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Exploring How Policy Integration Facilitates Change Implementation At A Midsize Public Research University: A Case Study

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EXPLORING HOW POLICY INTEGRATION FACILITATES CHANGE
IMPLEMENTATION AT A MIDSIZE PUBLIC RESEARCH UNIVERSITY: A CASE STUDY

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For my parents.

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Abstract

Most higher education institutions in the United States are bound to the triad's regulations, but their methods for integrating external policies with internal ones are unstudied. Employing a single-case, embedded design, this qualitative study centers on a midsize public, research institution in the eastern United States to explore how one higher education institution navigated its policy environment. I proposed three questions, focusing on how academic units (AUs) and support units (SUs) worked together, how they integrated internal and external policies, and how participants experienced institutional change processes. Three frameworks guided this study: colleges and universities as systems, top-down and bottom-up implementation, and the processual policy (dis)integration framework. I used the latter to understand how AUs and SUs collaborated and integrated policies. AU and SU stakeholders formed three key partnerships (AU-AU, SU-SU, and AU-SU), which they relied on to work together. Within these partnerships, participants used various policy instruments to fuel change processes and protect boundaries between AUs and SUs. Engagement in institutional change processes was an enlightening introduction for stakeholders new to institutional change—who were usually AU representatives—and an opportunity for veterans to expand their knowledge about external expectations and higher education trends. The substantive change policy partnerships established the infrastructure of policy integration. Colleges and universities seeking to develop or reboot their institutional change policies should focus on who is involved in changes, how they work together, and the inherent role of these policy actors both within the units they represent and within the institution at large.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When I began working in higher education, I was employed at an institution where changes to the curriculum and the organization were frequent, diverse, and unpredictable. The changes might include the sudden creation of a new degree program or the closure of a center that focused on faculty development. Consequently, academic units and support units existed in a perpetual state of reaction to unanticipated changes rather than predictable actions driven by foresight and planning. As a new assistant director in my institution's equivalent to an Office of Institutional Effectiveness, I often existed in a constant state of confusion because institutional processes were not followed, and we had to retrofit changes to ensure the institution remained in compliance with its regulating bodies.

A couple of years after I left this institution, I was talking to the head of Institutional Effectiveness at the institution that serves as the context for this dissertation case study. We were at a conference for accreditation and assessment. The head of Institutional Effectiveness mentioned that their institution had created a substantive change policy (SCP) to achieve compliance with their institutional accrediting organization's SCP. The policy was designed to coordinate complex changes at the institution that required review or approval from the institution's State Department for Higher Education and/or institutional accrediting body. Additionally, the SCP would guide institutional stakeholders through the change development and implementation process, which they did not have before. The lack of an SCP at the case site had resulted in, for example, a very complicated, confusing, and messy implementation of the

institution's first online degree program. Later, I researched the institution's policy online, and little did I know, it would emerge as my dissertation topic. I did not know institutions could have a policy solely for the coordination of academic and support units and internal and external policies. I reflected on my work at my previous institution and how a similar policy would have helped. The case site's SCP led me to consider the factors promoting and restricting institutional change, and how the stakeholders represented in this case coordinated and implemented changes via its change policy.

To explore this institution's change policy and the stakeholders involved in it, I relied on a single-case embedded design (Yin, 2018), supported by data collected from monthly SCP team meetings, Curriculog (a repository for change documents), and primarily, interviews with stakeholders who attend the SCP team meetings. To my knowledge, no other researchers have studied an institution's SCP to understand how the academic and support units work together, how they integrate internal and external policies, and how stakeholders experience and understand the SCP process. Exploration in this area is necessary, as the regulations governing higher education continue to become more complex and target new components of institutions. To survive a policy environment that is changing rapidly, institutions need effective change policies (Pont & Viennet, 2017). To begin this exploration of change in higher education, I first address what I mean by change and describe the higher education agents who engage in it.

Change in Higher Education

Change is a natural and necessary component of organizational life; colleges and universities are certainly no stranger to it. However, due to environmental factors, organizational politics and culture, and the confusing intersection of internal and external policies, changes can be more easily desired than achieved. To implement changes effectively, colleges and

universities must navigate a complex web of external mandates and policies, internal policies, internal and external stakeholders, and organizational politics and culture (Bryson, 2018; Fowler, 2013; Rowley & Sherman, 2001). These dynamics make the change development and implementation processes a critical aspect of strategic planning due to the complexity of the systems governing higher education (Bryson, 2018; Rowley & Sherman, 2001). Consequently, successful policy implementation is often political and messy rather than rational (Bryson, 2018; Trowler, 2002). Strong policy integration and implementation structures, which help the organization navigate its internal and external environments, are essential for the effective implementation of proposed changes (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018; Rowley & Sherman, 2001).

At many institutions, Offices of Institutional Effectiveness are usually the units responsible for coordinating external and internal systems to ensure the institution remains in compliance, produces quality programs and services for its students, and makes changes that align with the institutional mission (Alfred et al., 1999). Offices of Institutional Effectiveness help universities navigate the triad. The triad, which is comprised of the states, federal government, and accreditation organizations, regulates higher education (Suskie, 2015; Tandberg et al., 2019). Its influence on organizational life can depend on an institution's location, type, size, quantity of degree programs and academic and non-academic services offered, and organizational structure (Rowley & Sherman, 2001).

Each member of the triad prescribes certain requirements for institutions. To operate within their geographic boundaries, states require institutions to be authorized to operate and maintain licensure requirements for certain professions, such as K-12 education and counseling National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA, n.d.-a; Thompson

et al., 2020). Depending on the state and whether the institution is private or public, the state's

higher education coordinating body will have additional requirements. For example, in Virginia,

the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV, 2020) must approve new programs

for public institutions but not private ones. The federal government primarily regulates higher

education via the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended (Parsons, 2002), as well as the

negotiated rulemaking process, which is used to make changes to higher education regulations

via stakeholder collaboration (Carey, 2021). Federal expectations for colleges and universities

receiving federal aid are outlined in the Higher Education Act, and include policies related to

equal access to education (Title IX) and a mandate that institutions accepting federal aid

maintain membership with a federally recognized accrediting organization (Eaton, 2009; Gaston,

2014). Regarding accreditation, an institution's degree of external oversight will vary, for

example, based on the number of degree programs requiring specialized accreditation (e.g., law,

engineering, teacher education). These accreditors and the institutional accrediting organization

require regular evaluation based on pre-determined standards for academic programs in

particular and higher education in general (Suskie, 2015). In addition to the triad, other external

agents are part of the higher education policy environment and influence operations. These

external agents include lobbyists, regional education boards, think tanks, and higher education

associations, such as the American Council on Education (Ness et al., 2015; Parsons, 2002).

College and university stakeholders who plan and implement changes must consider how to

navigate these external agents, as well as the unique organizational and cultural dynamics of

their institution, when planning, interpreting policies, and implementing changes.

Changes within colleges and universities are often a consequence of shifts within the

external organizational environment (Bryson, 2018). The present higher education environment

has been complicated by the long-term implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, which includes the Great Resignation (Moody, 2022; Zahneis, 2022) and declining student enrollment (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Other characteristics of the higher education environment include rising student debt and tuition costs (College Board, 2022), and concerns about whether higher education is worth the financial investment (Ambrose & Wangel, 2020). To ensure their survival, higher education institutions must find innovative ways to adapt to these challenges, and to do so, they must satisfy the expectations of the triad and educational associations, which are not coordinated. External actors have different expectations for institutions and operate on different timelines and cycles (Eaton, 2009; Gaston, 2014; NC-SARA, n.d.-a; Ness et al., 2015; Parsons, 2002; Thompson et al., 2020).

External mandates and timelines are regularly occurring (e.g., annual reports, self-studies) or only emerge when an institution wants to implement a change but needs external approval to do so. These reports occur on different cycles. Institutions submit reports to accreditation organizations, which require institutions to complete both annual reports and self-studies at regular intervals (United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2023; Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges [SACSCOC], 2020). The challenges of navigating diverse and numerous higher education requirements like these aggrandize when an institution implements a change: institutional stakeholders must ensure the institution (a) adheres to internal requirements (e.g., policies and strategic plans) and (b) satisfies external requirements (e.g., federal, state, and accreditation reporting).

The development of distance education degree programs demonstrates this complexity. An institution creating its first distance education program in a major it does not currently offer must adhere to a variety of regulations before enrolling students. State higher education

governing bodies have different requirements for new programs. SCHEV (2020), for example, mandates that public institutions receive approval for any new program prior to implementation. Additionally, accrediting organizations can have policies governing the implementation of a new program modality and a new major. SACSCOC (2023) has a substantive change policy to guide institutions seeking to implement such changes. Institutions offering distance education programs must adhere to certain legal responsibilities if students must complete an activity, such as a practicum or internship, outside of the university's home state. For example, the institution must tell out-of-state students whether a program's curriculum will lead to licensure (e.g., counseling, teacher education) in the students' current states of residence (State Authorization Network, n.d.). Requirements will vary by state and accrediting organization (Thompson et al., 2020). This scenario represents only some of the external requirements institutions must consider before implementing a change such as a new distance education program—and does not integrate the internal policies and processes that are unique to every institution.

Statement of the Problem

For colleges and universities to navigate the complex higher education policy environment while meeting internal demands, they must establish effective policy implementation processes (Bryson, 2018). However, research on how college and university stakeholders interpret and navigate policy environments to implement changes is limited; most research in this area focused on the K-12 space (Chase, 2016; Goldrick-Rab & Shaw, 2007; Gonzalez et al., 2021). Some higher education research does address policy integration, but it is usually from the perspective of a specific problem, such as equity in community colleges (Gonzalez et al., 2021) or transfer policy in a 2-year college (Chase, 2016). However, scholars have yet to study how institutional stakeholders effectively integrate the diverse internal and

external higher education policies they must follow to make changes that will affect the quality of institutional programs and services. To address this dearth of research, I focused on how one midsize, public research institution navigated its specific policy landscape to implement changes. I focused on this institution because its unique change policy fascinated me, and I recognized that it is unique and would make a strong case study. I wanted to know if the policy was successful in terms of the level of collaboration between a diverse group of institutional stakeholders involved in change processes, and efficiency with which changes moved from inception to implementation. I was also curious if this institution's SCP could be a model for higher education institutions across the United States. To understand this case, I explored the SCP process through the lens of policy (dis)integration (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018), focusing on how the institution's academic and support units worked together to implement changes, how these units integrated internal and external policies, and the experiences of the stakeholders involved in these processes.

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

The foundational conceptual framework for this study is the processual policy (dis)integration framework (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018). Two other frameworks are essential for a clear understanding of the level of processual policy integration occurring via the SCP that is the focus of this research: School Systems (Birnbaum, 1988) and top-down, bottom-up implementation (Hanf et al., 1982, as cited in Sabatier, 1986). Together, (a) School Systems and (b) top-down and bottom-up implementation set the stage for the processual policy integration framework. The order of the frameworks is important. The School Systems framework establishes the contextual setting for the university in question. It provides a macro-level perspective of the university as a system with working parts (e.g., the academic and support

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units that comprise the SCP; Birnbaum, 1988). Top-down and bottom-up implementation

demonstrate the context through which the SCP emerged as a function of meso-level

stakeholders who observed a problem and chose to make a policy to address it (Hanf et al., 1982,

as cited in Sabatier, 1986). The processual policy integration framework is used to interpret the

outcomes of the work facilitated via the SCP according to four dimensions: policy frame,

subsystem involvement, policy goals, and policy instruments, which are evaluated according to a

four-level scale (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018). Figure 1 presents these theories' nested

relationship, which I describe in the following sections. I conclude with a discussion on how the

three frameworks work together.

Figure 1

Interaction Between the Theoretical Frameworks
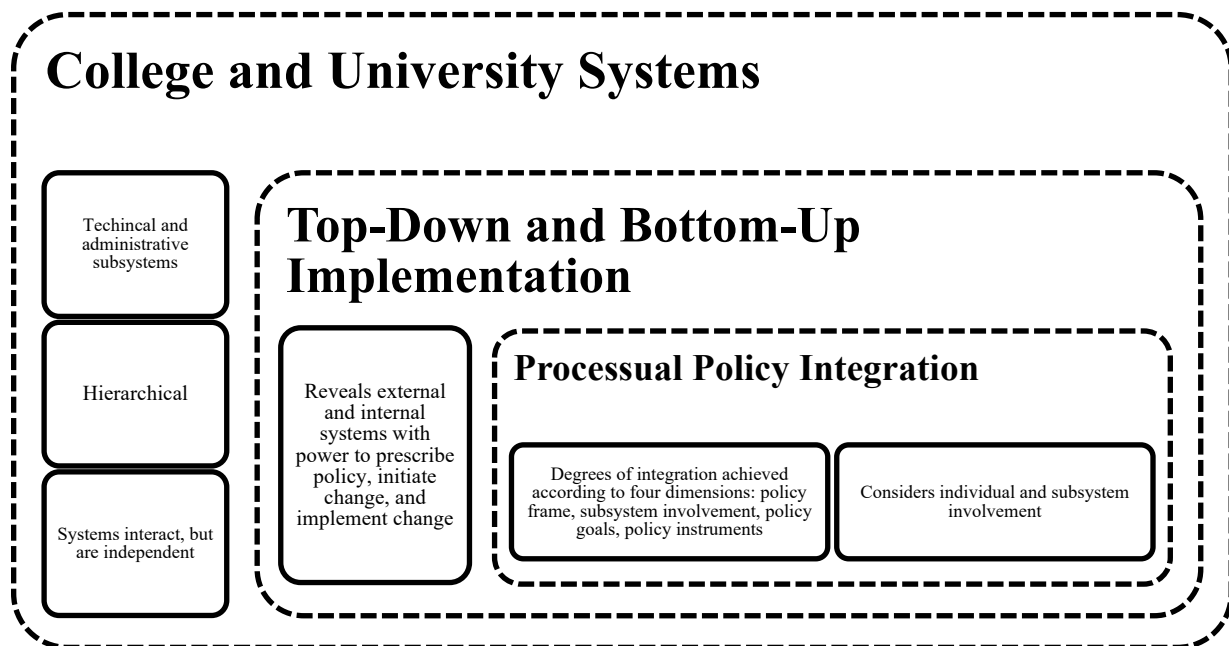
Systems Theory: Colleges and Universities as Systems

To understand the level of policy integration achieved via the SCP, the university must be understood as a system comprised of smaller subsystems that interact with and are dependent upon each other (Bess & Dee, 2007; Birnbaum, 1988; von Bertalanffy, 1968). Identifying the university as a system comprised of numerous subsystems not only allows it to be more easily understood, it also (a) allows for the ability to unpack how the university's subunits interact; (b) provides the chance to understand how both the university as a whole and its subunits interact with their internal and external environments (Birnbaum, 1988; von Bertalanffy, 1968); and (c) can help discern the power relationships between subsystems. Birnbaum (1988) presents his variations of open and closed systems: the "Pool System" and the "School System" (p. 32). The latter applies to this study. Pool Systems, which Birnbaum models after a pool table, are closed, tightly coupled systems. Pool systems have tight boundaries (e.g., the sides of the pool table), which cause the subsystems' (e.g., billiard balls) movement to be restricted. The subsystems can interact with each other, but the ways in which they interact are limited and predictable. In such systems, an event that affects one subsystem of the organization affects the other subsystems and can cause the system to break down (Weick, 1976). In contrast, School Systems represent colleges and universities, which are loosely coupled (Weick, 1976) and have "interrelated, interactive, and interdependent" subsystems (Bess & Dee, 2007, p. 94). These characteristics allow colleges and universities to respond more easily to change compared with Pool Systems because the subsystems have permeable boundaries that allow them to perceive changes in the university environment and higher education environment. Loose coupling awards subunits more freedom to make independent responses (Birnbaum, 1988). Figure 2 depicts the School System, modified from Birnbaum (1988). I describe each component of the School System below.

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Figure 2

School Systems and Their Environment
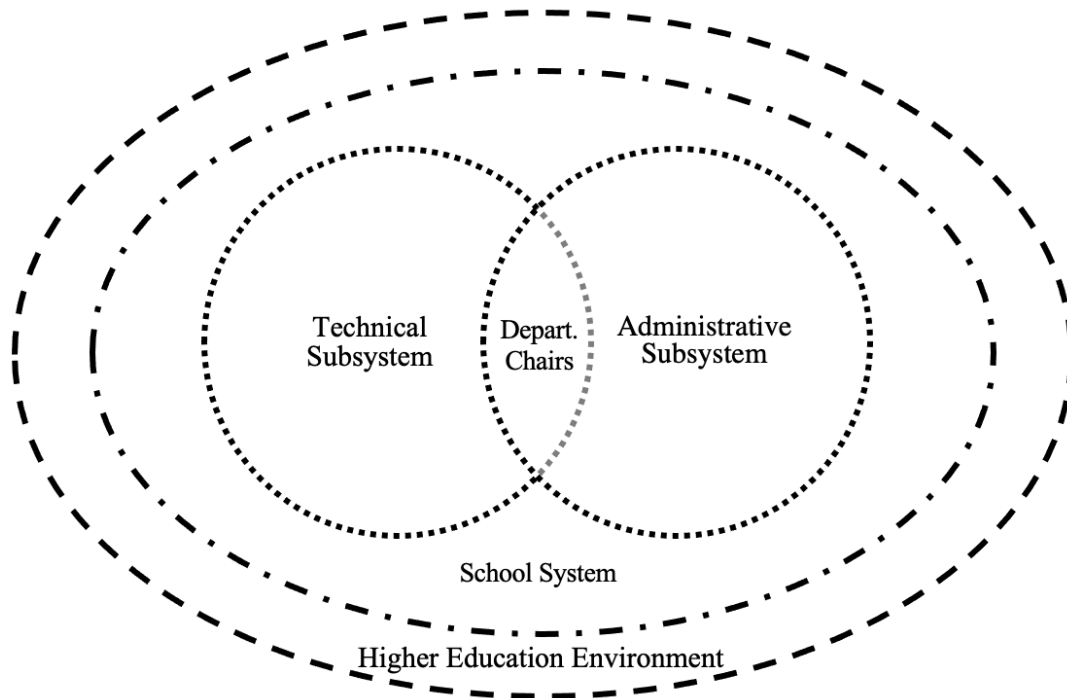
Note. Adapted from *How Colleges Work: The Cybernetics of Academic Organization and Leadership* by R. Birnbaum, 1988, p. 32, Jossey-Bass.

School systems are comprised of three parts: the technical system, the administrative

system, and the environment (Birnbaum, 1988). The technical system includes aspects of the

university (e.g., faculty) that "turn inputs into outputs," such as students and research grants that

are turned into graduates and knowledge, respectively (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 31). The

administrative system includes aspects of the university that "help to coordinate and direct the

organization," such as the department chairs, policies and regulations, deans, and budgets

(Birnbaum, 1988, p. 33). The technical and administrative subsystems overlap, which means

they share elements and interact (e.g., have permeable boundaries and similar organizational

members). In Figure 2, the department chairs represent the overlap between the technical and administrative subsystems, representing that they are the liaison between faculty and the administrative elements of the institution: a change in the technical system can affect the administrative system, and the department chairs help mediate these changes. If the faculty members propose the creation of a new degree program, which the administrative subsystem approves, the new degree program could result in the creation of a new academic department if the degree program is successful. The environment represents anything outside of the subsystems and the School System as a whole (Bess & Dee, 2007; Birnbaum, 1988). Each subsystem's environment includes the other subsystems within the school system and aspects of the external environments with which the system interacts. An academic subsystem that has specialized accreditation will be affected by external mandates from the accrediting organization, as well as professional and workforce changes within the field. The school subsystem is comprised of everything outside of the institution, which includes the triad, higher education associations, social values, politics, economic shifts, and geographic location, among other factors (Birnbaum, 1988; Bryson, 2018; Tandberg et al., 2019). External environments can be stable or turbulent. Stable environments experience little change and events within them are fairly predictable, but turbulent environments, much like the one higher education presently faces, constantly present new challenges and changes (Birnbaum, 1988).

The degree to which the environment affects the school system and/or its subsystems depends on two factors: (a) the permeability of system boundaries, which are the dividing lines between systems within their environments, and (b) whether the system is tightly coupled or loosely coupled (Bess & Dee, 2007; Birnbaum, 1988; Weick, 1976). Boundaries can be closed or open. Closed systems have rigid boundaries, such as with the Pool System, and are linear

(Birnbaum, 1988). Because closed systems tend to be more bureaucratic than open systems, it is easy to predict the outcomes of closed systems. Open systems, however, are not linear. Rather, they are dynamic because their boundaries are permeable. Consequently, "interactions of many kinds are likely to occur between the environment and many of the system elements" (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 34). Open systems are more open to change because they are more in touch with the external environment, and their loosely coupled nature allows them to perceive changes within and adapt to the environment more easily. These characteristics allow the system to survive and evolve (Birnbaum, 1988).

The technical system, the administrative system, and their environments frame how a college or university will respond to change. Birnbaum (1988) describes three environments in which a School System can exist that foreshadow the best technologies, such as an SCP, the institution should have in place to solve problems:

1. University change is rare, and "problems precedented" (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 45). Generally, a static system can operate effectively under centralized management.

2. University change is "frequent," and when problems occur, they are "precedented" (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 45). To respond to change effectively, a university should be loosely coupled and have "coordination by specialized planning units, planning of interlocking activities with attention to intermediate goals, and emphasis on quality" (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 46).

3. If changes within the University are both frequent and unprecedented, "technology must be adaptive" (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 46). Systems must "be decentralized" and "coordinated…within the unit," which allows plans to be changed via information received from the system and learning from experience (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 46).

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The first scenario does not apply to the School System. Colleges and universities are loosely coupled (Weick, 1976), and because they are plagued by constant changes within the external environment, their survival depends on efficient and effective responses to these changes.

The School System Birnbaum (1988) presents (Figure 2) provides a macro-level perspective of the technological and administrative subsystems, but I propose a few modifications to suit the context at hand. Figure 3 reflects edits to the original School Systems model to address how the university featured in this case study connects its academic and support units via the SCP to implement changes. The external environment remains the same, as does the loosely coupled nature of the system, the permeable boundaries, and the relative independence of the subsystems to respond to specific changes in their internal and external environments.

Figure 3

School System Model Featuring the SCP
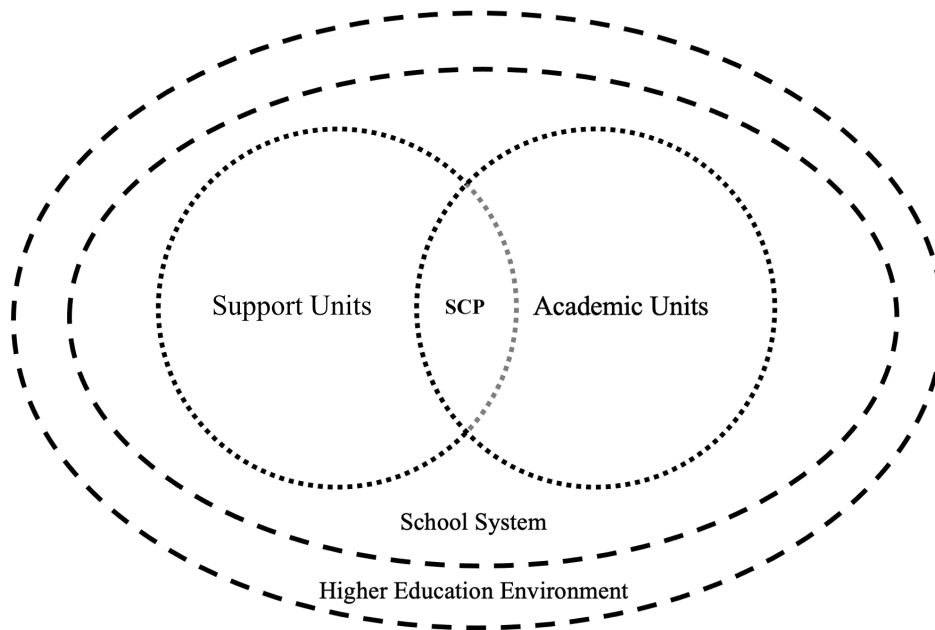
Note. SCP stands for substantive change policy. Adapted from *How Colleges Work: The Cybernetics of Academic Organization and Leadership* by R. Birnbaum, 1988, p. 32, Jossey-Bass.

In this revised model, I replace the technical subsystem with the support units, and the department chairs with the SCP. To make changes, it is the academic and support units that interact, and the SCP facilitates this interaction by prescribing the processes and internal and external mandates governing when and how changes can occur. The elimination of the technical subsystem and the department chairs does not mean that these are no longer elements of the School System. Rather, the technical subsystem is housed in the academic and support units, both of which have the faculty and staff to "turn outputs into inputs" (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 31). The process of transforming inputs into outputs is not focused on new graduates or the generation of new research, but rather, on transforming change proposals into the actual changes

themselves. The tools to transform these inputs (i.e., change proposals) into outputs (i.e., the actual changes) are housed within the academic and support units. Department chairs, as applicable, are involved in changes behind the scenes in their respective academic units. However, department chairs were not represented on the SCP team I studied.

Implementation Strategy: Top-Down and Bottom-Up

The second framework, implementation strategy, is comprised of top-down and bottom-up implementation strategies and highlights the power dynamic that emerges between subsystems. Top-down implementation strategy occurs when decision-making is centralized: the policy makers in the external environment pass mandates with little to no consideration for the implementers' perspectives (Matland, 1995; Sabatier, 1986). In organizational life, this type of implementation strategy indicates that power is centralized with the organization's leading administrators (i.e., deans at the school level, and provosts at the institutional level). In contrast, the bottom-up implementation strategy "starts by identifying the network of actors involved in service delivery in one or more local areas and asks them about their goals, strategies, activities, and contacts" (Sabatier, 1986, p. 32). In organizational life, this type of implementation strategy indicates that power is distributed to mezzo-level organizational members (e.g., assistant and associate deans, directors) who are given authority to make decisions and implement changes and policies based on their knowledge and experience.

Although I present the School System (Figure 3) as a relationship between the technical and administrative subsystems, the relationship between them can be hierarchical in some contexts: some subsystems have greater power and authority than others that is derived from policies and institutional structure (e.g., Faculty Handbook, organizational chart) or institutional culture (Birnbaum, 1988). The Provost's Office, for example, has more authority than the

academic departments it oversees. Additionally, internal institutional governance dictates the

power various subsystems and stakeholders hold. Faculty maintain authority over academic

programming and instruction, while the trustees and president primarily oversee the management

and operations of the institution (AAUP, 1966; Birnbaum, 1988). Although power structures are

prescribed via the institutional structure and governance policies that exist at the institutional and

school levels, institutional culture, policies, and finances may award one academic department,

such as engineering, more authority than the English department because the engineering dean

has been at the University longer, and the engineering department has more funding and

produces internationally known research. Additionally, there has been much debate over whether

governance should be shared between the faculty and the administrative subsystems of higher

education institutions due to the increasing number of state, federal and accrediting body

regulations that shape what colleges and universities can offer and how (AAUP, 1966;

Birnbaum, 1988, Kaplin et al., 2020). Due to the hierarchical nature of educational organizations,

which the School System model does not address, it is important to consider which

organizational units and stakeholders create policies and implement changes. These actors can

reveal (a) the autonomy of the system, (b) which academic and support units have the most

power, (c) the speed at which the University responds to change, (d) how well the subsystems

work together to solve problems, and (e) how well the institution integrates internal and external

policies (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018). The third and final framework I used is the

processual policy (dis)integration framework, which I discuss in the next section.

Processual Policy (Dis)integration Framework

Policy integration is considered one of the most critical, contemporary challenges to

public policy due to growing networks of mandates and the increased specialization of public

and private organizations (Candel & Biesbroek, 2018; Peters 2015, 2018). Generally, policy integration is used within public policy at the national level, focusing on major issues such as food insecurity and education (Candel & Biesbroek, 2018). The need for policy integration, however, is pervasive, occurring at the international, national, and local levels (Peters, 2015). Policy integration helps organizations and individuals coordinate demands to save time, save money, and improve efficiency (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016; Peters, 2015, 2018).

While some policy integration frameworks focus on outcomes, such as the achievement of policy integration, others consider policy integration to be a spectrum rather than a binary outcome assessing whether integration is achieved (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018; Metcalfe, 1994). Candel and Biesbroek (2016) offer a processual model of policy integration to account for the degrees of policy integration present among four dimensions: policy frame, subsystem involvement, policy goals, and policy instruments. They explain, "Policy integration is here understood as a process of policy and institutional change and design in which actors play a pivotal role, as interactions between (political) actors constitute the mechanisms through which shifts of policy integration occur" (Candel & Biesbroek, 2018, p. 196). The policy frame dimension considers the level to which the institution (represented by key institutional stakeholders) recognizes the problem is cross-cutting, applying to multiple subsystems and/or stakeholders. The subsystem involvement dimension considers the degree to which subsystems (i.e., key stakeholders in subsystems) are involved in cross-cutting issues and the quantity of interactions with other subsystems related to the policy frame. The policy goals dimension considers the degree to which subsystems integrate the larger policy goal into their policy goals. The policy instruments dimension considers the degree to which subsystems adjust their policy instruments to align with the larger policy frame (Figure 4). It is important to emphasize that

none of these elements can be achieved without people, who are key to the success of change

processes. This element is, in fact, underemphasized in the policy integration framework (Candel

& Biesbroek, 2018) because sufficient organizational and policy integration can only be

achieved when stakeholders are willing to cooperate.

Figure 4

Simplified Processual Policy Integration Framework

<div style="text-align:center;">⟵   Policy (dis)integration   ⟶</div>

Policy frame	**Description**: The presence of an overarching frame that fosters integrative interactions, i.e., whether a crosscutting problem is recognized as such and thought to be requiring concerted action. **Degrees**: Ranging from a narrow problem definition, where the problem is considered to fall within the boundaries of a specific subsystem to general recognition that the problem affects/is affected by the system as a whole and requires a holistic approach.
Subsystem involvement	**Description**: The range of (networks of) actors and institutions intentionally dealing with the crosscutting issue. **Degrees**: Ranging from siloed policymaking in which the issue is dealt with by one subsystem only to having all potentially relevant subsystems involved and interacting.
Policy goals	**Description**: (i) the range of sectoral policies in which the crosscutting issue is explicitly being addressed, either as a main or sub-goal; (ii) the coherence between goals. **Degrees**: Ranging from the issue only being addressed in one or a few other sectoral policies to integration across all relevant policies across sectors, possibly accompanied by an overarching strategy; and from no/low coherence to high coherence.
Policy instruments	**Description**: (i) the extent to which the means in sectoral policies have been adopted and adjusted to pursue a crosscutting objective; (ii) the presence of procedural instruments, to facilitate coordination; (iii) the consistency of the instrument mix as a whole. **Degrees**: Ranging from one or a few sectoral instruments, no procedural instruments at system-level and low consistency to an intelligent instrument mix, procedural instruments that facilitate coordination across subsystems, and high consistency.

Application of Processual Policy Integration Framework to Higher Education

Because the policy integration framework was not designed with higher education in mind, I have adapted the model to suit the context at hand and draw clearer lines between national and international policy integration concepts and how they relate to higher education. One significant change I made was to emphasize stakeholders within the institution and within critical subunits (i.e., Registrar, Institutional Effectiveness) that are key actors within each dimension of the policy integration framework. Focusing on the actors removes some of the opaque language Candel and Biesbroek (2016, 2018) use, such as "institution" and "subsystem" that fail to highlight the "doers" of policy integration and change work. Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 represent the adaptation of the policy frame, subsystem involvement, policy goals, and policy instrument dimensions of the policy integration framework to an American higher education institution. These figures represent my interpretation of how the framework might apply to higher education contexts. The changes described are inspired by the ones listed in the SACSCOC (2023) substantive change policy.

Table 1 presents the adaption of the policy frame dimension to an American higher education institution. Similar to Candel and Biesbroek (2016, 2018), the policy frame focuses on the problem organization stakeholders need to solve. In higher education, the problem is something that will trigger the SCP. Some changes require little to no input from institutional stakeholders, whereas other changes require input and support from a variety of stakeholders. The degree of integration for the policy frame dimensions depends on the type of change.

Table 1

Policy Frame for Higher Education

Aspect	Description
Definition	In the context of institutional change processes in higher education, the policy frame addresses the institutional change itself. An institutional change triggers the integration and consultation of stakeholders who contribute the breath of institutional knowledge and experience required to implement the change. However, the reality that change requires focused contribution from multiple units does not mean that all appropriate units are consulted and/or integrated into change processes; integration will vary.
Degrees	For the policy frame, the degree of policy integration is determined by the degree to which trans-institutional collaboration is required. Therefore, at the low end of the spectrum, the change will not require trans-institutional collaboration. A change in this category might be a minor curricular change, such as the update of a course description or number that should require limited (if any) faculty approval and a simple adjustment to the applicable Academic Catalog and associated documents by the Registrar. At the high end of the spectrum, the change will require trans-institutional collaboration. A change in this category might be the creation of a new off-campus instructional site.

Note. Adapted from "Toward a Processual Understanding of Policy Integration," by J. J. L. Candel and R. Biesbroek, 2016, *Policy Sciences*, *49*, p. 219, (https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-016-9248-y).

Table 2 focuses on the number and type of subsystems that are involved in the development and implementation of changes. There are two degrees of subsystem involvement: (a) the number of subsystems (i.e., academic and support units) that are involved in the change, and (b) the quantity and depth of the interactions between these subsystems. Regarding the former, the number of subsystems involved depends on the type of change. For example, a change to a course subject or number is a minor change involving only review and approval from faculty. A new degree program, however, will require the academic unit, as well as various support units and external units, as applicable, to implement the change. Regarding the latter, the quantity and depth of interactions can be a direct factor of the type of change with less complex changes requiring little to no interaction. Additionally, organization culture, existing change policies, and collaboration between stakeholders can determine how often subsystems meet and interact when developing and implementing changes.

Table 2

Subsystem Involvement for Higher Education

Aspect	Description
Definition	In the context of higher education, subsystem involvement represents the diverse academic and support units, and independent stakeholders, as applicable, who interact purposefully to implement a specific change.
Degrees	There are two degrees related to subsystem involvement: (a) the number of academic and support units that need to be involved, and (b) the quantity and depth of the interactions between the involved units.
	For density (i.e., number of units involved), a low level of integration among the subsystems occurs when decision-making authority is housed within one unit. Subsystem involvement may be low if (a) it is not necessary to integrate other units because the change does not necessitate trans-institutional collaboration, or (b) other subsystems who should be involved in the institutional change are not integrated even though they are affected by the change and/or the change requires their knowledge and expertise. In this case, there could be a variety of reasons why the appropriate stakeholders are not integrated into the change process. A high level of integration occurs when all the relevant stakeholders are integrated into the change processes.
	For the second degree (i.e., quantity and dept of interactions between relevant stakeholders), a low level of integration occurs when (a) there is no interaction between units because change implementation is siloed, or (b) interaction between units is unnecessary because the change is not substantive and does not require trans-institutional collaboration. A high level of integration between units occurs when there are regular, frequent, and meaningful interactions between all relevant academic and support units involved in the change.

Note. Adapted from "Toward a Processual Understanding of Policy Integration," by J. J. L. Candel and R. Biesbroek, 2016, *Policy Sciences*, *49*, p. 221, (https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-016-9248-y).

Table 3 focuses on the policy goals dimension of the policy integration framework. For institutions that must comply with mandates from the triad, the type of change determines the number of policies the change triggers and the entities with which the institution must comply. Additionally, the institution must navigate the degree of coherence (or lack thereof) between the internal and external policies. These two elements represent two degrees of the policy goals dimension. For the first degree, a change may trigger only internal policies because the change is not complex, but a change can trigger a variety of internal and external policies if it is complex,

such as with the addition of an off-campus instructional site. For the second degree, the coherence between the policies largely depends upon the effort institutional stakeholders put into coordinating internal policies with external ones, as external policies are notoriously uncoordinated. An institution with a change policy may achieve more coordination than one without a change policy.

Table 3

Policy Goals for Higher Education

Aspect	Description
Definition	Complex changes often intersect with internal policies and mandates from the triad. For example, the decision to offer a degree program at a level not currently available at the institution (e.g., offering graduate degrees when only bachelor's degrees are offered) will require state and accreditor approval at a public institution in Virginia. Complex changes are accompanied by diverse, external policies that must be addressed. Additionally, policy goals address the level of coherence (i.e., unity) between the various polices related to the change.
Degrees	There are two degrees for policy goals: (a) the number of policies triggered by the change, and (b) the coherence between the policies.
	For the first degree, there may be only a couple of internal and/or external policies triggered by the change, or there may be many intersecting internal and external policies triggered by a change. A more complex change will trigger more policies, and these policies may have contrasting policy goals.
	For the second degree, the coherence between the policies is largely determined by the institution and the stakeholders related to the change because mandates from the triad are largely uncoordinated. Therefore, coherence of policy goals must be achieved via intentional organization from relevant institutional stakeholders. In an ideal example, institutional stakeholders will know which internal and external policies apply to the change in question and apply them in an order that ensures the change will be approved and implemented.

Note. Adapted from "Toward a Processual Understanding of Policy Integration," by J. J. L. Candel and R. Biesbroek, 2016, *Policy Sciences*, *49*, p. 222, (https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-016-9248-y).

Finally, Table 4 focuses on institutional stakeholders' use of policy instruments to develop and implement changes. Such policy instruments include any variety of tools, processes, and other resources stakeholders use to develop changes, to receive approval from applicable

internal and external entities, and to implement the change. For this dimension, the degree of

integration can depend on the type of change, with minor changes requiring fewer instruments

and more complex ones requiring more strategies and creative thinking from stakeholders—

especially if a change requires stakeholder buy-in.

