State perspective. The themes that emerged from the public discourse include: 1) responsive to the state's fiscal situation; 2) concern about not providing accessible and quality education and 3) resource allocation as an investment for the state. In one instance, Chancellor Reed summarized the situation of the CSU: describing how the "challenge continues to be maintaining our commitment to access and quality with a limited pool of resources." Similar to the observations of Rendon et. al. (2005), the system leadership acknowledged that it was difficult to provide "high-quality, accessible higher education [that is] vital to California's economic prosperity." The excerpt above encompasses each of the themes that are elaborated on below.

*Responsiveness to the state's fiscal situation*

The California State Universities were (and continue to be) dependent on an unpredictable funding source of the state. Over the past decade, the CSU experienced periods of uncertainty with the budget. Yet the CSU remained focused on maintaining quality and college access, particularly for underserved communities. The Chancellor closed out 2001 acknowledging how "the state's economic situation [was] still in flux...[and the] outlook continues to be grim." Even then, in a time of "tight budgets and continuing enrollment pressure" the main priority was to "preserve [the] budget so that we can maintain the highest quality programs and services." This interplay of objectives was important, but ultimately, the actions taken by the CSU system were dictated by the state budget, more than the mission and strategic direction of the CSU.

At the 2002 'State of the CSU' address, the Chancellor focused again on the budget and enrollment scenarios as major challenges for the system. The CSU reaffirmed

its priorities—“three P's - preserving access, providing quality instruction, and preparing students for the workforce.” Chancellor Reed detailed how the CSU’s “ability to fulfill this mission is primarily affected by two factors: our budget and our enrollment demand.” Essentially, it was this reality that propelled enrollment management to be an institutional need and priority. Not only were the Cal States facing unpredictable budget allocations and increasing demand, some of the institutions were over-enrolling students. This was a troubling development for the system, the Chancellor explained how the CSU enrolled “more students than we are funded for, [but] we are going to continue to do everything in our power to fulfill our mission and serve these students with the high-quality instruction and services that they expect of the CSU.” In this particular year, the system was spared from the looming budget recession and got additional funding support from the state as the following excerpt indicates:

The good news is that [the budget] increases our enrollment funding levels...this increase will allow CSU to serve a total of more than 20,000 new students in 2002-03. That may sound like an incredible number of students...and it accurately reflects the demand that our campuses continue to face.

Then, in 2003, the system was facing “deep cuts,” which translated into limited enrollment growth. With a new mandate of zero enrollment growth, the Chancellor explained how the “state lawmakers have essentially told us that we need to place restrictions on our long-cherished promise of providing educational opportunity to all eligible California students.” As a response, the CSU introduced enrollment management techniques so that campuses would not enroll “students that we cannot serve with

adequate course sections, classes and support services.” During the same year, the CSU trustees made “the difficult decision” to raise system-wide student fees by 30 percent. The Chancellor expressed concern that the budget cuts “put limits on the CSU's long-standing promise of providing unlimited educational opportunity.” Yet, in 2004, the CSU raised the student fees again. This time, the Chancellor rationalized that “although the decision to raise fees is always a difficult one, the fee increase will allow us to serve more students and preserve more faculty and staff positions. Raising fees is one of many actions we have been forced to take as a result of the budget cuts.” For the CSU, the customary solution to offsetting budget costs was to raise student fees.

The years of 2005-07 were relatively good budget years for the CSU system. These years were marked by staff pay increases, a “solid new budget” and a positive outlook: “The CSU is on the move because it has the right mission, and it has people who believe in that mission. In fact, the CSU's greatest strength is the quality of its students, faculty and staff members whose perspectives, ideas and opinions come together toward a common goal: transforming lives through education.” Being “on the move” was the key message in the 2006 branding campaign. For the system, it was “critical that we use this new branding system in all of our communications so that we project a strong and powerful image, one that reflects the quality of the CSU.” This momentum carried into the year, and the outreach efforts of the CSU. As we will see in a later section, the CSU devoted a lot attention toward diversity efforts around this time.

In 2008, at the time of data collection from the interviews, the state budget started

to pose challenges once again. The Chancellor explained how “the Governor proposed cuts to the CSU budget and the proposed budget fails to fund access for 10,000 students and puts at risk our ability to provide quality education for the nearly 450,000 students already enrolled.” The system took active steps to address the enrollment issue and later that year, the Chancellor declared statewide impaction in an “unprecedented decision”—a move that required the CSU to restrict access to some students. It was the urgency of “very difficult economic times” which created this enrollment challenge of a “magnitude of which the CSU has not faced before.” He described how:

For several years, the CSU has provided access to more students while funding and resources from the state have remained static [or] declined. This imbalance cannot continue. Admitting students without the resources necessary to provide the courses and services they need to successfully manage and complete their education is not fair to students, or to the faculty and staff members who support them. In the end, all stakeholders (students, faculty and staff, taxpayers and employers) lose when quality is compromised.

As a way to not slip in quality, the CSU needed to find new revenue streams. The Chancellor cited that under uncertain times, the “only significant source of additional revenue for the CSU is [the millions of dollars] from the student fee increase that will be used to cover mandatory cost increases. [With] the state’s worsening budget situation ...now, more than ever, we need to continue to advocate to the legislature and Governor about the impact of such cuts, and stress the importance of funding higher education.”

So, while the fees generated by students was what kept the CSU functioning, they were also limiting the number of new students admitted to align with the enrollment funded by the state.

Given the state's deteriorating economy in 2009, the CSU implemented "cost-savings measures to protect our students, faculty and staff, and to preserve the quality of our universities" which translated into "the CSU Board of Trustees took another action to mitigate our budget shortfall [by increasing] student fees for the 2009-10 academic year." In another "difficult choice" they realized that: "We are in a dire budget situation that requires us to look at all the options we have to operate our universities." The system faced "drastic actions" as they confronted the "unprecedented financial crisis." Chancellor Reed reminded the state that: "our message to legislators has been clear: continued reductions to the CSU's budget will erode our ability to educate and graduate the students that are critical to the state's economic success." Unfortunately, this equated to raising student fees and increasing demand.

#### *Access and quality concerns*

Another theme that was central to the public discourse from the Chancellor's office was the need to fulfill the CSU mission and pay close attention to quality considerations. Early on, the Chancellor knew that the budget situation carried "a stark message about the future of access at California's public universities" (2003). In dealing with enrollment demand, the focus was on "maintaining academic quality" and college access. As the Chancellor explained:

In terms of the CSU budget, one thing remains clear: we have a commitment to providing our students with a high quality education. This means we will: provide “authentic access” – which means allowing students to get the course selections they need to graduate in a timely manner. We will not take more students than we can serve with high quality. (2004)

In addition, he declared how “in previous budget cuts, access was postponed. But, now it is clearly threatened. We have to realize that for the first time ever; the CSU has had to deny access to qualified students” and that “when access and quality are threatened, we must take action. The CSU is committed to serving students and to serving them well.” For the CSU, serving students meant reaching out to local communities. In several of the system-wide initiatives, the CSU sought to build the enrollment pipeline for the future.

#### Outreach efforts

Providing early outreach and college awareness activities to the local community, in a time of increased demand, may seem unnecessary but the CSU continued these initiatives to build the pipeline and to “reach out to those students who might never have realized that college is possible and give them the information and tools they need to get there and succeed.” So, even with the economic challenges and limited resources, the CSU maintained student outreach efforts. Several of the campuses administered TRiO grant programs such as Gear-Up and Talent Search. In terms of recruitment in contemporary times, the Chancellor noted that,

One thing for certain is that our universities can no longer take a passive approach

to outreach or admissions. We can't wait for students to come to us. We need to get out of our comfort zones, out of our "ivory towers" and take our mission out to the people where they live. We have to go directly into the community to reach students, many of whom are our most economically needy students. And many are undocumented immigrants. We stepped out of our campus comfort zones and gone into the communities, taking our education passion with us.

As the state's population became more diverse, outreach efforts typically targeted lower-income and students of color although the goal of the CSU was to "reach all students—urban or rural, low income or affluent, old or young. We help them understand that a college degree is within reach." With regard to students of color, the Chancellor bluntly remarked that, "if we do not help them to become eligible for college, the state will be in deep trouble. It is that simple." Actually, while CSU touts that they "continue to earn national recognition for serving students from underrepresented groups," they also acknowledged how "there is much work yet to be done." He linked the success of this ethnic population to economic considerations:

In today's economy, higher education is more important than ever. It can improve the economic situation of both individuals and their communities. That's why it is in everyone's interest - communities, businesses, and educators - to help students succeed in school and pursue the highest degree they can. In fact, we cannot state this fact strongly enough: The future success of our country's economy is inextricably linked with the educational attainment of our students.

In this way, the Chancellor took more of a neo-liberal approach in framing students as

‘economic beings’—plus, the rationale for assisting them now is about the potential contributions they will (or will not) make in the future. Nevertheless, the CSU invested in expanding college opportunities to students from traditionally under-served populations and “proudly holds the honor of being the most diverse public university system in the country.” Here, I highlight some of the initiatives to offer a glimpse at the system level involvement in building college awareness. The CSU developed many types of early outreach projects, including the *Early Assessment Program (EAP)*, “*Steps to College*” *poster*, *Super Sunday*, and the *College Bus Tour*. Other initiatives include *Troops to College* and partnerships with external groups, like the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) organization.

*Early Assessment Program (EAP)*. One of the first programs to emerge from the system office was the Early Assessment Program. The Chancellor explained that it was created to “help 11th grade students get a snapshot of their mathematics and English/language arts proficiency. The test incorporates the CSU’s placement standards into the California Standards Tests for English and math.” Thus, the exam was designed to minimize the need for remedial education and gives students the chance to use the senior year to become eligible for CSU admission. In 2006, the Spellings Commission cited the “CSU’s Early Assessment Program and academic outreach as two of the best national models of how higher education and K-12 can collaborate to help expand access to underserved students and help them prepare academically for the rigors of college.” The test is voluntary for students, and as we see in chapter four, each of the campuses organized EAP efforts in different ways. The rationale behind the EAP is that “as K-12 gets better,

so does the CSU because the students coming to our campuses are better prepared to do college work. Many universities often separate themselves from K-12, but we believe that working together, and also working with our community college colleagues, all of education in California will improve. That in turns means a better-educated workforce for this state.”

*“Steps to College” poster.* Several years ago, the CSU designed a “Steps to College” poster to encourage students (in grades 6-12) to prepare for college. The poster, which “offers a grade-by-grade checklist for parents and students from 6th through 12th grades on the steps they need to take to prepare and apply for college and financial aid” is used in other states as a model. In seeking collaboration, the CSU “partnered with Boeing to create additional English/Spanish versions of the poster and expand the distribution to local libraries and youth organizations. We also partnered with three Asian newspapers to print and distribute copies of the poster in Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese.” The poster represents one effort to reach diverse communities.

*Super Sunday.* Another outreach program of the CSU is Super Sunday—a college information event geared toward California’s African American population. What was distinct about Super Sunday was the venue, the CSU visited the churches of black communities. As Chancellor Reed described: “Research shows that churches are key components of the black community, so that’s where we went rather than waiting for parents and students to come to us. CSU took the message to the pulpits that college is possible and that it can make a significant difference in a young person’s life. The results

have been spectacular. Reaching an estimated 40,000 people in Northern and Southern California, the CSU's "Super Sunday" activities are part of our initiative to reach students and parents in their communities with information about how to prepare for and succeed in college. In 2007, the Chancellor summarized the efforts of the CSU:

We have spent the last two years reaching out to the underserved communities. We have gone to African American churches, joined with groups to create a college-going culture in the Latino community, and forged partnerships with Native American tribal leaders to help more young people know what it takes to go to college. Our efforts seem to be paying off in admissions applications.

In sum, applications from ethnic minority groups are on the rise, as is the national exposure garnered to CSU.

*College Bus Tour.* The final example about the CSU innovative approach to student outreach and recruitment at the system level was the Road to College Statewide Tour. In conjunction with the AT&T Foundation, the CSU designed a college tour in 2008 to bring more awareness out college preparation. As part of the campaign, a "customized 40-foot biodiesel tour bus traveled to high schools, college fairs and CSU's Counselor Conferences throughout the state. The bus was loaded with laptop computers and at each stop students, teachers and counselors explored the CSU's 23 campuses, learned about the admissions process, received information about financial aid, and talked to CSU experts." This public-private partnership was another way that the CSU was "bringing the university to the public" in this case, in a very literal sense. The bus tour had many stops

within California to encourage more students to enroll in college.

Overall, CSU outreach efforts worked toward building a college-going culture for California's underserved populations. The Chancellor felt that the CSU was a national leader in the area and that the CSU is "about 15 years ahead of all other universities in the country on what we are doing with underserved groups. People are watching us to see what we will do next" but he simultaneously acknowledged that the "real challenge is for Latino students - and all groups, for that matter - to have proportional representation in the eligibility pool. Right now we are getting close but not quite close enough." No doubt, to expand the eligible pool, a lot of progress needs to be made. As such, another main consideration was the preparedness of high school students to be eligible for university admission. Each year, the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) conducts an eligibility study among California High School students to see if they are eligible for admission to the University of California (UC) and the California State University. In 2006, only 35% of California high school graduates were eligible for admission to the UC or CSU (CPEC, 2006). When disaggregating this figure by ethnic group, discrepancies were present. For instance, among the 35% of students who are eligible for college, African Americans and Hispanics had even lower rates of preparation compared to other ethnic groups, at 25% and 24% respectively. These trends create challenges for regional public universities who are seeking to educate the state residents, which are increasingly ethnically diverse, and tend to be under-prepared for college. It is for this reason that the CSU continued its outreach efforts. Chancellor Reed reaffirmed the system's commitment that "providing access means more than simply opening the

doors. Providing access means assisting students all the way from elementary and secondary school until they graduate from the CSU.” As a whole, the Cal States claim to be the bridge between the community and workforce of the state. Overall, the motivation of the CSU to focus on college access was to build a better community and stronger economy for the state. For the CSU, the justification to receive additional investment from the state, and support from the general public is positioned around these concerns. So then, by investing in the Cal State system, and in turn the CSU campuses providing outreach to the community, the hope was that the students would contribute to a brighter future for California. Yet, what is not elaborated on in these public announcements for outreach and community partnerships is that the CSUs are changing enrollment strategies, and that this directional shift has meant an increase in admission criteria and student fee (tuition) hikes. Thus, the need for revenue and funding support has run head-on with access considerations. To complicate the issue, the involvement to early outreach initiatives to reach out to the underserved communities is what the CSU uses to publicize their institutional mission and leverage more resources. The Chancellor set the scenario in bleak terms:

We must reach students from traditionally underserved populations, get them eligible and into college and then get them graduated. They already are in the majority in California, and are on the brink of becoming a majority population in this country. If we don't serve those students – many of who are the first in their families to attend college – our universities will become obsolete, our workforce will suffer, and our businesses and economy will pay the price. Translated: our

communities and our standard of living will decline. It no longer will be “their” problem that they are not educated and contributing to the intellectual community and economic base – it will be a problem we ignored at our own peril.

The financial and economic considerations were, again, at the forefront in providing college access to students.

#### *Resource allocation as investment*

Since 2002, the CSU experienced a tumultuous cycle of budget allocations. Being dependent on the state legislature, the CSU was often in a reactive, wait and see mode as the state policy makers decide the budget. However, the CSU advocated for their continued financial support since the CSU “plays a critical part in California’s economic recovery.” One of the common strategies was to demonstrate how the CSU was an investment, not an expense to the state. The Chancellor provided comments such as “investing in the CSU is a winning proposition for every resident of California” and that “a CSU education adds value to both the individual student and the state’s economy. This means that an investment in the CSU is a sound investment for California.” The Chancellor would spread this message any chance he got. The Chancellor spoke at various policy venues (such as the CSU Legislative Day) and encouraged others to talk to the state’s elected officials:

Today, we need to remind our legislators that California needs to get its priorities straight and be smart about where it invests its money. There is no greater return than on money invested in higher education. (2004)

The “state’s worsening budget situation” meant that the CSU was “forced into the position that we are because degrading quality and not providing real access to students is a big issue. Now more than ever, we need to continue to advocate to the legislature and Governor about the impact of such cuts, and stress the importance of funding higher education.” So, there was a constant need to show the impact of CSU so that the state can realize that “higher education is vital to California's economic prosperity, and that our state relies on the CSU to provide high-quality, accessible, student-focused higher education for its citizens.” Thus, one of the roles of the Chancellor was to position the CSU in the best light as a way to secure financial support from the state. When that did not occur, the CSU turned to the students to recover costs and sustain the organization. Overall, the primary concern of the CSU was financial matters. Everything else flowed from this, as the campuses were dependent on state allocations.

#### Recap of themes

There was an interesting tension at the CSU with regard to reaching out to provide college access opportunities and the limited resources that the university has to educate those students once they are ready to enroll in college. In general, taken at face value, the findings from the public discourse suggest that they were primarily focused on coping with the financial situation, then on access and quality concerns. Yet, the issue was more complex than that. The CSU is historically known for being a primary access point for students of color, one glance at the student profile (from chapter four) indicates the students who enroll at the Cal State. So, the focus on early outreach efforts, particularly for California’s growing youth population, is seen as a way to plan for the future, but also

it could be viewed as strategic moves to garner additional resources and buy-in from the state and other stakeholders.

Like most public institutions, the universities within the CSU system were dependent on the state to continue providing financial support for its higher education operations. With surges in enrollment demand, coupled with the stagnating investments at the state level, the CSU leadership was left with the decisions of how to respond each year. Since the budget was so unpredictable, a challenge of the CSU was to know how many students to admit and enroll to still be offering college opportunities that were meaningful for students. Yet, they raised student fees to secure other funding sources. At the system level, there was some emphasis on accommodating the emerging low-income and ethnic populations of California by providing more outreach programming and campus events for the community. Yet, in many of the Chancellor public comments, providing assistance to these groups was not framed as being an investment in the students and for the community, but that the *lack of* college graduates would lead to a bigger problem in the future unless something is done now. On the other hand, the CSU as a whole are moving to be more selective, as it continues down the path of impactation and using the eligibility index and other measures to evaluate applicants. Universities were also realizing that they cannot rely on the state and sought other ways to embrace activities related to entrepreneurialism, such as the university initiatives with branding campaigns enhanced efforts to build a web presence and the desire to be a “destination of choice.”

## CHAPTER FIVE: INSTITUTION-LEVEL FINDINGS

Chapter five presents the findings from an analysis of a variety of institutional documents and formal interviews, and addresses the first two research questions about the ways in which policies and practices get implemented in the college recruitment office. The chapter focuses on the institutional level, and what the Cal State Universities and the recruitment offices were doing in response to policies and changing trends in new student enrollment. Key findings are presented by campus setting, and organized by the propositions that were described in the third chapter (which provides an overview of and how the propositions are connected to the theoretical concepts and data analysis). The chapter is divided into five parts: a section devoted to each university that describes the organizational structure, priorities and services of recruitment efforts, and concludes with a final section that draws theoretical connections and offers comparisons across the universities. In considering the institutional context to seek how the recruitment staff regard and enact enrollment-related policies, an analysis of the structure, priorities and services can be helpful in understanding some of the nuances found at each campus. As a review from chapter three, the propositions that direct the analysis are about:

**Institutional Priorities:** 1) *The formal position on enrollment management at the system level will focus on revenue considerations and maintaining the access mission of the CSU. At the campus level, the emphasis will be on maintaining access and improving prestige, with revenue considerations underemphasized.* 2) *All campuses will be increasingly entrepreneurial in reaching new student markets. As a result, recruitment offices will feel pressure to recruit and enroll students.*

**Programs and Services:** 3) *Non-impacted campuses will adopt new programs and enhance services to attract more students to their campus.* 4) *Each campus will organize its programs and services by following*

*mandates from the Chancellor or mimicking the recruitment models of other Cal State Universities.*

As explained in chapter three, the bulk of the propositions relate to aspects of academic capitalism in the new economy (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) and institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2000). The concepts framed the analysis in such a way that a macro-level view of the college admissions landscape emerged. That is, recognizing that activities in the recruitment office were not operating in a vacuum and that the context in which this work was carried out is important to consider.

Using the propositions as a guide, I examined the organizational structure, institutional priorities and services of each of the sampled universities in an attempt to better understand the context of a given organization. The findings are presented in the following order: Juniper University, Sycamore University, Pine University and Cypress University.

#### Juniper University: we are just catching up

Of the four universities in the sample, Juniper University was the only campus that did not have a senior administrator specifically designated for enrollment management, yet Juniper was the campus that exhibited the most market-oriented recruitment approach. For example, the recruitment office established a branding campaign for strategic messaging and established programs targeted to specific student populations as a way to improve the image of the university. More than the others in the sample, the staff of recruiters at Juniper spoke openly about the competition and pressure they felt to recruit students. Additionally, the office included a few international

recruiters and early outreach programs, which were grant-funded initiatives that the Director wrote “on [their] free time.”

Structural considerations

Juniper University was one of the few within the CSU system that had a strategic enrollment management plan that was openly shared with the general public. So, although the office was a part of the Student Affairs division, some of the processes often associated with enrollment management, such as a long-term strategic plan or campus-wide committees were in place. As the comments below suggest, enrollment management was a relatively new addition for the staff in the recruitment office.

Enrollment management is something that has come into popularity in the last five years or so. You never heard of a VP for enrollment, or heard of enrollment management in general, but now it is so carefully crafted that "you bring them in, and they get all of their courses and they graduate in a timely fashion. EM is not just about bringing them in, but it is about having them graduate. So it is understanding that [the recruitment office is] part of a bigger picture, that we are part of a team. (Bill)

Enrollment management issues were not always discussed directly within the recruitment office, it was typically a matter of business that the upper administrators and appropriate committees took care of. As Amy pointed out: “as recruiters we do not really, have enough grasp about that.” She continued by discussing her contribution and the role of her colleagues:

I am not directly related to enrollment management. We are the worker bees, the

big bees are creating all these rules, but really, they should ask us. Enrollment management would be beneficial if they interviewed us as recruiters, the information we have would be very helpful, since we see things they do not. The bees have a lot of insight of what works and what doesn't work. They do not come down to that level and they should. (Amy, Recruiter)

The response from Amy was unique among the dataset as one of few instances where the staff acknowledged that their role is important and can be insightful for improving the workplace processes and achieving institutional objectives. Being able to “see things they do not” gives an advantage to the recruiters in addressing the needs of the students.

At Juniper, the recruitment office belonged to a large consolidated unit organized under Student Affairs. A few years ago, there was a reorganization of offices, and with the shift came changes: new office-related procedures, cross-training recruiters to visit high schools and community colleges and a greater emphasis on enrollment numbers. It took time for some of the experienced staff members to adjust to the expectations from the reorganization.

It took a while but once we got the goals set by the Vice President, it settled down. Everyone was still doing [their] own thing in silos, but there was an effort being made to really merge the work that we were doing. Now it is better because there is less leaders, merged a couple of positions, moved the staff around a little bit and made it a lot better. I don't think it is perfect yet, but better. (Michelle, Recruiter)

The office culture has definitely changed, from when I first started working here. We lost a lot of people because of the administration, and the Director, going in a different direction. It was a mentality of “get on the train or get off.” It was very direct, it was cold—‘this is our purpose, this is what we have to do, if you can't get it done then maybe you need to go somewhere else.’ It is very different, not as lax as before, now it is ok, just ok, I think they noticed that there has been a strain for the last year or two. (Nancy, Recruiter)

The change that Nancy described is one that emphasized enrollment targets and finding strategies to reach them. At Juniper, there was a sense of stress among the staff to maintain student enrollments each year.

The VP just comes down and says these are the targets we need to hit. If we are a little low, we will just have a couple more programs to bring in the transfer students or whatnot, just to bump up the numbers. And typically what happens is that [the central Administrators] freak out because the numbers are not quite there from the "year to date" and because they are impatient, we do a program, and then we are overenrolled. (Bill, Director)

This type of balancing act is at the root of managing enrollments. As one recruiter warned, the university needs to “pave the roads before the cars come” by finding the optimal level of capacity to educate students.

### Admissions

At most universities, the recruitment and admissions functions are tightly linked since both offices deal with prospective students and the application process. For Juniper,

the offices fall under different domains (Admissions in Academic Affairs and Recruitment in Student Affairs) yet the Director described how the recruitment office was “joined at the hip with Admissions. We generate the applications, they run the paperwork, and so we always have to collaborate.” There was a sense of interdependence between the two offices as observed in the following comment from one of the other Directors at Juniper:

We need Admissions [representatives] at our events: just to have them talk about admissions policies because they are more ‘finger-on-the-pulse’ than we are when it comes to policies. We have programs that they just need to be there. (Bill, Director)

The recruitment staff was dependent on the Admissions office to share updates on policies and application deadlines. The lines of communication between the two offices were present but the majority of the recruiters at Juniper spoke about the misalignment between the functions and how the lack of communication got manifested into frustrations on the job. So, while the managers may see the relationship as a collaboration; the staff members viewed the same process in another way. Several staff described the workplace implications for the miscommunication with the Admissions office. For example,

What is really hard is that our Admissions office is separate from us. In some CSU campuses, it is usually Outreach and Admissions, where you are both. But with us we are very separate, so it makes it really hard because Admissions will be enacting policies or doing something but they don't let us know about it. So we

can be out in the field, and students will be telling us things and we are like, 'what are you talking about?' Sometimes there can be a disjointment with what Admissions needs to get done and what we need to get done, which usually makes the job very difficult. (Nancy, Recruiter)

Sometimes there is a “disconnect” between [Admissions], and us since we are not tied to each other, they are in academic affairs and we are in student affairs.

Sometimes there is a breakdown in communication, and especially now with the budget and stuff. For instance, with the transfer deadlines, we never know when they might be closing the [application] window on transfer students. We got an email yesterday that they are closing in July, you know, and we go to the community college and tell students 'we are still open, we are still open' but until when? They can never tell us a date. (Ernesto, Recruiter)

By not having the accurate information, the job of the recruiter became difficult, and often required additional steps to get the necessary information to provide to prospective students. Kristy, a new recruiter, detailed the need for the right tools:

Maybe the relationship between Admissions and Records (A & R) should be closer. I still don't have access to [the student information system] and it has been requested numerous times. It makes my job frustrating when I am out at a school and I can't access student information. I have to come back or make a phone call, so things like that would run smoother if I knew little bit more about A & R and the codes they use, so that I can be more informed. I can relay that information to

the student, instead of telling the student to go to Admissions...go to A and R, Go to A and R, Go to A and R! (Kristy, Recruiter)

As the examples show, there was strain between the recruitment and admissions office in developing seamless and accurate interactions with prospective students. On first glance of the organizational chart, there was a clear delineation between the two offices in that they report to different vice presidents. On the surface, the offices are working together but the channels of communication between the two functions could improve.

