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# Aligning Counseling Center Behavioral Health Outcomes with Overall College Outcomes

Lorrie Ann Spivey
*Walden University*

# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Lorrie A. Spivey

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. Frederica Hendricks-Noble, Committee Chairperson, Psychology Faculty
Dr. Kristen Chesser, Committee Member, Psychology Faculty
Dr. John Schmidt, University Reviewer, Psychology Faculty

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

Walden University
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MAE, Chadron State College, 2013

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

College counseling service departments report an increase in the demand for mental health services. Simultaneously, college counseling centers are reporting a shortfall in budgets to meet the increased demands. Furthermore, they are not prepared for the severity of the presenting problems found in today's student population. Behavioral health leaders on college campuses must find a balance between meeting the student population's immediate needs and meeting organizational outcomes, such as retention and student success. This qualitative case study focused on a College Counseling Service Department at a Midwest college serving a diverse population of college students. The strategies behavioral health leaders used to assess counseling center needs and set goals that align with the targeted outcomes of the organization were investigated using the Baldrige excellence framework.  Analysis of the Behavioral Health Organization consisted of reviewing Board of Trustee meeting minutes, internal emails, Town Hall meeting reviews, and interviews with 4 of the college's senior leadership members. Analysis revealed that there is a need for leadership to assess the needs of the students and assess outcomes of the student counseling services to determine strategy in aligning goals with the organizational targeted outcomes. The results of the case study converge with literature, indicating the need for increased awareness, reduction of stigma, and need to assess ways of meeting the needs of an increasing college population seeking mental health services. The social change implications of the study results include the need for increased outreach, education to reduce stigma, and reduction of barriers for the college student population seeking services.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my wonderful husband, my amazing sons, my mother and father who worked so hard to ensure that I was able to follow my dreams, and God. Without the wonderful support from you all, this study and its completion would not have been possible.

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Section 1a: The Behavioral Health Organization

College counseling centers are facing demands of accountability, assessment of service outcomes, and to alignment of efforts and outcomes with prevention and early intervention efforts (Brunner, Wallace, Reymann, Sellers, & McCabe, 2014). There have been attempts to find a universal design or structure for college counseling centers, but Brunner et al. (2014) posited that college counseling centers should be structured to best meet the needs of the organization and population being served. Every college counseling center has a set of needs for the population it serves (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, n.d.). College counseling center leaders have seen a rise in the numbers of students seeking services, more intense needs are being presented, and colleges must change with the demands of the population they ae serving (Brunner et al., 2014).

Higher numbers and more intense behavioral health needs on college campuses requires the organizations that serve them to increase their focus on crisis management and case management services (Lipson, Abelson, Ceglarek, Phillips, & Eisenberg, 2019). Previous research has revealed that the demand for college counseling services is steadily increasing and that the mental health concerns are disruptive to the student's college experience (Fink, 2014; Schwitzer et al., 2018). In addition, college counseling center leaders face the challenge of outreach, education, and prevention (Brunner et al., 2014).

With the changing need and focus, college counseling center leadership may find themselves setting goals that do not necessarily align with the targeted outcomes of the organization (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, n.d.). Leadership of college counseling centers must meet the needs of the organization, but college counseling

centers have found that the increase in students reporting mental health needs has reached to the level of one out of every three students (Kruger, 2019). Leadership of college counseling centers must examine whether they are creating goals that are effective and efficient and align with the targeted outcomes of the organization (Kitzrow, 2003; Kruger, 2019).

The College Counseling Services Department (pseudonym) was the focus of this study. The College has had a history of providing educational programming for a metropolitan Midwestern community for over 125 years. The State Department of Higher Education for the state that The College resides in makes funding decisions based on a formula that incentivizes graduation rates and the time that it takes to graduate, completion rates, and the number of certifications and degrees obtained. According to The College public website, The College is a large community college in the Midwest serving over 20,000 students from diverse backgrounds and is a commuter college without dormitory services with an open enrollment policy. Commuter colleges offer a more affordable options for students but also often lack the sense of community that a college with on campus housing can offer a student.

Open enrollment allows students an opportunity to enroll in college even if they experienced difficulties in high school, but it also attracts students who may not be fully prepared for college level academia. Remedial courses may be needed to bring students up to college level readiness (Roman, 2007). The uniqueness and opportunity of community colleges pose unique challenges for students and may produce more feelings of being overwhelmed and less supported (Shankar & Ip, 2018).

According to The College website, its vision is to understand the needs of the community and to meet those needs through programming, services, and education. The College identifies its core priorities as growth, alignment, and equity. With these core priorities in mind, The College identifies gaps in achievement and success and strives to eliminate the gaps between groups.

The Department is housed within The College and provides services to all eligible students who are currently enrolled. According to the Department website page, the mission of the Department is to meet a student where they are and assist them in taking steps to improve their life. The Department helps students identify steps they can work on to begin creating positive change in their lives with a holistic approach. The overall Department mission is finding the need and meeting that need by providing high quality, accessible learning for The College and for the community.

Martin, McNeill, and Warren-Smith (2013) stated that the vision is what provides meaning and drive for effective and efficient programming. Without a clear vision for leaders, it is difficult for the team to follow through with the actions. A shared vision allows for buy in and a drive to meet the targeted outcomes of the organization. Bryson (2011) posited that high performing organizations must have at least an implicit vision of what success looks like in order to achieve it.

The Department is a counseling services program within a Midwest community college that serves a diverse population including dually enrolled high school students up to retired and returning adult learners. The Department offers crisis intervention, preventative education, and training for faculty, staff, and students, group

intervention, and brief intervention therapy and case management services as well as referral. The College website indicates that the Department does not provide diagnoses or ongoing behavioral health treatment; however, the organization has community partnerships that assist in referral.

## Practice Problem

College and university counseling centers are tasked with meeting the needs of a diverse population, often with limited resources and an ever-increasing case load of students seeking services for behavioral health issues (Huang, Nigatu, Small-Crevier, Zhang, & Wang, 2018). According to American College Health Association's (ACHA) Spring 2018 National College Health Assessment with 104,648 surveys completed, 87.4% of college students feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities that they face, with 63.4% experiencing anxiety, and 41.9% reporting feelings of depression that limits the ability to fulfill activities of daily living. The College campus counseling center must address the presenting problems as well as determine how to best reduce the impact to student success in and out of the classroom (Francis & Horn, 2017).

College students may be at higher risk than the average population for common mental health problems due to stress and transition during the college years (Huang et al., 2018). A review of previous research revealed that college students continue to face more challenges even before they set foot on campuses and that campus leadership teams need to be ready to meet the need (Dykes-Anderson, 2013; Huang, Nigatu, Small-Crevier, Zhang, & Wang, 2018). ACHA. Leadership's understanding of this data is critical in the process of determining the strategic means to meet the needs of this growing

phenomenon (Dykes-Anderson, 2013).

Researchers have suggested that failure to graduate from college is positively associated with poor college completion rates due to mental health complications (Bruffaerts et al., 2017; Hunt, Eisenberg, & Kilbourne, 2010). Students with mental health complications often are unable to cope with stressors and fail to complete (Hunt, Eisenberg, & Kilbourne, 2010). In addition, colleges are often ill equipped to provide the services and supports needed for these students to be successful (Francis & Horn, 2017). Closing the academic equity gap for students with mental health needs require leaders of college counseling centers to set goals that assist the organization in reaching their targeted outcomes of increased student success, increased mental health awareness, and decreased stigma (Carroll, Humphries, & Muller, 2018). Behavioral health leaders on college campuses must determine how to set goals that align with the targeted outcomes.

In this study, I attempted to address the identified gap of behavioral health leaders assessing the needs of the population being served and setting goals that align with the targeted outcomes of the organization. Services should be readily available to all students in need of behavioral health services on the college campus and align with the targeted outcomes through quality programming, effective programming, and efficiency. The setting for the research was a midsized, open enrollment, not-for-profit, state funded community college in the Midwest. According to its website, The College has a student population with 61% under the age of 24 and 39% being 25 and older, with nearly 57% of students being women, 39% identifying as a minority race, and 54% of full-time students attending eligible for federal grants. A qualitative case study allowed me to

evaluate the organization to explore leadership strategies to improve quality of services in order to increase effectiveness and efficiency.

The Department that served as the partner site for this study offers counseling and accessibility services to all students attending The College through their counseling and accessibility program. The program goals of the Department of The College include improving processes access, inspirational space, professional development for program staff, and comprehensive assessment to increase overall satisfaction and success for the client/student. According to The College's website, The College serves over 20,000 students. The counseling and accessibility services department serves students with mental health concerns, students in crisis, and those needing accessibility services. The Department specific webpage for The College further reveals that the mission of the program is to acknowledge the diverse needs of the students and to assist in taking steps to improve the lives of those they serve.

## Research Question

The research question for this study is as follows: What strategies do leaders of a not-for-profit state college counseling service department use to set goals that align with targeted outcomes for the entire organization?

## Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore strategies leaders of college counseling centers use to determine and create goals that support students in a not-for-profit behavioral health program based within a publicly funded institution of higher education. Specifically, I focused on goals and programming that align with the targeted outcomes

of the organization that these behavioral health programs serve. The Baldrige excellence

framework provided a means to systematically assess the organization through the

leadership lens (see National Institute of Standards and Technology [NIST]. 2017). The

Baldrige framework provides seven key factors of an organization for effective

organizations. The key factors are leadership, strategy, customers, measurement/

knowledge management, workforce, operations, and results. These key factors are used to

systematically assess an organization for effectiveness and efficiency (NIST, 2017). The

focus of this qualitative case study included senior leaders of a community college

counseling department in the Midwest.

A review of the literature indicated that community college counselors are tasked

with multiple job responsibilities within the student support unit, which may include

duties such as academic advising, accessibility services, and other duties as assigned

(Hunt et al., 2010; Shankar & Ip, 2018). Due to the many varying responsibilities that are

placed on community college counselors, the challenges to meet targeted outcomes are

difficult (Shankar & Ip, 2018). Leaders of community college counseling centers are

tasked with creating goals for their departments that align with the targeted outcomes of

their organizations. The College Counseling Services Department is no exception to

having multiple challenges and minimal staff. The College's Department has two full

time counselors and one case manager on staff for their entire college. The College had

28,552 students enrolled in five campus locations in academic year 2017-2018. In

addition, the Department does not provide assessment for the student population and

continues to refer students to community behavioral health specialists for ongoing

behavioral health needs.

As evidenced through the literature review, there are benefits to outsourcing

counseling services, but there are also significant disadvantages (Gale, Franco, Reese,

Hutman, & Wang, 2019; Owen, Devdas, & Rodolfa, 2007). Students may face session

limits, financial burdens due to insurance coverage, less interaction with student support

services, and possible reduction in outreach efforts and educational programs to promote

mental health (ACHA, 2018). With the uncertainty of follow through with referral, it is

difficult to meet the behavioral health needs of the college community without providing

traditional mental health counseling on site (Shankar & Ip, 2018).

### Significance

This study is significant to the practice of behavioral health because effective and

efficient goal setting and programming is necessary in behavioral health organizations.

Without effective programming and consideration of best practices, behavioral health

college programs have difficulty in the meeting the growing mental health needs of the

student population that they serve (Francis & Horn, 2017). Leaders of college counseling

programs are tasked with meeting the behavioral health needs of a diverse and vulnerable

population with small budgets and often with skeleton crews (Francis & Horn, 2017).

College years are a peak period of onset for many mental health disorders. The need for

behavioral health services is high for this population and may be the difference between life or death if the needs are not met (Auerbach et al., 2018).

Posavac (2011) posited that programs develop ideas about needs of their client population that do not meet their true needs. Therefore, understanding whether the counseling center's program goals are aligned with the projected outcomes is essential for leadership to create effective programming for the population being served. The Baldrige framework discusses not only understanding the data that are collected and verifying those data but transferring workforce knowledge to create collaborative knowledge and to increase innovation (NIST, 2017). Knowledge about data collected across the organization is essential to increase effective and efficient goals that meet the targeted outcomes of the organization.

## Potential Contribution to Positive Social Change

The potential social change contribution may include better understanding of strategies to align goals and outcomes to build more effective and efficient programs. The benefits to students who have less barriers to their success include reduced need for crisis intervention, greater completion rates among students who have services in place, and less strain on the community to provide additional services. Researchers have revealed that nonacademic resources, such as mental health counseling and accessibility services, are effective support strategies in the retention of college students (Dykes-Anderson, 2013; Troester-Trate, 2017). With more success rates for clients seeking behavioral

health services, there is less strain on the college community as well as the community at large.

A review of previous research has revealed that college students are a key population to determining economic growth success (Auerbach et al., 2018; Zhu, Peng, & Zhang, 2017). Leaders in behavioral health organizations benefit from successful clients and increased effectiveness in programming that decreases costs within the organization. Increases in effective programming decreases the need for additional community resources (Sanches et al., 2015). With increased effectiveness, clients of behavioral health services are better equipped for societal demands such as employment, independent living, and other tasks of daily living.  Targeted outcomes of successful completion of college and reduced behavioral health symptoms have potential cost savings and benefits for the community and to individuals and their families alike.

## Background

Behavioral health programs face the challenge of meeting the needs of the populations that they are serving. Strategies to better understand how to align goals of the program to meet the needs of those being served is needed. Thornicroft and Slade (2014) posited that producing targeted outcomes is significant because it is the reason behavioral health organizations exist. College and university counseling and accessibility programs also face these same challenges of meeting the needs of their student population and determining programming goals that meet the targeted outcomes of the program. Leaders

of these programs are tasked with the challenge of ensuring their programs are effectively and efficiently meeting those needs within the bounds of their college strategic plan.

A review of the literature and the basis of the need for the study were grounded in the findings from previous studies. Challenges of college and university counseling service programs include increased demand and limited resources (Francis & Horn, 2017). In addition, researchers have indicated that assessment tools are numerous, and college counselors are faced with deciding which measures are best for determining distress in the college population (Broglia, Millings, & Burkham, 2017). Students can be resistant to seeking out mental health supports and services and are often faced with the challenge of getting to the supports. With the knowledge that college counseling services are facing increased demand, limited resources, and many therapeutic measures and means to choose from, leadership of college counseling centers should explore offering alternative options to serve their populations by such measures as online counseling services coupled with face-to-face services (Dunbar, Sontag-Padilla, Kase, Seelam, & Stein, 2018).

A review of previous research also revealed that service utilization on college campuses does not always match the need, which exposes a need to continue to strive to reduce the stigma of mental health among college students, faculty, and staff (Bourdon, Moore, Long, Kendler, & Dick, 2018). Coping strategies for college students to meet the need of the population and should be researched before implementation. Finding the strategies that work and are used by the college population coupled with proper training

of college mental health staff is critical to successful programming in college counseling

centers (Giamos, Soo Lee, Sueiman, Stuart, & Chen, 2017; Wilfley et al., 2018).

## Analytical Framework

The Baldrige excellence framework is a systems approach that assisted me in

assessing the Department of The College in seven categories: leadership, strategic

planning, customer focus, workforce focus, operations focus, and results (see NIST,

2017). The Baldrige excellence framework was developed to assist in answering

questions about the organization being studied that help in the exploration of how

effective and efficient the organization is and what changes or improvements can be

made to maximize the quality of the services (NIST, 2017). Despite the effect of

behavioral health disorders on an individual's quality of life, there continues to be subpar

quality of care and gaps in service due to limited access to services (Kilbourne et al.,

2018). The framework provided a blueprint to lead me through the practice problem

related to the creation and alignment of goals with the targeted outcomes of the

counseling department.

