2023

Historically Black Colleges and University Leaders' Strategies for Increasing Alumni Donations

Dub Taylor
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Dub Taylor

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Matasha Murrell Jones, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Rocky Dwyer, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Brenda Jack, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2022

Abstract

Historically Black Colleges and University Leaders’ Strategies for Increasing Alumni Donations

by

Dub Taylor

Executive MBA, Jack Welch Management Institute, 2015

B.A., Stillman College, 1999

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2022

Abstract

Historically Black college and university (HBCU) leaders lack strategies to enlist and retain donations from alumni to support long-term sustainability. HBCU leaders are concerned with developing and implementing strategies for enlisting and retaining alumni donations. Grounded in resource dependency theory, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies that HBCU leaders use to enlist and retain alumni donations to support long-term sustainability. The participants were six HBCU leaders at three HBCUs in the southeastern United States who have implemented strategies to enlist and retain alumni donations. Both a president and an institutional advancement officer were interviewed from each of the three HBCUs. Data were collected using semistructured interviews and a review of alumni donation documents. Through thematic analysis, six themes were identified: (a) exploring innovative new methods, (b) honoring tradition, (c) diversifying giving methods, (d) identifying and overcoming challenges, (e) leveraging every person, and (f) alignment between institutional advancement. A key recommendation is that HBCU leaders remain well-versed in the challenges they face (both internally and externally) so they can work to overcome them. The findings of this study have potential implications for positive social change by leading to increased alumni donations that could result in the creation of new student support programs that could expand students' access to high-quality higher education.

Historically Black Colleges and University Leaders’ Strategies for Increasing Alumni Donations

by

Dub Taylor

Executive MBA, Jack Welch Management Institute, 2015

B.A., Stillman College, 1999

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2022

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my wife and children, my parents, and the HBCU leaders who have invested in me.

Acknowledgments

First, I want to acknowledge my chair, Dr. Gregory Washington, for his unwavering support and guidance throughout this process. He kept me focused and encouraged throughout this work. I also want to acknowledge my institution’s illustrious president for being willing to review my capstone drafts and affirm that I was on the right track. I also want to acknowledge everyone who contributed to this process. Your support and efforts are greatly appreciated.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Problem Statement

In 2017, giving to higher education hit a historic high of $43.6 billion, with 26.1% of donations coming from alumni (Weerts & Cabrera, 2018, p. 1). Historically Black college and university (HBCU) alumni often represent the largest share of total donors. However, their donations still tend to be smaller than average and inconsistent when compared to alumni donations from primarily White institutions (PWIs; McClure & Anderson, 2020, p. 15). The general business problem is that HBCUs with low revenue from alumni donations are challenged to support long-term sustainability. The specific business problem is that some HBCU leaders lack strategies to enlist and retain donations from alumni to support long-term sustainability.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies that HBCU leaders use to enlist and retain donations from alumni to support long-term sustainability. The targeted population consisted of six HBCU leaders from three institutions who have successfully enlisted and retained donations from alumni giving to support long-term sustainability in the United States' southeast region. The implications for positive social change include creating new student support programs that could expand students' access to high-quality higher education from increased alumni donations. HBCUs could use increased revenue from donations to support students as they matriculate, increasing students' quality of life by enabling them to pursue employment opportunities with higher wages.

Nature of the Study

The research methods available are qualitative, quantitative, or mixed (Baskarada & Koronois, 2018). Qualitative researchers seek to understand the context and explore new phenomena using open-ended questions (Kegler et al., 2019; LaDonna et al., 2017). A qualitative approach was appropriate for this study because I sought to develop an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences using open-ended questions to gather data. The quantitative research method is used to address numerical data to conduct statistical analyses of variables' characteristics or relationships (Queiros et al., 2017). The quantitative method was not appropriate for this study because numerical data and statistical analysis were unnecessary to answer the research question. Mixed-method researchers combine qualitative and quantitative to increase understanding of a specific topic (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). Combining the two methods is appropriate when the researcher aims to provide a broader analysis of the phenomenon being studied (Almeida, 2018). Like quantitative methods, the mixed-method design was not appropriate for this study because statistical analysis of variables' characteristics and/or relationships was not needed to understand participants' experiences in developing and deploying strategies for increasing donations from alumni.

Qualitative researchers typically use ethnography, phenomenology, or case study as a research design (Saunders et al., 2015). Ethnography is used to describe and understand a social or cultural world through initial field study (Saunders et al., 2015). An ethnography design was not appropriate because I did not need to describe or understand the social or cultural world of the participants' organizations. Phenomenology is a qualitative design that focuses on personal meanings of participants' experiences, memories, and interpretations of those experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019). Phenomenology was not appropriate for this study because the focus of this study was not on a single phenomenon relating to personal meanings of participants' experiences with the subject phenomenon. Researchers use a case study design to study data to gain an increased understanding of a specific phenomenon within a defined environment for a specific time (Mfinanga et al., 2019). A multiple case study design is used to advance knowledge about phenomena by comparing similarities and differences among cases (Ridder, 2017). Comparing cases generates richer data and improves validity (Ridder, 2017). The case study design was most appropriate for this study because addressing the research question required collecting rich data composed of multiple perspectives to explore the challenges and successes of alumni giving strategies in the context of HBCUs.

Research Question

What strategies do HBCU leaders use to enlist and retain alumni donations to support long-term sustainability?

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your current rate of alumni giving?

2. What strategies do you currently use to enlist alumni donations?

3. What were key challenges to implementing strategies for enlisting alumni donations?

4. How did you address key challenges to implementing the strategies for enlisting alumni donations?

5. How did you assess the effectiveness of strategies for enlisting alumni donations?

6. What else can you share with me about your organization's strategies for enlisting and retaining alumni donations?

Conceptual Framework

This qualitative case study's conceptual framework was resource dependence theory (RDT). Pfeffer and Salancik developed RDT in 1978, revised it in 2003, and suggested that if organizations over-rely on one or more external resources, their ability to thrive becomes severely impacted when that resource is depleted (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). A resource's unavailability requires organizational leaders to seek alternative resources to decrease their dependence on resources that may become unavailable. The primary construct of RDT is that organizational sustainability is dependent on its ability to secure new resources from an external environment (Ilhan, 2020). A secondary construct is the imbalance of power created by resource dependency for organizations that fail to secure new resources (Ilhan, 2020). Andrews et al. (2016) argued that examining the impact on HBCUs is of primary importance because of the social and political contexts that HBCUs find themselves in—competing for state and federal resources while struggling to find other revenue sources. As a result of decreased state and federal funding, HBCUs have shifted focus to strengthening their alumni-giving initiatives to create another revenue source for institutions; this shift has led to varying degrees of success. Consequently, the RDT was expected to be an appropriate conceptual framework to support exploring strategies HBCU leaders use to decrease their dependence on tuition fees and state funding allocations by enlisting and retaining donations from alumni.

Significance of the Study

Leaders may use the results of this study to develop new strategies to enlist and retain donations from HBCU alumni. Leaders could improve practices for securing new resources. The potential business practices that leaders could develop from this study include new or improved approaches in marketing.

The findings of this study has the potential to affect positive social change by promoting increased alumni engagement. Increasing alumni donations could create an additional revenue source to help HBCUs increase enrollment and graduates. Increased enrollment and graduates may expand the pool of highly trained employees in local communities, and new graduate students could experience improved quality of life from higher paid employment. Additionally, the findings from this study may catalyze positive social change by reducing the financial tension common at HBCUs, improving their sustainability and continued impact on the development of Black professional communities.

Operational Definitions

Several descriptions and definitions are presented in the research, which may create misconceptions when attempting to comprehend the research. These terms and their definitions are found below.

Alma mater relationship: The connection to an institution where one has matriculated (Khatri & Raheja, 2018).

Alumni giving behavior: Behavior that describes alumni assistance as something that entities give but also as something that organizations promote (Khatri & Raheja, 2018).

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs): Originated with the mission to provide education to African Americans who were not permitted to enroll in PWIs (Kelly et al., 2017).

Institutional advancement: The office that oversees the process and procedures implemented to advance an institution in all areas via organized fundraising operations (Neary, 2017).

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

Assumptions, limitations, and delimitations describe anticipated barriers or factors that could potentially affect the outcomes of a research study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). These barriers or factors can affect a study's replicability (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). The assumptions, limitations, and delimitations associated with this study are outlined in this section.

Assumptions are the necessary beliefs to conduct research but cannot be proven (Rashid et al., 2019). The first assumption was that all participants would be honest about their institutions' challenges and the strategies used to overcome those challenges. Another assumption was that all participants would participate voluntarily and that participants would understand the questions well enough to provide detailed descriptions of their institution’s alumni giving efforts.

Limitations exist when gathering sufficient information about a topic (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). One limitation of this study was the sample size. The small sample size could potentially impact the generalizability of the study’s results. A second limitation was that the study relies on self-reported data from participants about the strategies they use to enlist and retain alumni donations.

Delimitations are limitations imposed by a researcher and create boundaries for a study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). A delimitation for this study was the sample size of three HBCUs that have demonstrated success in alumni giving. The population for this study was delimited to three HBCUs in the southeastern United States.

Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies that HBCU leaders use to enlist and retain donations from alumni to support long-term sustainability. The research question was: What strategies do HBCU leaders use to enlist and retain alumni donations to support long-term sustainability? This literature review is an extensive analysis of HBCUs’ financial stability and the role that HBCU leaders have been found to have in ensuring the stability of their institutions. The primary theory used in discussions of HBCU sustainability is RDT. Applying RDT to this study helps provide insight into ways to improve HBCUs’ financial sustainability.

This study was conducted to identify HBCU leaders’ strategies to engage their alumni and solicit financial donations to the institution. Alumni giving was the focus of this study because it is one of the most commonly used strategies to increase financial revenue (Anderson et al., 2019; Andrews et al., 2016; Betton, 2018; Blow, 2021; Boland & Gasman, 2014; Campbell, 2017; Coupet, 2017; Crawford, 2017; Daniel, 2016; Freeman et al., 2016; Hardy et al., 2019; Harper & McMickens, 2018; Johnson et al., 2017; Kimbrough, 2018; Lawrence & Woods, 2021; Miller et al., 2020; Orphan, 2020; Palmer & Freeman, 2020; Polk, 2021; Smith et al., 2020; Thacker & Freeman, 2020). Previous research around alumni giving at HBCUs has centered on institutions' financial stability (Andrews et al., 2016; Boland & Gasman, 2014; Coupet, 2017; Daniel, 2016; Hardy et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2020; Orphan, 2020; Smith et al., 2020), the role of the president in leading or supporting institutional fundraising efforts (Anderson et al., 2019; Freeman et al., 2016; Harper & McMickens, 2018; Kimbrough, 2018; Palmer & Freeman, 2020; Thacker & Freeman, 2020), and strategies HBCU leaders have used to improve an institution's financial stability (Betton, 2018; Blow, 2021; Campbell, 2017; Crawford, 2017; Lawrence & Woods, 2021; Polk, 2021). Researchers have also noted the need for attention to this topic because HBCUs face a funding crisis as their budgets continue to decrease annually (Daniel, 2016; Burnett, 2020).

Literature Review Strategy and Organization

In the professional and academic literature review, I examined peer-reviewed articles relevant to the research question. All the articles referenced in this literature review were found on JSTOR, ProQuest, or Researchgate. Articles were identified using the following search terms: *alumni giving in HBCU alumni, alumni giving strategies at*

HBCUs, factors contributing to increased alumni giving at HBCUs, *HBCU alumni giving, resource dependency theory and HBCUs, resource dependency theory*, *alumni giving at HBCUs, alumni giving strategies at HBCUs*, and *successful alumni giving at HBCUs*. I also conducted searches omitting the word *HBCU* to identify additional studies. Searches were limited to those published between 2017 and 2021 to pull the most recent relevant studies for discussion in the literature review.

Articles collected in this search mainly covered the motivations of alumni who give to their HBCU alma maters. Little research has been focused on the roles HBCU leaders play in increasing alumni giving or the characteristics of successful alumni giving initiatives. However, the literature search was robust regarding alumni giving generally. The review of the literature includes 60 references (see Table 1). Most of these articles were peer-reviewed (70%), while two (3%) articles were non-peer-reviewed articles. Of the peer-reviewed articles, 30 (71%) were published in the last 5 years. The literature synthesized in this review is divided into sections that align with the study's focus.

Table 1

Literature Review Sources by Year of Publication

Literature type	Older than 5 years	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total %	Total #
Peer-reviewed articles	12	9	9	9	2	1	70%	42
Non-peer-reviewed articles	1	0	0	0	0	1	3%	2
Books	3	0	3	0	1	0	12%	7
Other	2	2	1	0	1	3	15%	9
Total	18	11	13	9	1	5	100%	60

In the following section, I outline the conceptual framework for this study, its constructs, and the complementary and opposing theories related to RDT. In the next section, I describe how RDT aligns with and supports the current study. The literature review also contains a synthesis of the results of the studies previously investigating the strategies that HBCUs use to enlist and retain alumni donations. Specifically, studies related to the financial stability of HBCUs are discussed, followed by a discussion of the role that HBCU leaders play in fundraising efforts.

Resource Dependency Theory

RDT was developed based on the work of researchers like Jacobs (1974), Blau (1974), and Emerson (1962). RDT is primarily used to understand how organizations navigate their relationships with other organizations and how organization behavior is affected by their dependency on another organization (Kholmuminov et al., 2018; Sherer et al., 2019). RDT’s intended use is to identify the external resources required by an organization and to investigate how they then adjust to maintain a competitive advantage (Celtekligil, 2020). A primary construct of the theory is the role of power related to interdependence. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) suggested that, in an equitable world, organizations should manage how much they depend on other organizations. However, when the power dynamic is skewed, more powerful organizations can exert increased power over the organizations they contribute resources to (Coupet, 2013; Ulrich & Barney, 1984). Because that imbalance in power adversely impacts the organization being controlled by its benefactor, RDT emphasizes the need for organizations to manage their dependency on other organizations (Sherer et al., 2019).

RDT rose in popularity as a theory in the 1970s (Celtekligil, 2020). Pfeffer introduced the theory in 1972 and later joined forces with a colleague, Leblebici, to continue developing RDT in 1973. At this time, the theory was focused primarily on studying mergers and acquisitions (Pfeffer, 1972). By the time Pfeffer began to work with Salancik in 1978, RDT had evolved to heavily emphasize the role of power in mergers and acquisitions and joint ventures. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) suggested that the organization itself was a resource and could be controlled in an economic context. Pfeffer and Salancik pointed out that organizations depend on critical resources. A significant component of RDT is the idea that organizations may not always provide their resources, which would require them to secure them from external organizations (Zhang et al., 2019). This introduces a level of uncertainty for organizations with external dependencies, prompting them to manage the uncertainty by building relationships with external organizations (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

In 2003, Pfeffer and Salancik's theory expanded to include the concept of resource density (Celtekligil, 2020). In RDT theory, resource density refers to how authority and power exist among organizations (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). For organizational leaders, knowledge of resource density allows them to adjust their organizations to reduce overdependence on any one external relationship (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Failing to identify or develop new resources can lead to organizational failure. To survive, organizations must be able to acquire and maintain new resources (Celtekligil, 2020).

RDT Constructs

Theoretical constructs are the unobservable components of a theory inferred from collected data (Dixon & Johnston, 2019). RDT has three primary constructs: power relations, interdependence, and diversification. In this section, I provide a detailed description of each construct, its relationship to RDT, and how it has been studied in the existing literature. These constructs help provide insight into how the theory applies to the context being studied.