Table 4

Policy Instruments for Higher Education

Aspect	Description
Definition	To implement a change at a higher education institution, stakeholders rely on various tools and processes. A policy instrument can be any resource stakeholders interacting in the change process use to receive approval for a change and to implement that change, such as a published policy, forms stakeholders must complete to implement the change, and meetings. The integration of many units/stakeholders may result in the creation of shared policy instruments.
Degrees	At the low end of the policy instrument spectrum, a change that requires little integration among stakeholders, triggers few internal/external policies, and has limited subsystem involvement is unlikely to require institutional stakeholders to use a lot of policy instruments. However, at the high end of the policy instrument spectrum, a complex change requires the use of a number of policy instruments. If the level of integration between subsystems is high, the subsystems may share policy instruments.

Note. Adapted from "Toward a Processual Understanding of Policy Integration," by J. J. L. Candel and R. Biesbroek, 2016, *Policy Sciences*, *49*, p. 224, (https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-016-9248-y).

How the Frameworks Work Together

Figure 5 demonstrates how the School System is organized from the perspective of the

SCP, which is housed in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The SCP, which outlines the

requirements and process for implementing changes at the institution includes the SCP team. The

SCP team is comprised of academic units and support units. The members of the SCP team are

presented in Table 9 (Chapter 3); they represent 42 stakeholders from the academic units and

support units, such as the Registrar, Information Technology, and Institutional Research.

Academic units are the schools (e.g., Business School), and support units are any department on

the SCP team that does not offer degree programs. The academic and support units engage in the

integration of internal and external policies, which requires top-down and bottom-up

implementation.

Figure 5

Integration of the Frameworks Within the School System

```
┌─────────────┐
│   School    │
│   System    │
└──────┬──────┘
┌──────┴──────┐
│  Office of  │
│Institutional│
│Effectiveness│
└──────┬──────┘
┌──────┴──────┐
│     SCP     │
└──────┬──────┘
┌──────┴──────┐
│  SCP Team   │
└──┬───────┬──┘
┌────┴──┐ ┌──┴────┐
│Support│ │Academic│
│ Units │ │ Units │
└───────┘ └───────┘
```
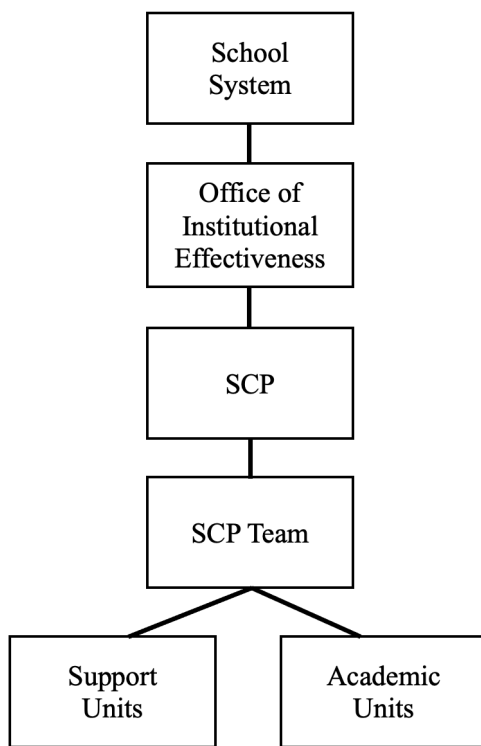
Note. The SCP is the substantive change policy.

To understand the SCP and the stakeholders who follow this policy, it is important to consider

the SCP as one element of a complex university system and higher education environment.

These systems are best understood via the School System theory, which breaks colleges and

universities into two subsystems that share some commonalities, such as shared stakeholders and

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functions (Birnbaum, 1988). For the institution in question, the academic and support units share the SCP in common, which requires the units to consult with each other when they want to make changes. Though it is not depicted in Figure 9, two factors are understood. First, it is understood that the Office of Institutional Effectiveness is not the only subsystem within the School System; the other subsystems have been removed to simplify the model. However, due to the cross-cutting nature of change problems, many subsystems are represented within the SCP even though the subsystems exist independently within the organizational chart. Second, it is understood that the School System is situated within a complex higher education environment, primarily comprised of the triad, politics, culture, and educational associations (Bryson, 2018; Suskie, 2015; Tandberg et al., 2019). One way the higher education environment influences colleges and universities is via external mandates that direct decision making within the subsystems (top-down implementation) via prescriptive policies, such as a specialized accrediting organization having a threshold for the student-to-faculty ratio. Subsystems desiring to implement changes must consider these prescriptions and internal requirements before doing so, which requires collaboration and consultation with stakeholders from many academic and support units to do so (bottom-up implementation). The SCP facilitates the collaboration and consultation among SCP stakeholders, which is measured by the processual policy (dis)integration framework to understand the level of policy integration the SCP has helped the institution achieve. The level of integration reflects the speed and efficiency at which the institution and its subunits can adapt to change and evolve in the present higher education landscape. Figure 6 demonstrates the SCP process and the subsequent interactions that are occurring between (a) the institutional stakeholders themselves, and (b) the institutional stakeholders and the external environment. Figure 6 is based on the process described in the institution's published SCP. I relied on Figure 6

to guide the study, as it represents the case (e.g., SCP process and those involved), which I

discuss in the following chapter.

Figure 6

Simplified Rendering of SCP Process
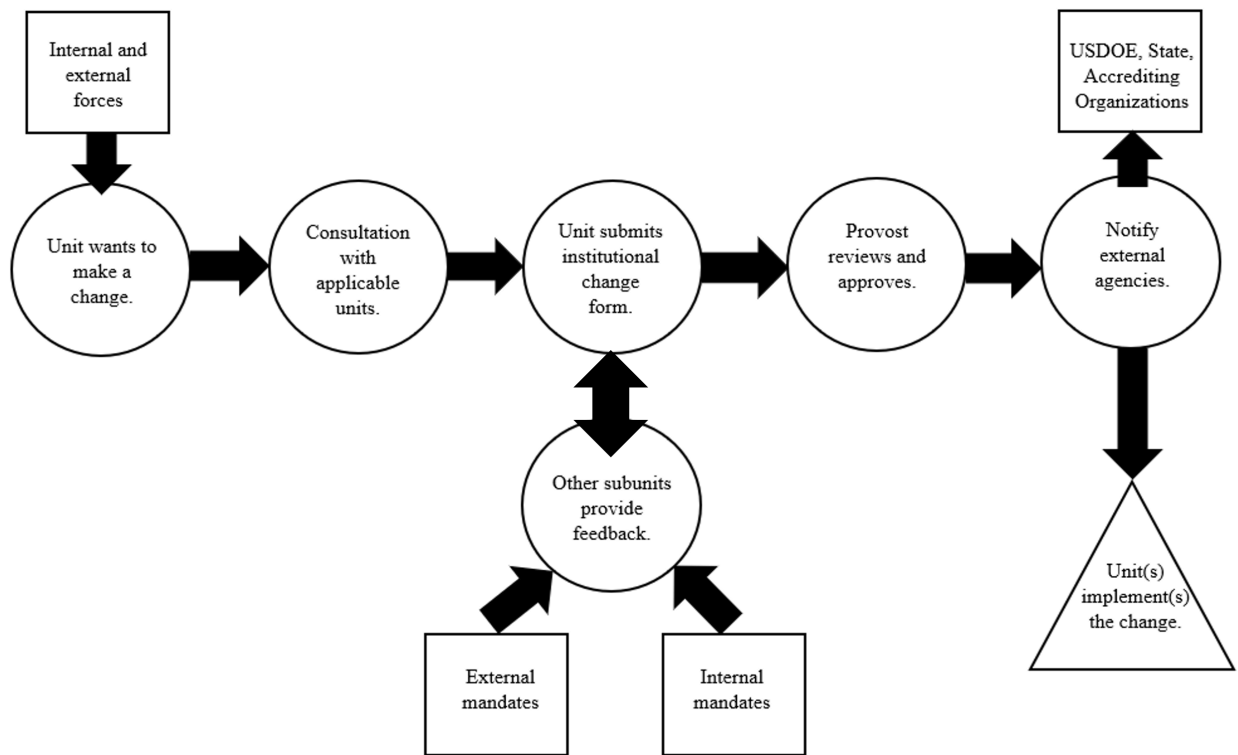
Note. SCP stands for substantive change policy. USDOE stands for the United States Department
of Education.

Research Questions

   The following research questions guide this study and were applied to both the academic

and support units that comprise the SCP team. The goal of this dissertation study was to

understand how the SCP facilitates the coordination of the academic and support units to approve

and implement changes, as demonstrated in Figure 3.

1. How do the subsystems represented within the SCP work together to implement change at a midsize, public, research institution in the eastern United States?

    a. How do the academic units work with the other units represented within the SCP to implement change?

    b. How do the support units work with the other units represented within the SCP to implement change?

2. How are internal and external policies integrated at a midsize, public, research institution in the eastern United States?

    a. How do the academic units integrate their internal policies and the external policies they must follow to implement change?

    b. How do the support units integrate their internal policies and the external policies they must follow to implement change?

3. What are the experiences of policy actors involved in policy integration at a midsize, public, research institution in the eastern United States?

    a. What are the experiences of policy actors within the academic units?

    b. What are the experiences of policy actors within the support units?

Significance of the Study

This study will benefit both scholars and practitioners. As mentioned previously, policy implementation and integration in postsecondary education is largely understudied with most policy implementation research conducted within the K-12 space (Chase, 2016; Goldrick-Rab & Shaw, 2007; Gonzalez et al., 2021). Additionally, postsecondary studies on policy implementation tend to address implementation from the perspective of a singular policy or policy goal, such as equity in community colleges (Gonzalez et al., 2021), transfer policy in a 2-

year college (Chase, 2016), or the creation of an internal academic advising policy (Clapp, 2007). Policy implementation, however, can be substantially more complex—especially when an idea or plan originates from within the institution and must satisfy numerous mandates prior to implementation. Similarly, most policy integration research focuses on large scale national and international topics, such as food insecurity and education (Candel & Biesbroek, 2018). However, studies do not address how higher education institutions navigate the complex policy environment that monitors the types of changes they can make and when they can make them. Consequently, this study expands existing research and explored how one university navigates its external and internal environments using the SCP as a tool to integrate policy implement changes successfully.

Although qualitative research is not generalizable, it is transferable (Shenton, 2004). Administrators at colleges and universities throughout the United States—particularly those accepting federal aid—can use the outcomes of this study to understand how their institution can create and/or improve policies that focus on how a university will address changes. This study also provides insights for third parties that help institutions navigate policies within the higher education environment, such as those governing distance education. Finally, the outcomes of this research demonstrated whether the policy (dis)integration framework, which was not designed with higher education institutions in mind, was suitable for evaluating this context.

Research Design

To answer the research questions discussed above, I employed a single case (embedded) research design, which is one of Yin's (2018) four variations of the case study. A case study was essential for a comprehensive understanding of the SCP, its associated processes, the network of collaboration that it was designed to facilitate between academic units and support units, and the

experiences of the associated stakeholders because it allowed me to explore multiple sources of evidence. Consequently, I was able to generate thick description of the employee activities surrounding the SCP (Tracy, 2010). The single case (embedded) design (Yin, 2018) aligns with the structure of the SCP process. The SCP was situated within the context of a midsize, public, research institution. Within the case (i.e., the SCP process), there were two embedded units: academic units (i.e., Business School) and support units (i.e., Registrar). To answer the research questions, I relied on three sources of data. The primary data source was a series of interviews completed with 11 representatives of the academic and support units. I completed two interviews with each representative, who were selected in consultation with the SCP Chair. I also relied on the SCP itself and the Curriculog content management system, which housed all SCP proposals the units submitted, as secondary data sources. Combined, these data sources worked together to provide SCP team members' perspectives of the SCP process and partnerships within the committee, as well as a comparative understanding of how the SCP is documented in official policy and occurs in reality.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms provide foundational knowledge required to understand this study:

- Substantive change policy: The SCP is the centralizing policy designed to coordinate academic units and support units that are involved in institutional changes. The SCP helps to ensure that significant changes to the curriculum, the number of campus sites, mission, and other elements of institutional life receive the appropriate input from institutional stakeholders and appropriate approval from the triad prior to implementation.

- Policy: Policies are "programmatic activities formulated in response to an authoritative decision. These activities are the policy designer's plans for carrying out the wishes expressed by a legitimating organization, be it a legislature, a judicial agent, or an executive body" (Matland, 1995, p. 154).

- Policy actors: Policy actors are the representatives of academic and support units who are on the SCP team. They are involved in the SCP process and adhere to the various internal and external policies their units oversee that relate to change implementation (Fowler, 2013).

- Policy goal: A policy goal, from the perspective of Candel and Biesbroek (2016), is the degree to which the policy frame (also called the policy problem) is integrated into the policies of the various units/subsystems the policy frame affects. The policy goals of other units are to address the policy frame.

- Policy implementation: Policy implementation is "the carrying out of a basic policy decision [that] identifies the problem(s) to be addressed, stipulates the objective(s) to be pursued, and, in a variety of ways, 'structures' the implementation process" (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980, p. 20, as cited in Neinhusser, 2018, p. 427). Policy implementation can occur through various approaches, to include top-down and bottom-up implementation (Matland, 1995).

- Policy instrument: A policy instrument is a tool used to correct a social problem (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016). There are three varieties: (a) subunits' adaptation of the larger policy, (b) tools used to help policy coordination, and (c) the variety of instruments used.

- Processual policy (dis)integration: Processual policy integration deviates from other policy integration perspectives that consider policy integration to be an outcome that is or is not achieved (Metcalfe, 1994). Instead, processual policy integration frames policy integration as a process in which different levels of integration can be achieved across four dimensions: policy frame, subsystem involvement, policy goals, and policy instrument (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018).

- School Systems: Colleges and universities are school systems. They are comprised of two primary subsystems that interact and depend on each other: the technical system and the administrative system (Birnbaum, 1988). School systems are usually decentralized and loosely coupled (Weick, 1976).

- Top-down implementation: Top-down implementation is a type of policy implementation in which the primary focus of policy implementation is a government organization, which prescribes, via a policy decision, what subordinate organizations must do (Matland, 1995; Sabatier, 1986).

- Bottom-up implementation: Bottom-up implementation is a type of policy implementation that focuses on implementation at the local level, considering the perspectives of "target population and service deliverers" (Matland, 1995, p. 148). When stakeholders at the local level are identified, stakeholders at lower administrative and power levels are integrated into the implementation process (Hanf, 1982, as cited in Sabatier, 1986).

- Triad: The triad represents the three entities responsible for governing higher education in the United States: the federal government, the states, and the accrediting organizations (Suskie, 2015; Tandberg et al., 2019).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Change is a natural and expected part of organizational life. It occurs because consumer demands shift, technology causes an industry to change, and leaders transition out of companies and their replacements have new visions for how things should be done (Bryson, 2018). Regardless of the type of change that occurs within an organization, it is generally unwise for the change to be adopted without the input of related stakeholders and associated units (Rowley & Sherman, 2001). Changes should be implemented with the consultation and efforts of other organizational units and members. Stakeholders can achieve such cooperation via policy integration (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018).

In this literature review, I first discuss educational change and the triad's role in monitoring educational changes. Then, I discuss the origins of policy integration studies, the various terms used to describe policy integration, and the available frameworks for understanding it. Although the concepts related to policy integration emerged outside of higher education studies and usually focus on national governments (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018; Peters, 2018), policy integration is still applicable to the context at hand (Trein et al., 2020) because it is described in terms of governance and systems—both of which are used to describe higher education (Bess & Dee, 2007). Additionally, scholars have advocated for the application of policy integration at the organizational level and in contexts other than environmental and climate studies (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018; Peters, 2015; Tosun & Lang, 2017). To begin this discussion on policy integration's application to higher education, I address how policy

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integration is relevant to both the triad and higher education institutions and highlight the lack of higher education literature on this topic.

Educational Change

Educational change is the pattern of adjustments within institutions and the contexts within which they operate that shape the programs and services they offer, students' experiences, and institutions' relationships with their communities and external entities, such as educational associations and businesses with which they are associated (Fowler, 2013). Change can be both internal and external to the institution (Kezar, 2014). Examples of internal changes include revisions to the curricula, strategic planning, program closure, and the launching of new programs (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges [SACSCOC], 2023). While Kezar (2014) categorizes such changes as internal ones, the launch of an undergraduate degree program in data analysis and processing, for example, may reflect external changes in the job market to which the institution is responding (Bryson, 2018; Lederman, 2018). Other external changes that the institution may be unable to control include economic and enrollment shifts, and transitions in appointed and elected state and federal leadership (Bryson, 2018; Kezar, 2014). Considering these factors, change has always been present throughout the history of education—though our present context is unique. Kezar (2014) provides a list of eight characteristics that distinguish this age of educational change from previous ones:

1. connection of higher education to the global economy;

2. the greater public investment and sense of accountability;

3. increasingly diverse students who engage in campus differently;

4. the corporatized campus environment;

5. for-profit higher education, competition, and marketization;

6. new knowledge about how people learn;

7. technology; and,

8. internationalization of campuses. (pp. 5–6)

While it is important to consider the reason for institutional changes, such as the list Kezar (2014) provides, the triad does not consider institutional change in terms of external or internal forces, but rather, based on the degree of impact changes will have on institutional programs and services (SACSCOC, 2023; Substantive Changes and Other Reporting Requirements, 2022). High-impact changes, which are often referred to as substantive changes, must be reported to an institution's accrediting organization(s) and/or state (SACSCOC, 2023; State Council of Higher Education for Virginia [SCHEV], 2020; Substantive Change and Other Reporting Requirements, 2022). States do not necessarily use substantive change language, but institutional changes affecting programs and services, as well as distance education and licensure and certification, are important at the state level and must also be reported—though requirements can vary for public and private institutions in some cases (SCHEV, 2020; Thompson et al., 2020). Considering the triad's requirements, it is not only important to consider external factors that catalyze change (Kezar, 2014), but how the triad classifies certain types of changes and the institutional reporting and mandates associated with them. These reporting requirements and mandates are largely a function of the triad's role to ensure accountability within higher education, and the institution is responsible for understanding and integrating internal policies and the triad's mandates to ensure it meets the requirements associated with the types of changes it wants to implement.

Change and Accountability From the Perspective of the Triad

One of the primary reasons institutions must report changes is to be held accountable to the state and federal entities that provide funding and to their primary constituents, which include

students and parents (Eaton, 2009; Gaston, 2014; Suskie, 2015). With this statement in mind, it is important to provide definitions of both public policy and accountability. Fowler (2013) defines public policy as "the dynamic and value-laden process through which a political system handles a public problem. It includes a government's expressed intentions and official statements, as well as its inconsistent patterns of activity and inactivity" (p. 5). Specifically, educational policy is representative of "the actions taken by governments in relation with educational practices, and how governments address the production and delivery of education in a given system" (Pont & Viennet, 2017, p. 19). Accountability is the primary term used to describe government oversight and management of higher education. Accountability

> refers to the responsibility (if not legal obligation) of campus administrators, as well as government officials, to provide their supervisors (ultimately, the public) reports of their stewardship of public funds. Such officials have always had a professional responsibility to account for their use of public dollars, but since the mid-1970s, deteriorating state and national economic conditions have led to demands for greater accountability. (Leveille, 2006, pp. 31, 34, as cited in Gaston, 2014, p. 53)

Higher education accountability efforts at the federal level emerged with the implementation of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act (also known as the G.I. Bill), which provided servicemen returning from World War II with educational funding (Thelin, 2004). Because the federal government did not want to create new organizations for monitoring its education funding, it "accept[ed] as proxy the institutional evaluations that colleges and universities rendered as part of voluntary accreditation associations" (Thelin, 2004, p. 265). Later, the USDOE required any institution accepting federal aid to be recognized by a federally recognized accrediting organization, and the states required institutions to obtain accreditation to

be authorized to operate (Thompson et al., 2020). Consequently, the accrediting organizations and their processes became a standardized element for institutional life and the gateway to federal funding, as identified in Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended (USDOE, 2023). This new role gave accrediting organizations "quasi-governmental authority" in which they serve as a sort of government entity even though they are not (*Thomas M. Cooley Law School v. The American Bar Association*, 2006).

Due to the trillions of federal dollars and billions of state dollars invested in higher education (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2019), the federal government and the states want to ensure that the grants, student loans, and other funding they provide are being used for their intended outcomes, which is primarily the matriculation and graduation of students who are equipped for gainful employment in their industries of choice (Eaton, 2009; Fullan, 2007; Gaston, 2014; Kezar, 2014). Various accountability structures exist. At the federal level, Title IV institutions must report to the Institutional Postsecondary Education Data System (Gaston, 2014); on Title IX (Kaplin et al., 2020); on distance education (NC-SARA, n.d.-a); and to accrediting organizations, which require self-study reports completed at regular intervals and annual reports (Eaton, 2009; Gaston, 2014; Suskie, 2015). States, too, have accountability methods, to include requiring institutions to have federally recognized accreditation for them to be authorized to operate within their states, enroll students, and use public funds (Gaston, 2014; Kezar, 2014; Thompson et al., 2020). States may also require the institution to notify and/or receive approval from the state's department of education before making certain changes, which is the case with SCHEV (2020). States also have requirements for state licensure and certification (Thompson et al., 2020).

At higher education institutions, the triad's accountability measures are filtered through an office generally called the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, where stakeholders examine proposed changes (e.g., launch of a new degree program) through the lens of specific categories that one or more members of the triad identify and define via state and federal policies (Gaston, 2014; SACSCOC, 2023; Thompson, 2020). In the following sections, I briefly describe regulations issued by each member of the triad. Then, I focus on change requirements through the lens of accrediting organizations (who are influenced by federal policies and translate these policies for their member institutions) and the states. Specifically, I look at SACSCOC and SCHEV because I am most familiar with these groups due my professional experience in Virginia. The institution featured in this case study is also a member of specialized accrediting organizations, but because the substantive change policy (SCP) considers regional accreditation and state mandates and leaves specialized accreditation within the responsibility of academic units, I do not include specialized accreditors here due to their diversity in type and number.

Federal Requirements

There is an entire network of federal regulations institutions accepting federal aid must consider. I address some of these regulations in this section, but this discussion is not exhaustive. These regulations relate to financial aid, international students, and third-party providers, among others. Federal financial aid restrictions vary depending on the type of aid, to include how aid money is awarded based on student grade point average and based on how it is distributed, such as by tuition versus athletic responsibilities. Overall, colleges and universities must use federal aid for the purpose in which it is designated (Kaplin et al., 2020). International student status is accompanied by a unique set of federal rules. There are rules related to services for international students and the department at the university that is appointed to provide these services. Many

federal regulations are included under immigration laws (Kaplin et al., 2020), to include legal

status in the United States, such as the F-1 visa, which covers full-time study at an educational

institution. Additionally, there are certain academic restrictions for international students, such as

the number of online courses they can complete, which is an important restriction to consider for

institutions seeking to replace on-campus courses with distance ones.

Other aspects of online education are restricted at the federal level, to include

accessibility (Kaplin et al., 2020) and online programs that are developed by online program

management companies (Silberman 2021; Springer, 2016). Institutions accepting federal aid

must ensure their online programs and courses are accessible for students with, for example,

colorblindness or seizure disorders that could prohibit them from accessing online course content

(Kaplin et al., 2020). Online program management companies are third-party companies that

partner with colleges and universities to build and facilitate online degree programs. Colleges

and universities rely on online program management companies when they lack the staff and

financial resources to build online programs in-house. In alignment with federal requirements,

SACSCOC policy, for example, mandates that institutions using an online program management

company report this contract to their accrediting organization if the company is developing 49%

or more of a degree program (SACSCOC, 2023).

Accreditation: Change Policies

Via accrediting organizations, the federal government issues requirements for the

changes institutions implement that are considered substantive changes. This section uses

SACSCOC as an example because it is the accrediting organization with which I am most

familiar to demonstrate the detailed and complex change requirements that necessitate the SCP.

SACSCOC (2023) change policies are categorized under their substantive change policy, which

is based in the USDOE's regulations for institutional changes. As recorded in the Code of

Federal Regulations, the USDOE defines substantive changes as "high-impact, high-risk

changes," which includes change of mission, governance, and degree level offered, among others

(Substantive Changes and Other Reporting Requirements, 2022). SACSCOC (2023) adds to this

definition, stating that a substantive change "is a significant modification or expansion of the

nature and scope of an accredited institution…that can impact the quality of educational

programs and services" (p. 2). Institutional and specialized accrediting organizations must

require their member institutions and programs to submit appropriate documentation for review

and approval before the changes are implemented (SACSCOC, 2023; Substantive Change and

Other Reporting Requirements, 2022). As such, the SACSCOC (2023) substantive change policy

emphasizes accountability: "substantive change policy and procedures assure the public that all

aspects of an institution continue to meet standards. It helps ensure substantive changes, if

approved, do not hinder an institution's ability to continue meeting the SACSCOC Principles of

Accreditation" (p. 2). Substantive changes, according to SACSCOC (2023), include the

following and require various degrees of review and approval from the SACSCOC Board of

Trustees and the SACSCOC Executive Council. The following list is not exhaustive, but

demonstrates changes that are considered substantive and provides an idea of some of the

changes the institution observed in this case study may implement:

1. making significant changes to the mission or objectives of the institution or its
   programs;

2. changing the institutional legal status, ownership, or control;

3. merging with another institution

4. implementing a new degree program that is a significantly different from programs the institution currently offers, and

5. offering new degree program modalities, to include distance and correspondence education.

SACSCOC (2021) and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA, 2019) data reveal that many institutions submit substantive changes. However, neither these data nor any associated literature demonstrate the policy integration processes institutions follow to implement changes. SACSCOC (2021) receives thousands of substantive change requests annually, tracks the number of substantive changes member institutions submit, and publishes a summary of this data in its annual report. The 2021 Annual Report includes data from 2016 to 2021 and notes that member institutions sent SACSCOC about 3,400 substantive change submissions in 2019, about 2,850 in 2020, and about 3,000 in 2021 (SACSCOC, 2021). Table 5 presents the types of substantive change submissions SACSCOC received from 2016 to 2021. From 2016 to 2021, submission increased by about 75% (1,875 submissions).

Table 5

SACSCOC Substantive Change Submissions by Type, 2016–2021

Substantive Change Submissions	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Approval	552	857	829	1,322	1,571	1,919
Notification	1,633	1,867	1,199	1,131	1,249	1,026
For C&R Review	98	99	66	40	42	142
Teach-out Plans	220	679	613	976	836	1,291
Total	2,503	3,502	2,707	3,469	3,698	4,378

Note. SACSCOC is the Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges. C&R references the Committees on Compliance and Reports. Adapted from *2021 Annual Report* by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, 2021, p. 15, (https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2022/06/2021-Annual-Report.pdf).

In partnership with NORC at the University of Chicago, CHEA (2019) issued a survey to institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations that both CHEA and the USDOE recognize. In the survey, the number of substantive changes the programmatic and regional accreditors received from their member institutions was indicative of the quantity of innovative changes occurring among their member organizations. CHEA reports that "85 percent of institutional accreditors and 40 percent of programmatic accreditors reported…growth" (p. 6). Table 6 summarizes the types of substantive changes institutions submitted to institutional accrediting organizations. The survey was administered in Summer 2018.

Table 6

Types of Substantive Changes Submitted to Institutional Accrediting Organizations: 2018

Change	% Reporting
Distance education	85%
Competency-based education	77%
Direct assessment of prior learning	62%
Programs with virtual/augmented reality environments	23%
Other	23%

Note. The percentages do not total 100% because institutions were asked if they submitted these types of substantive changes. They were not asked for the number of submissions they submitted for each type of change. Adapted from "Innovation in Accreditation and Higher Education: Accrediting Organizations Describe Their Engagement," by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 2019, p. 6, (https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED5 97903.pdf).

While the SACSCOC (2021) and CHEA (2019) data demonstrate (a) the quantity and variety of substantive change requests accrediting organizations receive, and (b) that higher education institutions are changing, this evidence does not illuminate the strategies institutions use to navigate substantive change mandates while remaining in compliance with the triad. For example, the institution's compilation of substantive change documentation (i.e., the substantive change prospectus) for SACSCOC (2023) is a lengthy and detail-oriented process, requiring input from multiple units within an institution, to include financial aid, university library, academic student and support services, academic units that will host academic programs, and departments providing services, as applicable (SACSCOC, 2020). To ensure these requirements (and other requirements from the triad) are satisfied, institutions must coordinate policies. For example, the Office of Institutional Research & Analytics at the University of Virginia (UVA, n.d.) has an "Approval Process Matrix," which summarizes the internal and external oversight for academic compliance. Combined, the existence of departments, such as the one at UVA, and the substantive change data from SACSCOC (2021) and CHEA (2019) reveal policy integration

is occurring within higher education, but research on the stakeholders involved and the methods

for and degrees of integration is limited.

State Change Requirements

States have different requirements for public and private institutions. Because higher

education policies are unique to each state, that variety is challenging to describe in detail here—

just as it is challenging to address all regional accrediting organizations. Therefore, this section

provides a brief overview of state authorization, and then focuses on requirements for public

institutions in Virginia because it is the state with which I am most familiar. The State Higher

Education Executive Officers Association overviews the important role states play across the

country to authorize institutions to operate within their borders, which is a process known as

state authorization (Tandberg et al., 2019; Thompson et al., 2020). State authorization "is the

first formal act in the legal operation of an institution and often serves as the foundation upon

which other quality assurance functions are built (like accreditation)" (Tandberg et al., 2019, p.

4). Without authorization, an institution cannot offer degree programs and enroll students legally

(Tandberg et al., 2019; Thomas et al., 2020). Such mandates are associated with discussions

about quality, which is a subcomponent of accountability (Eaton, 2009; Suskie et al., 2015).

Tandberg et al. (2019) explain

> The responsibilities of states do not end after initial approval. By requiring
>
> reauthorization or renewal of education providers, states may serve a continuous
>
> accountability and quality assurance role. The establishment—and continuous approval
>
> process—places tremendous responsibility on the state to assure that new and existing
>
> institutions are capable of meeting their educational missions and are operating in the
>
> best interests of their students and the state. (p. 5)

In addition to authorization and reauthorization, states can monitor changes institutions make to academic program offerings, organizational structure, the mission statement, or changes in the degree levels offered. For example, in the state of Virginia, the state higher education department, which is called SCHEV (2020), requires public institutions to submit program proposals and receive approval from the Council before making certain changes to academic programs. SCHEV receives its authority from the Code of Virginia. Table 7 presents the SCHEV reporting requirements for public, Virginia institutions by type of change. Note, also, that there are separate regulations for private institutions, but I do not address those regulations in this literature review (SCHEV, n.d.).

Table 7

SCHEV Program Approval Requirements for Public Institutions

Academic Program Action Sought	Approval		
	SCHEV Council	**SCHEV Staff**	**Action Reported to SCHEV**
C.A.G.S. or Ed.S.	X		
Certificates		X	
CIP Code Change		X	
Degree Designation Change		X	
New Degree Program	X		
Program Discontinuance		X	X
Program Merger		X	
Program Modification		X	
Program Name Change		X	

Note. SCHEV is the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. Actions in bold text also require public institutions to submit program proposals. Adapted from *Academic Programs at Public Institutions: Policies and Procedures for Approvals and Changes* by SCHEV, 2020, (https://www.schev.edu/home/showpublisheddocument/2561/638036855743830000).

SCHEV (2020) also issues requirements for institutions making changes to the organizational structure, the institutional mission, or the degree levels offered (e.g., adding master's degrees at an institution that only has undergraduate degrees). These requirements, as well as those from accrediting organizations and the federal government, must be coordinated at the institutional level to ensure the implementation of changes that are both in compliance with external mandates and integrate the necessary institutional stakeholders for the change (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018).

In addition to state-specific reporting requirements, institutions offering distance education programs that lead to licensure, certification, or have some other program requirement that students can complete outside of the state in which the institution is located must satisfy additional requirements (NC-SARA, n.d.-b). States that want to ensure they satisfy distance education requirements can become members of NC-SARA, which is a reciprocity agreement allowing member states to adhere to the same or similar requirements for distance education. This agreement reduces the institutional burden of understanding regulations for each state where students completing distance education reside. While membership is voluntary, states that become NC-SARA members help institutions ensure that students completing educational requirements at an institution outside of their state of residence can be confident that they are earning the appropriate credentials (NC-SARA, n.d.-b). Such regulations are important for institutions implementing new distance education programs to consider.

With this overview of the external mandates from the federal government, accrediting organizations, and the states in mind, it is now important to consider where the institution's adherence to these policies is found in the policy process, and second, how policy integration can facilitate the implementation of dynamic changes. I begin with a discussion on policy implementation, followed by a discussion on what policy integration is and how successful policy integration aids implementation.

Policy Implementation: Where Policy Integration Fits Into the Policy Process

The policy process, which is the "sequence of events that occurs when a political system considers different approaches to public problems, adopts one of them, tries it out, and evaluates it," generally consists of six steps, such as the process Fowler (2013) prescribes (p. 14). The six steps of the policy process are: (a) issue definition (defining the problem), (b) agenda setting

(determining which problem(s) gain popularity and move forward), (c) policy formulation
(creating policies), (d) policy adoption (identifying the policy to implement), (e) implementation
(putting the policy into practice), and (f) evaluation (evaluating the outcome(s) of the policy)
(Fowler, 2013). Policy integration occurs within the implementation phase of the policy process.
In this section, I discuss policy implementation and how it relates to policy integration.

Policy Implementation

There are various definitions for policy implementation, but it is generally considered the
enactment of new ideas or programs that requires the support of multiple organizations to bring
about a change (Fowler, 2013; Pont & Viennet, 2017). Fullan (2007) provides a robust
definition, focusing on change, the forces causing the change, and the planning required for
successful implementation:

> Implementation consists of the process of putting into practice an idea, program, or set of
> activities and structures new to the people attempting or expected to change. The change
> may be externally imposed or voluntarily sought; explicitly defined in detail in advance
> or developed and adapted incrementally through use; designed to be used uniformly or
> deliberately planned so that users can make modifications according to their perceptions
> of the needs of the institution. (p. 84)

Successful policy implementation requires an educational organization to have a
structured plan and policy makers who understand that educational organizations are complex
systems of tightly and loosely coupled organizational units (Elmore, 1985; Rowley & Sherman,
2001; Weick, 1976). Here, policy makers are present at two levels. First, there are policy makers
who are members of the triad and issue mandates that are not necessarily designed to
accommodate the individuality of each institution. Second, policy makers are also present within

each institution. They represent the stakeholders in academic and support units who (a) design policies specific to their institution and/or unit, and (b) design policies that help ensure the institution adheres to both internal policies and external mandates (Pont & Viennet, 2017). The SCP is indicative of the latter.

The distinction between the triad's policy makers and an institution's policy makers is important to make, as both types of policy makers affect policy implementation and integration. External policy makers tend to represent top-down policy implementation, in which an overseeing entity, such as a government organization, prescribes via a policy decision what subordinate organizations must do (Matland, 1995; Sabatier, 1986). Under this policy implementation style, policy makers—not policy implementers—are the focus, which can lead to challenges if the appropriate grass-roots level stakeholders are not integrated into policy development (Matland, 1995). Top-down implementation is generally considered a threat to successful policy integration (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018). In contrast, institutional policy makers engage in local-level policy implementation, which is more indicative of bottom-up implementation. Bottom-up implementation focuses on the groups and individuals who will implement the policy, which allows them to adapt the policy to local contexts (Matland, 1995). It is important to clarify that bottom-up implementation does not necessarily mean that organizational members at the *lowest* levels of organizations are the ones that provide the best input on policy development and implementation (Elmore, 1985). Rather, it is the organizational members who are closest to the problem the policy is designed to change who can provide the greatest insight. Elmore (1985) explains that "the problem-solving ability of complex systems depends not on hierarchical control but on maximizing discretion at the point where the problem is most immediate" (p. 605).

Policy makers at the institutional level must consider the structure and order required for successful policy implementation. Rowley and Sherman (2001) state,

> When one looks at any strategic management text, the discussion of implementation usually is one of implementing structure…to achieve success in carrying out strategies, the organization must adopt a specific structure to carry them out. Structure is the pattern of how organizations arrange people to maximize their talents and skills within specific task groupings to accomplish goals and objectives. (p. 149)

The implementation structure should provide stakeholders with the relevant process(es), information, tools, and knowledge necessary for implementing a change (Fullan, 2007; Rowley & Sherman, 2001). Additionally, implementation is successful, and stakeholders achieve their desired outcomes when policy makers understand organizations as systems. They should know which units will be responsible for certain tasks, be able to identify the required resources, and understand the applicable external requirements (Birnbaum, 1988; Elmore, 1985; Pont & Viennet, 2017).

Policy Integration as a Component of Policy Implementation

Policy integration can be used to examine the network of internal and external stakeholders, constituents, and resources that provide the structure required for policy implementation. In this section, I define and discuss the origins of policy integration in public policy, discuss its related constructs, and describe the origins of policy integration in the United States higher education system.

Understanding and Defining Policy Integration and Its Related Constructs

In a perfect policy environment, policy makers consider other programs, organizations, and government entities in the policy making process to understand how new policies will affect

adjacent organizations and their constituents (Peters, 2015, 2018; Tosun & Lang, 2017). Peters

(2018) summarized this challenge:

> In the best of all worlds, programs would be designed in a way that would produce *policy*
>
> *integration*. All policies that influence one another would be designed in ways that
>
> produce synergy, or at a minimum reduce conflicts. But we do not live in that perfect
>
> world so we need to think about how to coordinate programs after they have been
>
> authorized and are being implemented. Although this emphasis may appear to leave out
>
> design questions it does not, and designers should be thinking ex ante about what
>
> elements in a program will make it more or less conducive to coordination. (p. 1)

Policy integration is the process through which policies, processes and related organizations are

coordinated to improve efficiency and collaboration around the same policy problem (Candel,

2021; Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018; Peters, 2015, 2018; Tosun & Lang, 2017). In an ideal

policy integration situation, a government developing new policies to address a social problem,

such as climate change, would integrate the departments of agriculture, energy, and

transportation, among others, to help solve the problem. But efforts toward policy integration at

the governmental level is poor or nonexistent in many cases, which can result in a failed

implementation (Tosun & Lang, 2017). It is unclear how common policy integration is between

the triad and at higher education institutions in the United States due to a lack of literature on this

topic. Generally, higher education institutions—usually led by their Offices of Institutional

Effectiveness—must adapt their internal policies and process to align with external ones, but the

strategies they use to do so are a mystery.