*Institutional priorities*

Creating a marketing brand played a significant role in the activities of the Juniper recruitment office. Working on a branding campaign was a priority; in other words, the staff developed strategic messages and images and featured it in a prominent way. The emphasis on marketing is connected to academic capitalism because of the dominant perspective of the marketplace, and the need to “sell” the school to the students. When asked about the new priority of marketing and creating a brand, the Director stated,

Well, because we didn't have one. Most universities are moving in this direction.

This campus didn't have one so we are just catching up. I mean, you look at UCLA and you know UCLA when you see it. When I walk into a counseling center, and I see something from a far, I want to know that it is a Cal State thing.

You know, what is the brand? What is the message? When we say Cal State, what does that mean? And that's just a necessity. We need to catch up.

In some ways, the strategy Juniper took was to develop an identity out of the materials:

We are moving more and more into the marketing of things. Like our [materials]. When I first got here they were all different colors, some were beige, yellow, a couple of them were red but there wasn't a real theme to it. So, what we did immediately is we looked at everything we had and gave it sort of an identity. To me, it was like 'let's use school colors'. So now all the [materials] have that kind of look to them. (Richard, Director)

Along with the aggressive push of marketing in the recruitment approach, the office focused on "meeting the numbers" and the staff felt pressure to recruit. It seems as though the marketing campaign is an example of mimetic isomorphism since Juniper is simply trying to catch up; they need to appear legitimate by having a brand like the other (more prestigious) institutions. Being so market-driven, particularly as a necessity to recruit students, points to the pervasiveness of academic capitalism.

Juniper had a heightened sense of opposition since other postsecondary institutions were reaching out to the students in their local area. The Director spoke about expanding the recruitment territory and other strategies to deal with the population decrease in the area. He said,

We do go to [more remote parts of the state], where folks are moving to. You know, or do we go to [nearby counties], we need to look at alternatives. Another part of our attempt to mitigate this is through our marketing. We are hoping to increase the yield percentage so that will at least mitigate this possible decrease in students. But we haven't dealt with it, and that's why we have this 'marketing

thing’ and we are looking into plans to go into other regions to recruit. But it is going to be an issue, so we will see how we are going to deal with it.

An emerging theme at Juniper was the emphasis on marketing techniques to improve the campus image to recruit students and to ultimately increase enrollment. As competition for students was on the rise, the recruitment office sought more competitive applicants (i.e. those with higher GPAs).

### Markets and marketing

Some of the staff at Juniper compared recruiting students to selling a product. The various comments about the need for “positioning” or statements like “make it easier for us to sell,” indicates the scope to which the emphasis was on selling some kind of product so that the customer could make an informed decision.

We begin the typical recruitment with 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders; it’s about talking to them about Cal State. It is about marketing the university. Positioning ourselves in such a way that the students understand that CSU is a viable location for them to come. Our task is to provide them with the information so they can make an informed choice. And make sure that we position CSU in its best light. (Chris, Recruiter)

Juniper implemented changes to the office structure because of the importance of marketing and wanting to provide a structured correspondence with students. Thus, they turned their “glorified mailroom” into a more high-profile office with designated staff positions. In other words,

The communications unit [was] really intertwined in all of it. We have a graphic

designer, someone who edits, a writer, college students who enter contact cards and answer requests for information. We are now moving more and more into the marketing of things. (Richard, Director)

We have done market research, and had consultants come in and do it. This campus has not done a good job promoting themselves, and that is what the President is doing much more of, getting people to know all the great things that are happening at CSU. Sort of improving the image of the institution, the branding, if you will, if you want to put it in business marketing terms. (Bill, Director)

In addition to the market focus, the staff members at Juniper University were acutely aware of the image and perceptions of the campus that needed improvement. One goal of the office was to improve the type student that attend and therefore recruitment officers were encouraged to attract students who had a 3.5 GPA or above to consider the CSU.

From what I understand, the goal is to attract a little bit more of...(silence). Well, a lot people think that you go to CSU because you have a two-point-something GPA but when I work with students, the goal is to have them understand that even if you do have a 3.5, it doesn't mean that you have to go to a UC or some other school, there is a lot of opportunities here. I don't think, a lot of students realize how much this university has to offer, so we are trying to sell the university to students who have a 2.0-2.99 but also trying to get the students that are the 3.5 and the 3.6, 3.7 students to understand what this university has to offer. (Kristy,

Recruiter)

The challenges really lie in the fact that some students don't know what we offer. Local students are hard to sell because they think they know the campus, when they really don't. They don't know the different programs the faculty offer, or the facilities or labs that we have, the research that is going on, or the new facilities, you know, they don't know that stuff. It is sort of the local school; they don't have too much regard for until it. So, that is a challenge but we take that on. (Michelle, Recruiter)

The office hosted special programs to attract high achieving students, and as the comments imply, they had a specific idea of who those students should be based on the high school grade point average. Other targeted strategies were used, as Chris explained;

Our Honor's Day program is to attract students who are UC bound or private bound. You know, they don't see [this CSU] at that caliber, for some reason they don't see that. They want to do research; little do they know they can do that here. We try to get into the honors classes and use the interns to help facilitate that program. Also, we talk to the college counselors, like asking, 'do you have the group of students that are UC bound but maybe might take a look at [this CSU]. So we are trying to push that more.

In sum, there was a concerted effort to reach out to higher achieving students and "build up" the prestige of the student body. A challenge for accomplishing these goals was the perception of the California State University in the eye of the public. The common theme

around the office was the constant challenge of addressing how the CSU was not good enough, or does not get the respect it deserves. The sampling of comments below exhibited the range of concerns from the staff:

The reputation, well, 'it is just Cal State and anyone can get in here.' So, for students who are high achievers, this institution is not good enough for them because it is not prestigious enough. It doesn't have the name like [flagship UC]. The harder the school to get into, the better you are. That is how they see it. So I find that to be a major challenge, many look down on [this Cal State], it is not good enough. (Kristy, Recruiter)

I think there is a stigma is that we are the second rate university system. It is a hurdle we have to overcome. We are not a secondary school. [Students] say [CSU] that's my fallback school, and I say we are a good school. That's a hurdle but with the re-branding, we will get over that. (George, Recruiter)

It is not like we are "going to grow up one day to become a UC" and [the general public] doesn't understand how the two systems operate and work together or that we are not inferior to UC because we are a Cal State. We have a totally different mission, they do what they do very well and we do what we do very well and we are not apologizing for that! (Michelle, Recruiter)

As the next section documents, the staff felt as though they vie with other schools for students so that may explain some of the defensive tone in the comments from George

and Michelle. For them, the Cal State is an excellent institution and each day, as part of their jobs, they defend the reputation of the school as part of the recruitment message. In the current setting in which competition for students is becoming more of the norm, maintaining a certain image was particularly important for Juniper and other campuses.

While providing college access, there was still a competitive component to student recruitment. As such, Juniper University found itself in a unique situation of competing for students, and the majority of the staff certainly felt the pressure.

We are fighting for the same student and I have seen that recently, it happening more now. The community colleges are being more aggressive; we are all trying to get that one student to come to our college. It is hard to do that when the community college is [at the high school] once a week, UC has their interns that they bring in, and I have my interns—we compete for the same school and students. It is much harder to recruit that student! We have to try and go above and beyond and offer them more. (Nancy, Recruiter)

The community colleges, at least in my area, are doing a really good job of attracting students that would go to a UC or a Cal State; they are just providing better incentives for their students. One California community college offers a program where they pay for the student's first year, and good financial aid packages and scholarships for freshman. So they are taking a lot of students even from the UC and from us. (Ernesto, Recruiter)

In explaining the rationale for being so numbers focused, one of the directors at Juniper

said that it was simply a reality: “I think that is part of the old, when there was not a declining number of graduating seniors, and when other schools were not recruiting in our area, and we didn't have much of a competition. But there is competition, and there is a shrinking pool of graduating seniors and we have to be more numbers focused.” So, the rationale for Juniper University’s focus on the numbers was that the market for students eligible for higher education was shrinking and all institutions contend for the same pool of students. Richard, the Director extended the conversation about competition:

Our focus is with that group that needs to come to the Cal State. Or students who applied to UC that didn't get in, that are still pretty strong students, we want to be their next choice. But you know, [another CSU] is kind of close to us, so is [another CSU] so we are competing for some of the same students. But it is a healthy kind of thing; the students ultimately will go where they find the best fit. And for me, it is ‘let’s show them what a great fit it is’. (Richard, Director)

There is [competition among the CSU], there is. Especially with the top ones, the impacted schools, ones that are always up there, as far as competition. Sometimes campuses like [us] even among students within the local area—sometimes [we are] third or fourth on their college list. Or they apply just because it is in their backyard, as a back up. (Ernesto, Recruiter)

Along with the competitive streak, there were staff members who spoke about the pressure felt within the office with regard to bringing in the student numbers:

One thing that has always been pushed into to us is the numbers. Get the numbers,

get the numbers, and get the numbers! At the Community College level, when we were struggling to get the numbers, [they ask] are students transferring to us, why aren't you at your school, why aren't you there? It has always been forced upon us to get our numbers and do what we have to do to get it done if you can't get it done then, you need to figure something else. You need to come up with another game plan and it's been a pressure to do that. (Nancy, Recruiter)

I think that there is pressure maybe higher up, for the directors. I don't feel the direct pressure of bringing in students [because I work in mostly outreach].

Although if you look at the population of students that we serve, in relation to how many students go on to higher education it is...the pressure is there. It is been there and I think it will continue to be there. (Kristy, Recruiter)

When discussing the pressure to increase the numbers, George explained how the pressure was spread to all levels of the organization. As he described,

It is a chain of pressure. Pressure comes from [direct supervisor] to me, [direct supervisor] is pressured by [the Director], and then [the Director] is pressured from [Vice President of Student Affairs], [Vice President of Student Affairs], from the President the President from the Chancellor, they pass down their pressure, and I take it out on my cats when I get I get home [laughs]—recruit more students! It is a trickle down effect... (George, Recruiter)

The so-called chain of pressure at Juniper was strong, and it sent the basic message that promoting the university to students was essential for establishing a successful brand,

suggesting an overarching emphasis on revenue and prestige maximization. The staff wanted Juniper to be seen in a better light and sought to recruit better students.

In general, the office took pride in assisting students from all academic abilities, but there was a growing interest in reaching out to high achieving students by showing them what Juniper had to offer.

### Services offered

To get a better sense of the types of programs and services offered to students before they committed to enrolling at Cal State, this section provides a sampling of programmatic aspects that relate to the recruitment structure and priorities of the campus. At Juniper, there was a clear focus on marketing and it was reflected in how the office and the subsequent events they engaged in were organized.

In late spring, we have an event, our marquee program, this is really for admitted students and much more focused; the academic departments start talking more specifics. These students have applied and been admitted so now they are learning more about the nitty-gritty of here is how the department works, here is what we offer but it is marketing still so we have to tell students, and their parents, what a great college this is. (Amy, Recruiter)

Our student marketing and communication, it is a new division and they have done a lot of great stuff, it is [based] out of this office, they have done the website and publications and different ways for dealing with students that I think have

been innovative, and really just worked because it is in tune of what students want, and what they are used to. (Chris, Recruiter)

The importance of messaging relates to market-oriented techniques, and to the new types of individualized and customized materials that campuses utilize. In fact, new businesses are emerging to sell universities the right products to have that capability.

The other thing we are working on is the congratulation notice. Currently, when a student is admitted they get an envelope, fold it up and shove the papers in and that's it. That's their big moment, they have admitted to Cal State in a typical envelope. To me, it is a little anti-climatic. Let's send them something that screams, WOW, you have been admitted! So, we are working on a new piece. It will have an official seal, you open it up and it will be a certificate. You have been admitted! You're a great student! Nothing business-oriented. Later on, they get the letter with important business information. Again, to let them know that they are special, it is part of the marketing aspect of things. (Richard, Director)

The program that allowed Juniper to create personalized messages was a product offered for sale by Hobsens. Several other CSUs purchased and utilized Hobsens products.

Within the office structure at Juniper University, the central priorities were to establish a brand and maximize its utility in drawing students to the campus. The office was committed to the ideals of access, having the recruiters visit high schools and community colleges, also with the eye toward highlighting institutional strengths to attract more competitive students. The majority of the staff felt a sense of competition for

students. While they were ‘friendly’ with the CSU schools, they acknowledged that recruiting students was becoming more and more difficult.

Explaining requirements

At the time of data collection, Juniper was not an impacted campus; and the university’s goal was to maintain enrollments (not seeking major growth). They were, however, anticipating declines in the eligible population and the prospects were great enough to make the staff, particularly the managers, nervous and pro-active in the recruitment strategies employed at Juniper. Although, explaining impaction was not a priority, some recruiters would described the basics during recruitment presentations:

The impaction stuff comes up sometimes; the service area is not really an issue with us. If [this CSU] gets impacted, that would be an issue since the whole campus is impacted and so the service area is more important to the students. We just explain what [impaction] is, it means more students are trying to get in then there is room so the standards are going to be higher. I try to convince them this is how it is, sorry there is no way around it. (George, Recruiter)

We have a couple of impacted majors, but it is not really an issue for us. Come one, come all. The EI, is pretty straightforward, it is a formula. If you have over a 3.0 and your A-G requirements, then your SAT don't matter. If you have below a 3.0, there is a sliding scale. Obviously, there are a few exceptions, and the folks in A and R will make a call on that. (Geoff, Recruiter)

We have a wide range of students: everyone from the lowest GPA (like 2.0) but sometimes we work with students that have a 1.8 or 1.9, working with special programs like EOP, and all the way up to the 4.0 who chose us for the programs that we have here at the institution. (Ernesto, Recruiter)

At the time, dealing with impaction was not central to the work at Juniper since they still had space available for students. The staff took pride in providing college access to all types of students: first-time freshman and transfer students, to students with a range of grade point averages. Additionally, the office had designated a few recruiting positions to target international students. Most of the underlying principle behind the new open recruitment strategies is in response to the decrease in students who will be eligible for college admission in the area.

“We are just catching up”

The staff at Juniper University was increasingly aware of student markets and it was manifested into the daily practices of the recruitment office. In tangible ways, like the branding campaign or the personalized recruitment messages, and in the less explicit “pressure” that the recruitment staff felt in attracting students to the campus, the underlying premise was the important role of economic considerations for the university. To maintain enrollments, Juniper actively recruited first-time freshman and transfer students; they also had positions that focused on international student recruitment.

In terms of institutional isomorphism, there was some evidence that suggests that the office was not very concerned about the mandates from the state or Chancellor; the impaction policy did not affect the school. When the central administration would tell the

staff what targets to hit, was the only clear example of a top-down approach to control the activities of the staff.

The structure at Juniper did not appear to mimic any of the other campuses; in fact, they were the only one in the sample that did not name an executive position like a Vice President of Enrollment Management. Instead, the campus maintained a campus wide committee to coordinate those efforts. With regard to the practices within the office, Juniper offered the typical services—campus tours, college fairs, visits to the high schools and community colleges, and various on-campus programs. This set of activities was often the norm for recruitment offices. The sharing of ideas among CSU campuses, but some of the experienced recruiters saw their campus as pioneers, in other words, other Cal States looked to them for leadership and ideas for outreach. In addition, the Chancellor’s office hosted an annual conference for counselors, which brought the CSU recruiters from across the system together. This type of gathering served as an example of normative isomorphism since it was a professional development opportunity and a chance to expand knowledge and professional networks with others around the state. Furthermore, the CSU counselor conference was a vehicle for building the taken-for-granted notion that the recruiters are recruiting for the Cal State system as a whole. Since they represent the CSU, the staff was responsible for knowing about other campuses and referring students to their colleagues.

Sycamore University: by any means necessary

More than the other universities in the sample, the recruitment office at Sycamore maintained a staff of recruiters who had many years experience in the admissions field.

The staff had a seemingly good work relationship with each other and all contributed toward the common goal of enrolling more students and meeting the specific mandates set by the campus President. More than the other recruitment offices in the sample, the staff at Sycamore used creative means and programming to attract students to visit the campus. The activities ranged from early outreach for middle school populations to attending employment fairs for working professionals who wanted to return to college.

*Structural considerations*

At the time of data collection, Sycamore University was shifting towards an enrollment management approach, signaled by the creation of a Vice President responsible for the overall coordination of enrollment planning. The Director said, “the President created a new Vice President and we will fall under that division. I don't know how that will play out. We will have to see since it is new to all of us.” One thing was for certain: the staff would recruit no matter who was in the leadership position. Sycamore recruiters had a directive from the President to target freshman students in particular. The staff shared how:

Enrollment management for [this CSU] is different things. We are trying to build up our freshmen capacity and trying to maintain our transfer, which becomes our overall student enrollment. We are managing both. (Helen, Recruiter)

Another recruiter recalled how:

Our president wants more first time freshmen, so we moved towards interfacing with high schools and restructuring our strategy to be able to attract more high schools in a different way because of the mandates of the president. Prior to [the

new mandate] we had been considered a transfer-rich campus and in the process of having to put transfers on the back burner, our transfer numbers have slightly dipped low, so we are working on that again. (Norma, Recruiter)

By taking a more active role in reaching out to first-time freshman, the services for transfer students got overlooked and as a result, the number of students transferring to the university decreased. The Sycamore recruiters were responsible for visiting both high schools and community colleges; other recruitment activities ranged from early outreach events at middle schools to industry functions aimed at professionals thinking about returning to school, as a way to increase the profile of the campus and ultimately, recruit students.

Sycamore focused on improving the yield rate, but often times, they needed to remind the campus community that the task was the responsibility of everyone.

Our responsibility is not yield. Technically, I am just saying, that's what I believe. I think the campus, as a whole, is responsible for yield. It can't be left to our office, it just can't. Our campus has taken steps that they see it that way. We organize the events, and the campus community needs to show up and support it. That's the way it has to be. 'If we are going to organize the events in the field and campus events, you got to show up. If you all don't show up then we are not going to get the yield.' (Robert, Recruiter)

The Vice President (of Student Affairs) agreed with Robert's assessment and acted on it by persuading Sycamore faculty and professionals to attend campus and off-campus events hosted by the recruitment office. As one of the recruiters described,

Our VP has a little bit of pull to talk to faculty and say, "hey, were losing people unless you get on the bandwagon, our enrollment is going to take another big hit, its already taken two or three years of hits, because of our budget and because we are not meeting our enrollment," and once we started talking to everybody in a collaborative way, then things all of a sudden started to gel and move forward.

(Norma, Recruiter)

The previous excerpt suggests that it takes more than the recruitment office to build the reputation of a school, and that everyone in the campus community needed to contribute. Enrollment management at Sycamore was up-and-coming. With the impending arrival of the new Vice President designated to oversee student enrollment, a shift in operations was likely which called for closer attention to the ways in which the various units of enrollment worked together.

### Admissions

Of all of the campuses in the sample, the recruiters at Sycamore expressed the most frustration with the day-to-day processes of the Admissions office. From their view, the admissions practices were time consuming and minimized the recruitment efforts, particularly when applications were incomplete or not processed in a timely manner.

We have more applications than we did last year, and we had less students admitted at the same time. So, question is—we have more applications but still we are below of what we admitted last year at the same time, but we have more applications, so what's going on? Why are these applications not getting processed quicker? Even though we have a good working relationship with our

[Admissions] office, something needs to change. That's the biggest fight we have with our admissions office is about the actual process of getting students admitted is so tedious and it just takes forever. It works against us. (Robert, Recruiter)

Robert was visibly upset, shaking his head as he spoke about that the current process, which in his opinion, was not working. He was not alone. Other recruiters shared similar concerns about the dependence on the Admissions staff in getting students admitted and how they “don't have trouble one-on-one but the process is slow” (Nora). The idea of “working the student up” was not a common practice within the CSU but was something that the staff engaged in to speed up the process. This was evidence against isomorphism, since the staff at Sycamore is not following the formal policies and procedures; they were not acting like the other recruitment offices.

It's very frustrating, because we tell the students that they will hear something from Admissions in a couple of weeks, but that does not happen. We can do the work-ups on our students, so we can say yes you will be admitted but the official letter comes from admissions. Some of my colleagues do the work-ups, so does the Director, I do some but still, it doesn't really expedite it. It is taking longer than it should so it is very frustrating for us. (Helen, Recruiter)

That is the biggest thing we fight about all the time, you know, we get the applications in and we turn them over--actually we even do the work-ups (initial evaluation), we have them worked up and ready to go, we turn it over to Admissions and it still takes four weeks to get a admissions response, that is, if

we are lucky. (Robert, Recruiter)

The issue with the Admissions office was not about work performance per se, but the recruiters knew that a quicker acceptance could be more beneficial for the campus. As a veteran recruiter, Robert recalled,

I know being out in the field, I tell them all the time, for some students, it is whoever accepts them first, that's the school they will go to. So we don't want to be the 3 or 4th school to accept them, we want to do it right away. If they are eligible, we need to admit them quickly. Their concern is always, we are so behind, processing is behind for spring, and then fall comes. Some schools send their letters out in a week or two. We don't.

Similar to Juniper, the director had a slightly different perspective than the staff:

We get a lot of applications, but then the students don't come. I kind of feel bad for Admissions because they have to work up all those files because they don't know who is coming and who is not. (Carolyn, Director)

Even as Sycamore increased exposure and collected more applications than ever before, they still faced an ongoing issue with the yield rate, which is getting the students who were admitted to actually enroll at the institution. The staff took steps, like working up student applications, which was contrary to the typical CSU practice in order to make the application process go easier. It was these measures that characterized the determination of the recruitment staff to get the job done.

*Institutional priorities*

The fundamental objective of the recruitment office at Sycamore was to increase the number of students that attend the school as a way to raise the institutional profile. In that sense, the recruitment staff sought to elevate its status among the community by spreading the word about the strengths of the Cal State and what the university offers to prospective students. Overall, the university wanted to target first year freshmen, but the real function of all Sycamore recruiters was to “recruit across the board, we don’t care who you are. If you are interested in [this CSU] then come and talk to us.” While they tried to actively work with the local community, the common sentiment was that,

It is frustrating because the schools that are nearby don't send too many students here. Where you think they will send more, those students are saying 'No, I want to go to [another CSU] or [another CSU]' And then of course, some of them will look at UC or private as their first choice school, and if they don’t get in, then they will look at a Cal State as a back up. But we provide them the information and let them know that [this CSU] is available for you.

While the staff engaged with the local community and schools “in the backyard”, they still faced a challenge in getting students to consider enrolling.

As previously mentioned, Sycamore University was concerned with bringing more awareness to the community about what the school offers because right now it is “a hidden thing, and we need to bring people to campus to see, to show them that we are one of their options” as Nora, one of the recruiters explained. Norma, another experienced staff member, felt that the Sycamore campus was kind of unknown.

So they have heard of us, it is not like in the past, "oh are you a new Cal State?" Nobody knows that we exist out here in this corner of the world. We're not that far, we are not in the boonies, we're not out in the fields, so we are very accessible, yet, were fighting tooth and nail to have our name out there...in not so much a prestige way, but in an informational way because people don't know about us. (Norma, Recruiter)

Another challenge is our reputation and what people think about us in the larger community and even on campus so I think that is our biggest challenge. I have heard people say 'well, aren't you a second tier school' well no, we don't have tiers in the CSU, there are requirements, now we have some schools that are impacted, and the requirements there is higher, but that's it. So I am trying to change some of the language and how they view us. (Carolyn, Director)

This type of sentiment was quite common in each of the universities that I sampled. The need to change the public's perception of the Cal State resonated across campuses. In addition, the staff at Sycamore had to dispel myths about the university.

Counselors would be like 'you have a 4.0, you should be going to this [selective] school and that school' but they don't talk about the immediate Cal State in the area. They won't talk about [this CSU], they won't talk about [another CSU]; there are certain counselors who will do that. Most likely they are graduates of the UC or the private school so I guess they may have their bias but I think it is unfair to

the student. Some of the students may be successful at a smaller school than they are at a bigger school, even within the Cal State system. (Helen, Recruiter)

We've known that so it is hard to go out there (in the field) and people say negative stuff about the CSU. But that's not true. A lot of it is rumor, and conjecture, what people think. Like what do you mean by second-tier? We don't have that in the CSU system. (Carolyn, Director)

Aside from confronting rumors and misconceptions of the CSU, the recruitment staff experienced pressure to get the (enrollment) seats filled.

We are told a lot that numbers are up or down, we know all that, that is not a question. And we know that if our numbers are down, then we better go out there and really turn the rocks and find these students and get them to come here. We are told straight out. At one point, [the Director] put up signs in the office—*By Any Means Necessary*, let's get these seats filled. So we need to get out there and really shake the bushes and get these students to show up. (Robert, Recruiter)

Pressure may have existed in this campus setting, with the need to grow enrollment, but the pressure was not as personalized as it was at Juniper University. Nora detailed how:

The Director gives us goals to reach for the semester. But our lives are not dependent on it because we work closely with [the directors] and they know how the market is. We are out there being aggressive, telling you what we have to offer. (Nora, Recruiter)

Clearly, Sycamore needed to attract students. The approach implemented by Sycamore was to be innovative and savvy at reaching prospective students in new ways. The next section demonstrates how the office promoted a variety of programs so people could visit the campus and meet people who work at the university.

### Services offered

The type of services that a university offers to prospective students can be telling of the institutional commitments and where they choose to invest resources and staff time. For one of the recruiters, Nora, it was finding ways to “help sell our university. You know, how to market our campus to be one of the schools where people want to go.” As such, the theme based visits, or special events targeted to certain disciplines, were all unique to Sycamore. Instead of a typical campus tour, Sycamore developed creative events focused around academic disciplines and worked in collaboration with faculty to facilitate the activities.