Power Relations. In the RDT literature, power relations are the most commonly discussed construct. The entire theory rests on the premise that the allocation of resources is a source of power both within and between organizations (Kholmuminov et al., 2018). Power relations, in RDT, are rooted in dependence where dependence is related to the control one organization assumes when the other organization depends on it. Mossel et al. (2018) argued that an organization providing resources to another organization would hold power over them. In response, the organization receiving the resources may try to minimize the other organization’s power by reducing their dependence on the required resources (Mossel et al., 2018). Kholmuminov et al. (2018) also spoke to the nature of the power that exists when organizations depend on another organization for critical resources. These authors suggested that the greater the dependence on the resources provided by the organization, the greater the power the organization wields over the dependent organization. As such, power, or lack thereof, can dictate organizational behavior.

Margiono et al. (2017) characterized this type of power as a *power imbalance*. Power imbalances occur when a dependent organization has a high degree of dependency on external organizations for critical resources (Cui & Zu, 2019; Karanović et al., 2021). These imbalances in power can lead to independent organizations creating situations in which donors have to rely on their resources and are unable to free themselves from significant dependence without causing harm to the dependent organization's bottom line (Margiono et al., 2017). However, most organizations can attempt to restructure their dependencies to reduce any power imbalances (Cui & Xu, 2019). Clough et al. (2018) noted that power imbalances could leave a dependent organization in a vulnerable position that could potentially impact their ability to survive.

A second component of the power subconstruct is *power advantage*. Power advantage describes how power can exist to benefit organizations mutually dependent on one another. Consider this example from Chen (2019):

> Imagine two actors, A and B, are exchanging resources, and therefore depend on each other, and that A has more power than B in the relationship, thus giving A a power advantage in the relationship. A can use this advantage to negotiate with B for a better contract for trading and even can force B to accept unfavourable conditions that A offers. (pp. 2–3)

Those with the power advantage in a resource exchange must be committed to being attentive to the needs of the dependent organization to avoid losing the partnership and the benefit (Karanović et al., 2021). Failure to do so may cause dependent organizations to find another organization to provide critical resources to resolve any imbalances in the power dynamic through diversification.

Power relations are important when applied to the HBCU context. An imbalance of power in the exchange relationship can lead to the goals, mission, and focus of the HBCU being altered by the more powerful external organization. HBCU leaders must be able to reflect on power relations and make adjustments where necessary to reduce outside influence.

Interdependence. As a construct, interdependence refers to how organizations depend on other organizations to conduct their business (Deng et al., 2018). Interdependence is vital to the survival of organizations (Chen, 2019). Interdependence is the foundation for all the other constructs associated with RDT. Interdependence is dictated by the importance of the resources needed and ownership of the resource. Chen (2019) explained, “In this vein, A’s dependence on B relies on 1) that B has the resources that A needs; and 2) that B has the power to dispose of the resources needed by A (i.e., discretion)” (p. 3). Because the more independent organization is less dependent, a power dynamic is created between the two organizations.

Mutual dependence is related to interdependence and refers to the sum dependencies between two organizations (Chen, 2019; Margiono et al., 2017). Mutually dependent relationships occur when two organizations each possess critical resources needed by the other (Tripathi, 2021). Gulati and Sytch (2007) found that organizations participating in mutually dependent partnerships show higher trust, exchange more information, and act jointly compared to organizations that do not have mutually dependent partnerships. Aßlander et al. (2016) supported those findings in their study of sustainability performance. In partnerships where mutual dependence is weaker, there are more significant concerns about the power dynamic of the partnership (Karanović et al., 2021).

Interdependence is what makes exchange relationships possible. Specific to HBCUs, leaders should be positioning themselves to identify external partners that further the institution’s strategic plans. HBCU leaders, as often as possible, should consider mutual dependence as they attempt to identify partnerships.

Diversification. Organizations may attempt to diversify their order to reduce their dependency on one organization for critical resources (Chen, 2019). Diversification is an avoidance strategy that creates opportunities for firms to build new partnerships. Diversification can be considered a possible course of action when organizations are burdened by partnerships where there is a power imbalance (Chen, 2019; Cui & Xu, 2019). Hung and Hager (2019) noted that diversification could even be a way for organizations to address financial instability and uncertainty.

In their study of diversification among economy multinational enterprises, Cui and Xu (2019) found that engaging in diversification yielded a financial profit for participating enterprises. However, these profits were not evident until 3 to 5 years after the diversification occurred. While noting the benefit of diversification on organizations, Lashitew et al. (2021) emphasized that diversification is still a challenge for many organizations. Lashitew et al. also found that, while organizations enjoyed financial benefits, they were no more competitive than they were before diversification. Rodrigues and Dieleman (2018) argued that diversification could end up creating additional dependencies, leading to additional power imbalances.

When organizations are dependent on resources provided by an external body, their leaders will align institutional behavior with that body in order to preserve the resource relationship (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). In the HBCU context, the resource relationship often lies between the state and the institution—in the case of public higher education institutions—and between philanthropic organizations and private institutions. Whenever the organization providing the resources changes, the dependent institution will likely modify its activities and behaviors to align with the new environment (Tolbert, 1985).

For higher education institutions in general and HBCUs specifically, this dependence is consistently financial. Public HBCUs depend on the state legislature that the institution is located in. They have experienced consistently reduced funding allocations from the state in the last 10 years (Ehrenberg, 2012). Private HBCUs are typically overdependent on tuition and other institutional fees, along with donations from philanthropists. In both contexts, power relations, interdependence, and diversification are applicable.

Related Theories

There are number of theories that are related to RDT in the literature. These theories were considered for the theoretical framework for this study, but they ultimately fell short after a closer analysis. The theories related to RDT are power dependence theory and resource-based theory. The theories are related because they all describe the relationship between institutions and are used to examine organizational behaviors in response to that relationship (Li & Kennedy, 2018). The related theories are introduced and discussed in this section.

In the 1960s, Emerson began developing and using power dependence theory (PDT) to explore power dynamics in business relationships. For Emerson (1962, 1964), there was an apparent link between power and social exchange. His entire theory was based on the premise that some individuals controlled more valuable resources than others, leading to an inequality in exchanging those resources. Individuals with more valuable resources were able to create a social debt among those who needed their resources, which required other individuals to fall in line with what the powerful individual wanted to get what they needed to survive (Cook et al., 2006). When applied to an organizational context, PDT describes how dependency on others for critical resources dictates the power dynamics in a relationship (Celtekligil, 2020).

While PDT does focus heavily on the power dynamics in relationships, it is not appropriate for the foundation of this study because it does not encourage the analysis of the ways the organizations respond to skewed power dynamics. That is a core component of the current study. Moreover, while the researcher understands the role that power can play in organizational relationships, PDT does not speak to how organizations create new resources to minimize their dependencies in the way that RDT does.

Another complementary theory is resource-based theory (RBT). The theory focuses on efficiency as a method for sustaining the highest levels of performance (Barney & Clark, 2007). Resource-based view was introduced by Wernerfelt (1984). He attempted to develop a theory that shed light on the relationship between resources and outcomes. While other researchers also examined organizational outcomes, Wernerfelt (1984) did so by exploring the resources (human, financial, etc.) available to an organization in meeting its objectives. As such, Wernerfelt viewed organizational performance issues through the lens of competition for resources. Not being able to compete for resources meant that organizations would not be able to survive. This view was later supported by Barney (1986).

Barney (1986) added to Wernerfelt's (1984) framework by suggesting that it was more effective when analyzing performance across multiple organizations in a specific sector. Because of that, Barney (1986) has been credited with taking Wernerfelt's ideas and turning them into an actual research theory. Although Barney's (1986) theory provides a foundation for understanding how competition has implications for organizational success, it is not an appropriate foundation for this study. RBT provides a laser-focus on the resources each organization holds but does not consider how having and sharing those resources influences the dynamics between organizations or prompts leaders to be innovative in the creation or pursuit of new resources. Therefore, it does not align with the purpose of this study.

Contrasting Theories

The theories presented in this section are those that do not align with RDT. These theories are also centered on relationships between organizations, but they use a different organizational emphasis than RDT. The contrasting theories are behavior of the firm theory, institutional theory, and organizational ecology theory. The theories are discussed in the following section.

Behavior of the firm theory was developed by Cyert and March (1963). The theory focuses on understanding the intraorganizational dynamics. According to the theory, an organization's behavior is dictated by the aspirations of its leaders, the collective experience, and the organizational routine (Mossel et al., 2018). Of those three factors, routines are the greatest contributor to organizational success because it is through the routines that stability is achieved (Mossel et al., 2018).

In behavior of the firm theory, there are elements of power relations as the leaders do hold more power to influence the organization's behavior. However, there is not a dependence on an external organization like there would be in both RDT and the actual HBCU context. Because there is not a dependence on the exchange of resources, the interdependence present in RDT is different than any interdependent relationships present between employer and employee in behavior of the firm theory. There is also no need for diversification of resources in behavior of the firm theory, which is critical to the foundation of this study. While this theory is organization-focused, it does not focus on the influence of external dependencies or an organization's response to those external dependencies. As such, this theory is not appropriate to be used as the foundation for this study.

Institutional theory was developed by Meyer and Rowan (1977). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) also made significant contributions to institutional theory. The theory promotes the idea that organizations will adapt to reflect the behaviors of the dominant institutions. Adopting the behaviors of dominant organizations can lead to increased reputation and sustainability for less dominant organizations (Mossel et al., 2018). These behaviors drive organizational performance and effectiveness (Zhao et al., 2017).

All three constructs of RDT are missing from institutional theory. There was no mention of power relations, the interdependence of organizations, or a need for the diversification of resources. Again, although this theory is organization-focused, it was not appropriate as the theoretical foundation of this study. The focus of the current study was not to examine how HBCUs conform to the other institutions' institutional behaviors.

Organizational ecology theory is centered on understanding the ways that environmental conditions influence the livelihood and diversity of organizations (Hannan & Freeman, 1977; Mossel et al., 2018). Hannan and Freeman (1977) argued that an organization's success depends on the environment in which it operates. That means that this theory focuses on how organizations survive instead of how they navigate power imbalances through the diversification of resources. Therefore, it was not an appropriate theoretical framework for this study.

Application to the Study

HBCUs are confronted with financial obstacles that threaten their survival and durability (Coupet, 2013). These obstacles include inadequate alumni giving, cuts in federal funding, pandemics that affect economic stability, a declining enrollment, and increased competition for private donations (Kelly et al., 2017). Resource dependence is evident among private HBCUs that obtain as much as 90% of operating revenue from tuition and fees. This means, like many institutions of higher learning across the world, that HBCUs have an overdependence on tuition fees to operate (Kholmuminov et al., 2019). Without alternative funding strategies in place, slight declines in enrollment can lead to a significant budget crisis. (Campbell, 2017). Though these institutions have limited control over peripheral factors, there is a prospect for expanding their alumni's financial support (Kelly et al., 2017). Using RDT as the conceptual framework of this study presents an opportunity to analyze how HBCUs' overdependency on tuition fees as a source of revenue affects their ability to spend and provide programming to students. While it is understood that HBCU funding is a complex issue, RDT provides a starting point for examining institutional behavior. The following sections provide an analysis of the existing research around HBCUs dependence on external funding sources. First, there is a section on HBCUs' financial stability. That section is followed by a section on the strategies that HBCU leaders have used to diversify their revenue sources.

HBCU Funding

HBCUs depend heavily on funding from federal, state, and local governments to supplement their primary funding sources. HBCUs, both private and public, tend to receive the largest portion of their funding from student tuition and fees (Williams & Davis, 2019). After tuition, the next largest funding sources tend to be auxiliary income and private gifts and grants, respectively (Williams & Davis 2019). This means that significant decreases in student enrollment is enough to send HBCUs into a financial crisis, unable to pay staff or sustain student programming. Significant decreases in funding can also lead to accreditation issues for HBCUs. Federal funding tends to make up the smallest portion of HBCU funding (less than 10%).

Federal funding consistently provides a small financial cushion for HBCUs. HBCUs receive federal funding through Title IV of the Higher Education Act. They are also eligible to receive funding through a number of direct subsidies (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2017). Since 2015, HBCU leaders have seen a steady decline in the funds that are being provided to their institutions, which widened the financial gap between private and public HBCUs as well as HBCUs and PWIs. This decline has been most intense for private HBCUs, which are typically smaller institutions with small endowments and student enrollments. State and local governments have also reduced funding allocations to public HBCUs, further leading to a precarious financial position for those institutions.

Like the federal allocations, state and local governments have been providing fewer dollars to HBCUs. Between 2003 and 2015, state and local allocations decreased for all higher education institutions (Geewax, 2016). While much of that decrease was due to the economic recession, HBCU leaders did not see their state and local allocations increase after the economy began to recover (Hebel, 2014). Boland and Gasman (2014) compared the funding priorities across four states to determine if state funding patterns had become more equitable. They found that states continued to prioritize PWIs and other popular institutions over HBCUs when allocating funding. Orphan (2020) noted that regional public universities, including HBCUs, tend to have fewer resources than those flagship schools. While trends in state funding allocations may vary from state to state, one thing remains clear—HBCUs are suffering from financial instability due to the consistent decreases in their funding over time.

As federal, state, and local funding allocations continued to decrease, HBCU leaders scrambled to increase their student enrollments, creating an even greater dependence on tuition dollars. The reliance on tuition dollars also prompted many HBCUs to increase student tuition and fees to make up for the federal, state, and local shortfall (Crawford, 2017). The reduction in funding has also led to increased competition for philanthropic gifts from foundations and private donors (Commodore & Njoku, 2020). Taken together, these financial factors have altered the financial stability of the nation's HBCUs.

HBCUs' Financial Stability

In the wake of cuts to federal, state, and local funding allocations, most HBCUs raised tuition to make up for the loss of funding. This move made HBCUs more heavily reliant on tuition dollars as a source of operating revenue (Smith et al., 2020; Taylor, 2018). While most colleges and universities also rely on enrollment, the situation is slightly different for HBCUs because even the slightest decrease in enrollment could be detrimental to their operation (Mutakabbir, 2020). This is because HBCUs' endowments are not as robust as they are at some PWIs, limiting the institutions' ability to fall back on other funds to keep operations going (Crawford, 2017; Mutakabbir, 2020). Their tendency to move back and forth between funding sources creates rotating dependencies that further threaten the sustainability of the institutions. Nothing made this more evident than the school closings that were required as the COVID-19 pandemic gained speed in the nation.

The pandemic presented a special set of challenges for HBCU leaders. When college campuses were forced to close their campuses in March 2020 to prevent the spread of COVID-19, institutions were forced to, in some cases, pivot quickly to providing courses in an online format so that their semesters could continue (Murty & Payne, 2021). Many HBCUs did not have online learning in place prior to the pandemic and had to invest additional funds in upgrading their technology to facilitate online learning (Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018; Murty & Payne, 2021; Smith et al., 2020). Smith et al. (2020) noted that, while HBCUs did transition to online learning for their faculty and students, they were slower to do it than PWIs. Because of that financial instability/lack of resources, HBCUs were not able to be competitive with their PWI counterparts when it came to adopting online learning.

When HBCUs were unable to provide online learning at the scale of PWIs, that translated to a loss of tuition dollars for HBCUs. Institutions disbursed refunds to students for disruptions to their learning and room and board, and student enrollment began to drop as students went elsewhere to continue their education or took time away from school. The drop in student enrollment ballooned some of the financial issues that HBCUs were having (Murty & Payne, 2021). Not only were they losing their federal, state, and in some cases, local funding, they were also losing the tuition dollars the institutions relied on. Tuition dependence was a problem that HBCUs were going to have to overcome to avoid losing their accreditation status due to financial instability.

Tuition dependence is not an easy challenge for HBCUs to overcome. In the HBCU-related research, researchers often suggest that HBCU leaders expand their recruitment pool to include students who are not Black and/or low-income (Boland & Gasman, 2014). Taylor (2018) suggested that institutional leaders take advantage of the internet and social media to enroll as many students as possible. This, Taylor suggested, could potentially increase HBCUs' financial stability.