The research process included a review of public and historical documentation

about the organization to assist me in understanding the organizational history and

culture. McNamara (2006) discussed the importance of a review of public information as

a starting point and cited that this form of review gives background information to the

researcher and does not require a lot of time from the organization, their staff, or the

leadership team. In an effort to ensure that the research maintains ethical and quality

standards, McNamara stated that document review should include discovery of how the

document was developed as well as establish that the data are current, accurate, and complete.

## Sources of Evidence and Data Collection Strategies

Data collection in the research process included a review of public and historical documentation about the organization to assist me in understanding the organizational history and culture. Semistructured interviews were another major source of data. Interviews with leadership allowed me to understand strategic plans, goal setting, and processes and to develop a relationship with the organization (see McNamara, 2006). The Economic and Social Research Council (2019) indicated that a semistructured interview allows for flexibility based on the answers that the researcher receives. Flexibility assists in obtaining more descriptive information that supports the case study of the organization. The review of data included a review of the organization's strategic plan, personnel policies, documentation policy, evaluations, and annual or quarterly reports of the counseling service department of the organization.

The College has a research analytics department that was valuable in obtaining data concerning The College, the population served, and data specific to the counseling department that assisted me in researching the practice problem. In addition, the Human Resources Department was a valuable source of information in obtaining staff satisfaction information through staff satisfaction surveys and by giving information

about the qualifications and standards used in hiring practices for professional staff in the Counseling Services Department.

Study of the practice problem included interviews with organizational leaders. The practice problem focused on goal creation and targeted outcome alignment for the Counseling Services Department. Interview questions must align with the research questions, be intentional and inquiry based, and assist in understanding the meaning of experiences of those being interviewed (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The interview questions were derived from the Baldrige excellence framework and were presented to the Internal Review Board of the College of the study.

### Summary and Transition

The Counseling Service Department of The College was the focus of this study. The organization is a large not-for-profit public institution of higher learning that primarily offers associate degree programs and career skill certificates. Like other college counseling centers across the nation, The College faces the challenge of an increased demand for services coupled with more intensive behavioral health needs of the population that they serve. Community colleges, such as The College, face increased demands in addition to crisis counseling and case management (see Brunner et al., 2014). The College's Counseling Services Department must also provide education, outreach, and prevention services for their student population. Prevention and education are key services to reducing risk to college students (ACHA, 2018). In consideration of increasing demands and needs, in this study, I focused on exploring strategies for

leadership of college counseling centers to set goals that align with their targeted outcomes.

The Baldrige excellence framework guided this study and includes the systematic exploration and assessment of an organization's performance management across seven categories: leadership, strategic planning, customer focus, workforce, operations, and results (see NIST, 2017). The organizational profile is the umbrella in which these seven categories lie, and the researcher explores the interrelationships between environment, relationships and strategic situation (NIST, 2017).

Section1b provides an overview of the organizational profile. The organizational profile gives a clear picture of the organization and the population that it serves. Additionally, the organizational profile assists in giving context to the practice problem and helps in understanding the organization's strategic initiatives.

Section 1b: Organizational Profile

**Overview**

This study addressed the identified gap of behavioral health leaders assessing the needs of the population being served and setting goals that align with the targeted outcomes of the organization. College counseling service departments and centers are experiencing increased demand for services, tighter budgets, and more intensified needs for the students that they serve (Huang et al., 2018). With intensified behavioral health needs on college campuses, more diversified services such as case management, prevention, and education must be integrated to meet the needs of the population served. The National Council on Disability (2018) argued that colleges must enhance access to services, increase training for faculty and staff, and reform policies.

The purpose of the study was to explore strategies that could assist leaders of college counseling departments and centers in creating goals that align with the targeted outcomes of the organization. The research question of this study was as follows: What strategies do leaders of a not-for-profit state college counseling service department use to set goals that align with targeted outcomes for the entire organization?

The organizational profile discusses the organizational characteristics and its key factors of strategic importance, the organizational background, and context. The organizational profile provides a picture of the organization, the key influences on how it operates, and the competitive environment for the organization. The organizational profile assists in developing a context for understanding how the organization operates

and provides a basis for the assessment of the seven categories of the Baldrige excellence framework (NIST, 2017).

## Organizational Profile and Key Factors

The College is a community college located in the Midwest, serving a diverse population of over 20,000 students. Within the community college is the Counseling Services Department, which was the focus of this study. The College public website provides information on demographics of the population, the location of The College, and the departments and services that are provided within The College. The Counseling Services Department employs two full-time counselors, one case manager, and one full-time program aide. Currently, there are no open positions within the department at The College. The counselors within the department all hold master's level degrees and are licensed in counseling, social work, or drug and alcohol counseling. Program Aide educational requirements are an associate degree. In addition to the two counselors that are on staff within the Counseling Services Department, The College also uses two licensed counselors from the Accessibility Services Department who are in the same office as Counseling Services for education, support group leader, and crisis counseling hours.

The College offers comprehensive benefits, diversity training, state retirement, a culture of putting the student/client first, collaborative approach across the organization, and professional development opportunities. In addition to traditional benefits, The College offers tuition reimbursement for employees after 1 year of full-time employment. Cameron, Mora, Leutscher, and Calarco (2011) posited that positive working

environments produce positive outcomes for the organization. Cameron, et al. (2011) also discussed that positive working environments are characterized by affirmative environment, energy, and a constructive meaning in the organization. Job descriptions were not available at the time of this study but were requested, and education was derived from my own knowledge of the organizational policies. Interviews with leadership to gain further information were beneficial in completing the organizational profile as the study continued.

The focus of this study was leadership of The College's Counseling Services Department setting goals that meet the targeted outcomes of the organization. Customer focus and workforce satisfaction factor into outcomes for the organization and may be beneficial to the study. In assessing The College's counseling department workforce, it became apparent that work overload was something to further explore concerning outcomes for the organization. From findings while reviewing the organizational profile, workforce profile was identified as a factor in the practice problem.

The practice problem assessed in this study was that leaders of counseling services departments on college campuses must determine how to set goals that align with targeted outcomes. The focus of this study was leadership of the Counseling Services Department of The College. Increased student success, awareness, and decreased stigma assist in closing the equity gap that exists for students with mental health needs (Carroll et al., 2018). Understanding the needs of the client and the services that assist in meeting those needs is paramount to obtaining the targeted outcomes for behavioral health leaders.

The Baldrige framework provides seven key factors of an organization for effective organizations (NIST, 2017). The key factors are leadership, strategy, customers, measurement/knowledge management, workforce, operations, and results. These key factors are used to systematically assess an organization for effectiveness and efficiency (NIST, 2017). In this study, the two key factors to address the problem were leadership and data/knowledge management. The focus on leadership was the basis of the study. I focused on how leadership of a department of The College aligns outcomes with the organization. Additionally, data and knowledge management assist in measuring outcomes for the organization. These two factors most relevantly aligned with the focus of this case study.

Kodjababian and Petty (2007) stated that health organizational leaders need to include more than executive leadership to lead organizational projects. Kodjababian and Petty further posited that organizational projects should include project leaders to assist in sustainable and successful outcomes. Effective leadership is needed to create collaborative efforts and to motivate toward positive change for the organization and the client.

Leadership of the department was the focus of the study. The Counseling Service Department is housed within the main campus of The College. The Department webpage indicates that the service offerings include crisis intervention, preventative education, training for faculty, staff, and students, group intervention, and brief intervention therapy and case management services as well as referral. According to the Department webpage on The College website, the Department of The College does not provide diagnoses or

ongoing behavioral health treatment; however, the organization has community

partnerships that assist in referral.

      The College public website states that the vision of The College is to understand

the need of the community and to meet those needs through programming, services, and

education. The mission of the department is to meet a student where they are and assist

them in taking steps to improve their life. The department of the organization of the

study helps students identify steps they can work on to begin creating positive change in

their lives with a holistic approach.  The overall organization mission is finding the need

and meeting that need by providing high quality, accessible learning as a college and for

the community.

## Organizational Background and Context

The College's defined goals for retention and completion on their public website

offers that The College is an organization of higher learning that is tasked with meeting

the academic needs of the community through quality programs, but it is also tasked with

meeting the supportive needs of the students that they serve in order for that student to

succeed and complete the programs for which they start. As part of that task, colleges

have found themselves needing to meet more mental health needs of the students whom

they are serving (Brunner et al., 2014). Researchers have suggested that college students

receiving mental health counseling on college campus improves retention and academic

performance (LeViness, Bershad, Gorman, Braun, & Murray, 2019) . However,

researchers have also suggested that college counseling services departments are

overburdened with an increasing number of students seeking services, education, and

outreach efforts needed to assist in the increasing number of teen and young adult suicides and the need to educate to reduce stigma so students experiencing mental health issues seek out services (Auerbach et al., 2018; Bourdon et al., 2018).

Researchers have clearly identified a gap in academic equity for college students with mental health issues. Academic gaps create the exigency for strategic planning to meet the needs of those requiring additional supports for retention and completion. In addition, researchers have indicated that additional study is needed to identify how organizations can improve services and provide quality service to their growing number of clients as well as reduce the risk for the student population by providing education and supporting prevention efforts (Campus Mental Health Action Planning, n.d.; Fink, 2014, Kruger, 2019).

Johnson (2009) posited that the purest form of legal authority in an organization is found in a bureaucratic administrative staff. When discussing bureaucratic administration, it is noted that staff is "organized in a clear hierarchy of offices with higher levels controlling those beneath it" (Johnson, 2009, p. 26). Within bureaucratic organizations, staff are selected and appointed based on qualifications (Johnson, 2009). In addition, each office within the bureaucratic organization has clear division of duties and competencies (Johnson, 2009). Public institutions are primarily run on a strict legal framework with high demands of public accountability, thereby requiring centralized control of risk for the organization and requiring a bureaucratic organizational structure (van der Voet, 2014).

The College is a public institution of higher learning and is governed by the state Board of Education and an appointed Board of Trustees (see Figure 1). The Board of Trustees consists of 11 members who have governance authority over the entire operations of the college. Under the vice presidents of different divisions of The College, there are departments with directors or deans in place. The Counseling Services Department of The College lies within the Student Affairs Division, which falls under the direction of the vice president of student development. The Counseling Services Department consists of a manager of counseling and accessibility services, coordinator of counseling services, clinical staff, case manager, and administrative assistant. Because The College is a public institution, the information was easily found on the website of the college.
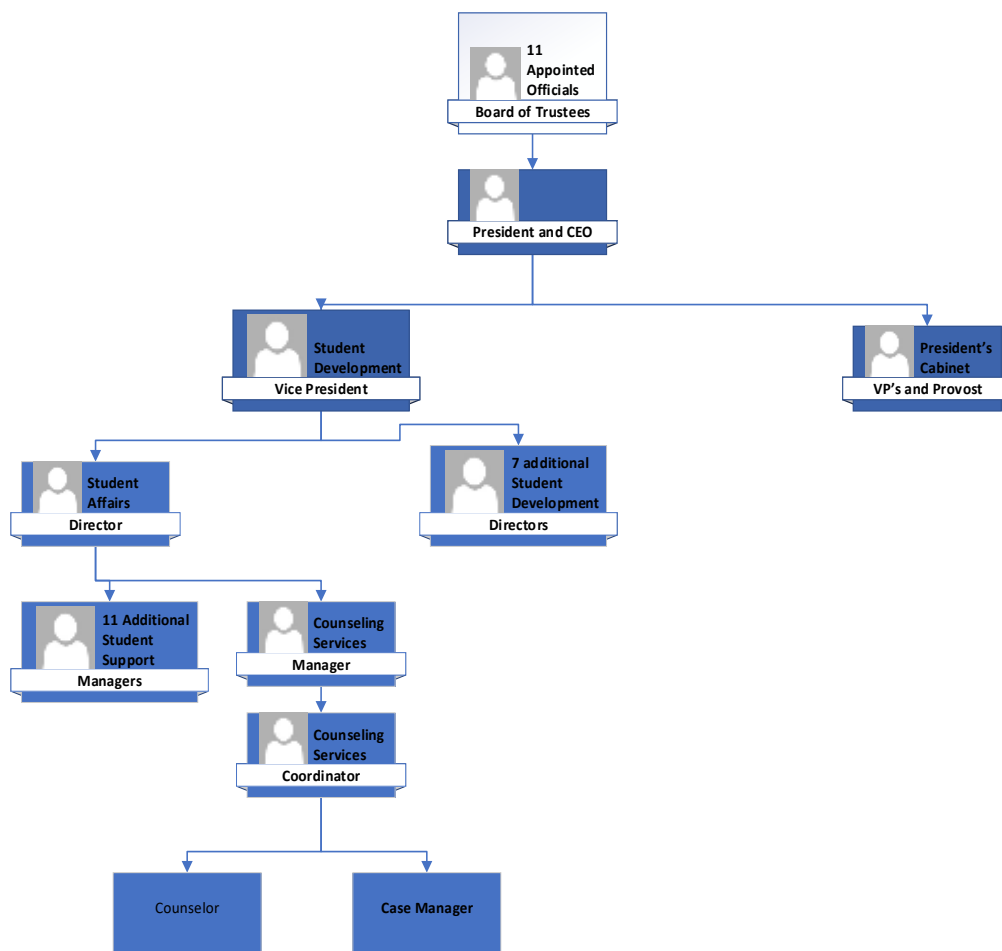
*Figure 1*. College leadership for the organization.

  The College's clients are the students of the college who are in need of behavioral health services and accommodations. The Department serves all students seeking services free of charge. In addition, the Department is part of the Student Affairs division of the organization and serves on the Behavioral Intervention Team for the organization. The Department webpage indicates that the Department offers consultation to staff and faculty and offers educational programming that is open to the public.

  The College's board meeting minutes indicate that the identified stakeholders are the businesses and other Universities that they partner with, the communities that they

serve, staff, the board of directors and partner organizations such as county board of developmental disabilities and the county board of mental health. The information is readily available in public documents and on the organization website. Although there is some insight into the practice problem with this information, it is helpful to interview leaders in the organization to ask about the stakeholders and their input in the organization concerning goals and services.

Review of the literature indicated that prevention efforts by the counseling services department is not enough, but that there needs to be a strategic plan to gain buy in from the leaders of the organization and the stakeholders of the organization that there needs to be a public health approach to mental health services on the campuses of our colleges (ACHA, 2018; Kruger, 2019). The public health approach allows the College to impact populations versus focusing on individual treatment.

**Organizational Terms**

*504 Plan*: This is an education plan utilized in public schools and refers to a person who has impairments that would substantially limit a student's activities of daily living (Disabilities Rights Education and Defense Fund, n.d.).  This plan is based on the 504 Rehabilitation Act that prohibits discrimination based on disabilities.

*Individualized Education Plan* (IEP):  These documents are utilized in conjunction with Individuals with Disabilities Education (IDEA). IDEA is utilized for children from age 3 to age 21 with an eligible disability (Disabilities Rights Education and Defense Fund, n.d.). There are 13 categories that are predetermined to make a child

eligible for educational accommodations and modification based on these categories

(Disabilities Rights Education and Defense Fund, n.d.).

*Student Support Services*: This term refers to all services provided to the student

whether the service is academic or personal in nature. The counseling service department

falls under the Student Affairs department, which includes all services that are not

directly related to academic services. Student support services are services provided by

the college to support the student's needs to assist in retention and completion (Arnold,

2018).

