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Narrative for Expanding Visibility to Non-Black Students through Enrollment Management Practices for Historically Black Colleges and Universities

LaDarius Thompson
Virginia Commonwealth University

Stephen Barr
Virginia Commonwealth University

Lisa Winn Bryan
Virginia Commonwealth University

Lisa Williams
Virginia Commonwealth University

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Stephen Barr
Bachelor of Arts in Drama and Communications, University of New Orleans, 2001
Master of Public Administration, Louisiana State University, 2009

Lisa Winn Bryan
Bachelor of Arts in Spanish, James Madison University, 1990
Master of Education, College Student Personnel and Counseling Psychology, James Madison University, 1993
Certificate of Nonprofit Management, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2004

LaDarius Thompson
Bachelor of Arts in Nonprofit Administration, University of South Carolina Upstate, 2010
Master of Science in Mental Health Counseling, Pace University, 2012

Lisa Williams
Bachelor of Arts in English, Longwood University, 1991
Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2014
Post Master's Certificate in Educational Leadership, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2016

Program Director: Dr. Tomika Ferguson
Assistant Professor and Co-Coordinator Ed.D. Program, Department of Educational Leadership

Virginia Commonwealth University

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Abstract

NARRATIVE FOR EXPANDING VISIBILITY TO NON-BLACK STUDENTS THROUGH

ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES

AND UNIVERSITIES

By Stephen Barr, Lisa Winn Bryan, LaDarius Thompson, and Lisa Williams

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Background: As the U.S. is growing more diverse, at historically black colleges and universities

(HBCUs) like VSU, non-Black students are considered underrepresented. Current declining

enrollment numbers at VSU have become problematic, creating a budgetary shortfall that has

impacted student facilities, programs, and services. In response, VSU is striving to increase

student enrollment through strategic enrollment management. This study examines how VSU can

expand its visibility with non-Black, domestic students in high schools and community colleges.

Further, this study adds to the understanding of enrollment management strategies at an HBCU,

as administrators, faculty and other stakeholders collaborate to provide an inclusive environment

for students of all backgrounds. This study also provides knowledge regarding the impact of enrollment management strategies to recruit non-Black students to VSU.

Project activities: Project activities included interviews about enrollment management strategies with admissions counselors from researcher-identified peer institutions, a Virginia high school counselor survey to assess the impact of VSU enrollment strategies, behaviors, and document analysis of web and print application materials from researcher-identified peer institutions.

Key findings: Results from the admissions counselor interviews, high school counselor student survey, and document analysis of web and print admissions and application materials indicated that the admissions counselors looked for new and innovative ways to appeal to prospective students and high school counselors through both personal engagement and the use of technology. SEM strategies provided additional opportunities for increased access to students based on race, socioeconomics, and diverse interests and needs.

Challenges and limitations: We encountered several challenges, including access to some key stakeholders, such as VSU student community members, access to enrollment management professionals, and limited high school counselor survey participation. Another limitation was the scarce amount of research available concerning non-Black students at HBCUs.

Chapter One

Narrative for Expanding Visibility to Non-Black Students through Enrollment

Management Practices for Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Virginia State University (VSU) is a historically Black university located in Petersburg, Virginia. Since its founding in 1882, the university's population has consisted primarily of African-American students who have dominated the culture (Virginia State University, 2019). However, as the United States is growing more diverse, the population of racially and culturally homogeneous universities is also evolving. Such trends must be examined by colleges and universities, such as VSU, as they evaluate their missions. Higher education institutions must consider how to increase enrollment by creating cultures that are inclusive to all students, including those students from underrepresented backgrounds. At historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) like VSU, non-Black, domestic students are considered underrepresented (Virginia State University, 2019).

Charged with the purpose of serving the needs of the Black community, HBCUs had a single segment of students from which to recruit and enroll. Black students were denied admission into other institutions, except for rare occasions. If a Black student wanted to pursue higher education, the student would generally choose to enroll at the closest HBCU (Draper, 1976). In the 1950s, 71% of Black Americans who enrolled in post-secondary education did so at an HBCU. Surprisingly, in just twenty years, this number declined to about 36% in 1970 and even lower to 18% in 1990 (Gasman et al., 2010). The decline in enrollment numbers and the decreased interest

in choosing an HBCU came as a result of subsequent law and policy from cases including,

Plessy v Ferguson; Brown v. The Board of Education; and the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

These landmark cases broke ground for debates concerning the rights of all United State citizens,

regardless of skin color, to attend the educational institutions of their choosing.

For over thirty years, the focus on African-American students at predominantly White

institutions (PWIs) has shifted from measuring academic achievement to measuring achievement

as it relates to social acclimation (Rose & Cantwell, 2019). HBCUs, unlike PWIs, have not

historically used exclusionary practices nor have they purposefully discriminated against

non-Black, domestic students from selecting to attend the institutions. In contrast, HBCU

institutional mission or vision statements have often included open-door enrollment, racial

diversity, inclusion and acceptance (Richardson & Harris, 2004; Yeakey & Henderson, 2003).

For example, VSU supports the preparation and education of a diverse population while staying

committed to its founding as an HBCU. However, enrollment numbers are on the decline for

HBCUs across the country. Further exploring this phenomenon is critical to understanding the

current and future position of HBCUs in addition to understanding how their narrative impacts

their visibility. This study will investigate factors that influence non-black, domestic students'

perception of VSU's visibility and the enrollment management strategies (EMS) to recruit that

population using a mixed-methods study.

Problem Statement and Study Purpose

Current declining enrollment numbers at VSU have become problematic, as the National

Center for Education Statistics (2019) indicated a 34.4% decrease in total student enrollment

from the fall of 2012 to the fall of 2018. This drop created a budgetary shortfall that has

impacted student facilities, programs, and services. To be a sustainable institution, VSU "recognizes the urgency of building an effective operational system" (Virginia State University, 2019). Therefore, this study will address the administration's desire to explore what information non-Black students have of VSU and whether they consider the institution when making higher education plans.

To meet this goal, this study will explore VSU's visibility with non-Black populations; investigate appropriate EMS to expand VSU's visibility so as to recruit more non-Black students; and consider possible factors that may cause non-Black prospective students lack of knowledge around VSU, despite its long history. An interest exists on the part of the administration to increase the number of non-Black undergraduate students, which is significant and demonstrates a commitment to a more inclusive community. One consideration that directly impacts the recruitment of this population is the lack of research regarding EMS for HBCUs. As such, this study responds to that gap in the research. An anticipated outcome of this study will be to provide recommendations for new strategies that will increase VSU's appeal to a broader range of non-Black, domestic students.

Research Questions

1. What is the VSU narrative that is shared with non-Black, domestic students?
2. How can the administration expand its visibility with non-Black, domestic students?

Significance of the Study

Higher education is continually evolving and diversifying to align with shifting demographics and the changing face of United States higher education as institutions struggle

with how to create social and academic cultures that meet the needs of all students, including minorities, the examination of diversity has intensified, and the lens continues to hone in on the issues of acclimation and support systems for minority students (Eakins & Eakins, 2017). Students' experiences and perceptions are critical to understanding social acclimation and academic success, as well as obtaining information and gaining insight specific to recruiting and retaining minority groups within a majority population (Eakins & Eakins, 2017). This study will add to the research on EMS that can be used by institutions in higher education, particularly HBCUs that are strategically intensifying efforts to recruit new students for institutional sustainability.

Further, this study will add to the understanding of EMS at HBCUs, as administrators, faculty, and other stakeholders collaborate to provide an inclusive environment for students of all backgrounds. The outcomes of this study may produce knowledge regarding the impact of EMS to recruit non-Black, domestic students to VSU.

Theoretical Framework

Two theories guide study: institutional theory and college choice. Institutional theory examines the processes and mechanisms by which structures, schemas, rules, and routines become established as authoritative guidelines for social behavior (Scott, 2005). This theory helps our understanding of the pressures that institutions face to become more similar and conform to easily recognizable and acceptable standards that help foster an institution's legitimacy (Harris, 2013). In addition, the institutional theory explains how choices (accidental or deliberate) made by institutions lead to mirroring norms and values within an organizational

field (Harris, 2013). This theoretical framework did guide the construction and analysis of interviews with VSU's admissions staff.

The second theoretical framework used in this study is college choice (see Appendix A). Perna (2006) stated that college choice is shaped by "an individual's assessment of the benefits and costs of an investment in college, which is influenced by the individual's habitus, as well as the school and community context, the higher education context, and the social, economic, and policy context" (p. 101). Hossler and Gallagher (1987) asserted that the college process has three stages: predisposition, search, and choice. This study will look into how the perceived narrative of VSU has influenced the college choice decisions for non-Black, domestic students who attend the university. College choice, as a framework, will influence the analysis of a high school counselor survey.

Research Overview

The scope of this study includes HBCUs and enrollment practices at HBCUs, specifically VSU. This study will use a mixed-method research design in order to help determine the qualitative and quantitative measures of the same concept, providing a more robust overall answer to the questions being asked (Schutt, 2019). Surveys of high school guidance counselors, document analyses of institutional admissions websites, and admission staff interviews will be utilized to gather the qualitative data. Both methods will allow for further insight regarding non-Black students' accessibility to recruitment and marketing information about the university. Although the research is focused on a public, four-year HBCU in Virginia, the data collected and analyzed for this study could provide insights for other minority-serving institutions (MSIs) with an interest in recruiting underrepresented student populations.

Relevant Terminology

This section will provide information on the relevant terminology used within this
document. These definitions provide specificity regarding the meanings of certain terms in this
study.

- *Black:* An American having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (U.S.
  Census Bureau, 2011) and/or people from the Caribbean (e.g., Jamaica, Virgin Islands,
  Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Haiti, Martinique). Other ethnic group considerations
  include Pakistan, South America, Europe, Southern India, Mexico, Cuba, Creoles, Native
  Americans, mid-eastern groups from Sudan and Saudi Arabia, newly immigrated
  Africans, and a variety of multi-racial people (Livingston & Pierce, 2013).

- *Branding:* The promotion of a particular product or company by means of advertising
  and distinctive design (The Dictionary of Merriam-Webster, 2020).

- *Diversity:* The presence of differences within a given setting that may include gender,
  race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, place of practice, and practice
  type. It is the way people are different and yet the same at the individual and group
  levels. Organizational diversity requires examining the makeup of a group to ensure that
  multiple perspectives are represented (Tan, 2019).

- *Domestic:* Domestic students are American citizens, naturalized U.S. citizens, permanent
  residents, refugees, or asylees; students who indicate that they were born and raised in the
  United States or identify themselves as American by nationality (Güzel & Glazer, 2019).

- *Enrollment Management Strategies (EMS)*: Strategic goals that are informed, intentional,
  and integrated and enable institutions to use a wide range of applied social science

research methods and models of strategic planning and analysis to achieve their

enrollment goals (Hossler & Kalsbeek, 2013).

- *Historically Black Colleges and Universities* (HBCUs): Institutions of higher education

  in the United States established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the

  education of Black Americans. These institutions are accredited by a nationally

  recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary [of Education]

  to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered or is, according to such an

  agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation. (U.S.

  Department of Education, n.d.)

- *Latinx:* A pan-ethnic label typically used to describe individuals in the United States who

  are descendants of, or direct immigrants coming from, Latin America. This term brings

  attention to diverse forms of gender identity and expression that fall outside of the gender

  binary inherent in the terms Latino or Latina (Santos, 2017).

- *Narrative:* Promotion of an institution's history, traditions, cultures, and/or values

  through varied modalities (The Dictionary of Merriam-Webster, 2020).

- *Non-athlete*: A person who is not an athlete (The Dictionary of Merriam-Webster, 2020).

- *Predominantly White Institution (PWI):* Used to describe institutions of higher learning in

  which Whites account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment. However, the

  majority of these institutions may also be understood as historically White (i.e., during

  their founding, students of color were not allowed to attend) (Lomotey, 2010).

- *Minority*: A culturally, ethnically, or racially distinct group that coexists with, but is subordinate to a more dominant group (The Dictionary of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020.).

- *Non-Black:* Asian, Hispanic, American Indian, and White/Caucasian students (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

Conclusion

For a century or more, HBCUs were in a practical manner the only accessible institutions of post-secondary education to Black people in the United States. Today, all Americans now have the individual right to choose when, where and how they would like to access higher learning. Even with declining enrollment numbers, HBCUs still prove to be relevant and a choice for many students.

Findings from this study could be used to develop targeted recruitment strategies for non-Black, domestic student populations, help HBCUs to reposition for future growth and to generate new strategic enrollment management (SEM) plans. In addition, this study could be useful to HBCU presidents, chief admissions officers, and administrators in understanding how to expand their narrative to non-Black, domestic students from the perception of high school counselors and other recruitment strategies from other MSIs and PWIs.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter will review the literature related to the major topics relevant to this study. First, a brief history of the purpose of HBCUs will discuss the specialized mission of these institutions and how the curriculum of HBCUs evolved from vocational to academic. Such changes leveled broad-based higher education standards between HBCUs and PWIs and allowed Blacks an increased chance for prosperity. A discussion of the challenges faced by HBCUs will bring the topic into a current social and political context. Next, the literature will discuss recruitment and enrollment management strategies used by institutions of higher learning to attract racially diverse student populations. This chapter will end with a discussion of the applicability to and potential impact of EMS at VSU.

Brief History

Higher education began when Harvard College was founded in 1636 (Ricard, 2006). The purpose of Harvard College was to prepare wealthy, White males for the ministry. For over 200 years, the higher education system in America served the elite (Ricard, 2006). As the central focus of higher education was on White males, it excluded other genders and races from full participation. Exkano (2013) stated that the founding of HBCUs in the mid-1800s was the "realization of the first social contract between a historically disenfranchised people and the government" (p. 68). The institution of slavery had robbed Black people of literacy, but not of their desire to be educated.

The first HBCUs were Cheyney University in Pennsylvania (1837), Lincoln University (1854) in Pennsylvania, and Wilberforce University (1856) in Ohio (Brown, 2013). Between

1865 and 1900, African-Americans and their others, mostly White philanthropists and missionaries established more than 200 schools (i.e., HBCUs) (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014). The second Morrill Act of 1890 required states, particularly in the Confederate south, to provide land-grants for institutions for Black students (Richardson & Harris, 2004). Exkano (2013) stated that because Blacks were denied a voice prior to 1865, it was "only through participation in education [that they were] able to reconstruct their identity" (p. 75). According to Richardson and Harris (2004), "from their inception, HBCUs managed to exceed the expectations of those who condescended to define their mission[s]" (p. 368).

Although the federal government aided the establishment of HBCUs, the longstanding impact of HBCUs is also regarded as tenuous, as HBCUs have been placed in the center of the country's struggle against segregation, discrimination, and the fight for racial equality and social justice (Cantey et al., 2011). Scholars and historians who have examined the history of higher education continue to assert that education is still deeply implicated in perpetuating White supremacy (Allen et al., 2018).

Curriculum

The initial mission of HBCUs was to provide former slaves who had no previous schooling with opportunities to learn basic literacy skills (Allen et al., 2007). The negative impact of White influence on early HBCUs was often "tinged with self-interest" (Exkano, 2013, p. 69). Even among White abolitionists and Northern philanthropists, racial prejudices were evident (Ricard, 2006). As Blacks were not regarded as equal, Whites supported a vocational curriculum that would prepare African-Americans for low wage jobs. Scholars and historians who have examined the history of higher education continue to assert that education is deeply

implicated in perpetuating White supremacy (Allen et al., 2018). Although the mission of early

HBCUs seemed progressive, in reality, such a curriculum stagnated African-Americans in their

quest for equality. As a result, the educational goals of some HBCUs remained limited, with a

focus on basic skill development, including instruction on social skills, manual trades, and

religious education (Ricard, 2006). It was not until the early 1900s that HBCUs began to offer a

curriculum at the post-secondary level (Ricard, 2006).

Shifting Purpose of HBCUs

Shifts in American society that began in the 1920s were articulated by scholar and

activist W.E.B. Du Bois, who stated that, without the establishment of the Negro college, Blacks

would be pushed back into slavery (Exkano, 2013). In Du Bois' influential text, *Souls of Black

Folks* (1903), he rejected Washington's emphasis on vocational training (Cantey, et al., 2011).

Booker T. Washington, a graduate of Hampton Institute (Virginia) and founder of the Tuskegee

Institute in Alabama, believed that a practical education would offer Blacks a means by which to

obtain advancement that remained socially separated from, but financially tied to Whites. Du

Bois, rather, advocated for a liberal arts education, comparable to that of White higher education

institutions (Allen et al., 2007). Du Bois pushed for Blacks to become doctors, teachers, and

professionals, paving the way for an elite group called the talented tenth (Ricard, 2006).

Du Bois' ideas shifted the scope of education for African-Americans. Exkano (2013)

asserted that Du Bois "recognized the need for Blacks to have an environment that allowed for

autonomy and self-reflexivity after centuries of oppression" (p. 64). The transition to a liberal

arts curriculum was a catalyst for HBCUs to play a more transformative role in Black

communities (Allen et al., 2007). The longstanding debate and opposing ideas of Washington

and Du Bois had, in effect, heightened the possibilities for HBCUs by initiating a more concerted

effort to emulate the larger system of higher education in America that offered a range of

academic options (Ricard, 2006). Exkano (2013) asserted that "HBCUs were single-handedly the

driving force to establishing the Black middle class" (p. 70). This shift also signified the

beginning of the long-standing struggle for HBCUs to justify their role in the world of academe

(Ricard, 2006).

Impact of Social Change

Another major change for HBCUs occurred during the 1950s. In 1954, *Brown v. Board of

Education* established the precedent that "separate, but equal" was not equal at all. The Supreme

Court ruling determined that segregation in public schools by race was unconstitutional. The

post-*Brown* impact, which included funding from the GI Bill and the passage of the Civil Rights

Act of 1964, propelled enrollment in higher education and translated into a 110% increase

between 1964 and 1969 (Allen et al., 2007). On the surface, these landmark court decisions were

beneficial to Blacks who sought higher degrees, but the expansion and transformation of higher

education stirred controversy among educational researchers.

The civil rights era also signified a time when federal policy confronted the neglect of

HBCUs as well as inequity for Black students. Many decades of under-funding had resulted in

the serious underdevelopment of Black institutions and demonstrated a lack of commitment to

the advancement of Blacks in America (Allen et al., 2007). Title IV of the Civil Rights Act

mandated that all colleges desegregate, and Title VI made it illegal for institutions receiving

federal aid to discriminate against students on the basis of race, color, or national origin (Brown,

2013). The push for students to migrate to PWIs became the equalizing policy of affirmative

action, providing access to college admissions through certain preferences for minorities (Knight et al., 2012). Social progress brought the issue of accommodation to the forefront for HBCUs and PWIs.

Diversification

In the times since affirmative action, scholars and leaders have debated over the future of HBCUs remaining "historically Black" because the population of HBCUs was growing increasingly more diverse with a greater representation of White, Latinx, and Asian American students (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014). As a result of diversification, a significant shift has occurred in the college choices made by African-American students (Brown, 2013). Due to increased access in an integrated society, the mission and existence of HBCUs is arguably obsolete (Knight et al., 2012). In the early 1960s, 70% of Black students attended HBCUs, but, by 2000, the proportion had dropped to 20% (Strayhorn & Johnson, 2014). Richardson and Harris (2004) examined HBCUs on the 50th anniversary of *Brown* and declared that "it created a backlash of unintended consequences" with decreased attendance and funding (p. 365).