To summarize HBCU's financial stability has become more precarious over time (Andrews et al., 2016; Boland & Gasman, 2014; Coupet, 2017; Daniel, 2016; Hardy et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2020; Orphan, 2020; Smith et al., 2020), leading HBCUs to become overly dependent on tuition dollars for operational needs (Crawford, 2017; Mutakabbir, 2020; Smith et al., 2020; Taylor, 2018). The financial condition of HBCUs became more evident to the general public during the global COVID-19 pandemic, during which HBCUs lagged behind their PWI counterparts in transitioning to online learning (Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018; Murty & Payne, 2021; Smith et al., 2020). Although it is clear that HBCUs are overdependent on tuition dollars, researchers have suggested that HBCU leaders should focus on ways to expand their recruitment pools to potentially bring in more students (Boland & Gasman, 2014; Taylor, 2018). Increased student enrollment will yield financial gains that may provide enough of a financial cushion to allow HBCU leaders to focus their efforts on identifying new revenue streams. Failure to focus on that area of institutional sustainability will undoubtedly have consequences for HBCUs.

Consequences of Financial Instability

Financial inconsistence has major implications for the existence of the nation's HBCUs. Focusing specifically on Tennessee State University, Daniel (2016) discussed the economic impacts of decreased funding and how those cuts have impacted the teaching and learning that happens at HBCUs. Daniel traced the economic challenges that some HBCUs have experienced over the last 20 years. This defunding has created trickle-down effects that impact daily operations and the student experience on the campuses of HBCUs. Because of that defunding, many HBCUs are struggling to keep their doors open (Burnett, 2020). To illustrate this point, Burnett (2020) focused on Paine College's story, an HBCU that lost its accreditation because it failed to meet the standard for financial resources and stability. Bennett College, a private HBCU in North Carolina, is facing a similar fate. The push to diversify HBCUs' financial stability is not simply about creating more money for the institutions; it is also about ensuring that their doors remain open and their degree programs remain viable. Now, more than ever before, HBCUs need leaders who are able to identify new funding sources.

Role of HBCU Presidents

As HBCUs face increasing pressure to develop new fundraising strategies, the need for presidents who understand how to achieve fundraising success is also increasing. While fundraising is a job that is usually left to advancement officers (Burgess, 2020), HBCU presidents now have to be able to step up to help fill that role. HBCU presidents are a critical factor when it comes to the institutions' sustainability. The research focusing on HBCU presidents tends to emphasize what they should be doing to improve the sustainability of their institutions (Anderson et al., 2019; Freeman et al., 2016; Harper & McMickens, 2018; Kimbrough, 2018; Palmer & Freeman, 2020; Thacker & Freeman, 2020). Across all of the studies, a common theme was that HBCU leaders needed to be communicative (Anderson et al., 2019; Freeman et al., 2016), entrepreneurial (Freeman et al., 2016; Freeman & Palmer, 2020; Harper & McMickens, 2018; Palmer & Freeman, 2020; Thacker & Freeman, 2020), and well-versed in effective fundraising strategies (Anderson et al., 2019; Freeman et al., 2016; Freeman & Lee, 2018; Kimbrough, 2018; Palmer & Freeman, 2020). Of these, the characteristic with the greatest emphasis was HBCU leaders' need to be well-versed in fundraising.

Fundraising continues to be a priority for HBCU stakeholders. Freeman et al. (2016) examined the HBCU presidency by investigating skills required for HBCU leaders in the 21st century. The participants in the study reported seven primary skills that are critical for HBCU presidents: vision, communication, fundraising, entrepreneurial disposition, the ability to understand and negotiate with faculty, board management, and collaboration. Participants frequently mentioned that fundraising was one of the critical skills for HBCU presidents because much of their work is focused on that aspect. Participants reported that future HBCU presidents would need to have a firm understanding of the political and financial environments. Freeman and Lee (2018) also emphasized the importance of HBCU presidents having a solid sense of how to engage potential donors before assuming the presidency. When HBCU presidents enter the role of president with fundraising experience, they can support the institution's fundraising efforts and guide the institutional advancement officers in creating a focus for successful fundraising campaigns. Research has shown that experience had a value-add effect for HBCU leaders, particularly when it comes to fundraising.

Freeman and Palmer (2020) explored the perceptions of effective leadership practices among presidents at HBCUs. The authors found that, according to HBCU presidents, HBCUs generally succeed in two categories—experiential skills and professional knowledge. Freeman and Palmer suggested that HBCU leaders also need to have expertise in fundraising and institutional finance to lead their institution successfully. That was considered a core skill among the HBCU presidents who participated in the study. This was also a core skill raised by Harper and McMickens in their 2018 study of the Bethune-Cookman University's fundraising success. Harper and McMickens (2018) found that the following presidential traits contributed to Bethune's ability to fundraise successfully: being politically visible and engaged, being politically astute, being shameless in requesting financial support, and building meaningful relationships with potential donors. Leveraging the skills above allowed Bethune-Cookman's president to improve the institution's financial stability. This is an approach that can be mirrored in other HBCUs to strengthen financial stability across the board. There are best practices associated with how HBCU leaders can become better fundraisers.

As part of becoming financially savvy leaders, HBCU presidents should spend considerable time learning the language of funders to increase their appeal when applying for grants or competing for other types of special aid. Freeman et al. (2016) also suggested that presidents build their political connections to leverage those when pursuing additional funding or trying to secure major gifts. The more experience HBCU presidents have in this area, the more likely those skills will positively impact the institution's sustainability (Freeman & Palmer, 2020). Increasing the financial stability of the institution has the potential to strengthen its reputation among accrediting bodies, students, and faculty. It may also result in additional programming for students and increased access to the resources that students need to successfully complete their programs.

Strategies Used to Improve Fundraising at HBCUs

In response to the continued decreased funding that HBCUs have experienced, it became necessary for HBCU leaders to investigate ways to increase fundraising at their institutions. This strategic planning is a necessary step in ensuring the stability of HBCUs (Palmer & Freeman, 2020). Part of that strategic planning requires considering how to engage alumni to increase their donations to the university.

Polk (2021) explored strategies that HBCU leaders use to sustain the financial stability of their institutions. After analyzing semi structured interview data, a researcher's journal, and institutional documents, three themes emerged. For the leaders of the eight HBCUs participating in the study, student enrollment and retention, fundraising, and institutional operations were the areas of focus. When it came to student enrollment and retention, these leaders developed programs that were intended to develop students holistically, which included an emphasis on philanthropy. The hope around teaching students about philanthropy prior to graduation was to communicate the importance of alumni giving prior to graduation. This has been an important part of how

Claflin University, a small private HBCU in South Carolina was able to make history as the first HBCU to reach 50% alumni giving. When students are taught from the beginning of their matriculation that giving back to their alma mater is important, it becomes second nature for them to donate whatever they can back to the university once they are alumni. This intentional effort creates a pipeline of donors that improve the institution's stability over time.

Student enrollment also keeps money coming into the institutions through tuition and other fees. Because of that, the HBCU leaders should spend time developing student support services that are intended to increase student retention (McDonald & Needham, 2020). Polk (2021) also noted that the participating HBCU leaders were also laser-focused on fundraising. For the leaders in the sample, state funding was the primary source of revenue. However, the institutions also relied heavily on tuition and fees. One leader reported that tuition and fees made up 60% of the institution's budget. It was an area of concern because tuition varied from semester to semester, creating consistent ebbs and flows in the operational budget. They reported implementing programs that engaged alumni in the hopes of increasing the donations to the institution. Alumni-focused initiatives also included a focus on building and maintaining relationships. Finally, as part of operational improvements, HBCU leaders reported engaging in shared goal setting with their staff members to increase buy-in. This was particularly true when it came to more difficult conversations about the need to cut positions or freeze hiring to improve the institution's financial standing. The HBCU leaders also referenced the importance of investments. Investing was used as a way to create a new source of revenue (Dameron, 2021; Polk, 2021). Investments are seen a way to guarantee the long-term financial stability of HBCUs. Regardless of the strategies HBCU leaders use to do so, improving the institution’s financial stability has implications beyond institutional operations.

As mentioned previously, financial stability also has implications for accreditation statues. Crawford (2017) discussed the challenges that HBCUs tend to face in the areas of governance, accreditation, and finances. He noted that, while the fundraising focus is likely on enrollment, accreditation is more important. This was because external funding opportunities often require institutions to be in good standing. Accreditation pursuits are often linked to quality improvement, which improves the institution’s standing with the accrediting body and simultaneously increases their enrollment. According to Crawford, focusing on accreditation and quality improvement was a viable strategy for improving HBCUs’ financial stability because it allowed institutional leaders to focus on multiple areas at one time. A focus on accreditation is also viable because it is one way to ensure that schools do not have to close, disrupting the education of thousands of students. If HBCU leaders are focused on making sure that each accreditation standard is completely met, then they will also come out of that process with a stronger reputation that could lead to increased student enrollment and philanthropic gifts.

Another strategy for improving financial stability is strengthening the relationships between HBCU leaders and existing supporters of the institution. Betton (2018) examined college presidents’ approaches to fundraising at selected HBCUs in the southeast United States. The strategies examined included the philosophies, experiences, and fundraising strategies. Ten HBCU presidents were interviewed to understand how they were engaging their stakeholders in fundraising activities. The data collected from those interviews revealed that the president played a specific role in fundraising planning and implementation. Presidents in the sample reported building and nurturing relationships with current and prospective donors to keep money flowing into their institutions. These presidents also noted that they invested heavily in the staff members who were most responsible for fundraising. To engage staff and external partners, the presidents focused on perfecting their messaging to ensure that they are communicating clearly and concisely with their stakeholders and potential donors. Specific to fundraising, Betton found that the presidents all agreed that it was a critical area of focus. Each president was giving significant attention to securing new sources of revenue for their institution. They described creating fundraising events and attempts to regularly engage alumni for donations. They also sought financial support from corporations and foundations. A final common strategy used was engaging the Board of Trustees in fundraising; most of the presidents reported working closely with the board chair to communicate fundraising initiatives and messages to the larger board. One institution reported that their students are heavily involved in fundraising. Students at that school, there was an emphasis on teaching philanthropy to students before they ever became alumni so that, by the time the graduated, they already understood the importance of supporting their alma mater with donations. Burgess (2020) supports the idea that HBCU presidents should prioritize relationship building and investing in their institutional advancement officers to ensure that the institution is receiving the maximum amount of financial support possible. Failure to do will result in decreases in funding for the institution.

There are several characteristics that HBCU board members can look for when identifying a leader for their schools. Blow (2021) also examined the efforts of a group of seven HBCU presidents whose institutions had experienced success in fundraising. The goal of the study was to understand the fundraising approaches and strategies the presidents used. Blow’s findings suggested that there were consistent practices used among all of the president in the sample. Generally, these presidents focused on establishing a vision of their fundraising priorities and built support for those priorities among staff and external partners. Specifically, the presidents in this sample did five things:

- They demonstrated the traits of a transformational leader.
- They implemented strategic plans that were based on data, research, and other institutional metrics.
- They demonstrated an understanding of the disciplines of fundraising and invested heavily in their Institutional Advancement offices.
- They built internal and external relationships that advanced their fundraising programs and emphasized alumni in their fundraising goals.
- They were aware of the historic financial issues that HBCUs faces and sought to establish new partnerships with external partners who did not typically fund their institutions.

Because many of the strategies used by presidents focused mainly on external partners, Blow suggested that HBCU presidents give greater focus to engaging their alumni. Relationship to the institution is an important motivating factor in why people donate. Failing to engage the group that has the closest relationship with the institution will result in continued revenue loss over time. To encourage alumni engagement, HBCU leaders must begin by acknowledging the barriers that currently exist for their institutions when it comes to fundraising.

Efforts around alumni engagement must be intentional. Lawrence and Woods (2021) interviewed HBCU leaders to gauge the ways that they engage HBCU alumni in giving efforts. Institutional leaders started out by explicitly naming alumni giving as an institutional focus. Doing so allowed leaders to generate support for the fundraising initiative before it was launched, adding more hands to support the work of fundraising. HBCU leaders also described the ways that they were engaging students to teach them the importance of alumni giving before graduation. A final strategy that was raised in the findings was the establishment of fundraising programs that are supported by churches. This was likely due to the ease of access to alumni and potential donors as leaders perceived churches to be the common spaces to engage their alumni.

Alumni Giving as a Revenue Source

Historically, HBCU leaders have faced challenges related to increasing alumni donations. Much of that is due to growing racial wealth gaps that keep alumni from donating at high levels (Burpo, 2020; Melvin, 2017; Williams & Davis, 2019). Even so, alumni represent a sustainable option for the increasing financial support to HBCUs. One of the primary issues with a focus on alumni donations is that it costs a lot for HBCU leaders to solicit alumni donations than it does to secure corporate and other philanthropic donations (Burpo, 2020). This results in small alumni fundraising campaigns that yield little revenue for the institution (Gibbs, 2020; Goldstein, 2020). However, there are success stories related to increasing alumni giving.

The Kresge Foundation's HBCU initiative has been one of the best examples of a strategic approach to increasing alumni donations at HBCUs. The initiative was a five-year, $18 million investment in five HBCUs (Burgess, 2020). Through the strategic provision of training and resources, the Kresge HBCU initiative successfully increased philanthropic donations, including alumni donations, at all five HBCUs. Claflin University saw its alumni giving rate increase from 35% to 45%, placing it on track to be the first HBCU to reach 50% alumni giving (Gibbs, 2020). The attention that brought to the small liberal arts university kept its alumni giving rate on the rise and resulted in large private gifts from Makenzie Scott and other philanthropists. This situates alumni as a critical part of HBCUs' financial success.

To increase alumni giving, HBCU leaders must be effective at communicating the need for financial support. When alumni believe that their contributions go towards helping students with needs similar to their own, they are more likely to participate in alumni giving campaigns (Gibbs, 2020; Richardson, 2018). This means that alumni fundraising efforts mut include a clear description of how alumni donations will be used to improve the educational experience of students currently attending their alma mater.

However, there are other factors that HBCUs must consider when it comes to alumni giving.

Alumni are often resistant to making donations because they may feel that HBCUs leaders only want their engagement because they want money. That perception makes alumni less likely to donate to HBCUs (Harris, 2020; Stuart, 2017). As such, it is important that HBCU leaders develop long-term engagement initiatives that are not just fundraising focused (Chisom, 2020; Richardson, 2018; Roberts, 2018). Taking a longer-term approach to alumni giving can yield better outcomes from a fundraising perspective and position HBCUs to receive increased support from other philanthropic donors.

Transition and Summary

Section 1 provided the foundation of the study to include the problem statement, purpose, nature of the study, research and interview questions, and the conceptual framework. Also included were the significance of the study and a review of the professional and academic literature related to the topic being studied. Section 2 covers the role of the researcher, the study's method and design, the participant population, data collection techniques, and data analysis procedures.

Section 2 includes the rationale for the chosen method and design. There is also a discussion of how research procedures were developed to strengthen the reliability and validity of the study. Section 3 describes the findings of the study, how they relate to the literature, and the implications for practice and social change.

Section 2: The Project

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies HBCU leaders use to enlist and retain donations from alumni to support long-term sustainability. The targeted population consisted of six HBCU leaders from three institutions who have successfully enlisted and retained donations from alumni giving to support long-term sustainability in the southeast region of the United States. Potential implications for positive social change arising from the findings of this study include creation of new student support programs that could expand students' access to high-quality higher education from increased alumni donations. HBCUs could use increased revenue from donations to support students as they matriculate, increasing students' quality of life by enabling them to pursue employment opportunities with higher wages.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is an instrument collecting data (Geddis-Regan et al., 2021). As such, a researcher's positionality can impact the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data (Jimenez et al., 2021). Because of the significant influence a researcher can have on a study's results, they must be transparent about their relationship to the topic being studied (Martins et al., 2020).