*The American Disabilities Act* (ADA):  This is a law that was enacted to prohibit

discrimination based solely on disability in employment, public services, and

accommodations (Disabilities Rights Education and Defense Fund, n.d.)


**Assets**

According to a review the College's budget and analysis documents The

College's financial records net position ending in fiscal year 2017 was 135.0 million. The

organization's primary asset is the real estate that it owns in three separate locations in

their northern region. The offices utilized for the function of counseling services is

maintained within the organization and is offered to the program free of charge. The state

in which the organization is established executes fiscal accountability for all public

higher education institutions pursuant to a senate house bill passed over two decades ago.

The State Department of Higher Education utilizes a ratio formula using 3 factors to

include viability, net income and primary reserve to create a composite score for each

public college or university in the state. The college has averaged an overall score of 4.6 since inception, with a maximum score of 5.0. The organization scores above the average as compared to other public higher education institutions in the state. According to State records on public institutions of higher learning, The College has established a history of not taking on debt, but to instead save and pay as they go. According to the College's website, Student Services account for 11% of the operating expenses of the college, and counseling services operate within this division of the college.

All colleges and university employees are held to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) that limits communication concerning the student's education record to third parties with exception concerning health and safety of the student or others (The Jed Foundation, 2014). In addition, the counseling services department must also adhere to Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines (The Jed Foundation, 2014).

The information presented on assets was readily available because the organization is a public institution. The information concerning regulatory requirements was found using the College's website and pages on the website specifically discussing HIPAA and FERPA. and resources on that site. Specifics concerning additional regulations and assets with more information need to come from the organization to specifically discuss further mandates that the program adheres to as well as specific budgets for the program of this study.

**Competitive Environment**

The College is a medium to large non for profit, state funded community college located in the Midwest. The counseling services department, which is the focus of this study provides two counselors for mental health needs of their students in conjunction with a case manager and education and outreach services on campus. There are numerous community colleges offering 2-year degrees within the region of the college. The counseling services department of the College offers free counseling services to all students attending the college free of charge. The counseling services department does not offer diagnosis services but provides referrals and has an agreement with a local 4-year university that offers psychosocial evaluations at a reduced charge.

The College's counseling services department complies with the state law that requires all institutions within the state to develop, implement and post online a policy to advise students and staff of suicide prevention programs on and off campus. The Department offers Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) Gatekeeper suicide prevention training to staff, faculty and students to educate the organization's population on recognizing and intervening and referring at risk individuals. The College serves the third largest population of community college students in the state and continue to offer professional development opportunities to keep their staff up to date on treatment skills and issues facing their population.

Strong collaboration with stakeholders, community resources, and other local universities appears to serve the College well; however, with continued increases in demand and an increase in suicide among the population 18-34 the quality of

programming has never been more important. The Department continues to strategize on meeting the needs of the students and relies on their core competencies of quality informed and educated service through their licensed professionals within the department.

Although the counseling services department of the College is not competitive in the nature of its business, it is important to consider that students are seeking colleges and universities that can meet their personal needs as students seeking higher education. The State Department of Education website indicates that it makes funding decisions based upon completion and success rates of the students. O'Keeffe (2013) discusses that 4.7 percent of students drop out every year due to mental illness. Having enough supports in place to facilitate staying and completing higher education degrees and certificates has become a paramount concern for colleges and universities.

## Summary and Transition

The College is a public, not-for-profit institution of higher education in the Midwest, that strives to increase completion rates and meet the needs of the communities that it serves. The Counseling Services department is part of the student support services provided under the umbrellas of Student Affairs. Leadership of the counseling services department to set goals that align with the organization's targeted outcomes is the practice problem of this case study. The organizational profile reveals that the organization is a bureaucratic organization with many layers of executive leadership to lead the organization. The organizational profile revealed that further study of the department was needed to ascertain vision for the Counseling Services Department.

Study of leadership, strategies, and clients further assisted in the case study of the counseling services department within the College.

Section 2 discusses the background through review of existing literature. Additionally, Section 2 addresses the approach of the study, the role of the researcher, and the strategy of the assessment. Section 2 gives the reader a clearer picture of the College and the Department of Study as well as the purpose of the study.

Section 2: Background and Approach–Leadership Strategy and Assessment

**Overview**

Understanding leadership strategies and approach requires assessment (Kruger, 2019). Assessment assists in understanding how The College leadership strategy and approach is related to the practice problem. The Counseling Services Department of The College was the focus of this study. College counseling centers across the nation are facing the challenge of an increased demand for services coupled with more intensive behavioral health needs of the population that they serve (Kruger, 2019). Community colleges, such as The College, face increased demands in addition to crisis counseling and case management (Brunner et al., 2014). The College Department must also provide education, outreach, and prevention services for their student population (see Much, Wagener, & Hellenbrand, 2009).

In this case study, I explored how behavioral health leaders assess the needs of their student population and set goals that align with the targeted outcomes of the organization. The National Council on Disability (2018) argued that colleges must enhance access to services, increase training for faculty and staff, and reform policies. As the need for services grows larger, and the intensity of these needs increase, leadership continues to set their sights on outcomes for the college and the community that they serve. In Section 2, I review the supporting literature and discuss the sources of evidence, leadership strategy and assessment, clients and population served, and analytical strategy of the case study.

**Supporting Literature**

Psych Info, Google Scholar, Academic Info, Ebsco, the APA resources, ACA resources, and the National College Counselor's Association resources were all used in the search for scholarly and peer-reviewed research concerning the practice problem. In addition, texts from previous graduate level courses were used for theory and reference.

Key search terms used in the search for literature were *leadership, goals, outcomes, college counseling leadership, alignment of goals,* and *behavioral health goals and outcomes*. The search for supporting literature began broad and was focused toward leadership and outcomes, but further research was needed to understand the specific focus of leadership for college counseling services on college campuses. The American Counseling Association and the National College Counseling Association website provided the most links to applicable research for the practice problem.

Literature concerning leadership setting goals that align with the targeted outcomes is considerable. Literature on leadership goal setting and alignment with targeted outcomes addresses the need for strategic planning or action planning that allows the organization or program to improve care or outcomes through an integrative approach that assists in recognizing service needs and areas of gaps in services (Bryson, 2011; Vachon et al., 2015). Previous researchers indicated that leadership influences the outcomes of program goals through their influence on providers and their attitudes toward the work that they are performing (Green, Albanese, Cafri, & Aarons, 2013). Glisson, Williams, Hemmelgarn, Proctor, & Green (2016) posited that organizational priorities should align with the targeted outcome of the population being served. The

goals for college counseling centers can often be blurred due to competing demands to meet the outcomes of academic success. As a result of this competition with the academic units on campus, there are little to no resources available to meet the growing mental health needs of the students seeking services (Francis & Horn, 2017; Shankar & Ip, 2018).

Bourdon et al. (2018) posited that understanding which mental health concerns predict on campus service use assists college leadership in understanding how the college services can address the needs of their students. College counseling service leaders must understand how data tracking of student service use assists in making strategic decisions in services provided to meet those needs (Bourdon et al., 2018).

A review of the organizational strategic initiative and the strategic planning of the Department within revealed much about how The College has set many strategic priorities for the organization. Strategic initiatives for the organization include alignment with community needs, equity, and growth. Review of The College's website revealed that the strategic initiative of alignment is to meet the social needs of the region and the economy. Growth is defined by an increase in the number of students being served by The College across all services. Equity is defined by The College as the staff, faculty, and student body reflecting the diverse community that it serves.

A review of the public website of The College revealed that The College provides a mission statement that discusses finding the needs of the community and the student population and meeting that need. The vision is not clearly defined; however, The College sets out the three strategic initiatives of the organization to define its objective

and to guide the work of the institution. Bryson (2011) stated that the vision of the organization is the description of what it envisions the ideal potential of the operation to be. While vision statements are rarely well defined, the organization with a clear vision is likely to be higher performing because it has a guide that the members can use to understand the expectations and outcomes (Bryson, 2011).

The Student Affairs Division of The College sets goals for the student support services division with input from leaders of each department. The Counseling Services Department of The College lies within the Student Affairs Division. Initial research of the Student Affairs Division of The College revealed a mission statement that was set forth by a slogan for the department. The Student Affairs brochure outlines the slogan CARES, which stands for Code of Conduct, Advocacy, Responding to Needs, Education on Suicide Prevention, and Sexual Violence Prevention and Response. The Department mission is to meet the student where they are and to assist them in taking steps to improve their lives.

A review of Counseling Services and Student Affairs departmental documents revealed that the Department and the Division do not have vision statements on their public website. The services provided indicate that the vision is inferred to meet the slogan of CARE as previously defined. Bryson (2011) suggested that widely circulated mission and vision statements assist members of the organization to have a clear picture of expectation and targeted outcomes. Another source of information about the organization was a short interview with the counseling department manager, who indicated that competencies have not been outlined for the department. Further

investigation of internal documentation revealed that the counseling department was reestablished as a mental health counseling department in the last 10 years. More information concerning the changes to the counseling department required further investigation.

A key finding about leadership was the depth of the leadership in the organization. The College is governed by a board and many layers of leadership. The leadership structure revealed that multiple layers of leadership between the top strategy makers and the clinicians who provide service may provide barriers to understanding the needs of those being served. Leadership knowledge about the needs of the population seeking services from the college counseling department needs further study. This was further discussed with the leaders interviewed. Understanding how information concerning the behavioral health needs of the population is being communicated to the leaders of The College needed further review and investigation.

## Sources of Evidence

The initial sources of evidence came from multiple sources. Public access to The College's website provided historical and public information concerning The College and Department. Further sources of evidence for review included The College's board meeting minutes and resolution documents, intra-net updates and "Buzz News" for the organization, organizational structure and governance documents , policies and procedure documents, employee handbook, and the division and department annual and quarterly strategic plan. Additional sources of evidence were review of departmental meeting notes, leadership strategic planning, review of the strategic plan and updates,

review of satisfaction surveys, review of policy and procedure, and semistructured interviews with leaders of the organization, division, and department.

Collection of data and a review of documentation provided evidence to support the practice problem. Qualitative data assisted me to understand how leadership of the organization strategizes and implements that strategy through setting goals that produce targeted outcomes. Semistructured interviews were coded to reveal themes that assisted me in the triangulation of data. Qualitative methodology allowed the data to be reviewed through the lens of the organization being studied. The Baldrige excellence framework was the guiding framework and provided the blueprint for the study.

### Leadership Strategy and Assessment

The College is a public institution of higher learning and is governed by the state Board of Education and an appointed Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees consists of 11 members who have governance authority over the entire operations of the college. The president and chief executive officer of the college has day-to-day operational authority as appointed by the Board of Trustees. The president has a cabinet consisting of the provost/chief academic officer, two associate provosts, senior vice president/ chief financial officer and senior vice president (VP) of the southern regional campus, four VPs, and senior advisor to the president/chief diversity officer. Under the VP of different divisions of the college, there are departments with directors or deans in place. The Counseling Services Department of The College lies within the Student Affairs Division, which falls under the direction of the VP of student development. The Counseling Services Department consists of manager of counseling and accessibility services,

coordinator of counseling services, clinical staff, case manager, and administrative assistant.

The College is a public institution; therefore, the information was easily found on the website of The College. The organizational intranet allowed me to use the college wide directory and organizational internal updates and news. The College is a bureaucratic organization with multiple layers of hierarchy in place within the organization and within the department. Researchers have suggested that perceived red tape within bureaucratic organizations may affect commitment to change within the organization despite high change leadership behavior (van der Voet, 2015).

The College's societal obligations are to provide affordable and accessible higher education with student support services in the student affairs division, as well as engaging the community that it serves through the student and community engagement department to assist in obtaining that goal. The Department lies within the Student Affairs division of the organization and provides free counseling services to students enrolled at that organization. In addition, the Department offers educational services, prevention services, and advocacy in support of students, staff and faculty. The Department is actively engaged in wellness fairs, student engagement fairs, welcome week activities, and other student prevention and promotional activities on the college campus and are invited to engage in public events that support the goal of reducing stigma related to mental illness. The College is actively involved in the community and in response to recent tornado disasters in the surrounding community, the organization has vowed to commit time, staff, and financial support to respond to the community's needs for at least 100 days. The

College's website indicates that the organizational mission is to find a need and to meet that need, whether it be within the organization or in the community that it serves. The College's commitment to this mission is defined through the outreach that it provides to the region and through the College's commitment to add regional services to communities outside of the main campus through providing regional campuses in 4 additional locations and through online learning.

The College's governance gives insight into the practice problem through the understanding of how the organization is structured and how strategic initiatives are determined within the organization. The College's Board of Trustees meets quarterly and maintains governance authority over the entire operations of the College. The board members are made up of local leaders from the region and are appointed to five-year terms.  The board of trustees gives day to day governance authority to the President of the College.

## Clients/Population Served

The population served by the organization is the community of the region served by the college. All information about the population served was derived from the public website of the College. The Department serves the students of the college, but also serves the community, the faculty and the staff of the college to educate, increase awareness, and to reduce stigma surrounding the issues of mental health. Colleges and universities are urged to provide awareness and prevention services to the student population in response to increased suicides among the college population. The College's State Revised Code includes language that requires colleges and universities to implement prevention

programming, provide information, and outreach plans. In addition, the Jed Foundation (n.d.) discusses best practices for college counseling centers and discusses the need for more case management and increased outreach efforts to decrease the number of crisis assessments needed. In addition, the Jed Foundation (n.d.) discussed the increased need to be aware of litigation risks in response to suicide among college students.

The College serves a metropolitan area of the Midwest made up of a diverse population. According to the College's website, the College had 28,552 students enrolled in the 2017-2018 enrollment period. The Department serves any currently enrolled student. Faculty or staff seeking educational services such as information on specific mental health issues are also served through the department. The department offers prevention services to the entire organization population as well as educational services to the surrounding community. The College has been in existence for 132 years. The College's onboarding orientation pamphlet discusses the history of the college and indicates that the College was a private college until 1966 and became a community college at that time to better serve the community with educational needs.

The Counseling Service Department engages students through wellness and prevention fairs as well as through marketing to current students through the organization's intranet, prevention and educational efforts through organizational presentations, and services that include support groups and individual counseling. The Counseling Services department is a service of the Student Affairs department and works in collaboration with other organizational departments to ensure continuity of care. Information from the public website concerning the Counseling Services Department and

the Behavioral Intervention Team of the organization revealed that the Counseling Service Department staff serves as members of the Behavioral Intervention Team and collaborates with faculty and staff of all organizational departments to assist in supporting the students in their educational and personal endeavors as students of the organization. In addition, the Department provides referrals to community partners for service needs that require additional or more extensive behavioral health or social service needs. The College maintains an extensive list of community partners and resources to assist the student in finding the right resources for their current needs.

## Analytical Strategy

Data collected for the purpose of this study consisted of organizational documentation, which included The College's strategic plan, organizational governance data, Board of Trustees meeting minutes, employee handbook, organizational website, divisional and departmental goals and projected outcomes, leadership meeting notes, departmental meeting notes, satisfaction surveys, organizational and departmental communication, and semistructured interviews with organizational and departmental leadership.

A review of the data informed the study to determine organizational structure, policy, strategy, and governance. Additionally, departmental information assists in determining departmental goals, customer satisfaction, and strategy to meet targeted outcomes. Semistructured interviews were used to inform the study by employing questions about the practice problem. The semistructured interviews consisted of specific questions to gain insight into the practice problem with plans to ask follow-up questions.