We had a [specialized field] Day so we brought schools to campus, and we involve the deans and faculty. We do a presentation and do a tour then the faculty has a designated time to do your thing. They are the content experts, so they do their thing. And I think that has proven to be beneficial. When I looked at the numbers, it looks pretty good. (Carolyn, Director)

The rationale, according to the Director, for more focused programming was because “there is this whole thing now about engaging students so that is the reason that I have tried to make it more [based on law and medicine].” The director spoke at great length about the creative sessions and events that the staff puts together, including evening

events once the recruiters “realized that young people think there is something cool about nighttime, and doing things at night. So I brought them here at night, we had over 200 kids here.” In addition, Sycamore recruiters would “blitz” high schools at lunchtime to create a buzz about the university. These activities represent Sycamore’s need for more exposure.

Besides the intent to engage students, there was a more immediate basis for hosting programs to prospective students. One program in particular, on-site admissions was designed to increase the yield rate for the university. The example below from the Director, illustrates why Sycamore chose to offer this service:

[On-site admissions] is more immediate, you know. And sometimes, actually we have had a greater yield than from other events. Maybe it could be that they are a self-selected group, they decided to come so there is already an interest. A big part is that we have the parents there and so if you get the parents engaged...and having the on-site admissions—some thing that is immediate and it makes people feel good and the parents are there so that's the reason for doing on-site because you can actually admit them there and you can develop this relationship there.

Another recruiter perceived the events more about the revenue it could generate:

SGL: What is the rationale (of on-site admissions programs)?

Nora: It increases the [full-time enrollment] of the university, and the students can see our faculty, the type of faculty that we have here on campus. Hopefully it will lure those students to [this CSU]. [The central administration] would like to see

more freshman here, of course that means more money for the university, they keep them longer, 4 years, and transfer is only two years.

Sycamore continued to work on better marketing for the University as a whole, and they offered a variety of programs to showcase the campus. The spirited nature of recruitment, and the collective effort of the campus community, was captured in the array of programs and services that the university provided for prospective students.

*“By any means necessary”*

At Sycamore, the drive toward prestige and revenue was not as pronounced as at some of the other Cal State campuses, yet, that it not to say that the recruitment staff were not savvy about tapping into student markets. From an academic capitalist standpoint, the recruiters generally viewed students as consumers, and tried to accommodate their needs through specialized programs to contribute to the end goal of “sealing the deal” and getting students to commit to Sycamore University. The office at Sycamore was very high-energy, and the staff hustled to get students interested in college. So, by knowing the market, they understood that they had to work harder to build up the image of the university.

As far as isomorphic processes, Sycamore offered all of the services that typical recruitment offices handle: campus tours, high school and community college visitation, college fairs and on-campus programs. There was a strong sense of “taken for granted” tasks that are associated with a recruitment office. At Sycamore, they spent resources to enable far-away schools to visit the campus and they hosted programs at community centers as a way to “take the Cal State to them.” Another way that Sycamore broke away

from CSU tradition was that they were more involved in the processing of applications. As noted, technically the staff was not supposed to evaluate applications but they did as a way to speed up the process for students to get an admissions decision quicker.

Pine University: We are the people's university

Pine University was in a different situation than the other Cal States in the sample because of their impacted status. Pine had a longer pattern of restricting student enrollment due to space and capacity limitations. As a result, the staff were more in tune with the policies of impaction and spent more time during presentations explaining processes related to impaction, the eligibility index and local service areas. Since Pine was impacted, the staff members worked within an established service area and were well versed in discussing student options, particularly if they could not gain access to the university right out of high school. More than the other Cal States in the sample, Pine devoted resources to serving the needs of the local area and the transfer population.

Structural considerations

Pine University was one of two campuses in the sample where the admissions and recruitment functions were in the same administrative unit; structurally, both offices were part of Academic Affairs. As the Director explained, "a decision was made [several years ago] that [our office was] better suited under Academic Affairs because we drive the enrollment. You can't have students in the classroom, if you don't admit them. You can't admit them, if they haven't applied. At our school, at least right now, I report to one of the AVP within Academic Affairs, I do not actually report to the Enrollment Management AVP. Some of that is history and tradition and I am actually hoping to

resolve that soon. I am in negotiations right now to move my office under Enrollment Management.” For this university, the enrollment management position was reflective of the need to create a high-ranking administrative position to deal with impact and oversee the task of managing student enrollment. The recruitment office worked closely with an AVP for Enrollment Management to strategize, although it was not official practice. The Director sought the move since “functionally it is already happening but organization chart wise it has not” and it was “close to the model that most of the other sister campuses have.” For the Director, the premise to reorganize the units was because the many other aspects of the university depend on the number and type of students that are enrolled each year.

#### Managing enrollment

One part of the work as a recruiter at Pine was to explain the additional requirements and processes related to undergraduate admission requirements at this particular campus. Since they were impacted, the university used different criteria to determine eligibility for admission. In terms of the role of the recruitment office in the campus enrollment management arrangements, the Director explained how they fit into the larger operations of the university.

Clearly, enrollment management is everything from the first contact through to graduation. And it’s all tied to the budget. So when you are thinking about enrollment management on the outreach perspective, you really have to consider whether or not you can provide services in the schools. So, again, strictly enrollment management, a lot of things are tied to the budget. If my budget gets

reduced by 50% tomorrow, I can't provide the same level of services. And if I can't provide the same level of services, then numbers go down. (Josie, Director)

Here, she links the budget with the performance and services of the office to show how they are dependent on sufficient resources to get the job done. The recruitment office worked "really closely with faculty and the academic senate and [we are] very clear that decisions that they make, effect [our] work." Based on the comments, the campus seemed to be engaging in strategic enrollment management by endorsing a holistic view of the enrollment operation and the strategies used in recruitment plans. For example, the director described how:

I talk to the [VP of EM] everyday, and really that is the one that tells me, 'we need to do X in such and such area.' For example, we added [a nearby city] as part of our impaction zone based on conversations we had. We were looking to expand, but we were looking to expand in an area that was high in an African American population. I am on the ground and I am able to say 'Well, let's really think about this' and we work together to make that happen. And someone being in our impaction zone requires my office to do certain things. So, in a way [the VP of EM] does direct some of my work. So, [with the organizational change] we are really going to be formalizing what functionally I think we already do. (Josie, Director)

Not only was the recruitment office interacting with the enrollment management leadership, they were acting strategically to attract more diverse students. In this case, Pine needed to develop a local service area that delineated who got services from the university and who did not, so the campus practitioners simply redrew the boundaries to include more high schools with students of color.

*Explaining requirements*

Findings suggested that the recruitment staff could not fully articulate the justification behind the policies or procedures they dealt with as part of the job. They were not too concerned, or rarely took the time to think about what the policies may mean for specific groups. Perhaps this has something to do with the level in the organization where they resided, where the idea of enrollment management may be vague or abstract to comprehend. A common response was something like, “I can not say that I am super familiar with [the EM policy] or what our model is.” This particular comment came from one of the Directors so I continued to probe to see what else she knew about the strategic enrollment techniques of the campus.

SGL: Who sets the parameters for the out-of-area applicants?

Betty: Our admissions office sets that, probably at the VP level, to statistically determine whether or not we are going to hit our targets. In this fiscal year, we are a little tighter on the budget, and going into this year we knew that. So we did raise our eligibility index for outside the local area. But with that, we increased our impaction area, meaning that we added more schools to the impaction area and so they projected that we would come out about where we were last year, or

maybe a little under. But the way that we receive that information, in all honesty, has not been completely clean.

So she acknowledged that there is ambiguity to the work at Pine. In other cases, the leadership simply provided guidelines for the staff to speak about policies or how to address commonly asked questions regarding policy. As Ryan, one of the Pine recruiters, described, “We are the front line. [The director] gives us guidelines on what to say and how to say it, which was really good because then we felt more comfortable giving out that information.” The commentary from the staff suggest that they were involved in raising awareness and promoting higher education in general, but not going into too much depth about the technicalities of the EM processes and tools.

### Admissions

No tensions were apparent between the recruitment and admissions office, as was observed in the patterns of miscommunication at some of the other campuses in the sample. Although the Admissions office was part of the same department, no formal relationships between the two offices existed. Only a few of the staff members mentioned that they knew “who to go to, to get admission questions answered” in the neighboring office. Some of the staff explained the limited interactions between the two offices:

There is no formal relationship that we have with Admissions, Financial Aid or even the [Educational Opportunity Program], unfortunately. The relationships that we have are reflective of individuals getting to know other individuals in the various departments and they are more informal. (Betty, Director)

At our campus, admissions and outreach are separate so they don't tend to, to be honest, they don't really use much of the enrollment management terminology.

We don't really focus on that as much, on our level anyway, at the staff level. I am sure that the Assistant Vice President and the Directors [of recruitment and admissions] probably work together to discuss that but they don't really talk about the goals among the staff. (Irene, Director)

The directors of admission and recruitment may attend the same meetings and kept each other personally updated, but the two offices had limited interactions. Thus, at Pine the tasks of recruitment and admissions were distinct, and seemed to function independently. Even though the campus was at limited capacity, and bombarded with applications, the operations of the recruitment and admissions office appeared smooth.

We have an increase in applications, however our campus has an auto-admit system in which students are able to, as long as they completed everything, our computer will automatically send them an admissions notice. So while we receive tons of applications, the [the admissions office] has a lot of applications lifted off of them with the auto-admissions being generated. (Carmen, Recruiter)

Even with more applications to process, there was less frustration and issues of miscommunication, than at other CSUs in the sample. Pine recently created a high level Enrollment Management position, and was about to reorganize structures to better coordinate the consequences of impaction (i.e. the need to have a local service area and use an eligibility index) with the services that the recruitment office typically provides.

### Institutional priorities

According to the Director, the objective of the recruitment office was to “ensure that the CSU, not just our school but the CSU in general, continues to serve the communities in which we live.” Pine University emphasized fulfilling the CSU mission and the importance of providing access, but the staff primarily focused on serving the local service area and transfer students. As an impacted campus, Pine could only admit a small percentage of the applications, so the recruiters emphasized the community college route. It was interesting to note that the Director thought that the role of the recruitment office was to “back-fill what high school and community college counselors are not able to do. Our role is to reach out to the students who don’t necessarily know they need a helping hand. Our role is not to spend all of our time with the students who are going to come anyway. We are involved a lot of the developmental stuff (like getting students prepared to come here).” So, at Pine, there was a distinction on what types of students would get more services, and taking an active role in encouraging more students to attend (instead of those orienting those student who intend to enroll). Unlike the other Cal States in the sample, the staff was not concerned with the yield rate so had more flexibility in how they devoted their time and resources.

### Market logic of supply and demand

There was a strong underlying market logic that pervaded the work done at Pine. That is, the recruiters talked about the economic principles of supply and demand in making sense of, and explaining, issues around enrollment capacity. For example, they used market principles to regulate and determine availability.

It is supply and demand. There are more students who want to come to school than there are seats for students. Well, at the school of their choice. Any student can get into the CSU, but they may not get into the campus of their choice. When I am training [the staff], we talk about options. (Josie, Director)

Since the campus was impacted, the recruiters explained the different admission requirements that prospective students needed to be eligible for admission. When asked about this, one of the less experienced recruiter said,

It is very difficult. Like yesterday, one of the questions I got was about accepting lower-division transfers and currently we are not. Somebody said that it is not fair to students, so I went ahead and explained that we like to give our students quality education and we do not like to have 30 or 40 students in one class because they will not get the one-on-one attention that they really need, so in order for us to do that, we need to increase our eligibility requirements, from minimum to maximum, to be able to make the student a competitive student. (Carmen, Recruiter)

Another recruiter shared how explaining the process could be,

...kind of tricky. But what we do, is when groups from [nearby cities] come for a tour, it is our responsibility to provide the A-G requirements, we have a slide that shows them what the minimum eligibility is for them, but it also shows them how to be a competitive applicant and meet the maximum eligibility so they can be above and beyond. (Elsa, Recruiter)

We focus a lot in our own backyard for our targets; we really try to work with our local area, work with them since they are in our impaction zone. Most of our conversations with the counselors and students are about how lucky they are to be in our VIP area. And that seems to go over well, but outside of the area, yeah, when we start moving into areas that are right on the edge, it is harder. Every year we are not completely sure what the standard is for admitting students outside of local area. And sometimes it gets raised and it is even stronger message when we are talking to students about being more than just menially eligible. (Betty, Director)

In both of the comments above, the implied message was that “we want better students” and students from the local area. Overall, recruiters were still trying to come to terms with needing to explain the changes in the enrollment practices at the impacted campus.

I try to explain to them that each university has their own set of requirements and here at this CSU. We are dealing with the budget cuts now so we are limited. That is one of the reasons that we can only accept a certain amount of students. We have a tremendous amount of students that apply—our application pool increases by the thousands, every year. Then that makes it difficult for us to be able to decide who do we accept, so that is one of the reasons we went to the local area model, because we wanted to make sure that we service those students who are closer to us, that are within our community. It is important for us to be able to service the local area and then move out from there. (Carmen, Recruiter)

Since institutional capacity was limited at Pine, the staff members were big advocates for the community colleges and the transfer path. In fact, assisting transfer students was a key feature of the recruitment office.

Our priority is transfer, not all schools have an aggressive push for transfers. So we have really close partnerships with the community colleges that we work with. And that is what makes a difference. I work closely with each of the Transfer Center Directors and the counselors at the schools that we serve. And not very many schools do that. Not many schools take the time to do it. (Irene, Director)

It is tough sometimes; the only thing that we can recommend here at [this CSU] is if you can't make it here, and you want to come here, there is always the transfer route. It doesn't necessarily mean that you can go to lose out of two years, you transfer in as a junior. And in two years more, you can graduate from here and your diploma will say [this CSU]. Not CSU, as a transfer from a community college. It will say CSU. That is the way that I handle it. It can be handled a little bit differently, I think, but I have not come up with another way yet. (Elsa, Recruiter)

There were mixed perceptions about what it meant to work with transfer students. Elsa had to rationalize to students that they don't lose time by starting at a community college. Whereas the office as a whole, embraced the 'message of hope' in their transfer messages.

Because we are not impacted at the transfer level...I love our message of hope.

One of the things that is really fun for me is that I can talk to a student who is all but failing out of high school, they can still come here if they go through a community college. They have to [meet the requirements] and since we are not impacted at that level, we can guarantee admission to any community college student that can meet eligibility requirements. So, the door is closed for them to come in as a freshman but they can come in as a transfer. And that is really an exciting message. (Josie, Director)

Ryan continued,

I don't think not accepting lower division transfers is any kind of big deal at all. I can say 'look, if you really want to come to a university that quick, you would want to look at Cal States that have smaller populations and they're not impacted at all and don't have those restrictions such as [another CSU] or [another CSU].'  
We can talk about options but in no way will I like, even apologize for us not accepting lower division transfers. (Ryan, Recruiter)

The 'message of hope' described by Josie, or the options that Ryan spoke about, were part of the strategy used to communicate about impactation. Instead of acknowledging that the university is denying students admission, they took a more positive spin, which included messages about attending a community college first.

### Entrepreneurial leanings

Pine recruiters felt little to no pressure to attract applicants. As one indication, a recruiter stated how the office does not "look at application numbers, because they are so big...but orientation numbers, that tells us how many students will be coming here."

Thus, since the staff did not pay attention to the annual application figures, there was not the same sense of urgency that some of the other campuses experienced when it came to reaching set targets. The office expectation here was not to reach a certain number of applicants, but to work directly with students to guide in the process. As Carmen said:

I think that is the beauty of [recruitment] here, at [this CSU] is that we are not being forced, and told here are the numbers we need to meet, or you need to bring in this many individuals. It is not about the numbers, it is about individual students and that one-on-one interaction, the impact you have on each student.

Part of the service area model, where you have one high school that sort of belongs to a specific CSU, is that you are not just speaking about your campus but representing the system. So we actually know quite a bit about our sister campuses and what the key programs are. What is a really nice thing, and I think any of my colleagues would say this to you at the other campuses; we are not in competition in the same way as that we might be competing with a private school or some other institution. I will look a student in the eye and say, ‘you know who has a really good program in that, is [a particular] Cal State.’ And [the same CSU] would do the same for us. (Josie, Director)

Thus, as the last comment suggests, the recruiters at Pine represented the whole system. In fact, many of the recruiters across the sample had a similar mindset and style. It was normative to be a CSU recruiter first, than to recruit students for only one campus. When giving admissions presentations, the staff needed to know a little bit about each campus

in the system. Nevertheless, Pine experienced less pressure to recruit and felt the least amount of competition than the other Cal States in the sample. The institutional priorities at Pine were to reach out to the local community (from the local service area) and serve the transfer student population.

### Services offered

The services provided to prospective students were structured to accommodate the basic services to schools, with additional resources devoted to event programming. “Every public high school in the state of California is in the service area of a CSU. So, in theory, everybody has at least one CSU that will come to a college fair or will come and do a presentation. In practice, that is not necessarily true” is how the director described the statewide recruitment area. Most of the recruitment activities were for targeted audiences and emphasized the idea of “taking Cal State to them” and events with tailored messages. For example, Pine hosted receptions for admitted students and collaborated with the Honors program for programming needs.

We actually have done receptions for all admitted students coming from our area and the transfer institutions where we have high feeder rates. This year we did 14 of them, last year we did 11. In those receptions, we have really tailored messages. So at the high school ones, we really push our freshman programs. We really push our honors programs. We call it taking Cal State to them. (Josie, Director)

Our university honors program have been given the mandate in the last two years to grow their programs so they have been collaborating with us on events. So they have attended all of our planning meetings for campus events. They have participated in many of our yield activities. They have really come closer to what we are doing. (Josie, Director)

Given the preference for transfer students, it was not surprising that they coordinated special programs and services for the community college population.

Transfer students are really important to us because often times [they] do not feel or treated like they are. If you look at universities across the board, they tend to be very prominent in serving freshman, but transfers students--when they come to campus--don't really see services for them. What we try to promote is a seamless transition into the university. We do all kinds of things to help promote that. It is like a full-on effort to try to help transfer students get used to the environment and make that transition. (Irene, Director)

Another way that Pine differentiated itself from the other Cal States was the ways in which they structured the services and used technology. For example, Pine hired peer mentors to help in their efforts as well as established a larger web presence to recruit.

We have really taken to some peer-development, para-professional training type of programs where we use our students in our outreach effort. And, where we can, we send a graduate back to that high school they graduated from so students can see someone who looks like them, and exactly what they have gone through and

is there to role model for them. At the same exact time, we are teaching these undergraduates the para-professional skills they need. We get a lot folks who are interested in student affairs careers, or they develop that interest while working for us. (Josie, Director)

CSU Mentor gives us the opportunity to guide students early on. It actually helps us. If we can encourage 8th grade students to use the CSU Mentor planner, they can start inputting their information, and when they get to senior year, our representatives are going to have less explaining to do. So that is less work, not only as us as professionals, but for our interns, and for the school administration that we work with. It is just a matter of getting the students to buy into it. I think ultimately, it is better customer service. (Carmen, Recruiter)

One of the things we would like to move into is more of an on-line presence. Maybe a virtual college fair or chat day. It would require much less staff time, less of a production. And it seems that students are moving toward what is on line and what is available. We have two websites now. That is where students can go online and it is all for prospective students. (Betty, Director)

Thus, at Pine, the use of technology was viewed as a tool for recruiters to broaden their base and the customer service capabilities. These types of recruiting practices were becoming more common at the CSU, as we observe within this sample of universities.

Although each of the CSU campuses were subject to the same policies and mandates, Pine was the only university in the sample to discuss the unfunded mandates that were imposed on them by the Chancellor's office. The Director described how:

Any system-wide office is going to be famous for unfunded mandates. In our system, you will be hearing about Troops for College or Super Sunday. From a policy level, our Chancellor, our trustees, our higher-level administrators, I mean, they are working with the folks who write the checks. So the folks that write the checks have their issues. They make promises but they don't have to deliver on the promises, we do. So, we are told all of a sudden you need to reach out to veterans. Which is a good idea, but it is above and beyond what we are already doing. And its unfunded, it's an unfunded mandate but we have to start reporting on what we have done. (Josie, Director)

Josie, the director of Pine, touched on the resource dependency considerations that the leadership was faced with, and the implications it can have on the recruitment office. In this case, the staff needed to engage in initiatives without additional funding. The director contrasted the experience of Troops to College with a program that was funded by the system:

There is the *Early Assessment Program* (EAP), where we actually were given some funding. But what is really interesting, is that the things that are not funded we are given some pretty heavy prescriptions on what it is we are supposed to be doing, and for something that was funded, there are 23 different models. It is fascinating, and we all get the same amount of money but something like *Troops*

*for College* (that is not funded), I am being told very specifically, ‘here are some meetings you need to attend’ or ‘here are some college fairs that you need to participate in’ or ‘here are some basic-level services you need to provide’ or ‘here are changes you need to put on your webpage’ to make sure you have a level of accessibility. It’s fascinating. (Josie, Director)

Although the other universities experienced the same coercive mandates from the Chancellor regarding the activities, a few of the staff at Pine were the only ones in the sample that mentioned it.

#### Outreach efforts

The early outreach initiatives of Pine were funded with institutional funds. In other words, the office did not have any TRiO programs to support these types of activities. However, the campus still had a strong presence in the middle and high schools. For them, that was the “essence of outreach: to develop them and then you go and pick the crops” and part of the developmental work.

I am working [in outreach] with a program that works with middle school students. I get the opportunity to impact them at that level, 6th through 8th grade. When I work with the middle school students, I tell them, there is no reason why in the next 4-7 years you will come to me and say that you are missing a requirement because that is the reason that we are telling you today to tell you what you should be doing. (Carmen, Recruiter)

Another recruiter who emphasized early outreach shared how:

We work with middle school students, and the middle schools that we serve feed

into a program that works with High School students so then these students are taken by the hand. [This program] works with them from 9th to 12th grade, and graduates them and also assists them between 11 and 12th grade to make sure that they are on track. So we try to do that. And once we get them here to [Pine], we send them to the TRiO programs like student support services or McNair Scholars so they have a support system within the university. (Aaron, Recruiter)

The comments describe outreach efforts that are not funded by federal grant programs (like some of the other campuses in the sample) but supported their early outreach initiatives with institutional funds; perhaps since they were not as focused on attracting applicants that they could think more strategically about the long term possibilities.

*“We are the people’s university”*

Although the staff members at Pine University were not worried about getting student applications or generating interest in the institution, the office was still very much market-oriented. Given the impacted status, recruiters gave economic rationales to describe and explain the concept of enrollment demand to others. The notion of supply and demand was very real for Pine, so the strategy was to talk about students’ options. Pine experimented with aspects of strategic enrollment management, for example, when they reconfigured the local service area to include more schools, or schools with a certain demographic that they wanted to capture. Yet, overall the enrollment practices were more implied tactics than blatantly entrepreneurial. More than the other campuses, Pine had more flexibility with the operations (since they had an dutiful relationship with the

Admissions office) but they were the only school that focused on unfunded mandates as being top-down, imposing guidelines on the work they do.

In terms of the other types of institutional isomorphism, there was some evidence that suggested that Pine was aligned with the other CSUs in this regard: they shared information with each other but at the same time, they acknowledge that there was some competition for students. The extent of the balance of cooperation and competition among the Cal States varied by campus; but all of them valued the cooperation with the “sister campuses” and helping students find the right fit for them. The events for prospective students varied, which suggested that the campuses had leeway in how they wanted to enact their recruitment work. For example, the staff at Pine cut programs such as on-site admissions, while other schools still offered it. It did not make sense for Pine to continue that type of service, and used the time at campus events to acclimate the new admits to the campus. The Pine recruitment office hosted a targeted interest in transfer students, which sets them apart from some of the other CSU campuses. In addition, because of the impacted status, there was a symbolic notion of maintaining a recruitment office. As the Director explained:

Clearly, there is going to be the ongoing conversation about if you are an impacted campus, why do you have recruitment? If fees are going up because you don't have the enough resources to serve the students you have, why are you bringing in more students? I am real fortunate that our President gets it. Our President understands that you have to keep the pipeline full. You can't go away for a couple of years and come back, that does more harm than good.

Pine was the only university in the sample that needed to justify the existence of the recruitment office, particularly since the interest and demand was so high for the school. In thinking about normative tendency this is an example of how no matter what, all colleges need to have a recruitment office.

#### Cypress University: waiting on pins and needles

Of the four campuses in the sample, Cypress University appeared most equipped to execute a seamless enrollment management operation. First, the university had an entire enrollment services department, which included related student services offices, as well as a senior level administrator that oversaw the activities. The recruitment office included early outreach staff and admissions evaluators to deal with students in all phases of the recruitment pipeline. So, unlike the other universities in the sample, Cypress combined the recruitment and admissions functions in one office, under the direction of one manager. With the intent for the campus to grow in the future, the staff concentrated on serving the local community and making the general public aware of the campus and its offerings. Since the school was relatively new, the marketing aspect of recruitment was significant and considered in the overall enrollment goals of the university.

#### Structural considerations

As mentioned above, the recruitment office was part of a larger department led by an Assistant Vice President. The university established a 'one-stop shop,' which included recruitment, admissions and financial aid units; it also included early outreach programs and international admissions. In general, the department ran off a linear type of model where the outreach staff started giving messages to the local community early on at the

elementary and middle school levels, and then the recruitment unit came in during the high school years to recruit.

I would define enrollment management as a pretty broad term. To me, it is anything from the prospect that is out there as a potential student to working with alumni after the fact, whether it is providing transcripts or whatever it might be, tracking those students. It is everything that happens in that continuum. (Ben, Director)

When we merged...some of the Cal States did the merge with Admissions and Recruitment, everyone was 'whoa, whoa' that maybe the kind of model that others are looking toward. Some did, a few changed over, some didn't and some did but then broke apart again (laughs). And some are still breaking apart. Others maybe split down the middle: recruitment does recruitment, and admissions handle admissions, whatever. (Nicole, Recruiter)

Nicole offered a brief overview of her knowledge of our recruitment offices around the Cal State system and how they organized their offices. Given the broad shift to Enrollment Services at Cypress, the recruitment office became more numbers-oriented, in terms of how they projected enrollments and how structured the work of recruiters. As a result, the recruitment staff faced several organizational changes within the office.