As the researcher, is it important for me to disclose that I am an institutional advancement officer at an HBCU in the southeastern United States. Because of my role, I am familiar with HBCU financial stability challenges. I am also aware of the power dynamics that can adversely influence HBCU leaders who want to keep their institutions financially solvent. In addition, I have had prior interactions with the participants who volunteered for this study. To minimize the risk of confirmation bias in this study, I consistently reevaluated participants' responses to examine how they challenge my assumptions about enlisting and retaining donations from alumni to support long-term sustainability. To mitigate any potential bias, I used an interview protocol to ensure that all participants were asked the same questions phrased in the same way. I also engaged in member checking after transcribing participant interviews to ensure their perspectives and experiences were captured accurately. In addition to these mitigation strategies, I was diligent about adhering to the ethical considerations outlined in the Belmont Report.

In 1979, the National Commission for the protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (National Commission) was directed to develop what is known as the Belmont Report. This report details the primary ethical considerations every researcher must consider as they develop, conduct, and report the findings of their studies. The three ethical considerations detailed in the Belmont Report are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice.

Respect for persons requires that researchers treat their participants as people and provide additional protections for participants in vulnerable classes (National Commission., 1979). This specific study did not involve engaging with any protected class of people established in the Belmont Report. However, participants were offered the protections of using a pseudonym and renaming their institutions to protect their anonymity.

Beneficence requires that researchers refrain from harming participants by minimizing the risks of their participation in the study. A researcher must inform participants of their privacy and confidentiality. Participants are withdrawn from a study if a breach transpires (Greaney et al., 2012). In this study, participants' private information was redacted and stored on an external hard drive, not on any online platform. Finally, after collecting and cleaning the data, the information was coded to remove any identifiable traits to cover any other possible breaches. Above all, the participants had a firm understanding that their participation was entirely voluntary. If participants did not feel safe due to their participation in the study, they could withdraw from the study with no questions asked.

Justice requires that a researcher provide equal benefit and risk to all participants. This study did not involve participants from vulnerable populations, so there was no risk that members of those populations would be targeted at a disproportionate rate. To ensure that all participants volunteered to participate with the same understanding, each participant signed an informed consent form that outlined the study's intentions. Participants agreed via the forms before participating in the interview.

Participants

Three institutions were selected for this case study to examine the phenomenon across different settings. To be eligible for participation, institution leaders had to have an established alumni giving initiative. Participants in this study must have been working in the institution's advancement office or be part of the executive cabinet at the time of data collection. People working in these two positions had the most relevant knowledge of and experience with the strategies used to enlist and retain donations from alumni. Once the study received approval, participants were contacted directly to gauge their willingness to participate in the study. This was possible because I already had a professional working relationship with many of the potential participants.

Research Method

The research methods available are qualitative, quantitative, or mixed (Baskarada & Koronois, 2018). Qualitative researchers seek to understand context and explore new phenomena using open-ended questions (Hamilton & Finley, 2019; Kegler et al., 2019; LaDonna et al., 2017). In this method, researchers use narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, or case studies as their approach. In qualitative research, a researcher acts as an instrument in the field, collecting open-ended data that continue to emerge in nearly every stage of the research process (Geddis-Regan et al., 2021). Data are analyzed and sorted into themes or descriptive categories. A researcher must not attempt to influence the phenomenon being studied throughout the data collection and analysis processes.

Hamilton and Finley (2019) noted that qualitative research begins with a researcher's assumptions and beliefs concerning the world around them. Those assumptions lead to the study of a specific research problem. Creswell (2003) and Merriam (1998) identified the characteristics of qualitative research. The first characteristic is that data collection typically takes place in the field. Another characteristic is that qualitative data are collected by the researcher instead of a survey or questionnaire. This usually happens through dialogue with the participants or by observing them in their environments. Qualitative researchers can also gather data using document analysis, behavioral observations, interviewing, and/or focus groups. A qualitative approach was appropriate for this study because I sought to develop an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences using open-ended questions.

The quantitative research method is used to collect numerical data to conduct statistical analyses of variables' characteristics or relationships (Queiros et al., 2017). The quantitative method was not appropriate for this study because numerical data and statistical analysis were unnecessary to answer the research question.

Mixed-method researchers combine qualitative and quantitative to increase understanding of a specific topic (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). Combining the two methods is appropriate when the research goal is to provide a broader analysis of the phenomenon being studied (Almeida, 2018). Like quantitative methods, the mixed-method design was not appropriate for this study because statistical analysis of variables' characteristics and/or relationships was not needed to understand participants' experiences in developing and deploying strategies for increasing donations from alumni.

Research Design

Qualitative researchers typically use ethnography, phenomenology, or case study as a research design (Saunders et al., 2015). Researchers use a case study design to study data for gaining an increased understanding of a specific phenomenon within a defined environment for a specific time (Mfinanga et al., 2019). A multiple case study design is used to advance knowledge about phenomena by comparing similarities and differences among cases (Ridder, 2017). Comparing cases generates richer data and improves validity (Ridder, 2017). The case study design was most appropriate for this study because addressing the research question required collecting rich data composed of multiple perspectives to explore the challenges and successes of alumni giving strategies in the context of HBCUs.

This case study was a multiple case study of three HBCUs in the southeastern United States. Yin (2017) explained that case study design could be used to analyze data from either a single case or multiple cases. When using multiple cases, a researcher collects and analyzes data from several sites, sources, or groups of participants to understand the impact of the phenomenon across different settings (Stake, 2006). In this study, the phenomena studied were the strategies HBCUs use to enlist and retain alumni donations. The rationale behind interviewing institutional advancement and executive leaders from multiple schools was to enable comparisons within and across cases. A multiple-case study approach was appropriate for this study because it allows multiple sites and groups to be studied to provide information that encourages an increased understanding of the strategies used to enlist and retain alumni donations (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2017).

Ethnography designers focus on describing and understanding a social or cultural world through initial field study (Saunders et al., 2015). An ethnography design was not appropriate for this study because I did not need to describe or understand the social or cultural world of the participants' organizations. Phenomenology is a qualitative design used to focus on personal meanings of participants' experiences, memories, and the interpretations of those experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019). Phenomenology was not appropriate for this study because the focus of this study was not on a single phenomenon relating to personal meanings of participants' experiences.

Population and Sampling

To gain multiple perspectives of the strategies used to enlist and retain alumni donations, I used a purposive sampling strategy. Purposive sampling is used to select participants who will likely yield the information most appropriate for the topic (Campbell et al., 2020). Specifically, a researcher will use a stratified purposive sample. A stratified sample is one that selects groups of participants to participate in the study. Once participants are selected, they are stratified by a characteristic (Campbell et al., 2020). In this study, the participants were stratified by their role: institutional advancement officer or executive leader. The number of participants in each stratified group were equal.

In total, there were six participants. Three were institutional advancement officers and three were executive leaders. Each pair of participants came from the same institution; thus, three institutions were sites in this study. The number of participants was appropriate because it allowed for the focused exploration of the phenomenon (Vasileiou et al., 2018). In qualitative research, smaller groups of participants allow a researcher to develop a deeper analysis of the phenomenon (Vasileiou et al., 2018). However, the sample size must be large enough and diverse enough to explore the phenomenon broadly. This sample size was appropriate because it ensured diversity of experience through the inclusion of two leaders at each institution and kept the sample small enough for a deep exploration of participants' experiences. These participants were chosen intentionally because they had the knowledge and experience needed to provide the best answers to the interview questions (Campbell et al., 2020).

Participants were selected if they met three participation criteria. First, participants must have been employed either as an institutional advancement officer (vice president, assistant vice president, or executive director) or an executive leader (president, executive vice president, etc.) at the time of data collection. Second, the participants' institution must have had an alumni giving initiative in place, whether it was one time or ongoing. Finally, the participants must have had some knowledge of the strategies used to enlist and retain alumni donations.

In qualitative research, *saturation* refers to the point when enough data have been collected from participants to develop a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Guest et al., 2020; Hennink & Kaiser, 2019; Saunders et al., 2018). Saturation is achieved when no new data are discovered. To reach saturation, I conducted interviews to ensure that I could determine the point when no new insights were being reported. This may potentially require follow-up interviews with the selected participants or the identification of new participants beyond the initial six.

Ethical Research

To conduct this study, I sought permission from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The approval number for IRB is 08-22-22-0724465. Once consent was granted, I began the process of contacting the prospective participants. Consent forms were distributed, reviewed, and signed before any data were collected from participants (see Appendix A). It is important to note that this study did not pose any harm to participants. The largest part of the consent form was dedicated to outlining audio-recording of the interviews. I chose a pseudonym that was used in throughout the data collection and analysis process. There were no incentives for participating in this study.

If a participant wanted to withdraw from the study during the data collection, they simply needed to notify the researcher via email. If a participant withdrew, the other person in the second category would have been asked to help identify someone else who can take the withdrawn participant's place in the sample. The newly identified person would have been asked the same questions using the developed interview protocol. This would have been done to ensure that there were still two narratives from each institution. Any data collected before the participant withdrew would not have been included in the reporting of the results. That data would have been destroyed immediately.

All the data collected were stored on a password-protected computer that belongs to the researcher. The data will be securely stored for 5 years to protect the confidentiality of participants. Audio and video recordings were uploaded to my computer and deleted from recording devices as soon as interviews are finished.

Data Collection Instruments

There are two data collection instruments that were used in the study. First, the researcher was the primary data collection instrument. As an active participant in the data-gathering process, the researcher facilitates the discussions through which data are collected (Pezalla et al., 2012). Semi structured interview protocols were the secondary source of data and were used to collect participant responses (see Appendix B).

A semi structured interview was conducted with each participant. Using semi structured interviews allowed the researcher to ask questions that are not included on the interview protocol (Gani et al., 2021). The additional questions were clarifying questions that were asked based on the participants' responses to the questions in the protocol. Using a semi structured interview protocol also allowed the researcher to ask the questions in the protocol out of order based on the flow of the conversation between the participant and the researcher. Each participant was interviewed separately. Interviews lasted for approximately one hour and were conducted in an environment that is conducive to interviewing. Due to ongoing precautions regarding COVID-19, the interviews were held virtually. Each interview was recorded to aid to make transcription easier. Prior to the interview, each participant was asked to choose a pseudonym that would be used during the transcription and final reporting. Participants were also reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any point without consequence. Interviews were appropriate for data collection in this study because they allowed the researcher to gather information from the participants that can be used to create rich, detailed descriptions of each participant.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the interview protocol, interview transcripts were sent to participants for member checking. Member checking allowed the researcher to ensure that participants' thoughts and experiences with the phenomenon being studied have been accurately captured (Candela, 2019). This process is typically used to strengthen the validity of a qualitative study (Candela, 2019). In the current study, the participants had two options to engage in member checking. First, they reviewed their interview transcripts to confirm that their perspectives were captured accurately.

Data Collection Technique

Once IRB approval has been granted, the researcher began contacting institutions to recruit participants. Institutions were identified by their reputations for successful alumni giving. Recruitment emails were sent to both the president and the vice president of institutional advancement. The president of my institution served as a gatekeeper in initiating contact with other university presidents. If the president did not respond to the initial recruitment email, the gatekeeper helped with the follow up contact via phone or in-person meeting.

Semi structured interviews were used to collect the data for this study. The advantages of using the technique is that it prompted a more normal flow of conversation between me and the participant, increasing the participants' comfort in the interview setting (Gani et al., 2021). A primary disadvantage of the technique is that it takes some skill to be able to manage a semi structured interview successfully (Adams, 2015). To collect the data needed to answer the research questions, I:

1. Made any modifications to the protocol as needed before recruiting participants.
2. Distributed consent forms for participants to review and sign.
3. Scheduled 60-minute interviews with the participants.
4. Reviewed the consent form at the start of the interview and use the abridged interview protocol (see Appendix C) to guide the interview.
5. Transcribed the interview verbatim.
6. Emailed the transcribed interview to the participant for member checking.

7. Scheduled a follow-up interview if the participant wants to clarify or expand their statements.
8. Analyzed and coded the data using thematic analysis.
9. Shared the final write-up with the participant via email for member checking.
10. Incorporated any clarifications needed before submitting the final work to the committee.

Data Organization Technique

In qualitative research, data are organized to aid in the analysis (Williams & Moser, 2019). Putting the data in some kind of order makes it easier to begin constructing meaning during the coding process (William & Moser, 2019). For this study, data were organized using a web-based platform for qualitative research once interviews have been transcribed.

The data for this study were uploaded to Dedoose, a web-based repository for qualitative data. There, the data were labeled by each participant's pseudonym. This was done to guarantee participants' anonymity and confidentiality as assured in the consent form. To that end, I was the only person with access to participants' data. As the data are being coded, the Dedoose system aided in keeping track of the codes and subcodes as they are discovered. This cataloguing kept the data organized and allowed for an easier analysis of the data. The data will remain stored in the Dedoose platform and the researcher's computer for 5 years.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process began after the interview data had been collected, transcribed, and member checked. The researcher transcribed the interview data and load it into Dedoose, a web-based qualitative analysis application. The data from interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a form of coding where the researcher identifies patterns in participants' responses and groups them together in themes or codes (Roberts et al., 2019). The thematic analysis of the data followed the process below:

1. Transcribe and review the interview data
    a. When reviewing the interview data, listen to the recording while following along with the printed transcript. This ensures that the transcription is accurate.
2. Email participants their interview transcript for member checking.
3. Once data were confirmed by the participant, the transcripts were loaded into Dedoose assigned to each participant's chosen pseudonym. The analysis occurred as follows:
    a. Step 1: Get familiar with the data
        i. The researcher read and reread the data (Scharp & Sanders, 2019)
    b. Step 2: Identify the initial codes
        i. Assign codes to any reoccurring experiences, thoughts, or strategies (Turner & Crane, 2016)
    c. Step 3: Develop themes

    i. Divide codes into categories that aligned with the research questions and represent the initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

d. Step 4: Review the themes.

    i. Each theme was scrutinized to ensure alignment with the data present in the transcript (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

e. Step 5: Write the results up.

As thematic analysis occurred and themes began to emerge, the researcher compared the emergent themes to those of previous research studies in order to evaluate how the initial findings align with previous findings. This occurred after each round of analysis. This secondary analysis was recorded in a researcher’s journal where the aligning and outlier themes were captured.

Reliability

A key construct of reliability is dependability. Dependability refers to how stable the findings of the study remain over time (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). One way that researchers can ensure that their results remain stable is to make their research procedures transparent. When the research procedures are documented, researchers allow their research to replicated successfully (Loh, 2013). Without that transparency, the researcher may not be able to verify that the results of the study are dependable. For this study, dependability was achieved through the clear reporting of the study’s procedures. The use of data collection tools, data organization, and analysis procedures are described in detail so that it is clear how they were used, how the data were handled, and how the data were analyzed to arrive at the study results.

Credibility

Credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation are constructs of validity in qualitative research. Credibility refers to the confidence the audience can have in the research findings (Stenfors et al., 2020). This construct requires that all parts of the research design be explained well and justified. The current study utilized member checking as a strategy for strengthening credibility. Participants had two opportunities to engage in member checking—once after the interviews have been transcribed and again after the findings have been written.

Transferability

Transferability describes whether the results of one study can be transferred to other contexts (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Documenting information regarding the study's procedures, makes the context and procedures relevant the materials used to collect data can be easily reused by others, the more the study can be replicated in other contexts to further what is known the strategies that HBCU leaders are using to enlist and retain alumni donations. In an effort to strengthen the transferability of the results, the interview protocol (simple and abridged) were included as appendices in the final write-up.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to degree that other researchers could repeat the study and come to the same results (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). It is achieved through the careful and thorough documentation of the research procedures. In this study, confirmability was addressed by keeping a clear record of the research path. Data saturation refers to the point when enough data has been collected from participants to develop a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Guest et al., 2020; Hennink & Kaiser, 2019; Saunders et al., 2018). This means that saturation has been achieved when no new data are discovered. To achieve this, the researcher coded the interviews as they are conducted to ensure that I could determine the point when no new insights are being reported.