Leaders identified to participate in the study were sent a consent form describing the

study and the rights of the participant to participate. Consent was requested via email, and

once consent was received, a request for an interview was sent to the potential

participant. The questions were sent to leaders within The College who agreed to

participate in the study.

## Role of the Researcher

Qualitative research requires the researcher to be involved at every level of the

research process. This case study was a qualitative study that included semistructured

interviews to obtain data from the participants of the study. The researcher must define

the practice problem and choose a framework with which to work to guide the study

(Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Khoshnava Fomari, Shogni, & Ali Cheraghi, 2014). The

Baldrige excellence framework provided a holistic framework for me to systematically

review the organization under study.

For this study, the organization chosen was the organization where I work. Ethical

consideration is paramount to ensure that bias does not skew the results of the study

(Sanjari et al., 2014). A researcher must define their role in the study concisely and

accurately. For this study, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was sought from

Walden University and from The College. Through the IRB process, I supplied The

College with a tentative set of questions that would be asked and defined participants of

the study as leadership of the organization. In addition, I defined organizational

documents to be reviewed to include internal and public documents concerning strategic

planning, human resources, employee benefits, public documents, and any internal and public documents pertaining to the Counseling Services Department.

Chaenail (2011) notes that qualitative studies require that the researcher become the instrument by which the data are collected. In this case study, I used semistructured interviews that consist of study specific open-ended questions. Open ended questions allow the interviewee to contribute their own perspective to allow for discovery concerning the practice problem (Chaenail, 2011; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008; Rubin & Rubin, 2006).

Through the interview process, I ensured accuracy of documentation of the participant response through recording the interviews with the Trint app and through transcription from this same app. Once the transcription was completed, transcripts were reviewed for inaccuracies, and member checking with the interviewee was completed. Member checking allows the researcher to validate data collected for accuracy with the original respondent (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016).

Prior to submitting to the IRB, I discussed the proposed study with the student affairs director and the counseling services manager. A practice problem was agreed upon during this meeting. To maintain ethical standards for the study, I submitted to the IRB committee of Walden University and The College once I received conditional approval from Walden University. Upon receipt of IRB approval from both organizations, I sent consent forms to all identified participants for interviews. Additionally, I reiterated that the interviewee and the organization would retain confidentiality and anonymity in the writing of the study. Once I received acceptance

from the participants, interviews were scheduled, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, and they were informed of their right to review transcripts of their interviews.

Block (2011) discussed the need to build rapport and trust in the consulting relationship. This study allowed me to take on the role of researcher and consultant for the organization of the study. My affilaition with The College creates a built-in relationship as the researcher; however, the interview process has allowed me to build additional trust in the role of researcher and not employee. Furthermore, great care was taken to avoid any conflicts of interest; no subordinates or staff who work for me were interviewed.. Consequently, my role as a mental health counselor assisted me in understanding the crucial aspect of building rapport to allow for the interviewee to trust and be less reserved in the way that they discussed their perspective of the organization.

**Interview Questions**

1. How do senior leaders set the organization's vision and values and how are the values and visions communicated to the stakeholders, staff, and community?

2. How does leadership create a plan of action to identify needs and setting expectations for the department and how do you consider the student and societal well-being and benefit as part of the strategy and daily operations?

3. How does the organization review and achieve accountability for strategic plans and fiscal accountability and who are the key participants in strategic planning?

4. How do you track data and information on daily operations and overall performance and how do you track progress on meeting strategic objectives?

5. How is client satisfaction and needs measured, and how does the organization use this information for opportunity for innovation and possible transformational change?

6. What key performance indicators (KPI) are used to control and improve work processes?

7. How do KPIs address targeted outcomes of the program?

8. How is communication and operational process deployed to the workforce and how is performance evaluation used to improve effectiveness and efficiency?

9. What processes are in place for workforce learning and are there processes in place for leadership development to encourage promotion?

10. What additional information would you like to share about how your organization strategizes to create goals that meet the targeted outcomes of the organization?

**Analysis of Data**

A review of documents provided me with qualitative data on the completeness of strategy, vision, mission, competencies, goals, and objectives. Additionally, organizational data assisted me in understanding the satisfaction of services provided and the extent of services being provided by the Counseling Services Department within the organization. The review of data assisted me in determining if the departmental goals aligned with the organizational targeted outcomes.

Interviews with The College leadership informed the research in determining themes through the coding process. Semistructured interviews were transcribed and coded. Following coding, themes were determined and informed me in relation to the

practice problem. Data collection and analysis are synchronous in qualitative data. With each review of document and interview completed, analysis was completed (see Chaenail, 2011; Kvale, & Brinkmann, 2008; Rubin & Rubin, 2006). Notes of observations within documents were documented, notes of observations and themes in interviews were noted, and coding began with each.

**Participants**

Participants for interviews were selected based upon their relationship to the Counseling Services Department within The College and their role within the organization. The participants of the study were the director of student affairs, the manager of counseling services, the coordinator of counseling services, and the senior VP of The College. The director of student affairs was chosen as a participant due to his leadership role concerning all of the Student Affairs services within the organization. The student affairs director meets with senior leadership within the organization and reports directly to the senior VP of the organization. The director of student affairs meets directly with the manager of the department to provide leadership and strategic planning of the department. The manager of the department was chosen as a participant due to her direct leadership of the department being studied. The manager of the counseling services department provides the strategic direction to all counseling services staff. The counseling services coordinator was chosen as a participant due to his working knowledge of the department as well as his coordination of all counseling services functions. The senior VP of The College was chosen as a participant in the study due to strategic planning and direct reports. The senior VP provided organizational knowledge

of governance that is critical to understanding the organizational strategy, initiatives, and funding decisions. Additionally, the senior VP is a direct appoint and reports to the president of the organization.

All participants were chosen based on their leadership positions within The College as well as their education and knowledge concerning the organization and the Counseling Services Department. All of these leaders had experience within the organization and were professionals with knowledge about the organizational structure, mission, and strategic plan for the organization.

**Procedures**

Qualitative research methods were utilized for this case study. Qualitative methods were appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to gain the perspective of those within the organization to study the practice problem. Interviews were conducted using the Baldrige excellence framework as a guide. The Baldrige framework provides guidelines for specific questions that allow for the systematic review of the organization. Data collection from documents includes review of the public website, review of board of trustee meeting notes, review of the strategic plan, review of employee benefits and policy handbooks, review of departmental meeting notes, review of "buzz news updates", and review of divisional strategic initiatives and assessment. The review of data collected consisted of coding, separating into themes and categorizing those themes to make sense of the data. Once a researcher reaches saturation of data, meaning that they are seeing a pattern in the data that is being reviewed, or they have exhausted all data sources. Fusch and Ness (2015) posit that saturation is also met when

no further coding is needed and that failure to reach saturation is problematic for validity of data. Document review was ongoing and requests from leadership for further documents continued throughout the study. Documents for review were board of trustee meeting minutes, board of trustee news articles, review of the organizational public website, review of strategic plan and initiatives, review of human resource policy, review of budget documents, review of client satisfaction, and any other documents that become pertinent to the case study exploration. In addition, interviews with leadership of the College that relates to the Counseling Services Department were completed. Semi-structured interviews were scheduled with executive leaders of the College. Interviews were conducted as the leaders agreed to meet with the researcher.

Coding of documents under review were completed on an ongoing basis throughout the review stage of the case study. Once all initial coding was completed, the researcher identified categories and patterns of the codes. Once these categories were completed, the researcher recoded to ensure that important data or linkages in the data were not missed. Once coding and categorization was complete, data analysis and triangulation of the data was needed to present results that are reliable and valid. Following coding completion, the researcher must interpret the data to make sense of the data that has been uncovered throughout the research process (Silverman, 2006). This approach allowed me as the researcher to gain understanding by exploring the practice problem within a specific organization and department. Utilizing leadership interviews in the process of exploration allowed me to gain a leadership perspective from within the College to gain insight into how the organization approaches the practice problem.

Validity refers to the integrity of the methods utilized in research and the accuracy of the findings and their reflection of the data (Noble & Smith, 2015). Precision to ensure that data is reflected accurately in qualitative research requires that the researcher accurately notes observations, interviews and review of data. In this study, interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim during the interview through the TRINT app. Observations during interviews were noted at the time of the interview to ensure that they were accurately recorded, and member checking was utilized to ensure that the interviewee's perceptions have been accurately recorded.

Reliability describes consistency within the procedures utilized for collection of data. In this case study, interviews with leadership consist of the same semi-structured interviews and follow-up questions are utilized for clarification of information obtained. In addition, all interviews were recorded in the same manner with the TRINT app to maintain consistency of procedures

**Summary and Transition**

Assessment of leadership strategies assists in understanding how the strategies and approaches of leadership in the Counseling Services department of the College is related to the practice problem. Leadership setting goals that are aligned with the targeted outcomes of the organization is the practice problem. Literature review of leadership strategy to set goals that align with the outcomes of the organization assists in understanding the importance of goal setting and understanding the needs of the population that is being served by the organization. The College provides services to a diverse population in the Midwest seeking services for behavioral health while attending

college. This specific population provides a unique and growing need for behavioral health services. The increase of 6 percent of students seeking services for psychiatric disabilities in United States college from 2006 to 2018 demands that colleges find innovative ways to meet the needs of this increasing population (McEwan & Downie, 2018). The data collection from documents and interviews of leadership within the organization informed the study to provide information about how the organization assesses and strategizes to meet the needs of the population being served. Section 3 discusses the measurement, analysis and knowledge management components of the organization. Specifically, Section 3 covers the College's workforce environment and workforce engagement. Section 3 further discusses the measurement and analysis of services provided by the Section 3 provides insight into the leadership management of the College and the Department operations.

Section 3: Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management Components of the

Organization

In this study, I investigated what strategies behavioral health leaders use to assess the needs of the population being served and how leaders set goals that align with the targeted outcomes of the organization. Specifically, in this case study, I focused on the Counseling Service Department of a community college in the Midwest. The College serves a diverse population of students amid the high demands of an increasing population that presents with mental health concerns and increased severity of problems. Leadership of college counseling centers are tasked with analyzing trends and strategizing to meet the needs of the population whom they are serving. I explored strategies used by leadership in order to meet the increased demand for services, while also improving the quality of the services provided.

ACHA (2018) survey indicated that 87.4% of the students surveyed felt overwhelmed by the responsibilities of college. Not only do students feel overwhelmed but there is also increased demand on college counseling employees to do more with less (Kruger, 2019; Barr, Rando, Krylowicz, & Winfield, 2010). With more students coming in for services, more demands to educate and complete prevention planning for suicide, and an epidemic of opioid abuse, college counseling centers must strategically plan to meet the increased needs. In this case study, I explored seven categories related to organizational effectiveness: leadership, strategic planning, customer focus, workforce focus, and operations focus, using the Baldrige excellence framework as a blueprint for the study.

In Section 3, I discuss the workforce, operations, measurement, analysis, and knowledge management components of the organization and their relation to the practice problem of this study. Sources of evidence used in the study were semistructured interviews with leadership of The College, internal documents concerning assessment of the department, Board of Trustee meeting minutes, Student Affairs strategic plan and quarterly reports, employee handbooks, internal memos, and the organization's webpage.

## Analysis of the Organization

### Workforce Environment

The College is a public institution of higher learning, which, according to the 2018-2019 Employee Handbook, provides a comprehensive benefit plan to all professional full-time staff. Benefits include bi-weekly earnings of sick and vacation leave as well as medical, dental, and vision insurance plans. Employees, both full and part-time, are part of the state public retirement system with an employer match. The College offers free tuition to staff and their dependents for courses at the college and tuition reimbursement for employees seeking additional education that cannot be obtained through The College. Tuition reimbursement has recently been reconsidered, and The College will reimburse up to $5,000 per fiscal year to employees furthering their education. Employees must submit an application to begin their studies that will be reimbursed and address how the education will assist the employee in their endeavors for organization. Professional development is encouraged, and staff are given opportunities to engage in professional development and conferences. The College's employee benefit

guide describes minisabbaticals to attend multiple day conferences that will take the employee away from their day-to-day operations.

The Counseling Services Department of The College maintains a licensed staff for counseling services. Counselors must be licensed through the State Counselor, Social Worker, and Marriage and Family Therapist board and must maintain the license to retain employment in the capacity of a counseling position. This requirement ensures that the professional staff is receiving up-to-date training and maintaining ethical standards set forth by the licensing board. In addition, professional staff within the Counseling Services Department must have a master's level degree in Counseling or Social Work.

The information about the organization's workforce environment was found within the Human Resources intranet page of the organization as well as within the employee benefits guide of the organization and in board meeting minutes. The College is committed to supporting employees at the organization to maintain professional standards and support growth within the workforce. Interviews with leadership of The College provided information about the hiring process and obstacles to hiring more staff. A review of new position request forms was completed to determine the process and information needed to hire new positions within the Department of The College. Each department has a hierarchy of budget managers to ensure that the department is fiscally responsible with budget allocation. With this process, it is often difficult to find additional money that is not already earmarked and/or in use.

A review of 2019 fiscal records indicated that budget allocations constrain the Department from being able to increase licensed staff as well as meet the needs of a

better data tracking system. A review of additional staff request forms indicated that the

current budget must be reallocated to allow for the new positions being requested.

Meaningful data that indicate the need for additional staff are needed as a basis for the

request. Investing in student mental health assists in meeting the targeted outcomes of

college, such as decreased dropout rates, closing the academic gap for students with

mental health concerns, and a safer campus (Lipson et al., 2019).  Students with mental

health issues are twice as likely to drop out from college or to have discontinuous

enrollment due to mental health concerns that present as barriers to educational success

(Lipson et al., 2019).

Key performance indicators are ways for organizations to understand

effectiveness and efficiency (Haber & Schryver, 2019). There is little research

concerning college key performance indicators for college counseling centers. Research

has been conducted to determine the most common KPIs used among colleges; however,

there is an acute lack of research specific to KPIs for college counseling centers in the

literature. Interviews with leadership of The College and the Department were used to

explore KPIs and their use within the organization to improve performance.

**Workforce Engagement**

Schneider, Yost, Kropp, Kind, and Lam (2018) posited that evidence of

workforce engagement is seen when there are employees "working hard, putting in effort

and staying involved" (p. 462). Being engaged in the workforce requires effort from both

the employee and the organization. The College shows evidence of engaging the

workforce by forming committees to resolve issues, holding annual recognition events for employees, and inviting employees to complete satisfaction surveys every 3 years.

The College provides an employee survey every 3 years facilitated by an outside agency. Student workers are not included in this process; however, all full and part-time employees are invited to complete the survey. A review of internal documents to include emails, board meeting minutes, and Human Resource information was conducted to understand the process and results of the surveys.

The College offers professional development for all full-time employees of the organization. The organization recognizes the need for continuous growth among the students they serve as well as the staff that they employ. The College has several programs available to enhance and promote growth through the Center for Teaching and Learning, tuition reimbursement, free tuition for full time staff and their dependents at the organization, as well as grants available to attend conferences. Two days of professional development are available for all full-time staff each calendar year. In addition, The College promotes professional engagement through encouraging employees to join professional organizations that coincide with their profession and attend conferences that allow the employee to stay current on issues related to their perspective profession.

The organization's website, Board of Trustee meeting minutes, and employee handbook was reviewed to gain further information concerning specifics about the employee climate to assist in outlining The College's engagement of the workforce. Workforce engagement appears to be a relative strength for The College and does not appear to be directly linked to the practice problem.