In spite of changing times and an increasingly diversified society, HBCUs continue to epitomize the African-American struggle for equality and dignity by providing students with open access to educational opportunities. Especially for students of color, the completion of a college degree is highly coveted (Kim & Conrad, 2006). However, diversification will continue to shift the focus of HBCUs from promoting Black advancement to accommodating a changing population over the coming decades (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014). Population changes and the significance of race in American society must be used to provide an important context for examining the role and mission of HBCUs (Allen et al., 2007). These changes are welcomed by

some and dreaded by others, particularly alumni, as HBCUs are seeing a dip in the enrollment of the very people they were established to educate (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014).

Exkano (2014) asserted that "HBCUs are needed as much today as ever before" (p. 68). Researchers continue to find evidence of stronger interpersonal relationships and social networking, including a sense of family for Black students, at HBCUs (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014). Although many Black students may adjust and adapt successfully at PWIs, they are less likely to feel a strong sense of inclusion and belonging (Kim & Conrad, 2006). Black students at PWIs continue to encounter criticism, experience exclusion and feel that their contributions are not valued (Tereshani & Briscoe, 2008). Allen et al. (2018) stated that "African American student college opportunities continue to be limited by structural disadvantages and systematic racism" (p. 43). As exclusion and racism persist, HBCUs will remain a vital option for Black students. Open admissions policies, remedial support services, and sustained civic engagement attribute to the HBCU legacy of providing opportunities for advancement for Black students (Richardson & Harris, 2004).

Enrollment Challenges

Enrollment decreases projected within the next decade will impact all higher education institutions (Grawe, 2018). Data from the National Student Clearinghouse (2019) has shown that, over the last eight years, a 9% decline has occurred in college enrollment. While public, four-year institutions have remained almost flat with enrollment compared to community colleges and private institutions in the past, the Higher Education Demand Index (HEDI) shows a significant contraction in the mid-2020s that will greatly impact higher education (Grawe, 2018). The reason for this enrollment decline is attributed to birth dearth and will result in

significant implications for enrollment strategies in ever-shrinking recruitment pools (Grawe, 2018). Grawe (2018) indicated that the northeast quadrant of the United States should expect a steady modest decline over the next five to seven years. The HEDI forecasts a 20% loss in the Mid-Atlantic and a 25% loss in the East North Central/New England region during this time period for regional four-year institutions (Grawe, 2018). Such changes in enrollment for these areas suggest that VSU has an opportunity now to make the recruitment changes needed to respond to the impending birth dearth.

Impending Crisis

Although all institutions of higher learning grapple with defining their missions, specialized institutions of higher learning, namely HBCUs, are guided by an overarching goal to accommodate the needs of different student populations. In the years since *Brown v. Board*, the population of Black students at HBCUs has decreased, but the proportion of White and non-Black students has increased (Allen et al., 2018). More than 100 HBCUs still exist, and these institutions account for approximately 3% of American post-secondary schools (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014). Despite their collective tenacity, these historic institutions continue to struggle against the wave of limited and deficient human and financial resources, as well as public scrutiny, apathy, and even condemnation. The stakes are higher for HBCUs regarding the challenges they face due to student migration, population shifts, underfunding, and fiscal management; some are currently in jeopardy and most are struggling to remain current and competitive (Ricard, 2006).

According to Cantey et al. (2013), "in facing economic and global challenges, HBCUs are forced to reassess their mission, goals, and methods to further sustain their role in higher

education" (p. 145). *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2003) identified Black colleges as

endangered institutions. In the 1992 case of the *United States v. Fordice*, the United States

Supreme Court questioned the educational value of HBCUs (Kim & Conrad, 2006). In some

states, such as Mississippi, policymakers have demanded mergers between HBCUs and PWIs

and have called for the closure of some institutions (Kim & Conrad, 2006). In 2006, four HBCUs

filed a lawsuit against the state of Maryland, accusing the state of providing unequal funding for

academic programs at PWIs and undermining comparable academic programs at historically

Black colleges in the state (Palmer et al., 2011). The four institutions are awaiting consideration

of the governor of Maryland as the Maryland Senate passed legislation that would allot $577

million to the state's four historically Black colleges and universities over 10 years (Neelakantan,

2020). In addition, litigation has grown acrimonious because HBCUs argue that PWIs have

implemented programs that have undercut the historically successful mission of inclusiveness at

HBCUs (Seltzer, 2019). Such court cases represent the continued legal fight for equality, but

injustice in higher education is not only combatted in large arenas. Allen et al. (2018) stated that

"African American college student activism, campus unrest, and broader progressive social

movements, such as the #BlackLivesMatter movement, highlights how higher education

systematically reproduces society's racial hierarchies" (p. 41).

Colleges and universities have the power to eliminate racial inequities, but it is evident

that they lack the drive and commitment to effect enduring systematic change (Allen et al.,

2018). Eakins and Eakins (2017) offered a solution for PWIs that could be utilized by HBCUs:

> While the demands for change may deceptively appear to inflict an economic burden to
>
> the systematic ideals of normality on university campuses within the United States, these

strains are cogent and apt in that they provide an opportunity for administrators to

reexamine, modify, and enact strategic initiatives on campuses that will hearten those

diversity efforts at their institutions (p. 51).

Thus, many HBCUs have arrived at an impasse of adaptation or extinction.

The history of HBCUs includes a vast social, academic, and political landscape, and such

complexities underscore the current issue of sustainability facing many HBCUs. HBCUs must

make critical organizational and institutional decisions while addressing the changing terrain of

student enrollment in order to survive. As globalization and access have become more relevant to

students in an ever-changing society, HBCUs must respond by adapting (Brown, 2013).

Sustainability requires heightened awareness and specific plans of action in order to increase

student enrollment. As HBCUs face challenges to thrive, one response has been to develop

stronger enrollment management practices.

Enrollment Management

Enrollment management evolved out of the field of college admissions (Croteau &

Maginnis, 2005). Although the official term "enrollment management" did not appear in the

literature until 1981, it was introduced by Maguire and Campanella of Boston College in 1976

when the college faced an enrollment crisis (Hossler & Bontrager, 2015). As enrollment

management involves the implementation of institutional activities to help shape and influence

student enrollment, Maquire and Campanella asserted that enrollment management would be the

best construct to address the crisis (Bontrager et al., 2012).

Enrollment management is both a concept and a process that includes traditional

operations of an admissions office and encompasses many other functions, such as financial aid,

retention, registrar, marketing, orientation, advising, career services, academic services, and

institutional research (Hossler, 1984; Huddleston & Rumbough, 1997). Kemerer et al. (1982)

asserted that enrollment management is both a concept and a procedure requiring a set of

activities to ensure a stable flow of students to and through the institution by incorporating a

collaborative approach. According to Hossler (1984), the process of retaining students is just as

important as recruitment in managing college enrollments.

The evolution of enrollment management from policy to practice over the last four

decades is evidence of higher education's transformation related to changing its admissions

practices to marketing enterprises (Henderson, 2001). Campanella's (1976) insight revealed that

institutional synergy and the integration of academic planning and market demands would be

necessary to break campus silos and unify the institution's enrollment strategy. Kurz and

Scannell (2006) proposed that the development of enrollment management for post-secondary

institutions hinged on the evolution of higher education becoming a marketplace.

While literature exists highlighting various enrollment management studies for PWIs,

very few studies have focused on HBCUs. HBCUs are the least studied but among the most

commented about institutions in academic literature (Brown & Freeman, 2004). Black (2014)

provided an analysis of enrollment trends at HBCU institutions over four years and outlined the

challenges and the contributions of these institutions. He provided foundational insights that can

be leveraged by HBCU leaders to focus on their respective campuses in order to generate

institutionally tailored solutions and strategies (Black, 2014), such as using data as it relates to

enrollment. Enrollment management considers how institutional pricing, financial aid trends, and

perceived institutional value impact enrollment when staffing and finances are not at the desired

levels (Black, 2014). Data from institutional enrollment trends is key. Institutions that are

presented with enrollment challenges should ask:

1. Are the admissions criteria aligned with student success factors?

2. What are the impediments to student success and completion?

3. Have strategies been developed to address the aforementioned impediments?

4. How are existing retention initiatives performing (e.g., learner outcomes, number of

students impacted, retention results)? (Black, 2014, p. 8).

HBCU leaders also are encouraged to analyze institutional pricing and identify a distinct

difference between the ability to pay and willingness to pay as both are equally important when a

student makes the decision to attend an institution (Black, 2014). Black (2014) asserted that

HBCU leaders should understand that a difference exists between affordability and value. Cost,

along with perceived quality, is powerful. The data has shown that students who perceive an

institution to have educational value at an affordable price will yield favorable graduation rates

and low average loan amounts (Black, 2014).

Funding that comes from tuition is highly important to the sustainability of HBCUs, as

many publicly-funded HBCUs have historically received an inadequate share of financial

resources from their own state governments and federal funding systems (Arnett, 2015). As a

result, state-funded HBCUs began to pursue their entitled fair share of institutional funding

resources from their state supporting government systems. Lawsuits have been filed on behalf of

public HBCUs in South Carolina and Maryland to contend that HBCUs in those states have

historically received less state funding support and inequitable academic program offerings in

comparison to the public PWIs (Arnett, 2015). Lawsuits in Maryland have sparked renewed strides for equality in the midst of turmoil.

The unpredictable higher education environment continues to be affected by internal and external factors, including federal policy shifts, decreased state support, and changing student demographics (Black, 2014). HBCUs represent only 3% of United States colleges and universities and account for nearly 25% of Black students earning bachelor's degrees, according to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). As many post-secondary institutions are striving to increase enrollments and degree completions for Black students, the expansion of enrollment management practices in higher education continues to evolve as the higher education landscape progresses.

Enrollment Management Structure

The EM structure or organizational model is well-researched, although early literature regarding enrollment models limited the management components to admissions. Hossler and Bean (1990) expanded the definition of enrollment management, asserting that enrollment management was not limited solely to recruitment and admissions, but required the integration of crucial student service areas with continuous movement into, through, and beyond an institution. Huddleston and Rumbaugh's (1997) national study identified seven functions most frequently recognized as enrollment management components by colleges and universities: institutional research and planning, marketing, admissions, registrar, financial aid, student orientation, and retention and advising. Additionally, Jonas and Popovics (2000) extended the definition of the enrollment management organization, focusing on the addition of budgeting, strategic planning,

and assessment, so as to involve the entire institution to target student graduation and goal

achievement.

The literature identified several components as critical to any enrollment structure and

model, with institutional research and planning as the primary enrollment management

components (Hossler, 2015). Collaborative processes between institutional research and planning

identify challenges and provide invaluable information on external trends and internal challenges

that support enrolling, retaining, and graduating students at a university. Institutional research

provides direction for enrollment managers by consistently assessing and providing data on

trends, marketing opportunities, and market challenges.

Further, institutions that utilize marketing as a tool to formulate communication plans,

outreach, and advertising opportunities have been successful (Huddleston, 2003). Adopting

marketing concepts provides opportunities for institutions to identify student demographics,

project student demand, and develop enrollment and retention plans (Huddleston, 2003). A shift

in the higher education landscape has led to a shift in the manner in which universities operate in

terms of recruitment and marketing (Chapeleo & O'Sullivan, 2017). According to Chapeleo and

O'Sullivan (2017), "universities are searching for a unique definition of what they offer in order

to differentiate themselves and attract students" (p. 159).

Recruitment and admissions practices are also vital to enrollment management

(Bontrager & Hossler, 2015). Admissions staff initiate partnerships between prospective

students, families, K-12 schools, and the institution. Recruitment practices connect students,

parents, and counselors to institutions through a series of strategic, continuous outreach efforts

and campus activities to continue to nurture the relationship between the universities and the

students (Hossler & Kalsbeek, 2009). If complications regarding the recruitment and admissions processes occur, then the admissions staff must have a working knowledge and understanding of the institution's academic programs, branding, and mission in order to utilize demonstrated counseling skills to mediate the issue. Ultimately, recruitment and admissions are pivotal to future enrollment and institutional viability (DeHaemers & Sandlin, 2012).

Strategic Enrollment Management

SEM combines enrollment management and institutional strategic planning to achieve the ideal enrollment. As enrollment structures and models vary, it is important to utilize student data to determine which enrollment planning strategy to adopt. Pollock (2012) suggested that SEM implementation requires the following: identifying key players and drivers; receiving 'buy-in' from executive leadership; and creating the data agenda, which includes accounting for state, federal, grant, and educational policies and initiatives. SEM also requires defining institutional goals, establishing a vision, establishing a strategic plan that focuses on collegiality and inclusion, and defining student success (Pollock, 2012).

Bontrager et al. (2012) discussed preparing the campus for change, more explicitly preparing for organizational change. Researchers studying organizational effectiveness have demonstrated that the behavior of organizational leaders will impact the effectiveness of organizations, both positively and negatively (Flanigan, 2016).

Additionally, Flanigan (2016) stated that choosing a deliberate leadership style, rather than a default style, the one that is most comfortable, will yield greater results. Choosing a leadership style that is purposefully aligned with the culture or structure of an organization can improve the effectiveness of enrollment management. Leadership that provides the opportunity

for collaborative participation and that allows stakeholders to share in the decision-making

process is the style that moves organizations toward achieving long term and sustainable goals

(Briggs et al., 2005).

Henderson (2017) discussed the importance of consensus-building across the university

to promote university-wide cooperation among divisions. For higher education, the outcomes

prove beneficial to student success and student engagement when academics and student affairs

work together to meet student engagement goals. Henderson (2017) identified cooperation as the

key component for healthy enrollment and greater student connection to the university.

Organizational change can pose an ideological challenge for some HBCUs as a result of

strong traditions and an ingrained culture of "being social agencies and social equalizers for

students of color that have been denied access to higher education and marginalized in society"

(Joseph, 2012, p. 126). To navigate the challenge of introducing organizational change,

Bontrager et al. (2012) recommended creating institutional value, initiating a culture of change,

and areas for change management. Change management involves advising university

administrators, faculty, and staff through engagement and equipping university personnel with

skills, knowledge, and attitude that will help faculty successfully interact with the community,

co-workers, families, and students (Bontrager et al., 2012).

Organizational change management also involves creativity and innovation through

programming policies and services that anticipate future changes. Research has suggested that

people are the greatest resource for improving enrollment. Matching and meeting student

expectations through the hiring of qualified SEM staff members, certified SEM training, and

professional development are necessary in order to communicate the brand of the university, while promoting a seamless and robust learning environment for the students (Leigh, 2014).

Each institution must evaluate itself in order to determine how it will implement enrollment management practices to effectively meet institutional goals. Unique institutional missions, visions, and goals can influence how enrollment management is implemented (Kurz & Scannell, 2006). Thus, no one size fits all enrollment management plan or strategy exists. Instead, enrollment management models exist that can be used as a whole or modified as a guide through which to implement enrollment management at both four-year institutions and two-year community colleges. Enrollment management strategies help universities achieve strategic goals in informed, intentional, and integrated ways by using a wide range of research methods and models of strategic planning in informed, intentional, and integrated ways (Kossler & Kalsbeek, 2013). Although enrollment goals for universities are generally multifaceted, they generally overlap in the following areas: improving market demand, enhancing the academic profile of the student body, ensuring socioeconomic and racial and ethnic diversity, improving graduation rates, and increasing the net revenue of tuition (Kossler & Kalsbeek, 2013). While enrollment management strategies can improve the organization and its appeal to students, student's choice is a significant factor related to increasing enrollment.

The College Choice Process

The College Choice process or the stages students go through when deciding whether to enroll in college is built off of an organizational structure theory originally developed by Hossler and Gallagher (1987) and added to by Perna (2006). The process includes factors or layers that map a student's attitude toward getting a post-secondary education (Griffin et al., 2012). Before

making the decision of whether to attend college, students must determine which school(s) will

meet their needs, values, and wants as well as whether any of the schools have academic, social,

or financial limitations (Griffin et al., 2012).

Factors that Impact the College Choice Process

The College Choice process helps researchers understand what factors will influence how

prospective students make decisions about which institutions they would like to attend. A 2009

longitudinal study, sponsored by the United States Department of Education, followed a group of

high school students from 2009 until 2012. The study found that the top three reputational factors

that impacted the college choice process were academic quality/reputation, having a desired

program of study, and job placement (LaFave et al., 2018).

When focusing on the human element of the college choice process, the students

indicated that their parents and the admissions counselors were the most powerful influencer(s)

when related to deciding which college to attend (Martin, 2015). The 2017 *State of College*

Admission report published by the National Association for College Admission Counseling

reinforced Martin's (2015) findings and highlighted that a student's access to college information

and counseling in high school is a salient factor during the application process (Clinedinst &

Koranteng, 2017).

Access also involves technology. Initial recruitment outreach is best received in the form

of social media or an online presence (Martin, 2015). Jones (2016) asserts that social media and

social circles can be a source of influence when no other credible source can be found.

Access also involves student experience. In a study conducted by Maramba et al. (2015)

of non-Black students, specifically Asian and Latinx students, the students were interviewed

about their college choices as they related to HBCUs. The results revealed that "those with peers who had prior knowledge about HBCUs shaped and influenced the decision-making process for these students" (Maramba et al., 2015, p. 265). These students understood their ethnic identities as non-Black students attending HBCUs, but this awareness did not impede their decisions to attend HBCUs (Maramba et al., 2015).

Factors that Impact the College Admissions Process

While it has been reported that high school counselors have a strong influence on students' college choices, Clinedinst and Koranteng (2017) suggest that high school counselors are overwhelmed with high caseloads and have little time to meet with students. Without engagement with students to discuss college choice, college admissions offices turn to the same methods they have been using for the last 20 years to identify a student recruiting pool, such as grades, high school curriculum, and test scores (Clinedinst & Koranteng, 2017). However, if an institution is looking for different outcomes but is using the same process for student entry, not much will change. Creating specific marketing designed to fit within high school counselors' limited time frames could help bring more applicants to the institution's front door.

Marketing Strategies that Impact the College Choice Process

The intangible nature of education is what makes marketing higher education so difficult (Anctil, 2008). Since education is something that cannot be seen, touched, or felt, the benefits of education are not available instantly once completed (Han, 2014). Successful marketing strategies for higher education require identifying the tangibles of an institution, such as academics, campus appearance, social life, alumni, and athletics, and distinguishing them from the institution's competitors (Anctil, 2008).

In addition to utilizing the most effective form of college choice materials, Harper (2001) found that HBCUs' admissions and recruitment materials needed to be examined for information completeness and should also answer prospective students' questions. Students should not have to go to several other sources to find their answers. Unfortunately, Harper (2001) found that recruitment materials from public HBCUs were less responsive, complete, and professional than those materials from private HBCUs.

Factors for non-Black Student Engagement at HBCUs

Educators need to better understand non-Black students' college experiences at HBCUs since there has been a steady increase in enrollment numbers (Carter & Fountaine, 2012; Maramba et al., 2015; Allen & Stone, 2016). In fact, since 2017 the population of non-Black students at HBCUs has increased by 25 percent (Richman, 2019). According to Carter and Fountaine (2012), several themes have emerged that have acted as influential factors related to the engagement of White students attending HBCUs. These factors were faculty and student interactions, staff and student interactions, involvement in co-curricular activities, prior university experiences, and first-year experience programs (Carter & Fountaine, 2012).

Allen and Stone (2016) found similar results in their study relating to Latinx students and how effective persistence and a sense of belonging were when creating an engaging atmosphere for non-Black students at an HBCU. Specifically, Latinx students appreciated supportive faculty (Allen & Stone, 2016). Additionally, students who successfully navigated enrolling and attending an HBCU were able to draw upon pre-college cross-cultural experiences. Non-Black students who had prior experience operating within the minority of a predominantly African-American community (e.g., K-12 education, church, community center) were less likely

to encounter culture shock and more likely to find ways by which to succeed in their college careers (Allen & Stone, 2016).