Transition and Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies that HBCU leaders use to enlist and retain donations from alumni to support long-term sustainability. The study's design required a qualitative case study approach. A qualitative approach was appropriate for this study because it could be used to develop an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences using open ended questions. The research questions were designed to provide an in-depth view of the HBCU leaders' experiences with developing strategies to enlist and retain alumni donations.

Data collection and analysis centered on three HBCU institutions. The study utilized semi structured interviews as its primary data source. Required approval from Walden University's IRB was obtained before any data collection takes place. Section 2 provided a description of the processes for the data collection and analysis. The processes were detailed in this chapter and included in the appendices to ensure dependability.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

In Section 3, I include a brief introduction, present research findings, and discuss applications to professional practice and implications for social change. I also provide recommendations for action and further research regarding successful strategies for enlisting and retaining alumni donations. Last, I reflect upon and summarize my experience conducting this research. Data were collected via virtual interviews held via Zoom. After collecting data, I coded the data using thematic analysis to reveal the common themes reported by participants. I then compiled all the themes in an effort to address my research question. I address the importance of implementing strategies for increasing the retention of alumni gifts to provide increased sustainability for HBCUs.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies HBCU leaders use to enlist and retain donations from alumni to support long-term sustainability. This study's population consisted of three HBCUs whose leaders had successfully implemented strategies to help them enlist and retain donations from alumni. An institutional advancement officer and the president of each of the three HBCUs were interviewed. The original intention was to interview leaders from four HBCUs, but the institutional advancement officer at the final HBCU was no longer available and withdrew from the study.

During the semistructured interviews with the HBCU leaders who met criteria of my study, I asked six open-ended interview questions (see Appendix B) and a few extension questions that helped me understand knowledge regarding the strategies they use to enlist and retain alumni donations. Data analyzed from interviews showed that, while there were a variety of strategies used to retain alumni donations, a common strategy was used for enlisting donations.

To ensure the privacy and confidentiality of all participants and their institutions, I assigned pseudonyms to both groups. All six participants were either an institutional advancement officer or a president and had extensive knowledge of the strategies used at their institution to enlist and retain alumni donations. The themes that emerged from the analysis of the interview data were (a) exploring innovative new methods, (b) honoring tradition, (c) diversifying giving methods, (d) naming and responding to challenges, (e) leveraging every person, and (f) alignment.

Participants

In this study, there were six participants from three HBCUs. Each participant was given a pseudonym to protect their anonymity. The same is true for the institutions participants were affiliated with at the time of data collection.

Institution A was represented by an institutional advancement officer and the college president. The institutional advancement officer, Institutional Advancement 1, had worked in fundraising for 20 years at the same institution. The president, President 1, had worked in higher education for 23 years. President 1 began their career working in student affairs and has been a college president for the last 11 years, serving two institutions in that role.

Institution B was represented by the vice president of institutional advancement and the college president. The vice president of institutional advancement, Institutional

Advancement 2, was a career fundraiser with more than 25 years in higher education. The president, President 2, had worked in higher education for almost 20 years. Nine of those years had been spent as a college president. President 2 had no fundraising experience outside their role as president.

Institution C was also represented by the vice president of institutional advancement and the college president. The vice president of institutional advancement, Institutional Advancement 3, was a career fundraiser of 20 years. Institutional Advancement 3 had also worked at four different HBCUs. The president, President 3, had worked in higher education for 25 years. President 3 had been a fundraising professional for 16 years during that time and a college president for 9 years.

The participants all had some knowledge of fundraising practices either through professional experience or leadership. All participants also had considerable experience working at different institutions. Participants’ answers to the interview questions are captured in the following section.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question in this qualitative case study was: What strategies do HBCU leaders use to enlist and retain alumni donations to support long-term sustainability? I interviewed six HBCU leaders situated in the southeastern United States who had expertise in enlisting alumni donations. During interviews, all six HBCU leaders were asked to answer questions related to the strategies they use to enlist alumni donations. Specifically, participants were asked to reflect on challenges related to alumni giving and how they address or work to address those challenges.

When the interviews were finished, I conducted my data analysis by hand coding the interview transcripts. As I analyzed data for this study, I found several common themes in participants' responses. I discovered that many of the presidents named alumni giving as an effort to diversify their revenue sources, especially after the global COVID-19 pandemic disrupted many of their most dependable revenue streams (student tuition and event fundraising). All participants named alumni engagement as a primary strategy for enlisting and retaining alumni donations. However, the participating schools were using a variety of different strategies to keep alumni engaged and connected to the school.

There were commonalities in the challenges HBCU leaders face when enlisting and retaining alumni donations. The participants often reported dissatisfaction with the institution and competition with alumni chapters as challenges that needed to be overcome. Specific to assessing the effectiveness of the strategies participants use for alumni giving, each school had a different way of doing so, but all participating HBCU leaders pay considerable attention to the alumni giving rate as evidence of success or failure. All participants in this research study were responsible for positively impacting alumni giving.

Theme 1: Exploring Innovative New Methods

For most schools in this study, alumni giving rates have been greater than 10% (see Table 2), but institutional leaders indicating wanting those rates to be higher. These numbers were reported by the participants and triangulated by a review of the annual giving reports for each institution.

Table 2

Alumni Giving Rate by Institution

Institution	2022 Alumni Giving Rate
Institution A	38%
Institution B	18%
Institution C	8%

As a note, Institution C's president viewed alumni giving in two ways: first as the percentage of alumni who donate based on the total number in the alumni database (8%), and second as the percentage of alumni who are repeat givers (20%). To keep their alumni giving percentages trending in the right direction, four of the six HBCU leaders named the use of technology as a tool for keeping alumni engaged. The first theme identified from the data was the idea that HBCU leaders use a variety of innovative methods to increase alumni giving.

Technology as an Engagement Tool

With the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, many of the HBCU leaders had to figure out how to expand their reach without having in-person events. In addition to sending their traditional mailers, the HBCU leaders also turned to sending mass emails and other mass messaging tools. When reflecting on the role that technology has played in the institution's alumni giving rate, Institutional Advancement 2 at Institution B, stated:

> I think technology has evened the playing field for HBCUs in the sense that, typically in a small shop, it's hard to have the necessary budget and the human capital. But in a virtual space, you actually have the ability to communicate with

> more people, more cost effectively. Technology has made everybody close to you. So, you know, we really, in the last year, had not done any hard mail snail mail solicitations. Everything that we've done has been in a virtual space.

Institution B was forced into using technology in the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Like many HBCUs, Institution B was event dependent to bring in money. When the pandemic halted all in-person activities, the development team had to consider new ways to host those engagement events to keep the money coming into the university. Institutional Advancement 2 explained:

> So one of the things that happened during the pandemic, we were forced to get into the virtual world. So mobile calls were how we had our scholarship gala and the most successful scholarship galas we've had were during the pandemic when people were virtual. And so we have platforms that allowed us to stream the event so people could participate. We didn't have costs for meals, so we had more money that went to profit.

While this was named revenue dependency for the university, the development team was able to invest funds in technology to keep the events afloat. These efforts paid off and worked in the university's favor as they were able to engage more alumni than ever through the virtual events.

Institutional Advancement 3 at Institution 3 also named technology as an innovation that his college was beginning to see the power of:

> The second thing that we’ve been able to do is invest in technology. There are a lot of online software and other types of support that our school and some of our sister schools just don’t utilize to reach out to alumni and donors.

While the advancement officer at Institution A did not specifically mention technology, they did emphasize the use of social media as an engagement tool. When asked if technology played in Institution A’s fundraising success, Institutional Advancment Officer 1 stated:

> Oh, most definitely. For your younger, or more savvy alum, they want to be able to make one click. It’s the least amount of clicks is what we aim for, so we are always tweaking and working our online giving pages. How many clicks does it take to get to the dollar? So, we’re definitely doing that. Also, increasing people’s names being seen for those who want that recognition. So definitely, technology has been a win for us. Because we’re in a society of “you better get me now” and a lot of folks don’t carry checks. So, me personally, I’m 49 and I may write 5 checks a year, if that. So, you have to be able to get the money where you can right when you can.

The advancement officer noted they use social media to spread the university’s good work. The president noted the university’s development team use social media to engage young alumni while their older alumni still received direct mailers from the university.

Other Engagement Strategies

In addition to their use of technology and social media, HBCU leaders described a variety of other engagement strategies. At Institution A, the Office of Institutional

Advancement runs a call center. The purpose is to keep alumni engaged in what's happening at the university, not just to solicit donations, although they do use it for that purpose during their annual giving campaign.

One of the strategies that most HBCU leader named as an engagement strategy was stewardship. Participants indicated two schools of thought around stewardship. First, President 1 (Institution A) described stewardship in the following way:

> And stewardship is important. That's the part that's often left out in philanthropy. Everyone needs to feel valued. Everyone wants to feel appreciated. And, with the utilization of technology, everyone can have that same feeling. So how do we make everybody, whether their gift is $18 or whether the gift is $8 million, to feel the same level of appreciation and value? So we focused on stewardship.

The advancement officer at Institution A, echoed President 1's sentiments.

However, leaders at the other institutions considered stewardship as doing what was said with the funds given. Institutional Advancement 2 explained:

> One of the things that I would tell you is that the key is stewardship. I think you have to do what you say you're going to do when you say you're going to do it. they are good stewards of the dollars that have been invested into the institution, and they are willing to answer all questions. Because sometimes people are under-informed and we have a responsibility to make sure that we give them all of the information they need so that they can make informed decisions.

President 2 from Institution B, also mentioned the importance of stewardship, but noted it as an area of weakness for his university and other HBCUs as well. In this sense, a lack of stewardship resulted in distrust in the universities and their leaders, leading to significant decreases in alumni donations.

President 3 from Institution C reported an engagement strategy where they engaged alumni in person:

> Then we have events that we call key cities. And the key cities events, the president and leadership team travel around to key areas where we have a decent number of alums. We also use those as fundraisers. Most of our chapters will set a goal to raise money and make their fundraising presentations at that time.

The key cities events allowed the institutional staff to use that time to update alumni contact information. They also recognized those who gave during those events, leading to an increased likelihood of repeat giving.

While Resource Dependency Theory does not explicitly mention the use of technology, the HBCU leaders' use of technology to diversify their revenue sources aligns with the constructs of RDT. The premise of RDT is to identify the external resources required by an organization and investigate how they then adjust to maintain a competitive advantage (Celtekligil, 2020). In this theme, HBCU leaders adopted new, innovative ways of communicating with and engage alumni in an effort to enlist and retain alumni donations. HBCU leaders mentioned that they used the communication methods that were most effective with each generation of alumni, focusing on social media with the younger alumni and direct mailers for the more seasoned alumni. Not only did they diversify their communication tools, the participating HBCU leaders understood that they were competing with other interests and affinity groups for their alumni’s time, attention, and financial support.

The findings outlined related to this theme align well with the previous literature. Betton (2018) suggested that HBCU leaders should focus on strengthening relationships with alumni. Regardless of which view of stewardship is used, the underlying factor is honoring and building relationships with alumni. Blow (2021) suggested that HBCU leaders work to make sure that alumni felt connected to their school as that would have greater impact on their decision to give. The HBCU leaders in this study did so by leveraging social media to expand their reach and engage alumni at a greater level.

Theme 2: Honoring Tradition

While the participating HBCU leaders lifted the importance of innovation, they also clearly understood the importance of valuing tradition when it came to enlisting and retaining alumni donations. This was especially true when it came to managing giving relationships. Many of the participants noted leveraging the innovative use of technology with younger alumni and students, while honoring more traditional methods for their more seasoned alumni. President 1 of Institution A, recounted the following:

> It was our elder alums who were just not interested in anything electronic. They still wanted to put their hands on physical documents, so what we were able to do was say that anybody from the class of x on down would get electronic mail. Because our younger alums were like , “hey, don’t send me paper. I get all my mail electronically. I haven’t read a paper newspaper in years”. So sending them that mailer, they still won’t know what’s going on. So we had to know our

> constituent base and it was truly based on the data. We also put out a survey regarding alumni preferences and there was a clear differential between more seasoned alums and our younger alums.

Outside of direct mailers, HBCU leaders were also utilizing phone calls to enlist alumni to give. Institutional Advancement (Institution A) noted that they used a call center to drive giving in their annual alumni campaign although that was not the primary goal. Instead, the call center was intended to be an engagement tool, saying;

> …we use our call center. We utilize direct mail. We utilize social media, word of mouth, volunteers, alumni engagement events, strong MOUs with the alumni association and its chapters, text to give, and definitely multiple online giving platforms to include crowdfunding.

President 2, at Institution B, explained that he used phone calls to enlist alumni donations on annual basis. He described the call by saying,

> As for me, I make 100 calls a month to alum. Not necessarily to solicit funds, but to say hi how are you doing. It's about keeping them engaged in the school through the lens of the president and I have found that has yielded major results for us. So that's what I have done to support the efforts of the development team to ensure that alum are engaged and feeling good about the work of the college.

On that phone call, he would explain what had been going on at the university throughout the year and solicit a gift at the end of the recording.

Another method for giving was to utilize in-person fundraising events. These were a very traditional approach to alumni giving. Homecoming celebrations were a major area of engagement for HBCU leaders. Homecoming is typically a week-long celebration where alumni return to their alma maters to participate in a number of paid events and activities.

Institution Advancement 3 from Institution C noted,

> And the 4th event is actually during homecoming. During homecoming, the classes set goals and work to raise money. The annual scholarship gala is also held during that time." Outside of Homecoming, HBCU leaders were also unanimously making visits to alumni chapter meetings to engage with alumni and other friends of the institutions. There were also strategic visits to areas where large numbers of alumni lived. While these events were largely for engagement and networking, the hosting alumni chapter often used the opportunity to make a financial gift to the university.

Related to in-person events, HBCU leaders also relied heavily on affinity groups to enlist alumni donations. Institutional Advancement 2 from Institution B described affinity groups as a high-priority method for engaging alumni and enlisting donations:

> Everyone was in a class. So if you identify with maybe your roommates or the people who lived in your dorm or your fraternity or sorority of if you were an athlete, so there are different cliques in a class that can be cultivated where chapters are normally small cliques where people use their influence to gain power.

For Institutional Advancement 2, most alumni may not have had the time to commit to serving in an alumni chapter. To him, the next best thing was to leverage their affinity groups. Institution B saw great success in doing fundraising challenges around the affinity groups. Could the Deltas outraise the AKAs? Could the volleyball team outraise the basketball team? Henry saw it as a meaningful way to draw alumni in. Once they gave the first time, continued follow up and engagement worked to create repeat givers.

When triangulating the reports of the HBCU leaders, I reviewed their alumni giving websites to determine how, if at all, they engaged alumni through affinity groups. For all three institutions, there was a place on the alumni contact form for them to list their affinity group memberships. In its annual alumni giving report, Institution A also had the affinity groups listed along with the amounts that they gave during that fiscal year. For those alumni who are part of those groups, that kind of visibility not only let them see how effective their fundraising and support efforts were, but it also created a sense of competition that fueled continued donations.

As a theme, honoring tradition does not explicitly align with RDT. However, because honoring traditional methods for engaging alumni could motivate them to support and continue supporting their alma maters. Providing that motivation and increasing alumni engagement and giving is a method for diversifying the revenue sources of HBCUs.