**Organizational Operations**

The College is a not-for-profit state funded community college in the Midwest. The focus of this study was on the Counseling Services Department of The College. The Department provides free counseling services to all college students who are referred or who self-refer. The Department does not provide diagnosis or psychiatric services to their clients. The counselors do provide crisis counseling, brief intervention for personal and academic problems, and referral to community resources. In addition, the department provides educational services concerning mental health and educational stressors to students, staff, and faculty.

The Counseling Services Department website reveals that the counseling staff provide QPR Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention training to staff, students, and faculty. The QPR Institute website indicates that a gatekeeper is someone in a position to recognize a crisis and the warning signs that someone is contemplating suicide (QPR Institute, n.d.). Gatekeeper training provides education and training to the lay person to recognize warning signs of suicide, learn how to offer hope, and learn how to get help (QPR Institute, n.d.).

The state-revised code in which The College resides indicates that institutions of higher education must develop, implement, and post online a policy to advise students and staff of suicide prevention programs. This law also requires that the program must provide information that includes crisis intervention access, information concerning suicide prevention hotlines, access to mental health programs, and student intervention and outreach plans (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Public Policy Office ,

2016). The College is providing the QPR gatekeeper training as part of this outreach effort. The College has also created an app that all students can access that assists in finding mental health and crisis assistance called the Hope Link. The call for action of suicide prevention stems from the increase in suicide rates across the United States. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (n.d.) reported that the national average for suicide increased 24% from 1999 to 2014, and the state in which The College is situated had an increase of 36% from 1999 to 2016 according to state council of mental health and family services records.

In addition to suicide prevention, the Counseling Services Department must apply to the state Mental Health and Addiction Services to provide mental health and addiction services. The State Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services has statutory and regulatory authority over providers of mental health services to consumers. Further oversight for licensed professional counselors and social workers comes from the State Board of Counselor, Social Worker, and Marriage and Family Therapists. The Board was created in 1984 with the primary responsibility to protect the citizens of the state through licensure of counselors and social workers. For the sake of keeping the exact state of the College masked, citation of the Board website is not being made. The Board establishes licenses and practice standards for the professional practice of counseling and social work. Licenses must be renewed every 2 years and requires that each renewal applicant completes 30 continuing education hours to include 3 hours of ethics and 3 hours of supervision if the supervisor designation is indicated on the license.

Student Affairs of the College completes strategic planning annually. This process facilitates leadership understanding of whether the College is meeting best practices for Student Affairs. The Department of the College is reviewing cases to identify common symptoms for students seeking counseling services. The Counseling Department started a support group for substance abuse in response to trends identified in student's seeking services. In addition, the Counseling Services Department provides organizational talks and trainings to reduce stigma and encourage students to self-refer and to assist staff and faculty in their knowledge of referrals. Interviews with leadership assisted in understanding how these activities in quality control and strategic planning are utilized to improve services and meet the demands of the student population and community.

**Management of Operations**

The College is making strides to assess operations to meet the needs of the students and community that they serve but acknowledge that they have just begun the process of assessment. The strategic plan for the Student Affairs Division identifies assessment measures as a strategic initiative for the calendar year. Interviews and review of organizational data in this study assisted in determining whether these measures are adequate and whether there are key performance indicators being utilized, and how that data is being stored and utilized.

Presently, the College utilizes Student Success Plan: Intervention and Case Management Software. The software was designed to provide a way to provide holistic case management services to the student across the college; however, the system is not clinically based and does not provide tracking systems that would allow the Counseling

Services Department to track trends, appointments, and progress. In addition, there are character limits for fill in boxes that limits the effectiveness of the electronic database. Interviews with Counseling Service Department leadership explore how appointments are tracked and how case management processes are determined. Organizational operations are directly related to the practice problem in identifying goals to meet the targeted outcomes of the organization. Assessment is crucial to identifying goals that produce the outcomes for the student, staff, and the organization.

Supervision of employees and management of operations was discussed in leadership interviews with the College Counseling Services leaders. Review of the hierarchy of the organization assisted in determining how information is disseminated within the College.  Leadership interviews benefited this researcher in determining accountabilities as well as communication plans within the college. It is apparent that each person within leadership must report the activities and effectiveness of those they supervise, but it is also easy to see how the importance of the services given within the Counseling Services Department can get lost in the daily operations of such a large organization.

It is important for the Counseling Services Department leadership team to assist in educating administration on the services that are provided to students and the value of those services (Much, Wagener, & Hellenbrand, 2009). With the continued increase in need for mental health services and tragic events of violence in communities, there is an increase in awareness from public officials to find a way to meet the mental health needs of the populations that are served on college campuses. The changes in roles of college

counseling centers has led to administrators not necessarily knowing what counseling

service departments roles consist of on the college campus (Much, Wagener, and

Hellenbrand, 2009). Severity of mental health needs as well as crisis response and

substance abuse have changed the roles of counseling centers, and administrators admit

that they are struggling to meet the demands for resources that are put on their college

counseling centers (Watkins, Hunt, & Eisenberg, 2012).

## Knowledge Management

The College's Counseling Services Department leadership understands the

changes in needs on campus and cite progress toward organizational strategic initiatives

as a priority. Specifically, the organizational strategic priorities are equity, alignment, and

growth. The Department's webpage on the College's public website discusses meeting

the academic and personal mental health needs of the students that they serve to assist in

making academic success a reality. The severity of the need coupled with the stigma and

attitude of the college student may present barriers to college students of the College

receiving the mental health services that they need. Leadership interviews with the

College furnished insight into the referral process of referring students with more

significant needs to community partners.

Interviews with the College leadership promoted insight into referring services to

community agencies and the effectiveness of the practice. In addition, leadership

interviews explored barriers to services and the services that are provided in times of

crisis. The insights gained from leadership interviews advanced the process of analysis of

the Department's effectiveness and efficiency of current practices of the Department.

The Student Affairs 3rd quarter update revealed that leadership of Student Affairs Division has been assessing all Student Affairs departments over the past year. The assessment has unveiled initiatives for all departments, and thus the departments are now tasked with developing assessments for their own departments. The Counseling Services Department completes annual performance evaluations of all employees. This performance evaluation allows the individual employee to assess their performance while comparing it with the strategic initiatives and targeted outcomes of the organization. Counseling Service leadership also completes case file checking on a monthly basis to ensure quality of services and documentation. Historically, the Department has completed satisfaction surveys with their clients; however, they have not found the surveys to be fruitful and are working on new avenues to gain client satisfaction information.

Gaining the perspective of the client can be a valuable tool in assessing effectiveness of a program and the services provided. Fischer and Valley (2000) posit that systematic survey of client satisfaction can be useful in determining the benefit of services. Interviews with leadership were utilized to elicit information concerning data collection and the efficiency of that data collection. Although satisfaction surveys are purposeful, they are only one piece of data that is needed to determine needs and services. Fischer and Valley (2000) discuss the need to use this data in conjunction with counseling service outcome data and standard of care.

As discussed, standard of care is measured through regular file checking, licensure of staff, and professional development of staff ensure staff has the most up to date information in caring for the students that they serve. The College uses comparative

data by attending conferences and through their membership in The League for Innovation for Community Colleges. Review of the literature on the League for Innovation website provides numerous data on other members and their pursuit of meeting the mental health needs of their student populations. The articles and projects on the League for Innovation web page outline projects undertaken by other community colleges in the League for Innovation and how they are working toward breaking down non-academic barriers for their students through provisions of innovative services such as mental health services that increase access to care as well as reducing the stigma associated with accessing such care (Projects: The League for Innovation in the Community College, n.d.).

As the College strives to assess their programs and services in the Student Affairs Division, the Counseling Services Department is tasked with also evaluating the department to gather data useful in determining services and programming. As programs such as the Department work toward meeting the need through additional programs and services, strategically planning and design of the program or services is needed prior to proposal (Posavac, 2011). Proposal of additional, new, or increased programming needs data that can describe need, outcomes, and alignment requires data that can support the proposal (Fischer & Valley, 2000).

**Asset and Information Technology Infrastructure Management**

Bollinger and Smith (2017) posit that core competencies within an organization come from the experience and skills of their employees. Knowledge management is the way in which organizations tap into this knowledge base and expand upon it through

collaboration and sharing of information within an organization (Bollinger & Smith, 2017). The College utilizes numerous different approaches to sharing information throughout the college. The Counseling Services Department has monthly staff meetings to share information and knowledge base among members of the department. The College holds Town Hall meetings at the discretion of the President of the College to share organizational news coming directly from the President. The organizational newsletter shares news about staff, programming, and events across the college, and the Student Support Services Division of the college holds quarterly trainings for the purpose of sharing information to all staff in the division across departments. Finally, Student Affairs shares quarterly reports across all Student Affairs staff to discuss progress on strategic initiatives and to remind staff of departmental goals. Monthly supervision of Counseling Services staff serves the purpose of sharing of information, but also as a quality measure to ensure staff is supervised as per state licensure requirements and to provide feedback to supervisees. The College provides multiple pathways for sharing of information to manage knowledge assets. Bollinger and Smith (2017) discuss that knowledge management is the collective and cumulative knowledge of the organization that make the knowledge an asset. The College's leadership encourages their employees through promotion of team commitment, committee involvement, and communication. Knowledge management can create innovation and improve operational process through the transfer of knowledge to others within the organization (Bollinger and Smith, 2001).

The Department has a shared drive in which the department employees can share information among team members and to store documents that are utilized to complete

their services. The College's intranet allows employees to access organizational data and forms that are shared within the organization. The data analytics team stores data from within the organization that can be utilized to complete monthly, quarterly and annual reports. Data analytics pulls data from several databases that are utilized within the organization. Currently, the Counseling Services Department utilizes only the Student Success Plan (SSP) database. The SSP database pulls information from Colleague to create accounts within the SSP system. A review of internal documents assisted in determining the completeness of data collected through the different software programs in use at the College. Internal emails concerning SSP and data analytics show that data can be incomplete for students who are served and are not currently enrolled in courses. Although it is not a perfect system for data, SSP is currently used to complete journal notes and to capture appointments. The department utilizes an organizational appointment manager technology that allows students to schedule appointments through the organizational app or through their student portal. Interviews with leadership promoted understanding of how various software is utilized by the Counseling Services Department and how effective these programs are in conducting daily practices and functions within the department.

The barriers to health IT are upfront costs for software programs, ongoing maintenance, training and infrastructure costs associated with the upkeep of equipment to run the software programs (Wisdom, Ford, Wise, Mackey & Green, 2011). Budget allocations must go through a series of steps to determine feasibility and need. In addition, allocation of funds from within the department budget must first be explored.

Data to back up the need for the budget allocation is required be provided with the

request for additional funding.

## Asset Safety Measures

The College has a $143 million operating budget and a $15 million capital budget

approved by the Board of Trustees for fiscal year 2020. The College operates on a

balanced budget and does not incur debt for expenditures. The VP of the College's

Financial Operations is also the CFO of the organization. The CFO has full responsibility

for the financial operations provided at the College per the organization's website. The

Office of Budget and Analysis supports the VP for business operations and CFO in

effectively managing the budgetary resources of the College. The Office of Budget and

Analysis prepares long-term financial projections and provides financial analyses

including cost/benefit analysis and forecasting for internal use and external agencies. The

Office of General Accounting provides payment of non-payroll college bills, preparation

and disbursement of monthly, quarterly, and annual financial statements and reviews and

pays travel expenses. Allocated operational budget of the Department was $236,285 for

fiscal year 2019. This budget includes staff of two full time counselors and one part-time

case manager.

The Facilities Management Department of the College sustains the organization's

overall appearance value standard and maintains all building's, grounds, utilities,

equipment, and mechanical and electrical systems in a cost-effective manner to provide

an aesthetic, safe, healthy and comfortable environment for the organization's

community. The mission of the Facilities Management Department is to ensure teaching

and community service activities continue uninterrupted. The facilities Management Department works to ensure proper asset management of facilities for The College to maintain value of the property that is owned and operated by the organization.

The Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the College's Police serve the campus 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to maintain a safe environment. DPS provides a safety tip and information line as well as responds to criminal and non-criminal incidents. The DPS provides escorts to students, staff, and faculty to their vehicles to ensure safety when requested. In addition, the DPS works in conjunction with the Counseling Services Department and the Behavioral Intervention Team to assist in crisis or behavioral intervention. In addition, DPS provides Annual Safety Reports to all students, staff and faculty of the College.

The DPS has emergency procedure guides in place for active shooter, bomb threats, civil disturbance, earthquake, tornado, and other natural disasters, fire, pandemic, power outage, and train derailment/chemical spills. In the event of a power or utility outage, The College buildings are equipped with automatic standby generators that provide limited emergency lighting and power. In the event of a power outage, many of the elevators will work; however, if the call button does not light and respond to your call, then the elevator will not work. There is an elevator rescue plan on file with the Organization's Police and the Facilities Department in case of emergency or failure of facilities.

Electronic health records contain sensitive information that must be secured and held in confidence as promised in the informed consent of the practitioner (Kruse, Smith,

Vanderlinden, & Nealand, 2017). Informed consent must outline confidentiality and exceptions to maintenance of confidentiality (Furrow Greaney, Johnson, Jost, & Schwartz ,2018). Organizations such as the College that house both health information and educational information also follow federal guidelines under FERPA which requires limited access to records.

The College has an IT Cyber Attack or Power Disruption Threat Annex in place to ensure the organization has a plan in place for response. The College IT Department has extensive policies in place to prevent cyber-attacks and respond to disruptions in the IT process. The IT Policy Manual contains the College's Information Security Policy. This policy is in place to ensure an organization wide approach to information security. This includes education and training for constituents. The security policy complies with federal and state statutes and regulations regarding collection, maintenance, and security of information assets. The policy establishes and implements reasonable and effective practices for protection and security of information assets of the College. The policy outlines roles and responsibilities, key concepts and principles, safeguards to mitigate risk, auditing and monitoring of the program. The VP of each college division is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and auditable information security controls are practices within their division. Each division also appoints an information security office to partner with the IT Department's Chief Information Security Officer to develop, implement and maintain appropriate and effective information security practices.

All of the College computing devices have up to date virus protection and automatically monitor to ensure protections are up to date. The IT Department tests all of

their disaster recovery systems at specified intervals and each department has its own

Business Continuity Plan that outlines how the department will continue operations if the

main IT infrastructure is unavailable. The IT Department is in a secure area and access is

only available via a token. The server area requires two types of authentication and logs

are kept for everyone entering these restricted areas of the College. Servers are protected

by dual power inputs into each unit in the event one power system fails and the IT

Department is protected by dual emergency generators that are dedicated to the

department.

The College's Counseling Service Department adheres to HIPAA, FERPA, and

the Confidentiality of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Patient Records, 42 CFR Part 2 laws to

maintain confidentiality of all records. Records are housed electronically in SSP and

PHIN on Colleague. Access to records marked under counseling or Personal Health

Information (PHIN) in Colleague is limited to Counseling staff and administrators.

Informed consent is reviewed and signed with all clients. Additionally, parent/guardian

consent for treatment of a minor under 18 is signed for any client who is under 18 years

of age. The informed consent for a minor does inform the parent that a minor 14 and

older can seek treatment for 6 sessions without the consent of parent which is allowable

under the College's State's Revised Code.