Maramba et al.'s (2015) study found that non-Black students, specifically Asian American and Latinx students, identified financial and practical reasons as strong additional factors for deciding to attend an HBCU. Diversity grants, scholarships, and the low cost of tuition made attending an HBCU a more viable and practical choice (Maramba et al., 2015).

Finally, proximity to a student's home was a practical factor for attending an HBCU (Maramba et al., 2015). Students could live at home and attend school without the additional costs associated with on- or off-college housing and food.

Past research has indicated that students are drawn to and succeed in environments where they see themselves reflected in impactful and powerful ways and perceive themselves to be key members of the community (Tatum, 2003). VSU understands the connection between inclusivity and increased enrollment. As a result, VSU has initiated the first step in the Strategic Plan 2020-2025, which calls for a more diverse student population (Strategic Plan Overview, 2020).

Virginia State University and HBCUs

This study focuses on Virginia State University, which was established under the Second Morrill Act of 1890 (National Institute of Food and Agriculture, n.d.). The Second Morrill Act of 1890 allocated funding for the institutions created in the First Morrill Act of 1862, which provided land grant institutions for Blacks and outlawed racial discrimination in admissions policies for institutions receiving Morrill Act funding (National Research Council, 1995). These land-grant colleges created non-academic programs, such as agriculture, engineering, and military training (Our History, 2019).

Virginia State University is located in the Mid-Atlantic was the land-grant institution for Black students, while the Virginia Polytechnic Institution, established in 1872 under the original Morrill Act of 1862 (Colleges, 1995), was the land-grant institution for White students. The Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute's name was changed to Virginia State College for Negroes (VSC) in 1930. In 1944, VSC opened its second branch in Norfolk, then named Norfolk State College (NSC). Subsequently, in 1969, NSC gained its independence from VSC and officially became Norfolk State University. A decade later in 1979, VSC changed its name to Virginia State University (Virginia State University, n.d.).

Like many colleges in HBCU history, VSU was a small organization. In its first year of instruction, 1883-1884, the organization consisted of 126 students, seven Black faculty members, one central building, 33 acres of land, a 200 book library, and a $20,000 operating budget (Our History, 2019). Many outstanding executive leaders directed the growth and progress of VSU over the last 12 decades. In December 2015, the VSU Board of Visitors announced that Makola M. Abdullah, Ph.D. would become the institution's 14th president (Our History, 2019).

The history of VSU compels a shift in focus from assets and finances to evolving campus cultures. Climate and culture reflect political and economic changes within higher education. To adapt, VSU's mission was changed during the 2013-14 academic year "to promote and sustain academic programs that integrate instruction, research, and extension/public service in a design most responsive to the needs and endeavors of individuals and groups within its scope of influence" (Virginia State University, n.d.d., para. 2). The institution's mission has become transformative, as the institution, as demonstrated by its strategic plan, is showing a greater commitment to a standard of shared governance, new opportunities, and identifying

strategies to address the challenges of higher education (VSU Strategic Plan, 2019). In order for

VSU to remain competitive in the post-secondary market, it will need to adopt recruiting

techniques that reach beyond the traditional population it serves and connect with students that

fit its transformative aspirations.

Shifts in Recruitment

The majority of HBCUs share a challenge in today's higher education culture: how to do

more with less. Solomon (2014) outlined the fiscal and institutional consequences of recruiting

shortfalls as they are related to VSU and the decline in enrollment that culminated in 2014.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), VSU saw a 42% decrease in

total student enrollment from the Fall of 2012 to the Fall of 2018. The effects of the enrollment

shortfalls caused several changes to occur in 2014, including temporarily closing some residence

halls and a dining hall and an increase in the university's already highly deferred maintenance

budget until enrollment numbers increase (Solomon, 2014). In 2019, VSU reiterated that recent

budgetary setbacks due to dropping enrollment were having "an outsized effect on student affairs

and academic support functions, and the university and community recognize the importance of

rebuilding an effective operational system" (Virginia State University, n.d.b., para. 3). Despite

recent financial challenges, VSU offers one of the lowest tuition rates in Virginia, resulting in

opportunities for upward mobility for a wide range of students with different cultures and

socioeconomic backgrounds (Strategic Plan Overview, n.d.).

In order to address socioeconomic disparities among college students, in 2019, the

president of the United States signed the Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking

Resources for Education Act (FUTURE), which permanently extended mandatory funding for

HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions. The goal of FUTURE was to increase

enrollment numbers for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) majors and

supplement other funding opportunities for the institutions (United Negro College Fund, 2019).

The Act was also the first successful legislation since the Higher Education Act of 2008 expired

in 2013. That Act governed federal education programs (Kerr, 2020). FUTURE "eases the

burdens on low-income, first-generation college students by simplifying the process for applying

for student financial aid" (United Negro College Fund, 2019, para. 1).

Access is a key factor in determining college choice and, as the quality of HBCUs is

constantly being questioned, federal and state lawmakers must renew their commitment to high

quality, affordable public higher education by increasing the revenue that these schools receive.

As HBCUs are seeking financial support, they are simultaneously striving to build a stronger

middle class and develop the entrepreneurs and skilled workers needed for a strong state

economy (Mitchell et al., 2017). For the purpose of sustainability, it is imperative that HBCUs

provide evidence of their importance related to educating all students, and not just Black

students.

Today's Virginia State University Student

In the Fall of 2018, VSU's 4,385 undergraduate and graduate students consisted of a

majority population of female students (57%), who were mostly in-state residents (General

Characteristics of Fall Headcount Enrollment, 2018). Out-of-state residents (27.2%) enrolled

from places such as New York, Washington D.C., Maryland, and New Jersey (State Council of

Higher Education for Virginia, 2020). From the Fall of 1992 until the Fall of 2017, the institution

consistently reported that around 90% of its students who reported their race indicated they

identified as African Americans or Blacks. The remaining students identified as White, Hispanic, Asian Pacific Islander, or American Indian (State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, 2019). In 2018, VSU had 329 student-athletes (231 males and 98 females) across 12 teams (Virginia State University, 2018). The institution's most popular majors include physical education and recreation, criminal justice, business management, and mass communications (State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019; Undergraduate Majors by College and Classification, n.d.).

Virginia State University's Strategic Plan

Lundy-Wagner's (2015) research indicated that VSU's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan implemented a policy agenda that focused on college access, dual enrollment, remedial education, and financial aid. The strategic plan revealed the university's attempts to diversify in a positive direction, as the first goal outlined VSU's desire to "become a national model institution offering opportunities for educating students from all backgrounds to attain high academic achievement and employment success rates" (Virginia State University, n.d., p.6). Supporting the first goal are four objectives that speak to the success and environment that VSU will need to recruit a diverse student population. The four objectives are:

1. Ensure affordability and reduce the financial obligation for all students;

2. Implement a comprehensive enrollment, marketing, and management plan to attract, recruit, retain, and reclaim students and increase the enrollment yield;

3. Establish a diverse and inclusive learning environment; and

4. Implement a university-wide comprehensive student academic success plan (Virginia State University, n.d.).

VSU's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan specifically mentions enrollment management and marketing (Strategic Plan Overview, n.d.). Palmer et al (2011) indicated that institutions need to go further than just mentioning enrollment goals and need to move toward "embracing an expansive definition of diversity that is attentive to ethnicity/race beyond the Black-White paradigm and enrollment numbers" (p. 98). HBCUs, like VSU, will need to become more involved with the post-secondary policy agenda by not only recruiting non-Black students, but also high school students via a dual enrollment program. Lundy-Wagner (2015) suggested that institutions should intensify their efforts to recruit students in areas in which they have not traditionally recruited, such as out-of-state students, students from various socioeconomic backgrounds, and international students.

VSU utilizes the Common Black College Application (CBCA) as one of its admission tools. The CBCA allows students interested in attending any of the 55 HBCUs to fill out one form and pay a one-time $35 application fee, thereby making the admissions process more efficient (Common Black College Application, n.d.). The CBCA is a tool that can be used to expose VSU to potential students as well as provide further competition for potential students. To increase access, in 2018, Richmond Public Schools partnered with the Richmond Public School Education Foundation and the CBCA to allow local students to apply to the 55 HBCUs without paying an application fee (WRIC-TV, 2018).

HBCUs and, more importantly, VSU has an opportunity to provide multicultural campus experiences and offer educational opportunities to individuals who face limited access to higher education (ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, 1999; Jewell, 2002). HBCUs could potentially reaffirm commitments they have to their local communities through innovative

strategies, such as partnering with local organizations and promoting political and economic

coalitions among citizens from various socioeconomic backgrounds (Jewell, 2002). Once these

commitments are established, the next step would involve marketing the relationships and

partnerships to promote a sense of inclusion and access for prospective students.

Marketing and Branding

Because of access and inclusion, the recruitment of African-Americans to HBCUs versus

the recruitment of students of other races and ethnicities to HBCUs is like comparing apples to

oranges (Mutakabbir, 2011). As such, recruiting strategies are significant in regard to expanding

HBCUs' narratives and educational opportunities as they relate to prospective students.

Successful marketing begins with identifying and understanding the population that the

institution wants to target (Hossler & Bontrager, 2015). Hossler and Bontrager (2015) advised

that, once the targeted population is identified, marketing efforts should be made to target the

population's values and create opportunities to deliver messages to meet the needs and wants of

the potential students.

VSU's Office of Communication has advertised in the Richmond and Hampton Roads

metro areas via television and newspaper ads (R. Hall, personal communication, May 29, 2019)

and, as such, is likely competing with other four-year public and private institutions in the

recruitment of students in the metro area. These institutions, public and private, include Old

Dominion University, Hampton University, Norfolk State University, Virginia Commonwealth

University, Virginia Union University, Randolph-Macon College, and the University of

Richmond. To expand their recruitment efforts, VSU is currently partnering with the Education

Advisory Board (EAB) to provide additional "boots on the ground" at various recruiting events

along the I-95 corridor in Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey, and New York. (R. Hall,

personal communication, June 30, 2019). In addition, the EAB recruited at the Virginia

Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (VACRAO) Fall Tour, the Infinite

Scholars College Fair, the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)

conference, and various other fairs applicable to HBCU recruitment events (R. Hall, personal

communication, June 30, 2019). VSU is actively expanding its marketing and recruiting efforts,

and the VSU Strategic Plan is targeting a more diverse student body.

Strategies to Attract Non-Black Students

VSU has selected eight benchmark institutions as its peers. The criteria that VSU used to

determine its peers was total enrollment, full-time/part-time percentage of students, size and

setting of institution, Carnegie classification, undergraduate to graduate percentage, sector

(public or private), faculty-to-student ratio, in-state to out-of-state percentage, retention rates,

entry tests scores (e.g., ACT, SAT), and default rates (Virginia State University, n.d.c.). Based

on the criteria above, VSU's benchmark peer institutions are Delaware State University, East

Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, Louisiana State University - Shreveport, Norfolk State

University, State University of New York (SUNY) at Fredonia, the University of North Carolina

at Pembroke, West Virginia State University, and Winston-Salem State University (Virginia

State University, 2019). Only three of the peer institutions are classified as HBCUs (i.e.,

Delaware State University, Winston-Salem State University, Norfolk State University). West

Virginia State University, which started out as an HBCU, has had a demographic shift in

enrollment and is now considered a PWI with 74.2% of its students identifying as Caucasian in

the Fall of 2018 (West Virginia State University, 2019) However, all of these peer institutions

are increasing enrollment through marketing and recruitment strategies that involve

diversification.

For VSU, diversification is critical to increasing enrollment. Peer institutions of VSU that

are HBCUs can provide marketing and recruitment strategies for VSU to model and emulate.

Snipes and Darnell (2017) discussed how HBCUs have used different outreach strategies to

target non-Black students of different backgrounds. Paul Quinn College (PQC), Texas Southern

University (TSU), Fayetteville State University (FSU), and Morehouse College have developed

strategic plans to recruit Latinx students to their institutions. FSU and Morehouse College

devised marketing strategies to entice Latinx students (Snipes & Darnell, 2017). FSU translated

sections of its website and all of its printed materials into Spanish (Snipes & Darnell, 2017),

while Morehouse College announced its intention to recruit more Latinx students. PQC

developed a soccer program to help build upon an already strong plan to attract Latinx students

through scholarships and the hiring of Mexican-American faculty and staff (Snipes & Darnell,

2017). TSU redeveloped its recruitment office and trained staff to work with Latinx students.

Now, recruitment officers plan and implement events for the community and create Latinx

centric spaces on campus within which to celebrate their cultural identities within the campus

community (Snipes & Darnell, 2017).

As HBCUs strive to diversify, literature can provide guidance on inclusivity and the

experiences of non-Black students who attend HBCU. Arroyo et al. (2016) conducted a study

about non-Black students' experiences at three different HBCUs. The results indicated that many

of the participants were not familiar with any of the specifics regarding the cultures and

traditions of HBCUs in general. Many of the students reported that they chose to attend an

HBCU "because of a number of important factors, such as proximity, affordability, and the availability of programs and activities that suited their interests" (Arroyo et al., 2016, p. 369). Arroyo et al. (2016) discovered some participants encountered resistance from their inner circles when they enrolled at HBCUs, but their positive interactions with admissions representatives and faculty provided the support needed to overcome the challenges that they experienced. Support and access could be strong starting points for enrolling non-Black students at HBCUs.

Peterson and Hamrick (2009) researched the White male experience at public HBCUs in order to identify White males who enrolled as a part of the "temporary minority" to examine their experiences on historically Black campuses. Three primary factors impacting inclusion resulted from this study: classroom environment, social environments, and greater awareness of race (Peterson & Hamrick, 2009). One of the highlighted experiences that differed from the normal classroom or social environment experiences related to race. Each of the White students indicated that he experienced discomfort in terms of being the designated White spokesperson since he was, sometimes, the only White person in the classroom or in a social setting. This phenomenon is referred to as "hypervisibility" (Peterson & Hamrick, 2009, p. 42). Hypervisibility occurs when students might be called upon to offer commentary or to have the answer to questions and topics based upon race; some Black students have indicated that they experience the same experience in predominantly White classrooms (Peterson & Hamrick, 2009). Hypervisibility underscores the importance of making students feel included.

Peterson and Hamrick's (2009) study highlighted the importance of positive and reaffirming student experiences for non-Black students at HBCUs. Efforts by other institutions to diversify their campuses (i.e., creating spaces on campus for Latinx students) suggest that the

cultural experience of non-Black students at HBCUs is significant and must be included in the institutional narrative shared by HBCUs, specifically VSU.

Chapter Summary

This literature review makes the case that HBCUs, VSU included, are great contributors to our communities and this country, with a rich history and an established legacy. HBCUs are successful in educating and preparing African-American students at higher rates than PWIs for professional careers or graduate and professional degrees; however, the composition of higher education is changing rapidly for all institutions. Minority populations are growing and evolving across the country and throughout Virginia. Thus, the approach for HBCUs related to recruiting and enrolling a more diverse population must change in order to address the issues that will be outlined in this research study. For VSU, in particular, the narrative for the institution and how it is communicated must support the cultural needs of students of diverse backgrounds and demographics. In addition, the review presented the history of enrollment management and explored strategic enrollment management models, recruitment, and branding and marketing.

Chapter three is informed by the literature and presents the methodology that will effectively analyze the enrollment strategies and narrative for VSU as well as determine the outcomes and recommendations for the executive leadership of the university.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Shifts within higher education are causing colleges and universities to reflect on their current enrollment practices. As such, "like the rest of higher education, HBCUs are facing tough economic times and will have to make critical decisions involving enrollment" (Snipes & Darnell, 2017, p. 50). The purpose of this study is to examine how VSU can expand its visibility with non-Black, domestic students in high schools and community colleges. An anticipated outcome of this study will be to provide recommendations for new strategies that will appeal to a broader range of students.

The researchers will use the outcomes of this study to make recommendations to VSU. The outcomes may also be valuable for other HBCUs. The research questions that will guide this study are:

1. What is the VSU narrative that is shared with non-Black, domestic students?

2. How can the administration expand its visibility with non-Black, domestic students?

The following section will review the theoretical framework that will inform this study.

Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by two theoretical frameworks: institutional theory (Harris, 2013) and college choice (Perna, 2006). Both theories inform this study due to their relationships with how shifting changes in higher education influence institutional change (Harris, 2013) and how institutional changes or services may influence students' college choice (Perna, 2006). The focus on VSU's narrative to key stakeholders is significant to the institution's interest in better

understanding students from diverse racial backgrounds. The enrollment stress faced by higher

education institutions, including HBCUs, indicates that, as the nation is becoming more

diversified, students are opting to attend PWIs that are more assertive in their efforts to appeal to

a broad range of students.

Institutional Theory

Institutional theory describes how deliberate and accidental choices can lead institutions

to mirror the norms, values, and ideologies of other organizations (Harris, 2013). The

environmental pressures that institutions face within an institutional theory framework limits the

discretion of an institution. These pressures do not allow autonomy when selecting how and

when to engage in certain strategic activities (e.g., recruitment, fundraising, curriculum) and,

instead, push institutions toward conformity (Harris, 2013). Harris (2013) stated that

"institutional theory emphasizes the normative impact of the environment on organizational

activity" (p. 45). External pressure from stakeholders determines the expectations for

organizational behavior, practices, and conformity, which drives the range of decisions available

for institutions (Harris, 2013). These external pressures could include population shifts, reliance

on tuition revenue, the need for a diverse student body, and rising costs. Institutional theory is

commonly used throughout post-secondary education and aids in explaining changes that happen

within the industry (Harris, 2019). Using institutional theory as a lens, Morphew and Huisman

(2002) reframed research on the academic shifts in higher education in order to show how

institutions are moving toward similar structures and norms modeled by top-ranked institutions;

there is an increase in uniformity for survival and competition.

Toma et al. (2005) asserted that "organizations that meet the environment's expected characteristics receive legitimacy and prove worthy of resources by society and the broader environment" (as cited in Harris, 2013, p. 45). When institutions operate within the guidelines of accepted notions, they are rewarded with additional funding, quality faculty, interested students, and public acceptance (Harris, 2013). Critics debate the relevance of HBCUs in current times believing that these institutions have not replied to the mandate to desegregate (Lee, 2010). As such, HBCUs find themselves in the sights of their state legislature when funding is scarce and discussion around mergers is discussed as a way to save money (Lee, 2010). The result of trying to be more homogenous is to gain more rewards but lose institutional-specific identities. This process in institutional theory is known as isomorphism (Harris, 2013).

The concept of isomorphism applies to this study as it explains the pressures of institutions that strive to look increasingly like each other. In regard to isomorphism, HBCUs are feeling pressure to reach enrollment targets and the recruitment efforts by some HBCUs are shifting from an almost exclusively African-American/Black student population to a higher percentage of non-Black students. The pressure to recruit other race students is what Knoke (1993) called coercive isomorphism. Pressure from organizations or entities that an institution relies on for support, including college rankings and state funders, results in coercive isomorphism (Morphew & Huisman, 2002). As an example, accreditation agencies can require specific standards for academic quality or financial viability to force institutions to adapt to maintain their accreditation (Harris, 2013).

College Choice Process

College choice is the analysis of the factors that influence a student's decision of whether to attend a college or university (Perna, 2006). Perna (2006) built on Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) research and added additional factors that could shape an individual's decision to attend a particular university (Freeman, 2015). Perna's (2016) four factors, or layers, are habitus; school and community context; higher education context; and the social, economic, and policy context. These factors allow students to consider their personal educational needs and goals and examine their options for college choice by making decisions that will provide the best opportunities for their career success.