  The limited prioritization of policy integration in real world contexts that Peters (2018)

references in the quote above coincides with the lack of cohesion in terminology and definitions

used to describe policy integration. In the following sections, I describe the state of the literature surrounding policy integration and define its related concepts. Then, I unpack the policy integration framework I use in this dissertation (see Chapter 1), describing how it relates to the case study at hand.

Policy Integration and Its Related Constructs

A review of policy integration literature quickly reveals a muddled presentation of the concepts related to policy integration (Candel, 2021; Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018; Peters, 2015, 2018; Tosun & Lang, 2017) and its associated terms, which include policy coordination, policy cooperation, policy coherence and policy collaboration (Cejudo & Michel, 2017; Trein et al., 2020). Other concepts scholars use less frequently include comprehensive planning, holistic government, joined-up government, whole of government, horizontal governance, holistic governance, boundary-spanning policy regime, and boundary-spanning policy regime (Tosun & Lang, 2017). Of these terms, policy integration, policy coordination, policy collaboration, and policy coherence emerge as the dominate constructs (Candel, 2021; Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018; Peters, 2015, 2018; Tosun & Lang, 2017). Still, the body of literature related to these constructs is both limited and scattered across various disciplines and research areas, most of which focus on policy problems national governments face, not higher education institutions (Candel, 2021). Scholars agree that the terms are defined inconsistently (Peters, 2018), used interchangeably (Candel, 2021; Cejudo & Michel, 2017; Peters, 2015, 2018), and applied to varying contexts and varying stages of policy development and implementation (Tosun & Lang, 2017).

Exploring Policy Integration, Coordination, and Coherence. Table 8 presents the foundational definitions of policy integration, coordination, coherence, and collaboration,

focusing primarily on definitions from the year 2000 and later. Following the table, I discuss these definitions and how they do or do not intersect. This discussion will reveal why I selected policy integration for this study rather than policy coordination or coherence. All three variations technically apply to the context at hand, which is the coordination of academic and support units to ensure policies are integrated effectively. But comparatively, policy coherence and policy coordination primarily focus on the subsystems involved in the change. Policy integration is more dynamic. It incorporates elements of policy coherence and policy coordination, but it also considers the degree of integration between the subsystems and the tools subsystems must use to achieve integration and solve a particular policy frame. Policy integration, therefore, considers the complex details of making different stakeholders with different goals work together. It also recognizes that all policy frames are different: some require high levels of integration, but others do not.

Table 8

Definitions: Policy Integration, Coordination, and Coherence

Policy Integration			
Scholar(s) and Year	**Definition**	**Framework**	**Notable Characteristics**
Underdal (1980)	An integrated policy is "a policy where the constituent elements are brought together and made subjects into a single, unifying conception" (Underdal, 1980, p. 159).	NA	Policy integration has three characteristics: comprehensiveness (input), aggregation (processing of inputs), and consistency (outcomes) (Underdal, 1980).
Peters (2015)	Policy "integration requires that each policy choice take into account the effects of that choice on the full range of other organizations and programs, and that as much consistency among the choices as possible be achieved" (Peters, 2015, p. 4).	NA	Through his primary concept is policy coordination, Peters (2015) does address policy integration, stating that integration puts more focus on the participants. Peters relies on Underdal's (1980) definition of policy integration.
Tosun & Lang (2017)	Policy integration is "characterized by the cooperation of actors from different policy domains—or policy sections" (Tosun & Lang, 2017, p. 554).	Literature review only	Their literature review reveals that there are two primary components of policy integration. The first is that policy integration requires the coordination of policy sectors. The second component is that policy instruments, which are usually procedural, facilitate integration.
Cejudo & Michel (2017)	Policy integration "is the process of making strategic and administrative decisions aimed at solving a complex problem. Solving this complex problem is a goal that encompasses—but exceeds—the programs' and agencies' individual goals" (Cejudo & Michel, 2017, p. 750).	Cejudo and Michel (2017) provide three levels of policy integration.	Cejudo and Michel (2017) argue that policy integration, coordination, and coherence are used interchangeably. Although these terms are related, they are different. They distinguish policy integration from policy coordination by emphasizing the policy integration occurs when organizations strive to solve problems that originate within another organization and may not apply to them.

Policy Integration			
Scholar(s) and Year	**Definition**	**Associated Framework**	**Notable Characteristics**
Candel (2021); Candel & Biesbroek (2016, 2018)	Policy integration is a process reflecting a range from low policy integration to high policy integration. This range applies to four dimensions: policy frame, subsystem involvement, policy goals, and policy instruments.	The policy (dis)integration frame is used to describe the processual and dimensional perspective of policy integration. Here, the focus is that policy integration is not perfectly achieved, but rather, it is integrated at various levels within organizations/institutions. Additionally, the policy (dis)integration frame demonstrates that several criteria/components comprise policy integration, and each dimension is achieved at different levels based on organizational capacities for integration (e.g., leadership and feasibility) and desired level of integration (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018).	Extending previous work in policy integration (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018), Candel (2021) focuses on two criteria: "the desirability and the feasibility of policy integration" (p. 346). Candel interprets desirability via a literature review that covers the positive and negative aspects of policy integration. He evaluates feasibility via a heuristic focusing on integrative capacity and leadership. A desirability assessment is used to determine if policy integration is advantageous and a feasibility assessment considers the likelihood of successful integration, which is determined by leadership and integrative capacity.

Policy Coordination

Scholar(s) and Year	Definition	Associated Framework	Notable Characteristics
Lindblom (1965)	"A set of decisions is coordinated if adjustments have been made in such that the adverse consequences of any one decision or other decisions in the set are to a degree and some frequency avoided, reduced, counterbalanced, or outweighed" (Lindbolm, 1965).	NA	Coordination involves partnerships that are used to avoid or decrease the severity of some problems and challenges.
Hall et al. (1976)	Coordination is "the extent to which organizations attempt to ensure that their activities take into account those of other organizations" (Hall et al., 1976, p. 459, as cited in Peters, 2015, p. 4).	NA	Similar to Lindblom, coordination requires partnerships with other organizations in order to keep in mind their activities.
Metcalfe (1994)	Policy coordination scale	Policy coordination scale	The use of a scale to describe or measure how policy is interwoven into organizational life is not unique to Candel and Biesbroek (2016, 2018). Metcalfe (1994) presents a policy coordination scale ranging from "independent decision making by ministers," which represents no coordination, to "government strategy," which represents the government's intentional partnership within the public sector (p. 281).
Peters (2018)	Policy "coordination occurs when decisions made in one program or organization consider those made in others and attempt to avoid conflict" (Peters, 2018, p. 2).	NA	Peters' (2000) definition of coordination integrates those of both Lindbolm (1965) and Hall (1976). Here, the focus is on avoiding conflict rather than solving a problem (Cejudo & Michel, 2017).

Similar to Candel (2021) and Candel & Biesbroek (2016, 2018), who state that policy integration occurs in levels/degrees, Peters (2018) also agrees that policy coordination has levels, which are determined by the characteristics of the relevant program(s) or system(s) (Metcalfe, 1994). |

Policy Coordination

Scholar(s) and Year	Definition	Associated Framework	Notable Characteristics
Cejudo & Michel (2017)	Policy coordination is "a process in which members of different organizations define tasks, allocate responsibilities, and share information in order to be more efficient when implementing the policies and programs they select to solve public problems" (Cejudo & Michel, 2017, p. 750).	Cejudo and Michel (2017) provide three levels of policy coordination.	Policy coordination is distinguished from policy integration in that coordination involves individuals and agencies that are striving to achieve the same goals.

Policy Coherence

Scholar(s) and Year	Definition	Associated Framework	Notable Characteristics
Cejudo & Michel (2017)	Policy coherence is the "process where policy makers design a set of policies in a way that, if properly implemented, they can potentially achieve a larger goal" (Cejudo & Michel, 2017, p. 750).	Cejudo and Michel (2017) provide three levels of policy coherence.	Policy coherence focuses on the "design of each policy within a policy area" (Cejudo & Michel, 2017, p. 750).
Peters (2018, 2015)	Policy coherence addresses the development of policies that are "compatible" with policies in other organizations and areas (Peters, 2015, p. 4).		Policy coherence generally refers to the design of a policy and its language, focusing on having a unified group of similar policies (Peters, 2015).

Considering Table 5, most of the language scholars use to describe the network of organizations and stakeholders that collaborate to solve problems or implement changes centers around policy integration and policy coordination (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018; Cejudo & Michael, 2017; Peters 2015, 2018). Policy coherence is sometimes used in place of integration and coordination, but coherence primarily focuses on (a) the language used in the policy and

whether it makes sense, and (b) the compatibility between policies affecting multiple

organizations and policy areas (Cejudo & Michel, 2017; Peters, 2015). Alignment is certainly a

component of policy integration and coordination because incoherent policies can yield disunity

among organizations and actors, but coherence reflects only one component of the goals and

purposes of policy integration. It fails to incorporate the collaboration and partnerships that

develop between stakeholders and organizations. Therefore, it is important to focus the

discussion at hand on policy integration and policy coordination, which make organizations and

their representatives accountable to each other during the implementation process (Candel &

Biesbroek, 2016, 2018; Cejudo & Michel, 2017; Peters, 2015).

Policy coordination represents organizational efforts that ensure decisions made in one

organization do not adversely affect another related organization (Hall et al, 1976, as cited in

Peters, 2018; Lindbolm, 1965). With policy coordination, the primary goal is to avoid problems

and improve efficiency rather than to solve existing policy problems or improve the degree of

collaboration and networking that occurs among organizations facing the same challenges

(Peters, 2015, 2018). Metcalfe (1994) and Cejudo and Michel (2017) provide policy coordination

scales, which much like Candel and Biesbroek (2016, 2018) and Candel (2021), present the

degree to which coordination can be achieved within an organization. Metcalfe's (1994)

coordination scale is simple and provides little elaboration on each of the nine levels of the scale

(Peters, 2015). The lack of information on the interactions between subsystems results in a very

linear presentation of the relationships between government systems. In contrast, policy

integration, as described by Candel and Biesbroek (2016, 2018), is linear but also comprised of

multiple components (policy frame, policy goal, subsystem involvement, and policy instruments)

Table 9 presents Metcalfe's (1994) levels of policy coordination, which I elected not to use as a

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framework because it is too vague. The challenge of applying Metcalfe's (1994) scale to higher

education is that it is not neutral—it is very specific to policy coordination at the national level.

Table 9

Metcalfe's (1994) Levels of Policy Coordination

No.	Level Description
9	Government strategy
8	Establishing central priorities
7	Setting limits in ministerial action
6	Arbitration of policy differences
5	Search for agreement among ministers
4	Avoiding divergences among ministers
3	Consultation with other ministers (feedback)
2	Communication with other ministers (information exchange)
1	Independent decision making by ministers

Note. Adapted from "International Policy Co-ordination and Public Management Reform," by L. Metcalfe, 1994, *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, *60*(2), 271–290, (https://doi.org/10.1177/002085239406000208).

Cejudo and Michel (2017) present their definitions of policy coordination, coherence, and

integration to bring some clarity to the field and demonstrate how each construct appears in a

case study on hunger in Mexico. They accompany each construct with a three-level scale for

each construct. The first level of their coordination scale presents organizational stakeholders

who work with adjacent stakeholders to further the achievement of their own goals. The second

level presents more collaboration between adjacent organizations, in which discussions and idea

sharing are a group effort, but each organization makes decisions independently. The third level

presents deeper collaboration between organizations in which they make decisions together to

achieve common goals. While Cejudo and Michel's (2017) policy coordination levels present the

degrees to which organizations can be coordinated, their scale lacks depth. Peters (2015)

observed the same lack of depth in Metcalfe's (1994) policy coordination scale. For Cejudo and

Michel (2017), the vague scales may be a result of the authors defining three separate constructs,

presenting their scales, describing the relationship between then, and applying them to a case

study within one research article (Cejudo & Michel, 2017). Table 10 provides their definition of

each term and its scale.

Table 10

Cejudo and Michael (2017): Policy Coordination, Coherence, and Integration Framework

Policy	Definition	Element of Policy Construct Applies	Scale
Policy coordination	Policy coordination is "a process in which members of different organizations define tasks, allocate responsibilities, and share information in order to be more efficient when implementing the policies and programs they select to solve public problems" (Cejudo & Michel, 2017, p. 750).	Organizations	Level 1: regular exchange of information between members' organizations for achieving their own goals more efficiently. Level 2: formal information exchange with which members' organizations make decisions regarding their own resources, and work individually, to contribute to a shared goal. Level 3: formal information exchange with which members' organizations make joint decisions regarding the existent resources for archiving a shared goal.
Policy coherence	Policy coherence is the "process where policy makers design a set of policies in a way that, if properly implemented, they can potentially achieve a larger goal" (Cejudo & Michel, 2017, p. 750).	Design of individual policies in policy area	Level 1: policies could simultaneously operate without getting in each other's way, but without contributing in a clear and differentiated manner to solve the same complex problem. Level 2: policies complement each other and could contribute to address the complex problem. Level 3: policies complement each other to address the complex problem, and they would be enough to do it comprehensively.
Policy integration	Policy integration "is the process of making strategic and administrative decisions aimed at solving a complex problem. Solving this complex problem is a goal that encompasses—but exceeds—the programs' and agencies' individual goals" (Cejudo & Michel, 2017, p. 750).	How stakeholders make decisions about the intersection between agencies and policies	Level 1: the decision-making body's capacity is limited to modify operational and design aspects of the instruments (programs and agencies) of the overall strategy. Level 2: the decision-making body has the capacity to redefine the design, modify the operation, and reallocate the responsibilities and resources that the agencies and programs already have. Level 3: the decision-making body has the capacity to use and modify the existent instruments (programs and agencies), and also to create new ones or eliminate them.

Note. Adapted from "Addressing Fragmented Government Action: Coordination, Coherence, and Integration," by G. M. Cejudo and C. L. Michel, 2017, *Policy Sciences*, 50, p. 750, (https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-017-9281-5).

What is unique about Cejudo and Michel's (2017) approach is that they consider policy coordination, coherence, and integration to be distinct but related constructs that are present within a government's response to one policy problem. This framework is challenging to apply to other contexts because it is still easy to misuse the constructs as they present them, such as by using policy integration when policy coordination is the most appropriate term. Additionally, if governments can practice all three constructs within one context, it can be challenging to know which construct to use, especially if, for example, integration cannot occur without coordination among organizations. Of benefit, however, is Cejudo and Michel's (2017) definition of policy integration, which focuses on "making strategic and administrative decisions aimed at solving a complex problem" that "encompasses—but exceeds—the programs' and agencies' individual goals" (p. 750). Here, the focus is on how integration will benefit multiple organizations—or multiple units within an organization, such as the network of academic and support units represented in the SCP—rather than an individual unit seeking to ensure that only its objectives are satisfied. Their approach shifts from an individualist perspective on policy to a collective perspective. Here, I transition to a discussion on policy integration, which necessitates cooperation among units and stakeholders, but is also a dynamic framework that provides a holistic perspective of problem solving in policy environments.

Policy integration emerged with Underdal (1980), who studied environmental policy (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016; Peters, 2015). Underdal's (1980) definition of integrated policy emphasizes participant engagement (Peters, 2015). It is "a policy where the constituent elements were brought together and made subjects into a single, unifying conception" (Underdal, 1980, p. 159). Underdal's (1980) focus on participants (or actors) has emerged in more recent definitions of policy integration, and contemporary versions of the term can be used to encompass elements

of coordination and collaboration (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018; Peters, 2015; Tosun & Lang, 2017). For example, Tosun and Lang (2017) characterize policy integration as "the cooperation of actors from different policy domains (Tosun & Lang, 2017, p. 554). Cejudo and Michel (2017) add to this definition, focusing on the interactions between stakeholders to make informed decisions to help solve a problem. Specifically, policy integration forces individual organizations (or individual units within an organization) to align with collective goals or the goals of adjacent organizations that may not represent their own goals. Through their policy integration scale, Cejudo and Michel (2017) recognize that there are degrees of policy integration. Or, as Candel and Biesbroek (2016, 2018) state, the level of policy integration an organization achieves will vary, and full policy integration may not be feasible or desirable for a particular organization or problem (Candel, 2021).

Candel and Biesbroek (2016, 2018) define policy integration through the lens of a processual policy (dis)integration framework that includes four dimensions that feature standard public policy language: policy frame, subsystem involvement, policy goals, and policy instruments (Table 11). They consider policy integration as processual rather than a static outcome and provide a range of low policy integration to high policy integration. There is one range for each of the four dimensions. Later, Candel (2021) expanded policy (dis)integration, stating that it depends on both integrative policy capacity and integrative policy leadership to be optimized.

Table 11

Candel and Biesbroek (2016) Processual Policy (Dis)integration

Frame	Definition
Policy frame	A policy frame "refer[s] to competing or dominant problem definitions of societal problems in public policy debates" (p. 218). Particularly, for Candel and Biesbroek (2016), the problem must be "cross-cutting" (p. 218).
Subsystem involvement	Subsystem involvement "captures the range of actors and institutions involved in the governance of a particular cross-cutting problem" (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, p. 218). They explore the number of subsystems involved and the number of interactions between them.
Policy goals	A policy goal is "the explicit adoption of a specific concern within the policies and strategies of a governance system, including the subsystem with the aim of addressing the concern" (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, p. 220).
Policy Instruments	Policy instruments are substantive or procedural.

Note. Adapted from "Toward a Processual Understanding of Policy Integration," by J. J. L. Candel and R. Biesbroek, 2016, *Policy Sciences*, 49, p. 219–224, (https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-016-9248-y).

Candel (2021) expanded their (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018) processual policy

(dis)integration framework to include policy capacity and integrative leadership. Policy capacity

is "the set of analytical, operational and political skills and competencies necessary to perform

policy functions, which can be discerned at three levels: individual, organizational, and

systemic" (Candel, 2021, p. 351). Candel (2021) considers policy integration "*the* [emphasis

original] critical aspect of policy integration processes" because poor leadership can result in

poor policy integration or even policy failure (Candel, 2021, p. 352). Integrative leadership is

used "to refer to the type of leadership that is necessary for governing cross-cutting problems"

(Candel, 2021, p. 353). He relies on Crosby and Bryson's (2014) definition of integrative

leadership: it is "the work of integrating people, resources, and organizations across various

boundaries to take complex public problems to achieve a common good" (p. 57, as cited in

Candel, 2021, p. 353). Essentially, an integrative leader is the individual who coordinates the

individuals, resources, and organizations required to solve problems. Effective coordination

results in change. Unlike the processual policy (dis)integration model (Candel & Biesbroek,

2016, 2018), Candel (2021) does not provide a heuristic to evaluate policy capacity or integrative

leadership, making it challenging to know how to evaluate an individual or governance system

according to these constructs.

One of the limitations of Candel and Biesbroek's (2016) model is that it is only applied to

national issues, such as food insecurity at a single organization (Candel & Biesbroek, 2018), and

the integration network that exists within one context. As such, policy integration is not used to

describe the higher education policy environment in the United States; there are no existing

studies that do so. Still, their policy integration framework can be modified to suit other contexts,

primarily because Candel and Biesbroek (2016, 2018) use standard policy language and created a

model that allows for diversity: policy frames, policy goals, subsystem involvement, and policy

instruments are loosely defined and can vary based on the context and the problem, which is true

of many policy environments. Therefore, unsurprisingly, policy integration receives only limited

discussion in higher education literature, which I discuss in the next section.

The Origins of Policy Integration Among Colleges and Universities in the United States

As I described in Chapter 1 and an earlier section of this literature review, the triad is

responsible for regulating higher education in the United States (Suskie, 2015; Tandberg et al.,

2019). This structure emerged in part due to the exclusive powers clause of the United States

Constitution, which states that any authority not expressively identified as belonging to the

federal government is in the hands of the states (Thompson et al., 2020). This system results in a

relatively decentralized higher education system compared with other nations (Pont & Viennet,

2017), in which the federal government, the states, and accrediting organizations issue separate

mandates to ensure the quality of educational programs and services (Eaton, 2009; Gaston, 2014; Thompson et al., 2020).

The consequence of this system in which institutions are fairly autonomous but must satisfy various diverse and uncoordinated mandates is that institutional stakeholders must understand the mandates from each overseeing entity and know how those mandates intersect with each other and with the policies and practices of the institution itself (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018; Pont & Viennet, 2017). This task becomes increasingly challenging as policies become more complex and increase in number (Trein et al., 2020). In ideal cases, institutional stakeholders can develop sophisticated policies such as the one in question—the SCP—that demonstrate policy integration at the local level is necessary to manage decentralized higher education oversight. Such policies are specific to individual higher education institutions because each institution has external and internal policies that are unique to itself. Some requirements do overlap with other higher education institutions, such as Title IX and other mandates originating from the USDOE, but many institutions will have unique combinations of state, federal, and accrediting requirements based on their geographic location, degree program offerings, and degree program modalities (Thompson et al., 2020). While policy integration is a ubiquitous issue, research on policy integration in U.S. higher education is non-existent—only emerging within studies on policy implementation.

Policy Integration at Higher Education Institutions

One challenge with the application of policy integration to higher education is that policy integration is primarily addressed in international contexts and the relationship between government organizations within one country. However, as Peters (2015) stated, issues of policy coordination are everywhere—not just at the federal and state levels, but within cities and towns

and other contexts. While it is evident that policy integration occurs at higher education institutions, research in this area is severely limited even though the practice occurs regularly due to the web of regulations issued by the triad that intersect with institutional policies (Eaton, 2009; Gaston, 2014; Tandberg et al., 2019; Thompson et al., 2020). Because policy integration occurs at the implementation phase of the policy process (Fowler, 2013), higher education policy implementation research can highlight some of the challenges institutions face with policy integration even though the research does not address policy integration specifically. Still, higher education scholars point out that policy implementation research is limited (Chase, 2016; Clapp, 2007; Goldrick-Rab, 2007; Gonzalez et al., 2021). In a recent review of the literature, Gonzalez et al. (2021) found that from 2000 to 2019, 40 (0.80%) articles in six higher education journals contained "implement," and of these articles, 5.64% used the word in the abstract. In this section, I address available studies on policy integration in higher education that relate to the topic at hand. Often, policy integration is addressed indirectly in the studies, or the results relate to a component of policy integration. However, the construct itself is not mentioned. These studies represent a range of higher education policy problems, such as the following one I discuss on academic advising.

Clapp (2007) used case study methodology to understand how two institutions implemented an academic advising policy. Clapp wanted to understand institutional culture and institutional processes for implementing an academic advising policy. Although Clapp focused on how institutional culture, policy processes, and institutional structure (e.g., centralized or decentralized) affected implementation, elements of policy integration emerged, to include leadership and feasibility (Candel, 2021), and the ability to network with other institutional subgroups (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018; Ceujdo & Michel, 2017). For example, the

communal, liberal arts college Clapp (2007) studied had an informal academic advising policy, but a collection of stakeholders from the main academic advising groups and smaller advising groups wanted to make a centralized policy. Due to poor support from leadership and individual units that had their own advising policies, their initiative failed. Later, the group learned that the Provost was working to create his own policy, exercising top-down implementation and poor leadership, which can yield poor integration (Candel, 2021; Matland, 1995; Sabatier, 1986). Similarly, at the state university Clapp (2007) included in the study, stakeholders began to create a centralized academic advising policy, but administrators failed to do so because other priorities distracted them, which demonstrates a lack of strong leadership that can inhibit policy integration (Candel, 2021). In Clapp's (2007) study, policy (dis)integration emerges in a study on the implementation of a specific policy type at higher education institutions with a weak infrastructure and incommunicative leadership to see it through.

Using case study methodology, Chase (2016) focused on how stakeholders at a public, 2-year college interpreted a transfer policy. Chase considered how stakeholders understand the policy and its history, which affected how institutional stakeholders interpreted and then implemented the policy. Chase's (2016) study revealed that policy implementation at the local level can be a consequence of top-down policy creation (Matland, 1995; Sabatier, 1986) in which stakeholders toward the top of or outside the organization direct policy creation rather than those closest to the policy problem. Although Chase's (2016) study featured fewer elements of policy integration than Clapp (2007), her questions and findings reveal an important consideration for this study: how SCP team members interpret and then integrate the various external and internal mandates within their institutional context, which are insights they will use to implement changes.

Goldrick-Rab and Shaw (2007) also studied higher education policy implementation via a nested comparative case study on six states to understand how "college access for the poor changed under welfare reform" (p. 82). The authors looked at Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Washington. Goldrick-Rab and Shaw (2007) demonstrate that the translation from welfare policy to college access is not always smooth, but they do not present a clear presentation of how stakeholders in these states interpreted and integrated policies within their existing policies for low-income students. To do so would require them to focus on a few institutions rather than a multi-state exploration. However, their study does provide some insights to the case at hand. In the least, Goldrick-Rab and Shaw demonstrate the policy environment in which policy integration occurs in higher education. Stakeholders who are required to both implement and integrate policies at the institutional level are often removed from policy creation, as

> policymaking often occurs in a decentralized manner and policy implementation is carried out by a set of actors that can be nearly fully disconnected from the policy makers. …Yet tradition policy analyses in higher education often neglect the implementation process, leaving the reader with the incorrect impression that the relationship between formal policy development and policy enactment in postsecondary education is relatively straightforward. (Goldrick-Rab, 2007, p. 77)

Although the studies presented in this section focus on the implementation of specific policies at the institutional level, they highlight that policy integration is indeed occurring both in research and at institutions. However, policy integration is never mentioned. Via this case study, I explored the dynamic ways in which institution-wide policy integration occurs to demonstrate

the importance of the use of this construct in higher education policy studies, as well as among stakeholders at the local level.

Summary

I began this literature review by describing change in higher education and addressing how each member of the triad has its own mandates and processes with which institutions must comply. These regulations are designed to hold higher education institutions accountable for the state and federal funds they use. The consequence is not only a plethora of regulations colleges and universities must navigate but that the regulations are decentralized. Each member of the triad has its own set of rules for higher education institutions, but they are not coordinated (Eaton, 2009; Gaston, 2014; Tandberg et al., 2019; Thompson et al., 2020). Therefore, it is each institution's responsibility to make sense of these rules and apply them correctly. To satisfy these external mandates and ensure compliance with internal policies, institutions should engage in policy integration (Candel, 2021; Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018; Peters, 2015, 2018). Because this construct is primarily a product of public policy literature, its application to higher education contexts is limited. Elements of policy integration appear in policy implementation studies, but policy integration is not addressed specifically (Chase, 2016; Clapp, 2007; Goldrick-Rab, 2007; Gonzalez et al., 2021). Consequently, this dissertation serves to amend this gap in the literature by exploring policy integration via the SCP at a midsize, public, research institution in the eastern United States.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Relying on qualitative inquiry—specifically via a single case (embedded) design (Yin, 2018)—I gained insight into the level of policy integration that has occurred via the SCP at a midsize, public, research university that used the SCP to help subsystems implement changes. In this chapter, I present the research design that guides this study, to include a justification for the single case (embedded) design, a description of the research paradigm (constructivism), a discussion of the cases, participants, and sampling, as well as data collection and analysis and validity and reliability. I conclude with a discussion of the delimitations, limitations, assumptions, and ethical considerations.

The study adheres to the following research questions, which I also presented in the first chapter. These questions direct the research methodology I have selected:

1. How do the subsystems represented within the SCP work together to implement change at a midsize, public, research institution in the eastern United States?

   a. How do the academic units work with the other units represented within the SCP to implement change?

   b. How do the support units work with the other units represented within the SCP to implement change?

2. How are internal and external policies integrated at a midsize, public, research institution in the eastern United States?

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a. How do the academic units integrate their internal policies and the external policies they must follow to implement change?

b. How do the support units integrate their internal policies and the external policies they must follow to implement change?

3. What are the experiences of policy actors involved in policy integration at a midsize, public, research institution in the eastern United States?

a. What are the experiences of policy actors within the academic units?

b. What are the experiences of policy actors within the support units?

Research Paradigm

This dissertation adhered to constructivism due to the nature of my engagement (e.g., direct observation and semi-structured interviews) with participants, which I used to present a dynamic view of their experiences within substantive change processes. Constructivism holds that reality is socially constructed both individually and collectively, and because reality is a social construction, no single perception of reality is considered the objective truth (Creswell, 2013; Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Within constructivism, there are multiple social realities "that are the products of human intellects," and these realities are created via the interactions individuals have with each other and their physical environments (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). Further, Crotty (1998) states that constructivism "is the view that *all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context* [emphasis original]" (p. 42).

Using an adapted version of Guba and Lincoln's (1994) table on the four research paradigms, Table 8 summarizes how this case study on the SCP aligns with the constructivist

paradigm. As stated, constructivism holds the position that the ways of knowing in the world (epistemological position) are relative to the individual's position in the world (ontological position; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). As such, the SCP team members presented multiple ways of being within this context, which is framed according to their membership to academic or support units, as well as other factors to include number of years of professional experience, diversity of professional experiences, and other intersecting factors. Consequentially, the multiplicity of positions yields diverse ways of knowing because each individual's interaction with the world and ways of constructing knowledge depend on their position within the world (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, SCP team members created knowledge through interactions with each other, which largely occurs through the SCP context.

Additional factors might shape their understanding of their external environments, to include interactions with professional organizations, such as those related to accreditation. Because positionality is the root of knowledge, and positionality determines who or what individuals interact with, an ideal method for understanding participants within their contexts is to interact with them personally. Therefore, direct observation and semi-structured interviews, both of which are components of qualitative research design, were ideal methods for answering this dissertation's research questions, which focus on the interaction between academic and support unit stakeholders, how well policy integration is occurring at the institution, and the experiences of academic and support units within the SCP process. Table 12 summarizes the application of constructivism to this study.

Table 12

Summary of Application of Constructivism to SCP Study

	Constructivism	SCP Case Study
Ontology	"Relativism—local and specific constructed realities"	The participants' position as stakeholders within academic and support units yield the presence of "multiple, apprehendable, and sometimes conflicting social realities" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111).
Epistemology	"Transactional/subjectivist; created findings"	Participants create knowledge and understanding via a variety of interactions within their environments, which includes the SCP team, the units within which they work, and other contexts, such as professional organizations.
Methodology	Hermeneutical/dialectical	Understanding is gleaned through interaction between participants and the researcher, such as through direct observation and semi-structured interviews. Knowledge is refined through these interactions, as well as through the conversation that emerges between the data sources as they are analyzed.

Note. SCP is the substantive change policy. Adapted from "Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research," by E. G. Guba and Y. Lincoln, 1994, in N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, p. 112, SAGE.

Researcher as Instrument Statement

Because participants' understanding of interactions with the SCP process is largely based on positionality, it is important that I, too, discuss my interest in the SCP. My interest in policy integration at colleges and universities stems from personal experience in the areas of institutional effectiveness, accreditation, and compliance, which includes navigating mandates from the triad (Suskie, 2015; Tandberg et al., 2019) and strategic planning (Bryson, 2018). I do not address the latter in this paper. Consequentially, I bring a certain degree of professional

experience into this study. I previously served in an Assistant Director position, writing regional and specialized accreditation reports, overseeing academic and support unit assessments, and navigating some state- and national-level compliance issues, such as those related to distance education. Additionally, at the time of this dissertation, I am employed as a Director of Institutional Effectiveness at a small, private school in the SACSCOC region, managing mandates from the triad, as well as assessments and institutional research (e.g., data reporting to state and federal agencies, and private entities). While my experiences in this field certainly yield some bias, there are benefits that I would not be able to obtain if I was not a part of the field already. For example, the technical language related to navigating external mandates is hard to master without daily immersion. This experience helps me explain concepts in a manner that is clear to the novice reader. Additionally, my experience in this area allows me to know what information and insights other effectiveness stakeholders will find important and insightful to their work.

While my professional experiences in this field are an asset to this study, it is hard to ignore some of my biases about institutional effectiveness processes, such as the SCP. Having worked at an institution that implemented changes regularly but lacked an SCP, I know the challenges of working in institutional effectiveness in a discombobulated environment. Therefore, I am naturally excited about this policy and am more inclined to present this institution's SCP in a favorable light because I know what it is like not to have one. Additionally, as a naturally wired rule follower, I enjoy institutional effectiveness work, and I am less likely to be critical of the external systems (e.g., the triad) that necessitate the need of an SCP in the first place. The mandates the federal government, states, and accrediting organizations issue are not perfect and are often confusing, but without them, I would not be employed in the institutional

effectiveness field. Consequently, I am more likely to accept the faults of the federal

government, states, and accrediting organizations (rather than critique them), and suggest how

institutions can adapt to the triad's mandates rather than be critical of or complain about it.

Despite the benefits my professional background brings to this dissertation, it is

important that I limit personal bias. To do so, I engaged in member checking and triangulation

(Yin, 2018), through which I confirmed with participants that the findings I produced from the

interviews, direct observation, and analysis of the SCP and content in Curriculog satisfy their

understanding of the SCP process. Specifically, for member checking, each participant received

a copy of their interview transcript and my summary of it so that they could confirm my

interpretation of their perspective was accurate. The structure of the processual policy integration

framework (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018) helped me limit bias because it has preconceived

criteria. In this way, the more positivistic elements of the study, such as the framework, helped to

limit the amount of bias that was present. In the following section, I discuss the research methods

I relied on to complete this study, which were shaped by the constructivist research paradigm.

Overview of Research Methods

In this section, I overview the case study research design and address its appropriateness

for this dissertation study.

Case Study Research Design

I employed a single case (embedded) design (Yin, 2018) to explore policy integration

from the perspectives of academic and support unit SCP stakeholders at a midsize, public,

research institution. Yin (2018) defines case study in two parts. First,

> a case study is an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon ("the
>
> case") in depth within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between

phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident. [Second, a] case study copes with

the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest

than data points, and as one result benefits from the prior development of theoretical

propositions to guide design, data collection, and analysis, and as another result relies on

multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion.

(pp. 41–42)

Compared with other qualitative methodologists, such as Stake (1995) and Merriam (1998),

Yin's (2018) perspective is considerably positivistic—as seen in his emphasis on the empirical

nature of qualitative studies in the quote above. Additionally, he writes that "the case study

research as it is described in this book appears to be oriented toward a *realist* [emphasis original]

perspective," in that there is one, objective reality (Yin, 2018, p. 42). Based on these statements,

it is no surprise that Yin (2018) prioritized structured research design and analysis processes

(Yazan, 2015). Still, Yin (2018) conceded that, as a method of qualitative inquiry, the case study

allows for in-depth, holistic exploration of a bounded system to generate thick description

(Tracy, 2010), which facilitates a keen understanding of the case rather than a summative sample

data generalized to a population (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). It might have been

possible, for example, to survey stakeholders at numerous institutions that have some version of

an SCP and/or SCP teams about the level of policy integration at their institutions, but the

findings would have been flat: the study would lack the thick description that would improve our

understanding of how the SCP stakeholders perceive policy integration at their institutions.

Considering these factors, qualitative inquiry—as opposed to quantitative inquiry—is an appropriate lens for understanding employee activity around the SCP.

Research Design

In this section, I describe the research design that facilitated the case study of the SCP process at a midsize, public, research institution. First, I begin with a description of the case, which is described in greater detail in Chapter 4, followed by a description of the single-case, embedded design I used (Yin, 2018).

Description of the Case

To answer the three research questions thoroughly, I needed to identify an institution that had a strong policy and/or process for implementing institutional changes. In my experience, these policies are relatively uncommon. Institutions under the triad's oversight strive to satisfy mandates when they implement changes, but they often lack a policy to govern the process, which can yield a disorganized and confusing mess in which the change is implemented, but the process is rocky, institutional stakeholders are left confused about the internal and external policies to which they must adhere and how they interconnect. Even after the change is implemented, stakeholders may have little to no understanding of how to complete the process the next time they need to receive external approval for a change before implementing it.

The institution in question, however, has such a policy. I became aware of this policy during a discussion I had with the university's head of institutional effectiveness. I had asked them about the substantive change process at their institution, and they mentioned their SCP. Several months after this conversation, a new person was in this position, but I also knew them through the same assessment and accreditation network. I approached them about using the SCP

process for this dissertation, they agreed, and served as an advocate for my study among the SCP team members.

The institution's SCP is well-established, as it is about eight years old at the time of this study. Additionally, the SCP includes a well-structured logistical system involving the relevant stakeholders in the academic and support units, as well as a content management system called Curriculog that the institution uses to archive documents and record official internal and external approval of changes throughout the process. The type of institution I used for this case study was not of the utmost importance, although it was more advantageous to the study if the institution implemented changes regularly—a characteristic that increased the likelihood that the institution would be a larger institution than a smaller one. The institution featured in this case study is a midsize, public, research institution in the eastern United States. The latter characteristic—that the institution be institutionally accredited—was also important to the study because accredited institutions must adhere to more regulations than unaccredited ones.

At this point, it is important to mention that the case was not the institution, nor was it the published SCP or the SCP team. The case was, however, the institutional change process itself, which integrated the published change policy, the process prescribed in the change policy, the SCP team stakeholders who represent the academic and support units, the tools used to facilitate the process (e.g., Curriculog), and the triad, which warranted the need for the SCP in the first place. The following research design was crafted with these characteristics and elements of the case in mind with the goal of understanding how the institution implemented changes by using the tools, processes, and stakeholders to integrate internal and external policies and mandates that must be satisfied before the change can be carried out. I provide a detailed description of the case in Chapter 4.