Blow (2021) suggested the HBCU leaders needed to know the history behind fundraising at their institutions. Each participating HBCU leader demonstrated a strong understanding of the fundraising traditions are their institution while also holding space for and championing innovation. The use of these methods is indicative of a focused, institution-wide initiative to engage alumni. That aligns with Lawrence and Wood's (2021) emphasis on strategic planning. Because of these strategies, all of the HBCU leaders participating in this study had seen large gains in their alumni giving efforts in the last 4 to 5 years.

Theme 3: Diversifying Giving Methods

The participating HBCU leaders also reported that they increased alumni giving by diversifying the ways that alumni could give to the institution. That normally happened with CashApp, Givelify, PayPal, and other financial apps. This shift took place at the HBCUs for one of two reasons. First, it was driven by the global COVID-19 pandemic because in-person giving was not a possibility. Institutional Advancement 2 noted that the pandemic forced his institution to consider alternative giving platforms to keep donations coming in while event fundraising was on hold. He explained by saying, "So when we focused on, during the pandemic, people using other diverse platforms (CashApp, PayPal, mobile calls to make gifts), we had a lot of first-time donors making smaller gifts".

Second, the use of these payment apps was a way of reaching younger alumni. Institutional Advancement 1 elaborated:

> For your younger, or more savvy alum, they want to be able to make one click. It's the least amount of clicks is what we aim for, so we are always tweaking and working our online giving pages. How many clicks does it take to get to the dollar? Because we're in a society of "you better get me now" and a lot of folks

> don't carry checks. So, me personally, I'm 49 and I may write 5 checks a year, if that. So, you have to be able to get the money where you can right when you can.

Institutional Advancement 2 also shared that the use of payment platforms allowed the institution's leaders and staff to engage alumni right where they are instead of having to follow up after the meeting/activity/event. This represents a new strategy that is not lifted in the HBCU literature. HBCU leaders report being responsive to changes that are needed in how alumni give, instead of having a singular focus on how often they give.

Institution B was the only university that mentioned that they promote a diverse giving strategy. Institutional Advancement 2 elaborated by saying:

> We also have gotten sophisticated, so we are doing multiple kinds of planned giving and estate gifts using trusts. We're allowing individuals to give gifts of property and other appreciating assets. Uh, that combined with our individual gifts—people give stocks.

Diversifying ways that alumni could give to the university has improved the rate of giving for alumni. The development team was able to increase the number of and amount of gifts to the university.

The data reported by the HBCU leaders was triangulated through a review of their alumni giving websites. Institution A prominently featured the tradition alumni giving website link while also pointing people to Givelify and PayPal giving options. Institution B included links to all of their alumni giving options on the front page of the institution's website and on the alumni giving pages of the site. Institution C had a traditional giving link, but did not have any mention of other ways to give. It did, however, mention that alumni could contact the Office of Institutional Advancement if they wanted to gift appreciating assets to the institution.

These strategies align with components of resource dependency theory that urge the importance of diversification to reduce dependence. Hung and Hager (2019) noted that diversification could even be a way for organizations to address financial instability and uncertainty. Cui and Xu (2019) found that engaging in diversification yielded a financial profit for participating enterprises. Because of the institution's willingness to develop new ways of giving, they were able to create and retain new donors.

This theme represents a new addition to the literature. When discussing the strategies that HBCU leaders use to improve fundraising, researcher had previously discovered that HBCUs tended to focus on increasing enrollment (Polk, 2021), strengthening their investment portfolios (Dameron, 2021), staying in good standing with the accrediting body (Crawford, 2017), and strengthening relationships with existing donors (Betton, 2018). However, the literature had not previously identified a focus on building appreciating assets (estates, land, etc.) for HBCU leaders.

Theme 4: Identifying and Overcoming Challenges

All the participating HBCU leaders named the challenges that they faced in enlisting alumni donations. Many of these challenges were related to an over-reliance on a single fundraising source (event fundraising) or miscommunication that led to skewed power dynamics. This supports Ilhan (2020) who emphasized that an imbalance of power created by resource dependency increases for organizations that fail to secure new resources. It also semi-supports Andrews et al.'s (2016) argument HBCUs' social and political contexts lead them to have to compete more for resources than other institutions. Institutional Advancement 2 and President 2 described the fragile balance between their alumni association and the institution:

> So, one of the things, in my personal opinion, that has been a challenge is the coordinated efforts between the Institutional Advancement Office and the National Alumni Association. I found that the NAA has had a challenge understanding its role. Its role is to be a champion for the mission and vision of the president and be a support organization, not an independent organization that has its own priorities. So that creates animus when you come to, um, when you're trying to get more people to give.

President 2 elaborated by saying:

> I tell our parents and alumni the same thing when I'm in front of them. Two things. There can only be one president at a time, so you can't be the president while I'm the president. And number two, don't work against me; work with me. So, you know, if you're working—if we're working together and you're trying to do something different, it really does cause chaos, cause problems. So let's work together. So that's been one of those ongoing pieces we have to work at is um really getting people to be on the same page.

The competition for power in the alumni/institution dynamic is an important challenge to consider because it is possible to for alumni chapters to siphon much-needed funds from the institution. Because of this, Institutional Advancement 2 explained that he would prefer that alumni chapters refrain from interfering in the institution's fundraising efforts. He stated:

> You can explain to the chapters that it's important for them to give scholarships or young people from your areas, but I don't want you to fundraise for the university. I want you to fundraise for your chapter. Because when you start to fundraise for the university, then you control the resources in your bank accounts, then you're limiting our ability to have, uh, annual dollars that we can spend. Because, Dub, when chapter raise money, they give you what they want you to have. They don't give you every dollar they raise. They continue to have dollars in their bank account as if their money but they raised it in the name of the university. So, I don't need you to do that. I need you to focus on your scholarships for people from your area and support the auxiliaries like band, and athletics if you want to. But, don't call anybody and solicit money that they can give directly to the university so that they can get their tax deduction from the university.

Here, Institutional Advancement 2 makes clear the idea that an overzealous alumni chapter can be detrimental to the institution.

Institutional Advancement 1at Institution A noted during his interview that the advancement office at his school established memoranda of understanding for its alumni chapters and the national association. Those signed agreements expressly communicate that the alumni are not interfere with institutional giving initiatives.

Membership in the alumni chapters was also a challenge that Institution 3 was working to overcome. President 3 described the challenge in the following way:

> Number 2, is the aging demographic of those who are active in the chapter. As they age, they say that they're tired and need young alums to come in and pick up the work. The challenge then, when you go after the young alums, they aren't interested in doing things the way that that the older group was doing; we're the new generation and we want to do new things. Hence, you've seen the proliferation of spin offs, these younger groups establishing their own chapters because they can't get down with what's going on in the older chapters. That's truly a dynamic that is real—the conflict of the generations.

That generational conflict only further diluted the institution's ability to foster strong alignment between the alumni chapters. It also added another group of alumni chapters whose leaders may feel inclined to create their own fundraising agendas instead of following the agenda set by the institution.

Because HBCUs tend to be dependent on philanthropic gifts (Commodore & Njoku, 2020), there can also be a hyperfocus on the celebrating the larger gifts while donors giving much smaller amounts go unnoticed. President 1 named this specifically as a component of stewardship, saying:

> Secondly, and most importantly, what we do is our unique ability to encourage stewardship. So it doesn't matter if the gift is $18.34 or $18, 340 or $18 million. Everybody is treated the same. They're treated as valued givers, so it doesn't the matter the dollar amount. You're making an equal sacrifice. That's the part that's

> often left out in philanthropy. Everyone needs to feel valued. Everyone wants to feel appreciated.

President 1 even described the impact of failing to value donors to give small amounts:

> And so, what I've understood is that there was a core group that were invited to the, uh, the Donors Luncheon each year. There was a subgroup, because their dollar amount didn't reach that threshold, they were not invited to the party. And so, again, that population has the potential to be that giver in the future. But if they don't feel valued and appreciated, then they won't become that giver. So how do we make everybody, whether their gift is $18 or whether the gift is $8 million, to feel the same level of appreciation and value?

Here, President 1 is again pointing out the importance of focusing on all gifts versus hyper focusing on the largest gifts. This challenge has been mitigated through the simple practice of thanking donors for their gifts. President 2 noted:

But the reality is that these gifts, in particular take time. And we have to pay attention to the small gifts, because remember, that even in those cases, I call them test gifts. That part is the part I want to do better at, particularly with our alums. For me, I think that area is one of the weakest at many of our schools.

Making their donors feel welcome despite the size of their gifts was a challenge lifted by more than one leader. However, both advancement officers and presidents understood that they needed to strengthen their staff's capacity to provide some type of appreciative gesture in return for every gift to increase alumni gift retention. HBCU leaders also recognized the challenges of alumni being contacted just for the enlistment of donations, so these appreciation/stewardship strategies served as a stop gap measure to improve relationships with alumni. This challenge aligns with one noted by Harris (2020) and Stuart (2017). Both authors described alumni's reluctance to give consistently because their engagement was typically focused on the enlisting of their financial support.

Theme 5: Leveraging Every Person

HBCUs tend to have challenges when it comes to capacity building die to high staff turnover (Burgess, 2020). The same was true for one of the HBCU leader pairs participating in the study. However, a common theme of among the participating HBCU leaders was the idea that every person on campus—from students to faculty to the executive cabinet—could play a role in fundraising. At Institution A, Institutional Advancement 1 and President 1 described the implementation of a student philanthropy program that they used to communicate the importance of alumni giving to students prior to graduating. Institutional Advancement 1stated,

> Looking back at 2009 when we first started seeing that spike from the 30% that was trending up to 40 and higher. Uh, we assessed that to see what happened, what changed. So we looked at where the gifts were coming from and we immediately saw that the class of 2011, 50% of them made a gift within their first year of graduating. So we backed it up and said, "Wait a minute". When we started our student philanthropy program, those kids were sophomores and freshmen. So, we started seeing the trend of students who were being trained

> through our student philanthropy, their gifts were coming in. They were taught that that was an expectation of being a Claflin alum—that you had to make a gift back. So, it was ingrained in them.

President 1 noted,

> We are very laser-focused on ensuring that alumni feel a part of the process. I think that's secondary. The first part is culture that is implemented prior to graduation—from orientation to what it means to be a, um, scholar at our institution. What does it mean for philanthropy as an undergraduate student and what does it mean as a graduate. So that from recruitment, matriculation, graduation, employment we are emphasizing the importance of philanthropy to our constituents.

Not only does the program reduce the workload for the advancement office, it gives students four years of being exposed to messages around philanthropy and how it helps the university thrive. At that institution, students also staff the call center that is used to keep alumni up-to-date on what is happening at the university. This is a considerable achievement, given that it keeps alumni connected to the student experience, which is something that most alumni will be able to relate to.

Institutional Advancement 3 and President 3 at Institution C also discussed their efforts to engage staff in fundraising efforts during the pandemic. Instead of sticking solely to their traditional fundraising methods, the advancement team focused on the procurement of grants. Institutional Advancement 3 described their process for this:

> I inherited a team that was quite okay with event fundraising only. And they were okay at it, but not great at that. For the last three years, we've had a constant level of fundraising with no opportunities or actions to increase it. And because COVID hit during my first year, I wasn't able to get my team trained through fundraising school—I had to do it myself. One of the things that I did—quickly—was leverage grant-writing ability to secure 400% increase in grants.

When asked to elaborate on their process for that significant achievement, Institutional Advancement 3 elaborated:

> We started writing! We were able to find a few faculty who were willing to identify grant opportunities. I formed a campus-wide grant writing team with permission from the president that included people from academic affairs, fiscal affairs, development, all across the campus. Between those groups, we were able to write 90% of them ourselves.

While the team at Institution C was inexperienced in methods beyond event fundraising, Institutional Advancement 3 was able to move them into grant writing with President 3's support. While this finding is not supported in the HBCU leadership literature, it does bring to mind the importance of alignment in the enlisting and retention of alumni donors.

Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) suggested that the organization itself was a resource and could be controlled in an economic context. Specific to this theme, HBCU leaders also recognized that they had internal resources that they could leverage to increase alumni giving. For some leaders, that resource was students. For others, it was institution staff members. Other than that, the theme of leveraging every person is not explicitly aligned with RDT. However, it does provide a lens into how HBCU leaders strengthen their capacity to diversify their revenue sources and engage alumni. Instead of focusing on the few, they involve the many to expand their impact.

From the literature, this them aligns most closely with Polk's (2021) findings. Then, he suggested that HBCU leaders place their emphasis on fundraising and on strengthening institutional operations. The reports from HBCU leaders reflected that as a priority as they described shared goal setting with the faculty members and their efforts to involve them in fundraising efforts. This was especially true for Institution C where grants became a primary focus as revenue source. Involving faculty in the pursuit of grants increased the institution's capacity and improved operations as the grants were obtained because there was no longer an overdependence on student tuition while campuses were closed during the pandemic.

Theme 6: Alignment Between Institutional Advancement and the President

Overall, Institutional Advancement 1 and President 1 at Institution A had the strongest alignment in their responses, which could be a contributing factor to their high alumni giving rate. Institutional Advancement 1 and President 1 named all the same challenges for enlisting alumni donations, specifically when it came to the emphasis on stewardship. Institutional Advancement 1 reported:

> I think challenges are always going to be what is the stewardship? How are we properly stewarding the donors to get them to give again? Uh, making sure that we don't treat everybody the same. Some hard lessons have been there is a

> population of people who still want to feel in touch—a letter. They want to write that check and they need an envelope without having to look for a stamp versus some folks who want to give digitally. So, it's been finding the right modality to ensure that you're making that donor feel special.

President 1 also called out the challenge of stewardship when it came to retaining alumni donations:

> Well, when I came in, the institution was already doing very well. What I emphasized was this notion of stewardship; if we can do a better job with stewardship, then we can move our current percentage to a higher percentage. And stewardship is important. That's the part that's often left out in philanthropy. Everyone needs to feel valued. Everyone wants to feel appreciated. And, with the utilization of technology, everyone can have that same feeling.

Based on their responses, it was clear that Institutional Advancement 1 and President 1 worked very closely with each other to align on the fundraising focus. Institutional Advancement 1 also likely had consistent opportunities to share the challenges and strategies that were being used with President 1, keeping the president engaged with the work of fundraising. This aligns with previous researchers' assertions that HBCU leaders need to know the language of fundraising to do well in increasing their institution's sustainability (Anderson et al., 2019; Freeman et al., 2016; Freeman & Lee, 2018; Kimbrough, 2018; Palmer & Freeman, 2020). While all leaders mentioned sustainability in some way, the strongest alignment among participating HBCU leaders was at Institution A.

This finding does not align with RDT explicitly, but it does offer insight into the power of alignment and collaborative efforts at HBCUs. Both of those leadership traits can contribute to the identification, pursuit, and attainment of new revenue sources. It would be worth further study to investigate how organizational alignment or synergy contributes to organizational efficiency, specific to power dynamics.

Applications to Professional Practice

Advancement officers and senior leaders at HBCUs could find the results of this study beneficial as they could use this to enhance their knowledge on successful strategies used for increasing the sustainability through the enlisting and retention of alumni donations. All participants in this study were valuable to filling this gap in the literature because of their thoughtful, honest responses to the questions posed, and their success in this area has been undeniable. Through the use of the strategies outlined in the findings, Hunt College was able to raise their alumni giving rate from 7% to 18% while Candle College raised theirs from 3% to 8%. One way to encourage financial sustainability at HBCUs is by diversifying fundraising sources (Hung & Hager, 2019). I have found that a key strategy to that success is that HBCU leaders must be clear on the historical context around fundraising efforts and know how to move the institution toward a use of new strategies (Blow, 2021). Sustainable strategies could include knowing when to invest in new resources, placing emphasis on philanthropy, and encouraging investment of institutional funds (Polk, 2021). Six emerging themes were found in this study: exploring innovative new methods, honoring tradition, diversifying giving methods, naming and responding to challenges, leveraging every person, and alignment. Upon review of these themes, HBCU leaders may find it beneficial to implement these strategies as they have been found to be successful and they have increased institutional sustainability.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change include creating new student support programs that will expand students' access to high-quality higher education from increased alumni donations. HBCUs could use increased revenue from donations to support students as they matriculate, increasing their quality of life by enabling them to pursue employment opportunities with higher wages. After reviewing the results of this study, I have identified several successful strategies that HBCU leaders, both advancement officers and presidents, can use to improve their chances at improving institutional stability through the pursuit of alumni giving as a revenue source.