Perna's (2006) theory begins with the habitus layer, which includes students' demographics, gender, social capital, and socioeconomic status. Each of these factors can play a role in college decisions. The school and community layer, which encompasses social structure and access to resources, can also influence college choice. Resources, such as literature and/or other sources of knowledge, inform college or university opportunities. The higher education layer suggests that the actions of colleges and universities also can play a role in students' college enrollment decisions. Macrocosmically, the habitus layer is influenced by social, economic, and policy changes; social capital; and post-secondary access (Perna, 2006).

In the higher education landscape, the idea of what a traditional student is has already changed. Students today come from a range of economic, religious, and ethnic backgrounds and have a range of educational and career goals. In addition, the range of institutions for advanced learning and specialized training for a particular career path has increased tremendously. Now more than ever college choice requires a great deal of information and access to that information.

Framing in this Study

As HBCUs were established for the purpose of educating a racial group, African-Americans, does the mission of HBCUs resonate with non-Black students' college choices? The college choice process begins with prospective students and the information they receive when considering college. This method was considered when drafting the questions for the school counselors in order to determine whether the counselors received information about VSU and if, in turn, the counselors shared this information with their students when discussing their college choices based on their specific social, academic, and financial needs.

Institutional theory provides a lens for understanding why VSU may make or have made organizational changes to become similar to PWIs through EMS to recruit a racially diverse student population. It is because of racial diversification that some PWIs are thriving. Institutional theory, as a lens, may help illuminate how EMS align with VSU's strategic plan and influence VSU's marketing strategies to key stakeholders.

The researchers designed survey questions based on the norms of the institution. Questions related to institutional perspectives on the patterns, beliefs, and values of VSU examine the university's efforts focused on the inclusion and acceptance of students from diverse backgrounds. Understanding the perceptions and experiences of these stakeholders will help the university develop specific recruitment strategies and inform potential students about the benefits of the institution and the institutional culture. Institutional culture is critical in higher education, as culture reflects an institution's ability to cultivate feelings of connectedness and also helps clarify the image of the institution (Toma et al., 2005).

How Institutional Theory and College Choice Inform the Study Methods

This section will describe the specific influence of the theoretical framework on the study methods. The questions developed using the college choice model inform the survey questions for the high school counselors in Virginia. Since student behavior is shaped by context, as indicated in Appendix A, college enrollment choice is influenced by marketing and recruitment, location, and institutional characteristics (Perna, 2006). Utilizing college choice can help to identify the role that Virginia high school counselors play with regard to influencing the quantity and quality of the recruitment information provided to students as well as the conversations held related to which post-secondary institutions to attend. Institutional theory informed the interview questions with the VSU admissions staff so that the researchers could understand the internal viewpoints, practices, and strategies that relate to the recruitment of potential students and understand the visibility of the institution as seen through the experiences of VSU's admissions staff.

Research Design

Mixed Methods Approach

The mixed-method approach is appropriate for understanding non-Black students' perceptions of and their experiences at VSU. Mixed methods integrate qualitative and quantitative data and use a distinct design that guides the research and may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks (Creswell, 2018). The core assumption for this study is that this integrated form of inquiry will uncover greater insights than using qualitative or quantitative research alone (Creswell, 2018). Convergent mixed methods, in which the researcher merges data to provide a more comprehensive analysis, is the design that aligns with

the research questions related to the effectiveness of VSU's narrative and recruitment strategies

(Creswell, 2018). Through numbered data and statistical procedures, as well as through the

meaning ascribed through open-ended interviews, the convergent mixed methods will allow the

researchers to make recommendations to the university, based upon a plethora of evidence.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) defined mixed methods research as a process "in which

the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using

both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program inquiry" (as

cited in Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007, p. 4). Qualitative research, both exploratory and

descriptive, will be gathered through fieldwork that includes interviews (individual and focus

group), observations, and document analyses (Creswell, 2007). The quantitative data will

examine the relationship between the variables and move the researchers from a general premise

to a more specific one by honing in on the ratings of the participants (Creswell, 2018). Collecting

data through electronic surveys will more objectively support the institutional theory framework

related to making philosophical assumptions about the changing role of HBCUs. The researchers

will narrow their focus to the viability of VSU. In essence, the researchers will respond to the

question of whether VSU adapting to broader demographic changes within the field of higher

education.

The qualitative method involves interviewing admissions staff, surveying high school

counselors, and undertaking document analyses of 13 institution's admissions websites. The

qualitative method will include open-ended questions and responses from the interviews and will

be critical in identifying emerging themes that relate to the institutional culture of VSU.

Document analysis of the university's printed and electronic materials will examine the broader

appeal of VSU's narrative in its efforts to offer a welcoming and inclusive environment, one that will recruit students from diverse racial backgrounds. The examination of all of the data obtained from the qualitative research will uncover perceptions about the school and will be used by the researchers to gauge the effectiveness of the university's recruitment strategies. The sum of the qualitative evidence will help the researchers in using the college choice framework to better understand the students' motivations in considering VSU as a viable college option.

Qualitative Methods

Interviews

For the qualitative component of this study, the researchers will conduct in-depth, one-on-one interviews. The interview questions will be open-ended, and the interviews themselves will be semi-structured in format (see Appendix C), allowing for natural conversational responses. As the ideal interview will range from 20 to 30 minutes, the interviews for this study should not exceed one hour in length. Each of the interviews will be recorded and transcribed, with the participant's permission. In order to ensure confidentiality, numbers will be assigned to each participant.

The participants will be interviewed in confidential settings. The researchers will scribe notes for the data analysis, recognizing themes that develop from the data collected. At the conclusion of this process, the participants will receive copies of the transcripts and data analyses if requested. The explanation and formatting of this data will be discussed in the findings.

Quantitative Methods

Survey

The questions on the survey will be designed to include the participant group location, race, years of service, and educational background. The researchers will upload the survey instruments into Question Pro, an online survey development cloud-based software program for analysis.

Document Analysis

Document analysis will be conducted on the admissions website information from VSU and 12 researcher-identified peer institutions in order to understand recruitment sentiment and the resulting enrollment trends. The documents will include the institution's admission's website and/or enrollment portal used by potential student enrollees. As document analysis is a form of qualitative research that gives voice and meaning around a set of documents and transcripts, the artifacts reviewed for this study will include marketing material from VSU (Boswell, 2009).

<div align="center">Setting and Participants</div>

The setting of this study will be at VSU. The researchers will gain access to the resources and potential study participants through a relationship with the vice-president for enrollment management and a veteran faculty member in the School of Education. This relationship will be used to identify study participants for the survey, interviews, and focus group(s).

There are two types of participants in this study. High school counselors will participate in an online survey, and the criteria for counselor participation will be determined based on the number of students who enrolled at VSU from a particular high school in the fall 2018 semester. Two groups of counselors will be identified. One group will be selected based on the high

number of students enrolled at VSU from their high school and the other group will be based on

low to no enrollment numbers to VSU from their high school. These high schools will represent

a range of demographics in order to determine the level of outreach and accessibility on the part

of VSU. High school counselors' responses are needed to provide information on VSU's

admissions and the university's efforts to disseminate information to prospective students in the

region. Counselor participation will yield data that the researchers will use to make

recommendations for recruitment.

The open-ended question interviews will be conducted with select members of the staff at

VSU. The criteria for interview participation are that the faculty members must work in the

admissions office in a capacity that involves recruiting students. Interviews with staff will

provide insight regarding perceptions about the mission and commitment of the faculty to

diversifying the university's student population. The researchers will be able to see the

convergence and connection of data and evidence from the participants and will make

recommendations to VSU based upon the information obtained.

Data Analysis

The data analysis procedures in this study are described in this section. Merriam (1998)

recommended that data collection and analysis in qualitative research be done concurrently. By

doing the data collection and analysis concurrently, the details from each session are recorded as

accurately as possible. The researchers will transcribe each interview and focus group. From the

first interview, salient themes and patterns will be identified in the participant's words through

deductive coding. Potential categories will identify themes by "making carefully considered

judgments about what is real and/or significant and meaningful in the data" (Patton, 2002, p.

406) to "convey an overall essence of the experience" (Creswell, 2007, p. 60). Additionally, any

significant statements or phrases related to research questions will be extracted and grouped

together thematically.

A quantitative survey will be electronically distributed via email to select high school

counselors. The survey data (see Appendix C) will be centered on the experiences of high school

counselors as it relates to admissions and enrollment materials received from VSU. The results

of this survey will provide the researchers with a greater understanding of the perceptions

surrounding VSU's college admissions process, which includes current criteria for admissions

and the accessibility and dissemination of information.

A document analysis of university admissions websites and the content within will be

used to identify underlying messages determining if the content is likely to appeal to and recruit

domestic non-Black students. The analysis of the website's materials will allow the researchers

to determine the viability between the university and the consumer. The researchers will identify

the recurrence of positive and negative language and culturally homogenous or culturally

inclusive images to determine the consistency of such components based on the data results,

participants' responses, and researchers' interpretations. From the surveys and interviews, the

researchers will create a rubric that demonstrates the identification of perceptions about inclusion

and diversity. Evidence will reveal the continuity between the narrative and actual experiences

and the connection between VSU's mission and the actual results. This rubric will provide a

mechanism for analysis to cross-validate and capture different dimensions of the same

phenomenon involving student enrollment and recruitment. Also, by using different data sources,

the researchers will provide a confluence of evidence that will be used to support the validity of the findings and results and reduce the impact of potential bias (Bowen, 2009).

Ethical Considerations

The researchers will obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from VCU and VSU in order to gain access to the participants for the survey and interviews. The potential participants will be emailed and provided with an informed consent form that details the nature of the study and their rights as participants. If a participant chooses to withdraw from the study, he/she can do so at any time and without penalty. Participating in this study is entirely voluntary and does not put the participants at risk or harm in any way.

For the participants' protection, the confidentiality of the data collected will be maintained in two ways. First, no identifying data will be collected from the survey participants. Second, the interviewers and focus group members will not be identified by their first name, but by a relevant title (e.g., administrator, staff, counselor, participant). All electronic information will be stored online using VCU's encrypted cloud service, which is password protected. The researchers have stored research data in a single location within VCU's cloud service further restricting access. Physical copies of the interview data for this study will be digitized on VCU's campus, allowing for encryption when transmitting it to VCU's cloud storage. Physical copies of the collected data will be locked in a file cabinet during the analysis period. The file cabinet is located in the office of one of the researchers. There is only one set of keys for both locks.

Limitations

In all research, both qualitative and quantitative limitations exist. This study has several limitations, including built-in bias, replication, and generalizations around HBCUs. One

pervasive criticism of all qualitative research is researcher bias or built-in bias, which impacts the validity or reliability of the study results (Smith & Noble, 2014). As the researchers are aware of this bias and understand that bias is unavoidable, the researchers will utilize strategies to reduce bias, including using interview prompts and having two members code transcripts.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis and Research Findings

This chapter contains the results of the mixed methods data analysis, as they relate to marketing strategies and recruitment that focus specifically on inclusion and diversity, access, and student experience. The study was guided by the context of the following two research questions:

1. What is the VSU narrative that is shared with non-Black, domestic students?

2. How can the administration expand its visibility with non-Black, domestic students?

Data collection methods for this study included in-person interviews; phone interviews; an online survey; and a document analysis of VSU's and researcher-identified peer institutions' admissions materials and admissions websites. The usage of tables, figures, and participant interview excerpts are used to outline key coding themes and results related to the two guiding research questions. All of the data was collected at the beginning of the Spring 2020 semester.

Qualitative

The research carried out for this section consisted of a series of in-person and phone interviews. An introductory invitation was extended to admission staff through an email or phone call explaining the study and what would be expected if the staff member agreed to participate in the study. Results related to marketing strategies and recruitment that focused specifically on inclusion and diversity are presented in this section.

Data Collection

 In-person and phone interviews were conducted with 15 admissions staff members from

six HBCUs and seven PWIs in the Mid-Atlantic and Southeastern regions of the United States

(Table 1). Population data was determined using Fall 2018 enrollment data from the Integrated

Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). The

population coding is as follows:

1. 'AA' represents total African American/Black students having origins in any of

 the Black racial groups of Africa who are enrolled at the institution.

2. 'Hispanic/Latino' represents students of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or

 Central American, or other Spanish cultures or origins who are enrolled at the

 institution.

3. 'Others' represents students of American Indian, Alaska Native/Asian, Native

 Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Other Pacific Islander culture or origin who are

 enrolled at the institution.

4. 'White' represents students having origins in any of the original peoples of

 Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa who are enrolled at the institution.

Table 1

Institutional Interview Characteristics

Participant	School Type	School Size	State	Population			
				AA	Hispanic/Latino	Other	White
Participant 1	PWI	4,869	Virginia	6%	6%	3%	75%
Participant 2	HBCU	4,020	Delaware	68%	6%	2%	9%
Participant 3	HBCU	1,433	North Carolina	69%	4%	1%	17%

Participant	School Type	School Size	State	Population			
				AA	Hispanic/Latino	Other	White
Participant 5	PWI	19,914	Virginia	5%	7%	4%	75%
Participant 6	PWI	3,929	Virginia	10%	5%	1%	74%
Participant 7	HBCU	6,564	North Carolina	75%	6%	1%	10%
Participant 8	PWI	16,605	Virginia	28%	8%	5%	47%
Participant 9	PWI	10,828	Maryland	17%	7%	20%	41%
Participant 10	HBCU	2,730	Maryland	64%	4%	2%	13%
Participant 11	PWI	22,509	Virginia	6%	6%	12%	58%
Participant 12	HBCU	4,075	Virginia	-[a]	-[a]	-[a]	1%
Participant 13	HBCU	4,411	North Carolina	74%	4%	1%	15%

Note: Interview participants have been assigned a reference number in this study to protect confidentiality.

[a]Data was not available.

Interviews were conducted with university admissions staff in order to examine various aspects of enrollment management strategies involving diversification, recruitment, and retention. The interview protocol (see Appendix D) included eight open-ended questions, in which the participants were asked to share details about their perceptions of their institutions' narratives and how the institutions' narratives aligned with specific marketing strategies that influence college choice. Open-ended questions were used to gauge the extent to which admissions counselors inform, recruit, and retain a diverse range of students. Questions were also used to determine how admissions counselors strive to create supportive and inclusive campus environments.

Data Analysis

All of the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and uploaded to a central cloud storage repository for the researchers to review. Each interview was coded manually in a Google Sheet document using salient themes deducted from the literature review. The coding began by transcribing information based on the analysis on the contents, resulting in the creation of the codes, or themes related to our research study topic. Each of the coded participant interviews was then compiled and delineated based on the 20 identified codes (see Appendix C) for this study.

Findings

Of the 20 codes identified, 10 were prominent: marketing strategy, recruitment, diversification, enrollment management, institutional culture, student experience, college choice or student choice, accessibility, curriculum, and outcomes. These individual codes were organized into three organizing themes: outreach, institutional narrative, and population.

Outreach

From the HBCU and PWI interviews included in this study, the researchers used the preceding codes to analyze the marketing strategies and recruitment that target a diversified student population: accessibility, student experience, outcomes, diversification, college choice. The data indicated that the admissions counselors looked for new and innovative ways to appeal to prospective students and high school counselors through both personal engagement and the use of technology. SEM strategies provided additional opportunities for increased access to students based on race, socioeconomics, and diverse interests and needs.

Outcomes

For students who have been traditionally underrepresented and disadvantaged, college outreach programs provide additional support and information to create a path to higher education (Domina, 2009). Outreach programs are designed to engage students and improve their chances of enrolling and graduating from college (Domina, 2009). The interview responses indicated that outreach programs and strategies are being used by admissions counselors to influence college choice and guide students' higher education experiences from the beginning (enrollment) to the end (graduation) and even beyond graduation. Participant 5 discussed the connection between student experience and outcomes, stating "We have a very high retention rate. After the first year, we have a 92% graduation rate." They continued to discuss outcomes, stating:

> From an employer, or employee standpoint, when they make a hire that speaks volumes because they're not just getting this academic kid. They're getting a kid that is... Or an applicant that has done things in the classroom as well as outside. They're very well-rounded.

Participant 7's response noted that a range of opportunities and resources must be provided "in order for us to really remain competitive in the higher education marketplace, to be welcoming and inclusive and provide different opportunities for a variety of students." Participant 7 also addressed the importance of equity, stating that "everything cannot be linear in terms of the support services that we provide." Participant 13 stressed the importance of reaching all types of students, sharing that "we kind of tailor those strategies to the student type that we're trying to recruit. Freshmen, transfer, and graduate."

Outreach Strategies and Programs

Outreach programs provide an opportunity for face-to-face engagement with recruiters, direct contact with faculty, and student involvement on campus and with the greater campus community. The interview responses also illustrated that outreach strategies and programs are being used by universities as part of their strategic plans. Participant 13 described the new approach that their university was implementing, stating:

> So number one, for the first time, this is not a new admissions technique, but, for the first time since I've been here at [Participant 13] in five years, we've purchased names from the College Board to go into our new CRM [customer relationship management] system. And, from there, we have a prospect communication track that sends frequent emails and all of them have a call to action to either apply or come visit the university. So that's one way in which we engage.

Responses from the interviews indicated that outreach efforts are being implemented to provide greater accessibility to students with diverse needs and interests. Participant 6 acknowledged that their institution has increased outreach efforts, stating that "we do share more about what's happening now and how academics, campus lives, resources, student life, internship experiences, how that meets the needs of the present students." Outreach strategies are also used to appeal to students with financial needs and specific career and educational aspirations. Participant 9 stated:

> So, our [name] Scholars Program…It was a program our president started 25 years ago here at [Participant 9]. He started it with the philanthropist [name] with the goal being to have more students of color go and earn their MD, MBA, PhDs.

Participant responses also indicated that outreach programs are being implemented to enhance the student experience, both academically and socially. Participant 7 stated:

We created, developed, and implemented an alumni recruitment program. The good thing for us is it's still going all these years later, and we have had some phenomenal return on that investment and investing in the alums, making sure that they feel a part of their institution, but that they are equipped with accurate information in sharing about their alma mater that was no doubt very different from when they attended.

Outreach efforts that reflect strategic planning and the implementation of marketing strategies that appeal to student experience impact enrollment.

Population

The participants were asked questions about diversification, marketing strategies, recruitment, and strategic planning that pertained specifically to students from underrepresented groups. In their responses, the participants indicated that including diversification in their recruitment and marketing strategies provided access and a level of comfort to underrepresented groups. Participant 7 stated:

[We] hired a bilingual admissions counselor because that obviously is more for parents who need to feel comfortable and need to understand that she's also an alum. So, by having someone who has attended school here, who's not black and [who's] giving her true and honest perspective, which was a great one, which is great for our office, has been really beneficial in helping families understand what the experience is at an HBCU for maybe a Latinx or Hispanic student.

The participants' responses also indicated that access played a key role in marketing strategies and recruitment while implementing diversification. Specifically, Participant 12 stated:

We're an access institution, so if you look at it from the viewpoint of student access, no matter Black, White, or other, that's really the reference point that I use. But we tell a student we're a historically Black college and university while we were formed, know what we are. We're not exclusive. We're inclusive to everybody to apply to university.