The College has put many security measures in place for protection and safety of

the public that they serve. The College has a strong IT department in place to handle

threats from outside of the organization. It is noted that although there are safety guards

in place for counselor and accessibility records for confidentiality purposes, there are

some administrative staff that have access to files. The Counseling Services Department is continually striving to find a more secure system that will hold electronic information that will meet the needs of the staff and protect the clients that they serve. More advocacy is needed to secure a system for the Counseling Services Department that will only be used for that purpose. The lack of clinical software that focuses on the need and purpose of the Counseling Service Department is related to the practice problem because Counseling Service Department staff are utilizing a system that was not intended for clinical staff utilization. Interviews with the Counseling Services Manager and Coordinator advance this researcher's understanding of how lack of clinical electronic programs effects the way data is kept and tracked.

## Summary and Transition

Section 3 discussed the workforce, operations, measurement, analysis, and knowledge management components of the College's Counseling Services Department and their relation to the practice problem. Building an effective and supportive workforce environment means more than just placing professionally qualified workers in positions but engaging them in the complex work that is entailed in the behavioral health world. Van Bogaert, Clarke, Willems & Monaelaers (2013) that engagement of the workforce is the difference that keeps staff, prevents burnout, and increases effectiveness of the work in which they are engaged.

The College values their employees and provide a comprehensive benefit program to include professional development. In addition, the College engages staff through working groups, committees, and monthly and quarterly meetings that keep them

informed. The College is committed to supporting employees to maintain knowledgeable

staff across all divisions and departments. However, budget constraints make it difficult

to increase licensed staff and to obtain better data tracking systems that assist in

determining needs, tracking outcomes, and comparing data.

      The Department lies under the umbrella of the Student Affairs Division of the

college. Student Affairs embarked on a yearlong assessment of all departments under the

umbrella of the Student Affairs Division. This assessment was part of the 2019 Strategic

Initiative of the Division and continues to be a priority of the Division. As part of the

Department's strategic goals for the fiscal year, the Department has been tasked with

working on a plan to assess the department, the outcomes of the department and the needs

of the students. Interviews with the leadership were utilized to determine if there is

adequate data to fully assess the needs of the students as well as data to constitute the

need for a clinical software program for the Department. The Counseling Services

Department has previously utilized client satisfaction surveys but have stopped using

them due to lack of adequate data coming from the efforts. Additionally, the Data

Analytics Department can track data for the department, but due to the limited

information obtained in the current electronic record system, the data is no

comprehensive enough to obtain data that can track trends and needs. Comprehensive

data tracking is directly related to the practice problem of leadership setting goals that

align with the targeted outcomes of the organization.

      The College has a comprehensive asset and information technology infrastructure

that allows for transfer of knowledge and safety and security of the assets within the

organization. Adherence to applicable federal and state guidelines and laws assists in ensuring the confidentiality and security of the information that the College obtains and uses in the operations of day to day services. The College holds town hall meetings, understands the need for succession planning, has shared drives for easy access to department and college wide information, and has tasked each Vice President of the college to utilize many different avenues in sharing knowledge within the college. The Department holds monthly meetings to share information with all staff of the department, the counselors meet one on one with leadership, and random case file checks are utilized to ensure quality of case files and care. The Student Affairs Division holds quarterly meetings and annual advance meetings and shares that information through quarterly and annual reports with all staff within the division. Additionally, the Vice President of Student Support Services holds quarterly meetings with all staff with divisions under this umbrella to share pertinent updates.

Section 4: Results–Analysis, Implications, and Preparation of Findings

The purpose of the qualitative case study was to explore the leadership strategies of a college counseling center used to set goals that align with the targeted outcomes of the organization. The College is a not-for-profit community college in the Midwestern part of the United States. The focus of the study was the Counseling Services Department of The College and how leadership strategizes to align their goals with The College's strategic initiatives. The Board of Trustee meeting minute notes as well as The College's website indicated that The College's three umbrella strategic initiatives include growth, alignment, and equity. The College strategic plan and the interview data from Participant D indicated  that that the college has outlined 10 suggested alignment strategies:

1. Expand skilled trades

2. Better persuade students to study in fields with good local jobs

3. Increase student field experience

4. Close the minority student success gap

5. Increase student life coaching

6. Expand innovative instructional approaches

7. Develop evermore seamless partnerships

8. Refresh regional learning center strategy

9. Encourage and support student entrepreneurs

10. Engage more alumni

The Student Development Division of The College has further defined these initiatives in the internal document titled, *Year-End Report to the President*. The Year-

End Report outlines major initiatives and goals for the Student Development Division. These major initiatives include closing the academic equity gap by furthering evaluation and improvement of student support services and Student Affairs programs and services. The Department studied is a Student Affairs Department and provides programming and services that are a part of the major initiative.

As with many college counseling centers, the Department is working on a short staff with limited resources. Watkins et al. (2012) indicated that budgets have been reduced for their departments, and more students and their families are looking to the college to assist in the care for mental health concerns. With the decreased budgets for student services, counseling departments of colleges are asked to do more with no increase in the number of counselors within their departments (Shankar & Ip, 2018; Watson et al., 2012). The research question for this study was what strategies do leaders of a not-for-profit state college counseling service department use to set goals that align with targeted outcomes for the entire organization? Recent studies indicated that college counseling centers are facing increased demand for services for students experiencing more severe symptoms and behavioral health concerns (Francis & Horn, 2017; Kruger, 2019).

In this study, I used the Baldrige excellence framework to assess the organization. The Baldrige excellence framework provides seven key factors of an organization for effective organizations. The key factors are leadership, strategy, customers, measurement/knowledge management, workforce, operations, and results. These key

factors are used to systematically assess an organization for effectiveness and efficiency (NIST, 2017).

## Analysis, Results, and Implications

### Healthcare and Process Results

Analysis of the Behavioral Health Organization consisted of reviewing Board of Trustee meeting minutes, internal emails, Town Hall meeting reviews, and interviews with four of The College's senior leadership members. Transcription of the senior leadership interviews was completed through the Trint application. The Trint application allows the user to use a recording device such as a smart phone, as was the case in my interviews, and then download the recordings into the application to transcribe the interviews. Once interviews were transcribed by the application, it allowed me to redact identifying information and correct transcriptions that were incorrect due to the interviewee accent that was misinterpreted by the application. Interviews with The College's leadership were coded using NVivo. Member checking was completed by using the transcripts and reviewing specific portions of the transcript with the senior leaders for accuracy. Archival data were used to validate results of the interviews, as well as fill in missing data needed for the study.

Previous studies indicated that college counseling departments are tasked to meet the needs of more and more students with more severe needs with little change to the way these identified areas of need are being approached (Kruger, 2019). Community college counseling services are often tasked with more duties that further diminishes the possibility of providing more traditional counseling services (Shankar & Ip, 2018). Data

from this study indicated that this is true of the Behavioral Health Organization that served as the site for this study. Additionally, researchers have found that stigma and lack of awareness often put organizational goals for the college at odds with counseling department goals (Eisenberg, Hunt & Speer, 2012; Lipson et al., 2019). Higher education goals and initiatives are based on the strategic initiatives of the entire college population focusing on completion rates. The State Department of Higher Education website in which the college is located indicated that funding is based on completion rates that consist of completion of courses and degree or certificate programs. Behavioral health goals are focused on personal growth and well-being. The Department's website states that the goal is to meet the student where they are and to assist the student in improving his or her life through goal setting and taking steps to improve one's life.

College counseling departments are often tasked with multiple duties, such as advising, complicating the counselor client relationship. Results of this study indicated that the Department does not branch out their workers to other duties such as advising; however, counselors do have the duties of serving on the Behavioral Intervention Team to provide suicide prevention services to the college and must work to reduce stigma at The College. Although counseling staff have the support of leadership, time commitments to other duties related to reducing stigma and suicide prevention efforts are limited. In addition, wait times to see a counselor are increasing as more students are seeking services.

Kruger (2019) posited that counseling service department budgets have not kept up with the increased need, and college counseling departments find themselves with

difficulties getting increased budgets to meet the need. The data found in this study suggest that The College is lacking data to increase the budget. Specifically, interviews with Participants A, B, and C revealed that there is a lack of assessment process in place for the Department. Themes of lack of assessment were consistent across three out of four interviews, indicating saturation. Additionally, internal documents related to a survey of 70 students during strategic planning revealed a lack of awareness across the college about the services and the needs of the student population. This lack of awareness of services was another identified theme revealed across all interviews with Participants A, B, and C and was confirmed through survey results. Triangulation of data is the use of different data collection methods and finding similar results (Posavac, 2011). Internal document review of survey results and semistructured interview responses converged to give similar data that The College population lacks awareness of the services available for students.

**Client Results**

Data collected for this study revealed two striking findings concerning clients. First, client satisfaction is not being currently measured. The interviews with senior leader Participants B and C revealed that customer response to the past years' surveys were minimal and had not been measured over the past year. Participant B indicated, "We were not getting useful data, and we were not receiving a good return from students. We know that we need to find a better way to assess client satisfaction and we will be working on that."

The second finding is that during strategic planning, a survey of 70 students revealed that students were not aware of student services available to them. Upon further follow-up questions, I found that students were not aware of the counseling department and the services that the Department provides. Participants A, B, C, and D revealed that all leaders viewed this as a significant finding of the survey. Participant A stated, "In our strategic planning meeting with student stakeholders we found it striking that the students indicate that they are not aware of the services that are provided in the Student Affairs Division" Participant B stated,

> One of our current goals in the Department is to work on student awareness of the services that are provided through out Department. The strategic planning survey with students revealed that they are unaware of our services or that we even exist.

The three strategic initiatives of the organization are equity, growth, and alignment. For the Department to align services with the organization's goal of alignment with the community and needs of those they serve, the counseling department must have data to support that they are meeting needs and what those needs are. As previously stated, the Department is tracking trends of client chief complaints at time of service, but additional supporting data such as outcome driven data are not being used. Lack of client satisfaction data or key performance indicators to determine outcomes of services makes it difficult to determine if the services are efficient or effective. In addition, growth of students being served cannot occur if students do not know of the service. Furthermore, with growth of student numbers for the organization comes growth of students needing counseling services. Literature reveals that percentages of students seeking counseling

services and experiencing feelings of overwhelm are on the rise (Bourdon et al, 2018; Brunner et al, 2014; Dykes-Anderson, 2013; Francis & Horn, 2017). The last strategic initiative of equity cannot be met unless the needs of those needing counseling services are being met. Currently, the Department is providing brief intervention and making referrals to community providers. Many students attending community colleges do not have insurance, are unable to obtain appointments in community programs, and lack follow through for services (Eisenberg, Goldricks-Rab, Lipson, & Broton, 2016). Participant B indicated, "Our community providers have waiting lists, and students are unable to obtain psychiatric services due to lack of available providers". Additional assessment of service offerings is needed by the Department to understand the needs of the students and how to assist students to follow through with referrals made to community providers.

Client results in this study converge with the literature which indicates that college counseling centers are not prepared for the increase in demand (Dykes-Anderson, 2013; Kitzrow, 2003; Kruger, 2019; Shankar, 2018). Data collected from the Department's internal documents reporting counselor and case manager appointments for the Department indicated a 33 % increase in unduplicated students from Academic year 2017-2018 to 2018-2019.  Data indicates that the increased demand on college counseling centers has come from the increased prevalence of anxiety and depression among college students (Francis & Horn, 2017). Interviews with Participant A, B, and C reveal a theme of increased crisis appointments for the Department. The theme of increased crisis appointments and overall utilization of services within the Department

converges with the literature that there is an increased prevalence of mental health on college campuses. The literature also revealed that students who receive services on campus have more successes academically (Bourdon et al., 2018). The College has three strategic initiatives, growth, equity and alignment. The goals of the Counseling Services Department of The College are to assist in the growth and assist in alleviating symptoms that interfere with daily activities personally and academically. These common goals are consistent with other research that indicates that utilization of services assist students and alternative options to meet the growing need on campuses must be explored (Brunner, Wallace, Reymann, Sellers & McCabe, 2014; Francis & Horn, 2017).

A key finding concerning client results is that outcomes are not being measured within the Department. This finding directly relates to the practice problem of leadership setting goals that align with the targeted outcomes of the organization. An interview with Participant A revealed that the Student Affairs department has begun assessing the organization utilizing Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) standards and assessment. Participant A stated,"The assessment of the Student Affairs Division led to the determination that all departments within the division needed to begin working on a comprehensive plan to assess their departments and the services that each provide".Conversely, an interview with participant D, a College senior leader, reveals that the organization leadership utilizes benchmarking through the organization's affiliation with the League for Innovation. The distinct differences in the way the College benchmarks as an institution of higher learning versus the way the Departments benchmarks, makes it difficult to align goals.

**Workforce Results**

Information concerning the organization's workforce environment was found within the Human Resources intranet page and within the employee benefits guide of the College. Board of Trustee meeting minutes were also reviewed for clarity and background of information. Additionally, the College's senior leaders of the Department were interviewed to obtain information concerning workforce environment. A key finding concerning workforce environment was the difficulty in hiring additional staff to keep up with the increased demand. Review of the *New Position Request* form revealed that the request includes the requester to produce information concerning additional capital needed to support the position such as computers, desks, and other equipment. Additionally, new position requests are mandated to include information pertaining to benefits of the new position to the organization. With the request, budget allocations must be identified prior to the submission. With this process, it is often difficult to find additional money that is not already earmarked and/or in use.

A review of internal emails sent to employees of the organization reveals that the last employee satisfaction survey was completed in December of 2016. The College's internal email states that the purpose of the survey is to assess the climate to identify greatest satisfaction areas and the priorities for change. The survey allows the College to benchmark against other institutions and inform internal key performance measures. The College's Board of Trustees meeting minutes dating March 21, 2017 note that the employee satisfaction survey reveals that the organization scores above the national norms and above two-year college norms in all categories of the survey. The categories

of the survey included institutional structure, supervisory relationships, teamwork, and student focus. Surveys were sent out to all part and full-time staff at the college, and there were 812 respondents for the survey. The Board of Trustee meeting minutes indicate that the survey is administered every 3 years and that the college uses comparison factors against other organizations that utilize the service who are comparable in size and urbanization factors.

The College engages their employees well and results of the employee satisfaction surveys indicate that employees are satisfied with their work environment. However, increased demand on the Department to provide services to students appears to be putting a strain on the employees of the department. Review of documentation and interviews with senior leadership revealed that hiring additional staff requires significant data and work to back up the request. Interviews with Participants A, B, and D indicate that data identifying clear needs to add employees would be needed. Although the Department keeps track of student needs by tracking trends of symptoms and complaints, a system is not in place to clearly identify needs and outcomes of the students being seen within the department. Additionally, budget allocations must be reviewed to determine if there is additional money in the department to support new staff and equipment needed to support staff.

Workforce environment findings show that the Department has similar circumstances to previous studies in that college counseling departments are expected to keep up with the increased demand with tight budgets (Much, Wagener, & Hellenbrand, 2010). Conversely, additional literature supports that investing in student mental health

assists higher education institutions in meeting their targeted outcomes of growth, retention, and completion (Lipson et al., 2019). As the College strives to stay fiscally responsible in their endeavors, leadership continues to work toward better understanding of what supports are needed to maintain student numbers toward successful completion of their programs.