The goal is to eliminate dependency on state funds or philanthropic gifts by highlighting how focusing on improving alumni giving efforts can improve the institution's sustainability. Once achieved, HBCU leaders can increase focus more on programming to improve the student experience and make continued investments in staffing and infrastructure. I plan to share the findings of my study with the participants who allowed me to interview them and other HBCU leaders (upon request). I also would also be interested in sharing my results with other researchers. This study will aid in increasing financial stability at HBCUs once published.

Recommendations for Action

My recommendations are driven by the themes that were taken from participants' interview data. The participants in this study shared not only strategies used for their own HBCU's success, but a couple of the leaders also shared advice for other HBCUs to consider when attempting to achieve similar success in enlisting and retaining alumni donations and improving institutional sustainability. By implementing some or all the strategies presented by the participants for this research study, they could gain a new revenue source, meaningfully increase alumni engagement, create a pipeline of alumni who give, and increase knowledge of fundraising best practices among HBCU leaders.

My first recommendation is that HBCU leaders work to identify ways to engage students in increasing alumni giving efforts. Students are the closest to the institution and can provide a compelling narrative for why alumni should reach back and provide financial support. My second recommendation is that HBCU leaders remain well-versed in the challenges they face (both internally and externally) so that they can work to overcome them. Having little insight into problems reduces their ability to solve problems before they become institutional threats. A third recommendation is to improve the alignment between institutional leaders so that they are working toward a singular goal and are normed on the strategies. Each leader should be clear on what the university is doing to engage alumni and how the efforts are going. That level of transparency will also help to enlist the support of students, faculty, and alumni. HBCU leaders should also work to ensure that they strengthen their methods for assessing the effectiveness of their alumni engagement efforts. My final recommendation is to share the findings of this research with other HBCU leaders through a forum such as CASE, a professional organization for advancement officers. In addition, I will present my findings to my own institution's president to see where we may be able to improve our efforts to enlist and retain alumni donations.

Recommendations for Further Research

In this qualitative case study, the data provided by the participants was key in providing descriptions of the strategies that have been used at successful HBCUs when it comes to the enlisting and retaining of alumni donations. The participants were all interviewed via Zoom.

My recommendations for further research include increasing the sample size. There are 100 HBCUs in the country, both public and private. This study only focuses on three institutions within a single region of the country. There may be differences in strategies and challenges across HBCU types or geographical regions. In this research study I interviewed six participants but increasing that number would provide more valuable information that could be generalized to the larger HBCU population.

I also recommend additional research around alumni perceptions of engagement efforts at HBCUs. Again, HBCU leaders may have a specific perspective of their efforts that may align with or be different from what the alumni themselves think. It could also provide a vehicle for alumni to describe how they want to be engaged, providing HBCU leaders with targeted feedback. In a context where competition for financial resources is a full-time endeavor, I believe that my recommendations for further research could be an essential to HBCU leaders who are interested in establishing robust alumni engagement initiatives to enlist and retain alumni donations.

Reflections

I enrolled in this program with the idea that I would get my doctorate and become an HBCU president. While I had no guarantee that I would get there, I thought it was important to round out my education with a doctoral degree. As I reflect upon my DBA journey at this point in the process, every challenge, emotion, and achievement runs through my mind. I think I have experienced every emotion on the spectrum throughout the course of my program.

Receiving IRB approval was definitely a high moment for me in this process. I had heard how difficult it can be to get through the process, so I focused on providing the clearest answers possible. I was also excited because I knew that the rest of the efforts would fall on me when it came to getting to the finish line. After the data collection phase was over, I reflected on the experiences each participant shared in order to understand how and where they fit together as a general HBCU experience.

This topic came to me as I was considering my professional work as a fundraiser. I kept pondering the question, how do we get all HBCU leaders to follow some basic best practices around fundraising? And over time, with the experience that I was gaining in institutional advancement, that question evolved to focus specifically on alumni donation efforts. So, when it came to this study, I was extremely excited because I knew that I would be able to gain valuable insight from the participating HBCU leaders. I was honored that every leader I contacted jumped at the chance to contribute to the larger conversation around alumni giving. Knowing that their time was short I kept the interviews focused to make sure that I did not take more of their time than communicated.

Overall, this process has been life-changing for me. My topic has the potential to open professional doors. It also gives me an opportunity to give back to the institutions that have given so much to me. I look forward to all of the things that will come after I earn my degree. It has absolutely been a rewarding experience despite my challenges.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore the strategies that HBCU leaders use to enlist and retain donations from alumni to support long-term sustainability. The target population consisted of six HBCU leaders from three institutions in the Southeastern region of the United States. Each leader was well-versed in the fundraising and the factors that contribute to successful fundraising efforts.

After analyzing the data provided by participants, I found that HBCUs use a variety of strategies to increase alumni giving in an effort to reduce their dependency on a single revenue source. This is aligned with the resource dependency theory research. Diversifying revenue sources improves institutional sustainability and reduces institutional threat. This is an important point for HBCU leaders because, despite their challenges, they are ultimately accountable for the for the success and failure of their institutions.

Overall, my findings suggest that strategies used by HBCU leaders include exploring innovative new methods, honoring tradition, diversifying giving methods, naming and responding to challenges, leveraging every person, and alignment. By elevating these findings to other HBCU leaders, the institutions could be positioned to move into a new era marked by financial sustainability.

References

Aßlander, M. S., Roloff, J., Nayir, D. Z. N. (2016). Suppliers as stewards? Managing social standards in first- and second-tier suppliers. *Journal of Business Ethics, 139*(4), 661–683. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3148-0

Adams, W. (2015). Conducting semi-structured interviews. In K. E. Newcomer, H. P. Hatry, & J. S. Wholey (Eds.). *Handbook of practical program evaluation.* Jossey-Bass.

Almeida, F. (2018) Strategies to perform a mixed methods study. *European Journal of Education Studies, 5*(1), 137–151. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1406214

Anderson, M., Woods, A. D., & Walker, R. (2019). The linkage of ethics and leadership to the decision-making process of HBCU college presidents. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal, 23*(1), 1–11. https://www.abacademies.org/articles/the-linkage-of-ethics-and-leadership-to-the-decision-making-process-of-hbcu-college-presidents-8024.html

Andrews, D. R., No, S., Powell, K. K., Rey, M. P., & Yigletu, A. (2016). Historically Black colleges and universities' institutional survival and sustainability: A view from the HBCU business deans' perspective. *Journal of Black Studies, 47*(2), 150–168. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934715622220

Arnold, T. S. (2021). *A case study exploring the success of a president at a HBCU* [Doctoral dissertation, Tennessee State University]. https://digitalscholarship.tnstate.edu/dissertations/AAI28776736/

Bansal, P., Smith, W. K., & Vaara, E. (2018). New ways of seeing through qualitative research. *Academy of Management Journal, 61*(4), 1189–1195. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2018.4004

Barney, J. B. (1986). Organizational culture: Can it be a source of sustained competitive advantage? *Academy of Management Review, 11*(3), 656–665. https://doi.org/10.2307/258317

Barney, J. B., & Clark, D. N. (2007). *Resource-based theory: Creating and sustaining competitive advantage*. Oxford University Press.

Baskarada, S., & Koronios, A. (2018). A philosophical discussion of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research in social science. *Qualitative Research Journal, 18*(1), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-D-17-00042

Beamon, A. M. (2017). *An examination of motivational factors affecting African American alumni philanthropy at a historically Black university* [Doctoral dissertation, North Carolina A&T State University]. ProQuest Dissertations.

Betton, S. O. (2018). Presidential approaches to fundraising at selected historically Black colleges and universities [Doctoral dissertation, University of North Florida]. Digital Commons. https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/etd/826/

Blau, P. M. (1974). Presidential address: Parameters of social structure. *American Sociological Review, 39*(5), 615–635. https://doi.org/10.2307/2094309

Blow, F. D. (2021). Promise, potential, opportunity: successful HBCU presidential fundraising strategies [Doctoral dissertation, Old Dominion University]. Digital Commons. https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/efl_etds/270/

Boland, W. C., & Gasman, M. (2014). America's public HBCUs: A four state comparison of institutional capacity and state funding priorities. Penn Center for Minority Serving Institutions. https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/four-state-comparison.pdf

Burnett, C. A. (2020). Diversity under review: HBCUs and regional accreditation actions. *Innovative Higher Education*, *45*(1), 3–15. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-019-09482-w

Campbell, D. M. (2017). Exploratory inquiry: Fundraising at historically Black colleges and universities to reduce resource dependence [Doctoral dissertation, University of Phoenix]. ProQuest Dissertations.

Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., Bywaters, D., & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: Complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing, 25*(8), 652–661. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1744987120927206

Candela, A. G. (2019). Exploring the function of member checking. *The Qualitative Report*, *24*(3), 619–628. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2019.3726

Celtekligil, K. (2020). Resource dependence theory. In H. Dincer & S. Yuskel (Eds.) *Strategic outlooks for innovative work behaviors* (pp. 131–148). Springer.

Chen, X. (2019). Antecedents of technological diversification: A resource dependence logic. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, *5*(80), 1–18. http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/joitmc5040080

Chisom, D. (2020). An analysis pertinent to an intervention strategy to increase alumni engagement at a historically Black college and university [Doctoral dissertation, Tennessee State University]. https://digitalscholarship.tnstate.edu/dissertations/AAI27837932/

Commodore, F., & Njoku, N. R. (2020). Outpacing expectations: Battling the misconceptions of regional public historically Black colleges and universities. *New Directions for Higher Education*, *2020*(190), 99–117. https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20370

Coupet, J. (2013). Historically Black colleges and universities and resource dependence: A Chow test of production functions. Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 35(4), 355-369. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2013.812054

Coupet, J. (2017). Strings attached? Linking historically Black colleges and universities public revenue sources with efficiency. Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 39(1), 40-57. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2016.1254427

Crawford, J. (2017). HBCUs: Accreditation, governance and survival challenges in an ever-increasing competition for funding and students. Journal of Research Initiatives, 2(3), 1-13.

Cui, L., & Xu, Y. (2019). Outward FDI and profitability of emerging economy firms: Diversifying from home resource dependence in early stage internationalization. Journal of World Business, 54, 372-386. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2019.04.002

Cyert, R. & March, J. (1963). A behavioral theory of the firm. Prentice-Hall.

Dameron, H. E. (2021). Reimagining personal finance curricula: The reach of HBCUs and the power of storytelling. Review of Contemporary Business Research, 9(12), 36-41. http://dx.doi.org/10.15640/rcbr.v9n1-2a3

Daniel, J. R. (2016). Crisis at the HBCU. Composition Studies, 44(2), 158-161. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24859535

Delke, V. F. (2015). The resource dependence theory: Assessment and evaluation as a contributing theory for supply management. Bachelor's thesis, University of Twente.

Deng, S., Lai, Y., Myers, S. L., & Xu, M. (2020). Foundation giving and economics research productivity at HBCUs: Empirical evidence from the Koch Foundation. Journal of Economics, Race, and Policy. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41996-020-00063-0

Diaz Vidal, D., & Pitlz T.G. (2019). Educating beyond the classroom: alumni giving and the value of campus culture. Studies in Higher Education, 44(12), 2208-2222. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1482269

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. American Sociological Review, 48(2), 147-160. https://doi.org/10.2307/2095101

Dixon, D., & Johnston, M. (2019). Content validity of measures of theoretical constructs in health psychology: Discriminant content validity is needed. British Journal of Health Psychology, 24 (3). pp. 477-484. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjhp.12373

Emerson, R. M. (1962). Power-dependence relations. American Sociological Review, 27, 31–41. https://doi.org/10.2307/2089716

Freeman Jr., S., Commodore, F., Gasman, M., & Carter, C. (2016). Leaders wanted! The skills expected and needed for a successful 21st century historically Black college and university presidency. Journal of Black Studies, 47(6), 570-591. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934716653353

Freeman, S., & Lee, J. M. (2018). Successful financial models at HBCUs. In S. Davis & W. Kimbrough (Eds.), Models of success: How historically Black colleges and universities survive the economic recession (pp. 59-76). Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Freeman, S., & Palmer, R. T. (2020). Exploring perceptions of effective leadership practices of presidents of historically Black colleges and universities. Open Journals in Education, 4(2), 207-228. https://doi.org/10.32674/jump.v4i2.2461

Gani, N. I. A., Rathakrishnan, M., & Krishnasamy, H. N. (2020). A pilot test for establishing validity and reliability of qualitative interview in the blended learning English proficiency course. Journal of Critical Reviews, 7(5), 140-143.

Geddis-Regan, A. R., Exley, C., Taylor, G. D. (2021). Navigating the dual role of the clinician-researcher in qualitative dental research. JDR Clinical & Translational Research. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F2380084421998613

Gibbs, C. J. (2020). Effective fundraising at historically Black colleges and universities: Lessons from a successful capital campaign (Doctoral dissertation). Howard University.

Glenn Jones, P. W., & Davenport, E. K. (2018). Resistance to change: HBCUs and online learning. Thought and Action, 34(1), 59-80. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1191460

Guest, G., Namey, E., & Chen, M. (2020). A simple method to assess and report thematic saturation in qualitative research. PLoS ONE ,15(5): e0232076. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0232076

Hamilton, A. B.., & Finley, E. P. (2020). Qualitative methods in implementation research: An introduction. Psychiatry Research, 283. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2019.112629

Hannan, M. T., & Freeman, J. (1977). The population ecology of organizations. American Journal of Sociology, 82(5). https://doi.org/10.1086/226424

Hardy, P. M., Kaganda, E. J., & Aruguete, M. S. (2019). Below the surface: HBCU performance, social mobility, and college ranking. Journal of Black Studies, 50(5), 468-483. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934719847910

Harper, S. R., & McMickens, T. L. (2018). Mary McLeod Bethune's fundraising success: Implications for contemporary presidents of historically Black colleges and universities. In S. Davis & W. Kimbrough (Eds.), Models of success: How historically Black colleges and universities survive the economic recession (pp.1-19). Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Harris, N. (2020). Exploring donor motivation at a southern HBCU: Turning strong sentiment into strong financial support (Doctoral dissertation). Tennessee State University.

Haven, T. L., & Van Grootel, L. (2019). Preregistering qualitative research. Accountability in Research, 26(3), 229-244. https://doi.org/10.1080/08989621.2019.1580147

Hennink, M. M., & Kaiser, B. N. (2019). Saturation in qualitative research. In P.

Atkinson, S. Delamont, A. Cernat, J.W. Sakshaug, & R.A. Williams (Eds.), SAGE Research Methods Foundations. https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781526421036822322

Hung, C., & Hager, M. A. (2019). The impact of revenue diversification on nonprofit financial health: A meta-analysis. Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 48(1), 5-27. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764018807080

Ilhan, A. (2020). An evaluation of the changing nature of power-dependence relations in organizations within the context of the resource dependence theory. International Review of Management and Business Research, 9(4), 165-179. https://doi.org/10.30543/9-4(2020)-15

Jackson-Nevels, B., Davis-Wagner, D., Livingston, V., Neely-Goodwin, S. (2020). Navigating through the pandemic at a historically Black college university: Challenges and opportunities. International Journal of Social Policy and Education, 2(5), 67-74. https://ijspe.com/Journals/Vol_2_No_5_July_2020/IJSPE-202042.pdf

Jacobs, D. (1974). Dependency and vulnerability: An exchange approach to the control of organizations. Administrative Science Quarterly, 19, 45–59. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2391787

Jimenez, A., Abbott, P., & Dasuki, S. (2021). In-betweenness in ICT4D research: critically examining the role of the researcher. European Journal of Information Systems. https://doi.org/10.1080/0960085X.2021.1978340

Johnson, G. S., Gray, V., Gray, L., Richardson, N. L., Rainey-Brown, S. A., Triplett, K.