### Admissions

At the time of data collection, many of the staff members were still adjusting to their new duties. The Director felt frustrated with the current structure and shared how

“one of the challenging aspects of the CSU is that it is a completely representative environment so only the managers are non-represented, and in terms of the way that it is structured, we are the only individuals that can supervise.” The structural restraints meant that the Director was the sole person in the office who could technically be in a leadership role. The Director described how:

those are some things, in my opinion, that are impediments to being able to develop the team as I would ultimately love to, but that is just the nature of our organization. (Ben)

Instead of being able to organize how the manager saw fit, the approach at Cypress was to cross-train employees. As the remarks below indicated, the new structure had some resistance. For example, the Cypress recruiters shared:

[My supervisors] are trying to [cross train the staff] but at the moment they are having trouble: how can you put a square peg into a round hole? Because the people that are here specialize in admissions—all you do is evaluations, or you’re a recruiter and you go recruiting. Now they’re trying to teach both and those people have different personalities: the recruiters don’t like being in the office and the advisors don’t like being out in the field. (Ralph, Recruiter)

We have gone to a more blended [model], where we have to do it all. Recruit and evaluate. If we can’t be in the office, then we are not doing our job...it is a double edged sword, because people see you out and they think you are having fun, but it is grueling work because you have to be ON all the time, you start the day at 7am

and may end at 10pm. I think people have the misconception that the work is glamorous. So that was kind of a hard time trying to educate people on what your role was and what your job is. (Nicole, Recruiter)

This type of misconception of job duties and other struggles with adjusting to a different work structure was fairly common at Cypress. In fact, one of the professionals described his new role in recruitment as though he was “brought into the field kicking and screaming.” There was an array of misunderstandings between employees about what it meant to be out in the field recruiting.

[I want to tell my campus colleagues] don't be upset at me because a lot of times, I can't be sitting in my office. If I am sitting in my office then I am simply not doing my job! But if it is going to make you happy to have me just sit there then think again, understand what that means. So, you may see me walking in at noon, but keep in mind, I have to work until 8 or 9pm, when you are done at 5. (Tina, Recruiter)

You don't get the respect that you deserve, as far as the people that go out and recruits for the campus, it is kind of like, it is hidden. Oh, who brought all those students here? They think they are coming on their own. You know? (Nicole, Recruiter)

In sum, the majority of the staff described apprehension and friction within the Admissions and Recruitment office, particularly among the people who process the applications with those individuals who primarily recruit. Although the same Director

managed them all, there was a lack of cohesion of what the common tasks and goals of the office were.

*Institutional priorities*

Cypress University planned for future growth and had taken active steps in cultivating a college-going culture within the surrounding community. As a relatively small campus, the recruitment staff worked on making more people aware that Cypress was a viable option for them. As such, there was a focus on the best way to utilize limited resources to most effectively market the university to the outside world. Since the goal was to grow, Cypress was most affected by the zero-growth model imposed by the Chancellor's Office. Gordon, one of the recruiters, described the frustration since "suddenly the carpet [was] pulled from underneath us and we don't know if we can grow right now because of the state budget crisis and that has really thrown a wet blanket on this institution because our desire is to continue to grow, and we know that the need is out there." Thus, Cypress was in a precarious situation of wanting to continue a trajectory of growth, but at the same time, they wanted to provide college access with limited resources. In general, the staff understood that the "CSU is meant to educate the masses" but they could not avoid the state funding crisis. The campus seemed to be in a wait-and-see mode given all of the uncertainty. One recruiter detailed the situation:

[Another CSU], for instance, when they first heard the news about the budget crisis and that schools might be considering closing, they decided right away to not open for the spring, way ahead of everyone else. The rest of us, I don't know if there are any other CSU that decided to close for the spring, we still haven't and

our filing period ends at the month. It is right around the corner and we still haven't decided so it's being funneled through the Chancellor's office. That all takes place right now so that is difficult. We are all waiting on pins and needles, we don't know how our jobs will be impacted by the budget as well. (Jesse, Recruiter)

With the possibility of turning students away, some of the Cypress recruiters were feeling that in the future, they would likely face more competition to meet the needs of students.

Right now, we have students almost beating down the door here so that is good but what I wonder about is...when the day comes when that is not the case. When the day comes when we, for whatever reason, don't see as many students interested. I think because of the economy playing into this, even though we are affordable. There are a lot of competing institutions right now that are offering more schedule-friendly and on-line options. So the challenge is to find ways that we still can effectively compete for students. (Ralph, Recruiter)

The campus would like to grow, but the state situation is hampering that. The Chancellor has been discussing our approach for spring because all the campuses have a zero-growth model for this year, and the zero-growth for us translates retracting a little bit because we "overshot" last year, we need to truly manage our enrollment down for this academic year to get back to our target. (Ben, Director)

Thus, there is a need for active planning and strategizing for the short and long term. The director of Cypress agreed that there was an increasing sense of competition. He said:

There is the reality that we are all competitors to some extent in that depending on what students are looking for, we are all in the market for the same students but there is a lot of cooperation. I think that this is true among all my colleagues is that first and foremost, we want the student to go to college, we would absolutely love if they came to a CSU campus and I guess the third step is that it would be our CSU campus. As long as those thresholds are met, that is what is important to all of us. (Ben, Director)

What has been nice about us, unlike some of the other CSUs, we don't have really all that much trouble recruiting people. The numbers game is on the positive side, and not on the 'oh my gosh, are we going to make it this year?' But who knows what the effect of all of this budget stuff will be because if students in the spring have to go somewhere else, then that really impacts future growth because we lose that full time enrollment that these students would have brought in. It's a real domino effect that can impact us several years down the road too, just by closing for one semester. (Gordon, Recruiter)

The comment from Gordon was the only one in the entire sample that made the direct connection between the budget and what that means for access and future growth.

*Being entrepreneurial*

The leadership at Cypress University was very aware of the economic implications of the work that they do. In explaining work practices, terminology for the

marketplace was used quite frequently among the staff. For example, in exploring other types of students and funding structures, the Director commented on:

Many CSUs haven't really looked at how we attract students from out of state because in many ways there have not been any incentives to do that. But that is changing, our funding model is solely based on California residents, so our target is California residents, but any other students that we bring into the university, they for lack of a better word—are paying full freight, they are paying full cost of attendance. So we reap, in a way that benefit more quickly. So there is some new interest in recruiting out of state or more recruitment or more broad recruitment to increase those numbers. (Ben, Director)

The language of 'paying full freight' was indicative of the practice of segmenting the student markets, depending on one's ability to pay. Ben also shared that the campus is looking at international students as a revenue source, so they were slowing increasing recruitment efforts in that area. Likewise, several of the outreach staff felt that the administration was counting on the early outreach programs, which are federally funded, to bring in more students to the university in the future. As one example, Tina described how her supervisors viewed early outreach efforts at the university:

I did sense in the beginning when we got the Outreach grant, the administration was like 'send them all to this Cal State' well, if the students want to, fine, but that is not our job. Ok? I think they have gotten to understand that a little bit more, especially the AVP, he is constantly asking--how many of your students are coming here. I would like to tell him, that is not our goal. Maybe it is his personal

goal but not ours; it's not the goal of the grant. (Tina, Recruiter)

Even though Cypress wrote and was awarded early outreach grants, the intent of the program was viewed in different ways. For the staff, they wanted to engage students in the possibility of attending postsecondary education, any college, whereas the senior administrators saw the potential for the same group of students to be future students of Cypress.

*Building an image*

One aspect of being entrepreneurial for universities was building a solid image. Part of the job at Cypress University, according to one recruiter, was “just letting [people] know we are here...we are a CSU too.” Indeed, many recruiters encountered the same mentality while out in the field recruiting. Some examples included:

A lot of people don't know about us. I think that some of the misperceptions are that 'what kind of programs do you have, how do you legitimize your programs?'  
(Wendy, Recruiter)

I feel that a lot of parents just looked to [a nearby CSU] because this campus seems so far away to some residents [from there]. I don't know, we seem very far so they don't even consider us. One mom said that it might as well be [across the state] so it can be a big reason not to come here. (Lydia, Recruiter)

Many people haven't ever heard of [this] Cal State; a lot of people hear about us but they think we are in [another part of the state.] You hear that a lot from

people, that 'we thought [this CSU] was over here, but it is actually close by!' So, we kind of get the overflow of the interest from [nearby CSUs]. (Tina, Recruiter)

In this case, being a part of the CSU was an advantage for Cypress because many people knew about the Cal States, even if they did not know the specifics of certain campuses. Although, like we observed at Sycamore, many students applied to Cypress “just in case they don't get into the other schools.” So, this CSU was still considered a back-up school, and one of the office objectives was to make the university a “destination of choice.” Yet, as Gordon pointed out, Cypress University was in a more secure position than others when it comes to hitting enrollment targets. He said:

We are not worried about the numbers yet. We are not in competition as some of the smaller schools. I'd hate to be a higher-level person there because they are really scrambling for the numbers and they are competing, whether they like to admit it or not, for bodies. (Gordon, Recruiter)

In terms of institutional priorities, Cypress struck a balance of providing access to students (to the extent possible) and developing a college-going culture with early outreach initiatives. The state budget posed a threat to Cypress' willingness to grow, so the campus began making pro-active moves to consider alternative revenue possibilities and other ways to achieve the school's mission.

### Services offered

The programs and services offered at Cypress University were designed with an eye toward the budget, attempting to be efficient with resources. As a result of this effort, on-campus programs got scaled down and various recruitment activities were scrutinized

along dimensions of impact and economies of scale. Moreover, the office was trying to establish more of a web presence and using community partnerships to assist overall college access initiatives.

In many cases, the recruitment job was similar to the other campuses; as Wendy described it: “you interact with different groups, working with a variety of people all the time. And counselors call on us for a variety of things, like a classroom presentation, college night, table at lunch, all of the above. Or sit in the library, sometimes if they have a college night, we go and represent the CSU, so I do a presentation that covers all of the CSU, what to expect for all of them and what are requirements are for all the campuses. And then showcase our university as well.” Due to budget considerations, Cypress was scaling back on high school visits and on-campus programs. The rationale of the Director was that the campus needed to consider the economies of scale for certain recruitment events. He detailed how decision-making, in terms of which recruitment events to be involved with, at Cypress were becoming more strategic:

We don’t do—and I think it is my perception in talking with colleagues—that public institutions are pulling back a little bit on the traditional visiting a high school, seeing a few students a day is becoming less and less the norm. Just because we often do not have the resources to do that so we need to be in venues where we can get—and I hate to put it in this sort of term but—‘more bang for our buck’ that we are getting more exposure to students and parents, whether that be a larger college fair so we have a greater economy of scale of being out there when we are having more and more limited resources. (Ben, Director)

Getting ‘more bang for the buck’, particularly in a time with less resources, was the marker for the Cypress office, meant that more costly activities needed to be reconsidered. Some of the veteran staff had a perspective on the change in recruitment practices. Ralph explained how the “budget was the reason for programs being cut down” in the following exchange:

SGL: So preview day like an open house?

Ralph: We don’t have it anymore.

SGL: So what happened to those programs?

Ralph: The budget, it was one of the first things to go. The past two years we had it but it was greatly reduced to what we offered and to I guess how far we reached out to students to come. It was mainly local kids who came and it was just a tour and a small presentation. I don’t think it was worth if for the students to come because they weren’t getting anything, nothing at all. Budget was the reason why it was cut down to that.

While programs were being cut or downsized, the goal of the office was to establish a stronger web presence.

We are in the midst of implementing a new email communication system, which many other CSU campuses have as well as others colleges and universities across the state and across the nation, in terms of when students create a VIP page and set up themselves to receive emails reminders about the campus, we are in the midst of implementing a new system to do that. (Ben, Director)

Thus, Cypress adopted services to meet the needs of the students, while still considering the resources to run the office. One interesting aspect of Cypress was the adoption of community partnerships in an effort to develop a college-going culture. In the last few years, Cypress University established community partnerships in the form of Memorandums of Understandings (MoU) with local school districts. This innovative strategy did not involve too many financial resources, but required the buy-in from the participants.

I think that the MoU idea is very innovative. We decided to continue pursuing that with other school districts and slowly set those types of partnerships up. I definitely think that is one fairly innovative approach that we are taking toward recruitment. We are just trying to respond to the communities that we serve in our immediate area. (Cathey, Director)

Yes, those students in all reality, if they are at our local feeder schools, they are guaranteed a place here. But it is a different message and a different perception if it is just something that we say as part of our schpeil versus actually putting something in the student's, and the parent's, hands saying here is your admissions letter as a 7<sup>th</sup> grader and here is what you need to do, as long as you can do x,y,z then this is your ticket to [this] CSU. (Ben, Director)

This localized approach, in conjunction with early outreach programs, was part of the overall enrollment strategy of Cypress. Ben continued by explaining how the MoUs would be considered in terms of planning for the future:

I think our campus is looking at over time that these MoUs that we signed come into effect—we have guaranteed admission to all of those students to the campus down the road, upon certain benchmarks. And so in a way, that will sort of like, help in building a freshman class, we will know that ‘ok this percentage of our freshman class each year will be filled by those MoUs and then in terms of getting our campus in terms of then, how will we shape the rest of our class? Do we need more majors in the science, like everyone else in the world, in the STEM majors or whatever it might be...so, I think that is the approach we are taking. (Ben, Director)

This scenario described by Ben was a clear indication that Cypress was engaged in enrollment management. Organizing all the units into a one-stop shop, and focusing on achieving college access and name recognition in the current era of limited funds, sounds like a typical approach to strategically managing enrollment. The staff at Cypress recognized the need to build the pipeline with a diverse group of students.

*“Waiting on pins and needles”*

Cypress University experienced coercive pressures that affected the actions of the recruitment office. For example, the Chancellor’s zero-growth mandate to limit enrollment, and a pattern of uncertain budget allocations, made the work at Cypress challenging since the campus wanted to grow exponentially over time. The recruitment

office invested its resources on streamlining the recruitment process and limited programs that were too costly to maintain. At the same time, they were being entrepreneurial by partnering with community organizations to assist in college-going initiatives. Aspects of academic capitalism were manifested in the office practices since resource allocation was a priority, as was building a better image so that Cypress could one day become a “destination of choice” within the Cal State.

With respect to aspects of isomorphism, the office at Cypress resembled others, but set itself apart as well. The recruitment office took steps to alter its services based on the current climate of college admissions, so that was reflected in spending less time at the high schools and investing more on activities that had greater economies of scale, creating the potential to meet more students at one time. In terms of staff development, the recruiters participated in the counselor conferences offered by the CSU system, but were less involved in building networks with colleagues or and ties with the profession.

#### Making connections

This chapter presented a summary of findings that relate to the ways in which university recruitment offices enacted enrollment related policies and practices in the workplace. Overall, each campus was different depending on their local context; the accounts from each campus show a range of experiences within the Cal State system. My analytical focus was on the extent to which practices and priorities varied by context. As this chapter demonstrates, the institutional context mattered a great deal. For example, Sycamore was in a position that seemed to be committed to the historic mission of CSU by encouraging both freshman and transfers to attend, they are also reaching out to

students who may not have considered attending a Cal State. Or, the situation could be more like Pine, where the demand for higher education has increased given the population shifts in the area; or take the case of Cypress, where the university explicitly moved to manage its enrollments more strategically. Finally, Juniper encompasses a little bit of each of the above descriptions, making it a unique case in balancing priorities.

The research interest focused on the strategic directions of public regional universities particularly in terms of the balance among increasing diversity and managing enrollments for quality and revenue, and how the strategic directions were expressed in the official policies and in the practices enacted by the recruitment staff at four California State Universities. Therefore, I gave attention to the organizational structure, priorities and services of the sampled universities through the lens of academic capitalism and institutional theory. I explored the extent to which the concepts from these theories, including some combination of the two, could explain the organizational behavior of CSU recruitment offices and the possible connections between policy and practice.

#### *Academic Capitalism*

Elements of academic capitalism could be linked to the rise of and necessity for enrollment management (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). In the context of academic capitalism, enrollment management structures were becoming more common across the California State University system. Three out of the four universities in the sample maintained a senior level position designated for enrollment planning and all of the campuses were strategic in the way recruitment was conducted by the staff and how they went about reaching specific goals. Whether it was “catching up” to create a marketing

brand or “becoming the destination of choice,” the need to position the university in the right light was revealing of the market-oriented edge of CSU recruitment. Many of the schools teamed up with businesses for products that facilitate mass communications and data systems. For example, at CSU, the Hobsens company (<http://www.hobsons.com/>) and its technological products was the preferred choice for website design and capabilities. Practices with the intent to promote and sell something to students indicate that the universities were more attuned to student markets. As a sign of mimetic or normative isomorphism several of the CSU utilized these products.

Beyond marketing the campus in general, there was a push for attracting international students because of the revenue they could potentially bring in, plus the diversity they add. For at least two of the CSU schools in the sample, Juniper and Cypress, the potential of the international market was an appealing alternative and so the recruitment office hired staff who were engaged in international outreach to broaden the student base (and revenue streams). Yet, the majority of the staff across campuses said that the work toward helping students make an informed choice, regardless of the institution chosen. This suggests that while the Cal States were more market-savvy, the staff working at the campuses did not fully embracing the common objectives of strategic enrollment management (basically, to maximize revenue and prestige). In other words, the Cal State system has not turned into a money-conscious business that nickel-and-dimes students for tuition dollars. Furthermore, the schools have not turned their back on the local communities and are not intent on being a UC or climb the prestigious hierarchy that makes up most of America’s colleges and universities. The situation that emerged

from the data was more about the CSUs trying to cope and respond to the dire state situation of uncertain resources in a time of great demand for higher education in California. The theory of academic capitalism in the new economy suggests that universities are becoming more interested in generating revenue, and are turning to new methods. Yet, even with enrollment demand, universities are doing all they can to attract quality students and gaining name recognition for the CSU campus.

### *Institutional theory*

The overlying premise of institutional theory is explaining how organizations are so similar (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). First, the Cal State Universities were not homogenous organizations, nor were they trying to resemble each other. Given that the universities reside in the same state and share the same system leadership, there were some processes that were similar. For example, all the offices conducted high school and community college visits, as well as facilitated admission presentations as typically understood as tasks of the recruitment office. Plus, all of the recruitment offices are relegated to accomplishing the same task (i.e. recruiting students). Yet, what the findings suggest was that each of the universities went about the implementation of recruitment work in different ways. In general, each one tried to be distinct, to set themselves apart from the other universities.

The level and actors that were the focus of the study were not in positions to make those types of decisions; therefore it is still unknown to us. Although, what is important was that these positions even existed within the CSU system. In other words, the admissions function is a long-standing task of any college or university but what was

different in the current context of CSU was the need to manage enrollment and for campuses to operationalize activities. This was manifested in the creation of an EM unit, or launching a marketing campaign (like Juniper) or developing a strategic service zone to determine which students to attract (such as Pine). Table eleven presents the organizational structure and the rise of enrollment management and the relations the recruitment staff has with the admissions office.

**Table 11. The organizational structure of the sampled universities**

	<i>Enrollment Management</i>	<i>Disconnect with Admissions</i>
PINE	Yes (new)	No
JUNIPER	No	Yes
CYPRESS	Yes	Yes
SYCAMORE	Yes (new)	Yes

The first column suggests that enrollment management spread through the system since three of the four Cal States in the sample had an EM unit in place. This is consistent with the larger trend across the system, with the eighteen universities system-wide. The second column highlights that there was miscommunication issues among the recruitment and admissions office at many of the CSUs in the sample.

For the most part, the big issue for the system was the increase of applications, and the time it took to get the applications processed. This required that the Admissions and Recruitment offices worked together. Even at Cypress, where the two functions were combined, there was some frustration about the tasks and who needed to contribute. A striking example was found at the Sycamore campus, where the recruiters were doing the

admissions staff's work (i.e. evaluate transcripts) even if it was against the rules of the system and the union. The findings suggest that the operations may be more symbolic (on paper only) or the enrollment function is loosely coupled (Weick, 1969). The ties between the two functions, recruitment and admissions, were not efficient which prolonged the application processing and the time it took to respond to students with admission notices. There was no evidence that any of the sites looked to other CSU to see how they organize the enrollment functions, or asked for ideas on how to resolve workplace inefficiency and conflict.

Table twelve illustrates how each campus had different meanings of access and prestige factors. While they all focused on fulfilling the mission of the Cal State, the recruitment offices implemented some of the same practices, but each of the schools had distinct features. In short, the priorities of the CSU campuses were not homogenous.

**Table 12. The institutional priorities of the sampled universities**

	<i>Access</i>	<i>Prestige</i>	<i>Entrepreneurial</i>
PINE	Focus on local area and transfers	Honors; compete with UC	No (supply and demand)
JUNIPER	Meet the targets; range of GPA; early outreach	Improve image and gain respect; seek higher GPA	Yes (brand and marketing); outreach grants
CYPRESS	Local area and early outreach	Become destination of choice	Yes (web presence and econ of scale); outreach grants
SYCAMORE	Meet the targets; freshman mandate	Improve image	Yes. Sell campus through engaging programs

Table twelve (above) shows the various priorities that are typically featured in enrollment management initiatives. For the schools in the sample, the enacted practices

were connected to one of the priorities. For example, in the column labeled prestige, we see that all of the campuses had prestige considerations but were acted on in different ways: Pine organized honors programs and competed with the UC for top scholars; Juniper was striving to improve its reputation and caliber of students; Sycamore also wanted to improve their image but implemented their approach through increased programming; and finally Cypress' main goals was to become a destination of choice which translated into an enhanced web presence to attract students to the campus.

In addition, the study focused on the various types of institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Table twelve and thirteen provide examples that support claims of each type of institutional isomorphism. In each case, there was evidence for, and against, the presence of coercive, normative and mimetic isomorphism at the CSU.

**Table 13. Examples that support (and don't support) coercive isomorphism**

	<i>Coercive</i>	<i>Not</i>
PINE	Impaction; local service area	Strategize for African Americans.
JUNIPER	Targets from VP	Loopholes in policies.
CYPRESS	Targets from VP; zero-growth model	Blended unit with Admissions
SYCAMORE	Targets from VP; Freshman mandate	Did work-ups of applications

Having targets set by superiors and policy mandates are examples of coercive isomorphism. Table thirteen documents examples that did not support the rationale of coercive measures. For example, if the system was so directive and top-down, then there would be more similarities among the campuses. Instead, the findings showed campuses

were distinctive: Pine was able to expand its service area to include high schools with higher percentages of African American students or Sycamore recruiters evaluating transcripts even though that is beyond the scope of their official work.

**Table 14. Examples that support (and don't) Normative/Mimetic isomorphism**

	<i>Normative/Mimetic</i>	<i>Not</i>
PINE	Peer mentors; visits	Compete for high achievers; focus on transfers
JUNIPER	Hobsens; Peer mentors; visits	No EM unit. Pioneers of outreach
CYPRESS	Hobsens; Peer mentors; visits	MOUs; less visits to schools
SYCAMORE	Hobsens; Peer mentors visits	More creative programs

Sharing information across campuses and outright mimicking the practices of another Cal State was a blurry line. One example is the use of student workers. Each of the campuses sampled hired student workers in the recruitment office. Although all of them enacted the same strategy, it was enacted in different ways. For instance, the “para-professionals” at Pine would visit to high schools with a staff member, whereas the “peer mentors” at Juniper would go out to schools on their own, and the “student assistants” at Sycamore were primarily based in the office doing more administrative support than recruiting. This example shows that on paper, each of the campuses enact the same strategy, it was implemented in different ways.

## CHAPTER SIX: GROUND LEVEL FINDINGS

To address the third research question, how the professionals viewed their role in regards to providing access to higher education, this chapter presents the findings gathered from the thirty-four interviews with recruitment staff at four CSU campuses. The findings are organized here by proposition, as discussed in chapter three, to guide the readers through the data analysis. The chapter begins with a description of the types of professionals who worked in CSU recruitment offices, then turns to the ways in the ways in which they tried to facilitate access to higher education and how this differed depending on one's professional orientation.

### Exploring work orientations

As a lens to interpret the work orientations of the recruitment staff, the study utilized the concepts introduced by Alvin Gouldner (1957) in a classic study of organizational behavior about latent social roles. A social role is a set of expectations that are placed on individuals who hold certain positions within a social group or organization (Gouldner, 1957). Latent social roles were relevant in studying the micro, everyday situations within an organization, as it sheds light on the congruence between rhetoric and action. That is, the university has policies and mandates regarding recruitment or enrollment practices that it needs to comply with but it depends on the actors within the organization to interpret and implement processes to do so. One's "position" as a recruiter holds certain responsibilities, but one's orientation toward the job may lead to variation in how people approach the job and how they build an identity in the workplace.

As a point of departure, I briefly review Gouldner's conception of Locals and Cosmopolitans. For Gouldner, there were two types of latent organizational identities:

- “(1) *Cosmopolitans*: those low on loyalty to the employing organization, high on commitment to specialized role skills, and likely to use an outer reference group orientation.  
 (2) *Locals*: those high on loyalty to the employing organization, low on commitment to specialized role skills, and likely to use an inner reference group orientation” (p. 291).

In general, the theory of locals and cosmopolitans calls attention to the difference between personnel and touches on issues of internal politics of the organization: some may be embedded in the needs of the local community and not on the ‘best practices’ highlighted at national conferences. In applying these concepts to this study and distinguishing between locals and cosmopolitans, there were obvious differences. The locals turn to the University as the reference group, not looking beyond the organization for answers, whereas the cosmos tend to be embedded in professional networks and value mobility and the exchange of ideas as important. The existence of differing orientations suggests that there can be many varieties of latent social identities.

In response to Gouldner's emphasis on two ideal types of identities, Rhoades, Kiyama, McCormick and Quiroz (2008) suggest alternatives that combine the two orientations, so-called intermediary types. Rhoades et. al (2008) advocate for new conceptions of what it means to be a ‘successful’ professional in higher education as they consider how some individuals can be a “socially responsible, involved professional, who is connected to place, community and the people they serve in ways that enhance that service.” (p. 232). And, more importantly, that employing professionals with these types

of characteristics can be a positive feature of the organization. For this reason, I utilized four categories: Local, Local-Cosmopolitan (LO-COS), Cosmopolitan-Local (COS-LO) and Cosmopolitan (Cosmo) to interpret and analyze the professional orientations. The LO-COS and COS-LO categories represented the new intermediary groups that are neither a Local or Cosmo but a blend of the two. I used the concepts to act as a tool to decipher between the types, to understand the organizational behavior and the role of individuals in shaping that. Descriptions are elaborated on with examples from the data.