Single-Case (Embedded) Design

As stated previously, this case study used the single-case (embedded) design. A case is a person, program, school, process, or other entity that can be bounded (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). While there are a variety of perspectives on types of case studies (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018), I rely on Yin's (2018) perspective for this dissertation because it aligns with the structure of the SCP team, which has embedded units (e.g., academic and support units). Yin presents four case study types: single-case (holistic) design, single-case (embedded) design, multiple-case (holistic) design, and multiple-case (embedded) design. Figure 7 is a reproduction of Yin's graphic rendering of the four types, which I define below and explain why the single-case (embedded) design is suitable for this study.

Figure 7

Yin's (2018) Case Study Types
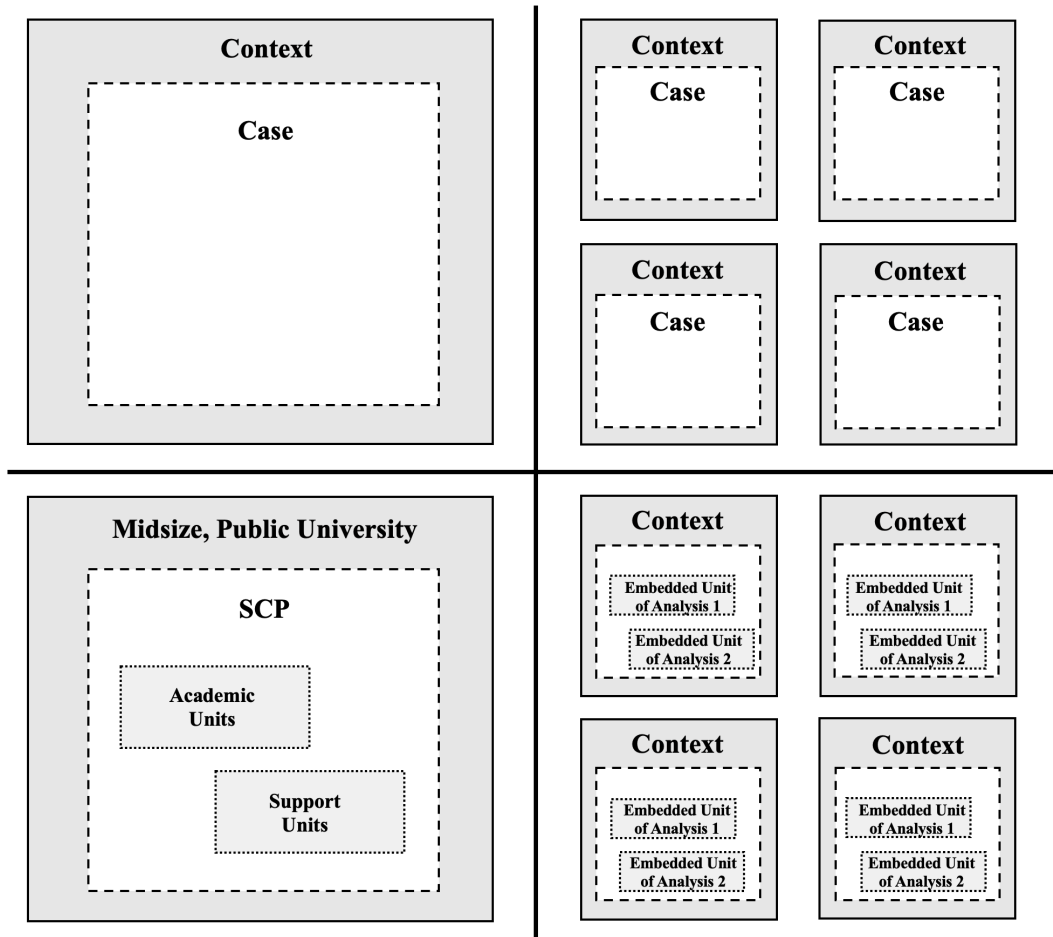
Note. Adapted from *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th ed.), by R. K. Yin, 2018, SAGE.

Case studies featuring the single-case (holistic) design (Type I) have only one case and one context, such as a study about a school or program. However, some cases studies may have more than one embedded unit of analysis that the researcher will explore, resulting in a single-case (embedded) design (Type II). Case studies involving multiple cases can also be holistic or embedded. Multiple-case (holistic) designs only have multiple cases and contexts but lack embedded units of analysis (Type III), whereas multiple-case (embedded) designs have multiple

contexts and cases and more than one unit of analysis within each case (Type IV). Yin (2018) does state that single-case studies are not ideal because they lack the rigor observed in the design of Type II and Type IV case studies; he encourages researchers to use multiple-case designs because they "will be more powerful" than single-case designs (p. 86). Of the four types, Yin considers the multiple-case (embedded) design (Type IV) to have the most power. Still, he does acknowledge that the richness of the description and the thoroughness of the analysis can produce power for the single-case types (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). I discuss the methods of data collection and analysis I employ in this study in subsequent sections.

Yin (2018) states that the single-case design is appropriate to some case study designs when they are selected based on one or more of the following criteria: *critical* (case selected due to alignment with theory), *unusual/extreme* (case is a deviant case, uncommon), *common* (reflecting regular, everyday life), *revelatory* (new case that can illuminate a particular issue), and *longitudinal* (study case over time). I selected this case based on its common and revelatory characteristics. The case was common because efficient and effective policy integration is a problem many colleges and universities face due to the number of mandates the triad issues (Suskie, 2015; Tandberg et al., 2019). The case was revelatory because—to my knowledge— there have been no studies on processual policy integration at colleges and universities in the United States (Chase, 2016; Goldrick-Rab & Shaw, 2007; Gonzalez et al., 2021).

My rationale for selecting this case can also be explained using Stake's (1995) binary contrast between intrinsic and instrumental case studies. Intrinsic case studies have a uniqueness or inherent individuality that compels the researcher to study them: "We are interested in it [the case], not because by studying it we learn about other cases or about some general problem, but because we need to learn about that particular case. We have an intrinsic interest in the case." (p.

83

3). However, for this case study, the institution and the participants who engaged in the study were not of primary importance. My motive in selecting the case was instrumental—to understand how one institution navigates a challenge common to many institutions, which is the coordination of internal and external policies to implement changes. Therefore, I selected this case based on the following mandatory criteria:

1. The institution (context) must accept Title IV funding, which results in its obligation to adhere to policies regulating higher education that emerge from the triad (Eaton, 2009; Gaston, 2014; Suskie, 2015; Tandberg et al., 2019).

2. The institution must be a public college or university, which means it must satisfy state mandates from which private institutions are exempt, such as the approval of new degree programs (SCHEV, n.d.; Thompson et al., 2020). Therefore, all members of the triad are represented within the institution, and the institution must integrate these mandates.

3. The institution must have a policy that coordinates various mandates, as the policy process (e.g., the SCP) is the focus of the case study.

Of particular importance to the uniqueness of a case is its boundedness: the case must have some sort of dividing line, whether that dividing line be the uniqueness of individuals or different schools. The case must be separate, or as Merriam (1988) puts it, "'fence[ed] in'" (p. 27). Yin (2018) considers "bounding the case" to reflect specific criteria about the case that help the researcher narrow research questions and determine the data that is applicable to the questions (the phenomenon) or extraneous to the questions (the context; p. 58).

For this study, the case was bounded according to the following criteria, which reflected the university's structure (see Figure 9):

1. The case was bound by the institutional context (midsize, public, research), which housed the SCP policy and served as the case's context. The institution's academic and support units, as well as its internal policies, the external policies it must follow, and its culture all framed the study of the SCP.

2. Further, the case was bounded by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, which was responsible for creating the SCP, updating it as required, and overseeing the university's implementation of and compliance with it. This office provided further context for the policy.

3. The SCP itself had its own series of restrictions. As a policy, the SCP included criteria for changes that should or should not be integrated into the SCP, as well as the process and requirements for implementing change at the university.

4. The nature of the SCP bound the participants to those directly appointed as SCP team members representing academic and support units affected by institutional change.

It is within these limits that the SCP stakeholders operated.

The embedded component (e.g., units of analysis) emerged because of the structure of the SCP team, which had academic and support units. The academic and support units were comprised of stakeholders from across the institution from which a sample was drawn (Yin, 2018). The embedded units "serve as an important device for maintaining the study's focus" (Yin, 2018, p. 78). As such, the research questions connect with the embedded units in that the academic and support units were used to compare the level of integration perceived by participants belonging to those groups. Figure 8 provides the model for the single-case (embedded) design, according to Yin's (2018) Type III case study. Figure 9 shows the single-case (embedded) design in context.

Figure 8

Single-Case (Embedded) Design
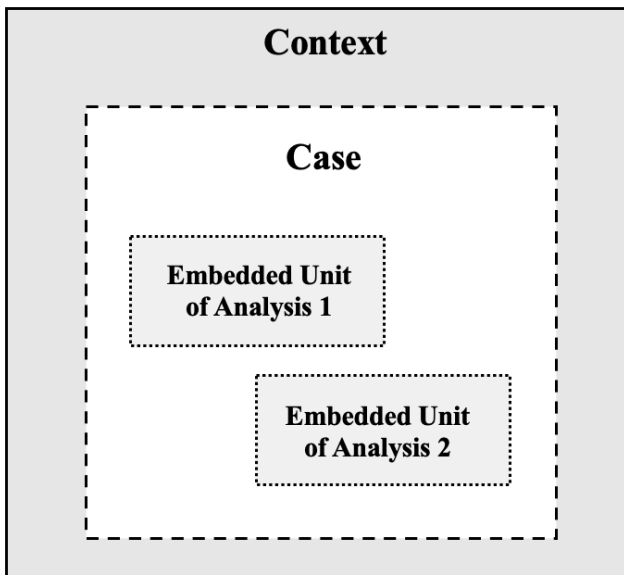
Note. Adapted from *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th ed.), by R. K. Yin, 2018, SAGE.

Figure 9

Single-Case (Embedded) Design in Context
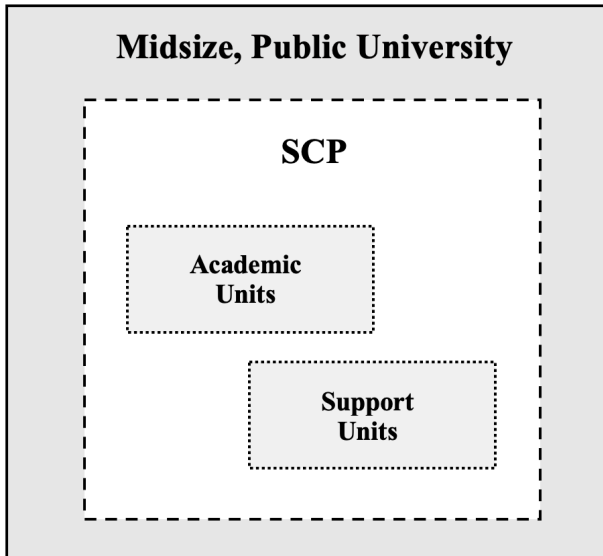
Note. Adapted from *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th ed.), by R. K. Yin, 2018, SAGE.

Participants

Prior to this study, I knew the chair of the SCP team via an assessment and accreditation network of which I am a member. Because we already had a rapport, I felt comfortable asking them if I could rely on SCP team members for this study. They agreed and became an advocate for me among the other SCP team members, encouraging them to participate. Our positive relationship made it easy to gather the information I needed, such as the official list of SCP team members, which includes their names, titles, academic or support unit they represent, and email addresses. I based participant selection on this active list of 42 SCP team members (e.g., individuals who were listed on the official SCP team list). Based on this list, I created an Excel spreadsheet that listed all SCP team members, their titles, the departments they represented, and whether their department was an academic or support unit. I categorized the schools as academic

units. I categorized all other units as support units. I also recorded whether each member's

meeting attendance was mandatory or optional because this status might indicate which SCP

team members would be able to provide the most robust perspectives of the SCP. This status was

recorded on the SCP team Zoom meeting invite.

Table 13 provides data on the breakout of the SCP team. This table represents the

population from which I selected the participants who participated in this study. From this list, I

purposefully selected participants (Patton, 2002) from the academic and support units to ensure

the following:

1. all schools were represented in the sample, and

2. critical support units managing tasks related to student enrollment and external

   mandates were represented (e.g., Registrar and Financial Aid).

Table 13

Number of SCP Team Representatives From Each Department by Department Type

Academic Units	**10**
Arts & Sciences	1
School of Business	3
School of Education	2
School of Law	3
School of Biological Sciences	1
Support Units	**32**
Academic Affairs	1
Admissions	1
Bursar	1
Compliance & Equity	1
Facilities	1
Finance	1
Financial Aid	2
Information Technology	2
Institutional Effectiveness	2
Institutional Research	1
Operations	2
President	1
Provost	1
Research & Graduate/Professional Studies	1
Center for International Studies	4
Student Affairs	2
Center for Teaching & Learning	1
Undergraduate Academic Affairs	1
University Counsel	1
University Libraries	1
University Registrar	3
Center for U.S. Politics	1
Total	**42**

Data Sources

I relied on two categories of data sources for this study: primary and secondary data sources. The primary data sources (direct observation of SCP team meetings and semi-structured interviews) required active engagement with the SCP team, analysis of their interactions with

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each other, and analysis of their responses during the semi-structured interviews. Additionally, I engaged with two secondary data sources (the published SCP and Curriculog content management system) via jotting and memoing (Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2021). (Curriculog is the content management system used to archive change proposals and ensure engagement from key stakeholders in change processes.) The secondary data sources served as grounding data points for the study, and I used them to understand the change process and corroborate insights I gleaned from my analysis of the primary data sources (Tracy, 2010; Yin, 2018). The following sections discuss the primary and secondary data sources in greater detail.

Primary Data Sources

In this section, I discuss the primary data sources: the direct observation of SCP team meetings and semi-structured interviews with participants.

Direct Observation of SCP team meetings. The SCP team meets monthly via Zoom (about one hour long), and I attended three meetings during the Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 semesters (October, December, January) to observe how policy integration emerges during these meetings via direct observation (Yin, 2018). Initially, I intended to observe four meetings, but unexpected meeting cancelations caused me to reduce the number to three. Even when meetings were canceled, I continued with the interviews, which began in September 2023 and concluded in March 2024. During the SCP team meetings, I was an "observer as participant" because the participants knew I was present in the Zoom room and could contact me via the chat system, which is what I experienced when I attend the first SCP team meeting before the study began (Merriam, 1998, p. 101).

The Zoom meetings allowed me to record the following:

1. the number of SCP team members who were present at the monthly meetings, which provided an idea of the level of engagement (e.g., amount of interaction among the academic and support units) related to the SCP among the various subunits;

2. the criteria and characteristics of SCP attendees, to include their department, professional titles, and whether their unit is an academic or support unit;

3. how the SCP team members interacted;

4. and the degree of policy (dis)integration observed in the meeting (Candel, 2021; Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018).

5. how the prescribed questions for the first and second interviews might be adjusted due to insights I gained from the direct observation of the SCP team meetings.

Findings gleaned from direct observation grounded the semi-structured interviews, which I used illuminate findings from the meeting observation, focusing on participants' experiences within the SCP team and the SCP process.

Semi-Structured Interviews. Semi-structured interviews served as the second primary data source for this study. I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews for two reasons. First, the semi-structured interview format allowed me to maintain some control over the direction of the interview (Merriam, 1998). The interview questions (a) explored gaps and other findings from the direct observation of the SCP meetings that show how the academic and support units worked together to integrate policies, (b) allowed me to understand individual participants' experiences within the SCP team and with the SCP process, and (c) allowed me to gain additional insights into policy integration at the university.

I completed the semi-structured interviews with participants from September 2023 to March 2024 to accommodate participants' holiday schedules, busy seasons at work, and any

unexpected events that prohibited interviews from occurring. I interviewed participants twice. Originally, the interviews were slated for December 2023 and January 2024, but the aforementioned life events slowed the schedule. Additionally, I interviewed one participant in September 2023 because they were available during that time. The first interview followed the interview protocol provided in Appendix A. The second interview (Appendix B) had both structured interview questions that expanded on the questions asked in the initial interview and exploratory questions that engaged the themes that emerged in the first interview. To ensure that the interview questions align with the research questions, I created a crosswalk to confirm the interview questions' relevance to the study by aligning them with the research questions (Appendix C). The interview questions were revised based on feedback from the dissertation committee. I interviewed representatives of each academic unit. Per recommendations from the chair of the SCP team, I invited representatives of the support units listed in Table 14 to be interviewed. The chair stated that these participants provided input on changes regularly and/or are actively engaged in the SCP meetings. In some cases, these individuals were also the head of the support unit. I invited 13 participants to be interviewed with the goal of interviewing each participant twice. If participants declined to engage in the interviews or were unavailable, following consultation with the SCP Chair or participants, I replaced those stakeholders if I could. Table 14 reflects the final list of interview participants. All but one participant (a stakeholder in the Business School) was interviewed twice. I interviewed 11 participants. All participants' job titles have been masked.

Table 14

Number of Participants by Unit Type and Name

Unit Type and Name	Participants
Academic	7
Arts & Sciences	
Associate Dean for Undergraduate Academic Programs	1
Business School	
Associate Dean of Innovation	1
Assistant Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs	1
Education School	
Assistant Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs	1
Associate Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs	1
Law School	
Associate Dean of Innovation	1
School of Biological Science	
Assistant Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs	1
Support	**4**
Financial Aid	
Director of Financial Aid	1
Institutional Effectiveness	
Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness	1
Undergraduate Academic Affairs	
Director of Student Advising	1
University Registrar	
Registrar	1
Total	**11**

Appendix A and Appendix B provide the interview protocol for the first and second interviews, respectively. I used the four dimensions of the policy (dis)integration framework (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018) as the four categories (policy integration, subsystem involvement, policy instruments, and policy goals) for the research questions. Within each category, the interview questions were designed to explore participants' knowledge and experiences within each dimension. To receive input on the protocol before I implemented it, I shared the protocol with a higher education policy expert and an accreditation and institutional

effectiveness expert who were accustomed to navigating changes at their institutions. These

specialists helped me to refine my questions for clarity, as well as integrate probing questions to

ensure participants' responses were robust.

Secondary Data Sources

In this section, I discuss the secondary data sources: the published SCP and the

Curriculog content management system.

Published SCP. The SCP, which is documented on the university's SCP webpage,

served as a critical data source for this study because it is the foundational policy upon which the

SCP team and the associated policy processes are built (see Figure 6). Compared with the other

data sources, the SCP was the only static data source,[1] making it both stable (published policy)

and specific (outlines details of the process, institutional stakeholders, and external demands)

(Yin, 2018). I depended on the SCP to ground my understanding of the SCP, and I used the SCP

to compare published information with the data I gleaned from interviews and participant

observations. If there were inconsistencies in reports from participants, I followed up with them,

which is a process known as corroboration (Tracy, 2010; Yin, 2018). Additionally, the published

SCP allowed me to observe whether the SCP deviated from published expectations. When

analyzing the SCP, I engaged in jotting memos (Miles et al., 2014), which I discuss in a

subsequent section.

Curriculog Content Management System. Like the published SCP, the Curriculog

content management system served as a live archive of the SCP changes because it is the official

record of changes units want to implement. The changes the SCP team discussed at the monthly

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[1] My use of "static" is conditional, as institutional stakeholders updated the policy once since its creation, and as of the writing of this dissertation, they are in the process of updating the policy again. The policy did not change during the study.

meetings were recorded within the Curriculog system. Each member of the SCP team had access to Curriculog, and they collaborated within the system by making recommendations and providing insights for the unit that wanted to implement a change. Because Curriculog serves as a written record of the proposed, in progress, and implemented changes, I also used it to corroborate findings from the direct observations of SCP meetings and semi-structured interviews (Tracy, 2010; Yin, 2018). The leader of the SCP team granted me access to Curriculog system via a unique username and password. I did not have restrictions in my level of access, other than being unable to add or remove users or make adjustments to archived proposals, which is the purview of the system administrator. As with the published SCP, I engaged in jotting (Miles et al., 2014), which I discuss later.

Data Collection

For the primary data sources, data collection occurred via semi-structured interviews and field notes generated from my direct observation of SCP team meetings. For the secondary data sources, I relied on the published SCP and the Curriculog content management system. In this section, I describe data collection for the primary and secondary sources in detail.

Primary Data Sources

To structure the direct observation of the SCP team meetings and the interviews, I used the policy (dis)integration framework (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018) that I described in Chapter 1. I used this framework to develop the direct observation protocol, guide the development of the interview questions, and create a priori codes for the analysis of the interviews. I discuss this framework and my adaptation of it below, followed by a description of the direct observation and interview data sources.

Processual Policy Integration Framework. Policy integration is the intentional partnership between independent stakeholders and groups that work together to solve a policy problem (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018). Such partnerships can help organizations and individuals coordinate demands to save time, save money, and improve efficiency (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016; Peters, 2015, 2018). Generally, policy integration is used within public policy at the national level, focusing on major issues such as food insecurity and education (Candel & Biesbroek, 2018). The need for policy integration, however, is pervasive, occurring at the international, national, and local levels (Peters, 2015). Therefore, the principles of policy integration are easily applied to the United States higher education system due to the uncoordinated mandates issued from the triad. To provide structure to the data collection and analysis, I elected to follow Candel and Biesbroek's (2016) policy (dis)integration framework even though it has only been applied in European contexts to date. The framework (a) uses standard policy language that can easily be translated to a U.S. higher education context, and (b) the framework approaches policy integration as a spectrum rather than a binary outcome assessing whether integration is or is not achieved (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018; Metcalfe, 1994). Both characteristics make the framework malleable and translatable to other contexts, such as the one at hand.

At face value, the framework appears simple, but a thorough breakdown reveals the framework's complexities, which forced me to simplify it so that it was suitable for this case. Candel and Biesbroek (2016) disaggregate policy (dis)integration into four dimensions: policy frame, subsystem involvement, policy goals, and policy instruments. They explain, "Policy integration is here understood as a process of policy and institutional change and design in which actors play a pivotal role, as interactions between (political) actors constitute the mechanisms

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through which shifts of policy integration occur" (Candel & Biesbroek, 2018, p. 196). The policy

frame dimension considers the level to which the institution recognizes the problem is cross-

cutting, applying to multiple subsystems and/or stakeholders. The subsystem involvement

dimension considers the degree to which subsystems are involved in cross-cutting issues and the

quantity of interactions with other subsystems regarding the policy frame. The policy goals

dimension considers the degree to which subsystems integrate the larger policy goal into their

policy goals. The policy instruments dimension considers the degree to which subsystems adjust

their policy instruments to align with the larger policy frame (Figure 8).

Considering Figure 10, it is clear the policy (dis)integration framework is more complex

than the initial breakout of the four subsystems, and it is unclear how the framework applies to

specific contexts because none are specified in the model. To aid the application of the policy

(dis)integration framework, I translated Figure 10 so that it applies to a U.S. higher education

context, specifically for an institution with state, accreditation, and federal mandates, such as the

institution investigated in this study. These translations are found in Chapter 1, Table 1 to Table

4.

Figure 10

Processual Policy (Dis)integration Framework

Policy frame	**Description**: The presence of an overarching frame that fosters integrative interactions, i.e., whether a crosscutting problem is recognized as such and thought to be requiring concerted action. **Degrees**: Ranging from a narrow problem definition, where the problem is considered to fall within the boundaries of a specific subsystem to general recognition that the problem affects/is affected by the system as a whole and requires a holistic approach.
Subsystem involvement	**Description**: The range of (networks of) actors and institutions intentionally dealing with the crosscutting issue. **Degrees**: Ranging from siloed policymaking in which the issue is dealt with by one subsystem only to having all potentially relevant subsystems involved and interacting.
Policy goals	**Description**: (i) the range of sectoral policies in which the crosscutting issue is explicitly being addressed, either as a main or sub-goal; (ii) the coherence between goals. **Degrees**: Ranging from the issue only being addressed in one or a few other sectoral policies to integration across all relevant policies across sectors, possibly accompanied by an overarching strategy; and from no/low coherence to high coherence.
Policy instruments	**Description**: (i) the extent to which the means in sectoral policies have been adopted and adjusted to pursue a crosscutting objective; (ii) the presence of procedural instruments, to facilitate coordination; (iii) the consistency of the instrument mix as a whole. **Degrees**: Ranging from one or a few sectoral instruments, no procedural instruments at system-level and low consistency to an intelligent instrument mix, procedural instruments that facilitate coordination across subsystems, and high consistency.

Note. Adapted from "The Expediency of Policy Integration," J. L. L. Candel, 2021, *Policy Studies, 42*(4), p. 348, (https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2019.1634191).

In the following sections, I describe my primary data sources, beginning with the direct observation of the SCP team meetings.

Direct Observation of SCP Team Meetings. I attended SCP team meetings from

October 2023 to January 2024 following submission of the Research Information Plan

(Appendix D) to all SCP team members via email. Before each meeting, they also received a

Research Information Sheet (Appendix E) via email. When a meeting was canceled, I continued

with the interviews that occurred from September 2023 to March 2024; I did *not* postpone the

interviews until I reached three direct observations. I recorded notes during my direct

observations of monthly SCP meetings (Yin, 2018). These meetings were held in Zoom and

lasted no more than an hour. I participated as an "observer as participant," in which my

"activities are known to the group; participation in the group is definitely secondary to the role of

information gathering" (Meriam, 1998, p. 101). The participants knew I was present in the Zoom

meeting, but I did not record the meetings, and I turned my camera off so that I was not a

distraction to participants, as it was obvious I was doing various tasks, such as taking copious

notes during each meeting. But, unlike the "complete observer" in which my presence would

have been unknown, I could interact with participants during the meeting if they had questions

about the study or wanted to share special information with me. This happened only once during

my observations. The protocol for observing the meetings is housed in Appendix F, and it has

been reviewed by two content experts, who provided feedback. Before, during, and after each

meeting, I completed the following:

1. Updated the pre-created template for direct observation of SCP team meetings
    (Appendix F), to include the date of the meeting and time.
2. I reviewed and archived a copy of the meeting agenda, which the administrative
    assistant emailed prior to each meeting.

3. At the beginning of the meeting, I recorded those who are in attendance, checking the Zoom roster periodically to ensure I added any late arrivals.

4. I took notes on the topics discussed in the meeting, to include the changes discussed, the unit(s) proposing those changes, the stakeholders involved in the discussion of these changes, and other matters of business addressed in the meeting.

5. At the conclusion of the meeting, I memoed about my observations to record my initial thoughts and reactions as they relate to the three research questions (Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2021). As applicable, I completed analytical memos (Miles et al., 2014), which occurred after I attended most of the meetings and had more data on which to reflect.

6. Finally, I completed the table in the direct observation protocol after each meeting to document the example of policy frame, policy integration, policy goals, and subsystem involvement that I observed (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018). Later, I synthesized these notes by writing an analytic memo on my overall perception of the SCP team's interaction within the four dimensions.

It is important to mention that because I did not record the SCP team meetings and I did not attempt to write a live script of each meeting, my primary source of information from the SCP team meetings were my notes, memos, and analytical memos. The outcomes of the direct observations were not coded. Prior to the October 2023 meeting, I attended SCP team meetings held during the summer. I used these meetings as an opportunity to build rapport with the SCP team (Patton, 2002) and to test my data collection strategy described above (Yin, 2018).

Semi-Structured Interviews. I conducted the semi-structured interviews between September 2023 and March 2024. The final SCP meeting occurred before I finished interviewing

all of the participants. The semi-structured interviews included the individuals identified in the discussion of the participants (Miles et al., 2014).

The semi-structured interviews only occurred after participants completed a consent form via Qualtrics (Appendix G) by marking a box to indicate they agreed to participate. In mid-November 2023, I emailed SCP team members and included a link to Calendly, which is an online appointment scheduler that allows individuals to select and cancel appointments independently. This tool improved efficiency and decreased the amount of time spent coordinating schedules. Once scheduled, interviews were held via Zoom, which allowed for (a) a meeting context the participants were already accustomed to due to the monthly SCP team meetings that occurred via Zoom, and (b) easy recording and initial transcript generation via the Zoom platform. At the conclusion of each interview, I completed the following steps:

1. I ensured that all files downloaded appropriately (e.g., video recording and initial transcript) and were saved on my personal desktop.

2. I wrote a memo to record my initial thoughts following the interview.

3. Next, I transcribed the interview. I reviewed and edited the interview myself using the initial transcript the Zoom platform generated as a template. I edited these transcripts myself so that I could become very familiar with the interviewee and begin some initial coding as I edited the Zoom transcription. I compared the outsourced transcription with the Zoom recording for accuracy. I interviewed 11 participants and had 21 interviews, transcripts, and summaries because one participant was interviewed once.

4. After the interviews were transcribed, I summarized the interview and the insights I gleaned from it into a one- to two-page document. I forwarded this document and the

interview transcript to each participant for their personal record and confirmation of

the accuracy of my interpretation. I repeated this process for each participant.

5. Throughout this process, I wrote memos to document my emerging thoughts prior to

    my analysis of the interviews. These memos also included any relevant connections

    with the direct observation of the SCP meetings and the secondary data sources

    (Miles et al., 2014).

Secondary Data Sources

Published SCP. Because the SCP is published on the institutional website, I saved an

Adobe PDF file of the policy within the data corpus. One file served as a the "original" copy of

the policy, and a second file served as the version used for jottings (Miles et al., 2014), which I

recorded after printing the document and writing on it by hand.

Curriculog Content Management System. The administrative assistant for the SCP

team granted me access to Curriculog, which I accessed using a unique username and password.

Due to the inability to download change files and the comments that stakeholders from the

academic and support units record, the best method for saving the SCP data was to save the

pages as PDF documents using the print to PDF function. These components include the

description of the change, the SCP stakeholder submitting the report, and feedback from

stakeholders who reviewed the change. There were no restrictions to my access, and I was able

to review proposals just as a typical SCP team member would.

I archived these PDFs on my personal computer, which was password protected. They

were saved according to the unit submitting the change, the year the change was submitted, and

the type of change. I recorded jottings (Miles et al., 2014) related to the Curriculog forms in

Dedoose, which I also used to code the interviews. The jottings included observations related to

alignment or misalignment between the published SCP, SCP team meetings, and semi-structured interviews, as well as questions to ask participants. I also recorded interesting observations about the changes and comments participants made. Additionally, to ensure that my jottings align with my research questions, I translated my jottings onto a new document that simply listed the three research questions (Appendix H). I sorted the jottings into the appropriate research question.

Data Analysis

In previous sections, I discussed the data in terms of their status as primary and secondary sources. In this section I discuss the analysis of these sources in the order in which they occurred. It is important to mention that while the Curriculog data source is listed second, analysis of this source was ongoing, as the system was updated throughout the study.

Analysis of Published SCP Document (Secondary Data Source)

Because the published SCP was available publicly, I could analyze it at any time. Consequentially, I analyzed this document first to provide my initial thoughts on the SCP that grounded further analysis of the following three data sources. I did not code the SCP, but rather, I recorded jottings on the SCP itself. Jottings archived my "fleeting and emergent reflections and commentary on issues that emerge during fieldwork and especially data analysis" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 86). Because my jottings for the secondary data sources focused on the static SCP policy and the record of changes and stakeholder feedback within the Curriculog system (discussed in the following section), the jottings addressed the following:

- how the SCP was designed to structure the academic and support units' interactions;
- observations of alignment between published policies, Curriculog, and the SCP team meetings;
- topics to follow up on with participants in the semi-structured interviews;

- my thoughts on who SCP team members interact within the Curriculog system; and

- as a "cross-reference to material in another part of the data set," (Miles et al., 2014, p. 86).

Overall, the jottings helped me to pinpoint tensions and misalignment within the data that warranted further exploration. Finally, although the SCP was a static data source, it was important that I revisited it throughout the data collection process, recording new thoughts, ideas, and reactions to the policy as the data corpus developed and expanded, and as I became more familiar with the case. Doing so helped me to corroborate my findings among the other data sources (Miles et al., 2014, p. 86).

Analysis of Curriculog (Secondary Data Source)

Similar to my analysis of the published SCP, I also used jottings (Miles et al., 2014) to record my reflections, and to corroborate findings from the policy, meetings, and interviews on the Curriculog document I generated (Tracy, 2010; Yin, 2018). As a system the SCP team actively uses, I reviewed Curriculog throughout the study. To ensure my jottings were organized, I translated my jottings for each change logged in Curriculog during the timeframe of the study to a template of research questions (Appendix H). Organizing my jottings in this manner helped me to ensure that I processed the data in a manner that helped me to answer the research questions. While I completed this portion of the data analysis, findings from Curriculog were integrated into my findings less than I anticipated. Stakeholders using Curriculog often left statements such as "no comment," and when they did leave feedback, it often was not applicable to the primary themes emerging via the participant interviews. The deficit of usable data stored in Curriculog indicates the likelihood that a lot of policy integration occurred offline, and therefore, would be resolved before participants engaged with Curriculog.

Analysis of Direct Observation of SCP Team Meetings (Primary Data Source)

After the meetings, I wrote two analytic memos. In the first analytic memo, I recorded my interpretation and perception of the meeting, to include the dynamics between the SCP team members, how well they seem to collaborate, moments of tension, and which subunits engaged most in the meeting. In the second analytic memo, I analyzed the notes I took in each section of the policy (dis)integration framework (policy frame, policy goal, subsystem involvement, and policy instrument) to gauge the level of integration occurring within the meetings (Appendix F). This memo focused on specific elements of the policy (dis)integration framework to provide a more structured analysis (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018), while the first memo focused on the dynamics of the group and my perceived experiences of the group members.

Analysis of Interview Data (Primary Data Source)

Because the semi-structured interviews occurred last (September 2023 to March 2024), they were the fourth and final cycle of data analysis. I coded the semi-structured interview data in four cycles, using Dedoose, a software application for qualitative data analysis, to analyze my data. The first coding cycle was implemented via a priori codes, emerging from the policy (dis)integration frame, which has four dimensions with each dimension having four levels (policy frame, policy goal, subsystem involvement, policy instrument; Candel & Biesbroek, years; Saldaña, 2021). In the second cycle, I used in vivo coding, coding the text in the participants' own words (Saldaña, 2021). In the third cycle of coding, I reviewed the first set of a priori codes for accuracy. Then, I consolidated and revise the codes that emerged via in vivo coding, grouping them into categories (clustering) (Miles et al., 2020; Saldaña, 2021). As new ideas emerged, I refined my codes and categories. In the fourth round of coding, I established relationships between the a priori and in vivo codes via concept mapping to confirm the

relationships between the codes that I am observing (Miles et al., 2020). To conclude, Table 15 summarizes the relationship between the research questions, data sources, and data analysis.

Table 15

Summary of Relationship Between Research Questions, Data Sources, and Data Analysis

Research Question	Data Sources	Data Analysis
How do the subsystems represented within the SCP work together to implement change at a midsize, public, research institution in the eastern United States?	Published SCP, Curriculog, SCP team meetings, Semi-structured interviews	Jottings, a priori coding, in vivo, analytic memoing
How are internal and external policies integrated at a midsize, public, research institution in the eastern United States?	Curriculog, SCP team meetings, Semi-structured interviews	Jottings, in vivo and a priori coding, analytic memoing
What are the experiences of policy actors involved in policy integration at a midsize, public, research institution in the eastern United States?	SCP team meetings, Semi-structured interviews	in vivo and a priori coding, analytic memoing

Trustworthiness

As I conclude this methods chapter, it is important that I address the trustworthiness of this study, as the validity and reliability of qualitative research is not identical to that of quantitative research (Merriam, 1998; Shenton, 2004). According to Guba (1981), the validity and reliability of qualitative research can be assessed according to four criteria: credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity; Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). This study aligns with these four criteria, which I address in detail below.

In quantitative research, validity is used to describe situations in which the study measures what it is supposed to (Merriam, 1998; Shenton, 2004). Guba (1981) provides a number of criteria researchers can use to ensure they develop and implement credible studies. I address the ones relevant to this study in this paragraph. To design this study, I selected and implemented methods standard to case study methodology in higher education. The research methods I described in previous sections are based in accepted methods of qualitative research, as demonstrated in the use of Yin (2018) to ground the case study design. Before completing the study, I familiarized myself with the institution prior to conducting the study by reviewing Curriculog, attending SCP team meetings, meeting with the SCP Chair to discuss the study, and reviewing the policy. I also relied on triangulation by incorporating different data sources so that my findings were corroborated: interviews, direct observation, Curriculog, and an evaluation of the SCP itself.

Transferability is the ability to apply findings to a similar context (Merriam, 1998). One factor that facilitates transferability is the nature of higher education in the United States. All schools with federal and/or state aid are shaped by the triad in some way, and while the institution at hand was located in a different state and has a different accrediting agency compared with other institutions in the United States, it faces challenges that are similar to its peers.

Dependability refers to the idea that if another researcher repeats a study as it has been outlined by the researcher, they should have the same outcomes (Shenton, 2004). To ensure the study can be replicated, I provided a thorough discussion of both my methodology and the case, as well as the specifics of my data collection and analysis. Finally, confirmability refers to objectivity and the reality that qualitative research is very sensitive to bias (Shenton, 2004). To

decrease the level of bias I introduced into the study, I clearly disclosed my biases in my researcher as instrument statement, which included my experiences in the field of institutional effectiveness and admiration for the institution in question's very thorough SCP.

Delimitations, Limitations, Assumptions

Delimitations

This study is delimited to one public research university and one process, which Yin (2018) states limits comparisons across cases and contexts to a midsize, public, research institution located in the eastern United States. This study's findings were also delimited to the processual policy (dis)integration framework for evaluating the degree of policy integration (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018). This framework was not made specifically for colleges and universities, but I chose to use it because it is the most comprehensive framework in the field of public policy (see Metcalfe, 1994). Findings from this study can be used to modify the processual policy integration framework for higher education contexts.