Strategies to Increase Diversity

Diversity was one of the salient codes identified when analyzing the admissions staff interviews. The participants shared examples of their strategies to increase diversity through admission practices, from marketing the university with brochures to creating opportunities for inclusion. A difference existed between the strategies used by HBCUs and PWIs. The participants from the HBCUs focused on marketing by sharing examples of providing visual representations of student diversity. Participant 13 from an HBCU highlighted diversity that is represented on application materials, stating: "So, we have a lot of different faces on our marketing and our brochures and things like that." Participant 13 then described how diversity among faculty is also important by stating:

I think that my staff, I know, represents a lot of different, it's not just one type of person. There's different people that have different walks of life. And, so, if a student can identify with this person that they see there, then they're more susceptible to kind of wanting to be there.

In contrast, participants from PWIs stated that they are implementing sustained efforts to create a sense of community through dialogue and face-to-face engagement. Participant 1 shared:

So, a lot of our new strategies have been kind of the message of finding your community

at [Participant 1] and you find your community here, whether that's, you know, racial and

ethnicity, whether that's geographic diversity up and out-of-state, students being able to

find a community of other out-of-staters.

Another PWI participant elaborated on how their office focused on face-to-face

engagement and coordinating such interactions based on location, targeting high schools that are

within the same region. Participant 8 stated:

I think that we are fortunate to just be an institution where it's natural to have these

conversations. And it's natural to have this setup just by nature of location and the

institution historically. And so being able to further the conversations about what there is

to offer in terms of diversity and just cultural awareness and opportunity. And being able

to keep that conversation going is key.

Participant 4 commented on the most impactful component of recruiting students that

represent diversity, stating that "it's the face-to-face interaction at the programs and at the

recruitment events across the globe" that make the difference. When it comes to recruiting

underrepresented students, the participants' responses indicated that strategies should also be

diversified and communicate a range of opportunities provided by the institution.

Strategic Planning, Marketing, and Recruiting

The participants were asked questions about recruitment and retention efforts that pertain

specifically to students from underrepresented groups. Their responses indicated that admissions

counselors are using various forms of strategic planning, marketing, and recruiting initiatives in

order to expand educational access to underserved and underrepresented populations. Participant 1 explained:

> And in terms of marketing to underrepresented populations, we have kind of made a shift over the past few years, a lot of the traditional marketing would be doing things like a lot of campuses used to have these like minority day. And they would have special events geared towards specific populations. And in our conversations with a lot of, you know, the younger generation and current students, they don't want to be separated out, they want to come to the same open house that everybody is coming to.

Events are just one example shared by participants used to expand access to underrepresented populations on their campuses. Offering opportunities for engagement represents institutional commitments related to expanding access to and diversifying their campuses, especially in light of changing demographic trends.

The data collected indicated that institutions of higher learning show a commitment to diversifying their campuses. Participant 12 stated they were focused on creating a more inclusive environment: "the key and goal are trying to get students to see themselves academically as someone who could do well here." Institutional commitment to diversifying campuses moves beyond a focus on race to focus on meeting students' academic needs.

A changing United States population reflects a changing college student population and these demographic changes have prompted admissions counselors to shift their recruitment approach. Participant 7 explained that "we had to reshape our lens about traditional high school students" and that their institution "is looking at students who are adult learners and online as well." Participant 3 discussed the changing messages that are shared with students:

I felt like our information that was disseminated to other people was always based off of

one type of person. Now, I feel with our new rebranding and everything that we have

going on now, I feel now we're able to cater in a more global perspective, on a more

global perspective.

Changes to plans and population shifts alter the approach of enrollment management

strategies used by admission counselors. As such, attention must be given to what is

communicated and how the institution's narrative is shared with prospective students.

Institutional Narrative

Previous research has indicated that institutional narratives in higher education are

influenced by many factors, such as shifts in student population, student perception and

experience, and the changing mission of a university. The data from this study revealed that

higher education institutions are using marketing and recruitment strategies to reshape their

narratives so as to reflect more inclusive campus environments. The responses indicated that

increased use of technology by students has propelled universities to strategize the manner in

which they market, recruit, and communicate their narratives.

Marketing Strategy

Participant 8 highlighted a new software strategy "through our Customer Relationship

Management (CRM) software that we use internally...we're able to do mass communications via

text and via email, and we're able to work with the College Board to purchase names and

information of students." Participant 1 shared details about how their recruitment and marketing

strategy conveyed the institution's narrative and noted that "we're a smaller school. We're not

trying to be all things to all people. And, so, we try to make it clear who we are, what we value, what's important to us." Furthermore, Participant 4 said:

> Whatever your slogan, your tagline is you need one and it needs to be pumped throughout the state. Everyone in the state knows that. Every school counselor should know it. Every alum should know it. Every person that works for [participants' institution] should know that and they should all be pumping the same consistent message. Ours has been for a long time.

Participant 13 emphasized the importance of branding that relates to inclusion:

> A few years ago, when we redid our branding, our marketing department did a lot of research, did a lot of surveys and focus groups from a lot of different populations to see kind of what sticks out about [participants' institution], what made you come, and again, our story and the common theme in a lot of those questions is the sense of family.

> Branding the institution and sharing an accurate narrative appeared to be foundational in sharing the institutional narrative. Further, various ways exist by which to share the narrative outside of marketing materials, including building intentional relationships.

Interpersonal Engagement

The responses also indicated that institutional narratives that are communicated through face-to-face contact and interpersonal engagement continue to influence students' college choice processes. Participant 4 underscored the importance of interpersonal engagement:

> Everything that we send out is encouraging students and their families to visit campus. That's the whole purpose of anything that we do prior to submitting the application is we want to entice you enough, we want to convince you enough that we have something that

is of interest to you in order for you to visit campus. If you visit campus, you are more

likely to apply and that's not just [participant 4 institution], that's any school.

Participant 1 commented on using marketing to forge personal connections with minority

students, stating:

And in terms of marketing to underrepresented populations, we have kind of made a shift

over the past few years, a lot of the traditional marketing would be doing things like a lot

of campuses used to have these like minority day. And [we] would have special events

geared towards specific populations. And in our conversations with a lot of, you know,

the younger generation and [the] current students, they don't want to be separated out,

they want to come to the same open house that everybody is coming to.

Most of the participants shared their experiences in regard to understanding the value and

impact of effective EMS implementation in reaching diverse populations and expanding their

institutional presence among prospects. The participants' responses demonstrated the importance

of diversity among prospective students, particularly across peer institutions. The responses also

support the importance of VSU adopting new ways to secure its position among its peers and

other Virginia institutions. The quantitative results will describe the perspective of Virginia high

school counselors when considering the VSU narrative.

Quantitative

The research carried out for this section consisted of surveys to Virginia high school

counselors and a document analysis of the admissions materials and social media content of the

13 institutions interviewed above. An introductory invitation was extended to 247 Virginia high

school counselors through an email explaining the study and what would be expected if the

counselor agreed to participate in the study. The counselors were selected based on the high

school enrollment yields of their counties relating to the Fall 2019 enrollment counts at VSU. A

mix of high and low yield counties/cities were selected so that the researchers could understand

the perceived narrative about VSU. The results related to VSU's narrative and recruitment efforts

are presented in this section.

In addition to the Virginia high school counselor surveys, the researchers also reviewed

admissions websites from the 13 institutions represented participants. This content was evaluated

based on visual marketing strategies that provide access and appeal to a diversified student pool.

Scoring via a rubric (see Appendix E), the evaluation of the admissions materials allowed the

researchers to assess successful enrollment management strategies by establishing criteria on

salient themes found in the interviews.

Data Collection

High School Counselor Survey

A survey was administered to high school counselors in Virginia in order to understand

VSU's current enrollment strategies and their impact on enrollment. The survey was sent to 247

high school counselors from 33 counties and cities. The county and city selections were based on

the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (2020) student enrollment yields from

first-time freshmen in the Fall of 2019 (Table 2) for VSU. A mix of high and low yield counties

was utilized.

Table 2

Survey Distribution

Locality	Fall 2019 Enrollment Yield	Yield Category
Amelia County	2	Low
Augusta County	2	Low
Bedford County	0	None
Bristol City	0	None
Campbell County	0	None
Caroline County	2	Low
Chesapeake City	68	High
Chesterfield County	105	High
Cumberland County	2	Low
Fluvanna County	1	Low
Frederick County	1	Low
Goochland County	2	Low
Grayson County	0	None
Locality	Fall 2019 Enrollment Yield	Yield Category
Hampton City	37	High
Hanover County	7	Low
Henrico County	35	High
Hopewell City	10	Low
King and Queen County	1	Low
Lancaster County	2	Low
Madison County	0	None
Montgomery County	1	Low
Newport News City	49	High
Orange County	2	Low
Patrick County	0	None
Pittsylvania County	1	Low

|		
Powhatan County	1	Low
Prince George County	19	Low
Richmond City	106	High
Suffolk City	24	Low
Tazewell County	0	None
Warren County	0	None
Washington County	0	None
Westmoreland County	1	Low

Note: High, Low, and None categories were defined as follows: High ≥ 35 students, Low ≤ 34 students, and None = 0 students.

The survey (see Appendix B) consisted of 14 questions, which included demographic data questions, multiple-choice questions, Likert scale questions, and short answer questions. It was implemented through Question Pro and the URL was sent to high school counselors via email. As the participants responded to the survey, the results were compiled into a Google spreadsheet for review and cross-tabulation.

The demographic data collected from the survey encompassed the following: (a) years served as a counselor; (b) years served at current high school; (c) county or city locality of high school; (d) college attendance; and (e) race (Figure 1). The participants' careers ranged from 1 year to 29 years and years served at current institutions ranged from 1 year to 26 years. Of the 26 respondents that completed the survey, more than 50% of the participants identified as White (61.5%, 16 participants), 28.6% or 8 individuals identified as African-American or Black, and 7.1% or 2 individuals identified as Hispanic/Latino. The response rate for the survey was 10.5%.

Figure 1

Ethnicity/Race of High School Counselors that Responded to the Survey
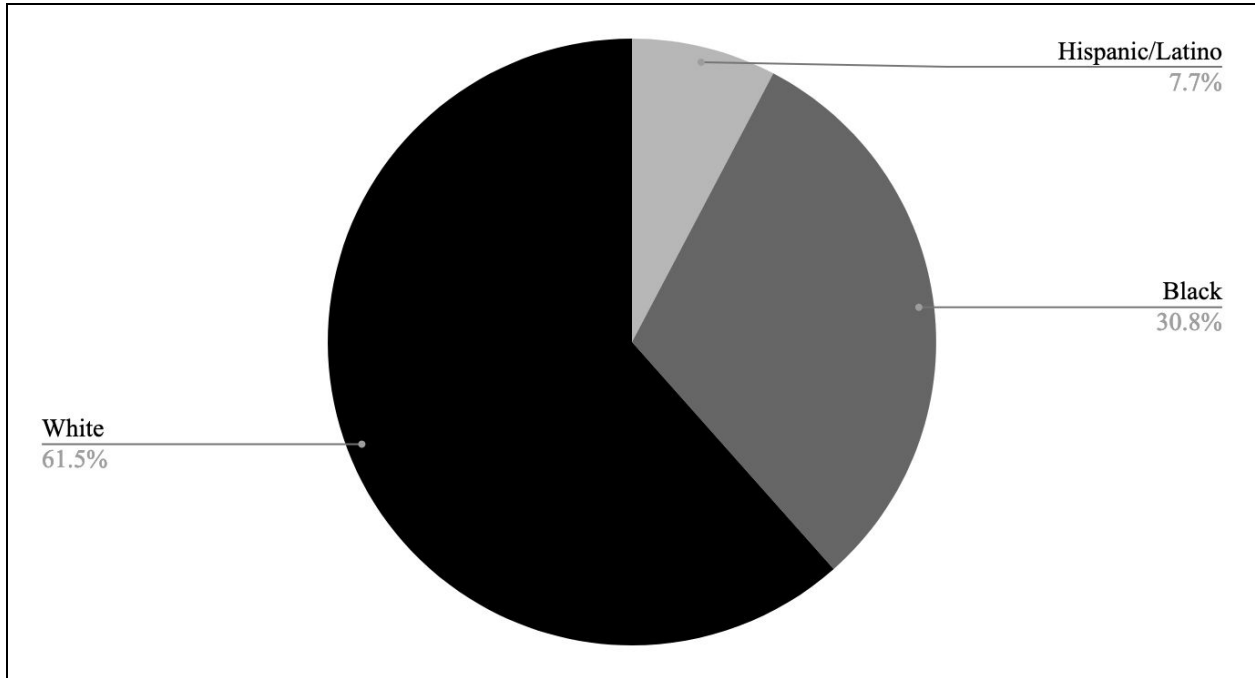
The counselors also responded to short answer questions on their perceptions of VSU and how they shared VSU information with their students. The data collected revealed that the counselors' backgrounds and experience, including race, locale, and the institutions they attended, influenced accessibility and college choice for prospective college students. For example, one high school counselor who is an alumnus of VSU spoke positively about the offerings and overall experience afforded by attending VSU, stating:

I speak from my personal and professional experiences with VSU. I talk about how it was for me to attend as well as when I worked there for a period of time. I also try to keep up with students who graduated from both of the high schools I have worked at and inform

my current students of the different opportunities and experiences students have been

offered.

Another counselor indicated that location was the only factor they considered, stating that

they only shared with "students who may want to stay close to home yet want to attend an

HBCU." Another counselor indicated that location was one among several important college

choice options, stating:

Students who want to remain in the Richmond area for college; students who specifically

state they are interested in applying to HBCUs; students who are looking into specific

programs that VSU offers; students who meet the admissions criteria; students who want

to pursue a variety of colleges in the VA public college system.

This information suggests the need for VSU to expand its narrative and also to reshape false or

stereotypical perceptions through active recruitment and innovative marketing strategies, as one

counselor stated that they shared information about VSU with "only Black students- middle to

low performance on the academic grading scale."

The survey was intended to provide the researchers with information specific to the

enrollment management strategies of VSU in order to provide recommendations to the

university. As such, the participants were asked to comment on the marketing and recruiting

strategies of VSU, which included the appeal of brochure and application materials, frequency of

visits by VSU recruiting officers, and perceived effectiveness and impact of VSU marketing

strategies and recruiting efforts. Questions 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, and 14 related specifically to

recruitment and marketing (see Appendix B). Questions were related to the institution's narrative

and its influence and impact on the manner in which high school counselors share information

and identify which students they feel would have the most success at VSU. The following

section is organized into three themes, similar to the qualitative findings, these themes speak to

the channels for universities to target in communicating the narrative: outreach, population, and

institutional narrative.

        Outreach. Outreach efforts on behalf of VSU were acknowledged by the participants,

but many offered commentary and suggestions for improvement. One of the questions asked

related to the types of materials the counselors received (Figure 2). The counselors could select

all applicable mediums as they pertained to their experiences. The most popular method of

communication was email. Brochures, postcards, and letters rounded out the remaining material

types received. There was one "other" response, which was a personal visit from a VSU Office

of Admissions staff member. Out of the 26 counselors who answered the question, 11 indicated

that they did not receive any materials from VSU.

Figure 2

Type(s) of VSU Admissions Materials Received by High School Counselors
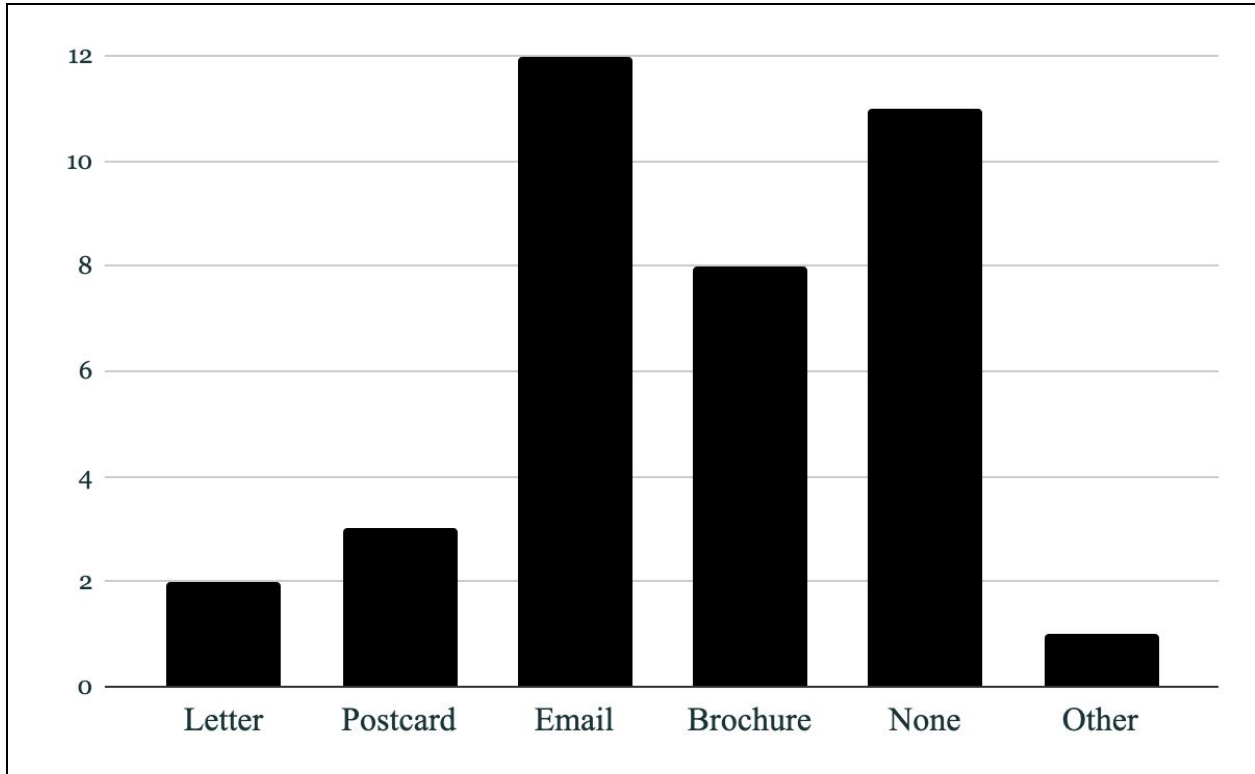
Almost half of the participants stated that VSU had visited their schools at least once during the academic school year, however, 53.8% of the participants indicated they did not receive a visit from VSU (Figure 3). As face-to-face visits are a critical component of recruitment, this data suggests the need for more interpersonal engagement. Communication on an interpersonal level impacts college choice.

The participants also commented on the VSU admissions staff's visits at the end of the survey and how the high schools' relationships with VSU could be improved to benefit the prospective students from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds. One respondent stated that the students would like "more contact from our assigned admissions counselor. The students at

[respondent's school] would also enjoy an on-site admissions event each spring, if available."

Another participant wrote:

> I have had issues dealing with VSU because of their lack of response. I truly think it has something to do with me serving a rural school, and the idea that it would not be worth the investment visiting because of the preconceived notion that there is minimal to no interest in VSU among students at my high school. However, I have plenty of students who are interested in VSU, but it is difficult to keep their attention on this institution because they make minimal effort to visit and/or be easy to reach. The students who do apply to VSU have problems with the next steps after applying because it is so difficult to get in touch with VSU's admissions office, affecting their decisions to go to VSU.

No indication existed from the surveyed high school counselors that they did not want to receive information from VSU. Instead, all of the responses suggested a desire for increased engagement.