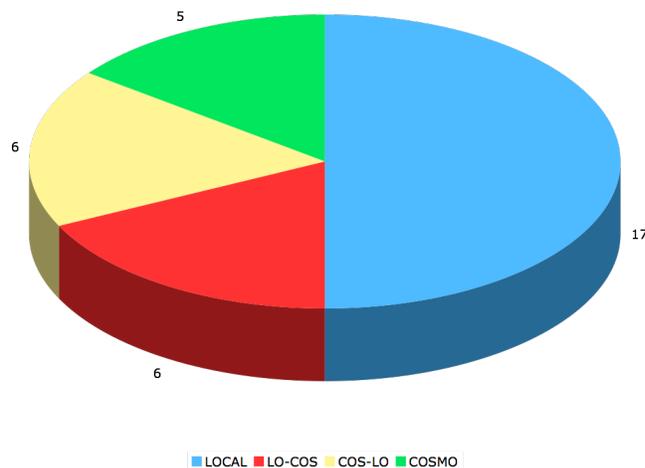
#### Findings by proposition

*Proposition Seven: There will be an overrepresentation of 'locals' compared to 'cosmopolitans' in the office units. Some individuals may exhibit the characteristics of both.*

*Proposition Eight: Among the four categories of latent social roles, differences emerge as it relates to loyalty, commitment and mobility of the professionals.*

**Table 15: Distribution of Professional Orientations**

**Distribution of Professional Orientations (CSU sample of 34)**



In general, the four California State University campuses in this sample were largely employed with Locals, designated as such since many came from the surrounding neighborhoods and/or alumni of the CSU. As table fifteen indicates, Locals consumed the largest group along the continuum with seventeen professionals out of thirty-four, following with six LO-COS, six COS-LO and five Cosmos in all. The majority of the overall sample, twenty-five of the thirty-four individuals, (which encompasses all of the Local and LO-COS groups), earned an undergraduate or graduate degree from CSU.

### *The Local*

All of the Locals attended and graduated from a Cal State University. As members of the community, they had high commitment and loyalty to the university. Many came from, and still reside, in the surrounding areas of their Cal State campus; therefore, mobility was low for this group. Locals focused on the activities at their university, and not looking outward to what other universities are doing. As such, the reference group was the immediate office staff and university. As we will see below, the students and community were also important points of reference for these individuals.

The majority of the Locals spoke about what CSU meant to them personally. This devotion and commitment, as the comments suggested, carried over to their work and the messages they use as a recruiter.

I give [students] that personal knowledge and it helps that I went to school here. I think that makes a huge difference, because if you are not invested in the school, you can just talk about it without any real feeling towards it. For me, I was very fortunate to come to school here. (Nancy, Juniper)

What I do best, is talking about where our strengths are. I think that being alumni is very helpful because I speak from the heart. I do try to represent the campus as if they were coming to my home. I mostly speak to the helpfulness of our campus, and the community-centered feeling that you get when you are here. (Betty, Pine)

I give presentations about the University and one of the questions that I usually get is, did you graduate from there, and it is so cool to say yes, and then during the presentation it's nice to say certain things like, what I really liked about going to this Cal State is...and I think that having that personal touch really helps students and parents be comforted and feel that they are making the right choice by [picking this CSU]. Because I have been there, I have done it, and I think I am a good resource to them. (Wendy, Cypress)

For Nancy, Betty and Wendy—each employed at different CSU campuses—they spoke to the importance of being invested in their particular university when giving information about the campus. Being able to share personal stories as a CSU undergraduate student are experiences that only Locals could draw on and incorporate into presentations to relate to their audiences. Plus, as alumni, they remained proud members of the CSU community.

Of the local group, the majority were newcomers to the profession, whether it was their first professional job after graduating from college or spending their first year as a

recruiter. However, there was a small contingent of the “Locals” who are veterans in the recruitment position. At the time of the interviews, the five women had held their positions for six or more years: indicating that loyalty for the job was high, while mobility was not. While they were not “advancing” in their professional career in the traditional sense, they seem to have found their niche: helping students in the community.

As the following comments indicate, these women had observed many iterations of the job in their tenure in the recruitment office.

When campuses grew, the position changed. When I first started, the position was more like Public Relations, we’d go out, set up a table out at a fair or a high school or a community college, and you’d do a lot of, “ra-ra-ra Cal State.” Then as I became more professional, in the position at [another CSU], they needed to grow, and in the process, they combined offices. So we blended together and they started to develop programs to bring kids on to campus to sell the campus in a different type of format, not just PR anymore. Now Deans, faculty, people talk to you, give you a campus tour. And then from there, it evolved again with the process of impaction and priority service areas. (Norma, Sycamore)

Basically, since I have been here, I have gone through several different directors and vice presidents, so the information that person gives out when they take the job here...we have merged, then separated from Admissions and Recruitment, to Outreach and Recruitment, we have rolled around a few times. At one point we were with outreach, they merged us with them for maybe two years, and then they

put us back with admissions. So, the philosophy of whoever is in charge would give you the information and share their policies and procedures because the direction is coming from them. (Nicole, Cypress)

With more experience to draw on, these individuals were more likely to “wait it out” and take direction from the leadership since the needs of the job was constantly changing. Yet, to these employees, the job essentially stayed the same. As one stated: “no matter who is here [in the leadership position], we have to recruit!” By following the directives of whomever is in charge these women demonstrate a high level of commitment to the organization by respecting their place within the work structure. In summary, the majority of the sample was comprised of Locals, who maintain a high level of loyalty and commitment to the university and the recruitment office. Many see themselves as members of the local community and that pride shows in their work.

### *The Cosmopolitan*

On the other side of the continuum were the individuals who were more cosmopolitan in nature. Smaller in number, these individuals were mobile, many relocated to California from another state they were from outside the immediate area. Five professionals in the sample stood out as showing characteristics of a Cosmo. In the context of this study, this could mean that they are unfamiliar with local cultures, or that they earned degrees in other fields besides education (for example, Math, Ministry, Counseling) and/or that they had work experience outside the domain of higher education. It is important to note that the way the word, Cosmo, was used here does not

mean that they were deeply committed to the higher education profession as the model may suggest. For example, among the Cosmos, the reference group for many of them was not professional associations or even the broader CSU networks. They were not tied to the higher education sector, but since they had experience in the general workforce prior to working at CSU, the reference group was often the experiences in former jobs, in the non-profit and corporate settings. In fact, only three professionals in the sample had any type of out of state experience in admissions or undergraduate recruitment prior to their current position. Several comments, such as the one shared by Lydia, that she was “not really familiar with any Cal States,” showed a lack of knowledge of the system and practices at other CSU campuses.

As cosmos, these individuals appeared to be less loyal to the university since they did not share the same sense of ownership, as the Locals. By working in the CSU, they needed to learn about the Cal State and adapt to the operations of the office. Several struggled with the office work culture and duties, and even, faced some resistance from the staff. What follows is the perspective from one someone in a director-level position attempting to introduce new ideas to the staff:

I am dealing more with issues of performance, HR, documenting, showing up on time, very *basic professional acumen* that I should not have taken for granted. Before, it was the Wild West and anything was game. And now, we are standardizing things, which any office should do, so I don't really have much sympathy for the complaints or the whining that may come from it because every

other office already has it. These are just norms, professional norms for any office. (Bill, Juniper)

As Bill lamented about the norms that any office should have, and as a Cosmo he had worked in several, implies that his Local co-workers do not know office etiquette. Unlike the Locals who were familiar with the university, or worked in the recruitment office as an undergraduate worker, the cosmo-like professionals had different circumstances in their path to becoming recruiters. Lydia admitted that she was “not looking for a full time job”, which was fairly common among this group. For example, Gordon shared his progression of becoming a recruiter:

Well, I came on as a temporary person to help with the admissions. I stayed in that role for a while, went full time, and then worked myself up to an evaluator position and now as an admissions officer. (Gordon, Cypress)

For the Cosmo, the reference group was also the university, but with an emphasis more on the central administration and the importance of getting the job (however defined) done. As Bill explained, “I am a state employee so I can't protest or say anything about the current situation with budget cuts. A private citizen maybe I would, but I have a job to do. And if that means cutting budgets, I cut budgets. If it means increasing enrollment, I increase enrollment. That's my job. I may not do it with a smile, but it is my job.” This remark can be analyzed in complete contrast to the way that the Locals, even the LO-COS describes their contribution to the university's mission. As Robert explained,

One of the things about doing outreach is that you need to have a community sense to what to do it, to really enjoy it because if it just becomes a job than you

are just reading applications, there is no sentiment behind it, there is no wanting to help someone out, they are just 'we need to make the numbers' and that's it. If you don't enjoy what you do, then it becomes work. (Robert, Sycamore)

A definite Cosmo, Bill, explained how he dealt with his co-workers who constantly advocated for the need to reach out to the local community:

But, despite the fact, there will still be some that say 'no, I don't believe this numbers thing. We should be there for the community'. And I am like, "I appreciate that because I have that strong passion for that as well, but there are certain realities so you try to explain it but ultimately, it is like, this is what we have to do. Take it or leave it. That's just a reality. If we had a blank check, then great, but we don't. We have bosses and they have bosses, and they have bosses. So sometimes the chain of command needs to be respected.

As somebody that was not embedded in the underlying values of the CSU, it may be harder to understand the other employees who advocate for working with the local community. Not only does he demonstrate that his loyalty and commitment was to the job, his reference group was 'the bosses' and accepted the current situation as reality, with no consideration of the possibilities of being able to accomplish the enrollment goals of the office and still reach out to the community. Not all of the characteristics of Cosmos need to be viewed as an infiltration of differing views. For example, having the work experiences and skills of a Cosmo can be a nice asset for the office too. As one example, Amy explained how she used her experience from a prior position to enhance her current job performance:

Since I have an admissions background, I am very familiar with the procedures and the academic requirements that the Admissions office has for students. So, by having that base of information, I am a real asset to the students when I go out there because not only can I relay to them the information about the requirements broadly but I also have an understanding of what students need beyond that. I am familiar with that so it kind of helps them, they don't have to call another person to ask. It's really great. (Amy, Juniper)

In this way, Cosmos could be an asset to the organization by drawing on past experiences, and bringing in new ideas. Yet, often times, they can be perceived as an outsider. Here we see cosmos as the minority, in number and philosophy, but we need to recognize the false dichotomy of Local and Cosmo, call for a more nuanced approach for examining professional orientations and latent social roles.

#### *Mixed tendencies*

The analytical categories of Locals and Cosmos are not so clear-cut. In fact, a mixture between the two types was frequently demonstrated in the data. As such, this study introduced two new concepts—LO-COS and COS-LO—as an extension of Gouldner's model of latent social roles. This new categorization reflects more of the nuance that Rhoades et. al. seek to capture in their new model of professional identity.

In the context of the current study, Local-Cosmopolitans (LO-COS) are the Locals who have several years experience on the job and tend to advance more in the profession. They are CSU alumni (in fact, several started their careers as student workers)

but they cultivated networks in the Cal State system and had prior work experience with other Cal State institutions in the system. Within the LO-COS group, I found some were established in the job (veterans) and others were emerging into their new role i.e. someone in the second year on the job and working more in areas beyond the typical recruitment zone.

To illustrate the distinction between the veterans and emerging LO-COS, let's turn to two examples. Both individuals started as student workers at their undergraduate campus; then they took positions outside of undergraduate recruitment before returning as recruiters. Beyond the typical role of recruitment, some of their work duties required program coordination at the community and system level. The first excerpt was from the veteran recruiter, who considered herself as part of the system-wide leadership, followed by the emerging professional, who was trained as a para-professional and worked at her devoted alma mater.

Some of the efforts to train us as a system help because you have an opportunity to meet each other and socialize, as well as to work and learn together in those settings. That is something that is intentional; we have been trying as leaders within the CSU outreach area to continue to keep that potential gap bridged between the campuses. You can always tell when someone is new and they don't get it. You have to bring them aside and say we don't do that. (Cecilia, Juniper)

The comments from Cecilia speak to the normative aspects that characterize CSU recruitment. The Chancellors office hosted professional development events each year and counselor conferences to train the system and state practitioners, and to provide the

various CSUs opportunities to get to know one another. Michelle, as a LO-COS, was one of the more experienced leaders and showed that she modeled proper behavior to newcomers even if it meant talking to them individually at events. Carmen, an emerging LO-COS, showed the willingness to go beyond the typical tasks of a recruiter and engaged in system-level activities.

The way that I see it is that, the first year I just learned, observed, now it is my second year, it is my opportunity for me to learn more about the Chancellors' office, like what are some of the policies coming up in the pipeline, what are the committees that I can get involved with, what can I do on campus. Yesterday, for example, I went to a meeting in [with the Chancellors' staff] on how to advise the A-G requirements. We have an initiative that is aimed at increasing the admission and retention of African American students in the Cal State system overall. So [we] are part of that initiative and I am actually the representative that works with the Chancellor's office for Super Sunday. I think it's great. (Carmen, Pine)

For a LO-COS, although they were learning about the policies and programs, there was still a strong sense of loyalty to the community and allegiance to the Cal State mission of access. In fact, many of the LO-COS professionals, began as a Local, then, with experience and exposure to the field, cultivated a career and set of professional networks that extended beyond the university that they are employed. In addition, as Michelle indicated, they teach and model for new employees the requirements and norms of working in CSU recruitment. The reference group for this group had the tendency to shift depending on the context: on one hand, they could advocate for the needs of the

community regarding a specific issue; on the other hand, they may turn to their colleagues in other parts of the state when a similar challenge comes up. One advantage of being a LO-COS was being grounded in the local community and traditions, but they still had an eye on the system and the bigger picture, particularly when it came to helping students pursue a path of higher education.

The Cosmopolitan-Local (COS-LO) was the designated category to describe the professionals who are outsiders, in the sense that they did not attend a California State University as a student or that they had extensive experience outside of college recruitment. Yet, what differentiates them from Cosmos was that they tended to openly embrace the mission and values of the CSU. As we will see below, all of the Directors of Recruitment fall in this category. Two others were placed in this group too, since they embraced the values of the CSU and became active members in the local community. As a seasoned outreach professional, Ernesto shows that one can work in other sectors and still advocate for the Cal State. As an alum, he drew on his experience at the CSU, and utilized what he knows about the UC system to advise the students properly.

I am having a good time here, and the areas that I am representing. [This job] has provided me a lot and I am glad that I am here. I am trying to get students into the University, any university, I don't care where they go actually, it is giving them right information. Even when I was at the UC, I would advocate [for this CSU campus]. (Ernesto, Juniper)

In a similar way, one can take all of their knowledge from past work experiences to ground their current work.

I have the benefit of working in all three public systems in California. I think that has given me great experience in terms of the knowledge base, knowing the inter-dependencies among the three segments as well as the nuances and uniqueness of each of the three segments. (Ben, Cypress)

The LO-COS and COS-LO groups are interesting since they are not what we would think of a “Local” or “Cosmopolitan” in Gouldner’s terms. There is need for a more nuanced approach for considerations about loyalty, commitment and mobility in the lives of professionals, and in turn, how that plays out on the job. With the introduction of new terms, this study extended the model of professional social latent roles and expanded the definitions of what it takes to be a professional in higher education today.

**Table 16. The typology of latent social roles**

ORIENTATION	LOCAL	LO-COS	COS-LO	COSMO
FREQUENCY	17	7	6	5
DIRECTIONALITY				

Table sixteen depicts a new typology for the latent social roles of recruitment professionals. The first two rows show the four orientations considered in this study and the number of people who fell in each category. A key component to the table, and the essence of what it means to have a “mixed” tendency of a LO-COS or a COS-LO is the concept of directionality. Used here, directionality conveys the movement between

categories. To some degree, a Local can “evolve” into having more of a Cosmo-like perspective as one gains more experience in the position and exposure to the system networks and initiatives. In the case of the COS-LO, one begins with more of a national perspective, then as one was immersed in the CSU, and adapting to the local culture and values of the CSU, does one begin moving in the direction of being more oriented to a Local outlook.

Facilitating access: but for whom

*Proposition nine: Regardless of the one’s position or impacted status of the institution, all professionals will view their role as facilitating access to higher education.*

Three sub-propositions are related, and will be addressed in this section:

*Proposition 9-a: However, the difference is who to provide access to and the student population that is emphasized: ‘locals’ want to assist the local community while the ‘cosmos’ seek to simply meet the enrollment target.*

*Proposition 9b: Those in director-level positions tend to be cosmopolitan and will be involved with national professional associations and embracing strategic enrollment management principles.*

*Proposition 9c: Many of the professionals with the Local orientation will exhibit the need to ‘give back’ to students and the community since they benefited from someone who helped them.*

Overwhelmingly, the professionals interviewed for this study viewed their role as helping students, guiding them through the college enrollment process. None felt that they were turning away students from college; although, one person acknowledged that sometimes they felt as though they play the role of a gatekeeper, but it was only in the context of working with undocumented students. Even then, the professional

acknowledged the power that a position at the university may have in some communities. In general, as one recruiter summarized, the essence of the job was to “represent this campus in a positive light.”

There was a distinctive pattern between the LO-COS group and many of the locals: they openly state their preference for working with minority populations. To illustrate this point, Lindsey, George and Manny spoke about their preference in working with ethnic populations:

I am passionate about working with specifically this population. This job allows me to go directly to the students that need the college awareness. Which are mostly the students that I can relate with...being from a mostly Latino population, underrepresented, and from low performing schools. The type of population that we target, that is exactly where I came from! (Lindsey, Cypress)

Most of my schools are majority, minority. And I prefer that. I think my passion is working with non-traditional population students, I think that are low in numbers here. Low income, students of color, that's the population I come out of. What I have found is that I have gone to a couple of schools, where it is a little upper class, and the attitude is, you're here to serve us. And then you go to another school that is lower income, you get this sense of we really appreciate you being here and talking to us. And I would much rather be in that that is the situation, where they really appreciate what your doing. Like -- High School, --

High School is the ghetto, man, but those kids are the most appreciative, I love going to that high school. (George, Juniper)

I think that when you present, you have to be more specific with the first generation college bound group, and being aware of the backgrounds of families when you do a presentation. On top of that, presenting to Latino populations is a lot of fun. Big time. I may be biased because I am Latino so that's how I look at it.

But I have asked different colleagues too and they agree. (Manny, Cypress)

From these examples, it is clear that there was an affinity of working with populations that they are familiar with, and in many cases, a part of. Thus, there is a common bond. The comments of George and Manny are interesting because as professionals they can have the tendency to feel prejudiced and biased in some cases. In terms of the information they give out during presentations, the content seems to be the same, except as Manny stated, the recruiters may need to be more specific with the information that is provided. There are certain aspects that get emphasized too, like outreach programs. As a recruiter, Wendy incorporates her knowledge of federal and state funded early outreach programs that provide support to undocumented, or first generation college student populations into her conversations with prospective students.

In high schools with large minority populations, I always touch on EOP and CAMP when I am visiting those schools. I make sure I spend more time on those two programs, like if you are low-income or minority or first generation college bound, or sometimes I ask 'how many people are in AVID', because I love

AVID, and I was an AVID student as well. And I did EOP, and that has really helped out too, so I try to talk a little bit more in-depth about it, then say at other high schools, like those in [other more affluent county] or somewhere with not as big of a minority population. I still touch on it but I don't go into as much details.  
(Wendy, Cypress)

Thus, many of the Locals prefer to work with communities of color. Some stated that they had more comfort working with populations with are similar to them. But, as we discover below, the COS-LO group had more of a tendency to not favor anyone; they were willing to work with anyone and demonstrated that they had the ability to do so.

#### Recruit anyone: Harvard to the 'hood

A common characteristic across the COS-LO group was that they give the same information but they may have changed the delivery (thus, they are keen on the idea of knowing your audience) and recognized that any recruiter should be able to recruit any student.

I remember having discussions at conferences, and a lot of people thought that only Chicanos could recruit Chicanos, and only Blacks could recruit Blacks. But I said 'it shouldn't be that way. If you are going to be a really good recruiter, that means that you should be able to recruit anyone.' (Robert, Sycamore)

Further along into the interview, Robert, an experienced veteran in recruitment, returned to the point about what types of populations a recruiter can recruit, and the skills needed to provide outreach to certain populations. He continued,

One thing about being a recruiter is that, well, some people say that 'you need to be a minority, to be able to recruit' or 'if you are a minority, you can only recruit your own' but a good recruiter is someone that can work with a white, a black, a Mexican, an Asian, whatever, that's a good recruiter. For me, in general the recruiter should be able to recruit anyone. (Robert, Sycamore)

Robert grew animated as he shared this story and his experience at the conference. I sensed his frustration about not being taken seriously and that as a minority, he had to prove that he was capable of recruiting “other” student groups as well. He was not alone in this sentiment. For example, another veteran in the field explained the situation at her campus, where she and her co-workers had to demonstrate that the minority recruiters could go out and recruit anywhere in the city. As Michelle recalled,

There was a time when various folks around campus did not think that we could pull that off because we were mainly minority, and there was some pretty mean comments said, to say that we wouldn't be able to go recruit the kids from [more affluent, predominately white area.] And we would say, 'OK, watch us!' You are going to send out [minority recruiters] out there and [we are] going to do it and we did! We would always get great numbers and they finally had to admit that they were wrong. I guess, we know how to recruit, period. It's not just the students that look like us. I think fortunately we have staff members that could do that, some better than others, but we moved from being just minority recruiters, going to minority schools, it is not necessary anymore. (Michelle, Juniper)

The preceding example shows that minority recruiters were faced with an awareness of the need to prove themselves on the job. The burden, it seems, was on the recruiters to perform and to produce applicants. Additionally, the same individuals were stepping up to the challenge and exceeding expectations.

We really had to understand that we are recruiting for the whole campus. I had no problem going to [affluent suburban HS] and the next day going to [poor urban HS] and then the next day, going to [middle class HS], and talking to students from very different cultures and economic backgrounds. I don't have a problem with that. I can go and adjust my presentation to fit the needs of the student or to communicate however I need to, with parents as well. That is fine with me.

Being adaptable and aware of the needs of various and diverse audiences should be a key trait for anyone involved with college recruitment. As Carolyn from Sycamore University summarized, in the long run, it is important for college recruiters (and others) to recognize the commonalities of people and the importance of knowing your audience, and responding to their needs.

Because what I found was that no matter what parents look like, they can be Black, Latino, Asian, White, African American, whatever, we all want the same things for our kids so when you talk to parents on that level, they don't care what you look like. So you know, it is easy to go out in the communities and talk about college and things like that. I think ALL parents want that for their kids. So when you talk to people like that it makes it very easy to communicate with them. Like people say all the time, 'you keep it real' and I do: I can go from Harvard to the

hood in two seconds (laughs) depending on where I am at, you have to do that. You know? You have to change your delivery. The message is the same. But sometimes you need to change the delivery. (Carolyn, Sycamore)

Being able to present to different audiences, and in different settings, is a necessity that all recruiters need to master in order to be an effective recruiter. As this section describes, depending on one's orientation, they can view the job in different ways. Along the same lines, some professionals choose to work at the Cal State for certain reasons.

#### Directors as COS-LO professionals

The directors, the lead supervisors of the recruitment offices, were an intriguing mix between categories. They were not active members of professional associations, nor were they eager to introduce enrollment management tactics to their offices, as was predicted. On one level, they all had extensive experience and knowledge about the state of California. They all worked at different types of institutions in the past, and a few mentioned that they were drawn to CSU to see "what this sector was like." Three of the four worked in recruitment and outreach positions at the University of California; the other was an alumnus of the CSU.

So I actually, primarily looked in the CSU because I hadn't had that experience yet and thought it would be interesting as a point of comparison. I will be real honest; I had no intention of sticking around as long as I have. I didn't expect to like it as much as I do. (Josie, Pine)

I really wanted to venture into the Cal State system because I already had worked at the community college, I had UC experience but I had never worked for Cal State. So, the opportunity presented itself. [This campus] is a very dynamic place to work and [our location], culturally speaking, it's great. It was an up-and-coming campus. So you know, it was appealing. (Richard, Juniper)

Although several of the Directors were attracted to the position since they wanted the experience at the CSU, they came to enjoy the position and welcomed the atmosphere of their respective campuses and cities. They did not try and bring the values of the UC here; they wanted to experience something new. One of the Directors made it a point to declare that the CSU is “not the ivory-tower university on the hill” and another remarked how “we have a very elitist attitude sometimes in the academy, so when I go out into the community I try to break it down to people and tell them what it really is.” These statements indicate that they are the bridge between the academy and the community. In many ways, they were comfortable in their current positions in the recruitment office. As Josie at Pine shared,

Every once in a while, maybe once a semester, I will hear from [our legislative affairs type office] and they would say such and such legislation is working it's way through the pipeline, what would be your reaction if something like this would happened. So I interact with them, I don't know how that gets translated to what they do in Sacramento but I never, ever have anything to do with the folks in Sacramento (laughs) and I am real happy about that. I am quite content to mind my business here in [this city]. (Josie, Pine)

The quote highlights a key trait of the COS-LO, one may expect them to be involved in staying abreast of state or national policies as it relates to college access and enrollment, but instead, we have a director who would rather focus internally to the university.

Among the group of Directors, it was interesting that none of them actively participated in regional or national conferences regarding admissions or enrollment management. While they all knew about the various organizations and pay membership fees on occasion, they were not actively involved in these professional networks. The managerial philosophy of embracing prestige over access, common in strategic enrollment management was absent in this group. Embracing the access mission of the CSU was much more prominent in their conversations about working for a Cal State.

Below, Josie explained the mentality between the UC and CSU:

And at the UC we had much more of the mentality of screening people out as opposed to here at the CSU where I feel it is more about access and bringing people in.