L., & Bowman, L. E. (2017). Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the twenty-first century: An exploratory case study analysis of their mission. Race, Gender, & Class, 24(3), 44-67. https://doi.org/ 10.2307/26529222

Karanović, J., Berends, H., & Engel, Y. (2021). Regulated dependence: Platform workers' responses to new forms of organizing. Journal of Management Studies, 58(4), 1070-1106. https://doi.org/ 10.1111/joms.12577

Kegler, M. C., Raskind, I. G., Comeau, D. L., Griffith, D. M., Cooper, H. L. F., & Shelton, R. C. (2019). Study design and use of inquiry frameworks in qualitative research. Health Education & Behavior, 46(1), 24-31. https://doi.org/10.1771/1090198118795018

Kelly, T., Woods, A., & Walker, R., (2017). Barriers to Historically Black Colleges and Universities alumni giving in the Baby Boomer and Silent Generations: An interpretive phenomenology analysis. Journal of Education and Social Development, 1(1), 1-6. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.808542

Khatri, P., & Raheja, N. (2018). Empirical evaluation of dimensionality of alumni giving behavior in the Indian context. International Journal of Management Concepts and Philosophy, 11(1), 82. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJMCP.2018.090414

Kholmuminov, S., Kholmuminov, S., & Wright, R. E. (2019). Resource dependence theory analysis of higher education institutions in Uzbekistan. Higher Education, 77, 59-79. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-018-0261-2

Kimbrough, W. (2018). Practical strategies: Leading HBCU during challenging economies. In S. Davis & W. Kimbrough (Eds.), Models of success: How historically Black colleges and universities survive the economic recession (pp.115-124). Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. European Journal of General Practice, 24(1), 120-124. https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092

LaDonna, K. A., Taylor, T., & Lingard, L. (2017). Why open-ended survey questions are unlikely to support rigorous qualitative insights. Academic Medicine, 93(3), 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000002088

Lashitew, A. A., Ross, M. L., Werker, E. (2021). What drives successful economic diversification in resource-rich countries? The World Banks Research Observer, 36(2), 164-196. https://doi.org/10.1093/wbro/lkaa001

Lawrence, S. L., & Woods, A. D. (2021). Increasing alumni giving at HBCUs: Start by broadening the job titles of those who do the asking. Planning for Higher Education, 49(3), 9-16.

Leak, H. N. (2018). Making bricks without straw: The Kresge HBCU initiative and fundraising at historically Black colleges and universities (Doctoral dissertation). New York University.

Lee, J. M., & Keys, S. W. (2013). Repositioning HBCUs for the future: Access, success, research & innovation. (ALPU Office of Access and Success Discussion Paper 2013-01). https://www.aplu.org/library/repositioning-hbcus-for-the-future-access-success-research-and-innovation/file

Li, A. Y., & Kennedy, A. I. (2018). Performance funding policy effects on community college outcomes: Are short-term certificates on the rise? Community College Review, 46(1), 3-39. https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552117743790

Mahone, R.L. (2021), “Philanthropy versus fundraising – An imperative for HBCUs”, Crosby, G.B., White, K.A., Chanay, M.A. and Hilton, A.A. (Ed.) Reimagining Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Great Debates in Higher Education), Emerald Publishing Limited, Bingley, pp. 71-77. https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80043-664-020211007

Margiono, A., Zolin, R., & Chang, A. (2017). A typology of social venture business model configurations. International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-09-2016-0316

Martins, F. S., Felisoni, P. R., & Gaspar, M. A. (2020). Planning academic publications: The role of the researcher and the development of publishable proposals. Iberoamerican Journal of Strategic Management, 19(3). https://doi.org/10.5585/riae.v19i3.18390

McClure, K. R., & Anderson, P. N. E. (2020). An uneven playing field: Fundraising at regional public universities in the aftermath of the great recession. Philanthropy & Education, 3(2), 1-26. https://doi.org/10.2979/phileduc.3.2.01

McDonald, J. B., & Needham, C. R. (2020). Strategies for enrollment managers at historically black colleges and universities: A single case study. Open Journal of Business and Management, 8(3), 1-28. http://www.scirp.org/journal/Paperabs.aspx?PaperID=100565

Melvin, D. A. (2017). An exploration of issues that influence pursuit and utlilization of exrernal research programs by historically Black colleges and universities (Doctoral dissertation). Capella University.

Mfinanga, F. A., Mrosso, R. M., & Bishibura, S. (2019). Comparing case study and grounded theory as qualitative research approaches. International Journal of the Latest Research in Humanities and Social Science, 2(5), 51-56. http://www.ijlrhss.com/paper/volume-2-issue-5/5-HSS-366.pdf

Miller, G. N. S., Lynn, F. B., & McCloud, L. I. (2020). By lack of reciprocity: Positioning historically Black colleges and universities in the organizational field of higher education. The Journal of Higher Education, 1-33. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2020.1803026

Mossel, A., Rjinsoever, F. J., & Hekkert, M. P. (2018). Navigators through the storm: A review of organization theories and the behavior of incumbent firms during transitions. Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions, 26, 44-63. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eist.2017.07.001

Murty, K. S., & Payne, T. B. (2021). Pandemics of COVID-19 and racism: How are HBCUs coping. AIMS Public Health, 8(2), 333-351. https://dx.doi.org/10.3934%2Fpublichealth.2021026

National Commission for the protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. (1979). The Belmont Report. https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/sites/default/files/the-belmont-report-508c_FINAL.pdf

Neubauer, B. E., Witkop, C. T., & Varpio, L. (2019). How phenomenology can help us learn from the experiences of others. Perspective of Medical Education, 8(2), 90-

97. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-019-0509-2

Orphan, C. M. (2020). Why regional public universities are vulnerable during recessions and must be protected. Third Way. https://thirdway.imgix.net/pdfs/override/Why-Regional-Public-Universities-are-Vulnerable-During-Recessions-and-Must-be-Protected.pdf

Palmer, R. T., & Freeman, S. (2020). Examining the perceptions of unsuccessful leadership practices for presidents at historically Black colleges and universities. Journal of Diversity in High Education, 13(3), 254-263. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000120

Pezalla, A. E., Pettigrew, J., Miller-Day, M. (2012). Researching the researcher-as-instrument: An exercise in interviewer self-reflexivity. Qualitative Researcher, 12(2), 165-185. https://dx.doi.org/10.1177%2F1487941111422107

Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G. R. (1978). The external control of organizations: A resource dependence perspective. Harper and Row.

Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G. R. (2003). The external control of organizations: A resource dependence perspective (2nd ed.). Stanford University Press.

Polk, C. L. (2021). Strategies used to financially stabilize historically black colleges and universities (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Walden University.

Queiros, A., Faria, D., & Almeida, F. (2017). Strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative research methods. European Journal of Education Studies, 3(9), 369-387. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.887089

Rashid, Y., Rashid, A., Warraich, M. A., Sabir, S. S., & Waseem, A. (2019). Case study method: A step-by-step guide for business researchers. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 18, 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1609406919862424

Richardson, A. S. (2018). A study of the relationship among revenue sources and retention rates at private historically Black colleges and universities (Doctoral dissertation). North Carolina A&T State University.

Ridder, H. (2017). The theory contribution of case study research designs. Business Research, 10(2), 281-305. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40685-017-0045-z

Rodrgiues, S. B., & Dieleman, M. (2018). The internationalization paradox: Untangling dependence in multinational state hybrids, Journal of World Business, 53(1), 39-51.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2015). Research methods for business students (7th ed.). Pearson Education Limited.

Schoonenboom, J., & Johnson, R. B. (2017). How to construct a mixed methods research design. Köln Z Soziol, 69, 107-131. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11577-017-0454-1

Sherer, P. D., Suddaby, R., Coquet, M. R. (2019). Does resource diversity confer organizational autonomy in arts organizations? Extending resource dependency theory. The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society, 49(4), 224-241. https://doi.org/10.1080/10632921.2018.1559265

Simon, M. K., & Goes, J. (2013). Assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and scope of the study. In Dissertation and Scholarly Research: Recipes for Success. Dissertation Success LLC.

Smith, J. E., Duckett, J., Dorsey-Elson, L. K., Moon, J., Hayward, A., & Marshall, D.

(2020). Teaching lessons from COVID-19: One department's story of transformation—an HBCU narrative. Open Journals in Education, 5(2), 13-32. https://doi.org/issn.2474-2554

Stenfors, T., Kajamaa, A., & Bennett, D. (2020). How to…assess the quality of qualitative research. The Clinical Teacher, 17, 596-599.

Stuart, R. (2017). Financial anxiety: Funding continues to be a major challenge at many of the nation's HBCUs. Diverse Issues in Higher Education. https://www.diverseeducation.com/students/article/15101081/finances-a-troublesome-subject-at-many-hbcus

Taylor, Z. W. (2018). "Now you're competing": How historically Black colleges and universities compete (and don't) on the internet. International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 15(28). https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-018-0111-4

Thacker, R. S., & Freeman, S. (2020). Managing stress in a time of increased pressure: Perspectives from university presidents. The William and Mary Educational Review, 7(1), 46-70. https://scholarworks.wm.edu/wmer/vol7/iss1/2

Theofanidis, D., & Fountouki, A. (2018). Limitations and delimitations in the research process. Perioperative Nursing, 7(3), 155-163. http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2552022

Toldson, I. A. (2017). Drivers and barriers of success for HBCU researchers submitting STEM proposals to the National Science Foundation. The Journal of Negro Education, 86(4), 415-421. https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.86.4.0415

Tripathi, N. (2021). Reverse the lens, set the focus on the followers: A theoretical framework or resource dependence, upward influence, and leadership. Frontiers in Psychology. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.699340

Ulrich, D., & Barney, J. B.. (1984). “Perspectives in Organizations: Resource Dependence, Efficiency and Population.” Academy of Management Review 9 (3):471–81. https://doi.org/10.2307/258287

U.S. Department of Education. (2017). Title III Part B, Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities. https://www2.ed.gov/programs/iduestitle3b/index.html.

Vasileiou, K., Barnett, J., Thorpe, S., & Young, T. (2018). Characterising and justifying sample size sufficiency in interview-based studies: Systematic analysis of qualitative health research over a 15-year period. BMC Medical Research Methodology, 18, 148. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-018-0594-7

Weerts, D. J., & Cabrera, A. F. (2018). Alumni Giving as Civic Expression. Philanthropy & Education, 2(1), 1. https://doi.org/10.2979/phileduc.2.1.01

Wernerfelt, B. (1984). A resource-based view of the firm. Strategic Management Journal, 5(2), 171-180. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2486175

Williams, K. L., & Davis, B. L. (2019). Public and private investments and divestments in historically Black colleges and universities. UNCF. https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/bitstream/handle/10919/89184/PublicPrivateHbcus.pdf?sequence=1

Williams, M., & Moser, T. (2019). The art of coding and thematic exploration in qualitative research. International Management Review, 15(1), 45-55.

Yin, R. K. (2017). Case study research and applications: Design and methods (6th ed.). Sage.

Appendix A: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study about the strategies that HBCU leaders use to enlist and retain alumni donations. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study seeks eight volunteers who are:

- Either an advancement officer or an executive leader at an HBCU
- Currently working on an alumni giving campaign
- Knowledgeable of the strategies that used to enlist and retain alumni donations

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Dub Taylor, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. You might already know the researcher as a fellow advancement officer, but this study is separate from that role.

Study Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore the strategies that HBCU leaders use to enlist and retain donations from alumni to support long-term sustainability.

Procedures:

This study will involve you completing the following steps:

- Reviewing and signing an informed consent form (this document)
- Scheduling time for a 60-minute interview
- Reviewing and confirming the interview transcript for accuracy
- Reviewing and confirming the final write up for accuracy____

Here are some sample questions:

1. How would you describe your current rate of alumni giving?
2. What strategies do you currently use to enlist alumni donations?

3. What were the key challenges to implementing strategies for enlisting alumni donations?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Research should only be done with those who freely volunteer. So everyone involved will respect your decision to join or not.

If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. Please note that not all volunteers will be contacted to take part.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this study could involve some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life such as sharing sensitive information. With the protections in place, this study would pose minimal risk to your wellbeing.

This study offers no direct benefits to individual volunteers. The aim of this study is to benefit society by providing new strategies that can be used to enlist and retain donations from HBCU alumni. Once the analysis is complete, the researcher will share the overall results by emailing you a summary.

Payment:

There is no payment for participation in this study.

Privacy:

The researcher is required to protect your privacy. Your identity will be kept confidential, within the limits of the law. The researcher is only allowed to share your identity or contact info as needed with Walden University supervisors (who are also required to protect your privacy) or with authorities if court-ordered (very rare).The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. If the researcher were to share this dataset with another researcher in the future, the dataset would contain no identifiers so this would not involve another round of obtaining informed consent. Data will be kept secure through the use of password protection and the use of a selected pseudonym in place of names. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

You can ask questions of the researcher by dub.taylor@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant or any negative parts of the study, you can call Walden University's Research Participant Advocate at 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here**. It expires on **IRB will enter expiration date.**

You might wish to retain this consent form for your records. You may ask the researcher or Walden University for a copy at any time using the contact info above.

Obtaining Your Consent

If you feel you understand the study and wish to volunteer, please indicate your consent by replying to this email with the words, "I consent".

Printed Name of Participant	______________________
Date of consent	______________________
Participant's Signature	______________________
Researcher's Signature	______________________

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your current rate of alumni giving?
2. What strategies do you currently use to enlist alumni donations?
3. What were the key challenges to implementing strategies for enlisting alumni donations?
4. How did you address the key challenges to implementing the strategies for enlisting alumni donations?
5. How did you assess the effectiveness of strategies for enlisting alumni donations?
6. What strategies do you currently use to retain alumni donations?
7. What were the key challenges to implementing strategies for retaining alumni donations?
8. How did you address the key challenges to implementing the strategies for retaining alumni donations?
9. How did you assess the effectiveness of strategies for retaining alumni donations?
10. What else can you share with me about your organization's strategies for enlisting and retaining alumni donations?

Appendix C: Abridged Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol	
What you will do	**What you will say—script**
Introduce the interview and set the stage—often over a meal or coffee	Thank you for meeting with me today. Before we get started, I want to take a moment to go over the informed consent form with you. This document outlines the purpose of the study, what will be needed from you, and how to report a grievance with my university. Please take a moment to review the document and let me know if you have any questions. <pause> Do you have any questions? Do you consent to participation in this study? Thank you. Let's begin.
• Watch for non-verbal queues • Paraphrase as needed • Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in depth	1.How would you describe your current rate of alumni giving? 2.What strategies do you currently use to enlist alumni donations? 3.What were the key challenges to implementing strategies for enlisting alumni donations? 4.How did you address the key challenges to implementing the strategies for enlisting alumni donations? 5.How did you assess the effectiveness of strategies for enlisting alumni donations? 6.What strategies do you currently use to retain alumni donations? 7.What were the key challenges to implementing strategies for retaining alumni donations? 8.How did you address the key challenges to implementing the strategies for retaining alumni donations? 9.How did you assess the effectiveness of strategies for retaining alumni donations? 10.What else can you share with me about your organization's strategies for enlisting and retaining alumni donations?
Wrap up interview thanking participant	Thank you so much for sharing your experiences with me today. As a next step, I'll turn the audio into a written transcript that I will send to you via email for review. This is just to make sure that I capture your experiences accurately.