Figure 3

Does Your High School Receive Visits from VSU Admissions Staff?
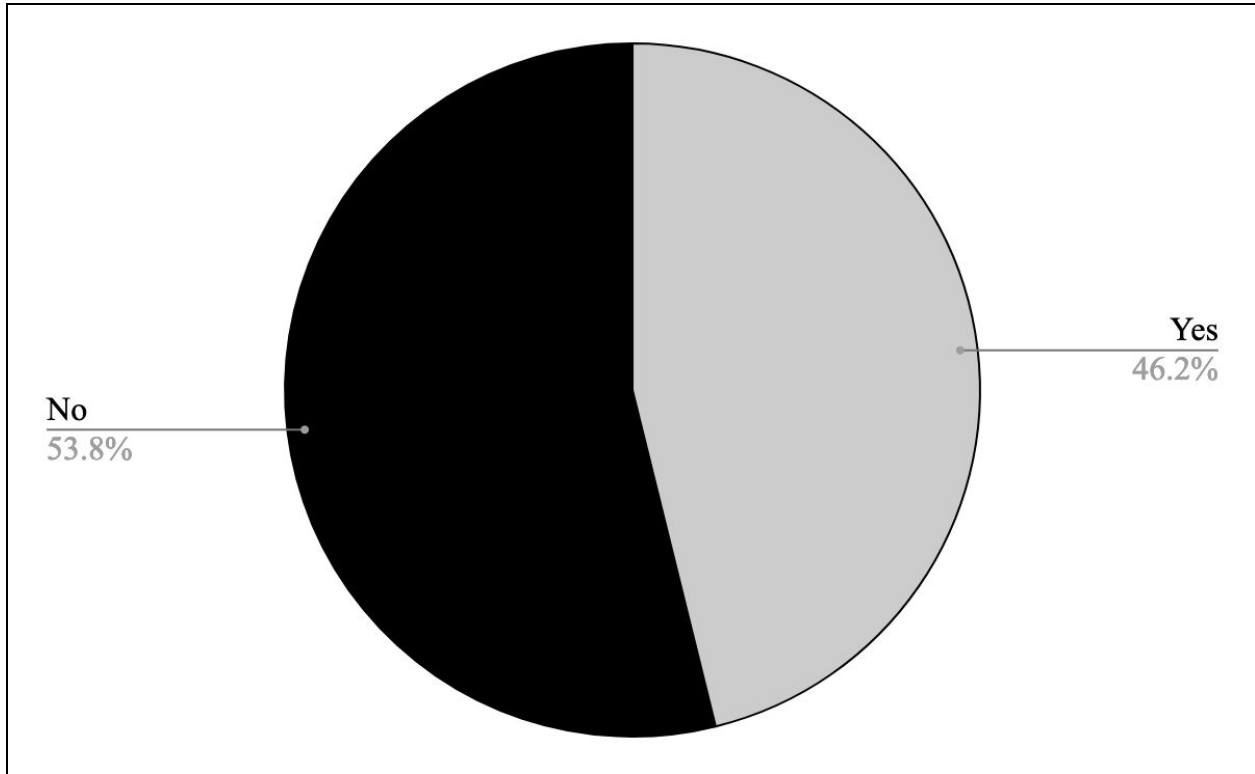
Note: Graph represents whether VSU admissions staff visited a participant's high school during the high school counselor's tenure of working at the high school.

Of the participants that received admissions materials, 88% (10 participants) indicated that the current information they receive helps with conversations relating to VSU offerings. When asked if VSU was included in conversations with students interested in attending college, only half (13) of the participants indicated that it was sometimes. Six of the participants said rarely, four said often, two said never, and only one participant said always (Figure 4).

Figure 4

How often is VSU included in your conversations with college-bound students?
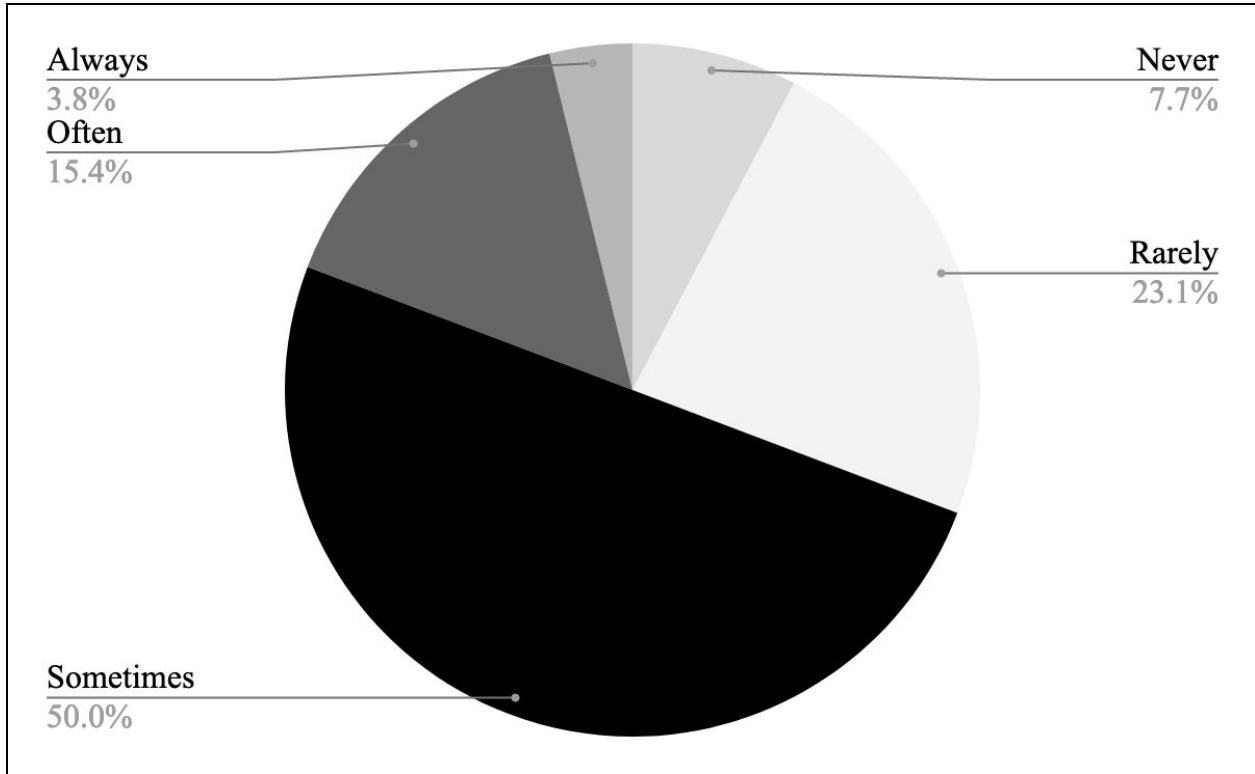
When looking at the impact that admissions staff's visits had with Virginia high school counselors, those counselors who received visits included VSU in conversations about post-secondary education more often. Out of the 12 Virginia high school counselors who stated that they had received visits from VSU admissions staff, seven (58.33%) stated that they had conversations with their students sometimes about VSU, three (25%) stated they had conversations often, and two (16.67%) stated they had conversations rarely. The 14 Virginia high school counselors who indicated they did not receive visits from VSU admissions staff had conversations about VSU less frequently. Out of the 14 counselors, six (42.86%) stated they had

conversations about VSU often, four (28.57%) stated rarely, two (14.29%) stated never, and both

often and always had one (7.14%) participant each.

The participants were also instructed to view a four-page brochure available from the

VSU Office of Admissions' website (see Appendix F). Once reviewed, the participants were

asked to rate the brochure using a Likert scale from 1 - Strongly Disagree to 5 - Strongly Agree

using the following questions:

1. This brochure contains appropriate information to provide students in my school with

    relevant knowledge about the institution.

2. This brochure grabs the attention of the students at my school.

3. This brochure provides adequate academic information to high school students.

4. This brochure depicts a diverse student body.

    In general, participants indicated that they liked the brochure (Figure 5).

Figure 5

VSU Office of Admissions Freshman Brochure Scoring
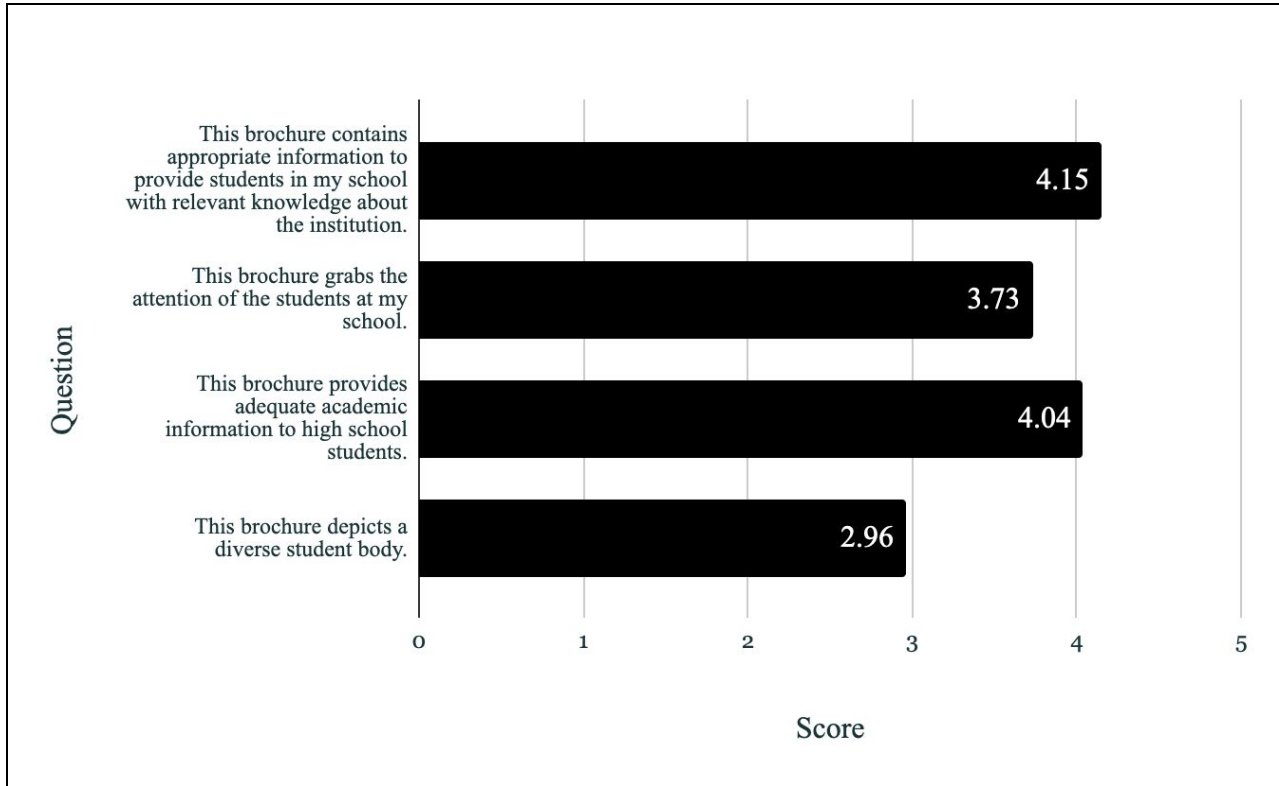
Some of the participants commented on the appeal of the materials, perception of the

narrative shared, and the impact of both the materials and institutional narrative on the

recruitment of prospective students. One participant stated:

I think this is a great brochure...to the extent that a brochure reaches the hands of students

who live in today's on-line college search environment. I think that the diversity

represented on the brochure is perhaps accurate (a couple of White athletes and one

White student or professor in a suit), and I think if it is truly representative of the

student/faculty, then it will help students seeking an HBCU experience confirm that, even

if it is not mentioned specifically, but having a few other students from diverse

backgrounds present lets students know that the university is open to everyone and values

diversity. If there is more diversity at the institution than is shown, then more photos

could be present.

Another participant indicated that the brochure was "bright and eye-catching," while

another thought it was "nice literature and advertisement."

In regard to how some of the participants stated that the brochure could be more

effective, one participant stated that "it is very wordy--students this day and age need to have

bullet points and fast facts--I am doubtful if they will read the entire brochure." Another

participant commented on accessibility, offering that "if this brochure is a 'first look,' then I

would say it has too many words." Another participant commented on the content of the

application, stating that "the section about the Free Application for Federal Student Aid

(FAFSA) is highly appreciated; however, I would emphasize that it is an online application.

Paper apps are available, but it is a much more stressful process."

In terms of college choice, the participants highlighted the importance of affordability

and outcome. One participant stated:

> Students are looking for action shots, not headshots, in a brochure. Students need to see
>
> what VSU has to offer, not just what the students look like. The brochure does not
>
> contain ways that students can receive monies to attend school, it only includes how
>
> much school will cost. We know college is expensive, but we also need to know what
>
> opportunities students have for scholarships.

Another participant stated that the materials contained "no information about

accreditation, or about where students end up (employment, etc.)."

One participant offered a suggestion on recruitment, requesting "more structured and more organized recruitment" when scheduling visits and communicating with schools. Another participant suggested the importance of:

being more present at events and truly highlighting students who have once attended our high school. This is how other colleges get our attention, they are able to identify students who graduated from our high school and give us progress updates. They have us counselors on a listserv where they will send us emails periodically on the happenings at the college and how that ties into the admission process or ways for high school students to see the college in its true glory.

VSU benefits when contact is made with the Virginia high school counselors. When information makes it to the school counselor level, there is an increase in conversations about VSU as a post-secondary option. The material that VSU is sharing with first-time students is appealing and the general consensus is the material does a good job of grabbing the attention of the student, gives students the information needed while in high school, and gives relevant academic information. The lowest scoring element of the brochure was the diversity shown.

Population. The data provided information proposing strategies for VSU to implement to recruit a more diversified student population. One participant suggested focusing more on diversity using visual images but also wanted to see diversity in the admissions staff. This participant stated that he/she would like more "visits from a diverse group of people representing VSU. Also, more structured and more organized recruitment." This participant stated:

the majority of the students seen in the brochure are African-American students. In this area, VSU is known for being a school where students who are African-American are the

majority of those attending VSU. It doesn't show a great deal of diversity, but I recognize

that that would be hard because the university isn't a racially diverse school.

Another participant indicated that it may be beneficial to "show more diverse populations

that they are wanting to maintain."

In addition to racial and ethnic diversity, the trajectory for recruitment is an important

component of enrollment management (Bryant, 2013). Increasing and focusing on specific

regions of the country and state for marketing and recruitment could attract a more diverse

student population. One counselor commented on locality when describing students who

consider VSU as those "who express a desire to stay close to home or to commute, students who

wish to attend college as economically as possible, students who are interested in some of the

programs VSU offers." Another stated that:

> VSU seemed an appropriate choice for students who want to remain in the Richmond
>
> area for college; students who specifically state they are interested in applying to
>
> HBCUs; students who are looking into specific programs that VSU offers; students who
>
> meet the admissions criteria; students who want to pursue a variety of colleges in the VA
>
> public college system.

The Virginia high school counselors identified some key points that VSU could consider

when attempting to stand out from other four-year institutions. The counselors' commentary

suggests that, within the state of Virginia, VSU successfully markets specific programs. As such,

VSU could promote itself as the 'home' school for those students who do not wish to travel far

for school as well as increase the school's reputation by highlighting the diversity among its

staff. VSU could take these suggestions and interweave diversity as it relates to racial representation, geography, and student outcomes into its institutional narrative.

Institutional Narrative. An institutional narrative relates to institutional theory and reflects the university's history, mission, and culture as well as the manner in which the university's story is perceived and shared with students and other stakeholders (Drori et al., 2016). The data revealed the impact of the VSU narrative on high school counselors and high school students. Perceptions of the demographic makeup and academic standards of VSU were evident among the school counselors who influence their students to attend or not attend VSU.

One participant commented on the perception of VSU, stating that "it is hard because their [high school students] perception of the school is so off, [VSU] needs to start from there and then kids will think more highly of the university." Another commented on the type of students who attend VSU, stating that these students are exclusively "Black students-middle to low performance on the academic grading scale." Another participant identified the type of student as "typically African American students who are interested in an HBCU." As the history, purpose, and impact of HBCUs are not often well-known, HBCUs continue to be inaccurately assessed. Consequently, the reputation of HBCUs has evolved into a combination of culture and public opinion (Brown, 2013). Some of the responses from the high school counselors reflected perceptions that were skewed and limited.

In this case, reputation, though an intangible instrument, was used to promote public perception (Brown, 2013). Comments from the participants also underscored the nuances of perception, which can be positive or negative, emphasizing the point that, when perception is based on experience, it can be valuable and influential. As comments from one participant in this

study validated the impact of a personal connection to the university, VSU should maximize its resources to create marketing strategies that create a feeling of personal engagement with the university.

Document Analysis

The document analysis provided additional supporting evidence regarding marketing strategies that provide access and appeal to a diversified student pool. The document analysis of admissions websites from the 13 identified HBCUs and PWIs allowed the researchers to corroborate evidence on successful EM strategies by triangulating the salient themes established from the admissions staff interviews. This triangulation is important because it has been shown to improve the validity and reliability of research (Golafshani, 2003).

A rubric tool (see Appendix E) was developed in order to evaluate the admissions websites. The tool was developed with three delineated levels: 3 - meets expectations, 2 - needs improvement, and 1 - unacceptable. Each level specified the expectations and descriptions for how a score was to be assigned. The scoring levels for the rubric tool were established by rounding to the nearest delineated level. A score of 3 - 2.5 was considered a high score and met or nearly met expectations, 2.4 - 1.5 was considered a fair score and identified that the documents needed improvement, and 1.4 - 0 was a poor score and indicated that the documents were unacceptable.

The researchers used the data from the admission staff interviews to determine the themes of outreach, population, and institutional narrative for the document analysis in consideration for the recruitment of a more diversified student population. One of the most important tools for outreach, according to the admissions staff we interviewed, is the university's

website or digital presence. Information and accessibility are conveyed through material design

and institutional communication. University websites are expected to provide practical

information on the application process through the ease of use and interactivity. To convey the

institution's narrative, the website should also include the college's history and academic

mission. Showcasing student experiences can help students understand the institutional culture.

The visual design was the first element analyzed for this section.

Visual Design

Visual design reflects the visual appeal, practical access to information, and easy

identification of pertinent information in the medium used to display and inform the university's

materials. The researchers assessed visual design based on the presentation of information on the

institutions' admissions website and the students' accessibility to information and resources. As

visual design relates to outreach, a university's website design ties into many of the strategies

that are being used by PWIs and HBCUs to provide greater access such as sharing aspects of the

campus life, peer to peer experiences, and accurate campus information.

When prospective students and school providers review and evaluate each university's

admission website the three key areas of concentration are the most prominent considerations.

Visual design, institutional culture, and institutional communication are examples of factors

impacting the document score such as providing a clear explanation of admissions requirements

or a diverse and inclusive learning community. The importance of visual design was

corroborated by the comments offered during the interviews with the admissions counselors.

They commented on students' use of technology and how they (i.e., the counselors) used

technology as a viable means by which to connect with prospective students.

The results of all of the documents analyzed, relate to visual design yielding a mean score

of 3 to 2.5 (Table 4) illustrating an effective design layout and site navigation. The higher scores

indicated success for the following variables regarding the content on the website:

well-organized, accessible for students with disabilities, had clear direction on the best way to

contact the institution for prospective students who had questions that could not be answered

online, and clearly provided admissions requirements. For example, Participant 6 designed their

university site with clear, easy to read menu items. Action buttons were front and center on the

main page directing the user to click for more information. Once a button was clicked, it was

easy and apparent how the user could navigate back and forth between the main page and the

admissions site.

Table 4

Institutional Admissions Document Analysis

	Visual Design
Institution	Rubric Score
Participant 1	3
Participant 2	3
Participant 3	3
Participant 4	3
Participant 5	2.5
Participant 6	3
Participant 7	3
Participant 8	3
Participant 9	2.75
Participant 10	2
Participant 11	2.75
Participant 12	2.25
Participant 13	2.5

Note: Table shows the visual design rubric results from the institution's admissions website.