She continued,

If a student is eligible for admission at CSU and lives in [the nearby county], we will take them. I can actually guarantee admission to anybody in our service area. When I worked at the UC, you could live a stone's throw of campus, and you could exceed eligibility and I couldn't guarantee you entrance. Some of that, we are a bigger system, so we can afford to be more porous with our borders. It is a mentality. We are the people's university. (Josie, Pine)

Josie showed pride in being involved with the people's university and "the fact that we are part of the community that we serve." Others directors that I interviewed, echoed the sentiments of Josie. For example, even though three of the four previously worked at the more prestigious University of California, they were attracted to the Cal State so they can cultivate a college-going culture in the community and help students gain entry into higher education, and not necessarily compete for the coveted spots at the UC. As Ben, the Director of Cypress explained,

I previously worked in the UC system, at a selective four-year public university, you can talk about what students *need* to do to be eligible to attend a UC but the reality is that for many of the campuses, you are going to be disappointing—in some cases, 75% of the applicant pool—and so it is such a breath of fresh air to talk about access and the importance of higher education and what students need to do, and what families need to do to support their students, and to know that there is something behind that. For Cal States, well, this is a system of access and availability to students, and that is what we are built on. To really talk about that, and to know that there is not an asterisk beside it, a caveat...well, if you get in! It is a much more positive environment to be in, than on a campus that is selective.

Ben exemplified many of the characteristics of a COS-LO Director. Starting his career in admissions as an undergraduate student worker, he accumulated a wide range of experience in each of the sectors of California higher education. He had out of state experience working in recruitment and was a member of a few national associations (although he rarely attends the national meetings anymore). In the last few years, he

moved to the Cal State and lives in the community near campus. As was detailed above, Ben was primarily drawn to the CSU because of the access mission and the genuine interest in assisting people in the community to prepare and attend college. He concluded,

[Working at UC got] trying and tiring, whether it is when you are doing the introductory admissions presentation and some asks, 'what's the average GPA?' and you have to say, '4.02' or whatever it might be, and you just see the faces drop. To really talk about access and have something behind it is what is one of the most beneficial things for me. (Ben, Cypress)

So then, the Directors were not bringing the philosophy of UC here, and did not try to change the CSU or make it look more like a UC. Instead, they embraced the access mission and felt good doing about the work that they do.

#### I see myself in them

Another distinction among the Locals, and to a certain extent with the LO-COS group, was the ways in which the professionals got drawn to the job, and stayed, because of the desire to help students. Many revealed that they themselves had struggled in high school, and there was someone to help them. Some spoke about the need to give back and several "didn't want others to go through same thing." In the examples below, the importance of having and exchanging social capital (Stanton Salazar, 2001) was illustrated in terms of the recruiters being accessible to students in need.

I was in a position that I was almost kicked out of college because of my lack of resources, until I found that one person that said 'no, this is the way you do things' and that person helped me throughout the four years, and I did well. So I feel that

I have a personal responsibility to give back. I love what I do. Not only do I share my experiences in the classroom, but when I go out in the field and work with students, I let them know who I am, I let them know where I came from, I let them know that when I got here [to the United States], I did not know the language. If I didn't know the language and learned it, and worked hard in high school and got in to a Cal State, straight from high school, there is no reason that they should not. You know? (Carmen, Pine)

I know that I could have been working in the field or factory because that is all I knew from my parents' background. Actually, I did work in the fields and I did work in the factories, and so because of higher education I am just very grateful. I know what it has done for me and I know what it can do for others. I now feel that my part in all of this is teaching and helping facilitate people through this whole process. (Tina, Cypress)

I think [students from inner city schools] respond to someone who has gone through what they have gone through. I share my story, this where I came from, this is what I overcame. I had teachers tell me you are going to be shot and killed before you finish high school. I didn't have great grades in high school but education became important to me. I had to go community college route but I was driven. After that one person at the community college helped me, I will be [gosh darn] if I let another kid go through what I went through. If I can help, I will

do that. This is where my passion is, versus making more money. So, [this job] doesn't pay the most, but it is rewarding, I am getting a lot out of it, that's why I do this. (George, Juniper)

Based on the responses here, we get a better grasp about the ways that these professionals went about helping prospective students, and their motivation for doing so. By recognizing that they were once in the student's shoes, or had someone that encouraged them, this set of professionals were highly committed to making a difference. They wanted to be like "that individual" who helped and encouraged them. Below, Nancy and Aaron conveyed why they were so passionate about the job and modeling to students that the path to college was an attainable option for them.

I want to get [the students] through the process because I know what it is like to not know, because I was that student, not knowing what to do. Now that I have the keys and the knowledge, I am going to spread that out. I will be there for them! Especially my kids [from recruitment territory]...they only think that they can go to one community college, and I know where they grew up and the type of economics that are there. I was you! I went to school two blocks away from here.

So, for me, I am giving back to my community by helping out those students, and helping the larger community with that. But I think that the students do not have that person that they can go to when they do have something going on (with regards to academically or social) for the most part. And so, it is good to be there

when someone needs help, so helping students is a top reason for being in this profession, and going back to my community. I am Latino, and a male and I have a bachelor's and a graduate degree and I am from [nearby city], so basically I am working with that population. I try to share as much as possible to students to motivate them, so they can see that it is possible. (Aaron, Pine)

What is uncovered in the quotes above was the extent to which the professionals played a key role in the transfer of important social capital as it relates to preparing for college. For example, quite a few of the Locals and LO-COS elaborated on their personal story of being influenced by someone, and in turn, they wanted to ease the college choice and application process, and inspire future generations to pursue a college education.

#### No worries

*Proposition ten: The Local employees interpret the enrollment management policies and practices as being a threat to the open access mission and commitment to the local community, whereas the Cosmopolitans and the Cosmopolitan-Locals actively encourage the adoption of innovative and state-of-the-art recruitment practices.*

In general, none of the people (regardless of classification) in the sample perceived any concern regarding the enrollment management policies or the new practices related to impaction. The common reaction was, "that is just the way it is." Only one person shared their dissatisfaction about the direction that the university was taking. Though, as a local, his feelings were more about turning into another kind of university:

I think one of the biggest issues I have, that I'm struggling with, is changing from a small school to a bigger school. I think I am struggling

because what will our message be, I mean one of our biggest selling points has always been small class sizes, one on one attention but now were getting to a point where with the budget the way it is, we need to do more with less. What can we cut out? (Ralph, Cypress)

So in this case, the concern was not impaction (limiting students) but actually, the opposite, he was concerned with campus growth and his perception of what the CSU is suppose to be. Overall, none of the professionals were publicly concerned about the idea of turning students away, or the effect that new enrollment strategies have on the students who are recruited.

None in the sample openly described the feeling of being concerned about the new direction of admissions policies and enrollment management. Surprisingly, several would cite the “budget” as a challenge but rarely spoke about student fee increases or the impact it had on students. As discussed before, one limitation of the study was the time that passed from the time of the interviews to the system-wide impaction mandate. The policy change may have had a differential impact depending on the school; universities like Cypress or Sycamore who want to attract students are forced in the same situation as some of the bigger, more populated campuses.

The use of technology was not viewed as a threat to access. In fact, all of the employees encouraged the adoption of innovative and state-of-the-art recruitment practices. It was clear that the tools were seen as just that, not as a replacement of the recruiter. At the CSU, common innovations was an institutional website and CSU Mentor, a system wide interface that offers information tutorials and the on-line

application. There were no clear differences between the Locals and the Cosmopolitans and the Cosmopolitan-Locals when it came to their perspectives about using technology. Overall, the recruitment professionals seemed satisfied with the new technologies and tools that they used to recruit students.

### Aspects of race

There was one component of the enrollment-related policies that some of the professionals did not agree with and felt that the actions were a threat to college access. The main disagreement that emerged from the interviews, and highlights the incongruence between state policy and practice, revolved around race and ethnicity issues. The 1996 Proposition 209, which banned the use of affirmative action in college admissions, as well as the 2001 Assembly Bill 540, which granted qualified undocumented students with resident tuition, were central in conversations with the ethnic minority recruiters, particularly those of Mexican descent.<sup>5</sup> From the overall sample, about eleven of the professionals (a mix of Locals and LO-COS) could be characterized as advocates for services specific to minority populations. That is, they worked closely with undocumented students beyond the scope of their job description or they found ways to still help universities recruit an ethnically diverse class without using affirmative action practices. In other cases, it was smaller instances within the workplace,

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<sup>5</sup> As a limitation of the study, I did not ask any of the study participants to disclose their race or ethnicity, although many of the respondents self-identified as Mexican, Mexican American or Chicano during the interview. Others made suggestions like, “when I came to this country, I only knew Spanish” or “I come from a minority community.”

like Kristy, a first-year recruiter at Juniper, who did not agree with the typical perception that the office had of Latino populations. She said,

There is a lot of research and perceptions out there that says, especially families, of Latino cultures do not value education. I don't think that is correct. From my own personal view, parents have high expectations and value education, opportunities are not always there and I think that they want it, but they just don't know how to...so I think that it is important to have people there at the school to give that information to students.

There was a level of understanding and service not present in the recruitment office, that some of the recruiters thought should be required. For Kristy, she challenged the perspective that Latino cultures do not value education; for Betty or Ernesto they suggested that the CSU needed more Spanish-language materials. As they described,

I think that our office lacks...in as much as we reach out to the Latino community, I don't think that we have the paper materials that we should. Especially since we have a limited amount of materials in Spanish, or any kind of formal documents for AB 540 students to pass out. That is a big challenge. (Betty, Pine)

I know that students, especially in my [recruitment area], they don't want to end up in the fields, they want better. Their parents want better, but they just don't know how to get it. So, it is giving them information, bilingual information.

Actually, that is one thing that the CSU lacks in general is not having a lot of bilingual publications, there is probably one or two pieces but it is so general,

nothing specific. So [part of my job is] translating everything from English to Spanish and giving it to the parents, and for the students making sure that they understand the information. (Ernesto, Juniper)

So, in this case they recognized, and worked toward, meeting the needs of the community by way of providing bilingual information. In the following section, two issues are highlighted: recruiters going ‘above and beyond’ the basic job duties to work with undocumented students and examples of the ways some of the CSU campuses implemented work practices so that they aligned with the regulations of Proposition 209 while still providing services geared toward outreach to underrepresented communities of color.

#### Advocating for AB540 students

Assembly Bill 540 was enacted in 2001, and allows eligible undocumented students the chance to attend college as a resident. The processes to determine eligibility are not clearly defined, and rarely did recruitment offices train its staff on how to advise these issues. Often times, the recruiters took it upon themselves to learn more about the resources, and spent time during off-work hours assisting students in these situations.

I advise students who self-designate as AB 540, there is a special process of being able to qualify them as AB 540 students. I go over and above, because I am a big advocate to AB 540 students. In fact, I am an advisor for AB 540 students here. I have friends that were AB 540, and I use that as an example for these students and I tell them, well, remind them that they can't stop at high school. That there are scholarships out there, some are available to them that are not looking for social

security numbers so the possibility is still there. I am not acting as the regular admissions counselor, that is me. I care for them, and I go ahead and answer their questions because I care and I am knowledgeable so I give them information. For me, I take it a step further and make an educational plan with them. So I take it to a different level, now, is that my role? Does it go beyond my boundaries as my job description says—see what I mean? There is the thin line, but I just try to do what I can as far as getting them here. (Manny, Cypress)

Similar to Manny, George used examples from his personal life to comfort the students who are in an uncertain position of legality.

I work a lot with undocumented students. Telling them the [information on the application] is not going to the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) department, it is strictly for the university. I share what the options are for them as AB540. Like we will try to help [them] find scholarships, we don't ask for Social Security number or citizenship status. There is even a club on campus an AB540 support organization. So [I let them know that they] are not alone, my wife was in the same situation, she was AB540 when she was going to CSU. She made it, and you can do this too. (George, Juniper)

I think we have not made an effort to make our application AB 540-friendly. We still ask for a green card, we still ask for an SSN number and I have been to so many application workshops where I have seen students get up and walk out. And sometimes I stop my workshop and walk out behind them. And I ask, why are you

leaving? And 'it is because they are asking for that, and I didn't bring it.' So at that point, I tell them that why don't you go ahead and give me your phone number and or we can meet early when there are no students on campus and I can meet you and we can complete the application, I know why you are leaving, so don't worry about it, come back at 7:30am and we can complete it. (Carmen)

Carmen continued by telling a story of a student, since she notes that “one of the things that really pushes [her] is the story of students’, of one of the students that she assisted in the past.

This was a 4.37 student, very high grade point average, and she was trying to make a future for herself, so I meet with the parents and they filled out the affidavit, since that is something that is also under wraps at some schools. Here, we are a little bit more open about that. This is what you need to do...but at other schools, it is like, 'oh, ok we jump through hoops to go through there, and then go to here, no, now go back two hoops. So it is really hard for them, so what I did was I brought over the affidavit, they signed it, I got the transcripts, she got put in as an AB 540 student, she has been admitted and she will start here in the fall.

Carmen went above and beyond here, she even met with the student’s parents to complete the necessary paperwork, which facilitated the path for the student to enroll at the university. This may be a small victory for Carmen but she wanted to see broader, more formal initiatives for the undocumented student population.

My goal is to be able to see how we can hire those students, or provide stipends, different means, we can give them a scholarship, but politically I don’t know how

far we can go with that. And with the Cal State in general, I don't know how far the Cal States are willing to go for these students. But personally, I encounter them daily and I feel that those students should have more opportunities.

As the experience of Carmen pointed out, some recruiters took on the responsibility of staying informed about the policies. In general, the CSU did not provide professional training or official publications about AB 540. In his interview, I asked George, who seemed to know a lot about the recent developments of AB 540, how he knew so much about the issue.

SGL: Is this information you accumulated on your own?

George: I guess so, yeah I accumulated it. We did not have an office wide meeting about this, like to tell us what we are going to do. I think we have some good people on campus that are supportive of AB540, like people in admissions, people in different departments that we can call on, say a student needs some help we know who to call on. I wish it was a little more, "This is our campus policy.'

George and Carmen wanted more of a formal process for providing information and supporting the undocumented students who are eligible for admission to CSU. For the most part, the issues around Proposition 209 was the only instance that there was a clear difference between the official policy of the state and CSU and what the professionals thought about the policy and its implications for students.

#### Considering affirmative action

In another context, still related to race, were the ways in which the recruitment offices dealt with the mandates of Proposition 209—which banned

the use of affirmative action in California. Overwhelmingly, the people in the sample thought that it mattered little, and did not affect the Cal State system too much.

Well, it didn't really have the effect on CSU as it did on the UCs. And again, it is because of the whole accessibility issue. We are extraordinarily diverse; in fact we are a majority-minority campus. We were before 209 and we are afterwards. [Cal States] are community-based institutions, and just look at this community. (Josie, Pine)

SL: Has Prop 209 affected the type of students who come here?

Betty: I think it has impacted what we call certain processes that we do. In all honesty, I think, in my perception of it, you can have a proposition, but you still have committed individuals who are going to make sure that their University represents California. And that their University represents, that the University is open to more diversity. And so, they just find ways around it. Most of the time they are called diversity programs, they change the names to diversity.

As Betty pointed out word choice was very important. Another recruiter, Michelle, recalled how she played an active role when it came time to interpret the policy in the workplace. She explained, "I took the opportunity to be really creative and looked at the verbage of that law so that I could be familiar with it, 'what does it really say', 'there has to be a loophole here.'" And there was. As she elaborated,

There was a coordinated effort by the state to change the language of a lot of various programs, in anticipation of that law passing, there was a shift in focus to

low-income and first generation but a term ‘economically disadvantaged’ and ‘educationally disadvantaged’ what that means that they don’t have a history of college-going in their family so that kept the CSU safe and we really didn’t use race in admissions anyway because it is a very cut and dry admissions process—they need the grades, they need the classes but it did eliminate those targeted programs. But again, there are other ways for finding those students if you want to, you can go by zip code, you can go by school, or go by first generation or low income and that’s easy to find in California, easy to find low income areas and schools in those areas.

The Director at Cypress shared the institution’s techniques for reaching out to minority communities, while still compiling with the law.

As long as...as long as we do not confer...um, if only information is provided, in the form of a letter or phone call, so that in terms of the legal interpretation of the Prop 209, it is not conferring a tangible benefit to the student. If we did a program in which we had the expense of having students here, providing food or whatever, that it a tangible benefit and we cannot, we are prohibited from doing that. It is not solely based on race and ethnicity but if we are only providing information, and that is what we are doing, just proactively instead of just putting it out passively, that has been deemed acceptable. (Ben)

The issues around affirmative action and policies like Proposition 209 in California seem to indicate that the professionals have more agency than originally theorized. The examples showed that although they were following the rules, there were other ways that

they navigated around them to help students of color pursue a college education. The fact that many Locals and LO-COS were advocacy-oriented suggests that they were more aligned with the needs of students of color. The loyalty of this set of professionals was not always with the university, but the students and their families that they serve.

### Summary

Overall, the chapter emphasized the role of the professionals employed in the university recruitment offices. Across the board, the professionals saw themselves as facilitating access to higher education. However, there were differences depending on where one was situated in the typology of latent social roles. For example, Locals were connected with the community and often saw themselves in the students, and wanted to help them gain admission to college. For the Cosmos, the interest in students was not as apparent; they seemed more interested in doing the job than really assisting students. The professionals who most aligned with the mixed orientations were grounded in the issues and needs of the community, while also being comfortable and/or advancing in their professional career. Another reason for learning more about the recruitment staff is that many of them have the potential of becoming institutional agents (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). As a whole, campus professionals are a likely source of institutional support. Several of the people interviewed exhibited qualities of being engaged institutional agents. Those that exhibited characteristics of institutional agents included Carmen from Pine and Ernesto at Juniper who worked to provide resources and opportunities to students and communities to reduce the information and cultural barriers. Regardless of

professional orientations (although, many of the so-called institutional agents in this study fell in the LO-COS group) they wanted to empower students to make informed choices about college. Perhaps they came to the position with a willingness to help students, or like Robert from Sycamore, being part of a community with a social justice focus.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Regionally focused, relatively non-selective public universities, such as the California State University, entered the realm of managing enrollments. To some degree, the shift was due to economic necessity and limitations of institutional capacity, but it could also be attributed to the entrepreneurial spirit captured at the university level. Whatever the reason, public universities are shifting more toward strategic enrollment management for solutions to address their multiple priorities.

In recent times, public universities find themselves in a precarious position to serve the needs of its local resident students, and respond to the demand for an affordable education, while still offering a quality education in a time of economic downturn and uncertainty. At the time of this writing, the dismal financial situation, forcing budget cuts and furloughs, at the national and state levels were seen as the impetus of the challenges for the CSU system. In reality, that is only partially true. The internal choices made at the system and university level are reflected of the vision that the leadership wants for the Cal State. Recognizing the balancing of priorities and challenges, one can scrutinize that the rise of enrollment management was a response to fiscal and prestige concerns. From the expansion of enrollment positions or the vast increases in college applications that need to be processed, the work carried out in recruitment and admissions offices was becoming an even more integral part of the overall operations of the university.

The CSU is known for lifting up the populations in the communities of California. The historic role of CSU providing college access for students in local areas (who tend to be underrepresented minorities) is now questioned due to the changing admission

standards and increases in student fees. In the last decade, the CSU system leadership took active steps in creating enrollment management policies, structures, and recommended practices. The shift in discourse—from universal access to authentic access—was implemented in concrete ways by the use of impactation and local service areas. It was also clearly reflected in the fact that the CSU did not admit any new students in January 2010, the first in the system's existence. A tension between providing college access and having the appropriate resources to do so is the challenge faced by the CSU.

This study was about the ways that the recruitment professionals enacted the system-wide and institutional enrollment management policies; as well as explored their professional orientations in regards to college access. I was interested in whether there was any congruence between the enrollment management policies at the system and campus level and the perspectives of a group of professionals. In other words, I explored to what extent the professionals complied with the policies, or if they had any concerns about the new direction that the CSU was taking in terms of increased marketing and limited services.

In general, the findings suggest that there was congruence between the CSU system policies and the enacted practices of the recruitment staff. Yet, the study calls attention to the bigger question about what it means to be a 'public' university; there were some differences of what the leadership thought as compared to the professionals on the ground. Since the professionals are the workers who are, technically and symbolically, doing the outreach work for the university, these individuals should have

insight into the complexities that surround the issue and also have a clear sense of the possibilities for innovation and change.

The budget was the main concern, but the recruiters spoke about the budget in vague terms (i.e. we need more resources, or the budget is a problem) whereas the public announcements had the budgetary issue at the forefront, to highlight that it was the state budget that was forcing the CSU to develop impaction and enrollment management processes. The majority of the staff complied with the supervisor requests, without much questioning. In the rare cases that staff disagreed, it concerned issues around undocumented students and how to better serve them. Even in situations where a recruitment office did something unique—like at Sycamore where the recruiters evaluated applications or at Juniper where they worked with student associations to reach out to students of color—the Directors or the administration often encouraged it. Nevertheless, the universities were responding to the state situation (actually, they were dependent on it), and prioritized the fiscal circumstances as the main reason for the policy changes. The public announcements from the Chancellor, and the actions of the professionals, suggested that there was still a desire to serve the needs of the community by providing access and continue assisting students through the college choice process.

Facilitating access to higher education was the main objective for the staff at the recruitment offices. They held their jobs so that they could help students go to college. But, as the study found, processes and practices varied by institutional context. At the same time, given the downward trend of state funding for public higher education, as well as the increasingly competitive market for attracting students, universities in the sample

were turning to alternative methods to increase revenue. Although the universities did not explicitly express that raising money was a motive, findings showed that the recruitment offices turned to branding and marketing campaigns as a way to promote the image of the institution to boost awareness and prestige. As a contradiction, these activities were happening at a time when the system leadership was developing policies to deal with impaction. In effect, the system began to turn students for the first time in CSU history by not opening admissions during the spring term in 2010. Furthermore, the recent developments were pertinent to consider since the Cal States are historically known as the primary access point for many low income, students of color. From an equity standpoint, it is essential to understand how these populations fare in the implementation of enrollment management policies and practices.

### Summary of findings

After conducting this research project, I am convinced that the work of recruitment professionals at the Cal State, and other public universities, are an important part in meeting enrollment goals and ultimately, the objectives of the institution.

- At the system level, the findings identified the spread of enrollment management at the CSU. Eighteen campuses had a position of Assistant Vice President of Enrollment Management, which could be indicative of the need to respond to unpredictable enrollment demand and state support. Universities across the CSU system took active steps in responding to the demand/capacity issue, which led to impaction policies, the impetus for enrollment management structures. Overall, the analysis showed that the rise of EM practices was to deal with the system's

capacity to meet enrollment demand with sufficient resources. When the policies were introduced there was a fair amount of discretion given to campuses to assess their own local context in carrying out strategic enrollment practices.

University level

- With regard to the universities, the key findings suggest that the institutions were dependent on the local context, and responded accordingly. For example, the data revealed that Cypress was not hard pressed to attract students, so the campus focused more attention on building the pipeline through early outreach initiatives and community partnerships. Or, since Pine admitted a small number of freshmen each year, the recruiters really encouraged the community college route.
- The general sense from CSU recruiters was that there was more competition to attract students. Recruiters spoke about student markets and in marketing terms. As a nod to academic capitalism, campuses pursued branding campaigns and innovative technologies to reach out the students. This was paradoxical, given that the system as a whole was facing such a crunch in meeting demand.
- There was evidence that supported, and did not support, tenets of institutional isomorphism. For example, with coercive measures, there were various policies to comply with and mandates from the campus leadership to follow. Yet, in some cases, recruiters found loopholes (like recruiting students of color at Juniper) to get around certain restrictions. Or, at Pine, they needed to create a local service area to designate which schools they would visit but the staff added extra high schools that aligned with their overall recruitment goals.

- In accordance with institutional theory, there were cultural norms of the CSU that influenced organizational behavior. In general, all of the campuses participated in ‘typical’ activities: recruiters visited the high schools and community colleges; they set up booths at college fairs, they hosted open house events on the campus. At the same time, there were strategic decisions about campus programming for prospective students. Across the system, there was variation among campuses, i.e. some developed specialized programs, such as Pine’s honors receptions or Sycamore’s themed visits to attract key student populations.
- Aside from the norms of what constitutes a recruiter, it was taken for granted that the staff represented the whole CSU system at recruitment events. They often referred students to other campuses, and always with a colleague’s contact information. So, while there was a friendly competition within the CSU, it was understood that there was some level of cooperation among CSU campuses.
- Information sharing across campuses occurred, but there was no blatant mimicking of practices or procedures. In the instances where sharing was referenced in the interviews, it was more about how recruiters took the gist of a concept or idea and tried to adapt it to their own setting. In fact, many times this type of sharing was encouraged. There was a blurred distinction between mimetic and normative tendencies, and the case of a complex system like CSU, it was difficult to determine what is copying, and what was the effort of the numerous joint training and professional development opportunities, such as the counselor conferences that all of the CSU recruiters from across the state attend each year.

- When considering isomorphism and the ways in which universities structure their recruitment efforts, the common approach was to situate units under Student Affairs and usually without formal ties to the Admissions office. The staff members at each of the sampled universities carried out recruitment practices without much questioning or resistance to the policies in place. As one of the professionals put it, “they feed us the information and we are the soldiers to get it out to the community.”

For the most part, the constructs borrowed from academic capitalism and institutional theories were helpful in understanding the broader organizational context of universities. Yet, I realized that the theories were not enough for explaining all of the patterns, particularly that of the recruitment staff. As Lipsky (1969) reminded us, the workers at the lower levels of the organization have the autonomy and agency to make decisions on the ground that has much of an effect as the actual policy.

#### Professional orientations

Several interesting findings emerged from examining the work lives of the recruitment professionals. As the public representatives of the university, these professionals can ‘make or break it’ for the institution. Luckily for the CSU, the majority of the professionals interviewed were satisfied in their positions and genuinely viewed their role as facilitating access to college. Yet, there were some professionals who internalized the rhetoric of the system level, while others felt that the new changes were beyond their control and forced on them by their supervisors. In terms of professional orientations, the study uncovered:

- The classic conception of latent social roles, laid out by Gouldner (1954) could be expanded upon. In chapter six, two new concepts were introduced to provide more nuance to the strict Local and Cosmo dichotomy. The findings highlight how there were gradations between these two categories. For instance, those individuals identified as LO-COS began as Locals (i.e. they attended the CSU or began working as a student worker) and became more engrossed in the job and expanded their networks to other recruiters in the state. On the other hand, evidence also pointed to people who were more Cosmopolitan-like (i.e. not from the local community or had work experience outside of higher education) but over time, became more committed to the mission of the CSU, and providing access. In these cases, the professionals were characterized as COS-LO.
- Chapter six directed our attention to the professionals themselves, and their work practices. There were many instances when professionals shared stories of “going above and beyond” for a student since they reminded the recruiter of their former selves, or they had a deep commitment for assisting students, particularly undocumented students. Several of the professionals interviewed felt as though they were advocates for this vulnerable student population.