**Leadership and Governance Results**

Leadership of the College engages staff through direct communication in town hall meetings, the staff buzz newsletter, and through all staff/faculty emails. However, communication concerning policy changes or direction of the organization are not consistently communicated across the college. Although staff is encouraged to participate in professional development and organizational events, these events are not attended by many staff/faculty due to scheduling conflicts. Additionally, due to the hierarchy of the organization's leadership, it is often difficult for the stream of information to funnel toward decision makers. A conscious effort must be made by leadership to gather data and ensure that decision making leadership is kept abreast of the information. Specifically, data concerning the needs of students seeking counseling services is not necessarily on the radar of the leadership that makes budgetary decisions. The Board of Trustees and the President of the College, along with the President's cabinet meet on a bimonthly basis to discuss matters concerning the organization.

The strategic initiatives of the College are high priority among all senior leadership, and subsequently at the forefront of the work that the Department is engaging. The College's strategic initiative of alignment is to align services to meet the need of the

students and the community that it serves. In fact, the founder of the organization spoke

of finding the need and endeavoring to meet that need. Interviews with senior leaders of

the Department echoed the mission of finding the need and meeting those needs of the

community with unanimity. Participant A stated,

> The College jumped in without hesitation to help meet the needs of victims of a
>
> tornado tragedy in the community that occurred over Memorial Day weekend in
>
> the community. They College has committed to be involved for at least 100 days
>
> in the assistance and relief efforts.

The College assisted in tornado relief as well as provided free counseling to any

community member needing counseling services after a mass shooting in the community

that they serve. Review of services within the organizational website reveals the College

proudly serves the community in their time of need through community outreach and

participation in community action projects.

Strategic planning continues to be a priority for the College as evidenced by the

Board of Trustee meeting minutes, According to Board meeting minutes and resolutions,

the Board of Trustees approved an ad hoc Strategic Planning Committee to be formed to

frame and steer additional strategic planning after the board and stakeholders had

engaged in a thorough strategic planning process. As a result of the strategic planning

process, an interview with Participant A revealed that the Student Affairs leadership

completed a thorough assessment of the division and has tasked each of the 11

departments within the division begin working on assessment processes for their

departments. Counseling Services lies within the division of Student Affairs. An

interview with senior leaders, Participants B and C revealed that they have begun to discuss and strategically plan to begin an assessment process of the Counseling Services Department as part of their strategic goals for the calendar year 2019. The *Student Affairs Annual Report* for the Division outlines strategic initiatives for the Division and each of the departments within the Division. The Counseling Services Department outlines creating an assessment process for the department as one of the strategic initiatives for the year. At the time of this study, assessment processes had not yet been determined. Participant A said, "The results of the strategic planning student survey of 70 students indicated that the majority of those students were not aware of the services that we provide in the Division of Student Affairs".

Lack of assessment processes and awareness of services are significant findings relating to the practice problem. Assessment to determine needs of the program are essential to setting goals for the Department. Although the College has set strategic initiatives of equity, alignment and growth, it is difficult to align initiatives of the Department with the College without proper assessments and data to support goal setting.

**Financial and Marketplace Performance Results**

As part of the College's strategic planning process, seven strategic policy rules were put into place. The governance rules that provide operating parameters for the College were found within the College's strategic planning and process results. The seven strategic policy rules are sustainable, accessible, for the public good, best talent, truthful, continuous quality improvement, and compliant. The College has been a public institution since 1966 and been in existence for 133 years. As evidenced by the seven

strategic rules and explanations of those rules, the College understands that innovation must be utilized to continually improve, but also that the College must be for the public good and sustainable so that it may continue to serve the community.

The College Fiscal Resources page on the College website indicates that the College was established by the voters of the county in which it is located. Revenues for the College are derived from levies approved by the voters of the county, and fees paid by students. Capital funds are received from state grants and appropriations. The Foundation of the College raises funds from individuals, organizations and corporations to support scholarships and special educational projects. According to Board meeting minutes from July 2019, the College has a $143 million operating budget and a $15 million capital budget approved by the Board of Trustees for fiscal year 2020. The College operates on a balanced budget and does not incur debt for expenditures. The Departmental Budget indicates that the Department has an allocated budget of $236,285 for fiscal year 2020. The Department expenses include the following:

- Full Time Professional/ Administrative Staff Salaries.

- Incentive pay for staff.

- Student workers' pay.

- Hourly staff pay.

- Fringe benefits to include medical, dental, Medicare, and tuition reimbursement.

- Supplies.

- Travel.

- Subscriptions to professional journals.

- Memberships to professional organizations.

- Printing for The Department.

- Special events costs that include catering.

The bulk of the departmental budget is utilized by wages for staff. See Figure 2. With a

tight budget, the Department is unable to fund additional staff with existing allocations.
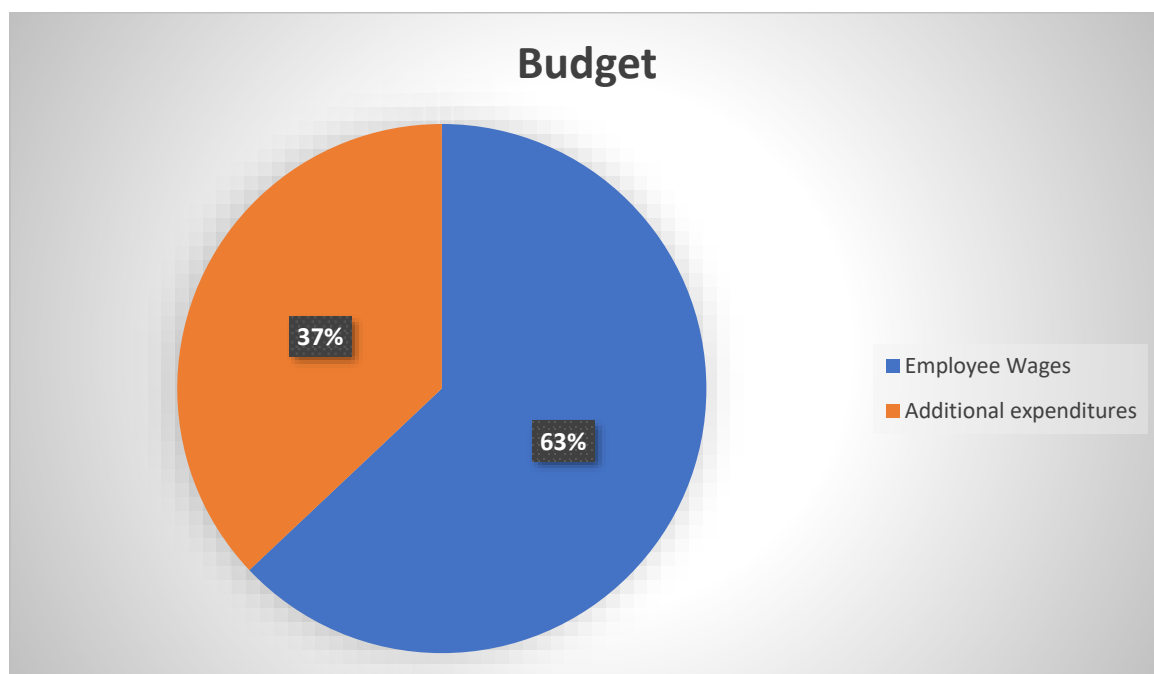


*Figure 2.* Department budget allocation used for employee wages.

The State Department of Higher Education provides an audit analysis of financial

ratio for all state colleges and universities of the state. The top score for positive analysis

is 5.0, and the College rates at 4.8 for fiscal year 2018. The State analysis indicates that

the College has no debt.  The College prides itself on not incurring debt and discusses

fiscal responsibility of not incurring debt regularly at Town Hall meetings at the College.

The College Affordability and Value internal report indicates that the College realized a

"40 million-dollar cumulative savings, efficiencies, and cost avoidance over the past 10

years". Additionally, the *College Affordability and Value* report indicates the College

annualized tuition for FY 2018 was $2971, whereas the statewide average was $6030.

The College is bound by state mandates to only raise tuition as described in the annual

Governor's budget for the state.

The College's fiscal responsibility and budget management speaks to the

commitment to make college affordable to the student population that it serves. This

fiscal responsibility is maintained across the Departments of the College, which increases

the need for the Department leaders to implement assessment that assist in determining

the need for additional counselors and software that provides more accurate measurement

of services.

The lack of Electronic Health Record (EHR) Software to maintain records of

services provided puts the College at a disadvantage for maintaining confidential records

as well as making a smooth referral of services to outside service providers. In addition,

if the College were to decide to provide more comprehensive services and bill for those

services, the College would need to purchase and train on EHR prior to being able to do

so. The College is able to utilize a Clinical Utilization tool which was utilized to

determine that academic year 2018 had a Clinical Utilization Ratio (CLI) of 107, which is

higher than 60 percent of colleges with similar student numbers. Participant B indicated,

> We understand that our counselor to student rations are high and that we are not
>
> within  the best practice ratios for a college counseling department. We have
>
> made a request for additional clinical staff, but we understand that our current
>
> budget does not support that additional staff member.

The Crisis and Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) reports have been significantly

higher the first two -thirds of academic year 2019-2020. The Department is responsible

for manning crisis and behavioral intervention cases. The current pace of crisis and

behavioral intervention cases has mandated that the Department borrow clinicians from

the Accessibility Department to ensure that all clients are seen in a timely manner.  The

Accessibility Services Department of the College is managed by the same senior leaders

and is housed within the same suite as the Counseling Department of the College.

Although the Accessibility counselors are being utilized in the interim, all senior leaders

state that this is not a long-term solution to the surge in crisis and behavioral intervention

reports.

      **Student success** was an overwhelming theme among the interviews and literature

that was reviewed for the study. Participant A states, "We work to find solutions for

students so that they may be successful on our campus", while Participant B states, "Our

goals is to helps students reduce barriers to student success". Participant C, states "Our

goal is to identify barriers to success and to help students overcome those barriers

through counseling services that assist the student in setting action plans".  Literature

identifies student success as part of every counseling services department, as well as

breaking down barriers that present through mental health concerns in the college years

(Bourdon et al, 2018; Brunner et al, 2014; Dykes-Anderson, 2013; Eisenberg, 2016).

      With increases in clients needing to be seen and the lack of additional funds in the

allocated budget, the financial results findings are significant. Budgetary constraints to

hire additional professional staff continue to put further strain on the Department to meet

the needs of the student population. The College financial stability is a strength; however, the budget allocations of the Department will not be enough to meet the needs of an increasing need for counseling services among the student population. An interview with Participant B indicated that the Department has no "wiggle room in the budget for additional expenditures". A review of the Department Budget provides a more in-depth analysis of the budget constraints. The budget is clearly earmarked for employee pay. Additional earmarked dollars go to printing services, special events, and minimal dollars are budgeted for additional supplies and professional development.

## Implications

### Strategic Planning

The first theme to emerge from the results is strategic planning. The College recognized the need to strategically plan for the future of the College and embarked on a lengthy process beginning in 2017. At the end of the initial strategic planning process, the College reconvened with the Board of Trustees and a resolution to begin a special strategic planning committee was ratified. The College Board of Trustees meeting minutes indicates that the College also identified 3 strategic priorities at the end of the initial strategic planning stages. These strategic priorities are growth, alignment, and equity. With this commitment to strategic planning, the College has committed to continuing to meet with stakeholders. Participant A states, "Meeting with 70 students to gain their perspective allowed the College to gain insight from the consumer" Additionally, Participant D stated that "meetings with the stakeholders allowed College

staff and faculty to receive information from the students that provided them with information that could not otherwise be realized".

**Commitment to Equity**

Another theme that emerged was commitment to equity. Participant D states, "The College is committed to reducing the academic gap between groups and to commit to having a student body, faculty and staff that reflects the diversity of the community that they serve". In response to this commitment to equity, the College and the Department has committed to an Equity Summit that provides training concerning diverse groups to the staff and faculty of the College. Participant A said, "The College has committed to ensuring that staff and faculty are prepared to assist in breaking down the barriers to academic equity". Studies show that students experiencing feelings of overwhelm, anxiety or depression who receive counseling services while attending college are more successful academically (Brunner et al, 2013; Schwitzer et al, 2018).

The College senior leaders' commitment to fostering a common goal through strategic planning, education and engagement aligns the College with the Baldridge Framework core values and concepts. The Baldridge Framework takes a systematic approach to managing all of the components of an organization (NIST 2017). This approach allows the College to approach the strategic initiatives on a building block approach that allows the entire organization to work in unison to meet the needs of the population that they are serving.

Workforce environment and engagement are other areas assessed that presented as strengths for the College. The College benefits pamphlet and Human Resources

website indicate that the College offers fringe benefits, professional development and ongoing learning and training opportunities. The College offers tuition reimbursement for employees to continue their education and to commit to staying abreast of current educational methodology. In addition, the College Human Resource website indicates that the College has a Center for Teaching and Learning that allows staff and faculty to earn continuing education credits for free through the center. In Section 5, subsection Workforce Environment and Engagement, it discusses how the environment is an opportunity for improvement.

**Workforce Engagement**

It is an area of strength for the college as evidenced through interviews with the College leadership. Participant A said, "We offer opportunities for staff to engage in national memberships as well as committees within the college. The staff is encouraged to engage in committees within the college and to entertain presenting at conferences as the opportunity arises". Participant D also said,

> We welcome feedback from our faculty and staff and encourage them to be
>
> involved in our committees and training initiatives. The Student Development
>
> team meets quarterly, and our Departments are encouraged to present on new
>
> initiatives to the entire Student Development team.

Schneider, Yost, Kropp, Kind, & Lam (2018) posit that workforce engagement significantly correlates with organizational performance. The College's internal document, *Evidence of Successful Growth and Development* shows significant increases

in student success rates with a 355% increase in graduation rates from 2005-2018, and a 1905% increase in graduation rates for minority students in that same time period.

**Opportunities**

Opportunity for improvement can be identified through key findings in measurement and knowledge management. The Department did not have KPIs in place and did not have benchmarking in place to determine the or measure success of services provided by the Department. Although the Department is tracking numbers of students seen, they are not tracking outcomes. Participant C said, "We track trends to determine most common reasons for students being seen such as depression and anxiety, but we do not have KPIs in place". With follow up questions, Participant C indicated," Most data tracking is done manually, and no formal system is in place". However, further review of internal documents indicates that the appointment management system in place is able to track appointments for each individual counselor within the Department.

Although the Department does not benchmark or utilize Key Performance Indicators, Participant B said, "We do compare data with other local, similar colleges to inform practice". The lack of formal processes in place to measure outcomes of the students being served leaves the Department without adequate data to indicate the need for services as well as the need for additional services. Participant B stated, "We regularly utilize counselors from Accessibility Services during crisis appointments and for Behavioral Intervention Team assistance". Although this works for the short-term, Participant B acknowledges that this does not adequately address the problem of increased need for services and the need to continue prevention efforts for suicide across

the campus. Posavac (2011) posited that departments need to present data in order to request additional programs and services for a program or department. With little data concerning outcomes, the Department will have difficulty in making a request that will be approved for additional staff or programming.

**Meetings**

A theme identified in coding in NVivo was that of meetings. There is a common consensus within the Department that meetings are an important way to communicate and to share information; however, there were no meeting minute notes to be found to clearly identify what these meetings captured within the Department or throughout the College. One exception was Board of Trustee meeting minutes. These meetings are formally captured through meeting minutes and archived for public consumption.