Institutional Culture

Institutional culture demonstrates institutional history, traditions, student character, and values. This variable was assessed based on the website's inclusion of information about the university's mission, student population, academic offerings, experiential learning opportunities, and the student experience. Institutional culture appeals to students' perceptions of the university and reinforces the most important themes of the population and institutional narrative. An institution's culture propels students to view themselves as individuals, community leaders, and global citizens. The results for institutional culture (Table 5) corroborated the findings from the interviews with the admissions counselors. Again, a mean score of 3 to 2.5 revealed an effective narrative through a variety of materials for a diverse group of individuals. The score indicated that the content incorporated a variety of diverse and inclusive recruitment materials, detailed the mission of the institution, and provided context enabling potential students to better understand the experiences one could gain at the institution.

Table 5

Institutional Admissions Document Analysis

Institutional Culture	
Institution	Rubric Score
Participant 1	3
Participant 2	3
Participant 3	3
Participant 4	2
Participant 5	3
Participant 6	3
Participant 7	3
Participant 8	3
Participant 9	2.33
Participant 10	1

Participant 11	2.33
Participant 12	1.67
Participant 13	2.33

Note: Table shows the institutional culture rubric results from the institution's admissions website

Institutional Communication

Institutional communication reflects clear communication and precise messaging and was assessed based on the methodologies that universities employ to appeal to students' needs and interests, engage with students, and keep students informed. It relates to outreach and population. The participants in this study discussed their strides to consistently and periodically reach out to students and form avenues to provide a communication continuum. However, as students heavily rely on and utilize technology, universities have had to make modifications in how they communicate in order to meet the demands of prospective students, accordingly.

The results for institutional communication (Table 6) with a mean score of 3 to 2.5 revealed an effective call to action for students to apply to the institution. The score indicated that the website and its digital designs made it clear how to start the admissions process, allowed for easy content navigation, was accessible to all, provided a list of scheduled activities for students to learn more about the institution, and presented timelines and requirements effectively. For instance, Participant 1 provided the entire admission review process on their website, indicating application submission deadlines, interview dates, FAFSA submissions, and the date that the admission decision would be announced.

Table 6

Institutional Admissions Document Analysis

Institutional Communication

Institution	Rubric Score
Participant 1	3
Participant 2	2
Participant 3	3
Participant 4	2
Participant 5	3
Participant 6	3
Participant 7	3
Participant 8	3
Participant 9	2.20
Participant 10	1.2
Participant 11	3
Participant 12	1.60
Participant 13	3

Note: Table shows the institutional communication rubric results from the institution's

admissions website

The overall rubric scores for all three elements regarding document analysis can be found in

Table 7.

Table 7

Institutional Admissions Document Analysis

	Total Score
Institution	Rubric Score
Participant 1	3
Participant 2	2.8
Participant 3	3
Participant 4	2.33
Participant 5	2.83
Participant 6	3
Participant 7	3
Participant 8	3
Participant 9	2.42
Participant 10	1.42
Participant 11	2.75
Participant 12	1.83

Participant 13	2.67

Note: Table shows the total rubric results from the institution's admissions website.

Conclusion

The data collection process consisted of interviews with admissions professionals, a survey with feedback from high school guidance counselors, and document analysis. The researchers analyzed both qualitative and quantitative data in order to respond to the two research questions:

1. What is the VSU narrative that is shared with non-Black, domestic students?

2. How can the administration expand its visibility with non-Black, domestic students? The data from the interviews with college admissions counselors and surveys by the high school counselors to determine the EM strategies that had the most impact on student enrollment were converged.

Comments, ratings, and responses from the participants revealed a series of codes that led to three themes: outreach, population, and institutional narrative. These salient themes indicated a common perception of the influence of marketing strategies and recruitment in college choice. College choice and institution theory align with the perceptions expressed by the interview and survey participants that communicating a narrative that states a clear mission, depicts a rich history and culture, and promotes an enriching and diverse student experience. The results also revealed that, in order to increase student diversity, enrollment management strategies must focus on meeting a wide range of students' needs and interests. In addition, the data indicated that accessibility and affordability are key components in the marketing and recruiting processes.

The following chapter discusses the findings and recommendations for the executive leadership of VSU to consider in order to enhance the institutional narrative, expand visibility, and recruit a more diversified student population.

Chapter 5

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine how VSU can expand its visibility with non-Black, domestic prospective students. This mixed-methods study included both quantitative and qualitative methods. The researchers developed a web-based survey that was shared with 26 high school counselors who responded to 14 questions. The participants responded to questions that revealed their perceptions of VSU's narrative and the impact of the university's marketing and recruiting strategies on prospective students. Interviews were conducted with 15 enrollment management professionals from six HBCUs and seven PWIs in order to gain a greater understanding of SEM practices and marketing strategies implemented by peer institutions to recruit a diversified student population. In addition, an analysis of application and recruitment materials was conducted on 13 institutions to converge findings from the surveys and interviews.

The theoretical framework for this study was informed by institutional theory and college choice. Two overarching questions guided our research:

1. What is the VSU narrative that is shared with non-Black, domestic students?

2. How can the administration expand its visibility with non-Black, domestic students?

This chapter provides a summary of the study results, discusses how the study findings relate to the theories and prior research, provides implications for practice, explains limitations of the study, and provides recommendations for future research.

Interpretation of the Findings

The future and sustainability of VSU depend on the development and expansion of a

diverse student pipeline, the successful implementation of new and innovative enrollment

management strategies, and increases in university-wide resources outlined in the university's

2020-2025 Strategic Plan. According to the plan, the executive leadership is committed to the

following: earmark funds, support the office of communications, design marketing materials and

strategies, hone in on the VSU voice, redesign the university and admissions websites, build and

diversify the admissions staff and alumni support, create and fund the objectives outlined under

Support and Resources of the plan will meet institutional goals (Strategic Plan Overview, 2020).

Interviews with enrollment management professionals, an analysis of university

marketing and recruitment documents, and a survey of Virginia high school counselors provided

the researchers with relevant data to respond to both research questions. This section summarizes

the study findings as aligned with the research questions.

The Virginia State University Narrative

The VSU admissions staff acknowledged the importance of the university's narrative in

recruiting non-Black students and stated that they felt that the VSU narrative is strong in

communicating traditions that are rooted in African-American culture, but they hope to also

appear welcoming to students of all backgrounds. These staff members understand that students

would like to see diversity, not only among VSU's students but also within its staff.

Additionally, these staff members shared that they are striving to diversify the student body by

sharing the VSU narrative with high school counselors and students.

However, many high school counselors shared a limited view of VSU's culture and mission and considered it a "local" or commuter university that targets only African-American students with average or below-average GPAs. The high school counselors' perceptions may be limited because of missed opportunities or infrequent visits from VSU recruiting staff. The counselors indicated that they would like to receive materials and resources that share VSU's narrative, show more university/lifestyle images highlighting the narrative, and target the demographic that VSU would like to recruit. In addition, the counselors indicated that a narrative that includes the voices of alumni and highlights student successes would show future students the possibilities that can come from enrolling in VSU.

Importance of the Institutional Narrative

Institutional narratives are critical to the recruiting process and, in higher education, are influenced by shifts in student populations, students' perceptions and experiences, and the changing mission of a university. Our data revealed that PWIs and HBCUs are using marketing strategies to adapt to such changes. Higher education institutions are reshaping their narratives to reflect more inclusive campus environments. Marketing strategies and communication that focus on institutional narratives influence the recruitment of underrepresented students.

This study found that institutional narratives must be interwoven between every fiber of the admissions office, institutional recruitment materials, and potential students who attend the institution. Several of the institutions' admissions staff stated the importance of using technology to effectively market, recruit, and communicate the VSU narrative. If an institution cannot properly place its narrative in the aforementioned places, then the messaging of the institution is lost to high school counselors, prospective students, and their families.

Expanding Visibility with Non-Black, Domestic Students

To recruit a diversified student population, data from high school counselors suggest the need for marketing strategies that promote increased visibility. Therefore, we recommend that a diversified VSU admissions staff communicate with high school counselors on a wide range of academic and social opportunities that relate to student outcomes.

Outreach also influences the marketing strategies that HBCUs and PWIs are implementing to expand visibility and provide greater accessibility. Admissions counselors and enrollment management professionals at both HBCUs and PWIs noted that tracking software that identifies underrepresented students is an important tool for recruiting a more diverse student population. Enrollment management professionals from HBCUs shared that view books and recruiting materials that reflect diverse student populations are being used to communicate institutional cultures to appeal to underrepresented student groups. HBCUs have increased their presence at recruitment fairs, and PWI enrollment management strategies have included increasing opportunities for dialogue and interactions to create an atmosphere of inclusivity among students. We, therefore, recommend that VSU increase efforts to promote diversity through tangible recruitment materials visually and by sharing the reality of the inclusive community among VSU faculty, staff, and students with prospective students and high school counselors.

Limitations

Some limitations exist for this study. The first limitation was access to some key stakeholders such as VSU student community members. The researchers did not conduct interviews with currently enrolled VSU students or alumni of any ethnic or racial identifiers.

Time restrictions and being outside researchers were barriers to successfully capturing the voices

of key stakeholders (i.e., current and former students).

The second limitation was related to the survey participants. While 247 school counselors

were contacted, the survey sample resulted in 26 completed surveys and 44 partially completed

surveys. Of the potential 238 school counselors in Virginia, 70 counselors opened and viewed

the link to the survey. The school counselors who completed over 85% of the survey were

encouraged by the researchers to return to the link to complete the survey; some school

counselors did return to the survey. The data were collected at the end of the fall of 2019 and

early spring 2020 semester. Due to the limited time for data collection, the school counselors

were provided a three-week window to complete the survey.

The third limitation focuses on access to enrollment management professionals. The

interviews with the enrollment management professionals who were not at VSU were conducted

online via email and Zoom, an online conferencing software. The VSU admissions staff

interview consisted of a single, face-to-face interview with only two participants. In hindsight,

due to admission responsibilities in early spring, the researchers could have used phone or Zoom

interviews to be more flexible with the VSU staff schedules. This limitation narrowed the

availability and number of participants from VSU.

The fourth limitation relates to the study scope. One main objective of the study was to

determine the perceived institutional narrative for VSU. Therefore, the study relied on the school

counselors' self-reported data to understand that narrative externally. Internally, if the

researchers had access to more VSU admissions staff members and VSU students, they would

have examined and compared the institutional narrative from the perspectives of currently enrolled and employed individuals.

The final limitation was created because non-Black student populations at HBCUs are small (Snipes & Darnell, 2017). As this study focused specifically on the considerations for non-Black students, the limited amount of research available concerning non-Black students at HBCUs impacted the study. This limitation indicates the importance of more research studies regarding non-Black students at HBCUs.

Recommendations for Practice

This study revealed opportunities for VSU to improve its visibility and enhance its narrative among prospective students and high school counselors. The researchers have identified recommendations that align with the study findings and existing research to be used by VSU to attract and recruit more non-Black, domestic students. The key topics of the recommendations are communication and marketing, relationship building, and institutional research.

Communication and Marketing

The interviews and survey responses highlighted the importance of clear, effective communication from the institution to key stakeholders. Therefore, we recommend using marketing strategies that provide increased access to web and paper application information and materials. PWIs and HBCUs are increasing their use of technology to inform and communicate with students. We recommend a website design that encapsulates the VSU mission, culture, and student experience, as well as other forms of technological communication that provide access to information and resources. The survey responses indicated that implementing marketing

strategies that communicate VSU's narrative to a broader demographic could influence college choice, which fits with the results of Perna's (2006) theory.

In order to assess recruitment and marketing efforts, we recommend the development of a comprehensive enrollment strategy that includes the continued use of CRM software that can be shared across the institutional departments that may have touchpoints with prospective students or impact the student life cycle, from inquiry to graduation (Figure 6) (van Vugt & Knasys, 2015) .

Figure 6

Student Lifecycle Funnel Through Customer Relationship Management Software
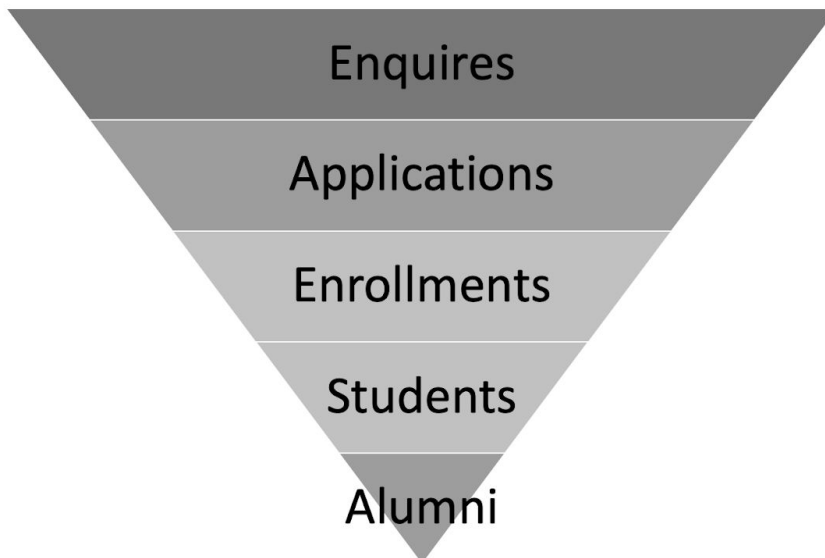
Sharing access to the continued use of the CRM is recommended for tracking the dissemination information by region and student characteristics. According to Yim et al. (2004), three emerging marketing pathways exist that may support CRM for undergraduate recruitment. These are customer-focused orientation centered on building valuable and satisfaction, ongoing

relationship marketing programming over transactional interactions, and a database of technology-orientated marketing (Yim et al., 2004). The combination of these elements, when implemented appropriately, offers the potential to improve communications and interactions between prospective students and high school counselors, and students and the university. Using CRM technology for recruitment and retention purposes aligns with the goal of any enterprise, which is to attract, keep, and grow customers (Peppers & Rogers, 2011).

In business and industry, tracking customer information can be difficult across multiple departments. With the ability to link stakeholders together, CRM systems offer the potential to track interactions as customers may interact with marketing, sales, management, customer support, billing, and a host of other departments (Guay, 2017). According to Guay (2017), this approach allows managers to keep track of outgoing and incoming communications from multiple clients and departments and serves customers by anticipating the next set of customer needs. If utilized properly, CRM systems have the ability to coordinate and track critical student and high school counselor information, which is crucial to the recruitment and retention of undergraduate students, especially students who assume they don't fit in the VSU narrative of a VSU student.

Understanding the best practices and uses of CRM systems across institutions can help institutional administrators who are seeking effective strategies, tools, and technologies for increasing student recruitment and retention rates. Rigo et al. (2016) stated that the goals of these administrators are retaining current undergraduate students, providing needed services, and managing institutional budgets.

Tracking student data is a useful tool for growing the diversity of the campus community. Two variables for tracking consideration are student characteristics and identifying geographical regions within the US where specific student populations reside. The tracking priorities for EM professionals include race and ethnicity, particularly White students, of specific ethnic groups as outlined by the colleges: Latinx, Asian, and Native American. Additionally, regional diversity is a prime area of opportunity. Tracking could also be used to target states that have graduating classes (e.g., Texas) that are more diversified, particularly those states that have greater concentrations of Latinx students. The National Center for Education Statistics (2019) has shown that the number of Latinx students enrolled in college has nearly doubled in the last 20 years. These practices will allow for an extended reach to a broader demographic student population pool. We recommend communicating the VSU narrative with multilingual versions of recruitment and application materials, particularly Spanish for the Latinx population. In addition, we recommend hiring a bilingual admissions counselor focused on increasing Latinx applicants to align with growing trends and interest in this population.

The evaluation of marketing strategies and recruitment activities is an effective practice for enrollment management professionals. Higher education institutions are now acting as businesses, using marketing to gain an effective position in their own marketplaces and identifying program strengths to help position themselves in their markets (Sanborn, 2016). VSU should assess its current marketing and recruitment strategies to determine its competitive position.

Competitive marketing in higher education has also had an impact on enrollment management. According to Judson and Taylor (2014), some researchers believe that higher

education marketing has turned to marketization, where institutions are now trying to prove that the tuition for strong programs is an exchange of goods and that the customer, the student, is the recipient of the goods.

Higher education is ever-evolving and institutions need to determine new ways to establish their identities in rapidly changing environments (Sanborn, 2016). For example, with the emergence of online education, for-profit institutions with open enrollments, and other alternative means of obtaining degrees, the competition for higher education options is at an all-time high for prospective students. While understanding that not all institutions may have a large marketing budget, it is imperative for VSU to define and share its advantages, online or otherwise, in order to remain competitive. As such, we strongly suggest a comprehensive evaluation of program and degree offerings.

Role of the Virginia State University Admissions Staff

The results of this study support Perna's (2006) theory that school and community stakeholders influence college choice. The study findings indicate that high school counselors are key stakeholders in the college choice process. As such, VSU admissions staff should prioritize building relationships with school counselors with either visits to high schools or by inviting them to campus. The surveyed counselors identified having an interest in wanting more engagement and increased communication with this population could directly influence relationships with prospective students.

We recommend building relationships through face-to-face visits. The counselors indicated that they would like opportunities for more frequent interactions with VSU admissions counselors. During these visits, VSU could offer pertinent information about access to web and

paper recruitment materials, enrollment requirements, and admissions deadlines. Both the high

school counselors and admissions staff indicated that presenting diversified recruitment staff,

which is reflective of a more diverse student population could be beneficial.

Increasing the VSU presence also aligns with the strategies implemented by both PWIs

and HBCUs participants in this study to cast a wider net for recruitment. Although engagement

with admissions counselors is an effective strategy, PWIs also employ sustained opportunities

for student-to-student engagement; therefore, we recommend promoting the inclusiveness of

underrepresented students by providing student-centered social activities and awareness of

support systems for enrolled students.

Recommendations for Future Research

The researchers believe that the following suggested research tracks could continue to

enhance the narrative and attract more qualified students to VSU and other HBCUs.

Further research of HBCUs that employ diverse enrollment management professionals

charged with recruiting students from targeted demographic backgrounds could inform VSU's

recruitment of non-Black, domestic students. A qualitative study could be developed to

understand why non-Black students chose to attend VSU or an HBCU in general. Studying other

HBCUs that have been successful in recruiting diverse populations could also be a benefit.

To expand the viewpoint of non-Black students at HBCUs, the execution of a qualitative

study that analyzes effective support systems through surveys of non-Black VSU alumni to

inform VSU's current SEM practices and retention efforts would be instrumental. Data from

non-Black focus groups at VSU could be useful for strategic planning on how to meet current

students' needs.

The findings of this study suggested high school counselors are key stakeholders for

prospective students making college choices. Building upon current or new relationships with

school counselors at the middle and high school levels would increase the number of incoming

students from around the state over the long term. A quantitative study that would help expand

on this study's findings could use a larger set of high school counselors from additional

regions/states to see how the enrollment efforts of VSU and other HBCUs have influenced the

college choice process.

Additionally, the findings of this study suggest that an assessment of enrollment

management activities and strategies, especially those that require resources, is needed to

determine if they are worth the investment and successful in improving and planning for

recruitment. Some of the activities may not have measurable outcomes, but the implementations

of any new activity and/or marketing strategy should be documented and compared against

enrollment goals to determine possible impact. For those activities that require resources, a

return on investment (ROI) could be computed by measuring the growth in enrollment or

increasing application yield rates compared to the financial investment in the activity. Paxton and

Perez-Greene (2001) stated that, once a college can understand and accept what it takes to

manage enrollment, it can begin to analyze each process to ensure a greater chance of retaining

and developing successful students.