Certainly, state, system and institutional policies guide the work of recruitment officers. Policies offer parameters to comply with, and prescribed ways of doing things. As a higher education community, we have little understanding about the ways policies get implemented in the workplace and to what effect. Due to the constant flux of policy adjustments and adapting to population and eligibility projections, I feel it is imperative

that research and policy studies pay attention to the ways in which the campus recruiters, who need to explain the official processes, have a grasp of the issues. How do they interpret and explain the current climate of impaction and state funding decreases to different audiences? This study suggested that university recruitment offices and the professionals who work there, have a wealth of institutional knowledge and may have a unique perspective about the impact of recent changes to enrollment management and what it means to college access.

Formal and informal processes of policy implementation were observed. Initially, the system-wide enrollment management policy gave discretion to the campuses to respond and enact practices, as the campuses saw fit. The mandate allowed flexibility for the campuses, and various approaches were used to deal with enrollment. However, in 2009, the system's approach was more directive, and simply shut down admissions for Spring 2010 term. In other cases, the informal processes were given more prominence. For example, the reporting mechanisms for unfunded initiatives like *Troops to College* was more structured than basic reports on the number of students served.

### Implications

There are numerous theoretical and practical implications that come out of the study. This is important since the study focused on a different sector and set of professionals, often unrecognized, which offers a chance for researchers and scholars to gain a new perspective of the higher education field.

### Research implications

First, in terms of contributions to research, I expanded on the Gouldner model of

social latent roles and introduced new definitions to better capture different types of professional orientations. Focusing on the directionality between categories (how one would evolve from a local to a LO-COS, for instance) can be a key area to better ascertain how professionals view their role on the job, and the relationship between individual agency and social structure. In this way, the study highlighted that there is much promise that comes from the micro-institutional analysis of everyday situations.

My analysis modified and complicated institutional theory. For example, as a modification, I treated the CSU as the environment and explored the connections among the system. This was helpful but it also underplayed the other aspects of institutionalism, namely the importance of the national and state environment in determining the context of the university setting. Likewise, the role of the organizational actors (i.e. the recruitment professionals) is an expansion of the original theory since I focused on the micro-level (Powell & Colvas, 2004). Future research can focus on the ways in which undergraduate recruitment or enrollment management gets enacted in various institutional settings. The boundary-spanning relationships of recruitment professionals (internal and external to the organization) are another intriguing line of future research since individual actions may influence the strategic directions that universities take. The role of preparation and training of recruiters, as well as continued professional development, should also be subjects for consideration in subsequent research.

#### *Practical implications*

Findings from this study have practical implications for the daily operations of organizations. First, recruitment professionals continue to be a fundamental component to

any recruitment effort, and the actual work that these employees conduct can be influential in the overall direction of the university. With regard to the recruiters, they are the public face of the university. They need to represent the organization to external and internal audiences so the training and professional development opportunities they receive should be taken seriously. The time it takes to train and socialize new people to the position is a worthy investment. Imagine all the time and resources put into a marketing campaign, only for it to be undermined by an inexperienced recruiter or an unhappy employee. A scenario like this is not beyond the scope of ground level professionals, particularly since they interpret the policies and messages that are passed down to them, and they are out in the public explaining the processes without much supervision. In that sense, the recruiters were autonomous to ‘do their own thing.’

The recruiters hold a unique and expansive knowledge base since they work in the community and with other campus units; this holistic view of the college transition process could certainly be helpful in making enrollment management decisions. This theme emerged in the interviews, examples include Amy from Juniper who mentioned that “we are the worker bees, and the big bees are creating all these rules, but really, they should ask us” as well as Josie from Pine who described how “...I am on the ground and I am able to say ‘well, let’s really think about this’”. The various experiences that the recruitment staff encountered as part of their jobs can be instructive in refining processes and developing more efficient techniques. In general, it seemed that most of the big decisions were made at the administrative level, as expected, and then dictated down to the staff. Referring back to the observation by Hossler, Kuh & Olsen (2001) described in

the first chapter, the strategy employed by the universities was more of the “traditional approach of using power of senior administrators to implement change” (p. 216). Even so, it does not have to be that way. Generally, there could be more of an effort to learn about the perspectives of the staff and engage them in relevant professional development to get the necessary ‘buy-in’ to achieve the short and long-term goals of the university. In the case of the sampled Cal States, there was not any vocal resistance to policies and practices per se, but the channels of communication could be improved. Working with the Admissions Office and the processing of applications was a source of contention for many of the recruiters throughout the study. Knowing this, the system or campus leadership, could take active steps in trying to resolve the problem, with the insight from the actual people faced with the issue. I am not suggesting that the ground-level folks know best, or that they should make all of the decisions that affect their work processes, but what I am suggesting is that visionary leadership can achieve more by taking some time to listen to the staff. On a similar note, at the campuses of Sycamore and Pine, the work environment was positive and the staff felt respected; which in turn, may have lead the staff to be more committed. Cultivating workplace morale is an ongoing process that should not be underemphasized by the upper levels of management.

### Recommendations

There are numerous possibilities for the CSU, but I leave you with two general themes, along with specific recommendations. First, the recruiters on staff are committed to providing access to students but may need more respect and support to get the job done. With the budget cuts of recent years, the professional development activities have

been cancelled or postponed at the system level. It is important to still provide staff training and opportunities to learn about enrollment management as a whole and how the university operates. It does take much resources to keep the recruitment staff well informed and confident in their jobs. The second general recommendation is to (re)imagine some of the possibilities that the CSU and the universities are embarking on. In other words, the normative environment does not need to direct the behavior of the CSU. While institutions are quick to invest in strategic enrollment management, and finding ways to maximize prestige and revenue, that does not need to be the only choice. As mentioned throughout this document, the CSU is known for being a critical entry point for first time students into postsecondary education, why not focus on, and take pride in, that? Why the push for better qualified students, and what does that mean to emphasize these priorities during a time of capital and structural constraint? In many ways the CSU is at a crossroads.

### Conclusion

This study brings into focus the need to consider the rhetoric versus the reality when it comes to undergraduate admissions at the California State University. The CSU is an important resource for California, as the system educates a large number of students each year. As this study documents, there are many challenges to recruit in the contemporary times of enrollment management. In the case of the CSU system, there was a need to balance their long-standing commitments to access and diversity, while also tending to financial and image concerns. Recently, the CSU has joined the Access 2 Success national initiative, which hopes to cut the college graduation gap in half in the

next ten years. Essentially, the project is to not just focus on student access, but on access *and* success (which is a major feature of most EM plans). In any case, the CSU has publicly committed to improving graduation rates, yet at the same time, faculty positions are being cut, fees increase and class sizes are getting bigger. By paying attention to the public rhetoric, and then tracking those commitments to actual practice, one can see a disconnect in how college access is conceptualized and carried out.

The study detailed how four universities in the CSU system enact system-wide and institutional enrollment management policies and practices. In addition, I examined the professional orientations of the recruitment staff, and explored their role in regards to college access. The changes in enrollment management that were occurring at the Cal State, and continue to occur at present, are indicative of the higher education landscape where higher education is situated in the marketplace and the accumulation of resources is necessary to maintain the operations of the university. For this reason, maintaining a positive image and attracting more students (both tasks charged to the recruitment office) is more important than ever before. The four sampled universities and the thirty-four professionals interviewed for this study represent a complex mix of institutional priorities and responding to internal and external demands. The recruitment staffs are in a distinctive position since they are at the lower ends of the university structure, so they are not making key decisions about policy, but they are the people who are hired to represent the university and present accurate information about enrolling at the institution to prospective audiences. The role of recruitment is a historic function of any college and

recruit; institutions need students. What has changed in recent times is the growing sense of competition to attract students, and the modes and strategies for doing so.

Many years ago, DiMaggio & Powell (1983) theorized why organizations are so similar, but the findings from the study suggest otherwise. As Ben from Cypress recognized, the CSU may share the same name and policies, but “if you look across the twenty three campuses that varies wildly in how that actually plays out on individual campuses.” Although the four campuses in this study shared similar institutional context and in the same region of the state, there was still variation as to the ways the universities organized their enrollment structures, priorities and services, as the findings demonstrate. The same could be said for the professionals. Each office and professional had their own style and approach, and dealing with various degrees of impaction, but all of them had an affinity towards the Cal State. They perceived themselves as a ‘bridge’; they were all contributing to college access goals and they were proud to be assisting students go to college. The interplay of university enrollment structures and the agency of the recruitment professionals is complex, and more influential than people realize.

## **APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

What is your title/position and how long have you worked in this office?

*The first set of questions is about work practices*

1. What kind of programs and services are offered by your office to recruit undergraduate students to this University?
  - a. What type of undergraduate students does this University aim to admit?
  - b. Do you utilize targeted strategies for specific student populations: transfer, low-income, minority, top students, younger students, out-of-state/international or local service area?
2. When giving presentations, how do you explain CSU admissions standards and impaction polices?
  - a. How do you explain the purpose of using the following admissions tools: the eligibility index, local service area, CSU Mentor and the on-line application?
  - b. What is a typical HS visit like for you? What questions to you get from prospective students and how do you frame your answers?
3. When it comes to outreach and recruitment, how do you distinguish this CSU from the others?
  - i. What are the practices modeled after? Are other schools doing the same? How is yours different or similar?

*The next set of questions is about system-wide Enrollment Management and Admissions policies, as well as the tools used by offices that deal with undergraduate admissions.*

4. How did you become familiar with the policies and procedures that you deal with at work?
  - i. Rationale for enrollment management and impaction policy
  - ii. Utilizing the eligibility index
  - iii. Having a local service area
  - iv. Using CSU Mentor and online application
  - v. Affirmative action in college admissions
  - vi. Enrollment management at the system and institutional level

5. Briefly describe how Outreach, Recruitment, Admissions, Enrollment Management units are structured and/or defined at this campus?
  - a. What is your role? Main tasks?
6. How have your (and the office's) work tasks changed with the introduction of EM? CSU Mentor? Increase in applications?

*The following questions are about the relationships you/office have with campus units and external groups.*

7. In what ways do you (and/or your office) work with:
  - a. Admissions Office (and recruitment or early outreach)
  - b. Educational Opportunity Program on your campus
  - c. Financial aid and /or Scholarship office
  - d. Other enrollment management units on campus?
  - e. The President's office (central administration)
  - f. Faculty or any one else at your campus?
8. In what ways do you (and/or your office) work with:
  - a. Staff of the Chancellors office
  - b. Other CSU campuses in the system?
  - c. What about the State Legislature— How do their actions affect your job?
    - i. What about recent discussions about Zero-Growth?
    - ii. Do you feel pressure to bring in external grants? Net tuition revenue?

*The final set of questions focuses on your professional development and work philosophy.*

9. Describe your initial training for your position. Was this helpful, why or why not?
10. How were you trained to discuss admissions issues and use the tools discussed above?
  - a. In what work settings do discussions about current policies and procedures occur?
  - b. What types of topics are discussed at staff meetings throughout the recruitment cycle?
11. How do you view your role in regards to providing access to higher education?

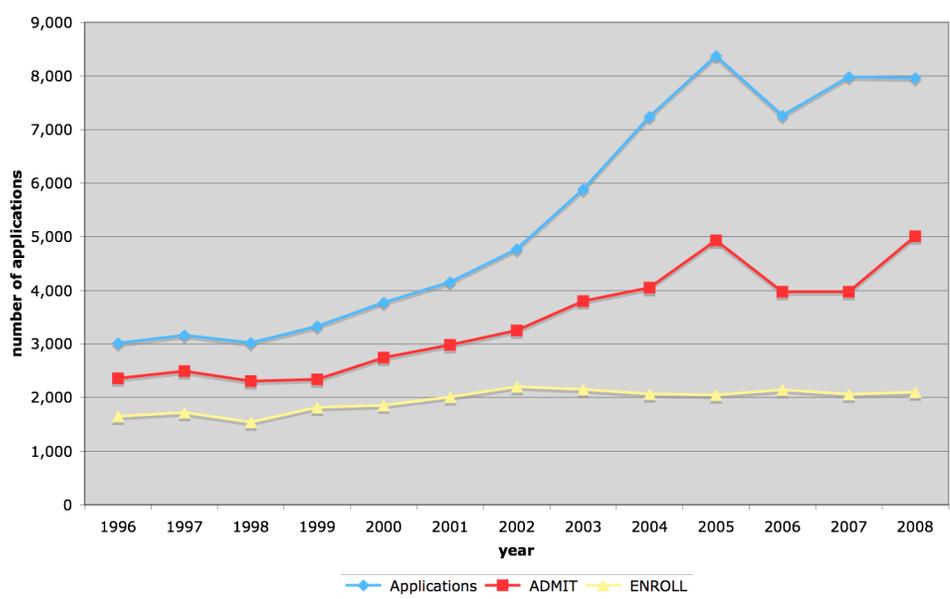
- a. What is your role in achieving the university mission?
12. From your perspective, what are the challenges your institution faces in terms of recruitment and undergraduate enrollment?
  - a. Does this create tensions on the job?
  - b. What about challenges for the CSU system? The state of California? Nationally?
13. In your opinion, is there competition among the CSU schools? What about the University of California?
14. Have you attended any conferences about your area of work: outreach, recruitment or college admissions? Which? What did you learn? How does this inform your work?
15. Are you a member of any professional associations? If so, what is extent of involvement? How does this inform your work?

**APPENDIX B. PARTICIPANT PROFILE**

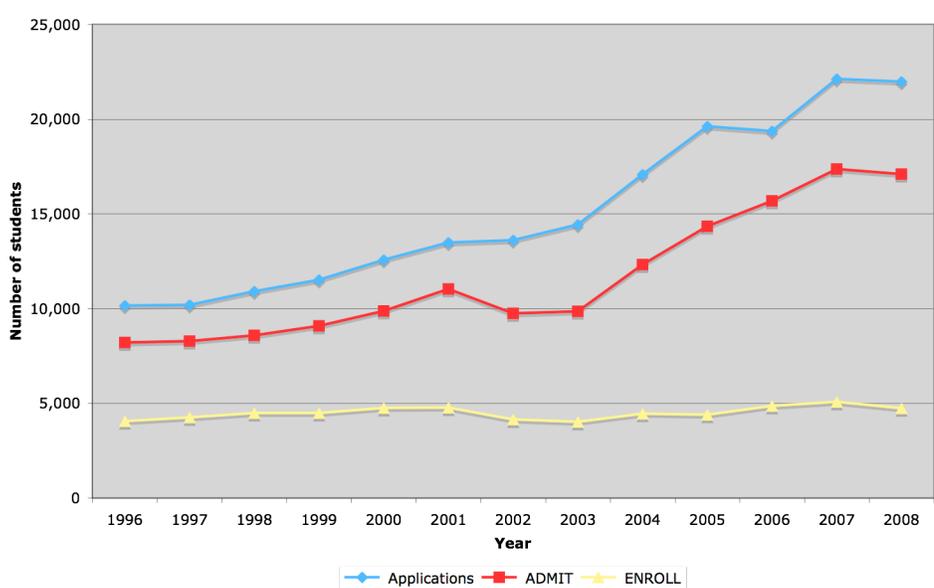
<b>NAME</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Campus</b>	<b>STATUS</b>	<b>JOB CLASS</b>	<b>CSU ALUM</b>	<b>Community College</b>	<b>Advanced degree</b>
Amy	Recruiter	Juniper	COSMO	2	no	no	no
George	Recruiter	Juniper	COS-LO	2	yes	yes	yes
Kristy	Recruiter	Juniper	LOCAL	1	yes	yes	in progress
Bill	Director	Juniper	COSMO	1	no	no	yes
Richard	Director	Juniper	COS-LO	2	no	yes	yes
Michelle	Director	Juniper	LO-COS	3	yes	no	yes
Geoff	Recruiter	Juniper	LOCAL	1	yes	yes	in progress
Nancy	Recruiter	Juniper	LOCAL	2	yes	yes	yes
Ernesto	Recruiter	Juniper	LO-COS	2	yes	yes	started
Chris	Recruiter	Juniper	LOCAL	1	yes	no	yes
Josie	Director	Pine	COS-LO	2	no	no	yes
Carmen	Counselor	Pine	LO-COS	1	yes	no	no
Betty	Director	Pine	LOCAL	1	yes	no	no
Ryan	Counselor	Pine	LOCAL	1	yes	yes	yes
Aaron	Counselor	Pine	LOCAL	1	yes	no	yes
Irene	Director	Pine	COSMO	3	no	yes	yes
Elsa	Counselor	Pine	LOCAL	1	yes	yes	yes
Robert	Officer	Sycamore	LO-COS	3	yes	no	no
Carolyn	Director	Sycamore	COS-LO	2	yes	no	yes
Nora	Officer	Sycamore	LOCAL	3	yes	no	yes
Norma	Officer	Sycamore	LOCAL	3	yes	no	yes
Helen	Officer	Sycamore	LOCAL	3	yes	no	no
Wendy	Officer	Cypress	LOCAL	1	yes	no	no
Lydia	Officer	Cypress	COSMO	1	no	no	no
Nicole	Officer	Cypress	LOCAL	3	yes	no	no
Jesse	Coordinator	Cypress	COS-LO	1	yes	yes	yes
Ralph	Officer	Cypress	LOCAL	2	yes	no	no
Lindsay	Coordinator	Cypress	LO-COS	1	no	no	yes
Gordon	Officer	Cypress	COSMO	2	no	no	yes
Manuel	Officer	Cypress	LOCAL	2	yes	no	no
Cathey	Director	Cypress	LO-COS	2	yes	no	yes
Ben	Director	Cypress	COS-LO	2	no	no	yes
Maria	Advisor	Cypress	LOCAL	1	yes	no	no
Tina	Director	Cypress	LOCAL	1	yes	yes	yes

### APPENDIX C: APPLICATION, ADMISSION & ENROLLMENT, BY CAMPUS, 1996-2008

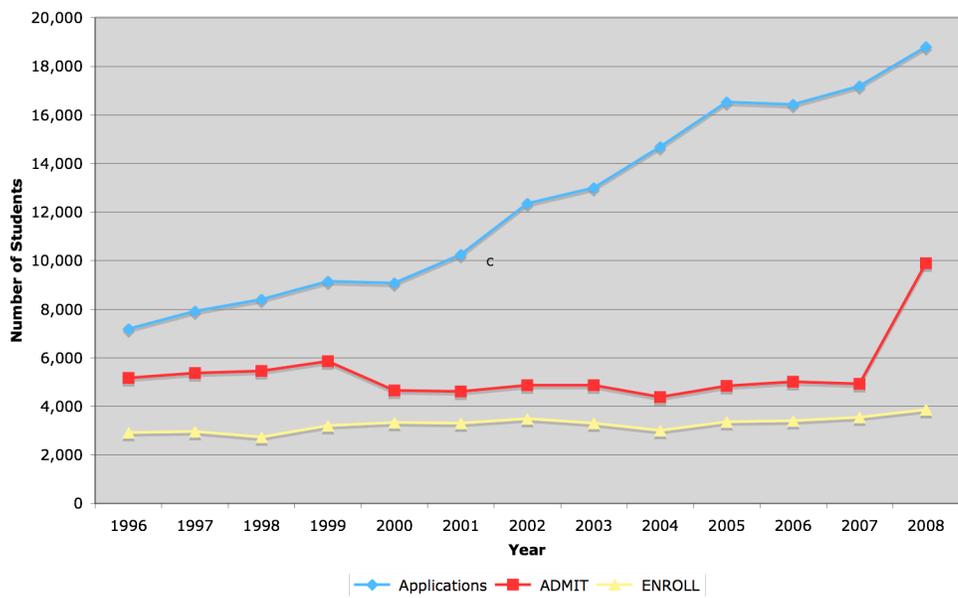
**CSU Bakersfield: Applications and Enrollment, 1996-2008**



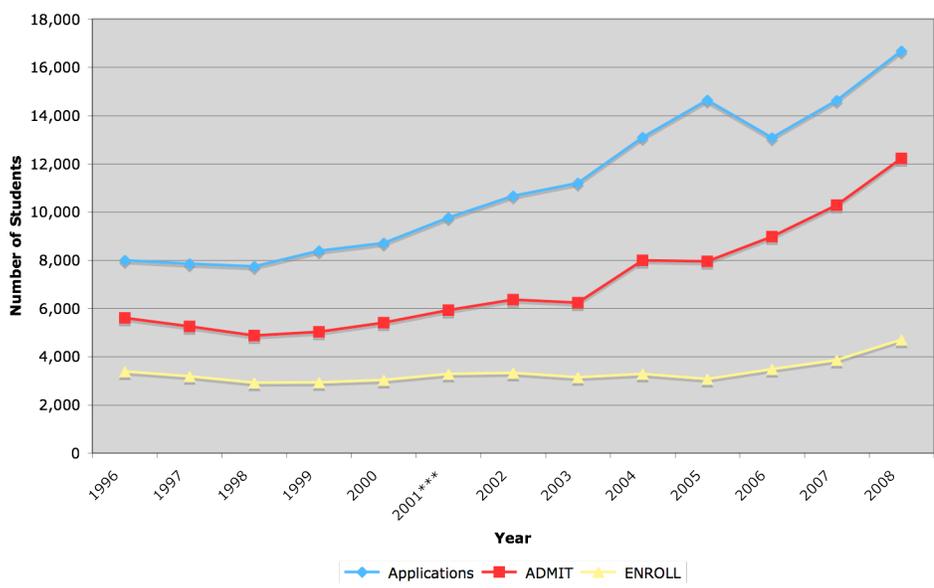
**Chico State: Application and enrollment, 1996-2008**



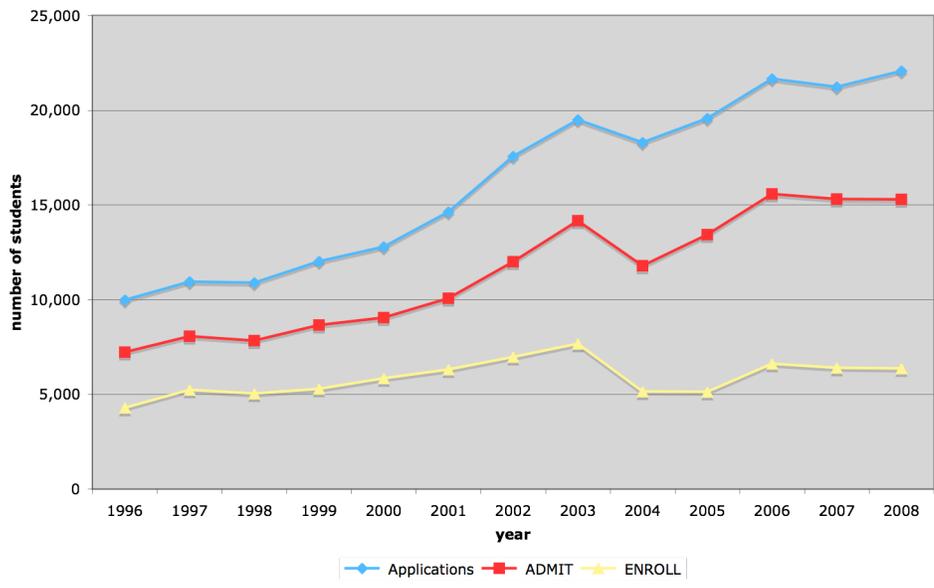
**CSU: Dominguez Hills: Applications and Enrollment, 1996-2008**



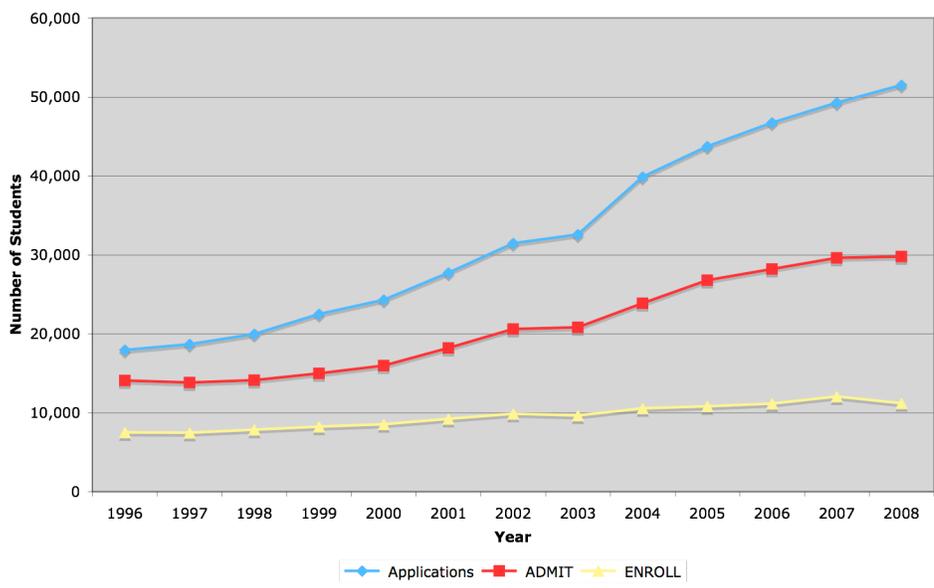
**CSU East Bay: Applications and Enrollment, 1996-2008**