Limitations

One limitation of the study is that I could control the SCP representation and engagement. As seen in Table 14, there were more academic participants than representatives from support units, which could result in the findings being skewed toward the academic SCP team members. However, because the academic units were the units that proposed changes in consultation with the support units, this imbalance was justified.

Assumptions

This study assumed that the SCP integrated the four dimensions of the processual policy integration framework. This frame shaped the types of questions asked, evaluation of SCP meetings via participant observation, and consequently, the study's outcomes. Finally, this study

also assumed that participants were forthright in their responses to their interview questions, which would lead to more robust data.

Ethical Considerations

Before I began any data collection, I received approval from Substantive Change University's Education Institutional Review Committee (EDIRC). Then, I proceeded to collect informed consent documents from participants (Appendix G). To protect participants' identities, I created new professional titles except for units such as Financial Aid and the Registrar, which generally have the same title regardless of institution. Additionally, all documents and data related to the study (e.g., video recordings, transcripts, notes from participant observation) was saved on locked computers; I was the only individual who could access these documents.

CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTION OF THE CASE

The substantive change policy (SCP) emerged due to a change in Substantive Change University's (SCU) external environment: the institutional accreditor required that each institution in its membership have an SCP. SCU created such a policy to ensure it was compliant by the time it submitted a self-study in 2016. Although the institutional accrediting organization's requirement triggered the development of the SCP, SCU stakeholders who were involved in developing and implementing changes were keenly aware that their institution lacked a policy that coordinated both people and internal and external policies (Director of Institutional Effectiveness, personal communication, February 12, 2024). Implementing significant changes, such as SCU's first, online master's degree program, the Master of Business Administration, without an SCP was an experience some stakeholders did not want to repeat. The SCP has evolved since SCU implemented it in 2015. Over time, the size of the SCP team increased from 20 to 42 members as more institutional stakeholders wanted to be a part of the change team because they saw the value of awareness and engagement in trans-institutional changes, and more staff were identified as important stakeholders. There is now a collaborative SCP change form that allows academic and support units to provide comments that is managed in a program called Curriculog. And, over time, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness developed a website on which it publishes robust resources to guide stakeholders through the SCP process. In this section, I describe SCU, the SCP, and the academic and support unit representatives who

comprise the SCP team. I also address the history of the SCP, to include how it was developed to comply with the institutional accreditor's substantive change policy, how the current policy works, and how the current policy compares with the original SCP.

Description of the University

SCU is a midsize, public university located in the eastern United States. SCU is institutionally accredited and holds a number of specialized accreditations. SCU is not part of a state system and has an independent institutional board. It serves both undergraduate and graduate students. SCU does not have schools designated specifically to graduate education; its discipline-specific schools, such as Business and Education, serve both graduate and undergraduate students. The Law School and School of Biological Sciences are the only academic units that do not enroll undergraduate students. Consequently, faculty members are not designated solely as undergraduate faculty or graduate faculty, but rather, they teach students at both levels. The schools include Arts & Sciences, School of Education, School of Business, School of Law, and School of Biological Sciences. The academic units hold a variety of specialized accreditations to include the American Bar Association, American Psychological Association, American Association of Colleges and Schools of Business, Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, and National Association of School Psychologists.

Typical support units found at many other institutions, although they may be known by slightly different names, exist at SCU. Support units represented on the SCP are Academic Affairs, Admissions, Bursar, Compliance & Equity, Facilities, Finance, Financial Aid, Information Technology, Institutional Research, Operations, Office of the President, International Student Office, Student Affairs, Center for Teaching and Learning, University

Council, University Libraries, Registrar, and Office of the Provost. Of course, many other offices support faculty, staff, and students at SCU, but these units are not mentioned here because they are not represented on the SCP team.

The academic and support units mentioned above work together to produce degree programs and academic and student support services for the institution's undergraduate and graduate students. Academic programming at the University is diverse in terms of academic level, discipline, and modality. The institution does not offer associate degree programs, but it does offer bachelor's, master's, professional (e.g., Specialist in Education), and doctoral degree programs, as well as the Juris Doctor. The University also offers post-baccalaureate and post-master's certificates. Academic degree programs are diverse in terms of modality. SCU's institutional accreditor approved SCU to offer fully-online degree programs, and the University offers a number of asynchronous and hybrid degree programs at the graduate level (master's, professional, doctorate, post-baccalaureate certificate).

Overview of the SCP team

The SCP team serves as the coordinating body for the SCP and includes representation from stakeholders across the University. The SCP team's purpose is to ensure that changes academic units submit are properly reviewed by academic and support units that are affected so that they can adapt and make changes within their units. The Team also serves as the focal point for communicating changes to stakeholders at the SCU, who then report these changes back to the units they represent. The SCP team is not, however, an authoritative body that approves the changes academic units submit. Consequently, the SCP team is appropriately called a team rather than a committee, which would have authority over academic changes.

A lot of the coordination for the team occurs via email. A representative from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness sends out monthly emails to the SCP team, which includes information about the next SCP meeting and an agenda. The Director of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, who is also the Chair of the SCP team, may also send out regular communication to remind SCP team members to review changes that are in Curriculog and make other announcements. All SCP meetings occur on Zoom.

The monthly Zoom meetings include representatives from the academic and support units who are SCP team members, though not every member attends monthly. The SCP Chair leads each meeting, beginning with general updates that lead into any specific changes. The SCP Chair may also provide an overview of the SCP processes and any upcoming changes the Office of Institutional Effectiveness plans to make to the process. Every meeting has a standing agenda item for the academic units to report out on changes that they are working through and/or thinking about. In the following section, I describe the members of the SCP team beginning with the academic units.

Academic and Support Units Represented on the SCP Team

Each academic and support unit is structured differently, and each unit's SCP team representative has different roles on the SCP team and in facilitating change within their respective units. In this section, I describe relevant details about the five academic units and the four support units that are represented among the interview participants.

Academic Units

Arts & Sciences. Arts & Sciences houses most of the undergraduate degree programs, although it does house some graduate programs that do not fit into the other schools' disciplines, to include American Studies, Physics, and Classical Studies. The Associate Dean of

Undergraduate Academic Programs and the Director of Student Advising represent Arts & Sciences.

School of Education. The School of Education offers both undergraduate and graduate degree programs in education, focusing on elementary education, higher education, and psychology and counseling. The Assistant and Associate Deans of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs and the Associate Dean for Accreditation and Compliance represent the School of Education.

School of Business. The School of Business offers both undergraduate and graduate degree programs in business. The Assistant and Associate Deans of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs and Associate Dean of Innovation represent the School of Business.

School of Law. The School of Law only offers graduate programming: the Juris Doctor and the Master of Laws. The school is planning to offer an online Master of Legal Studies, pending approval from external stakeholders. The Assistant and Associate Deans of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs and Assistant Dean of Innovation represent the School of Law.

School of Biological Sciences. The School of Biological Sciences offers graduate programming. The Assistant Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs represents the School of Biological Sciences.

Support Units

University Registrar. The University Registrar oversees many administrative elements of academic programming at the institution, to include the development and publication of the academic calendar, undergraduate catalog, and exam schedules. There are three key roles within the Registrar that support each of these areas and support institutional change: the Registrar, Assistant Director of the Registrar, and Associate Director of the Registrar. The Registrar is a

member of the Provost's staff and has a direct relationship with the academic units. Additionally, the Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness (and SCP team Chair) reports to the Registrar. The Assistant Director of the Registrar manages registration and records, system implementation, and academic calendar implementation. They partner with other support offices to assist with, for example, the implementation of a new program with a non-standard academic calendar. The Associate Director of the Registrar oversees curriculum management (i.e., Curriculog), guides transfer credit and degree processes, partners with the undergraduate and graduate schools, and awards degree programs. The Registrar and the Assistant Director of the Registrar represent the Registrar's Office on the SCP team.

Financial Aid. Financial Aid is responsible for overseeing the award of aid to graduate and undergraduate students. The Director of Financial Aid described the Financial Aid Leadership team as a Mini SCP that leads the Financial Aid office. The team meets every other week to discuss changes and consider how a change will impact the system and how they should advise students. The Financial Aid Leadership team includes: the Director of Financial Aid, the Director of Operations, the Director of Aid, and the Associate Director of Aid. The Director of Financial Aid and the Associate Director of Operations represent the Financial Aid Office on the SCP team.

Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness serves several functions at the institution that warrants its oversight of the SCP. This office ensures the institution follows the standards and policies of the institutional accrediting organization and academic and program policies for the State Department for Higher Education, which includes requirements for state authorization and licensure disclosure. Additionally, Office of Institutional Effectiveness stakeholders develop and revise the institutional change resources, such as

timelines and templates, and serve as consultants for academic and support units during change processes. The Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness, Associate Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness, and Director of State Compliance represent the Office of Institutional Effectiveness on the SCP team.

How the University Developed the SCP

The core of the history of the SCP emerged due to the former Director of Institutional Effectiveness,[2] who created the SCP in conjunction with the Registrar and other institutional stakeholders. Other elements of the history emerged during the interviews, as institutional veterans described the time before the policy and how the SCP positively altered the degree of coordination and collaboration occurring at the institution. There were some inconsistencies in how participants recalled why the SCP developed, but these inconsistences are understandable because the SCP is approaching its tenth year. Overall, I relied on the Director of Institutional Effectiveness' memory.

The Director of Institutional Effectiveness (personal communication, February 12, 2024) explained that the SCP emerged because the institution needed to comply with its institutional accreditor's substantive change policy as a part of a self-study. To achieve compliance, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness partnered with the Registrar and other institutional stakeholders to develop and implement a policy (now known as the SCP) that addressed the institution's process for achieving substantive changes that require external approval. The Director of Institutional Effectiveness stated that the new SCP not only helped SCU achieve compliance, but it also eased the implementation of future changes, made evident by the launch

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[22] Note that the Director of Institutional Effectiveness was the original creator of the SCP. The Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness replaced the Director of Institutional effectiveness when they left SCU.

of the online MBA degree program, which was complicated because SCU lacked a central coordinating policy (i.e., SCP) and coordinating body (i.e., SCP team) for changes. The "online MBA reinforced the need for such a policy" (Director of Institutional Effectiveness, personal communication, February 12, 2024).

The Business School, which housed the MBA, was not the only academic unit struggling through change processes, a reality that made the SCP increasingly essential. The former Director of Institutional Effectiveness (personal communication, February 12, 2024) stated that if a school wanted to implement a change, there was little to no coordination, and as a result, the school did not go through the appropriate channels. Additionally, there was a general lack of knowledge among the academic units of the complex and detailed internal and external requirements for change implementation. The Director of Institutional Effectiveness used several strategies to develop the policy. They served as a reviewer for SCU's institutional accreditor for other institutions completing self-studies. Through this role, they understood how other institutions developed and implemented change policies to demonstrate compliance with the SCP standard. The primary advantage of this strategy was that they would know whether the institutional accreditation review team found the institution in compliance, allowing the Director of Institutional Effectiveness to draw from the strongest policies. As the Director of Institutional Effectiveness began to develop the policy, they included a variety of institutional stakeholders so that the SCP integrated all units involved in changes. Initially, a small group created the policy, and to the best of the Director of Institutional Effectiveness' memory, the initial team included the Registrar and representatives from the academic units. The Director of Institutional Effectiveness served as the Provost's representative, as the Provost has the authority to approve or deny a change—no academic or support unit on the SCP has that authority. This power

structure emphasizes the coordinating rather than authoritative function of the SCP. After the taskforce described above created the SCP, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness contacted any institutional stakeholder who might be affected by the SCP to request feedback on the policy. The Director of Institutional Effectiveness recalls that the original SCP team membership totaled 20 people. Currently, 42 members are listed on the SCP team roster.

Initial Processes Designed to Support the SCP

Since the SCP was finalized in August 2015, the processes, resources, and technology supporting the SCP have become increasingly sophisticated. Prior to Curriculog, which is the online tool academic units use to submit changes and receive feedback, the SCP process was paper-driven, eventually transitioning to an electronic form. The latter was beneficial because stakeholders across the institution could review changes that had been submitted and advocate how or whether the change would affect the unit they represent (Director of Institutional Effectiveness, personal communication, February 12, 2024).

The original institutional change form required the completer of the form to identify themselves, the academic and support units (called offices on the form) that would be integrated into the change, the head of the academic unit, and points of contact for the change (SCP, personal communication, February 13, 2024). The completer described the change, included attachments, indicated the year and term of anticipated implementation, and identified the type of change. The types of change were categorized as follows and include one example of each category of change: curricular change (e.g., creation of new degree program); changing the location, delivery, or structure of degree programs (e.g., adding or removing an off-campus site); structural change (e.g., changing name of program title); and changing the scope of the institution (e.g., creating a new center or institute). The original institutional change form also

required the submitter to indicate whether and when they contacted the relevant support units who would be affected by the change. The stakeholders in this section included Academic Advising, Facilities, Student Affairs, University Library, Bursar, Financial Aid, University Registrar, and Information Technology. However, the form did not indicate that there was a mechanism for ensuring the academic unit had actually contacted all of the stakeholders. With the new Curriculog form, which is a live and dynamic document, all units have the opportunity to communicate their recommendations publicly.

The former Director of Institutional Effectiveness (personal communication, February 12, 2024) explained that initially, only some members of the SCP team had to "weigh in on a proposed change." Due to its foothold in the calendar, academic catalog, and degree conferral, the University Registrar, for example, always provided feedback. Financial Aid was required to provide input as well. To request feedback, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness would email the group, state that described change would be "going through," and requested that stakeholders relay questions and concerns (Director of Institutional Effectiveness, personal communication, February 12, 2024). Eventually, the electronic change submission form was replaced with Curriculog, in part, because the Registrar was already using it for changes to academic courses and wanted stakeholders to become more comfortable using it.

The Director of Institutional Effectiveness (personal communication, February 12, 2024) also developed a timeline for submissions, which has been expanded since the new Director of Institutional Effectiveness started their role. The timeline became an essential resource because institutional stakeholders are often unaware of how long it takes to get changes approved. A lack of understanding of timelines was a sentiment echoed throughout the interviews, with academic

representatives from the Schools of Business and Education stating that they have had to educate stakeholders on the amount of time it can take to get changes approved.

The SCP's Current Purpose and How it Works

Purpose

As stated in the above description of how the SCP emerged, the SCP was designed to ensure that institutional stakeholders who desire to implement changes consult the appropriate internal stakeholders to achieve (a) compliance with all external bodies, and (b) coordinate with internal stakeholders to ensure the change can be implemented smoothly and effectively. The SCP does not grant any institutional entity or person authority to make the final decision on an institutional change that an academic unit submits. Members of the academic units approve changes according to their internal policies and processes, and the Provost has the final authority on change approval. The SCP team nor its members have the authority to vote on whether a change can be implemented; a vote should never be a component of an SCP team meeting or a change submitted thorough Curriculog. As such, the SCP team is appropriately called a team rather than a committee because the SCP team is not an authoritative body. Rather, it is a collaborative body in which each member serves as a consultant, specializing in the area of the institution they represent. As consultants, SCP team members recommend strategies for how to implement changes and address challenges that could merge with external regulations or internal process.

How it Works

Because the SCP is designed to manage a variety of institutional changes (e.g., addition of a new program, addition or closure of off-campus instructional site), there are a variety of pathways by which a change can be approved. The pathway a change takes depends on the type

and degree of change, as well as the internal and external entities involved in the review and approval of said change. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss all possible pathways a change can take, but in this section, I discuss the general change path from idea inception within the academic unit to approval by the appropriate entities. In its official, published version, the SCP process is disaggregated into three steps: inception and planning; submission of the change; and external submission, review, and approval.

In the inception and planning stage, stakeholders should review resources published on the SCP webpage that describe the types of changes (e.g., academic changes, organizational changes) and decide which category aligns with the change. Then, the stakeholder must consider the anticipated date of implementation and consult the associated timelines that are also published on the SCP webpage to determine (a) how long it will take to gain internal approval, per the academic unit's and institution's internal policies and processes; (b) how long it will take to achieve external approval; and (c) the order in which it needs to pursue approval from external entities. For example, if an academic unit wants to launch a new certificate program, the SCP team stakeholder should consult the relevant resources published on the webpage. Then, the academic unit should complete a SCP announce form in Curriculog to notify stakeholders that a proposed change may affect them and obtain feedback. The stakeholder should also consult with the Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness.[3]

In the submission of a change phase, the stakeholder should continue to follow the appropriate timeline for the change. This process includes submitting an official SCP proposal form, followed by securing approval from all internal bodies, such as faculty committees and the

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[3] I use the Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness here to indicate the transition from the former Director of Institutional Effectiveness to the current head of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

institutional governing board, per university- and school-level guidelines. Stakeholders should also submit all documents for the State Department for Higher Education and institutional accreditor at the deadlines listed in their timeline. Examples of submission documents required for external approval include the State Department for Higher Education and institutional accreditor's change proposal forms and should be completed in collaboration with Office of Institutional Effectiveness stakeholders.

In the external submission, review, and approval phase, stakeholders work closely with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Provost's Office. The timelines indicate when institutional stakeholders can anticipate feedback from the institutional accreditor and the State Department for Higher Education, but discussions with interview participants indicate that both entities can request feedback on change proposals, and that delays can occur. Additionally, it is important to note that the institutional change process places responsibility for notifying the State's Department of Education and specialized accrediting bodies, as applicable, on the academic units, which are responsible for submitting copies of the documents submitted to these entities to the Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and Provost.

At each stage of the SCP process, academic units, support units, and/or the Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness communicate regularly. In the planning phase, in which the institution submits the SCP announce form, the academic unit communicates with other academic units and Office of Institutional Effectiveness stakeholders, who provide recommendations for change implementation based on previous experience and expectations from external bodies. The academic unit also communicates with the applicable support units, primarily the Registrar, Financial Aid, and Bursar. By the time the academic unit submits the SCP announce form, a significant amount of planning and consultation has already gone into the

change. It is at this point in the institutional change process that the Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness wants to revise the process. Because so much planning and feedback occurs within the SCP announce form, it becomes redundant to then submit an SCP proposal form for a change that stakeholders have thoroughly planned and gained consultation for. At the time of the writing of this dissertation, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness was deciding how to merge the two forms to improve the process. In this way, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, which manages the SCP is also engaging in its own institutional change process by refining the policy and processes that help academic units implement changes.

Comparing the Original and Current SCPs

In the section above, I described the current SCP and how the process may be revised in the future. In this section, I describe the original SCP (effective August 30, 2015), which was developed to demonstrate compliance with the institutional accreditor's substantive change policy for an upcoming self-study. I compare the original and current SCPs based on the following characteristics: scope, purpose, the policy itself, and procedures.

Scope

The language used to describe the scope of the original and current SCPs is identical. The SCP applies to all units at the institution, which includes academic and support units and departments.

Purpose

The original SCP language primarily focuses on external compliance; institutional stakeholders are required to determine if a change would trigger external reporting requirements for the United States Department of Education (USDOE), State Department for Higher Education, and/or the institutional accreditor. The specialized accrediting bodies were included

among the list of external entities, and these groups do not tend to emerge in current SCP team conversations. The current SCP policy states that the schools are responsible for ensuring that they remain in compliance with specialized accreditors' standards and policies. The revised policy focuses on both compliance with external entities and communication with relevant institutional stakeholders who may be affected by changes. The primary entities that SCP is concerned with are the State Department for Higher Education and the institutional accreditor. Overall, the current purpose of the SCP has changed, though the ethos remains the same: the SCP ensures appropriate institutional stakeholders are integrated into the change process to provide feedback on how the implementation of a change may affect the processes, policies, and resources of that unit. In this case, the SCP is not solely focused on ensuring external compliance, but also, allowing internal stakeholders—whether they represent the academic or support units within the institution—to state how they will be affected by a change or need to coordinate to help achieve the proposed change.

Policy

Although they use slightly different formats, both documents describe the types of changes that should be integrated into the SCP. The original policy, for example, looks at whether the change is significant, which reflects the institutional accreditor's language related to the SCP. The revised policy, however, does not mention "significant changes." Changes that trigger the SCP include academic changes that require feedback and involvement from (a) academic and/or support units and/or (b) changes that require approval or notification of an external entity, such as the institutional accreditor, the State Department for Higher Education, or the USDOE. This distinction is important, as the interviews revealed that changes that are not required to be reported externally can sometimes go through the SCP process if, for example, the

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change can have future impact, such as changing the credit hours required for a degree program by only three credits, which does not need to be reported but can have long-term, cumulative effects that may trigger future SCP involvement. Both policies list the types of changes that should go through SCP, but the categories are different. The original categories are described above, but the revised policies focus on academic (e.g., new program) and organizational (e.g., off-campus instructional site) change categories.

Procedures

Compared with the original policy, the revised procedures are far more complex and detailed. Both policies expect a pre-proposal so that the anticipated change is reported in the conceptualization phase. This pre-proposal carried into the revised policy with the SCP announce form in Curriculog, which allows units to report changes their unit is thinking about so that stakeholders are aware—even if that change never manifests. The SCP announce form also facilitates collaboration among effected stakeholders so that coordination and planning can occur early in the change process. For both policies, early announcements allowed the proposing unit to be informed of internal and external requirements their change would trigger. Both policies require internal review and necessitate the integration of internal stakeholders, but the revised policy has a far more detailed internal review section, focusing on the timelines that the proposed change would trigger. The final proposal is reviewed and approved by the Provost. Both policies focus on reporting to the State Department for Higher Education, institutional accreditor, and State Department of Education, and discipline-specific accrediting agencies, but the schools are responsible for submissions to the State Department of Education and specialized accrediting bodies and forward copies to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the Office of the Provost. The revised policy includes a crosswalk that indicates which entities (i.e., Board of

Trustees, the State Department for Higher Education, institutional accreditor, and/or the State

Department of Education are required to approve certain types of changes). In terms of

procedures, the primary difference between the original and most recent iterations of the SCP is

that the current iteration offers far more resources to SCP team members.

The characteristics of the SCP and SCP team I discussed in this chapter lay the

foundation for my analysis in Chapter 5. I address how SCU stakeholders adapted to mandates

from the external environment via the SCP, which shaped who they worked together and

integrated internal and external policies to implement changes.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

This chapter is organized by research question. The first research question focuses on how the academic and support units work together to implement changes at Substantive Change University (SCU). The second research question focuses on how the academic and support units integrate internal and external policies to implement changes. The third research question focuses on the experiences of and knowledge gained by the participants representing the substantive change policy (SCP) team's academic units (AUs) and support units (SUs). I answer each research question from the perspective of the AUs and SUs to discern how they approached collaboration, policy integration, and their personal experiences, but the degree to which I focus on the perspectives of AUs and SUs depended on how the data emerged. For some research questions, the AUs and SUs had their own themes, but for other research questions, the AUs and SUs each had a subtheme within the themes. Additionally, the number of AU participants (7) exceeded the number of SU participants (4), which skewed the analysis to the AUs in some cases.

Overall, I found that collaboration between the AUs and SUs, which emerged as three partnership types (AU-AU, SU-SU, and AU-SU) was essential for the SCP to be a successful process. To make these partnerships work and to catalyze the change processes, AU and SU group members used a variety of policy instruments, some of which were unique to the units and some of which were mutual. To integrate internal and external policies, the AUs and SUs followed the prescribed paths laid out for them, which included the academic governance

policies for each academic unit, the SCP, and the internal and external policies and processes the governed how the SUs were able to do their work. When it came time to send a change to an external unit such as the State Department for Higher Education or the institutional accreditor, the AUs, in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, adhered to each external entities' guidelines to submit the proposed change for review. Experiences participants gained through collaboration and policy integration were varied. Some participants were completely new to institutional change processes when they joined the SCP team, and others were seasoned. Still, AU and SU participants expanded their knowledge of processes due to participation on the SCP team. Some learned more by way of their introduction to the SCP team, and others, who were already familiar with change, learned more via their continued engagement in an ever-changing policy environment in which there was always something new to learn. Before describing the findings above in detail, I begin with a section on how participants defined the SCP, described its purpose, and defined their roles on the SCP team and within the change process. Although this section is not tied to a specific research question, I asked these questions in the first interview to ground the discussions. During my data analysis, I realized these foundational questions informed participants perspectives on collaboration and policy integration. I concluded that it was important to include a summary as a preamble to the findings.

The SCP From the Participants' Perspective: Definition, Purpose, and Stakeholder Roles

In the first round of interviews, I asked participants to define the SCP, describe SCP team meetings, and define their role in the SCP process and on the SCP team. While these questions were not connected to specific research questions, they established the context for the interviews. As I began the analysis, I returned to participants' definitions of the SCP and their descriptions of their roles in change processes. AU and SU participants' role definitions and definitions of the

SCP formed the foundation for the themes that emerged in the research questions. Therefore, to ground the analysis for the three research questions defined above, I summarize the participants' understanding of the SCP and their roles in it. When necessary, I refer to these findings as I unpack various themes and subthemes associated with the three research questions.

Participants' Purpose and Definition of the SCP

Participants defined the SCP as a form of university oversight to ensure SCU subsystems maintained compliance with external entities. They also considered the SCP a coordinating entity that included the SCP team, which was the group of stakeholders who helped to coordinate changes. These purposes of compliance and coordination helped decrease institutional liability with external entities, ensure students enrolled in quality programs, made institutional stakeholders aware of changes, and increased accountability. The Associate Dean of Curriculum and Student Affairs (School of Education) defined the SCP as "a process that [ensures] all of the offices at the institution who need to play a role in a change happening know about it, provide feedback on it, and then react to that change." It is important to mention AU participants emphasized the following: the SCP is not an official committee. Therefore, it is not an authorizing policy and does not have an authorizing group associated with it that votes on whether a change should happen. The SCP is a coordinating policy with an associated, collaborative group (i.e., the SCP team) designed to "break people out of silos," as the Director of Financial Aid put it, ensuring collaboration for change implementation.

Participants' Description of Their Roles

Participants representing academic and support units described their roles within the SCP process and SCP team differently. Their perspectives are important because the SCP itself does not clearly define the role of AUs and SUs in the process. The SCP does indicate that the focus

of the policy is on AUs, which submit changes and send the necessary documentation to specialized accrediting agencies, as applicable. However, specific duties of the AUs and SUs are excluded. AU participants stated that they submit changes to the academic programs, educate the faculty within their unit about change and change processes, review changes submitted by other AU stakeholders, and provide feedback on those changes. Regarding their relationships with SU stakeholders, AU participants stated that they are the clients of the SCP team. They consult the SCP team to gain tools, strategies, resources, and connections necessary for change implementation. The Assistant Dean of Innovation (Law School) described their role in this manner:

> as a client [of the SCP], I expect accurate information, timely responses. I expect a collaboration. ...I expect them to be able to explain to me, "Okay, this is what the standard says, and this is how we're going to meet it and provide support."

In contrast, SU participants stated their role was to support AUs, helping them to implement changes and making AU stakeholders aware of the policies and processes a particular change triggered. To describe themselves, they used adjectives such as advisors, consultants, and "policy police." The Director of Financial Aid stated the following of their role:

> I think my role is more advisory in the sense of, as these changes, desires, dreams start flowing into [the SCP], I provide a report of what the impact is on my areas of responsibility, which is financial aid, whether that be federal, state, or institutional type aid, and how is that going to impact [my area]?

The SCP Chair and Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness, who had a slightly different role compared with the other SUs, stated that they are the "bridge between developing and implementing."

While AU and SU members of the SCP team have contrasting, self-defined roles, both types of policy actors had gatekeeping roles within the SCP process, meaning that they controlled access to resources, knowledge, or people. AU members functioned as gatekeepers between the faculty they represented and the SCP process. As I discuss in the third theme for the first research question, "AU Strategies: Boundary Checking While Engaging in Collaborative Partnerships," one AU stakeholder actively served as a boundary between the faculty they represented and the SCP, determining what information was shared between the two groups. SU policy actors functioned as gatekeepers of the internal and external policies they oversaw, which could restrict the changes AUs make. SU policy actors never mentioned withholding information from AUs, but they did provide examples of actively enforcing external policies, which I discuss below. These descriptions of participants' roles and their definitions of the SCP reemerge in my discussion of the findings.

Research Question 1: How the AUs and SUs Work Together to Implement Changes

The first research question focused on how the subsystems represented in the SCP work together to implement changes at a midsize, public, research institution in the eastern United States. In alignment with an embedded case study design, I examine the AUs and SUs separately to understand how each type of unit works with the other units. Three themes emerged that answer this research question. The first theme is "Subsystem Involvement: Developing Collaborative Partnerships," which focuses on three types of partnerships that existed between AUs and SUs that were used to facilitate change implementation. These partnerships, each of which is a subtheme, are AU-AU, SU-SU, and AU-SU. The second theme is "Relying on Policy Instruments: Tools for Collaborative Change Implementation," which focuses on the distinct and mutual policy instruments AUs and SUs used to fuel change processes. The third theme is "AU

Strategies: Boundary Checking While Engaging in Collaborative Partnerships," which focuses

on how AUs engaged in boundary checking to assert the distinction between AUs and SUs in the

SCP team and process and their ultimate authority over academic programming.

Subsystem Involvement: Developing Collaborative Partnerships

The ethos of the SCP is to create a space where SUs and AUs can establish partnerships

that allows them to facilitate a smooth and timely implementation of changes while adhering to

internal and external timelines and policies. Consequently, the SCP facilitated the development

of three types of partnerships: AU-AU, SU-SU, and AU-SU. Some, such as the SCP team (AU-

SU), were mentioned in the SCP, but most were not. The other partnerships were the organic

outcomes of the SCP, which was designed to provide a space where AUs and SUs could

coordinate. The first theme, "Subsystem Involvement: Developing Collaborative Partnerships,"

unpacks these three partnerships. I define this theme as follows: AUs and SUs created three types

of partnerships to help them facilitate change implementation: (a) partnerships existed between at

least two AUs (AU-AU), (b) between two or more SUs (SU-SU), and (c) between at least one

AU and one SU (AU-SU). In some cases, the partnerships between two or more AUs and two or

more SUs can occur within the same department. For example, a multi-SU partnership in the

same unit occurred in the Financial Aid and Registrar Offices' specialized leadership teams,

whose members collaborated to make changes based on their specialized roles. These leadership

teams function as "Mini SCPs," to borrow a phrase from the Director of Financial Aid. In the

sections that follow, I address the partnerships as individual subthemes. The discussion will

convey that both AUs and SUs relied on stable, collaborative partnerships as they navigated

institutional change, but the partnerships were formed for different purposes and had different

dynamics. AU-SU and SU-SU partnerships were often based on problem solving and strategy

development. These are the partnerships in which work was done and members walked away with action items for change implementation. AU-AU partnerships between two different units were for idea sharing and mutual support.

Not all partnerships were necessarily created equal, in that some partnerships clearly had more power than others. This power might be demonstrated by an AU, such as the Business School, that had more change experience than other AUs, and therefore, was called upon for advice. Or, this power might be demonstrated in the SCP team, which had more power than any other partnership group due to its official definition in the policy, authority to coordinate changes, and number of stakeholders represented on the team.

AU-AU. Two types of AU-AU partnerships emerged. The first AU-AU partnership existed between two different AUs. The second AU partnership existed between two or more AU stakeholders who were members of the same AU.

AU-AU partnerships existed between members of two different AUs. These partnerships did not emerge because the AUs needed to collaborate on a change. Rather, these partnerships were used for idea exchanges and mutual support. It is important to mention that these AU-AU partnerships only existed, as far as I was able to discern, between *two different* AUs within the context of the SCP. The were no AU partnerships that include three or more *different* AUs. The Assistant Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs (School of Education) did mention a regular meeting that included the deans of the five academic units, but the meeting focused on navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. While this meeting represents a multi AU-AU partnership, I excluded this example from the analysis because it was not related to the SCP specifically, and the participant confirmed the purpose of this multi-AU partnership was not connected to the SCP.

AU-AU partnerships between two different schools often existed between the Business School and one of the other academic units, suggesting that the Business School's extensive experience in change implementation gave them more social capital compared with other AUs represented on the SCP team. Other AUs consulted the Business School when they wanted to implement changes because the Business School was known to be the most innovative school, and therefore, could provide more recommendations for how to navigate the SCP process and implement complex changes. For example, the Business School and the School of Education used an online program management company for some of their online degree programs. Because the Business School was the trailblazer in this area, the School of Education SCP representatives sought the Business Schools' expertise. While the Associate Dean of Innovation (Business School) acknowledged that the other AUs contacted them because their unit was a trailblazer, they predict that the dynamic will change as SCP develops a stronger culture for institutional change and more AU representatives become institutional change experts, which would decrease the frequency at with they contacted the Business School. The Assistant Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs (School of Education), which was arguably the second most innovative school, stated,

> I use the Business School Assistant Dean or Associate Dean as a sounding board to say like, we've got some questions about if this would work, how this could work. Sometimes those conversations happen outside of the SCP team meetings. Just as kind of fact finding, or you know, information gathering.

In fact, it was fairly common and expected that "fact finding" meetings did occur offline, outside of SCP team meetings. If an SCP team meeting highlighted the need for two AUs to have a private conversation because it was too specific to address with the larger SCP, they established

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the sort of meeting described above. AU participants who sought out the Business School described their interactions with the Business School positively. Additionally, the Business School was very agreeable; they were more than happy to assist other AUs.

AU-AU partnerships also existed between members of the same academic unit. Unlike the heterogenous AU-AU partnerships, which existed for idea exchanges and mutual support, internal AU-AU partnerships were more specialized partnerships that focused on the nitty-gritty aspects of developing, approving, and implementing changes. The clearest example of an internal AU-AU partnership emerged from the School of Education, which had three stakeholders who worked together to navigate changes: the Assistant Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs, the Associate Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs, and the Associate Dean for Accreditation and Compliance. Two of these stakeholders, the Assistant and Associate Deans of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs attended the SCP team meetings with the dean overseeing accreditation and assessment attending occasionally. When describing this three-pronged team, the Assistant Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs (School of Education) focused on the specialized role of each stakeholder. The Senior Academic Dean, for example, specialized in SCP processes, and partnered with faculty members to navigate changes to the academic programs. The Associate Dean for Accreditation and Compliance focused on specialized accreditation and worked with faculty members to complete those reports. The Assistant Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs explained,

> I meet with both of them regularly. And can kind of monitor where things were and when we need to collaborate. I have great respect for both deans. They are experts in their areas. They know more about the areas that they oversee than I do.

While the Business School also mentioned internal AU-AU partnerships that assisted with SCP-related changes, the School of Education's partnership stood out because of quotes like the one above, which highlighted not only clear role specialization but admiration for colleagues' expertise and strong collegiality. Other academic units did not describe their AU-AU partnerships in great detail, but that does not mean they did not have similar working relationships.

SU-SU. Like AUs, SUs established exclusive, homogenous partnerships. The SU-SU subtheme represents a partnership between two or more SUs designed to help SUs aid AUs with change implementation. There can be two types of SU-SU partnerships: (a) formalized SU-SU partnerships and (b) internal, homogenous SU-SU partnerships. The formalized SU-SU partnerships partnership existed between two or more different SUs. The second type of SU-SU partnership occurs between stakeholders within one SU and is used to assist that specific SU with change implementation.

The first and only type of formalized SU-SU partnership that existed between two or more different SUs was called the "trifecta," which is the collaboration between Financial Aid, Registrar, and Bursar, was an informal partnership that is not documented in any official SCU policies. The members of the trifecta "look out for each other," as the Director of Financial Aid phrased it, and alerted each other when something significant to each other's offices is coming down the pike. The Director of Financial Aid described this partnership:

> We don't have a formal meeting structure of any kind. But we look out for each other
> and have it informal and loose: let's get together and talk about what this school's trying
> to do or what [change] they've offered up and see how that works.

It is important to mention the trifecta is the only three-unit, SU-SU partnership discussed in this study and reflects two trends: (a) the number and type of SUs represented in this study, and (b) the critical role these three units play in change implementation, which is why the SCP Chair recommended I speak with them over a unit such as Information Technology. First, I interviewed three participants in Financial Aid, Registrar, and Office of Institutional Effectiveness, because I was unable to secure interviews with the Bursar and Institutional Research. This number limits the number of partnerships that emerged through participants' descriptions. Of these units, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness was the only unit excluded from this formalized SU. As the Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness stated, their office has a different role in the SCP process compared with members of the trifecta. They are the "bridge between developing and implementing" and were less involved with the nitty-gritty aspects of change implementation that the trifecta oversees. The SCP team Chair exists to coordinate the entire SCP process and consult with AUs on the timeline and requirements AUs must fulfill to receive approval from the State Department for Higher Education and SCU's institutional accreditor. As the Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness stated, they do not know and do not need to know what is specifically going on in the other units. That level of detail extends beyond their role:

> The things that I can't speak to about…are what happens in other units and what their considerations are. I don't know what the University Registrar pays attention to it entirely. I don't know what federal Financial Aid or the Bursar is looking for. ...And that's why we have the team. And that's the importance of it, right? And I think when you've got good people, you've got good people making the decisions, you're going to be in a good place.

For the reasons the Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness described, the trifecta becomes an essential SU-SU partnership. The trifecta is responsible to ensure that changes are embedded into actual institutional systems and processes.

After the trifecta meets and SUs wrap up AU-SU meetings that are discussed in the next section, the individual SUs still needed to complete the tasks their offices oversees so that the changes could be implemented. To do so, individual SU stakeholders, who have specialized jobs, emerged to take control of the tasks related to their roles. Financial Aid and the Registrar described how the structure of their departments helped them work with each other, and consequently, with AUs to implement changes.

For the Registrar to partner effectively with the SCP team and its associated stakeholders, it must function as a cohesive, yet specialized unit. Cohesion and specialization are achieved via three roles within Registrar that create an internal SU-SU-SU partnership: the Registrar, Assistant Director of the Registrar, and Associate Director of the Registrar. The Registrar described the way they work together as a "three-legged stool":

> It takes all three legs for stability, and that's very much how those roles function with regard to academic or institutional change and with regard to all of the work of the University Registrar's office, but specifically for institutional change.