Conclusion

HBCUs are facing significant challenges that include birth dearth; competition from

PWIs who want students from diverse backgrounds; declining numbers of high school-aged

students heading to college; and the incorrect, outdated narratives that HBCUs are only for Black

students. The future and sustainability of VSU depend on the development and expansion of a

diverse student pipeline, the successful implementation of new and innovative enrollment

management strategies, and increases in university-wide resources. The data collected for this

study includes key variables and outcomes for the recruitment of students from a variety of

backgrounds. Through active recruitment, enhanced communication and marketing strategies,

and school counselor engagement, there can be increases in student populations from a variety of

backgrounds who apply to VSU.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Social, economic, & policy context (layer 4)
Demographic characteristics
Economic characteristics
Public policy characteristics

Higher education context (layer 3)
Marketing and recruitment
Location
Institutional characteristics

School and community context (layer 2)
Availability of resources
Types of resources
Structural supports and barriers

Habitus (layer 1)

Demographic characteristics
Gender
Race/ethnicity

Cultural capital
Cultural knowledge
Value of college attainment

Social capital
Information about college
Assistance with college processes

Demand for higher education
Academic preparation
Academic achievement

Supply of resources
Family income
Financial aid

Expected benefits
Monetary
Non-monetary

Expected costs
College costs
Foregone earnings

College Choice

Figure 1. Laura Perna's Conceptual Model of College Choice (Perna, 2006)

Appendix B

High School Counselor Survey

1. How many years have you served as a counselor?

2. How many years have you served at your current high school?

3. In what county or city is your high school located?

4. Where did you attend college?

5. What race do you identify with?

    a. Hispanic/Latino

    b. American Indian or Alaska Native

    c. Asian

    d. Black or African American

    e. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

    f. White

    g. Other

6. What type(s) of information do you receive from VSU?

    a. Letter

    b. Postcard

    c. Email

    d. Brochure

    e. Other

    f. None

7. Does your high school receive visits from VSU admissions staff?

    a. Yes

    b. No

8. If applicable, please describe the frequency and nature of the visits from the VSU admissions staff.

9. How often is VSU included in your conversations with students interested in attending college?

    a. Never

    b. Rarely

    c. Sometimes

    d. Often

    e. Always

10. What are the characteristics of the students with whom you discuss VSU?

11. Please review the VSU Office of Admission Freshman brochure.

    a. Likert Scale

        i. This brochure contains appropriate information to provide students in my school with relevant knowledge about the institution.

        ii. This brochure grabs the attention of the students at my school.

        iii. This brochure provides adequate academic information to high school students.

        iv. This brochure depicts a diverse student body.

    b. Provide additional comments about the brochure.

12. What type(s) of information about VSU would be most helpful for you to learn and share

with your students?

    a. Recruitment emails about VSU

    b. Recruitment brochures

    c. Recruitment website

    d. School visits from VSU admissions staff

    e. Interactive online tours

    f. College fair information involving VSU

    g. College application process, deadlines, and criteria for VSU enrollment

    h. Other

13. In what ways can your school's relationship with VSU be improved to benefit prospective

students at your high school from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds?

14. Is there anything else you would like to share related to this study?

Appendix C

Admissions Staff Interview Protocol

Study: The VSU Narrative for Expanding Visibility to Non-Black, Non-Athlete Students

through Enrollment Management Practices for HBCUs

- **Time of Interview:**

- **Date:**

- **Place:**

- **Interviewers:** Stephen Barr, Lisa Winn Bryan, LaDarius Thompson, and

  Lisa Williams

- **Interviewee:**

The purpose of this study: Virginia State University (VSU) is a Historically Black

College/University (HBCU) located in Petersburg, Virginia. The university has historically

experienced enrollment numbers where African-American students have dominated the

culture. Having been a pillar in the community for more than 137 years, the administration

would like to explore why White students have either never heard of VSU or do not consider

the institution when making higher education plans. How can the administration expand its

visibility with non-Black, domestic students? What are the factors that cause White students

to have no knowledge of the university, despite its long history?

The information you provide will help us to understand your perceptions and

perspectives on this topic. You may choose not to participate or stop your participation at any

time without negatively affecting your relationship with the researcher. No compensation will

be provided for the investigators or participants. The study will include an in-person

interview, not to exceed 30 minutes.

As the researchers, it is our responsibility to ensure that all information resulting from

the survey and interview is kept confidential. Note that no names or any other identifying

information will be used in the results of this study except for your role at the university (i.e.,

admission staff). No one will have access to your confidential responses except the student

investigators and the committee chair and principal investigator supervising this project, Dr.

Tomika Ferguson, assistant professor of educational leadership at VCU.

[Interviewee reviews and signs informed consent form.]

Questions:

1. Could you describe how your institution attracts and engages with prospective

   undergraduate students? What specific strategies related to those students from

   underrepresented populations does your institution utilize?

2. How do you disseminate information to prospective underrepresented students?

   a. Which marketing mediums (e.g., email, mailings, events) do you feel produce the

      best results?

   b. Could you describe how you utilize your relationships with college counselors

      during the admissions process, particularly with information sharing?

      i. What could be improved?

3. How does your enrollment management team determine which regions within and
   outside of the state to target and share admissions information about your institution?

4. In what ways have you or your institution made intentional strides to appeal to students of different races and/or backgrounds?

   a. How is this intentional stride reflected in your recruiting strategy?

5. How would you define the narrative of your institution as it is shared with prospective students? (Narrative may need to be defined or changed to story, culture, or traditions.)

   a. Do you feel that you communicate the mission of the institution as part of the institution's narrative?

   b. In what ways is that narrative clarified to prospective students through marketing and admissions efforts?

   c. Could you give an example of how that narrative is made **visible** to prospective students and families throughout the admissions process?

   d. Based on the information shared by your institution, to what type(s) of student(s) do you feel your information appeals?

   e. Do you feel that you include the narrative of underrepresented student populations in the promotion of your institution? (The term underrepresented here refers to race and ethnic populations with low percentages in your current undergraduate body.) If so, how specifically?

6. Do you feel that the narrative and/or culture of your institution has or is changing? If so, in what ways?

   a. Are these changes reflected in the narrative that is communicated?

7. Do you want to share any additional information not asked or that may have been sparked by this conversation?

8. Do you have any questions?

Thank you for your cooperation and participation in this interview. Again, all responses will be kept confidential. Do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions after today.

Appendix D

Admissions Counselor Interview Codes

Marketing strategy

Recruitment

Diversification

Strategic enrollment management (SEM)

Institutional Culture

Student Experience

College choice/Student choice

Accessibility

Curriculum

Outcomes

Affordability

Strategic plan

Awareness

Shifting purpose

Identity: race/ethnicity

Faculty

Completion/Graduation

Impending crisis

Social environment

Socioeconomic status

Appendix E

Document Analysis Rubric

Institution:

Instructions: This rubric is split into three: Material Design, Institution Communication and *Institutional Design*. Material Design asks you to ensure that the site is easy to navigate, consistent in its layout, and straightforward in its usage. Institution Communication asks you to focus on how accessible, timely, and clear the institution is its communication with students. As you review the institution site, we recommend that you focus on one category at a time and score each criterion on a scale of 3 (Meets Expectations), 2 (Room for Improvement), or 1 (Unacceptable).

A. Visual Design				Section Score: 0	Average Score 0	
	Criteria	3	2	1	Score (1-3)	Notes
1	Content is organized consistently and effectively and is easy to identify.	Information about the university is consistent and clear throughout the site.	Content may be inconsistent. Some information is not entirely visible.	There is no clear division of content and no identifiable consistency among options.		
	Criteria	3	2	1	Score (1-3)	Notes
2	Document Accessibility for Students with Disabilities	Admission application and other admission documents are PDF format and do not use complex tables, highlighting, and other formats difficult for screen readers.	Admission application and other admission documents are in PDF format but may include complex tables, highlighting, and other formats difficult for screen readers.	Admission application and/or other admission documents are in other formats (i.e. Word Doc) and use complex tables, highlighting, and other formats difficult for screen readers.		
	Criteria	3	2	1	Score (1-3)	Notes
3	Materials includes means of contacting institution (i.e. admissions office location and hours, email).	Means of contacting the institution are listed in the admissions materials, and are easy to find. Includes best way to contact the institution and estimated response time.	Contains generic means for contacting the institution does not specify best method of communication or response time. May not be easy to find.	Means of contacting the institution are hard to find or nonexistent. Does not include best method of communication or response time.		
	Criteria	3	2	1	Score (1-3)	Notes
4	Institution explains admissions requirements and deadlines.	Document explicitly states admissions requirements and deadlines.	Documents include some admissions requirements, but information is nonspecific or has a large range.	Information regarding admissions requirements and deadlines is missing or hard to find.		
B. Institutional Culture				Section Score: 0	Average Score 0	
	Criteria	3	2	1	Score (1-3)	Notes
5	Variety of recruitment materials that appreciates a diverse and inclusive learning community for students from various backgrounds.	Instuition incorporates variety of diverse and inclusive recruitment materials to increase student engagement and attend to community connections.	Institution includes more than 1 diverse and inclusive recruitment material type, but does not seem to enhance engagement or attend to community connection.	Recruitment materials do not vary and do not seem to enhance engagement or attend to community connection.		
	Criteria	3	2	1	Score (1-3)	Notes
6	Narrative within recruitment materials articulates the history, traditions, cultures, and/or values of the institution.	Narrative of the materials clearly incorporates the mission of the institution.	Narrative of the materials slightly incorporates the mission of the institution.	Narrative of the materials barely incorporates the mission of the institution.		

	Criteria	3	2	1	Score (1-3)	Notes
7	Recruitment materials provide institutional context that enable prospective students to understand student characteristics, experiences, attitudes, and environmental variables.	Recruitment materials clearly provide institutional context that enable prospective students to understand student characteristics, experiences, attitudes, and environmental variables.	Recruitment materials slightly or barely provide institutional context that enable prospective students to understand student characteristics, experiences, attitudes, and environmental variables.	Recruitment materials provide no institutional context that enable prospective students to understand student characteristics, experiences, attitudes, and environmental variables.		

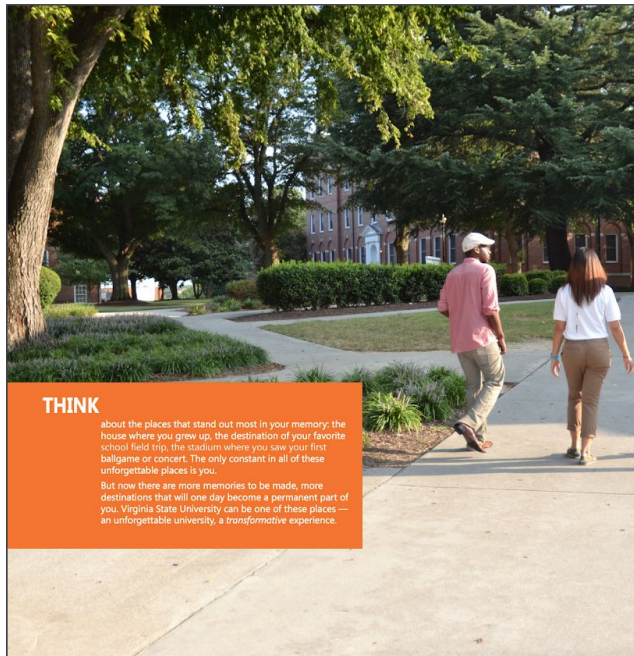| C. Institutional Communication			Section Score:	0	Average Score	0
	Criteria	3	2	1	Score (1-3)	Notes
8	Site design makes it clear how to get start the admission process.	Message on home page and Admissions page telling students how and where to get started.	Message on home page and/or Admissions page, but not both.	No explicit instructions on how or where to get started.		
	Criteria	3	2	1	Score (1-3)	Notes
9	Institutional site navigation tool is organized and easy to use.	All institutional site navigation toolbars are easily navigable.	Some institutional site navigation is possible through the menu toolbars.	Toolbars are missing or difficult to find.		
	Criteria	3	2	1	Score (1-3)	Notes
10	Content is accessible. Closed captioned videos, alternative text, and screen reading capabilities.	All content is accessible. Accommodations are included in Accessibility section.	Content is mostly accessible. Accommodations are included in the Accessibility section.	Course content is not entirely accessible. Accommodations are omitted or incomplete .		
	Criteria	3	2	1	Score (1-3)	Notes
11	Recruitment activities incorporate interaction with instuition.	Most recruitment activities incorporate interaction with the institution.	Some recruitment activities incorporate interaction with the institution.	Recruitment activities do not incorporate interaction with the institution.		
	Criteria	3	2	1	Score (1-3)	Notes
12	Institution provides appropriate and timely institutional communication on the admission process.	Institution conveys expected timelines for recruitment activities, and provides timely feedback on all admission materials needed for enrollment.	Institution provides timely feedback on all admission materials needed for enrollment, but does not have official guidelines for timeline.	Institution does not provide timely feedback on the admission process.		
	Sum of Criteria Scores:	0	Ave. of Criteria Scores	0		

Appendix F

POSSIBLE

PROGRAMS OF STUDY * Indicates minor program
Concentrations in italics

Accounting
Africana Studies*
Agriculture
- *Agri-business & Economics*
- *Animal Science*
- *Aquatic Science*
- *Environmental Science*
Art & Commercial Art & Design*
Art History*
Biology
Chemistry
- *Biochemistry*
- *Forensics Chemistry*
Community Health*
Computer Engineering
Computer Science
Criminal Justice
Cyber Security & Forensics*
Dance*
Drama*
Economics
Electronics Engineering Tech.
English
Family & Consumer Sciences
- *Dietetics*
- *Family, Child & Comm. Svcs.*
- *Textile, Apparel & Merc. Mgmt.*
Film Studies in Literature*
Finance*

French*
German*
Health & Physical Education
Health Promotion*
Health Science*
History
Hospitality Management
Industrial & Logistics Tech.
Information Systems*
International Business*
Management
- *Human Resources Management*
Management Information Sys.
Manufacturing Engineering
Marketing
Mass Communications
- *Print Media*
- *Public Relations*
- *Radio & Television*
Mathematics
- *Actuarial Science*
- *Statistics*
Mechanical Engineering Tech.
Military Science*
Music
- *Instrumental Performance*
- *Sound Recording Technology*
- *Vocal Performance*

Philosophy*
Photography*
Political Science
Psychology
Public Health*
Recreation*
Secondary Education*
Social Work
Sociology
Spanish*
Sport Management*
**Teacher Education Program
(Interdisciplinary Studies)**
- *Community Based Education*
- *Elementary Education - PreK-6*
- *Special Education - K-12*
Visual Arts
- *Animation*
- *Graphic Design*
- *Studio Art*
- *Web Design*
Writing*

Pre-Professional Programs

Pre-Law
Pre-Medicine
Pre-Pharmacy
Pre-Veterinary Medicine

VALUABLE VSU offers one of the most extraordinary values in higher education. Virginians benefit from among the least expensive in-state tuition and fee rates in the United States, even before in-state grants are taken into consideration. Out-of-state and international students — especially those from the Northeast and Midwest — will find VSU's out-of-state tuition and fees comparable to the in-state costs at their state flagship universities. And, of course, VSU offers competitive athletic scholarships in addition to over $25 million in academic scholarships and need-based financial aid solidifying Virginia State as "*Virginia's Opportunity University.*"

To determine your eligibility for federal aid, you must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), available at most high school and college guidance offices and online at www.fafsa.gov. To receive aid at VSU, apply for financial aid as soon as possible after October 1 by completing the FAFSA and listing VSU as a school to receive your information. Do not wait to be admitted to VSU to apply for federal financial aid. The earlier you apply, the better chance you will have of being considered for all aid programs.

UNBEATABLE If admitted to VSU, you don't just become a student, you become a Trojan, part of a unique and renowned family, past and present, who represent every experience. Trojans can be the first in their family to attend college, or they may come from a lineage of Trojan alumni. The university's commitment to offering a wide range of academic programs, to valuing a community formed by students from various backgrounds, and to promoting a sense of pride in Trojan Athletics contributes to the sense that "there's always something going on."
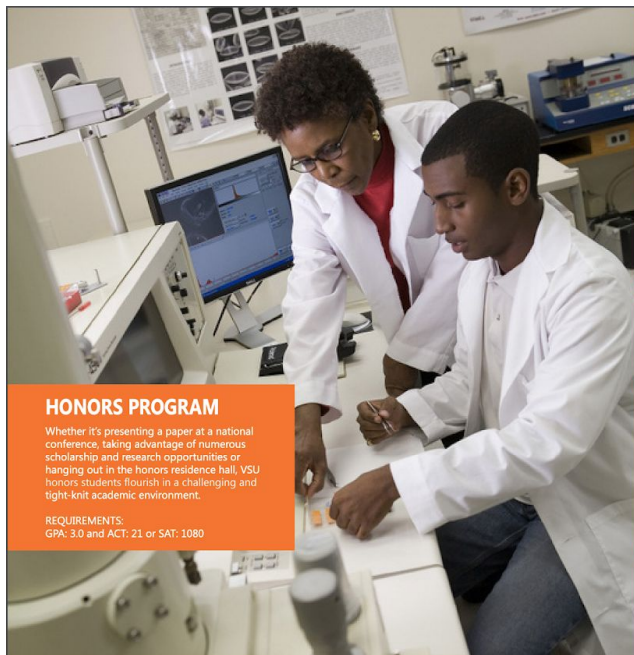
ACCESSIBLE VSU students will say it's the family-type friendliness of students and faculty that first attracted them to become Trojans. Just as important are the programs to ensure the success of all students through mentoring, and career coaching at our Academic Center for Excellence (ACE). At VSU, you will join a supportive academic community with resources and guidance to provide a *transformative* educational experience.

HONORS PROGRAM

Whether it's presenting a paper at a national conference, taking advantage of numerous scholarship and research opportunities or hanging out in the honors residence hall, VSU honors students flourish in a challenging and tight-knit academic environment.

REQUIREMENTS:
GPA: 3.0 and ACT: 21 or SAT: 1080

FAFSA CODE
003764

SAT CODE
5860

ACT CODE
4424

UNDENIABLE

FOUNDED: 1882

LOCATION: Petersburg, VA

SIZE: Our main campus sits on more than 236 acres with Randolph Farm, our 416 acre agricultural research center less than 2 miles away.

ENROLLMENT: Fall 2016 boasted a class of approximately 4600 students from over 30 states and 12 countries.

2017-2018 TOTAL COST: Virginia: $19,606 Non-Virginia: $30,452

FINANCIAL AID: Academic, athletic, band, ROTC and need-based scholarships are available.

17
VARSITY SPORTS

CIAA CONFERENCE
8 men's varsity sports
9 women's varsity sports

17:1
STUDENT:FACULTY RATIO

ADMITTED FRESHMAN CLASS PROFILE
Average GPA: 3.0
Average ACT: 18
Average SAT: 970

TRANSFER STUDENTS:
Minimum GPA: 2.0

2017-2018 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS:

STEM: Tuition, fees, room and board
3.5 GPA and 26 ACT or 1250 SAT
STEM major

PRESIDENTIAL: $10,000
3.2 GPA and 24 ACT or 1170 SAT

PROVOST: $6,500
3.0 GPA and 21 ACT or 1080 SAT

Scholarship programs shown are for first-time freshman only, including dual-enrolled students. GPA for scholarship eligibility is based on a recalculated weighted or unweighted 4.0 scale.