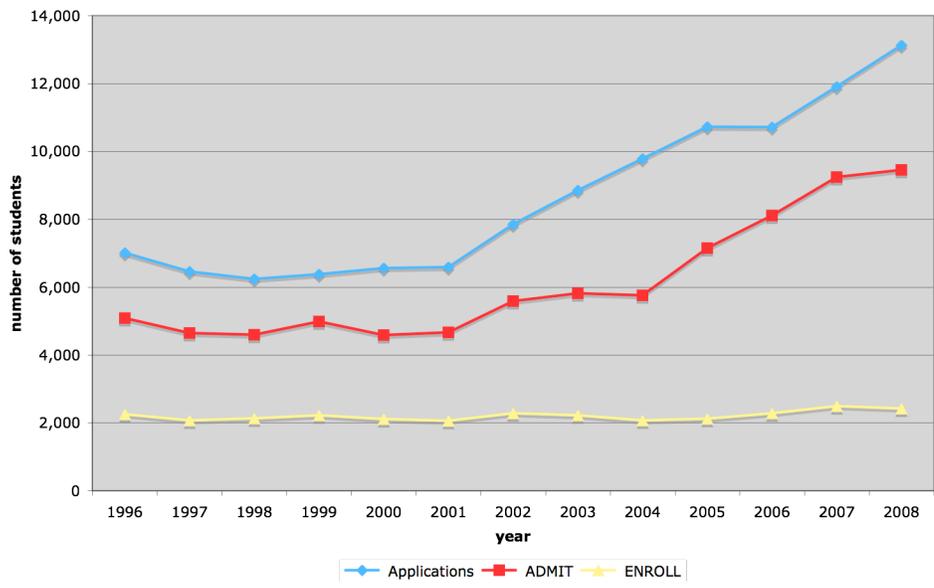
Fresno State: Applications and Enrollment, 1996-2008



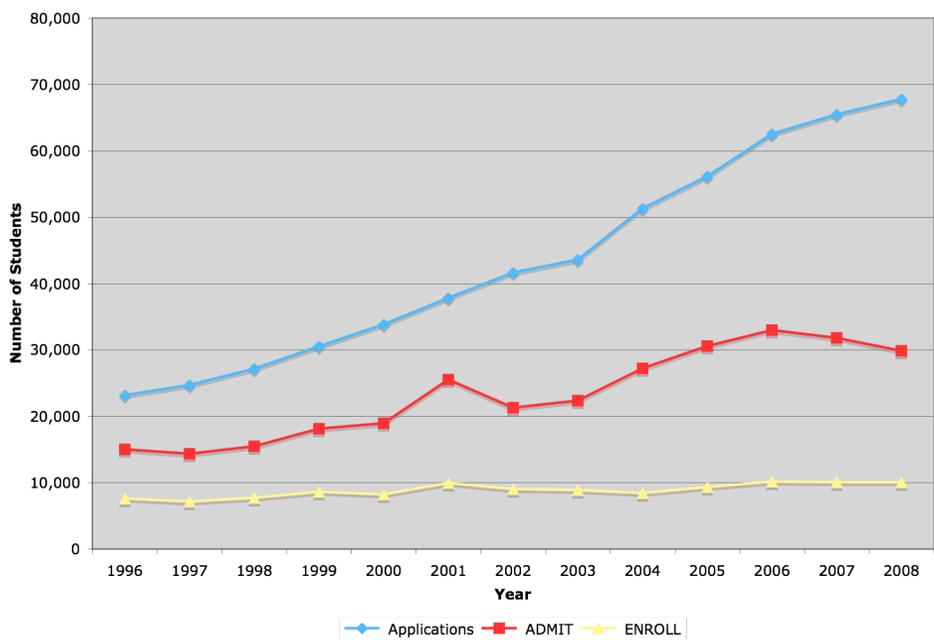
CSU\_Fullerton, Application and Enrollment, 1996-2008



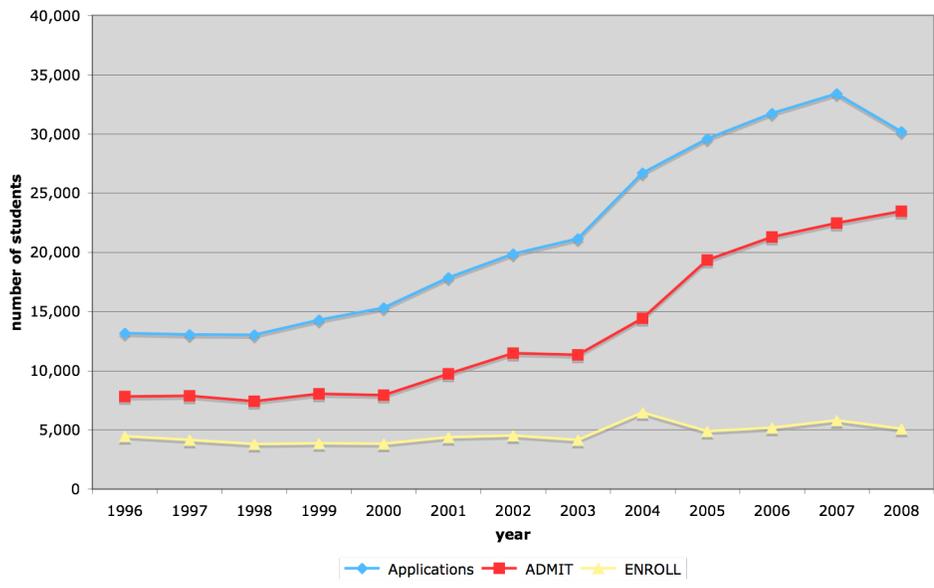
**Humboldt State: Application and Enrollment, 1996-2008**



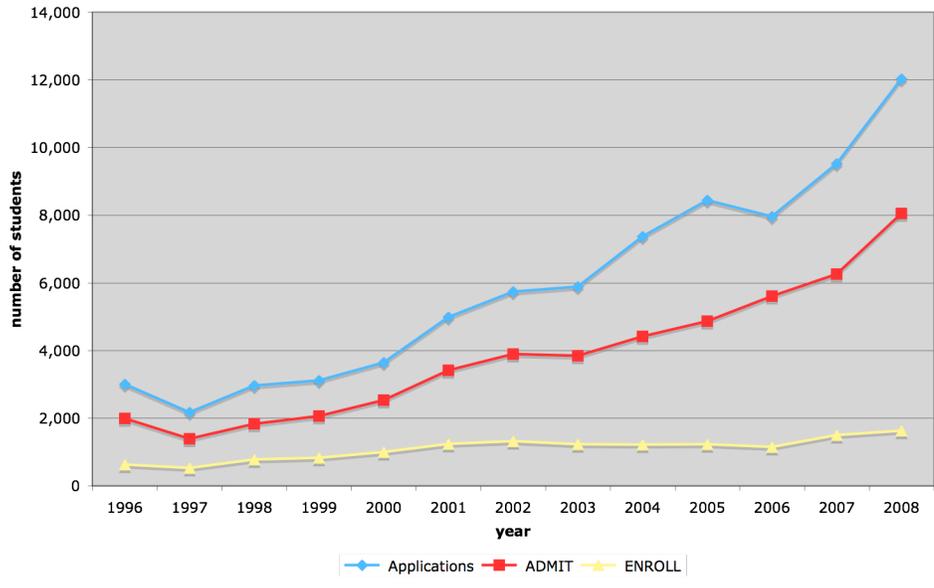
**Sac State: Application and enrollment, 1996-2008**



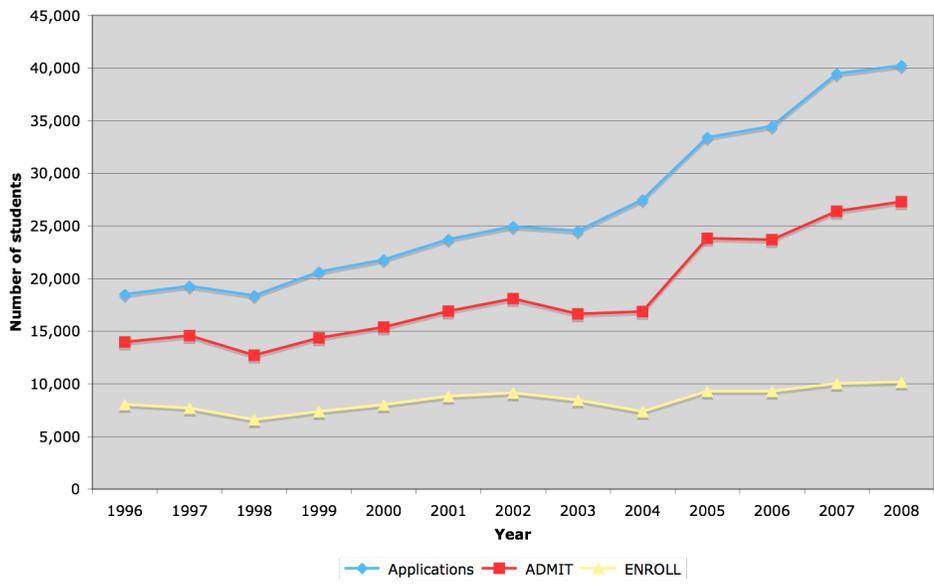
Cal State LA: Applications and Enrollment, 1996-2008



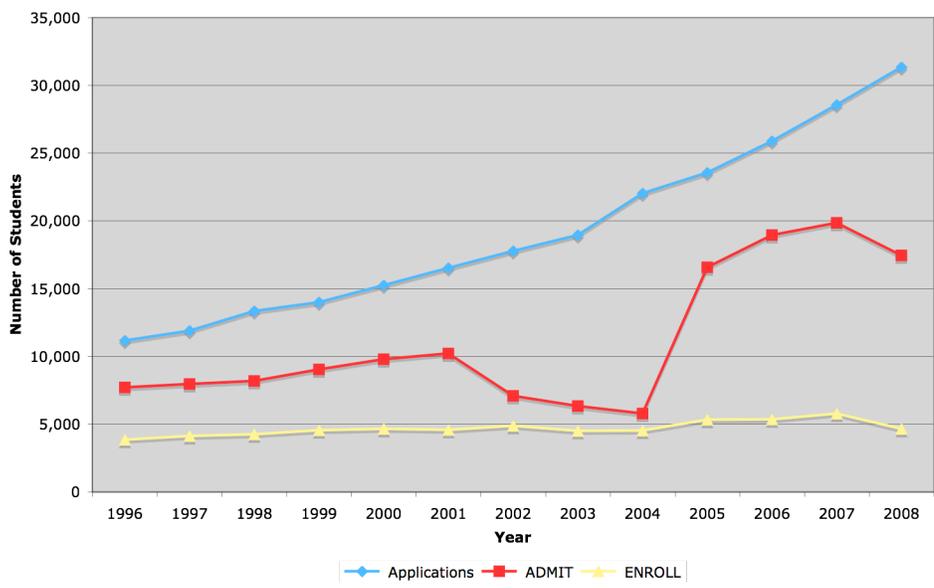
CSU Monterey Bay--Applications and Enrollment, 1996-2008



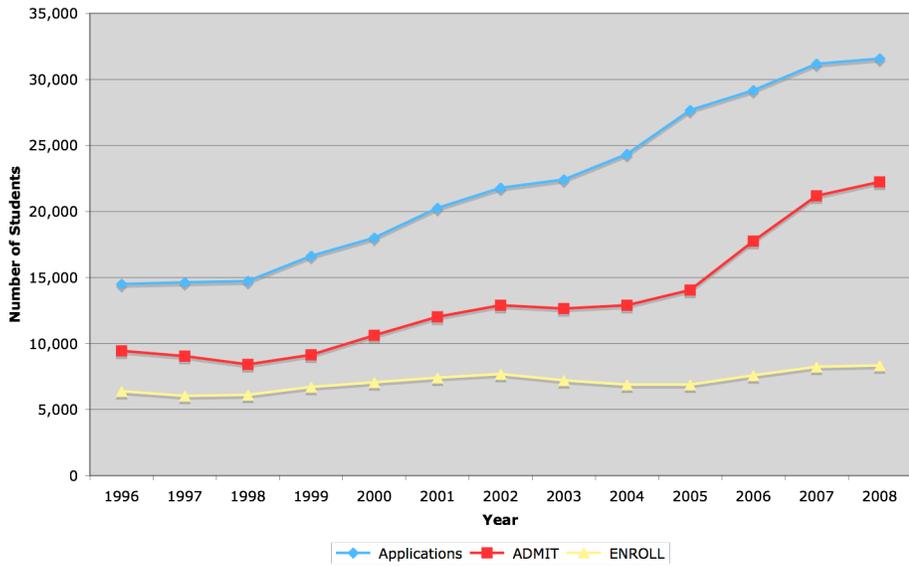
**CSU-Northridge: Application and Enrollment, 1996-2008**



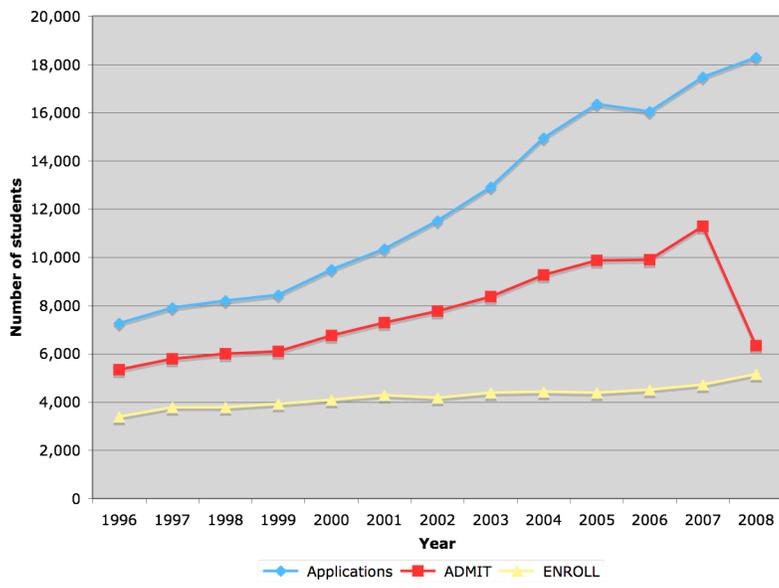
**Cal Poly Pomona: Applications and Enrollment, 1996-2008**



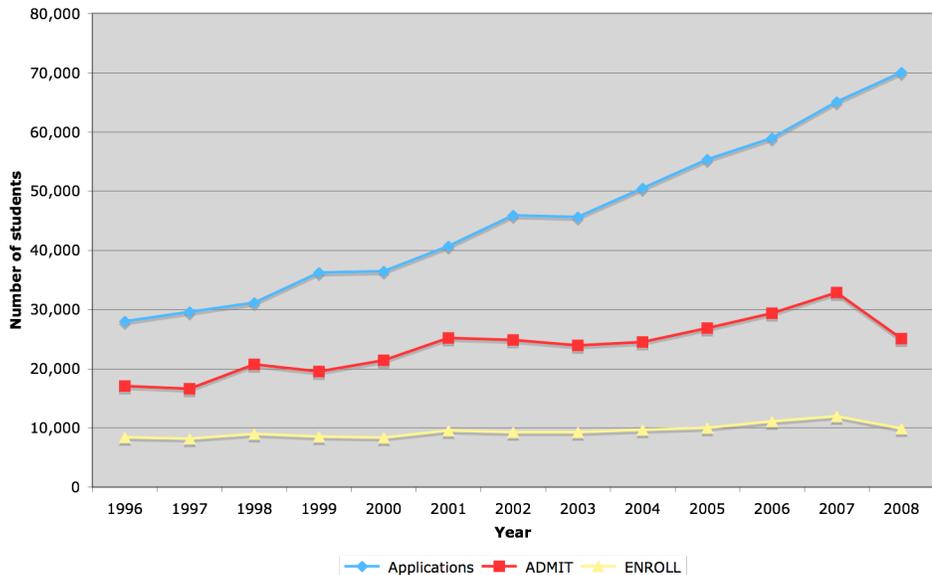
**Sac State: Applications and Enrollment, 1996-2008**



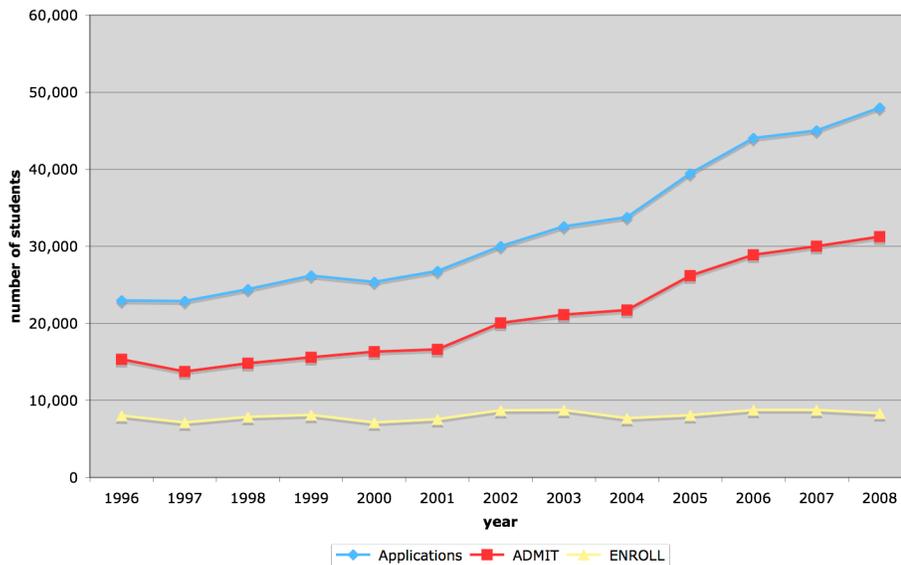
**CSU San Bernadino--Applications and Enrollment, 1996-2008**



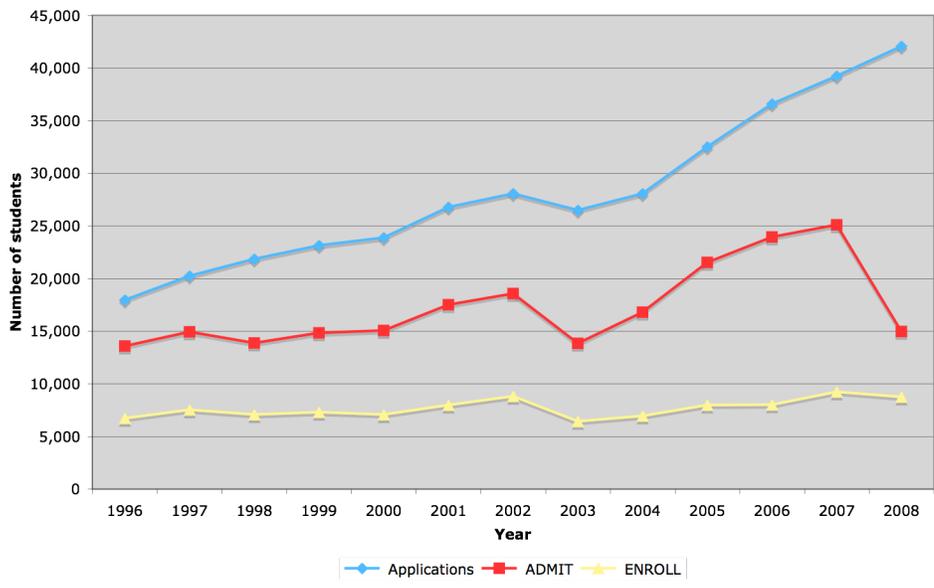
**San Diego State: Applications and Enrollment, 1996-2008**



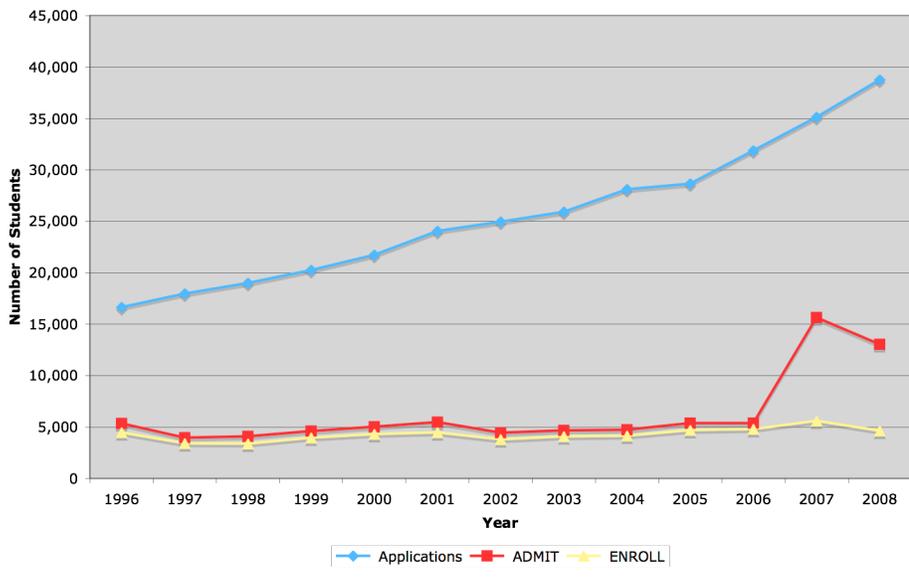
**San Francisco State: Applications and Enrollment, 1996-2008**



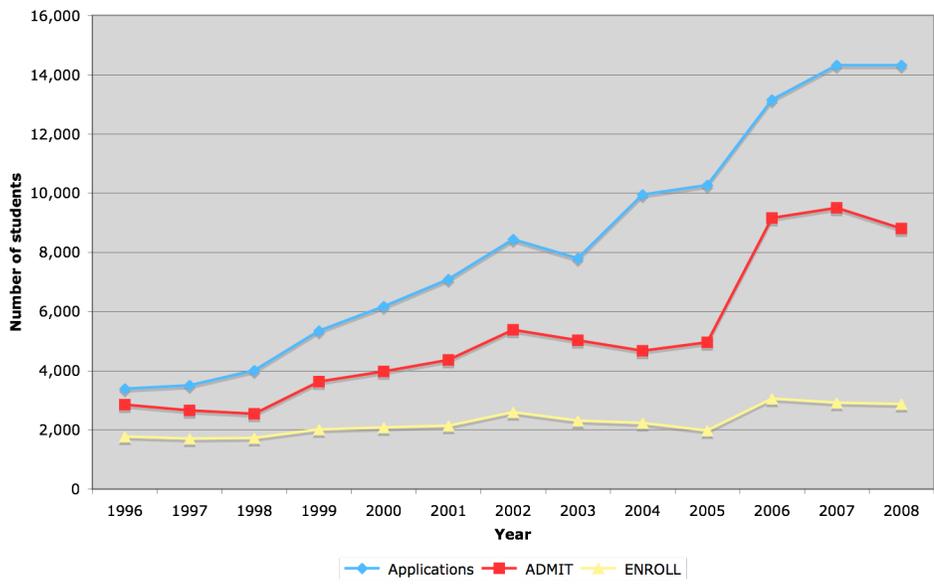
**San Jose State: Application and Enrollment, 1996-2008**



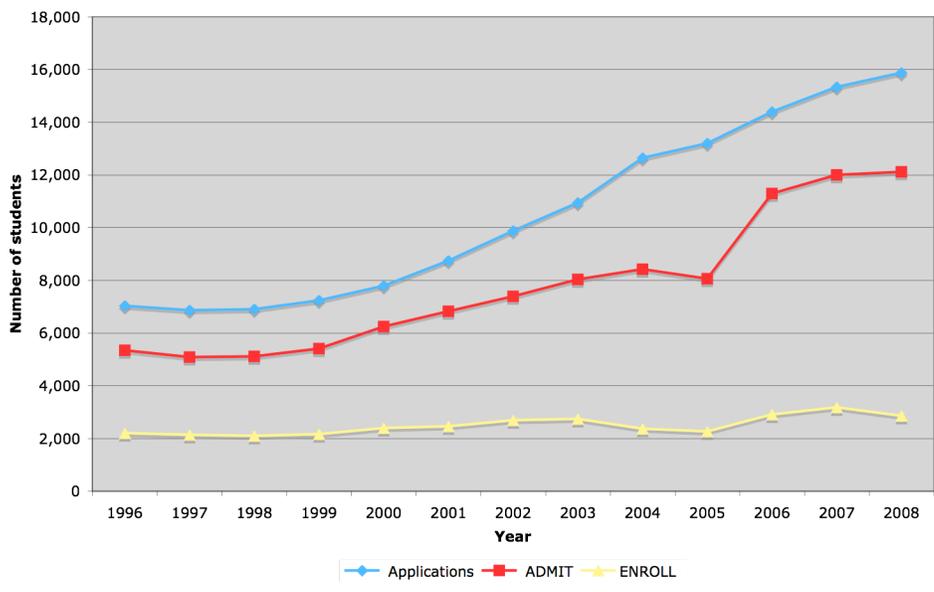
**CAIPoly-SLO: Applications and Enrollment, 1996-2008**



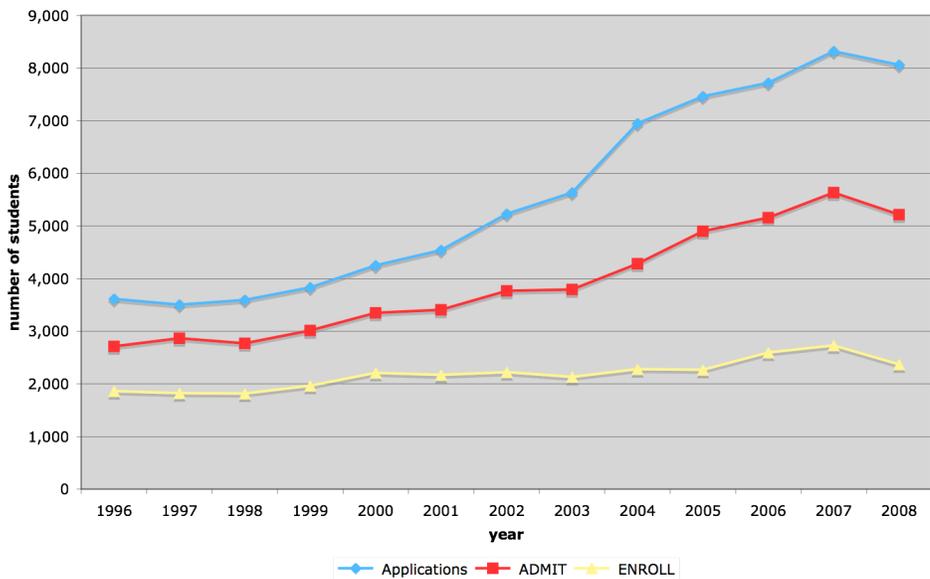
**CSU: San Marcos--Applications and Enrollment, 1996-2008**



**Somona State: Applications and Enrollment, 1996-2008**



CSU Stanislaus: Applications and Enrollment, 1996-2008



**APPENDIX D. MAP OF THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITIES**

(source: California State University, 2010).



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