The roles of each member (as they relate to institutional change) are as follows:

1. Registrar: The Registrar is a member of Provost's staff, has direct relationships with each of the AUs, and has a strong relationship with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness because the Registrar is the direct report for the SCP Chair.

2. Assistant Director of the Registrar: The Assistant Director of the Registrar manages registration and records, system implementation, and academic calendar

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implementation. They also partner with other SUs. For example, the Assistant

Director of the Registrar might manage a change such as the implementation of a new

program with a non-standard academic calendar.

3. Associate Director of the Registrar: The Associate Director of the Registrar oversees

curriculum management (e.g., Curriculog), guides transfer credit and degree

processes, partners with the AUs, and oversees the archival, management, and award

of degree programs within systems.

Each member of the three-legged stool did not attend every SCP Meeting, but the stakeholder

who attended supported the other members by updating them on critical discussions and findings

as they related to the Registrar's Office. The SCP Meeting attendee will "distill" the SCP

agenda, the group will mull over the action items together, and the group will determine who in

the University Registrar needs to respond. The Registrar explained that meeting and discussing

"takes time, but it vastly expands the capability to serve the complexity of our audiences." After

meeting together, the Registrar team collaborated to create a set of bullet points to bring back to

the SCP team and/or arranged for a smaller group of individuals to meet. These smaller meetings

were often intense, collaborative meetings requiring whiteboards or projector screens and were

designed for change implementation and problem solving.

Financial Aid has a Financial Aid Leadership Team, which the Director of Financial Aid

called a "Mini SCP." This Mini SCP meets to collaborate on change implementation and

includes the Director of Aid, Associate Director of Aid, and Director of Operations. The team

meets every other week to discuss changes. They consider how a change will impact the system

and how they should advise students. The Director of Financial Aid described the Financial Aid

Leadership Team:

We have sort of a leadership team in the office that meets periodically every other week.
So, anything we need to change, we kind of run through them. How is this going to
work? It's almost a Mini SCP now I'm thinking about it…Anytime we need to
implement a change, [we ask], how is that going to impact the system? How do we advise
students? You know, call that office about how this is going to work. That sort of acts as
a Mini SCP for our policies.

Clear SU structure, role specialization, and strong collaboration within the SUs is essential for
SUs to achieve successful change implementation. As demonstrated through the Registrar's
example of the three-legged stool and role specialization, which designated elements of a change
to different stakeholders, lays an important foundation for the partnerships between AUs and
SUs, which I discuss next.

AU-SU. The AU-SU partnership, which is a partnership in which one or more AUs and
SUs collaborate to work through changes, is the only partnership type mentioned in the SCP.
Examples include the SCP team, which is mentioned in the SCP, and includes 42 stakeholders
representing academic and support units across the institution. "Continuing Conversations:
Business School" is another example, but it is not mentioned in the SCP. Continuing
conversations is an informal, reoccurring meeting that includes the Business School and SUs.
AU-SU partnerships did not need to be established ones, such as the two described above, but
they could also be ad hoc with an AU or SU reaching out as needed.

The SCP team is the archetypal example of a partnership between multiple AUs and SUs,
and it is the largest and only AU-SU collaboration specifically defined in the SCP. The SCP
team includes 42 members total, with 10 AU representatives and SU 32 representatives. The SCP
was the most powerful partnership in the study, as the policy coordinated the entities responsible

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for change implementation and provided SUs with the authority to advise AUs. While the SCP team meetings, according to participants, primarily focused on updates from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and updates from the AUs, the SCP team meetings provided the foundational collaborative space where AUs and SUs discussed the highlights of upcoming and pending changes, and determined if there are components of a change they still needed to address. The brief conversations that occurred in the SCP team meetings were the catalyst for the AU-AU and SU-SU collaborations that occurred offline.

The Associate Dean of Undergraduate Academic Programs (Arts & Sciences) described how the SCP and SCP team provided a collaborative space where AUs and SUs could communicate, and SUs gained the ability to provide feedback on changes, which they might not be able to do without the SCP:

It's just something that never really happened before. And I think that it's really good for folks like Admissions and the [Center for International Studies] and Finance: to understand what we're [Arts & Sciences] doing and what we're thinking about so that that way we don't walk in and say, "Hey here's this change that we just approved, now implement it." But that they can at least say if you tweak this part, implementation will be quite smooth if you don't then it's just [going to] be really rough on the student.

The AU-SU partnership also translated to the Business School and its relationship with the trifecta, which functions as a Mini SCP team just for the Business School to troubleshoot changes.

Continued Discussions: Business School is a formal meeting with the Business School and the trifecta. The partnership developed because the Business School was implementing changes so regularly that a formal, regular collaboration became practical. This AU-SU

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partnership is not mentioned in the SCP, but is the only formal, regularly occurring partnership between an AU and the trifecta. The Director of Financial Aid said of these meetings:

> The Business School does a great job of reaching out to us as they're developing programs to talk about impacts because they're trying to do something a little more entrepreneurial and out-of-the-box. We seek to make sure that what they're doing is flexible enough, yet staying within the boxes that they need to stay. We actually have a group on campus that meets every couple months just for Business School issues: Business, Registrar, Bursar, and Financial Aid. That grew out of the need to be aware of what was going on over there [at the Business School]. And it's been it's been a fruitful group. It's sort of like a Mini SCP to do a thing you can't do with all the people on an [SCP team] meeting. So, it's very much an advisory thing for them.

It is clear from Continuing Conversations, and the other AU-AU, SU-SU, and AU-SU partnerships that it was not just the existence of partnerships that helped the academic and support units to work together to implement changes, but also the policy instruments they used to foster positive partnerships and solve problems. In the following section, I describe the policy instruments that AUs and SUs relied on to work together.

Relying on Policy Instruments: Tools for Collaborative Change Implementation

Candel and Biesbrok (2016, 2018) define policy instruments as tools that are used to aid the process of policy integration and the collaboration between the subsystems during policy integration. Both AUs and SUs used a variety of policy instruments to help them work within the three types of collaborative partnerships described above. Some instruments were unique to AUs, some were unique to SUs, and other instruments were mutual, meaning that both AUs and SUs used them. In this section, I cover the following subthemes: (a) unique policy instruments AUs

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used for collaboration, (b) unique policy instruments SUs used for collaboration, and 3) mutual policy instruments. Unique policy instruments for AUs and SUs existed because each group used different instruments to navigate the partnership types described in the previous section. Other policy instruments, such as Curriculog, were shared because they were embedded into the SCP process or were shared because they were based in AU-SU interactions. The different instruments AUs and SUs used reflected their roles in the SCP process and on the SCP team. Due to their oversight of the academic curriculum and their authority to change it, AUs sought other AUs for advice about changes to academic programs that only an AU could provide. Similarly, they sought to advocate for AUs based on their unique experience on the SCP team. SUs' policy instruments also reflected their roles in change processes, which was to ensure compliance with the policies they oversaw.

Unique Policy Instruments AUs Used for Collaboration. The unique policy instruments AUs used for collaboration were connected to the exclusive AU-AU partnerships. Examples of the exclusive policy instruments included asking another AU for advice and supporting another AU's change proposal. Therefore, these policy instrument examples focused on how AU stakeholders chose to interact with each other when they were the ones submitting a change or when they wanted to support another AU stakeholder going through change processes. These examples indicated that AU-AU partnerships work in two directions. An AU was likely to accept help (input) from another, more experienced AU, but AUs were also likely to advocate for another AUs change (output) to reduce resistance from an SCP team member. Here, AU policy instruments were connected to their role in the SCP process: they sought AUs for advice only AUs could provide, and they advocated for other AUs in a way an SU most likely could not.

The AU-AU collaborative partnerships allowed AUs to reach out to each other for advice on how to go about certain changes. As I stated in the AU-AU partnership discussion, AUs were most likely to consult the Business School, and consequently, they were more likely to ask the Business School for advice about a specific type of change the Business School had already worked through, such as online programming achieved in partnership with an online program management (OPM) company. The Assistant Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs (School of Education) consulted the Business School about this type of change:

> In my situation, we have a robust online counseling program with our OPM, who's a third-party vendor. The Business School has several programs with this OPM, and they have had those programs for longer. So, a couple of years ago when we were considering adding another program through the OPM, there was a lot of advice and kind of asking the Business School. How did you grow your programs? How do you interact with this vendor? What kind of pros and cons do you see?

In addition to asking other AUs for advice, AUs also advocated for another AU's changes to reduce resistance from an SU and demonstrate that a similar type of change had been successful in the past.

While the example of one AU supporting another AU's change occurred only once, it is important to mention this example because it relates to a subsequent theme, AU Strategies: Boundary Checking While Engaging in Collaborative Partnerships, that explores the boundary protecting AUs practiced with other SUs and the SCP team. In this example, Arts & Sciences supported a change going through the Business School with the hope that their support would produce less resistance from the SUs that would help implement the change. This strategy was used to facilitate a more positive AU-SU interaction between the Business School and Financial

Aid and Student Accounts. The Associate Dean of Undergraduate Academic Programs (Arts & Sciences), who expressed support, remarked,

> I currently am encouraging and supporting the Business School and the changes that they're trying to make. ...So, they put [it] in their [Curriculog] announce form. I am responding in ways that are like, I really think this is a great idea from an Arts & Sciences perspective. We fully support. You know, that kind of thing. And then, when we get to the SCP Meeting, and [the Business School] brings that up, I can guarantee you, you know, Financial Aid and Student Accounts is going to say, "But this makes it harder."

This AU-AU strategy emerged again in the discussion on the boundary checking strategies AUs relied on to protect the authority of the AUs over academic programming, which I discuss later.

Unique Policy Instruments SUs Used for Collaboration. Like AUs, SUs relied on unique policy instruments to facilitate their partnerships with other AUs and SUs. These instruments reflected SU stakeholders' roles in the SCP team and SCP Process, which is to inform AUs of the impact changes will have on federal, state, or institutional policy compliance, and to raise awareness of potential effects of a change.

Both Financial Aid and the Registrar self-described themselves as "policy police." They used this description to convey a dynamic of their relationship that emerged when they oversee internal and/or external policies to which AUs must adhere. At times, as the Registrar explained, they must tell an AU that a change simply is not possible. For example, at SCU, there are multiple academic calendars operating for different credentials, but all program start dates must align with university-wide registration and financial aid disbursements. The Registrar explained the latter is a rigid policy:

When it comes to the calendar, for example, if a new certificate is going to use an ABAB calendar [alternating calendar] like a six short sessions per year. I was pretty autocratic about that. I said, you have to use this calendar because the only way we can efficiently provide registration support is if the start dates are the same. The six start dates are the same. So, we have an AB calendar that goes out to 2030 that we have created, and we require them to use it. So, that's an example of autonomy bordering on autocracy. But it keeps the trains running.

Although SUs could not accommodate every aspect of a change an AU wanted to implement, they did provide alternatives and other strategies when possible, such as an AB calendar to indicate when any program at the institution must start regardless of its length. This structure provided the parameters within which the AU could implement changes.

Mutual Policy Instruments. Of course, there were also mutual policy instruments, meaning AUs and SUs used the same instruments. I define mutual policy instruments as policy instruments that both AUs and SUs used to work together to implement changes. These instruments overlapped with the AU-SU partnerships and could be used to facilitate these relationships. Interestingly, some of the AU-SU partnerships reemerged as policy instruments for their roles as entities facilitating communication, idea sharing, and networking. These partnerships were developed to be collaborative tools.

In the previous theme, Subsystem Involvement: Developing Collaborative Partnerships, I categorized the SCP team as an AU-SU partnership. It is certainly an example of an AU-SU partnership, but it also emerged as a policy instrument because it is, fundamentally, a networking tool. It is a primary medium used to share changes, report updates, and determine if offline discussions are needed. Since the SCP team was established, SCP stakeholders have come to

view it as a critical space that facilitates the sharing of information, and it was created as a tool for information sharing because one did not exist previously.

Nitty-gritty meetings (meetings covering minute details) are another example of a partnership that also functions as a policy instrument. These meetings often emerged after conversations in the larger SCP team or within Curriculog indicated that a more detailed, off-line discussion was necessary. The Registrar described nitty-gritty meetings:

> I mean meetings, and not just meetings to talk, but meetings where somebody's projecting on the screen and we're looking at the Banner forms and we're really getting into the nitty-gritty. So not just talking about it but figuring it out. Doing some testing in a non-production environment in Banner. There's been a lot of that, really deep diving. It is so helpful when everybody's in the room together instead of one person talking to one person then to another person and then having to back up to the other. It's really helpful to have everybody together.

Nitty-gritty meetings gave AUs and SUs confidence that a change they were working through could implemented effectively and that all stakeholders involved in the change were aware of what was happening, rather than having information shared only among a few stakeholders involved.

Curriculog is the content management system that facilitates the SCP process. AUs thinking about a change submitted an announce form or official proposal, and these documents were shuffled through the prescribed SCP process. In addition to its administrative function in the SCP process, Curriculog served as a mutual policy instrument because it allowed AUs and SUs to leave feedback on changes. To initiate feedback, the SCP team Chair sent an email to the SCP team when there were new proposals to review. AU and SU representatives commented on

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the changes as needed, but not everyone commented on each change. It was very common for an AU or SU to state that they did not have feedback. In other cases, an AU or SU left a detailed comment. For example, one change that was addressed several times in participant interviews was a Business School change to begin admitting undergraduate students to the Business School (for business-related majors housed in the Business School). For this Curriculog change proposal form, SCP stakeholders responded with a variety of comments, to include questions about the effect the change would have on undergraduate academic advising and the general education curriculum. The Associate Dean of Undergraduate Academic Programs (Arts & Sciences) stated they would like to have a conversation about how the change would affect advising and registration for undergraduate students, which is housed in Arts & Sciences, not the Business School.

Compared, the SCP team and Curriculog had similar functions as policy instruments in the SCP process. Both tools facilitated collaboration and idea generation, but both were designed to generate ideas, highlight concerns, and highlight the need for off-line conversations and meetings between appropriate stakeholders, such as the nitty-gritty meetings described above. The SCP team and Curriculog were never the spaces in which details are hashed out "in front of God and everyone," the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Academic Programs (Arts & Sciences) facetiously stated. These tools were used to plant seeds that were nurtured in other spaces.

AU Strategies: Boundary Checking While Engaging in Collaborative Partnerships

In the subtheme on policy instruments that are specific to AUs, I hinted that AUs engaged in boundary checking as they interacted with the SCP team and followed the SCP process. I define this theme of boundary checking, which I call AU Strategies: Boundary Checking While

Engaging in Collaborative Partnerships, as the strategies AUs used to ensure they maintained clear authority over the curriculum, which included some AUs' assertation of a clear distinction between the roles of AUs and SUs in the SCP Team and process. Boundary checking was achieved due to AU SCP team members' power as representatives of the faulty bodies within their units and their inherent role as overseers of academic program development.

To establish context, I must reference the preamble of this chapter in which I described AU and SU participants' description of their roles in their own words. Their perspectives provide a foundational understanding for this theme. Within the SCP, AUs are clearly identified as the proposers of change and consider themselves as such. AUs, under the guidance of the faculty, submit curricular changes, which SUs help them implement. SUs and the SCP team have no decision-making authority over academic changes, but at times, AUs sensed that the collaborative, information-sharing characteristics of the SCP process gave SUs a freedom to contribute their voice to change processes when at most, they would not have had a voice before, and at minimum, their voices were stifled. To protect their authority over the changes related to SCU's academic programs, some AUs asserted a clear designation of the roles of AUs and SUs within the SCP process and SCP team.

The SCP and the associated SCP team are not an authorizing policy and team. Rather, the SCP and SCP team exist to coordinate academic and support units to implement change. As the Associate Dean of Innovation (Business School) stated, the SCP is "not an authorizing committee" or an "authorizing policy," but rather, a "coordinating body and coordinating policy." This emphasis on coordination rather than authorization highlights the boundaries of the policy and the limits the policy places on associated stakeholders, therefore addressing some AU

concerns that an SU could prohibit an AU from making a change or that the SCP team weighs in on curricular changes before the academic unit.

The Associate Dean of Undergraduate Academic Programs (Arts & Sciences) hinted that faculty in their unit expressed concern that the SCP threatened faculty authority over the curriculum. They had to explain to their faculty that the SCP and its team are not authoritative entities.

> The way that I try to diagram it out for them [the faculty] is to point out that full authority rests within the Arts & Sciences Dean's Office. And the purpose of the SCP process is so that other people don't mess up interpreting or delivering what we intend to do. It's meant to make sure that when we implement the changes that we have approved, everybody else is on board and is doing it correctly.

Their emphasis on whether the AU is "doing it correctly," meaning that the AU implemented the change in a manner that yielded the desired outcome, indicates that the AU sought to implement the change by receiving the appropriate degree of input from SUs, but not more—the AU the minimum required engagement, which is also demonstrated in the subsequent theme that was also generated from the same AU.

"Do we need to report that?" focuses on protecting the AU, its associated faculty, and its jurisdiction over the curriculum from too much input from an SU to which the AU does not report. While this subtheme only emerged in Arts & Sciences, interactions between an Arts & Sciences SCP team member and the SCP team Chair demonstrate the tension between AUs and the perceived, emergent authority of SUs in the SCP process.

The Arts & Sciences stakeholder recounted that the SCP team Chair wanted them to report changes to the SCP team that they did not think were necessary to report because the

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changes were not substantive. Because the changes were not substantive, they did not need to be reported to an external entity such as the State Department for Higher Education or institutional accrediting body. An example of a minor change included changing a major/degree program by three credit hours. The SCP team Chair preferred that these changes go through the SCP process because in time, they might accumulate into changes requiring external reporting but go overlooked because the changes were not reported through the SCP process and recorded in Curriculog. The Arts & Sciences stakeholder's resistance to this reporting emphasized the importance of establishing boundaries between the AUs and SUs. For example, they did not present changes to the SCP team if they knew they did not need to go to SCP. Such changes included minute adjustments to the curriculum, and changes that are below the threshold set by the institutional accreditor. Sometimes, the Chair of the SCP suggested that the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Academic Programs (Arts & Sciences) submit a change to SCP, but they did not because they knew the changes did not require SCP input:

> So, I don't send everything that I think the SCP team Chair would want me to send. I just send what I think other people need to know…like I don't think people need to know that we added a concentration to a major. That's in the weeds.

This example demonstrates some tension between the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, which represents the SCP and SCP team, and Arts & Sciences: the nature of the SCP implies that most changes—not just ones requiring external approval—should advance through the SCP process because, as the SCP Chair stated, small changes accumulate into significant ones that must be reported out. The ultimate question is whether the SCP and SCP team's role threaten faculty authority over the curriculum or are a byproduct of a higher education environment that is based in non-negotiable regulations, which the SU's represent.

Protecting boundaries not only included distinguishing the roles of AUs and SUs in higher education, but it also included the boundaries between AUs. In this case, the boundaries reflected the unique academic offerings of each AU: AUs wanted to ensure that their academic programming was distinct to their unit and did not overlap with the other schools. Once again, this theme was a significant point of discussion for the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Academic Programs (Arts & Sciences). As the largest academic unit in terms of both the number of academic programs and faculty headcount, Arts & Sciences was more likely to have academic programming that overlapped with the other AUs. Among the AU participants, there seemed to be an understanding that one school should not recommend new programs that already existed in Arts & Sciences or vice versa, such as the Business School offering a concentration in economics, which was already covered in Arts & Sciences. The Arts & Sciences stakeholder summarized their perspective of protecting the boundaries between the AUs:

> I don't want the Business School to say we're going to develop a concentration in Economics. Like, no, you're not. We've got that. Thank you. Or, you know, I would never go and say, [Arts & Sciences is] going to start a program in Legal Studies. You know because we have enough people that are interested in Law and Arts & Sciences. I think to some extent it's 100% about protecting boundaries and maintaining your purview.

Arts & Sciences was not the only AU that strived not to impede on another AU's academic territory and reduce replication. One Business School stakeholder mentioned that they did not want to present curricular changes that have any impact on the undergraduate offerings, particularly the undergraduate general education requirement. Changes that intersected between two schools triggered involvement from the University Academic Policy Committee. Although

Arts & Sciences does not "own" a degree program in another school, the Arts & Sciences faculty must vote on curricular changes when it shares even a small portion of the curriculum with a degree program housed in another AU.

Similarly, the development of a new AU focusing on data analysis and processing yielded tensions between academic units. One AU stakeholder described the tension as "turf battles between schools." When the school was announced at an SCP team meeting, a different AU wanted to block the change because it already had a degree program in a similar area. The stakeholder, who did not want to be identified, explained,

> There hadn't been coordination or discussion about how these two would interface. Obviously, that should happen before a new program is approved. I mean one of the benefits of the SCP process is that you can catch those issues, but ideally that should all happen before it goes into Curriculog where people start seeing it, right? They should have those conversations in advance.

In this example, the announcement about the new school seemed to function like a surprise and led to boundary protecting for the AU that housed similar programming but had not been consulted. In a similar vein of guarding what is shared at the SCP team and when, the next theme considers how the SCP team can function as a premature announcement of changes to the detriment of an AUs internal practices and policies.

The theme, "cat out of the bag," also emerged from one unit: the School of Business. This phrase means that information was revealed before it is intended to be revealed. Their perspective represented another important concern about the role the SCP and SCP team played in ensuring all necessary stakeholders know about a change. At times, announcements provided too much exposure for a school, causing information to reach units external to the school before

the AU's own faculty were fully aware of the change. As such, "cat out of the bag," occurred when a change was announced to the SCP team via Curriculog or the monthly meetings before the change was presented to the faculty of that school for a vote.

The SCP team could be aware of a change long before it was presented to the faculty for a vote because the SCP process requires that AUs announce they are thinking about a change—even if that change never happens or may be finalized months or years later. Early announcements are designed to catalyze early collaboration so that affected units can begin thinking about how the proposed change impacts them or triggers processes and policies they oversee. As the Assistant Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs (Business School) summarized:

> One of the challenges we've had with the [SCP] team [is that] in some cases I'm saying to them we're thinking about this before it's ever come to the faculty for vote, which makes me a little nervous. [If] it circles back to the faculty and they're like, why are you talking to people across campus about this when we haven't even talked about it at a faculty meeting? So, I get a little nervous about that. That kind of stuff can kill [a proposed change]. One time we wrote we are "thinking about thinking about" a change. In an effort to remedy this issue, the Business School stakeholder tried to inform others who hear of the change first not to share it anywhere else.

These examples of boundary checking are important to consider as I examine the formal and informal collaborations that emerged via the SCP and the strategies and policy instruments the units used to work together. The examples do not necessarily reveal an apprehension for or distrust in the SCP—AU participants affirmed its value. Still, it was important for AUs to protect their traditional role over the curriculum, which became somewhat vulnerable due to the SCP.

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Conclusion

This section addressed the first research question, which focused on how academic and support units work together to implement changes. The analysis of participant interviews, SCP team observations, and Curriculog change proposals forms revealed that one of the primary tools used to facilitate collaboration between AUs and SUs were partnerships and policy instruments. There were three partnerships variations: AU-AU, SU-SU, and AU-SU. The distinct roles of AUs and SUs in the SCP process and SCP team resulted in the use of unique policy instruments in the homogenous partnerships and shared policy instruments within the heterogenous partnerships. Additionally, the role of the AUs as the proposers and directors of changes to the academic programming yielded a defensive stance toward the degree programs offered and faculty role in approving curricular changes. Table 16 aggregates the themes addressed in this section and includes a definition and representative quote.

Table 16

Research Question 1: Summary of Themes and Associated Quotes

Theme	Definition	Example Quote
Subsystem Involvement: Developing Collaborative Partnerships	The ethos of the SCP is to create a space where SUs and AUs can establish partnerships that will allow them to facilitate a smooth and timely implementation of changes while adhering to internal and external timelines and policies. Consequently, the SCP facilitated the development of three types of partnerships: AU-AU, SU-SU, and AU-SU.	"We have sort of a leadership team in the office that meets periodically every other week. So, anything we need to change, we kind of run through them. How is this going to work? It's almost a Mini SCP now I'm thinking about it. ... Anytime we need to implement a change, [we ask], how is that going to impact the system? How do we advise students? You know, call that office about how this is going to work. That sort of acts as a Mini SCP for our policies." - Director of Financial Aid
Relying on Policy Instruments: Tools for Collaborative Change Implementation	Both AUs and SUs used a variety of policy instruments to help them work within the three types of collaborative partnerships described above. Some instruments are unique to AUs, some are unique to SUs, and other instruments are mutual, meaning that both AUs and SUs use them.	"I mean meetings, and not just meetings to talk, but meetings where somebody's projecting on the screen and we're looking at the Banner forms and we're really getting into the nitty-gritty. So not just talking about it but figuring it out. Doing some testing in a non-production environment in Banner. There's been a lot of that, really deep diving. It is so helpful when everybody's in the room together instead of one person talking to one person then to another person and then having to back up to the other, you know, it's really helpful to have everybody together." - Registrar
AU Strategies: Boundary Checking While Engaging in Collaborative Partnerships	AUs engaged in boundary checking as they interacted with the SCP team and followed the SCP process. They asserted the distinction between AUs and SUs in the SCP team and process.	"The way that I try to diagram it out for them [the faculty] is to point out that full authority rests within the Arts & Sciences Dean's Office. And the purpose of the SCP process is so that other people don't mess up interpreting or delivering what we intend to do. It's meant to make sure that when we implement the changes that we have approved, everybody else is on board and is doing it correctly." - Associate Dean of Undergraduate Academic Programs (Arts & Sciences)

Note. SCP is the substantive change policy. AU stands for academic unit. SU stands for support unit.

Research Question 2: Integration of Internal and External Policies

The second research question focuses on how SCU integrated internal and external policies. Specifically, I focus on how AUs and SUs integrated the internal and external policies they must follow to implement changes. The following four themes emerged: (a) AUs: Following Directions: Using AU Governance Policies and the SCP to Integrate Internal and External Policies, (b) AUs: Policy Instruments: Keeping Proposed Changes Moving Change Processes, (c) SUs: Serving as Consultants and Monitoring the Changes, and (d) Mutual Policy Instruments: Consulting External Resources when Stuck on a Change. Both AUs and SUs used the SCP as a guide to direct when they should consult each other about how to navigate complex changes that required input from multiple units. Independently, AUs and SUs consulted the policies and procedures applicable to their units to know how to react when a change triggered a policy they oversee. AUs depended on the governance policies specific to their units to gain faculty approval, and they followed the SCP to know how to migrate that change through external approval processes. SUs relied on published external polices and procedures originating from the state, federal government, and accrediting bodies to know how to serve as consultants.

At times, both AUs and SUs got stuck: they encountered a unique change for the first time, and they sought advice from sources external to the institution in the form of listservs, professional organizations, and personal networks. For SCU stakeholders, integrating internal and external policies can be stated as simply as following directions. Internal policies for academic governance already existed, as did the external policies governing institutional change. Under the guidance of the SCP and its associated team, AUs and SUs followed the paths that had been constructed for them.

AUs: Following Directions: Using the AU Governance Policies and SCP to Integrate Internal and External Policies

When asked how they integrated internal and external policies, AUs referenced the bylaws for their AU and the SCP itself. Therefore, the theme Following Directions: Using AU Governance Policies and SCP to Integrate Internal and External Policies emerged. The best way for AUs to ensure adherence to internal and external policies was to follow the path prescribed by each AU's internal governance policies (e.g., bylaws) and by the SCP. The Registrar, though not an AU, expressed confidence that the SCP was a carefully curated policy. In time, it would be very easy to identify any stakeholder who was not following the pre-established directions for integrating internal and external policies because the relevant stakeholders at the Registrar or Office of Institutional Effectiveness would know when a change was not submitted to the appropriate external entities. Consequently, poor integration of internal and external policies was unlikely under the SCP:

> An academic unit has not violated a significant internal or external policy in a long time. There was once a school that thought they had a new program, but they could not register students because it wasn't in Banner. The Associate Director of the Registrar told the school it could not be added to Banner because it hadn't been approved by the State Department for Higher Education. Issues similar to this one have not happened in a long time.

Even before a change reached the SCP team for review, the AUs depended on their bylaws, which prescribe the process for academic changes, to take a change from inception to faculty vote.

Follow the Bylaws. The administrators and faculty members in each AU followed the governance policies applicable to their unit because the governance policies outline the process for approving academic changes. When internal approval is achieved, the change is then shuffled through the SCP process, which is the subtheme I discuss next. The Assistant Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs (School of Education) summarized, "Most things in the School of Education are developed at the program and department level and then come up through a governance process." Adherence to governance processes demonstrates that faculty led changes at the program and department levels and adhered to internal processes to achieve approval.

If a change affected both a component of the undergraduate curriculum and a program housed in another school, the change triggered additional internal policies, such as the University Academic Policy Committee, which is the Arts & Sciences undergraduate curriculum committee. The Associate Dean of Curriculum and Student Affairs (School of Education) provided an example of a change in their AU that required the University Academic Policy Committee to get involved because the change affected the undergraduate general education curriculum:

> Anything that would impact…the undergraduate general education curriculum would have to go through University Academic Policy Committee, which is an Arts & Sciences undergrad curriculum committee. I don't know that we've had anything like that since we had the [undergraduate degree in education]. But if we did, it would go through there. For example, if we had an education course that we wanted to meet one of the undergraduate general education curriculum buckets. That would have to go through the University Academic Policy Committee and that would have to be voted on. Like that Arts & Sciences committee because that's general to every bachelor's degree. But if we want to

make a change to our [undergraduate] major, we want to reorder it, change a course,

that's just done through School of Education governance.

The Associate Dean of Curriculum and Student Affairs (School of Education) statement

demonstrates that a change in one AU could trigger policies (and associated committees) in

another AU. If a change activated these policies and associated committees, the effected schools

simply followed the prescribed policies.

Follow the SCP. On paper, it can appear that the SCP is the policy that starts after an AU

submitting a change obtains *all* necessary approvals from its faculty, as well as any adjacent

schools if applicable. Or, as the Arts & Sciences stakeholder stated, the SCP "abuts" the

academic policies in their unit. However, in practice, following the AU bylaws and SCP was not

necessarily a linear process because the SCP specifies that AUs should notify the SCP team via

the Curriculog change proposal form and at the monthly meetings when a change is being

considered or planned—even if the change was not approved by the constituencies in that AU

yet. When changes were announced early, the AU might receive direction from an AU-AU or

AU-SU partnership that shaped the change before the faculty approved it. For example, AU

stakeholders often contacted the Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness to gain

clarity on the process they should follow for change approval. This was a common AU-SU

partnership because the change processes and timelines published on the SCP webpage, though

helpful, could leave users uncertain of their next steps.

Therefore, the SCP process mingles with AUs' academic governance policies.

Eventually, when the change is approved within that AU, the SCP carries the change through the

rest of the process because the SCP directs the submission of the change to the State Department

for Higher Education and institutional accrediting body, as applicable. At the same time, the

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change may also be submitted to applicable specialized accreditation bodies, which is a step

mentioned in the SCP but is under the purview of the AUs. The Office of Institutional

Effectiveness does not manage specialized accreditation, but the office does archive specialized

accreditation submissions and outcomes, per the SCP.

AUs: Policy Instruments: Keeping Proposed Changes Moving Through Change Processes

While each AU's governance policies and the SCP provide a strong structure for ensuring

a proposed change can be implemented without violating an internal or external policy, AU

stakeholders relied on various policy instruments to move changes through the applicable

processes and achieve approval *within* the AU. These instruments, which include "whipping the

votes," identifying champions, and drafting white papers, are used in tandem with AU bylaws

and the SCP.

Champion. Stakeholders referenced the importance of champions, or stakeholders who

support an academic change and help the AU's SCP liaison move the change through internal

academic approval processes. The Assistant Dean of Innovation (Law School) references the

complex process of securing champions and decreasing resistance to change:

> Most people, when you're implementing change will eventually embrace the change, but
>
> you have to do the work. You can't just push it on them. You have to show them why.
>
> You have to know why in your own mind. You know, you don't just change for change's
>
> sake. You have to understand that and so I think that's what the biggest factor in a
>
> successful or unsuccessful change is. Going through is long and sometimes painful, but
>
> going through the process of getting people to agree why the change needs to happen and
>
> getting champions for it. I always try to pick out a few people that are really excited. Get

them to talk to their colleagues and their fellow faculty members about why this is a great

thing.

The Law School administrator's description of seeking allies preceded the whipping of the votes.

Securing champions, according to the quote above, occurred earlier in the process, sometime

between when a change idea was emerging and the faculty vote. The next subtheme, "whipping

the votes," occurred after the formal change proposal was formed and was approaching a faculty

vote.

Whipping the Votes. As a self-identified "gate coordinator" for changes in Arts &

Sciences, the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Academic Programs also "whips the votes" to

ensure the appropriate faculty were present to vote for academic changes. In their reference to

"whipping the votes," the Associate Dean referred to the political practice of ensuring that

representatives vote according to party lines (United States Senate, n.d.). Or, in the context of

AUs in higher education, faculty vote to approve the change in question.

Working Groups and Steering Committees. Academic and support units also relied on

working groups and steering committees when moving through the change process. These

groups research and plan a change before reporting on it to other stakeholders at the institution to

gain support. The Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness described the steering

committee and working groups that were used for the formation of SCU's School of Data

Analysis and Processing:

> In fall of 2022 the Provost put together a working group to explore this. Then in spring of
>
> 2023…we had a steering committee come together to do research and send out surveys to
>
> the university committee, so there was a lot of vetting of the potential for having a new
>
> school. Would it be a new school? Would it just be, you know, a new graduate school?

What were the options? Because we were looking to put together a few departments specifically that are in Arts & Sciences right now. And separate them out or do something to allow them to sort of more closely align. And not be buried in the Arts and Sciences School where there are 40 plus programs, right? And so, the steering committee did its work for that whole semester. We had town halls, all of the things. So, there's a lot of stuff. All of that research was done. We had a final report that was submitted to the provost in late May or early June and then they did some work over the summer and met with the faculty and talked with the faculty. Their plans to do a new school were announced at the end of September. The Board of Trustees approved this at their last meeting this past November.

Similarly, the School of Biological Sciences relied on a working group to create a white paper to convince the faculty to approve the proposed professional master's degree:

We developed a white paper. We actually had a working group that was put together by the School of Biological Sciences' Academic Council. That's the representative body that oversees policy recommendations and such for the academic program. …A working group of that council wrote a white paper about why it made sense to have a professional degree program at the School of Biological Sciences and what the value of it would be.

Steering committees and working groups served as a method for developing an argument in favor of a change and convincing institutional stakeholders to support it.

SUs: Serving as Consultants and Monitoring Changes

Compared with AUs, SUs used different strategies to facilitate the integration of internal and external policies because they were not responsible for advocating for a change or securing the appropriate level of support in their unit. Rather, they ensured that AUs had the information

and resources they needed to implement a change that complied with internal SU policies and external polices. When the time came, SUs also helped AUs ensure change implementation was smooth. Consequently, SUs served as consultants who monitored changes and were mostly unconcerned with the bylaws for each school and even the SCP in some cases. Because SUs did not need to know about or engage in each AUs specific governance process, their roles were to ensure that (a) they focused on the policies they oversaw, and (b) consulted with AUs to ensure compliance with the internal and external policies they oversaw.

SUs Focus on the Policies They Oversee. AUs did not need to memorize all the internal and external processes and policies they triggered, that was for each SU to know: SU stakeholders were the masters of the internal and external policies they managed. Referring to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness' role in policy integration, the Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness stated,

> They [AUs] don't necessarily have to live in a space where they're aware of every
> nuance [among the SU policies and processes]. That's why we have the work of my
> office and why we have the SCP team because there are people who are going to be much
> more, I would, say experts, or they're going to understand the intricacies of these various
> policies internal and external so that all of that comes together and we end up making
> sure that we stay compliant with all of the laws and regulations and that we're doing
> right.

Further, the Registrar emphasized that "each school does its own academic governance." The Registrar did not memorize each school's academic policies, but they knew enough about some academic policies to let an AU know when it diverged from them. This subtheme of monitoring changes was also demonstrated in one conversation with the Director of Financial Aid, who

indicated that unlike the AUs they did not need to not need to know the intricacies of the SCP, but rather, they should be aware of how financial aid policies apply to a change. When asked if they had any thoughts on the resources posted to the SCP webpage, the Director of Financial Aid asked where that webpage was, stating that they know it exists but did not need to use it because Financial Aid is not a unit that submits changes through the SCP. They managed financial aid policies and ensured AUs complied with them. Their role in the SCP processes was affected by whether a change needed approval from the institutional accrediting body or the state.

Consulting and Supervisory Role. The SU's role in serving as consultants and supervisors of policy relates back to their role on the SCP team. As consultants, they met with AUs via the AU-SU partnerships described in the first research question, providing guidance on how a change abuts various internal and external policies. The consulting role demonstrates how SUs engaged with AUs to ensure they took the right course of action. The Registrar explained,

> We do often Advise the schools that they need to put something through, and I would sometimes run it up the flagpole with the Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness and say, hey, do you think this needs to go to institutional change? That was before we had strengthened the website to the point where now, you know, it's, very easy to assess. So, we were more alerting others about the need.

Although the SCP webpage has more resources now compared with the time the Registrar references, the AUs were still very quick to seek the help from the Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness. The Assistant Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs (Business School) stated that they often contact the Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness, asking, "Do I have to bring this [change] to your committee?" Financial Aid also described how they are available when other units need assistance:

Being there for them if they need assistance, you know, like I think as a result of the SCP

being developed everyone's more open to talking to others about how is this going to

impact you? What do we need to think about that we haven't thought about?