Bollinger and Smith (2017) posited that knowledge management comes from employees and the knowledge they share with others within the organization. Although the Department leadership is committed to sharing information within the Department and with others in the college. The leadership shares information through team meetings, supervision and College communication pathways such as Town Hall meetings and the monthly Buzz. However, it is noted that data collection is problematic. Despite acknowledgement and a common theme of the need for data and best practices, the Department was unable to identify clear data that should be collected by the Department to identify strengths, areas of limitation, and areas for improvement. The Department does not have a concise way to collect data that will inform the Department and improve quality of services. Specifically, the Department utilizes the SSP software program that

was built by the college. This program was not built specifically for counseling and does not adequately collect data that could provide more clinical and practical information to measure outcomes and improve service.

## Strengths and Limitations of the Study

### Strengths

The methodology of the study is a relative strength. The study is a case study that allowed the researcher to examine the College in real time and to gain insight and perspective of the practice problem through the lens of the senior leadership of the Department. Additionally, the strength of a case study is that it allows the researcher to have better understanding of a phenomenon which can lead to improved quality. The Baldrige excellence framework is specifically framed to allow the researcher to systematically study different areas of the organization to determine areas of need and strength to provide a basis to improve quality of an organization, or in the case of this study, a Department of a College.

College students are increasingly entering into college with mental health diagnoses and behavioral health concerns. Kruger (2019) posited that one in every three college students has experienced feelings of being overwhelmed. Additionally, the QPR Institute (n.d.) indicated that suicide is the second leading cause of death in individuals 18-24. As colleges are feeling the overwhelming demand to put more services in place, they are also feeling the burden of decreased budgets and staff to meet the need of those students (Kruger, 2019; Kitzrow, 2003). Students experiencing feelings of being

overwhelmed are much more likely to engage in services if there is a sense of decreased stigma and there is increased mental health awareness on college campuses.

The College's *Affordability and Value* pamphlet indicates that graduates of the College realize a 94% increase in earnings in the first year after graduation. As colleges strategize to determine if their efforts to offer more counseling services, students who languish with mental health concerns without treatment are significantly more likely to not complete their program or degree (Hunt et al., 2013). As the College has found, a key strategic initiative is to reduce the academic equity gap. The equity gap for students with behavioral health concerns is significant, but with treatment this population can be successful in and out of the classroom (Francis & Horn, 2017).

**Limitations**

Limitations of the study included limited access to senior leadership for interviews. The College of study included an IRB approval process and this process restricted the research to leadership related to the Counseling Department only. Additionally, senior leadership had limited availability to meet and complete the interview process. Although there was a limitation in the number of senior leaders interviewed for the study, themes were clear. The College did not offer a lot of internal data; however, this may be based on the fact that the Department has limited data to present for the study. Additionally, although this researcher addressed researcher bias, the bias of the participants of the study could not be controlled. This study is a case study specific to the Department of a College and therefore has a generalizability limitation.

Although the study results converge with literature in specific areas, the results cannot be generalized with all other college counseling departments.

## Social Change

A community is changed by the increased reduction of stigma, and the increased success rates of students seeking higher education from a community college in their own back yard. Community colleges offer a more reasonably priced education within the community that the students reside. This allows students being served to stay within their own communities, and often remaining in those same communities following graduation. Eisenberg et al, 2016, indicated that community college students are often working full time in and are non-traditional students facing many obstacles to their educational goals. The value of providing education and workforce skills to non-traditional students is often difficult to measure; however according to the College's *Affordability and Value* pamphlet, students who graduate from the College realize a doubling of income in their first year after graduation.

Outreach initiatives by the Department raises awareness concerning mental health issues. With awareness comes reduction of stigma.  Reduction of stigma for college students seeking mental health services has the potential to increase academic and personal successes of community college students. Outreach to faculty and staff assists in the creation of informed staff who are more adequately prepared to educate and assist all students, to recognize behaviors and symptoms that indicate the need for intervention, and the resources to assist with students who are encountering barriers to academic success.

**Summary and Transition**

The results are an indication of the experience leaders have in aligning department goals with the goals of the organization. Strategic planning for the College has been intensive, but the Department is deep within the organization. This study did not review all departments within the college and is limited to the study of one Department within the College. Section 4 has reviewed the results and the key findings and themes of the study as well as implications for social change. Section 5 will conclude the study with recommendations and potential solutions. Additionally, Section 5 will discuss implications for the need for further study.

Section 5: Recommendations and Conclusions

In Section 5, I review the recommendations and conclusions that result from the synthesis and analysis of the data collected and analyzed during this study. The recommendations of the study are derived from the results that were reported in Section 4 of the study. Recommendations and conclusions are presented on all seven sections of the Baldrige excellence framework results.

## Recommendations

### Leadership

The leadership of the Counseling Department is a relative strength. The Department has a strong leadership framework that identifies annual goals for the Division as well as for each Department within it. In this study, I revealed that the leadership of the Division embarked on a yearlong process of assessment to begin forming strategy to assess divisional and student population needs and determine best practices for the Division. However, it was discovered that the Department had not yet formed an assessment tool at the time of the study to determine needs. Leadership of the Department identified this as an area of weakness.

The counseling manager and counseling coordinator meet monthly with the Counseling Department staff and bi-monthly with division leadership, and the student affairs director reports directly to the VP of student development. This process sets up a direct line of communication for the Department to address areas of need and improvement. I recommend that leadership meetings have minutes so that communication is archived and can be referred to in order to ensure that action plans are

congruent with discussions that took place in the meetings.

**Strategy**

Strategy is another area of strength for The College. The College has actively participated in strategic planning and has set forth clear strategic initiatives for The College. These strategic initiatives are clearly outlined in The College's strategic plan. Additionally, the strategic priorities of the College are clearly outlined as growth, equity and alignment. The strategic priorities prompted The College to plan and implement an Equity Summit in 2018 and 2019. Mental health and accessibility services were not the focus of the 2018 Summit; however, the 2019 Summit provided the opportunity for the Department to discuss these important issues and how they are related to the academic equity gap of those with behavioral health concerns.

Strategic planning gave The College an opportunity to gain information from stakeholders concerning services being provided. A significant finding was related to students being unaware of the existence of the Counseling Department. I recommend that the Department participate in marketing planning and outreach services to initiate awareness among students, faculty, and staff to ensure that students are given the opportunity to use services. I also recommend that the Department participate in opportunities such as faculty development, in-class presentations, and college activities and events. Although the Department has participated in events and activities such as Welcome Week and Student Health Fairs, I recommend that the Department engage students in more conversation through planned activities such as classroom discussions and increases in marketing exposure. Classroom discussions may include suicide

prevention, discussions about specific diagnoses, test taking strategies, stress management, and coping skills. Planning these in-classroom discussions prior to the start of a semester will assist in adding these to the class syllabus as part of the curriculum of the course. Adding mental health discussions to curriculum across many academic programs will increase participation, increase mental health awareness, and assist in reduction of stigma.

### Measurement and Analysis

Client awareness and needs assessment are an area of weakness for the Department. Results indicated that the Department has not been completing client satisfaction surveys and has not been tracking outcomes for clients being served by the Department. Organizational goals of higher education institutions are often at odds with the goals of mental health services; however, The College is striving to meet the needs of the community and the students that they serve. Clear data and key performance indicators will assist the Department in aligning their goals with the outcomes of the organization. Use of key performance indicators can determine targeted outcomes. Additionally, benchmarking through comparison data of other organizations can assist in becoming more efficient (Coombs, Geyer, & Pirkis, 2011). At the time of the study, assessment of the Department was in its infancy. The Department was not assessing the needs of the students and was not tracking any outcome data for the students being served at the time of this study.

Establishing key performance indicators for the Department will provide a way of tracking outcomes of services being provided. I recommend that the Department begin

assessing outcomes of students being served through an outcome driven satisfaction survey. Additionally, it will be important to assess the needs of the entire student population to better understand the needs of the population. Leadership of the Department indicated that the counselors track trends for the clients they serve. When asked to describe the tracking being performed, leadership indicated that counselors are informally tracking trends in presenting problems of the students being served. In addition, I highly recommend that The College consider a public policy approach to mental health by creating a Mental Health Action Plan. An example of a comprehensive tool would be The Healthy Minds Study. This study would survey all students enrolled in the college concerning mental health needs. This assessment tool would allow the college to determine the current population needs. The Healthy Minds Study is the only study that specifically studies mental health on college campuses (Healthy Minds Network, n.d.). Although this would be an expenditure for the Department, I recommend that the Department consider applying for a Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration  grant opportunity that specifically pays for Mental Health Action Plan prioritization. The Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration grant funding opportunity is open every other year to interested colleges.

**Workforce Environment and Engagement**

The workforce environment is a strength for The College. This strength can be used as an opportunity for the Department. The College offers opportunities for professional development to keep abreast of current topics as well as to provide opportunity to gain continued learning education credits. I recommend that the

Department engage Center for Teaching and Learning within the college to develop

training opportunities to faculty and staff that will also give opportunity for continuing

education credits. Offering training specific to mental health issues, suicide prevention,

and behavioral intervention in the classroom will assist the Department in raising

awareness to mental health issues, assist in suicide prevention efforts, and may facilitate

reduced stigma. Openness to discussion about mental health topics such as suicide

prevention assists the college community in their strategic initiatives of equity, growth,

and alignment.

**Customers**

The customers (clients) of the Department are the students enrolled at the college.

Additionally, the college serves through community relationships. The College offered

counseling assistance to anyone in the community seeking crisis counseling following a

mass shooting less than a mile from their main campus. Although the Department does

not provide long term counseling or diagnosis, it provides referral services to community

resources. The Department has been making referrals to community resources for more

involved mental health concerns that require ongoing counseling and psychiatric services.

I recommend that the Department senior leaders reach out to community resources to

form a more streamlined approach to referral to ensure continuity of care. Although the

college has a list of community resources and a working relationship with the Alcohol,

Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board, I recommend that they formally meet

with the board to gain more information about waiting lists of providers, providers who

work on a sliding scale, and the ability to receive psychiatric services at the identified

providers in the area. Forming more working relationships with community partners will assist in streamlining the referral process. Forming relationships will also facilitate communication between the department and community providers to ensure to assist in follow through and continuity of care.

It is also recommended that the Department consider an EHR that provides a behavioral health intake assessment tool, that is more congruent with the needs of the clinical staff of the Department and ensures confidentiality of client records. In addition, the EHR software, such as Titanium, will provide a secure system to transfer client records to community providers to ensure compliance with Federal and State confidentiality laws and mandates. Titanium starting price is 1520 dollars per year and provides a system to track data, capture electronic signatures, and secure. Although there are other EHR software programs available, this program was specifically written for college counseling centers. Although college counseling centers are not held to HIPAA laws when students are seeking services within the college, transfer of information to and from outside providers back to the Department would be covered under HIPAA. Seamless sharing of information through an EHR would also allow the college to bill for services if it finds that to be something the College would like to pursue in the future.

A significant finding in the study was the student to counselor ratio for the College. Best practice for college counseling departments is 1:1,500 Full Time Enrollment (FTE) (Best Practices for Mental Health Services in Colleges and Universities, n.d.). Currently, the Department has a counselor to student ratio of 1:6,100 FTE. It is recommended that with these ratios the Department develop a plan to request

an additional counselor. This study provided information that leadership faces a challenge

to request additional staff without significant data to establish the need for funding.

Additionally, budget requests are required to have budget managers provide information

outlining how the Department will allocate current budget money to fund the request.

Since the current budget will not provide allocation for an additional staff member, it is

recommended that the department begin assessment of needs and track data that identifies

outcomes that align with the College priorities of Growth, Equity and Alignment. It is

suggested that Growth can be aligned with the ability to serve more students with mental

health concerns and not have a waiting list that would discourage students with these

needs from enrolling at the College. It is also suggested that the strategic priority of

Equity is being addressed with this request through the ability to serve more students in a

timely manner and provide more intensive case management that will assist the student in

breaking down barriers that prevent the student from achieving academic success.

Finally, it is suggested that the request of additional staff is in alignment with the needs

of the community. The Department has had a 33 percent increase in counseling,

unduplicated clients from academic year 2017-2018 to academic year 2018-2019. This

increase in requests indicates that the Department is receiving more referrals and requests

for services, constituting a need for additional staff to meet those needs. Additionally, the

College has received a significant increase in BIT referrals that indicates that more

students need to be touched by counseling services to discuss academic, behavioral and

conduct concerns. The Department and its leadership are highly active in the BIT team

process, and these referrals can be more readily addressed and more closely monitored

with additional staff within the Department.

Given budgetary constraints, it will be important for leadership to explore additional means of meeting the needs of the demand of students seeking counseling services. Although internships and part-time positions have previously been explored as alternatives, it is recommended that the Department leadership explore alternatives to hiring a full-time licensed staff. The College has current relationships with several colleges in the area who have counseling and social work programs that may have students looking for internship experiences. It is recommended that leadership reach out to form stronger more formal relationships with one or more of these colleges to gain interns who can meet the need of the increasing case load. Additionally, it is recommended that the Department leadership consider forming more support groups for students seeking counseling services. Although community colleges often face a difficult time gaining student engagement, it will be important to market these support groups to students who are already seeking services (Nguyen, 2011). These students may be more willing to attend support groups instead of individual counseling if made available.

## Recommendation for Future Study

This case study is limited by the amount of data being collected by the Department at the time of the study. Recommendations have been discussed with leadership of the Department throughout the study, and the Department leadership has begun the process of collecting client satisfaction surveys that discuss outcomes of the services. In addition, leadership of the Department has begun the process of setting KPIs for the Department to assist in determining measurable outcomes for the Department and

the students that they serve. Post-implementation analysis of student satisfaction surveys and tracking of data such as completion and retention among students receiving services is recommended. Analysis of the data can assist the Department in further assessing needs and to determine next steps for leadership to align outcomes with the College.

Comparison studies with other community college counseling centers. Comparison will assist in determining the benefits of alignment of department goals with college targeted outcomes.  In addition, it would be beneficial to study the challenges that leadership faces in making the case for more comprehensive services in a community college setting and to study college counseling center outcomes for those colleges who already provide more comprehensive services. Dykes-Anderson (2013) made the case that comprehensive counseling can increase retention rates, as well as, provide a way for students to seek career counseling while addressing possible barriers to success. In addition, Dykes- Anderson (2013) discussed the fact that increased rates of students entering college with mental health diagnoses substantiates the need for a more comprehensive approach to assisting these students. Increased rates of students with mental health concerns prompts colleges to consider the need for a more comprehensive approach to assisting students on their road to success and recovery.

**Concluding Statement**

The case study has provided an opportunity to study in real time the practice problem of leadership of a college counseling department setting goals that align with college targeted outcomes. The Department has a responsibility to serve individuals seeking services for behavioral health concerns while pursuing college and career goals

in a community college atmosphere. This study provided insight into leadership

perspective in strategy of setting goals of a counseling department that align with the

college's targeted outcomes. Community college counseling centers are unique because

they are serving individuals who often have more significant barriers to success in higher

education. Additionally, the number of students entering college with an increased

number and severity of mental health concerns is an issue. College counseling leadership

is tasked with assessing the needs of the students while finding a balance with meeting

the outcomes of the college that they lie within. This study has systematically assessed

key areas of the college and discussed the need to set goals and track outcomes to

determine if the Department is meeting the needs of the students and community that it

serves. Moreover, this study provided information on the importance of reduction of

stigma, raising awareness, and providing suicide prevention services on the college

campus. Further study is needed to make a broad statement concerning the needs of

college counseling centers; however, the study of this community college's Department

allows the reader to understand the need for mental health services on the college

campus, and the need for leadership to understand those needs to assist in improving

services.

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