The supervisory role required SUs to monitor AUs to ensure they remained in

compliance with policies. The Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness described

the strategies they used to ensure the AUs remained in compliance:

Which strategies do I need to maintain compliance? Staying on top of them, making sure

that they are doing the things that they need to do in developing the curriculum or

preparing the proposals and thinking things through. Being quite frank with them when

they missed a submission deadline to say you cannot start this because you didn't get it in

on time to this entity. It's not going to happen. You can't advertise it because you haven't

submitted, you know, a proposal for it yet, etc.

While the SUs' position as consultants suggests that they serve AUs, they did have a level of

authority in the SCP process that is earned via their roles as policy experts. As the gatekeepers to

compliance, which the Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness indicated in the

quote above, SUs gained the ability to direct when and how a change was approved simply by

letting the policies they managed serve as the voice of authority.

Mutual Policy Instrument: Consulting External Resources When Stuck on a Change

When a complex change took an AU or SU into territory with which they were not

familiar, AUs and SUs consulted both personal and formalized networks when they needed

advice on how to navigate complicated changes or needed to understand new regulations. AUs

and SUs consulted different resources, but they both relied on external sources for guidance.

AU: External Resources Consulted. AUs used WCET, which is a blog dedicated to explaining complex policies related to online education, state authorization, and federal regulations, such as the financial value transparency and gainful employment regulations taking effect in 2024. AUs also used blogs and websites, such as Phil Hill and HolonIQ.

SU: External Resources Consulted. SUs used a variety of resources, to include listservs for the institutional accrediting organization, regional and national professional organizations for accreditation, assessment, and Financial Aid. The Director of Financial Aid mentioned that they even posted a question on a Facebook Group for Financial Aid. They contacted the group when the Business School was creating modular programs to see if another school had experience with it. For AUs and SUs consultation of external resources indicated that institutional changes can be complex, and the right path forward was not always clear.

Conclusion

For SCU stakeholders, policy integration was best achieved by adhering to published policies and process. AUs followed the academic governance policies unique to their AU and the SCP, and SUs followed the policies they adopted from the applicable state, federal, and accrediting bodies. While academic governance policies functioned independently of the SCP, they did run in tandem with it. This "abutting" of academic governance policies and the SCP emerged when an AU announced a change to the SCP team before it was approved by its faculty. To achieve faculty approval, AUs secured champions, whipped the votes, and employed steering committees and working groups to develop content to advocate for a change. Both before and after an AU's faculty approved a change, SU stakeholders served as consultants to AUs, advising them on how to navigate the internal and external network of policies governing higher education. Although SUs' efforts took on a customer service sort of role, they did exercise some

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authority, which was granted to them via the non-negotiable policies and processes they

oversaw. Table 17 summarizes the themes I covered for the second research question.

Table 17

Research Question 2: Summary of Themes and Associated Quotes

Theme	Definition	Quote
AUs: Following Directions: Using AU Governance Policies and SCP to Integrate Internal and External Policies	The best way for AUs to ensure adherence to internal and external policies was to follow the path prescribed by each AU's internal governance policies (e.g., bylaws) and by the SCP.	"Most things in the School of Education are developed at the program and department level and then kind of come up through a governance process." - Assistant Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs (School of Education)
AUs: Policy Instruments: Keeping Proposed Changes Moving Through Change Processes	AU stakeholders relied on various policy instruments to move changes through the applicable processes and achieve approval *within* the AU. These instruments, which include "whipping the votes," identifying champions, and creating white papers, were used in tandem with AU bylaws and the SCP.	"Most people, when you're implementing change will eventually embrace the change, but you have to do the work. You can't just push it on them. You have to show them why. You have to know why in your own mind. You know, you don't just change for change's sake. You have to understand that and so I think that's what the biggest factor in a successful or unsuccessful change is. Going through is long and sometimes painful, but going through the process of getting people to agree why the change needs to happen and getting champions for it. I always try to pick out a few people that are really excited. Get them to talk to their colleagues and their fellow faculty members about why this is a great thing." - Assistant Dean of Innovation (Law School)
SUs: Serving as Consultants and Monitoring Changes	SUs ensured AUs had the information and resources they needed to implement a change that followed internal SU policies and external polices.	"They [AUs] don't necessarily have to live in a space where they're aware of every nuance [among the SUs]. That's why we have the work of my office and why we have the SCP team because there are people who are going to be much more, I would, say experts, or they're going to understand the intricacies of these various policies internal and external so that all of that comes together and we end up making sure that we stay compliant with all of the laws and regulations and that we're doing right." – Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness
Mutual Policy Instrument: Consulting External Resources when Stuck on a Change	When a complex change or new regulation takes an AU or SU into territory with which they are not familiar, AUs and SUs consulted both personal and formalized networks when they needed advice on how to navigate complicated changes.	"There's other organizations that I look at for external like market data and things. There's a company called HolonIQ. There's a consultant called, Phil Hill. He does a blog." - Associate Dean of Innovation (Business School)

Note. SCP is the substantive change policy. AU stands for academic unit. SU stands for support unit.

Research Question 3: Experiences

The third research question focused on the knowledge and experiences AU and SU stakeholders gained as participants in the SCP process and team. To answer this question, I depended on quotes from the participant interviews. SCP team meetings were not the avenue for participants to describe how their knowledge of institutional change was developing. Similarly, Curriculog was not a platform for SCP stakeholders to state whether feedback on a change developed their understanding on institutional change. If a stakeholder learned something new from feedback, the Curriculog system was not where they would record these revelations. Similarly, the SCP team meetings were not the forum where they would announce they learned something new.

Three themes emerged for this research question. The first theme was "I Gained a Better Understanding of and Appreciation for SCU." Through their engagement with change processes, participants learned more about other units and colleagues engaging in change throughout the institution, and developed a strong sense of respect for the effect one unit could have on another. The second theme was "I Developed and Improved My Understanding of Institutional Change." Participants had varying levels of experience with and knowledge of institutional change processes. In particular, AU participants had less exposure to institutional change while SU participants were often veterans in this area. The third theme was "I Developed and Improved My Knowledge of External Entities." For some participants, particularly AUs, the SCP team was their first introduction to institutional accreditation and the State Department for Higher Education's change requirements. Other participants, though familiar with change, learned more about these entities, thus expanding on previous experience.

I Gained a Better Understanding of and Appreciation for SCU

Because institutional change requires the cross-collaboration of stakeholders throughout SCU, participants developed a better understanding how of their institution works and strong working relationships with their colleagues. Coupled with this understanding of how the institution works was an appreciation for the work occurring throughout the campus. Primarily, this theme emerged among the AUs, most likely because AUs were often siloed on campus: generally, there was no need to collaborate with stakeholders outside of their AU unless they had a role—such as membership on the SCP team—that required them to do so. In comparison, key SUs, such has the Registrar, Financial Aid, and Office of Institutional Effectiveness, intersected with far more regions of the SCU community. Stakeholders in these offices were likely to know more about what is happening at SCU and how the institution works.

Forming Relationships: "I know people at the university more." As a large team of 42 members, the SCP team helped deepen some participants' collegial relationships and expand their networks. The Assistant Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs (School of Education) stated, "I know people at the University more." Other SCP team Members, such as the Assistant Dean of Innovation (Law School) used the SCP team as a tool to foster strategic partnerships on the team:

> I always am very collaborative in my work. It allowed me to form relationships outside of just seeing it on the [Curriculog] form and people know who I am. I know who they are. And that's always helpful when you're trying to push through something like a new degree program.

By forming relationships, the Assistant Dean of Innovation (Law School) learned who they should talk to in order to push changes through, and these conversations were often initiated by

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inviting someone to coffee. Even if they did not talk about work, a relationship was established for the future. The importance of forming relationships was new for the Law School SCP team member. Having worked at a much larger institution with around four times the number of students, they stated that you had to be directed to the right connections to have changes go through at a large university. At SCU, however, "it really is about who you have professional personal relationships [with]." As SCP team members increased their institutional network, they began to observe how the institution is connected.

I Recognized How Units are Interconnected. Participants commented on how SCU is a decentralized institution with very distinct academic units that operate independently. The SCP is designed to connect these silos by reinforcing preexisting connections and fostering new ones by requiring academic units to report their changes to a centralized team. As change implementation caused SCP team members to experience the connections across campus first-hand, they began to consider how other aspects of institutional life are interconnected—even down to the number of doctoral degrees awarded by each school. Assistant Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs (School of Education) stated,

> Even though I think that SCU is very decentralized and that the five schools operate very independently, there still is a need [to consider] those kinds of things that are affecting SCU as a university. The number of doctorates that I'm producing in the School of Education factors into if we're going to be an R1 or an R2. People in the Business School are going care about how many doctorates are produced in the School of Education because it's going to impact what our Carnegie classification is starting next year. It's just helped me to see kind of where the interconnections are across campus.

Such realizations demonstrated participants were aware that what happens in one unit affects another unit, increasing the sense of responsibility participants had in their role at SCU. In the same way that the SCP opened participants' eyes to the university as a system, it also increased their awareness of the positive innovations occurring throughout the institution and the hard work that goes into them.

I Appreciate the Work of Other Units. The design of the SCP, which includes AUs reporting on changes at the SCP team meetings and/or Curriculog, allowed SUs and AUs to know more about what is going on in other units in terms of the changes they made and how they operate. As participants gained more exposure to the broader university, they also developed an appreciation for the work achieved by other units. Without the SCP team and Curriculog as information-sharing platforms, many institutional stakeholders would not have been aware of the impressive changes occurring in other units or the work required to implement those changes.

Participants remarked on the work done in other offices. Several participants acknowledge the work the new Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness had done to revise the SCP and update the SCP website because the changes significantly improved how they could do their work. The Associate Dean of Innovation (Business School) commented on their counterpart in the Law School's hard work. They are doing "some good work over there in the Law School" in launching an online master's degree to appeal to professionals who need legal training but not a juris doctor. An administrator from the School of Biological Sciences remarked that the SCP team is

> a wonderful place to see all the dedication and enthusiasm, and student-focused work that
> happens among administrators and staff at SCU. A lot of people think mostly faculty are
> the ones that take care of students and interact with students, but all those people behind

the scenes that are making sure that everything works the way it's supposed to that
students are getting the highest quality programs they can, you know, within the
constraints of what the university has to offer like making sure a program that's not a
quality program doesn't get approved. And it doesn't get sent to the State Department of
Higher Education, right?

Their understanding that institutional changes are a joint effort between faculty and staff
transitions to another revelation for AU participants: they learned how to navigate internal and
external policies to produce changes.

I Developed and Improved My Understanding of Institutional Change

Participants entered the SCP team with various understandings of institutional change.
Some many members did not know about the SCP policy itself, the SCP team, or the dynamics
of change at SCU. Therefore, their involvement broadened their understanding of institutional
change and how it occurs. Stakeholders who already understood institutional change or had been
a part of it for a while described their veteran-level knowledge that developed over time.

"I didn't know what institutional change was." AU participants were less likely to
know what institutional change was before they were integrated into the SCP world. In fact, AU
representatives who formerly filled faculty roles did not need to know what institutional change
was, which was a sentiment the Associate Dean of Curriculum and Student Affairs (School of
Education) held. Faculty should develop the curriculum, teach, and research. It was the academic
administrators' role to ensure changes were approved and implemented according to the SCP.
The same administrator's colleague in the School of Education (the Assistant Dean of
Curriculum and Faculty Affairs), who was previously faculty stated, "I had no idea what
institutional change was or that there was a body that met regularly to navigate change at the

university." Similarly, the Assistant Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs (School of Biological Sciences) was less familiar with the institutional accreditor and "administering" higher education because their unit prioritized research over teaching. They rarely submitted changes, but the development and implementation of a professional master's degree opened their eyes to an entirely new perspective of higher education.

> There's folks everywhere around you and even in Arts & Sciences where they have so many faculty and so much governance of structure to manage the undergraduate program. So, I basically you know, serving on both of those committees [SCP and Assessment Steering Committee] was a major way for me to understand how you administer… How you manage and administer the academic side of the house in higher education."

The Director of Student Advising (Academic Affairs) who was very new to the SCP when I interviewed them but not new to the institution, stated:

> I didn't know that [the SCP team] existed when I was part of the Business School. Probably because of my role. Certainly, curriculum changes were being discussed and things were happening, but I didn't know that there was the official process for making that happen and making other constituents on campus aware of those changes.

In some ways, it was not necessary everyone at the institution to be aware that the SCP existed or of what it was designed to achieve, but participants indicated that they were better off engaging with the SCP team because they learned a lot of about their institution in particular and higher education in general.

Institutional Change Veterans' Enhanced Their Knowledge. Of course, not all SCP administrators were new to institutional change or to the goings on of other AUs and SUs at SCU. The SCP served as a tool for expanding their knowledge of higher education and their

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institution. Participants who had been a part of higher education for a while and/or had a lot of experience with institutional change, described how their knowledge of institutional change expanded. They provided a more philosophical discussion on change at their institution and higher education in general. This subtheme applied to both AU and SU participants.

The Associate Dean of Innovation (Business School) reflected on how the interconnectedness of institutional life not only applies to higher education but to other aspects of industry:

> I think the integration across different disciplines has been really interesting. I love the way that it works in terms of the collaboration and the communications. Like that's just something that I think is just really impactful. It's not really a higher education thing, but it kind of gives me a different perspective on how innovation can happen. Right, like how it can happen because a lot of times in higher education, we think we're in our own silos, right?

Similarly, the Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness stated that learning is continuous in higher education and work in institutional change provided the opportunity to continue to learn more:

> As I continue to grow in this space as we all do, we start to learn more about the workings of other units, right? The more that you interface with them, the more that you learn what they do and what the impacts might be, right? And so, we have a sense, we kind of intuitively know that. You know, what the Registrar's Office needs to know when we have new programs. Right? Where else might that impact? Could it impact if it's a graduate program, the Vice Provost for Research is going to need to know. And the Bursar is going to need to know. You know there are so many different places that need

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to know what the fee schedules are. I mean there's so many things that you don't think about. So, there's learning. I've learned more about the Registrar's Office because I report to a Registrar, and I interface with them, and we have you know team meetings, the leadership meetings between the two units. I recently learned as early as today that the organizational proposal that we're working on has more required than I anticipated to get information relating to the marketing of the new school [Data Analysis and Processing] and to get budget information for that. And so, I'm learning more about how marketing costs are estimated and how that's much more complicated than I thought, right? So, it's a continual sort of learning thing, right? And I think that's a direct result, I would say of our process and having all the people at the table because otherwise you may not know that someone needs to be there because you don't know what they do.

Veterans' understanding of institutional change was dynamic. It evolved as new regulations emerged, the institution implemented novel changes, and they interacted with more units at the SCU.

I Developed and Improved My Knowledge of External Entities

As the SCP stakeholders learned about institutional change at SCU, they also learned more about external entities governing higher education, such as the State Department for Higher Education, the institutional accreditor, and specialized accreditation groups. Participants also learned more about private organizations, such as the online program management company the institution used and the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). Such knowledge gave stakeholders a working knowledge of how to interact with these organizations and/or how to operate within the parameters these organizations establish for institutions. "I better understand what our compliance requirements are," stated an administrator

in the School of Biological Sciences. "Because that's where we really have to get down into the nitty-gritty…with the expectations of our accreditors. These are the expectations of the state. National requirements, you know, all those things."

Navigating the State Department for Higher Education and its requirements was particularly new and challenging for some SCP stakeholders. In fact, one SCP team meeting covered the minute details the state expected in proposals from the institution, down to the characters that could or could not be included in program and school titles. The State Department for Higher Education was new for one Law School administrator who worked in private and public education in other regions of the country:

> You know, mostly around that State Department for Higher Education piece. Particularly how they look at demand, which is again, very much the undergrad, new professional and having to be like that's not the kind of program we're opening and so, the data you're asking for, I'll give it to you, but it's not any good…so those sorts of things like what the State Department for Higher Education very specifically is looking for and how you can deliver that information to them with them understanding that they're not really looking at what we're looking at it from marketing and where our students are. That's been the biggest piece really that, outside of the general systems and culture.

The Associate Dean of Curriculum and Student Affairs (School of Education) had worked at the institution for some time, but working as an AU administrator exposed them to the external bodies that oversee higher education:

> There are a lot of things I didn't know before. I thought everything had to go to the State Department for Higher Education and institutional accreditor for approval and some things for notifications—they're not approvals. I didn't know how often the State

Department for Higher Education, for example, meets to approve. It's not like you can

send them something anytime you want. They have certain times of a year where they

review submissions. There are a lot of technical pieces I was not aware of. I didn't know

that we need to officially notify if we weren't admitting to a program. Because we do that

from time to time, we'll put a program on hiatus, but we actually need to send a

notification for that.

The Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness echoed these sentiments. They were

familiar with accreditation before working at SCU, but previously, their work was only adjacent

to a state reporting.

Conclusion

Via their engagement on the SCP team AU and SU stakeholders gained a better

appreciation for and understanding of SCU, learned more about institutional change, and learned

more about the external entities governing higher education. Overall, AU participants had more

revelations about their institution and institutional change because they generally had less

exposure to this aspect of higher education than SU participants who worked with regulations

regularly. Table 18 provides a summary of the themes and associated quotes for the third

research question. In the subsequent chapter, I interpret the findings, connecting them to the

literature and making recommendations for policy and practice and future research.

Table 18

Research Question 3: Summary of Themes and Associated Quotes

Theme	Definition	Quote
I Gained a Better Understanding of and Appreciation for SCU.	Because institutional change requires the cross-collaboration of stakeholders throughout SCU, participants developed a better understanding how of their institution works and strong working relationships with their colleagues. Coupled with this understanding of how the institution works was an appreciation for the work occurring throughout the campus.	"Even though I think that SCU is very decentralized and that the five schools operate very independently, there still is a need [to consider] those kinds of things that are affecting SCU as a university. The number of doctorates that I'm producing in the School of Education factors into if we're going to be an R1 or an R2. People in the Business School are going care about how many doctorates are produced in the School of Education because it's going to impact what our Carnegie classification is starting next year. It's just helped me to see kind of where the interconnections are across campus." - Assistant Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs (School of Education)
I Developed and Improved My Understanding of Institutional Change.	Participants entered the SCP team with various understandings of and experiences with institutional change. Some were new to institutional change and others were veterans.	"I think the integration across different disciplines has been really interesting. I love the way that it works in terms of the collaboration and the communications. Like that's just something that I think is just really impactful. It's not really a higher education thing, but it kind of gives me a different perspective on how innovation can happen. Right, like how it can happen." - Associate Dean of Innovation (Business School)
I Developed and Improved my Knowledge of External Entities	Participants learned more about the external entities governing higher education.	"I didn't know how often State Department for Higher Education, for example, meets to approve. It's not like you can send them something anytime you want. They have certain times of a year where they review submissions." - Associate Dean of Curriculum and Student Affairs (School of Education)

Note. SCP is the substantive change policy. AU stands for academic unit. SU stands for support unit.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

I designed this study to understand how the academic and support units at a midsize, public research institution in the eastern United States worked together and integrated internal and external policies. I also wanted to understand what participants gained from engaging in Substantive Change University's (SCU) change processes. One of the most significant findings from the first research question, which addressed how the units worked together, was that the academic units (AU) and support units (SU) formed a variety of partnerships that served as support networks and planning teams. There were AU-AU partnerships, SU-SU partnerships, and AU-SU partnerships, with variation within each type of partnership. For the homogenous partnerships (AU-AU, SU-SU), the partnerships could exist between two different units or within the same unit, but they had to represent the same unit type. For the AU-SU partnerships, the partnership could either be the official substantive change policy (SCP) team, or they could be between two or more AUs and SUs. Except for the SCP team, these partnerships were unofficial, meaning they were not mentioned in the SCP or any other SCU policy.

To integrate internal and external policies, which was the focus of the second research question, AUs followed the bylaws for their academic units, which cataloged how to gain approval for changes to the academic programming within those AUs. When approval processes in those units concluded and a change was ultimately approved, the units then followed the SCP. It is important to mention that the AU governance policies and the SCP are not necessarily "tag-team" policies, meaning that the completion of an AU governance policy initiated of the SCP

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process. A change could not be submitted to an external unit before AU processes concluded, but AU stakeholders were already seeking wisdom from the SCP team even before a change shuffled through academic governance policies. Here, the goal was to strategize changes from idea inception to submission to external entities. In addition to following institutional policies, AUs and SUs also held meetings, used Curriculog, and other policy instruments to catalyze change processes.

Regarding the experiences of participants, participants of AUs and SUs had slightly different takeaways. AU stakeholders, who were sometimes faculty representatives who were new to administration, had little exposure to institutional change, as they had been focused on teaching and research in their previous roles. Another stakeholder who was unfamiliar with the SCP had previously worked in the Business School in a different type of role. SUs, however, were more familiar with institutional change due to the nature of their work in navigating internal and external policies. Still, whether AU or SU participants were new to the SCP world or veterans, they all explained that they were in a continuous cycle of learning more about the external requirements for making internal changes.

In this section, I connect the findings summarized above with the available literature on institutional change processes and policy integration at higher education institutions in the United States (Chase, 2016; Clapp, 2007; Goldrick-Rab & Shaw, 2007; Gonzalez et al., 2021). It is important to reiterate, as I did in the introduction to this dissertation and the literature review, that research in this area is severely limited. Available resources focus on higher education accreditation and policies, but these resources are mostly summaries of higher education policies and resources for practitioners rather than studies on how institutions are navigating substantive change at their institutions (Chase, 2016; Clapp, 2007; Goldrick-Rab & Shaw, 2007; Gonzalez et

al., 2021). Additionally, other resources on policy implementation and policy integration focus on other organization types, such as national organizations. The policy (dis)integration framework that I used to help ground this study was helpful because it contained policy dimensions (policy frame, policy goals, subsystem involvement, policy instruments) that are likely to be present in any policy context regardless of organization (e.g., higher education institution or national organization) or topic (e.g., higher education compliance or national food insecurity crisis; Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018). In the sections that follow, I address connections to the literature where applicable, suggest a revised policy (dis)integration framework for the present context, provide recommendations for research and practice, and conclude with suggestions for future research.

Discussion of Findings

Integration of Internal and External Policies

Through planning processes, it is important for organizations to identify the external mandates with which they must comply, as these mandates will direct institutional decision making and change implementation processes (Bryson, 2018). In higher education institutions, these mandates are the reason policies like the SCP and Offices of Institutional Effectiveness exist (Alfred et al., 1999). SCU encountered the external policies from the triad that I expected it to encounter (Suskie, 2015; Tandberg et al., 2019): approval from the State Department for Higher Education, institutional accreditation, and federal policies, such as those managed by the USDOE. These policies provided the boundaries for what SCU could and could not do to change their academic offerings, structure, and other characteristics *without* approval from one or more of these entities (Bryson, 2018). Additionally, these policies are designed to ensure higher education institutions are accountable to state, federal, and accrediting body entities (Eaton,

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2009; Gaston, 2014; Suskie, 2015). The SCP was the institution's method for (a) ensuring that it was in compliance with these entities; (b) achieved the purpose of external mandates, which is to ensure that state and federal funding is used appropriately, higher education's constituents (students and their parents) are served appropriately; and (c) and that the institution produces quality, academic programming that equips students to achieve gainful employment, which one participant mentioned in their interview (Suskie, 2015). Regardless of whether a change was innovative, such as the development of an entirely new degree program or a new school, or much simpler, such as closing a major in which students had stopped enrolling or changing the title of a major, the SCP worked equally to meet the three methods described above.

What my review of the literature did not reveal, however, is how subsystems within higher education institutions work together and how institutions integrate these external policies—over which they have little to no control—with their internal policies. This study revealed how one institution went about it. Per the SCP issued from the SCU's institutional accreditor, the institution created its own SCP, which requires AUs and SUs to collaborate on cross-cutting changes. The units relied on policy instruments and collaborative partnerships, which are the two topics I address in the next section.

Policy Instruments as Levers for Change

Candel and Biesbroek (2016, 2018) defined policy instruments from several perspectives: (a) how much existing policies are modified to fit a new policy goal, (b) tools used to aid collaboration, and (c) the number and diversity of policy instruments used. The latter occurs across a spectrum, with the high end of the spectrum representing the integration of a diverse mix of instruments to unite subsystems. Policy instruments help move processes along, improve collaboration between units, and keep lines of communication strong. A variety of policy

instruments emerged in this study, and the ones I focus on first are the SCP and the SCP team, as I had initially considered the SCP to be representative of subsystem involvement, and not a policy instrument, too. According to Candel and Biesbroek (2016), the SCP and the team can be considered a policy instrument. They write, "At the highest degree of integration, organizational procedural instruments will take the shape of a boundary-spanning structure or overarching authority that oversees, steers, and coordinates the problem as a whole" (p. 223). The SCP and its adjunct team cross the boundaries of five AUs and 22 SUs, and it does have its own unique authority even though the team does not vote on changes. That is because the authority vested within the SCP originates from the units that oversee certain policies: the AUs for faculty oversight of academic programming, and the SUs for oversight over internal and external policies that determine how changes are implemented. This vested authority yielded some tension between the AUs and SUs, as AUs wanted to ensure that the SCP did not infringe on AU authority over changes to academic programs.

Different subsystems use different policy instruments. This "mixture" of instruments develops over time, and they are "ad hoc" (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, p. 223). Instrument mixes can also be aligned between subgroups. Additionally, mixtures of policy instruments are likely to be more diverse for policy frames that require higher subsystem involvement. The outcomes of this study demonstrate that the high collaboration required for many changes that go through the SCP resulted in a diversity of policy instruments, some of which the AUs and SUs shared, and some of which were unique to the units depending on their role on the SCP team. One unique policy instrument was the subsystem as instrument. This trend extended to all of the partnerships. When facing a challenging change, AU and SU representatives consulted their AU-AU, SU-SU, and AU-SU partnerships, as applicable, because the partnerships housed the tools and resources

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they needed for policy integration and implementation. Within these partnerships, the participants relied on nitty-gritty meetings, where they discussed the minute details related to a change and reaching out to other stakeholders for wisdom. Both groups used Curriculog, which was the shared content management system used to track changes and provide feedback. Other policy instruments that were used as levers for change included both AU and SU participants' consultation of external resources, such as listservs, professional networks, and personal networks. If a stakeholder encountered a change or issue that was new to them, they reached out to these groups to gain guidance and advice.

Collaborative Partnerships

Subsystem involvement was another, important component of the policy (dis)integration framework (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018). Subsystem involvement is the number of organizational stakeholders involved in a change, ranging from one unit for changes that to not intersect with or require consultation with other units, to many units for cross-cutting, complex changes. The underlying understanding is that for cross-cutting problems, no one entity can solve the problem without consulting other subsystems (Cejudo & Michel, 2017). This idea that complex change is inherently collaborative reflects the fundamental ethos of the SCP.

This dissertation study narrowed the discussion on subsystem involvement, focusing specifically on two types of subsystems: AUs and SUs. They were a modification of Birnbaum's (1988) technical and administrative subsystems. Because the study narrowed the discussion on subsystems to AUs and SUs at one higher education institution, I was able to consider how the units interacted to implement changes. This exploration revealed three types of partnerships AU-AU, SU-SU, and AU-SU that were not discussed in the literature on change implementation. In contrast, the literature had revealed that poor collaboration and productivity between units

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overseeing a change could result in interference from high-level administrators who resort to top-down implementation (Clapp, 2007); strong, centralized leadership is necessary for smooth and effective change implementation (Candel, 2021). The study at hand revealed not only the specific types of partnerships that emerged in cross-cutting compliance contexts, but that they operated under the centralized leadership of the SCP, SCP team, and the SCP chair—none of which had decision-making authority. As I mentioned previously, the three types of partnerships were AU-AU, SU-SU, and AU-SU. AU-AU partnerships focused on idea sharing and support; SU-SU partnerships focused on strategizing about changes emerging from the AUs; and AU-SU partnerships were collaborations focused on external approval and the minute details of change implementation. Other than the SCP team, none of these teams were official, but because they were a product of the SCP team, they were under the authority of the centralized SCP, which was led by the SCP Chair, who was also the head of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The centralized purpose, role, and leadership of the SCP team allowed it to function as a guiding coalition for change (Kotter, 2012).

It seems likely that the positive, collegial atmosphere participants described of the SCP team translated to these subsidiary partnerships, which were also both collegial and yielded productive outcomes, helping to resolve problems and implement changes. Each partnership also doubled as a policy instrument (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018). Via collaboration the partnering units would gain and/or share resources to move the change process forward. In particular, each partnership type demonstrated that no one unit was capable of developing and implementing institutional changes independently.

Of course, in complex environments, stakeholders represent their particular interests, so it was only natural that tensions emerged between the AUs and SUs. Tensions existed because they

had different roles in the SCP process. AUs proposed changes to the academic curriculum and sought help from SUs to implement changes. SUs oversaw internal and external policies that shaped how a change could be implemented, and they consulted with AUs on how to implement changes. Consequently, there were times when SUs could direct an AU change.

How Higher Education Professionals Understand Organizations and Organizational Change

Educational change is a series of adjustments higher education institutions make that shape the programs and services they offer and interactions between the institutions and their constituents (Fowler, 2013). While external changes, such as those related to politics and technology, are often beyond institutional leaders' control (Bryson, 2018), institutions can often mediate their responses. Participants in this study made a variety of changes in response to the external environment, and their responses shaped how they understood their organization and organizational change.

The AU participants brought a variety of changes to the SCP team, and each change represented a different reaction to the external environment. The School of Biological Sciences, for example, proposed a practical master's degree program to appeal to students who did not want to complete a research-based master's degree in the field. The institution sought approval for a new School of Data Analysis and Processing to provide educational opportunities for students in a popular and emerging field. In other cases, changes that were less substantive were made, such as changing a concentration in the undergraduate degree program in education. State-level mandates resulted in the School of Education adding a third literacy course and emphasizing special education. Participants often brought these changes after significant planning within their AUs, consultation with third parties, and review of market analyses (Bryson, 2018). And through this engagement with colleagues and experts, participants—

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particularly AU participants—began to learn about higher education on the job. They learned about the types of changes that would benefit institutional constituents and would boost revenue. As these changes were approved by faculty and were brought to the SCP team, participants learned, too, about the requirements of the state and accrediting organizations. Through these processes and networks, participants learned more about their institution, how higher education worked in their context, and formed strong professional relationships with their colleagues. Much of these interactions and a lot of the knowledge gained would not have been achieved without the positive force of the SCP.

Redesigning the Policy Disintegration Framework for Higher Education

I relied on the policy (dis)integration framework to ground this study. The framework was not perfectly matched for higher education; Candel and Biesbroek (2016, 2018) had designed it for implementation in generalized, national contexts. As such, the results of this study can be used to design a new version of the policy (dis)integration framework for substantive change at higher education institutions. The original framework had four dimensions: policy frame, policy goal, policy instrument, and subsystem involvement (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018). As I analyzed the participant interviews, SCP team observations, SCP, and Curriculog, I focused less on the policy frame and policy goal dimensions, and more on the policy instrument and subsystem involvement. Subsystem involvement was a primary focus due to the research questions: I was interested in how the AUs and SUs (a) work together, (b), integrate internal and external policies, and (c) what they learned from the SCP. These research questions focused less on the policy frame and goal dimensions. Additionally, the SCP, by design, shifted my focus from the policy frame and policy goal dimensions. First, the SCP functions as a framework that is used to filter out changes that do not require subsystem involvement at the institutional level.

Second, the policy frame of the SCP is whether the change requires external reporting and whether the change can have a cumulative effect (i.e., some changes are minor, but if several minor changes are made over time, they will require external reporting). Third, the policy goal of the SCP is to ensure cross-collaboration and communication for substantive institutional changes. With these three points in mind, the specific types of changes, which represent various policy goals, policy frames, and policy instruments, become less significant. Rather, what is more significant to the SCP is that the right changes are filtered through the SCP. The SCP tells stakeholders involved in change processes at SCU the level of integration that is required and the types of changes that require it. The policy frame and policy goals are pre-defined.

With this discussion in mind, I recommend several changes to the policy disintegration framework. To launch this discussion, I should remind the reader of Figure 11, which I presented in Chapter 1. Figure 11 reflects how the frameworks selected for this dissertation study work together:

Figure 11

How the Frameworks Work Together
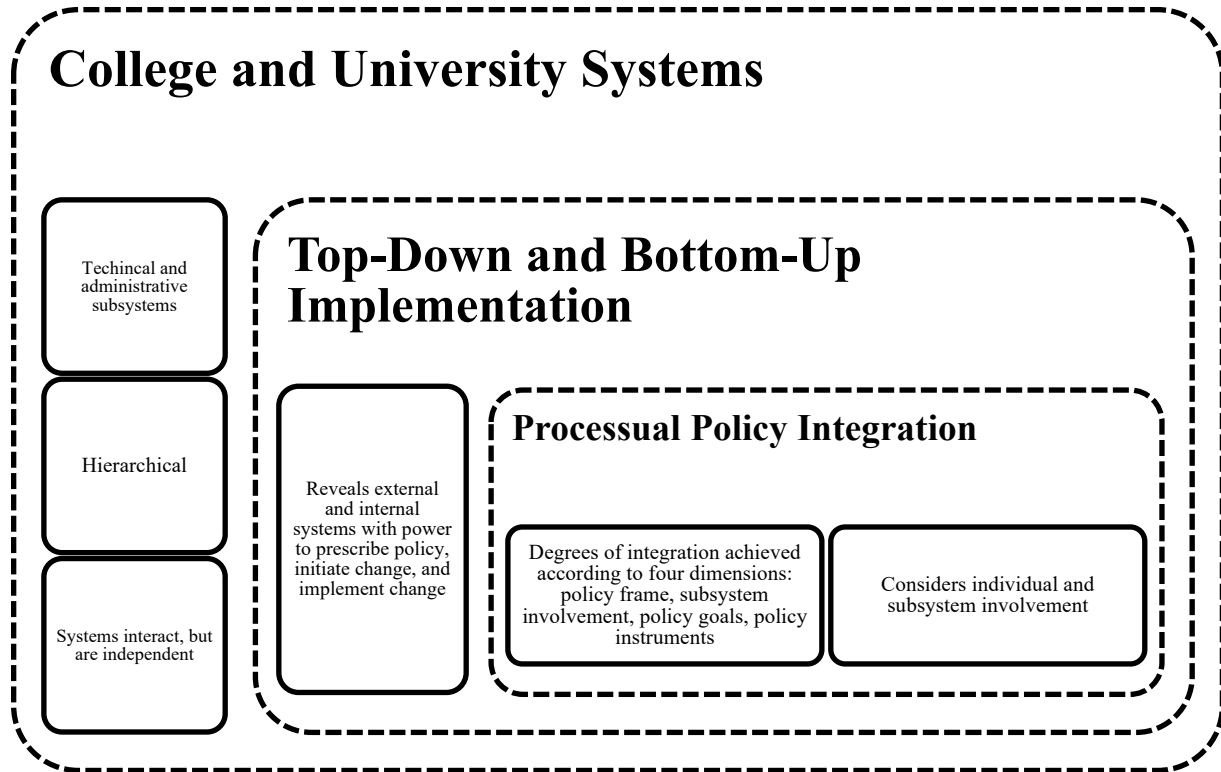
In this study, the SCP represented the third nested box in the figure: processual policy

integration. To narrow the focus to the institution-level, this figure can be redesigned, as

presented in Figure 12.

Figure 12

Policy Integration at the College and University Level

> **External Mandates Developed in External Environment**
>
> - USDOE
> - Accrediting Bodies
> - State Department for Higher Education
>
> **Individual College/University**
> - Academic Units
> - Support Units
>
> **Substantive Change Policy**
> - Facilitates AU-AU, SU-SU, and AU-SU partnerships
> - Policy instruments used to catalyze change processes
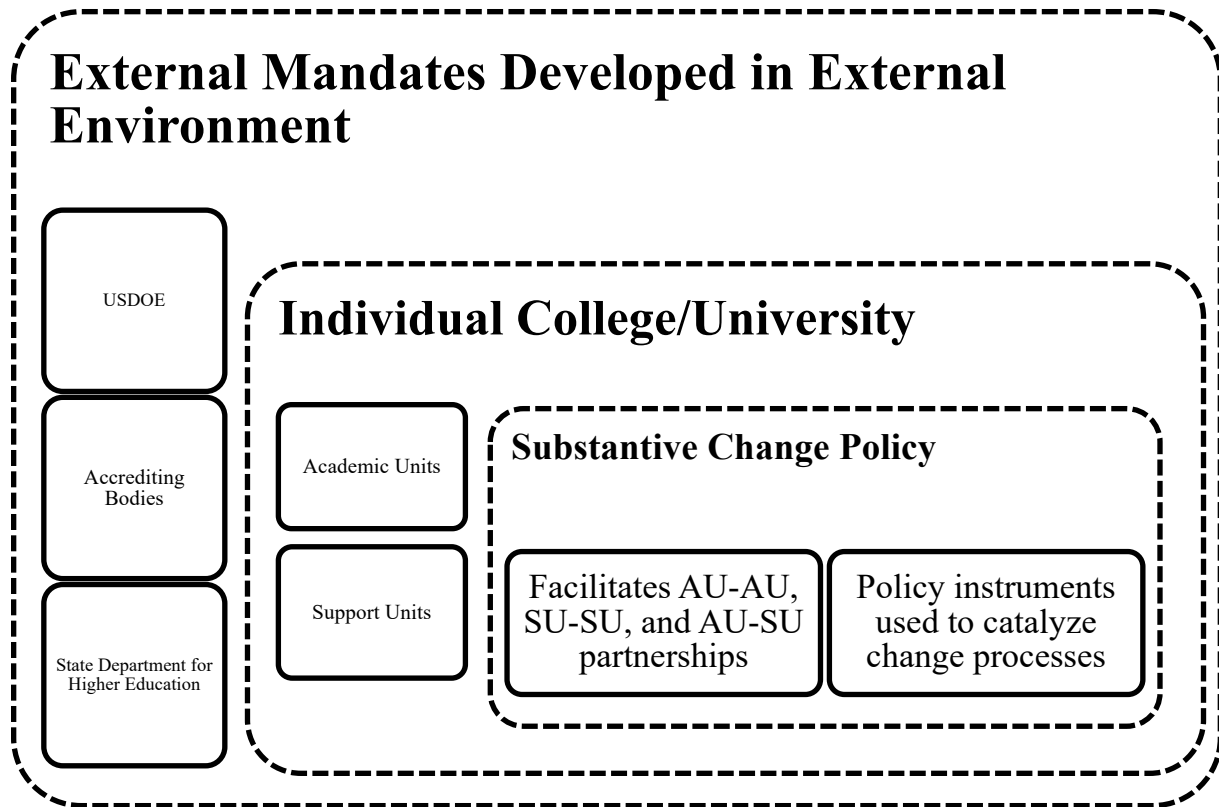
Note. AUs and SUs are academic units and support units, respectively.

Figure 12 demonstrates the way in which each college and university accepting federal and/or state aid is nested into the external environment, which is comprised of the triad: the USDOE, accrediting bodies, and state departments for higher education. The AUs and SUs, which are housed in colleges and universities, are affected by and must respond to these external mandates when faculty members want to make changes requiring outside approval. To manage complex changes while maintaining compliance, institutions benefit from an SCP—even if one is not required by their accrediting agency as it was for SCU. The SCP serves as the tool for policy integration, filtering changes that require external approval prior to implementation and require

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input from other AUs and SUs. The SCP unites AUs and SUs through partnerships and encourages the use of policy instruments to improve the change implementation process. The AUs represent a college or university's faculty bodies, who oversee the curriculum and have authority over modifications to it. The SUs represent entities that do not oversee academic programming, though they do represent the specialists who know the internal and external regulations governing institutional change. To fully understand the policy integration facilitated by an SCP, it is important to zoom in on the SCP portion of the figure, which I present in Figure 13. This figure reflects policy integration working in context in the SCP process.

Figure 13

SCP as a Policy Disintegration Framework
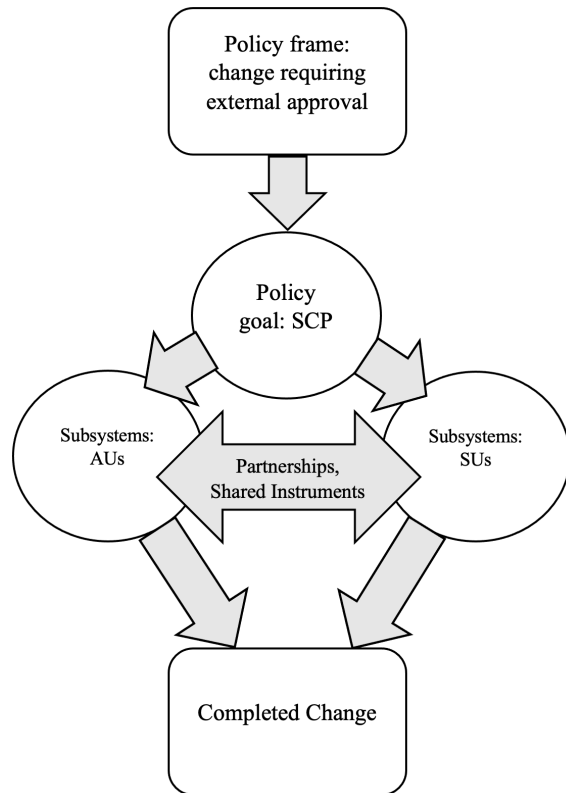
Note. The SCP is the substantive change policy. AUs and SUs are academic units and support units, respectively.

In Figure 13, the four dimensions of the policy disintegration framework (Candel & Biesbroek's, 2016, 2018) are integrated into the SCP version of the policy disintegration framework in the following ways:

1. Policy frame: The policy frame is any external change requiring approval from the State Department for Higher Education, federal government, or institutional accrediting body. The institution requires any change meeting these criteria to flow through the SCP. The SCP necessitates that other AU and SU stakeholders to be

notified (at minimum) and contribute to the change (at most) for successful implementation, which further demonstrates that SCP changes are cross-cutting changes.

2. Policy goal: The policy goal of the SCP is that for each change internal and external policies are integrated and independent subsystems are brought together in partnerships to resolve a policy frame. As demonstrated in Figure 13, the SCP unites independent AUs and SUs, which oversee internal and external policies and processes, as applicable. This integration of units with different purposes can yield tension between the two groups as they represent their expressed interests in higher education, oversight of curricular development (AUs), and compliance with internal and external policies (SUs), which may not always align.

3. Subsystem involvement: The SCP necessitates that both AUs and SUs are involved in changes that must be filtered through the SCP because they are cross-cutting changes that cannot be siloed for implementation to be successful. In the case of the SCP, the subsystems involved are AU and SU policy actors who are also members of the SCP team. Outside of the SCP context, they are independent units, but the SCP draws them together via unique partnerships facilitated by the SCP. As discussed in Chapter 5, these partnerships emerged in three forms (AU-AU, SU-SU, and AU-SU) with the primary, official partnership being the SCP team (AU-SU). The SCP's unification of AUs and SUs that might not partner in any other context can change the nature of coupling. Generally, higher education institutions are loosely coupled (Weick, 1976), but the SCP brings AUs and SUs together to solve shared problems, generating more tightly coupled systems for the purpose institutional change.

4. Policy instrument: AUs and SUs rely on a variety of policy instruments to collaborate over cross-cutting changes, such as meetings. Some instruments were shared, such as the Curriculog tool, and others were unique, such as the AUs' use of champions and whipping the votes to move changes processes along.

In summary, this interpretive framework focuses on how an effective SCP facilitates collaboration between AUs and SUs via partnerships and shared policy instruments to yield a completed change that conforms to internal and external polices.

Because there have not been studies focusing on higher education change processes, the outcomes of this study present a good opportunity for recommendations. In this section, I discuss recommendations for research and for practice. I summarize the recommendations for research and practice in Table 15, located at the end of this section.

Recommendations for Practice

My recommendations for practice stem from suggestions participants made during their interviews. Some of their suggestions were ones they were already thinking about before the study began, and others emerged from our discussions. These recommendations included improved onboarding and training for new members, SCP and SCP teams at the AU and SU levels, and a regular audit to ensure that the SCP and SCP team do not transform into a decision-making policy and body. These recommendations can be applied to SCPs developed at other institutions. While these recommendations are specific to an institution that wants to develop its own version of the SCP or perfect one that already exists, this study, in general, speaks to the broader importance of establishing an SCP at any institution, regardless of institution type, size, and unique characteristics. The themes that emerged in this study reveal that change implementation within higher education institutions cannot occur in a vacuum. No individual and

no single academic or support unit can engage in substantive change implementation successfully (Cejudo & Michel, 2017). Hopefully, at minimum, higher education professionals who read this study will recognize this reality and take the first steps toward developing an SCP at their institution. I, too, will gather what I have learned via this study to create one where I work.

Onboarding and Training for New SCP team Members. Institutions that develop or choose to revise their SCPs should ensure that all stakeholders, regardless of their degree of involvement in changes, are onboarded so that they understand the purpose of the SCP, the role of external entities, and their roles on the team (Alstete, 2004; Bryson 2018). When I interviewed one participant who was new to the SCP, they were unsure of the exact nature of their role on the SCP other than observation and awareness. Although they interpreted their role correctly, members should enter the committee with a clear understanding of their purpose on the team, as well as the state, accrediting, and federal regulations with which changes intersect.

SCPs and SCP teams at the AU and SU Levels. The SCP is an institutional-level policy, but individual AU and SU units will also benefit from having coordinating bodies and intentional policy integration at local levels. SU-level SCPs, such as the trifecta and the leadership teams in Financial Aid and the Registrar, and AU-SU SCPs, such as Continuing Conversations: Business School, emerged because of work occurring on the SCP. The success of these teams indicates that they will be beneficial in other areas (Alstete, 2004; Birnbaum, 1988; Bryson, 2018), such as within the AUs. One School of Education stakeholder, for example, mentioned they wanted to develop institutional change resources for their unit and, perhaps, develop a set of online resources suitable for the faculty and staff they represent. Developing change teams at the academic level would help streamline processes and standardize resources

for different types of changes, to include proposal templates like the ones that are used for the SCP team. At the AU-level, these templates could be useful to faculty submitting changes and for submissions to specialized accrediting bodies. Additionally, developing change teams at the academic level would help instill a culture of institutional change. If faculty generally become future administrators (e.g., deans who will serve on an SCP), a culture of institutional change will help introduce them to institutional change processes.

Audit SCP and SCP team. Finally, to ensure that the SCP and the SCP team do not evolve into authoritative entities, it is important for teams like the SCP to audit themselves to ensure they remain a collaborative—and not authoritative—entity (Birnbaum, 1988; Bryson, 2018). Similarly, to protect the relationship between AU representatives and decision-making faculty, the SCP Chair should work with AU representatives to ensure changes are not announced too soon, which was a concern the Assistant Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs (Business School) expressed. A stable SCP is essential for institutions as they navigate the ever-changing higher education policy environment.

Recommendations for Policy

One of the primary challenges facing higher education institutions is that policies emerging from the external environment are not coordinated and are becoming increasingly complicated (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018; Pont & Viennet, 2017; Trein et al., 2020): the triad does not create policies to accommodate institutional individuality. Policy integration between State Departments of Education, institutional and specialized accrediting organizations, and the federal government is poor, leaving institutions to figure out how to negotiate policy independently. However, non-government organizations exist that can help higher education institutions improve their policy integration strategies. These organizations include the State

Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC), Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), and Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA). These well-known organizations can provide public resources (e.g., example policies, example resources like those seen on the SCP webpage) and training for institutional stakeholders who oversee compliance issues, helping to transform complex policy work into practical application. I summarize these recommendations for policy and practice in Table 19.

Table 19

Summary of Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Findings	Related Recommendations	Supporting Literature
Overall importance of SCP for directing change implementation	Institutions lacking an SCP should develop and implement one	Bryson (2018); SACSCOC (2023)
Participants' developed knowledge of the organization and external mandates	Institutions with SCPs should provide training related to institutional processes, external mandates, and the SCP	Alstete (2004); Bryson (2018)
SU-SU and AU-AU partnerships yield Mini SCPs	Institutions should encourage AUs and SUs to make Mini SCPs and resources, similar to the SCP webpage, to organize change and create change at local levels	Alstete (2004); Birnbaum (1988); Bryson (2018)
AUs engaged in boundary checking while engaging in collaborative partnerships	Review/audit SCP and SCP team to ensure it retains its purposes of coordination and integration	Birnbaum (1988); Bryson (2018)
SCU used internal governance policies to integrate internal and external mandates	SHEEO, C-RAC, CHEA, and ASPA can coordinate to improve understanding of policy integration for higher education institutions	Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, 2018; Pont & Viennet, 2017; Trein et al., 2020

Note. The SCP is the substantive change policy. SCU is Substantive Change University. AUs and SUs are academic units and support units, respectively.

If followed, these recommendations for policy and practice can yield improvements to change processes for institutions, thus establishing productive cultures of institutional change, educating stakeholders, and potentially, improving the quality of updates to academic programming colleges and universities submit to external constituents.

Future Research

To better understand institutional strategies for implementing substantive changes, it is important to explore higher education change strategies in other contexts. This study considered a midsize, public institution. Although there is no research to indicate that an SCP would be more or less successful at a smaller or larger institution, it is possible that the size of this institution contributed to its success. Institution size, of course, cannot be considered without also looking at institutional culture and change history, which affected policy actors' willingness to work together in this study. Considering these factors, future researchers should study SCPs at large public and small public institutions, as well as large and small private, non-profit and private, proprietary institutions. Control determines the type of policies to which an institution must adhere. Private institutions, for example, have less state oversight compared with public ones (Kaplin et al., 2020). Additionally, institution size can reflect the number of institutional stakeholders who work on changes, with smaller Offices of Institutional Effectiveness being more likely at small schools. However, it is important to remember that the size of the institution does not always determine how complex changes can get. The complexity of changes will be determined by the variety of degree programs offered (e.g., baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral); the number of modalities offered (e.g., on campus and online); and whether the institution has off-campus instruction sites, among other examples. In looking at these contexts, it may also be helpful to explore SCP development over time at one or more institutions to observe how the policy and the culture around institutional change, for example, evolve over time.

Future researchers should include additional SU stakeholders in their studies, as only four SU participants were represented here (Registrar, Director of Financial Aid, Assistant Vice

President for Institutional Effectiveness, Director of Student Advising). Because I was unable to include the Bursar and a stakeholder from Institutional Research, participants from these areas should be looped into future studies. As researchers explore how more SU stakeholders navigate change, they should also consider how these roles require specialized knowledge and skills for processes to work and institutions to maintain compliance.

In addition to exploring other types of institutions, it is also important that future researchers explore the cultures of change at different institutions. One important aspect of institutional change that emerged once in this study was stakeholder resistance to change processes and change oversight. At SCU, stakeholders welcomed the implementation of the SCP and the SCP team because they had experienced life without such a group and policy. There was some skepticism in the Arts & Sciences AU, but the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Academic Programs explained to faculty that the SCP's purpose was not to make decisions or approve changes but to ensure changes can be implemented smoothly. However, low resistance to an SCP will not be the case at all institutions. Therefore, it is helpful to explore how high-resistance cultures navigate substantive change policies that are mandated from the institutional accreditor. Finally, one outcome of this study was a revised policy (dis)integration framework for higher education institutions. This framework should be implemented in future studies to test its applicability, and also, to suggest ways in which it can be revised or expanded. Compliance with external policies is certainly an aspect of higher education that will remain, and it is important for scholars to continue research in this area to understand how institutions of all types navigate policy environments, and to help the stakeholders managing these processes to improve their change processes and ease the burden of compliance. The future research suggestions I discussed above only further qualitative research in this area. Quantitative methodologies will also be

beneficial for future researchers to explore SPCs in broader contexts. A researcher might, for example, survey heads of offices of institutional effectiveness to better understand the status of change policies and the culture of change at various institutions.

The qualitive suggestions are primarily recommendations for similar studies to be replicated in other contexts, but themes that emerged also warrant further exploration. By design, the SCP united AU and SU representatives from across the institution. In many cases, these representatives already knew each other from other institutional contexts, such as the all-dean meetings that occurred during COVID. In other cases, new partnerships emerged as participants engaged on the team. The partnerships suggest that a social network analysis of an SCP will illuminate the relational dynamics between SCP team members, exploring how and why certain partnerships form, how long they last, the power dynamics within individual partnerships, within the SCP, and as appliable, at the broader institutional level. Such an analysis may also improve understanding of the role of faculty authority over the curriculum in a process that is not described as authoritative but does yield some decision-making authority to the SUs due to their oversight of policy.

Summary

As I progressed through this research study, one thought repeated itself. I needed to develop and implement a stronger institutional change policy and process at the institution where I serve as the Director of Institutional Effectiveness. The institutional culture and strong faculty power make this task feel daunting even though my institution is significantly smaller than SCU. Similarly, I hope this study also drives home the importance of change policies for my readers: if your institution lacks a change policy, develop one, implement it, and work hard to develop a positive culture of institutional change that will sustain both the policy and the process. This

culture of change and the strong partnerships I described were the bread and butter of the SCP process. Without them, the policy would have existed, but it would have been static, and change implementation would have been as messy as it was at the first institution where I worked in accreditation and assessment. Institutions developing SCPs or modifying existing ones should pay close attention to the actors involved: who partners with who, the policy instruments they use to work together, the power dynamics of these partnerships, and how these partnerships connect to the SCP team and institution at large. Both AUs and SUs serve as gatekeepers and have authority unique to their roles in change processes. Understanding these dynamics can help SCP chairs (or the equivalent) navigate the complex relational and policy dynamics within their institutions so that changes can be approved by internal and external entities with minimal drama.

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Interview 1 Protocol

Date	
Location	Zoom
Name	
Department	
Department type	
Position	

Introduction

1. Introduce myself, say thank you, describe the study, and recap what will happen during Zoom session. Briefly discuss second interview
    a. Interview should take 30-60 minutes.
2. Before we begin, do you have questions?

Questions

1. Please define the SCP in your own words.
2. How would you define your role on the SCP team?
3. Please describe your experience with the SCP.
    a. How long have you been on the SCP team?[4]
    b. What's a typical meeting like?
        i. How long are they?
        ii. Who talks the most?
4. How do the departments interact with each other when working through institutional changes?
    a. Which departments do you interact with most?
    b. Can you provide an example?

Policy Frame: Academic Units

1. How do departments in your school know a change should be brought to the Substantive Change Policy (SCP) Team?
    a. What might trigger a decision to move to the SCP team?
    b. Who typically initiates the process?
2. Can you describe the types of changes you have brought to the SCP team?
    a. How did the suggested changes emerge? Was there a champion?

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[4] Make note of whether any members were on the team since the beginning.

3. How has your membership on the SCP team shaped the way you think about implementing changes at your university?
    a. Describe for me what you know now that you may not have before.
4. Have you recommended changes to the SCP itself and its associated processes?

Policy Frame: Support Units

1. Generally, support units do not bring changes to the SCP, but if your unit has, can you tell me about it?
    a. Have you recommended changes to the SCP itself and associated processes?
2. How have you encouraged academic units to bring changes to the SCP?
    a. What might trigger a decision to move to the SCP team?
    b. Who typically initiates the process?
3. Can you describe the types of changes you have brought to the SCP team?
    a. How did the suggested changes emerge? Was there a champion?
4. How has your membership on the SCP team shaped the way you think about implementing changes at your university?
    a. Describe for me what you know now that you did not know before.

Subsystem Involvement: Academic Units

1. Can you provide an example of other departments/schools your school consulted when it wanted to implement a change?
    a. How did you determine which stakeholder groups to consult and which groups did not require consultation?
    b. How did your consultation with the stakeholders influence the change?
    c. Describe the typical circle of stakeholders that most often consult with you on changes. How stable is this group?
2. How much autonomy does your department have when developing or implementing changes?
    a. What other areas might be impacted by changes you might make? Can you provide an example?
3. Can you describe the quantity and depth of your interactions with other SCP team members?
    a. Who do you typically engage with the most?
    b. Who seeks you out the most?

Subsystem Involvement: Support Units

1. Can you describe how you encouraged another department to implement a change?

     a.   Who consulted you?

     b.   How did your consultation with the stakeholders influence the change?

2.   How much autonomy does your department have when developing or implementing changes?

     a.   What other areas might be impacted by changes you might make? Can you provide an example?

     b.   Describe the typical circle of stakeholders that most often consult with you on changes. How stable is this group?

3.   Can you describe the quantity and depth of your interactions with other SCP team members?

     a.   Who do you typically engage with the most?

     b.   Who seeks you out the most?

Policy Goals

1.   What are examples of university policies and external policies your unit must consider when it wants to implement changes?

     a.   How do unit-specific accreditation requirements influence how you approach your departmental changes?

     b.   How do SCHEV requirements influence how you approach changes?

     c.   How do federal policies influence how you approach change?

2.   What are examples of policies you oversee that impact other departments that want to implement changes?

     a.   Describe for me how a change in this area might go from start to finish.

3.   The SCP is designed to make implementing changes a coherent process. Have you observed ways in which your department has adjusted its policies and processes to align with the SCP?

     a.   How does the SCP make policy implementation more coherent?

Policy Instruments

1.   What strategies does your department use to implement changes?

     a.   How do these strategies differ depending on the scope of change?

2.   What strategies does your department use to help other departments implement changes?

     a.   What triggers you reaching out to help other departments as they implement change?

3.   How does your department ensure other departments remain in compliance with the university policies and external policies your department manages?

     a.   How are the policies implemented when the change impacts multiple units?

4. Describe the alignment between the SCP and the policies and processes your department manages?
    a. What type of ongoing evaluations are in place?
5. Is there anything else I should consider as I develop my understanding of how the SCP works?
6. The SCP is published online, and there are many resources available on the webpage. Can you describe how you have used these resources when implementing changes?
    a. What do you think of them?
    b. Are they confusing? Helpful? Easy to use?

Interview 2 Protocol

Date	
Location	Zoom
Name	
Department	
Department type	
Position	

Introduction

1. Introduce myself, say thank you, recap what will happen during the second interview.
   a. Interview should take 30-60 minutes.
2. Before we begin, do you have questions?

Questions

1. Recap Interview 1 and state the focus of Interview 2.

Policy Frame[5]

1. Who in your department leads change processes (e.g., a point person that is the same each time, the person most effected)?
   a. Does leadership/contribution change depending on the role of individuals in your department?
   b. Does leadership/contribution depend on the type of change?
2. Can you describe your processes for identifying the stakeholders who should be involved in change processes?
3. How has your membership on the SCP shaped how you understanding higher education?

Subsystem Involvement

1. What is the role of groups external to the institution, such as an accreditor, state or federal entity, or groups of which you're a member (e.g., professional association)?
2. Can you describe a time when you implemented a change without consultation with other departments and if there were unseen consequences that emerged?
3. Describe for me an example of a change process requiring input from other departments that was in-depth and long lasting.

---

[5] I used the phrase "your department" because each participant represents their department. I hope participants will include personal experiences and statements about their department in their responses.

Policy Goals

1. What are examples of university policies and external policies your unit must consider when it wants to implement changes?
2. What internal processes/check lists do you follow when wanting to implement changes?
   a. Do others in your department use these?
3. How do you determine which changes might impact other departments?
4. Describe for me any challenges that emerged due change processes your department developed.

Policy Instruments: Academic Units

1. How do champions of the changes your department implements engage in the implementation of policy?
   a. Please describe whether these policies are internal, the SCP, accreditation standards, state, or federal.
2. Describe instances when you may not have reached out to help other departments when they were working through changes and what happened as a result.
3. How does reporting on the evaluation of new change policies and implementing change look in your department? How might this differ across the institution (e.g., same process for everyone or homegrown based on department)?

Policy Instruments: Support Units

1. How do champions of the changes your department implements engage in the implementation of policy?
   a. Please describe whether these policies are internal, the SCP, accreditation standards, state, or federal.
2. Describe instances when you may not have reached out to help other departments when they were working through changes and what happened as a result.
3. What type of repercussions exist for departments that are not compliant with implementing changes your department manages?
4. How does reporting on the evaluation of new change policies and implementing change look in your department? How might this differ across the institution (e.g., same process for everyone or homegrown based on department)?

Appendix C

Table of Specifications: Crosswalk with Research Questions and Interview Questions

Interview Questions: Round 1

	RQ 1	RQ 2	RQ 3

How do departments in your school know a change should be brought to the Substantive Change Policy (SCP) Team?
    What might trigger a decision to move to the SCP team?
    Who typically initiates the process? (policy frame: AUs)
	X		

Can you describe the types of changes you have brought to the SCP team?
    How did the suggested changes emerge?
    Was there a champion? (policy frame: AUs)
	X		

How has your membership on the SCP team shaped the way you think about implementing changes at your university? Describe for me what you know now that you may not have before. (policy frame: AUs)	X		X
Have you recommended changes to the SCP itself and its associated processes? (policy frame: AUs)	X		X
Generally, support units do not bring changes to the SCP, but if your unit has, can you tell me about it? Have you recommended changes to the SCP itself and associated processes? (policy frame: SUs)	X		

How have you encouraged academic units to bring changes to the SCP?
    What might trigger a decision to move to the SCP team?
    Who typically initiates the process? (policy frame: SUs)
	X		

Can you describe the types of changes you have brought to the SCP team? How did the suggested changes emerge?	X		

Was there a champion? (policy frame: SUs)			
How has your membership on the SCP team shaped the way you think about implementing changes at your university? Describe for me what you know now that you did not know before. (policy frame: SUs			X

Can you provide an example of other departments/schools your school consulted when it wanted to implement a change?
    How did you determine which stakeholder groups to consult and which groups did not require consultation?
    How did your consultation with the stakeholders influence the change?
    Describe the typical circle of stakeholders that most often consult with you on changes. How stable is this group? (subsystem involvement: AUs)
	X		

How much autonomy does your department have when developing or implementing changes? What other areas might be impacted by changes you might make? Can you provide an example? (subsystem involvement: AUs)	X	X	

Can you describe the quantity and depth of your interactions with other SCP team members?
    Who do you typically engage with the most?
    Who seeks you out the most? (subsystem involvement: AUs)
	X		X

Can you describe how you encouraged another department to implement a change?
    Who consulted you?
    How did your consultation with the stakeholders influence the change? (subsystem involvement: SUs)
	X		

How much autonomy does your department have when developing or implementing changes?
    What other areas might be impacted by changes you might make? Can you provide an example?
    Describe the typical circle of stakeholders that most often consult with you on changes. How stable is this group? (subsystem involvement: SUs)
	X	X	

Question			

Can you describe the quantity and depth of your interactions with other SCP team members?
    Who do you typically engage with the most?
    Who seeks you out the most? (subsystem involvement: SUs)
	X		X

What are examples of university policies and external policies your unit must consider when it wants to implement changes?
    How do unit-specific accreditation requirements influence how you approach your departmental changes?
    How do SCHEV requirements influence how you approach changes?
    How do federal policies influence how you approach change? (policy goals)
		X	

What are examples of policies you oversee that impact other departments that want to implement changes? Describe for me how a change in this area might go from start to finish. (policy goals)	X	X	
The SCP is designed to make implementing changes a coherent process. Have you observed ways in which your department has adjusted its policies and processes to align with the SCP? How does the SCP make policy implementation more coherent? (policy goals)		X	
What strategies does your department use to implement changes? How do these strategies differ depending on the scope of change? (policy instrument)	X	X	
What strategies does your department use to help other departments implement changes? What triggers you reaching out to help other departments as they implement change? (policy instrument)	X	X	
How does your department ensure other departments remain in compliance with the university policies and external policies your department manages? How are the policies implemented when the change impacts multiple units? (policy instrument)	X	X	
Describe the alignment between the SCP and the policies and processes your department manages? What type of ongoing evaluations are in place? (policy instrument)		X	

Is there anything else I should consider as I develop my understanding of how the SCP works? (policy instrument)	X	X	X
The SCP is published online, and there are many resources available on the webpage. Can you describe how you have used these resources when implementing changes? What do you think of them? Are they confusing? Helpful? Easy to use? (policy instrument)		X	

Interview Questions: Round 2

	RQ 1	RQ 2	RQ 3
Who in your department leads change processes (e.g., a point person that is the same each time, the person most effected)?	X		
Can you describe your processes for identifying the stakeholders who should be involved in change processes?	X	X	
How has your membership on the SCP shaped how you understanding higher education?			X
What is the role of groups external to the institution, such as an accreditor, state or federal entity, or groups of which you're a member (e.g., professional association)?		X	
Can you describe a time when you implemented a change without consultation with other departments and if there were unseen consequences that emerged?	X	X	
Describe for me an example of a change process requiring input from other departments that was in-depth and long lasting.	X		X
What are examples of university policies and external policies your unit must consider when it wants to implement changes?	X	X	
What internal processes/check lists do you follow when wanting to implement changes?	X	X	
How do you determine which changes might impact other departments?		X	
Describe for me any challenges that emerged due to change processes your department developed.		X	X
How do champions of the changes your department implements engage in the implementation of the policy?	X	X	

Describe instances when you may not have reached out to help other departments and what happened as a result.	X	X	X
What type of repercussions exist for departments that are not compliant with implementing changes your department manages?	X	X	
How does reporting on the evaluation of new change policies and implementing change look in your department? How might this differ across the institution (e.g., same process for everyone or homegrown based on department)?	X		

Research Information Plan (Email)

Hello,

My name is Rachel Smith. I am a Ph.D. student in the William & Mary School of Education. My dissertation research focuses on the use of policy integration within higher education institutions that are implementing significant changes. In order to study policy integration in higher education, I will observe the [SCU] [SCP] Meetings, which occur monthly via Zoom. You are receiving this document because you regularly or occasionally attend these meetings, and Dr. [SCP Chair], has agreed that the [SCP team] will serve as the context for my dissertation study.

What does this mean for you? I am requesting to observe approximately four Zoom meetings in September, October, November, and December of the Fall 2023 semester. If any of the meetings are canceled, I plan to attend a meeting in the Spring 2024 to make it up. I will be present in the Zoom meeting, but my camera will be off, and I will not record the sessions. However, I will be accessible via the chat function during the meetings. I will not record your name or any information that shows your identity, and you will not be required to sign any form. My hope is that I can gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which [SCU] integrates its internal and external policies to implement significant changes at the institution, which is an important task for any institution accepting state and/or federal aid and that maintains accreditation. Attached you will find a research information sheet with more details about the study.

You do not need to respond with any formal consent; however, if you are uncomfortable with me being present or observing the meetings, please reach out to me via email at resmith@hsc.edu. I am also available to answer any questions you have about me or the research project.

Thank you so much and I look forward to attending the [SCP Meetings]!

Best,

Rachel

Rachel Smith
Doctoral Student
School of Education
William & Mary

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, or regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than myself, you are encouraged to contact the William & Mary School of Education Institutional Review Committee (EDIRC) (EDIRC-2023-08-11-16490-lwgran). You can contact the head of EDIRC for the William & Mary School of Education, Dr. Tom Ward (tjward@wm.edu).

Research Information Sheet

Research Information Sheet
William & Mary School of Education

Exploring How Policy Integration Facilitates Change Implementation at a Midsize, Public, Research University: A Case Study

[SCP team] Information Sheet

You are being asked to voluntarily participate in a research study. I am doing this study to explore how policy integration occurs within a higher education institution in the United States. If you choose to participate, four [SCP Meetings] will be observed in September, October, November, and December 2023. I will attend additional meetings in Spring 2024 if any Fall 2023 meetings are canceled or if I am unable to attend.

While I will attend the meetings, I will not record the sessions. I will take notes, but I will not record your name or any information that alludes to your identity. You will not sign this form.

I will store my notes in ways that I think are secure. I will store papers in a locked room that only I can access. I will store electronic files in computer systems with password protection. However, I cannot guarantee complete confidentiality.

If you have questions, please contact the sole researcher, Rachel Smith, resmith@hsc.edu, 757-339-8211. The faculty advisor for this project is Dr. Leslie Grant, lwgran@wm.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, about the study, or would like to talk to someone other than myself, you may contact the Dr. Tom Ward, W&M EDIRC, tjward@wm.edu. Please reference this EDIRC protocol code: EDIRC-2023-08-11-16490-lwgran.

Appendix F

SCP Team Meeting Direct Observation

[date]
[length of meeting]

Attendance

Name	Title	Department	Unit Type

General Meeting Notes

	Notes
Tone of meeting	
Participants' interactions	
Topics discussed	
Length at which meeting items were discussed: which topics does the team spend more time on?	
What types of comments from members?	
Details about anyone who reached out to me before or after the meeting (e.g., email, Zoom chat)	

Assessment of Policy (Dis)integration

Policy Frame

Definition	In the context of institutional change processes in higher education, the policy frame relates to/addresses the institutional change itself. An institutional change triggers the integration and consultation of stakeholders who contribute the breath of institutional knowledge and experience required to implement the change. However, the reality that change requires focused contribution from multiple units does not mean that all appropriate units are consulted and/or integrated into change processes; integration will vary.	
Degrees	For the policy frame, the degree of policy integration is determined by the degree to which trans-institutional collaboration is required. Therefore, at the low end of the spectrum, the change will not require trans-institutional collaboration. A change in this category might be a minor curricular change, such as the update of a course description or number that should require limited (if any) faculty approval and a simple adjustment to the applicable Academic Catalog and associated documents by the Registrar. At the high end of the spectrum, the change will require trans-institutional collaboration. A change in this category might be the adoption of online education as a new modality for the institution for multiple degree programs.	

Subsystem Involvement

Definition	In the context of higher education, subsystem involvement represents the diverse academic and support units, and independent stakeholders, as applicable, who engage/interact intentionally/purposefully to implement a specific change.	
Degrees	There are two degrees related to subsystem involvement: 1) the number of academic and support units that need to be involved, and 2) the quantity and depth of the interactions between the involved units. For the first density (i.e., number of units involved), a low level of integration among the subsystems occurs when change/power/decision making is housed within one unit. Subsystem involvement may be low if 1) it is not necessary to integrate other units because the change does not necessitate trans-institutional collaboration, or 2) other subsystems who should be involved in the institutional change are not integrated even though they are affected by the change and/or the	

| | change requires their knowledge and expertise. In this case, there could be a variety of reasons why the appropriate stakeholders are not integrated into the change process. A high level of integration occurs when all the relevant stakeholders are integrated into the change processes.

For the second degree (i.e., quantity and dept of interactions between relevant stakeholders, a low level of integration occurs when 1) there is no interaction between units because change implementation is siloed, or 2) interaction between units is unnecessary because the change is not substantive and does not require trans-institutional collaboration. A high level of integration between units occurs when there are regular, frequent, and meaningful interactions between all of the relevant academic and support units involved in the change. | |

Policy Goals

Definition	Complex changes often trigger/intersect with internal policies and mandates from the triad. For example, the decision to offer a degree program at a level not currently available at the institution (e.g., offering graduate degrees when only bachelor's degrees are offered) will require state and accreditor approval at a public institution in Virginia. Complex changes are accompanied by diverse, external policies that must be addressed. Additionally, policy goals address the level of coherence (i.e., unity) between the various polices related to the change.	
Degrees	There are two degrees for policy goals: 1) the number of policies triggered by the change, and 2) the coherence between the policies. For the first degree, there may be only a couple of internal and/or external policies triggered by the change, or there may be many intersecting internal and external policies triggered by a change. A more complex change will trigger more policies, and these polices may have contrasting policy goals. For the second degree, the coherence between the policies is largely determined by the institution and the stakeholders related to the change because mandates from the triad are largely uncoordinated. Therefore, coherence of policy goals must be achieved via intentional organization from relevant institutional stakeholders. In an ideal example, institutional stakeholders will know which internal and external policies apply to the change in question and apply them in a manner/order that ensures the change will be approved and implemented.	

Policy Instruments

Definition	To implement a change at a higher education institution, stakeholders rely on various tools and processes. A policy instrument can be any resource stakeholders interacting in the change process use to receive approval for a change and to implement that change, such as a published policy, forms stakeholders must complete to implement the change, and meetings. The integration of many units/stakeholders may result in the creation of shared policy instruments.	
Degrees	At the low end of the policy instrument spectrum, a change that requires little integration among stakeholders, triggers few internal/external policies, and has limited subsystem involvement is unlikely to require institutional stakeholders to use a lot of policy instruments. However, at the high end of the policy instrument spectrum, a complex change requires the use of a number of policy instruments. If the level of integration between subsystems is high, the subsystems may share policy instruments.	

Note. Tables adapted from J. L. L. Candel, 2021, The Expediency of Policy Integration, *Policy Studies*, *42*(4), 346–361, (https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2019.1634191).

Informed Consent Form

Exploring Processual Policy Integration in a University Context: A Case Study

Dear Participant,

Below, I provide information relevant to this research study that will help you decide whether to participate. You may decide not to participate in or to withdraw from this research study at any time. Your choice not to participate is not associated with and will not affect your professional role at [SCU].

The purpose of this study is to explore policy integration via the substantive change policy at [SCU]. This study is an embedded case study design.

There will be four sources of data for this study: 1) the SCP policy, 2) direct observations of the [SCP Meetings], 3) content in the Curriculog system, and 4) semi-structured interviews. The latter will occur in December 2023 and January 2024. There will be two interviews total. I will need your assistance with the semi-structured interviews.

1. During each semi-structured interview, I will ask specific questions related to your perspective of and participation in the [SCP team].
    a. The semi-structured interviews will occur via Zoom, and I will record and transcribe the interview. Each interview will last 30 to 60 minutes.

After I transcribe the interview, I will ask you to review my one-page synthesis of the interview to confirm that I have conveyed your thoughts and ideas correctly. Additionally, I will provide you with a final copy of the study for your review. Your name will not be included in the study, and I am the only person who will know your identity. Your job title and department, as well as a pseudonym, will be used.

There are no perceived risks associated with this research study.

If you agree to participate in this research study, select yes below and sign your name. Your signature indicates that you are fully aware of the dynamics of this study and its purpose.

If you have questions at any time during the study please email me at resmit@wm.edu.

Best regards,

Rachel Smith

Appendix H

Template for Organizing Curriculog Jottings

	Jottings

How do the subsystems represented within the SCP work together to implement change at a midsize, public, research institution in the SACSCOC region?
    1. How do the academic units work with the other departments represented within the SCP to implement change?
    2. How do the support units work with the other departments represented within the SCP to implement change?	

How are internal and external policies integrated at a midsize, public, research institution in the SACSCOC region?
    1. How do the academic units integrate their internal policies and the external policies they must follow to implement change?
    2. How do the support units integrate their internal policies and the external policies they must follow to implement change?	

What are the experiences of policy actors involved in policy integration at a midsize, public, research institution in the SACSCOC region?
    1. What are the experiences of policy actors within the academic units?
    2. What are the experiences of policy actors within the support units?	

VITA

Rachel Elizabeth Smith
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Education	William & Mary
	Williamsburg, Virginia
	B.A. Linguistics and Sociology, 2010

Regent University
Virginia Beach, Virginia
Master of Theological Studies, 2016

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Ph.D. in Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership, 2024

Professional
Experience

Regent University
Virginia Beach, Virginia
Assistant Director of Assessment and Compliance, 2017–2020
SACSCOC Reaffirmation

William & Mary
Williamsburg, Virginia
Accreditation Consultant, SACSCOC Fifth-Year Report, 2021

Christopher Newport University
Newport News, Virginia
Accreditation Consultant, SACSCOC Fifth-Year Report, 2022–2023

Hampden-Sydney College
Hampden-Sydney, Virginia
Director of Institutional Effectiveness, 2023–present